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**WOMEN, REPRESENTATION AND THE
SPIRITUAL IN THE WORKS OF
THOMAS COOPER GOTCH, ROBERT
ANNING BELL AND FREDERICK CAYLEY
ROBINSON**

One Volume

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Warwick, Department of History of Art
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I would like to dedicate the thesis to my daughter, Emmie. Named after Emmeline Pankhurst, I hope you will witness greater improvement in the lives of women.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and that it has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

Abstract

This thesis examines the works of three ‘forgotten’ British artists, working from the late nineteenth century and well into the 1920s. In a period which saw momentous changes associated with the onset of modernity, artworks appeared to speak of revivalism, tradition, even nostalgia, rather than the new. Thomas Cooper Gotch, Robert Anning Bell and Frederick Cayley Robinson shared an interest in the spiritual, the unseen and immaterial, which they expressed through representations of women, placing faith, broadly, in ‘the feminine’ as synonymous with humanity’s neglected ‘spirit’ in the modern, materialistic world. The eclectic and contradictory nature of the artworks examined, their complex and ambiguous representations of womanhood and female spirituality were expressive of the condition of modernity in its rich, varied forms.

These artworks are analysed in the context of an important historical moment for the feminist movement, since all three artists addressed the explosion in female agency related to contemporary feminism, the ‘gender crisis’ and the Suffragette movement. By placing artworks in this context, I have attempted to bring women, their presence in the public sphere and visual culture, their discovery of a ‘feminist voice’ in this period, into the frame. Women imagined invigorating movements, from the confines of the domestic interior into the airy heights of mountain tops, using languages of righteousness and joyous expectancy, and the artworks examined provide visual analogues and commentaries on these feminist possibilities and new imaginative aspirations.

While all three artists mediated the visual ‘types’ of womanhood available within art languages, they created quite distinct images of women. Representations range from Gotch’s female Messiah, where woman’s spiritual power originates in her innocence and purity, Bell’s images of Amazonian strength allied with a closer female relationship with nature, to more occult versions in Cayley Robinson’s paintings, related to theosophy. The artworks participated in a tremendous moment of hope for women in their endeavours toward autonomy and fulfilment. In presenting women’s spiritual role as humanity’s redeemer, these paintings reveal how art may envisage intangible forms of spirituality and emancipatory possibilities.

Abbreviations

ATC	The Art Theosophical Circle, London
GSA	Glasgow School of Art
NUWSS	National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies
RBCSA	Royal British Colonial Society of Artists
SPR	Society for Psychical Research
WFL	Women's Freedom League
WSPU	Women's Social and Political Union

Illustrations

Dimensions where available are given in centimetres, with height before width.

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Introduction

This thesis concerns three ‘forgotten’ artists whose works displayed the richness of British art in the period and the complicated cultural experience of modernity. The artists’ compositions featured women as the mode to present symbolic subjects which at times bordered on the mystical. I have chosen these artists as they shared a similar project to represent the unknown, invisible, spiritual forces in culture and they also all experienced an increasingly indeterminate position within the history of British art. Whilst they have been readily linked, both at the time and since, with the past, the poetical and the inner life, their relationships and associations with modernity have been forgotten. Examining the representation of women in their artworks has enabled compelling links to be made between the history of art, visual culture and the history of feminism and women’s increased agency and aspirations in this period. In all three chapters, women’s emancipation is suggested through representations which engage with and mediate both old and new modes and visual types of womanhood. Profound hopes and possibilities for the future of humanity were expressed through images of women which were charged with forms of spiritual resonance and modern consciousness.

Thomas Cooper Gotch, (1854-1931), Robert Anning Bell, (1863-1933), and Frederick Cayley Robinson (1862-1927), were British painters whose careers spanned from the 1880s to the 1930s. They trained in the 1880s and experienced popularity and critical acclaim in the 1890s and 1900s, receiving serious attention in newspapers and journals. The careers and biographies of the three artists indicate shared experiences and connections. All three artists held membership and exhibited through the New English Art Club (NEAC). Cayley Robinson and Gotch both began exhibiting paintings in the Newlyn style from the late 1880s. Like many artists of the period, the three had seminal visits to Florence which informed their reinterpretation of modes of womanhood. Bell travelled more extensively in Italy in the 1880s studying Venetian art and techniques for applied art such as mosaic, which had a huge impact on his painting. Cayley Robinson and Gotch both visited Florence, 1898-1901, in trips which altered their painterly practise, following which they changed to a ‘Pre-Raphaelite’ or Symbolist style. All three artists spent time in Paris in the late 1880s to 1890s and

exhibited at the Royal Academy, while Cayley Robinson and Bell eventually became ARA, in 1921 and 1922 respectively.¹

There were closer relationships between them. Gotch and Bell had ongoing connections through exhibitions Gotch organised through his chairmanship of the Royal British Society of Colonial Artists, (RBSCA), for which Bell contributed.² Alongside Gotch, Bell was a member of the Imperial Arts League in 1914.³ Gotch worked with Bell on a Chaucer pageant in Ottershaw and took the role of King Arthur at another pageant in Liverpool, 1895.⁴ The Liverpool curator Edward R. Dibdin wrote to Gotch desiring work from him, particularly ‘subject pictures’.⁵ Bell maintained an ongoing relationship with Dibdin after leaving Liverpool.⁶ The connection is reflective of the interest by Liverpool collectors in such painters who were associated with the ‘Rossetti tradition.’⁷ Gotch and Bell continued to correspond on various matters.⁸

Bell and Cayley Robinson also shared connections. Cayley Robinson took up a teaching post at the Glasgow School of Art (GSA), from 1914-1924, after being recommended by Bell, who had been teaching there as Chief of the Design Section from 1911.⁹ Bell and Cayley Robinson were members of the Royal Society for Painters in Watercolour and watercolour became an important mode of expression for these artists in their later works, enabling their experimentation, as described in retrospective analyses within the volumes of the *Old Water-Colour Society’s Club* in

¹ Despite unsuccessful applications, Gotch did not gain admission to the RAA schools and though all his important works were exhibited there, never gained membership status.

² *Catalogue for Exhibition of Pictures by Modern Artists*, Exhibition arranged by Mr. T. C. Gotch in the aid of the Northamptonshire Red Cross Fund, (Kettering: Alfred East Art Gallery in association Kettering Urban District Council, Wednesday, July 17th, 1915)

³ According to the list in: Members’ Leaflet, Imperial Arts League, 15 George Street, Westminster, 1914, consulted in the Alfred East Art Gallery

⁴ Tate Archive: TGA 9019/2/5/12: Press Cuttings on Exhibitions in Durban. The pageant was reported in the article ‘Chaucer Pageant at Otterspool,’ *Liverpool Mercury*, (20th June, 1895)

⁵ Letter from E. R. Dibdin to Gotch, 7th February, 1907, Tate Archive: TGA 9019/2/3/1/8 – Correspondence D. Dibdin desired works from Gotch for exhibiting in the Lincoln Gallery, noting: although the fashion of the moment is to look askance at the “subject” picture, there is some reason to think that the general public continues faithful to art in which good painting is enhanced by the incident or idea presented. As you are one of those who occasionally employ their genius in this way, we should be very glad to hear of a picture

⁶ Evident in correspondence within the ‘Dibdin Papers,’ Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool

⁷ Julian Treuherz, ‘Aesthetes in Business: The Raes and D. G. Rossetti,’ *The Burlington Magazine*, no. 146, (2004), pp.13-19

⁸ There are letters in the Tate Archive: Bell wrote to Gotch in June 1915 concerning *The South Wind*, as a work to sell in Sydney. (9019/2/3/2/27: Correspondence B). In 1919, Gotch noted that ‘Bell is to have lunch and tea with Phyllis.’ (9019/2/2/15/71)

⁹ Ray McKenzie (ed.), *The Flower and the Green Leaf: Glasgow School of Art in the Time of Charles Rennie Mackintosh*, (Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2009)

1928 and 1934-5 respectively.¹⁰ Bell and Cayley Robinson also completed illustrated books to great acclaim and worked both from Glasgow and Holland Park, London in their later years.

The artists thus shared networks and places, living, training and teaching locations. They were asked to complete similar projects, including posters for the railway companies in the 1920s.¹¹ However there were important differences between the artists, their careers and artistic output. While Cayley Robinson and Bell both undertook mural commissions, Bell differs from the other two artists as he is also regarded as a significant designer. He worked in many different media, undertook important public art commissions and developed an allied interest in civic culture, as well as maintaining his connections with the Arts and Crafts movement.¹² My articles on Bell, 'Robert Anning Bell and the Mosaics in the Palace of Westminster', *British Art Journal*, (2009) and 'Robert Anning Bell in Liverpool, 1895-99,' *Burlington Magazine*, (2012) examining his applied art and mosaics, are testimony to his commitment to civic, decorative art commissions. Bell undertook the most networking of the three, writing and lecturing about art and architecture, showing industry in his various teaching positions.¹³ Bell's proactive approach supported the work of Cayley Robinson and Gotch on several occasions, for example aiding Cayley Robinson's appointment at the GSA. Despite being connected to the others through a vague mystical inclination, Bell had a very grounded interest in the visual culture of the city. Equally Gotch undertook extensive world travel from 1883 and very practical overseas work in relation to the RBSCA, organising overseas artists' colonies and exhibitions, as well as teaching and maintaining a social circle in Newlyn. Cayley Robinson, conversely, had the closest relationship with esoteric movements, European Symbolism, theosophy and the occult.

¹⁰ Bell was associate from 1901, member 1904, Robinson from 1919

¹¹ 'Posters by Royal Academicians: New Series for L.M.S Railway', *The Times*, (24th December, 1923)

¹² Friendship with Walter Crane, George Frampton and C. F. A. Voysey for example. Bell showed regularly in Europe with the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, notably at Turin in 1902. Bell was elected a member of the

Art Workers Guild in 1891 and master in 1921: Peter Rose, 'Bell, Robert Anning (1863–1933)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, (2004; online edn, Sept 2010), www.oxforddnb.com accessed 2nd August, 2016

¹³ Teaching positions held at the Liverpool University School of Art and Architecture, 1895-9, Glasgow School of Art, 1911-1918, Royal College of Art, 1918-1924

All three artists were associated from the 1890s and 1900s with the Pre-Raphaelite tradition in art. Cayley Robinson and Gotch were both included as proponents of 'Pre-Raphaelism Today' in the re-printed volume by Percy Bate, *The English Pre-Raphaelite Painters: Their Associates and Successors*, (1899).¹⁴ In a number of articles, these artists were linked together broadly through shared values, morality, ethics, intellectual or poetic inspiration and conscientiousness in artistic practise. Despite being grouped together in contemporary writings, such interpretations were vague and undefined. The artists were seen as unusual and unreconciled within current art movements in many contemporary reviews. However, they came to be largely understood in terms of their critical positioning in counter-distinction to modern art, as part of a:

list...of symbolistic, inward-brooding artists, young and old, behind whose line, form, design and colour is an ethical or literary intention, sometimes so subtle it can hardly be called didactic¹⁵

The artists were examined by the same range of sympathetic writers, including A. L. Baldry, Lewis Hind, Frank Rinder and Martin Wood, sharing contemporary modes of critical attention. It was later noted in an article in the *Connoisseur*, (1917), that: 'Mr. F. Cayley Robinson shares with Mr. Bell the power of elevating a serious theme above the region of anecdotal painting.' Cayley Robinson achieved this, continued the article, by 'investing his work with a remoteness from actual life, attained through his mystic outlook and dignified austerity in his employment of form and colour.'¹⁶

The categorisation of Gotch, Bell and Cayley Robinson as the tail-end of Pre-Raphaelitism became a negative association, their art was deemed increasingly less relevant or out of touch. After about 1910, these artists received less reviews and less favourable critical attention. By the 1930s, Bell wrote: 'Burne-Jones is out of fashion' and we have not reached a point where he may receive an 'unprejudiced consideration of his work.' Bell suggested that esteemed Victorian artists find:

their art has at the time lost the freshness of its appeal, it has become familiar: the public is satiated and vivacious youth always scornful of the

¹⁴ Percy Bate, *The English Pre-Raphaelite Painters: Their Associates and Successors*, (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1899, reprinted 1901 and 1910), pp.112-117

¹⁵ C. Lewis Hind, 'Ethical Art and Mr F. Cayley Robinson', *The Studio*, 31, (1904), pp.235- 241, (p.239)

¹⁶ 'Current Art Notes: The Royal Society of Painters in Watercolour', *Connoisseur*, Vol. 49, (1917), pp.236-8, (p.238)

opinions and judgements of the [older generation] vehemently desires some new thing.¹⁷

Bell noted a type of polarised reaction in 1933: “anything to do with Camelot makes me sick,” was the candid remark of one of our vivid young moderns at a casual mention of Sir Edward Burne-Jones.¹⁸ This type of simplification was inherited by later art historians, shaping and limiting scholarship.

The milestone exhibition *The Last Romantics*, (1989) in which all three artists were represented, began to raise these artists from obscurity. Though well-known to dealers, collectors and auction houses, Bell, Gotch and Cayley Robinson were all but invisible within art historical scholarship.¹⁹ This catalogue was valuable in resurrecting the artists from their entirely ‘forgotten’ status. Christian gave valuable attention to alternative voices in British art history and strains of continuity, drawing on English literature, the Gothic and the Pre-Raphaelites. However, the catalogue also served to confirm the status of these artists as a conservative vanguard associated with traditionalism and a time before Modernism and the First World War. The title ‘last romantics’ suggested distant, reactionary artists, failing to move with the times, times which appeared to have rejected resoundingly Victorianism along with artistic heritage, schooling and methods they stood for.²⁰ Such were the reductive views I have sought to revisit and complicate.

I have faced some challenging aspects during my research. There is very little secondary material written about these artists, so I have looked at related scholarship on British art. Problematic areas of art historical orthodoxies needed to be addressed in the writing of this thesis, such as the limited dichotomies of ‘Victorianism’ and ‘Modernism’ and the distended position British art has gained within the overall narratives pertaining to this time period. The thesis places the artists firmly at the centre of pan-European intellectual currents, including Symbolism, rather than as part of a parochial, insular, British outpost of the art world. Elizabeth Prettejohn and David

¹⁷ Robert Anning Bell, ‘Burne-Jones’, *The Saturday Review*, (24th June, 1933), p.620-1

¹⁸ Robert Anning Bell, ‘Burne-Jones’, *The Saturday Review*, (24th June, 1933), p.620-1

¹⁹ John Christian, (ed), *The Last Romantics: The Romantic Tradition in British Art: Burne-Jones to Stanley Spencer*, (London: Lund Humphries in association with the Barbican Art Gallery, 1989) [exhibition catalogue, Barbican Art Gallery, London, 9 Feb – 9 April 1989]

²⁰ The desires of ‘Moderns’ were described by Bell, not entirely unsympathetically in ‘The “Moderns” and Their Problems’, *The Saturday Review*, 27th May, 1933, pp.513-4: ‘a bleak denial of all that has gone to make our splendid artistic heritage...[instead] the board should be swept clean for a fresh start.’

Peters Corbett wrote pioneering works which addressed these issues in *After the Pre-Raphaelites*, (1999) and *The Modernity of English Art, 1914-1930* (1997). Since beginning my research, there has been a growing scholarly interest in writing this period of British art in a manner which supports detailed case studies, privileging context and nuance whilst denying overarching narratives which may serve to obscure.²¹ A number of scholars have focussed on ‘forgotten’ British artists, inspiring several events including the British Art Network Seminar ‘Overlooked Victorian Artists,’ held at Manchester Art Gallery, (January, 2014), ‘From Bradford to Benares: The Art of Sir William Rothenstein,’ Bradford, (March-July, 2015). Scholarship has begun to consider the critical reception of works which deal in emotion and sentimentality. This was re-evaluated in the Tate Focus Display on Victorian Sentimentality, (2012) and the conference ‘The Arts and Feeling in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture,’ Birkbeck, (July, 2015).

And since *The Last Romantics*, the artists have featured in a number of other important exhibitions including *The Age of Rossetti*, Tate, (1997) and *Watercolour*, Tate, (2011). The exhibition *Chasing Happiness* at the Fitzwilliam Museum, (2006-7) focussed on Cayley Robinson’s illustrations for Maurice Maeterlinck’s *The Blue Bird*, while the *Acts of Mercy* exhibition at the National Gallery, (2010), displayed Cayley Robinson’s mural works, rescued and purchased by the Wellcome Trust in 2007.²² These events have continued to raise the profile of these artists. While *The Age of Rossetti* suggested the connections between Frederick Cayley Robinson and European Symbolism, there remains virtually no scholarly work which has attempted to place these artists in their historical context and examine their relationship with modernity. Indeed, Gotch’s painting *Alleluia*, (1894), features on Christmas cards sold in the Tate

²¹ Sarah Turner, ‘Spiritual Rhythm’ and ‘Material Things’: Art, Cultural Networks and Modernity in Britain, c. 1900-1914, Ph.D Thesis, (The Courtauld Institute, 2009); Tim Barringer’s work on John Byam Liston Shaw, David Peters Corbett and Lara Perry (eds), *English Art, 1860-1914: modernities and identities*, (Manchester : Manchester University Press, 2000); Pamela M. Fletcher, *Narrating Modernity, the British Problem Picture, 1895-1914*, (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2003); Corbett, D. Peters, *The Modernity of English Art, 1914-30* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997); Lisa Tickner, *Modern life and Modern subjects: British Art in the Early Twentieth Century*, (New Haven, Conn., London, Yale University Press, c.2000); Caroline Van Eck and Edward Winters (ed.), *Dealing with the Visual: Art History, Aesthetics and Visual Culture*, (Aldershot: Ashgate 2005); other research has focussed on E. R. Hughes by Victoria Osborne and Frank Cadogan Cowper, by Hettie Ward

²² Alison Smith (ed.), *Watercolour*, (London: Tate Publishing, 2011); A. Wilton and R. Upstone, (eds.), *The Age of Rossetti, Burne-Jones and Watts: Symbolism in Britain, 1860 –1910* (1997) [exhibition catalogue, London, Munich, and Amsterdam, 16 Oct 1997 – 30 Aug 1998]

shop encouraging a familiar, rather than critical, mode of viewing, reaffirming the status of such paintings as decorative. My thesis will challenge the simplified analyses of these artists which art history has inherited. I will apply scholarly attention to their artworks and position them as embedded in modernity.

Modernity

This research has not merely been an attempt to rescue artists from oblivion, or to redeem them from a cultural undervaluing.²³ The thesis is concerned with the history of modernity, in its complexity and emphasis on the visual, the feminine and the spiritual. I aim to emphasise continuities from the past and the interconnections between the work of Gotch, Bell and Cayley Robinson with other more entrenched artistic groupings where strict demarcations and divisions have previously been observed. I use the words ‘modern’ or ‘modernity’ as opposed to the terms ‘Modernist’ or the categorisation of individuals as ‘Moderns’, since the latter denote a whole range of fixed and more reductive meanings, noted by scholars such as Sarah Turner and Tim Barringer.²⁴ The time period, approximately 1880-1930, covers the main artistic output of the three artists. This period witnessed the onset of modernity as well as being a crucial historical moment for the feminist movement. In the thesis I consider the artists as exemplary of modernity; their work is not an escape from or a disavowal of the modern world, but a direct engagement or symptom of the modern in its pervasive and varied forms.

Works on the history of modernity from a number of perspectives, as well as feminist critique and theory, inform the thesis. Inter-disciplinary scholarship on the experience of modernity now considers the landscape of modernity and of modern art to be rich, including many voices. Scholarship highlights a number of less tangible areas within an experience which was piecemeal and fractured rather than coherent. An understanding of modernity, as historians Martin Daunton and Bernhard Rieger have demonstrated, includes: ‘contemporaries’ conviction of living in and through an

²³ Similar aims to re-contextualise a subsequently forgotten artist inspired the exhibition John Martin, see Martin Myrone, *John Martin: Apocalypse*, (London: Tate Gallery Publishing Ltd, 2011)

²⁴ Turner, (2009), pp.21-3

era of profound man-made changes as the defining hallmark’, allowing more sensitive studies of this period and its complexity.²⁵ Features of modernity included:

a fundamental “shift in authority and prestige” from religious to scientific elites...extension of the franchise after the Reform Act of 1867 contributed to the transformation of British political culture, ushering in the age of mass politics...a new phase in the history of empire that fuelled a more widespread and aggressive popular imperialism in the metropole...increases in middle- and working- class affluence underpinned the rise of novel and highly visible forms of popular entertainment, leisure and consumption. As women claimed and gained access to various public realms, widespread and contentious debates took place concerning the ‘problem’ of unstable gender hierarches. These developments mark only several examples of the wide range of innovative phenomena experienced in Britain between 1870 and 1940.²⁶

These artists witnessed tumultuous changes in societal structure, culture and gender relations, the growth of the city, changes in technology including greater speeds, altering the experience of space and time. The artists had varying relationships with the modern world and the city.²⁷ As explored in Chapter Two, Bell had tangible interactions with modernity through his lectures on art in the city. Further, as revealed through his writings, he was constantly aware of tremendous changes taking place in aviation, the speed of life, technology, culture, inter-personal connection and urbanisation, mentioning them in publications which alluded to the psychological experiences of modernity. Cayley Robinson’s connections with theosophy, as a modern form of spirituality, came with associated ideas about the social applications of such ideology to ameliorate the symptoms of the modern world. Gotch’s exhibition work for the RBCSA was rooted in cosmopolitan networks and modes of display.

Modernity created problematic relationships with time, with the past, present and future. A sense of the present being transitory affected the security of relationships

²⁵ Martin Daunton and Bernhard Rieger (eds.), *Meanings of Modernity: Britain from the Late-Victorian era to World War II*, (Oxford: Berg, 2001), p.1

²⁶ Daunton and Rieger, (2001), p.3

²⁷ This was noted in Ian Kennedy and Julian Treuherz (eds.), *The Railway: Art in the Age of Steam*, (Kansas: Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art; Liverpool: Walker Art Gallery, c.2008), which examined paintings from the 1830s to the 1960s.

with the past.²⁸ Lynda Nead has discussed a more fluid concept of time originating in this period, noting how Michel Serres has ‘compared time to the movement of water, a river that forks, changes its form and flow and fold over on itself. History is thus kinetic and cannot be separated into impermeable or isolated periods; it will continuously draw aspects of the past into its layers and fold and bring apparently diverse or distant phenomena into unpredictable proximity in unexpected networks.’²⁹ Nead further described a ‘temporal scrambling of past and present and disregard for linear periodisations ... place and national borders.’³⁰ A cultural sense of incoherence, rupture and the loss of a distinct and increasingly removed past impelled a significant number of people to seek types of restoration, through revival, or idealisation of the past, ranging from folk traditions, the village or artistic styles.³¹ Feminism, while absorbed by the possibilities of the future in utopian visions, also looked back to re-assess.³² Feminists revisited the past and imagined alternative histories, retaining and re-reading historic constructs in order to move forward with social and political change.³³

In-keeping with these cultural tensions, the artists expressed, through eclectic aesthetics and appropriations, contradictory relationships with revival and the past. Paintings are often situated somehow outside of normal, everyday time, set in mythic or indeterminate times and places.³⁴ Artworks considered in the thesis are visually expressive of expansive, rather than finite, time, displacement and of being in no time and sometimes evoke immortality and reincarnation. Viewing experiences may allow transcendence or magical experiences outside of the rational known Universe, in paradoxical or ambiguous relationships with tradition and modernity.

The allure of the occult and popular psychology in this period reflected a continuing desire for the spiritual, as also a critical part of the experience of the

²⁸ Daunton and Rieger, (2001), p.14

²⁹ Lynda Nead, *The Haunted Gallery: Painting, Photography, Film c.1900*, (New Haven ; London : Yale University Press, c2007), p.3

³⁰ Michel Serres and Bruno Latour, *Conversations on Science, Culture and Time*, trans. Roxanne Lapidus, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), cited in Nead (2007), p.3

³¹ Daunton and Rieger (2001), p.5

³² Daunton and Rieger (2001), pp.4-5

³³ Feminists used aggression but were encouraged not to give up femininity, summarised in Alison Lee’s introduction to Gertrude Colmore, *Suffragette Sally*, edited by Alison Lee, (Peterborough, Ontario, Canada; Plymouth, UK: broadview editions, 2008), pp.12-15

³⁴ ‘multi-temporal’ spaces are discussed in Turner, (2009), pp.94-5

modern, previously dismissed as only relevant for an aberrant and atypical few.³⁵ Alex Owen, historian of the occult, has described how concepts of modernity as a process of rationalisation failed to address the tensions between the rational and the irrational, ‘secular imperatives and spiritual desire.’³⁶ The works of Bell, Gotch and Cayley Robinson privileged spiritual and occult perspectives. Such artworks were considered reactionary and nostalgic, but may now usefully be placed within a spectrum of varied responses to, and engagements with, modernity. The ambiguous, eclectic and contradictory nature of their artworks seems expressive of the condition of modernity in this period.³⁷ The key features of modernity that I discuss are feminism, spirituality and the connection between them.

Feminism

I approach these works as a feminist scholar and frame the visual constructs of womanhood produced by Bell, Gotch and Cayley Robinson with contemporary feminist activity and female agency. The period of my thesis begins in 1880, a few years prior to the repeal of the Criminal Diseases Act in 1886 which ushered in the ‘social purity’ campaign and sees the advent of the ‘New Woman’ in the 1890s, changes in physical culture and unprecedented female agency, including an increasingly militant battle for the vote up to the First World War. The period ends in 1930, just after the vote had been eventually won in 1928. Debates concerning women were pervasive in culture, as described Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis in their introduction to *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact*, (2001), citing A. G. P. Sykes in the *Westminster Review*, (1895):

it is not possible to ride by road or rail, to read a review, a magazine or a newspaper, without being continually reminded of the subject which lady-writers love to call the Woman Question. ‘The Eternal Feminine’, the

³⁵ Alex Owen, ‘Occultism and the ‘Modern’ Self in *Fin de Siècle* Britain,’ in Daunton and Rieger, (2001), pp.71-96; Daunton and Rieger (2001), p.6

³⁶ Owen in Daunton and Rieger, (2001), p.73. Daunton and Rieger, (2001), p.73; Alex Owen, *The place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern*, (Chicago, Ill.; London: University of Chicago Press, c2004.)

³⁷ Owen in Daunton and Rieger, (2001), p.73

‘Revolt of the Daughters’, the Woman’s Volunteer Movement, Women’s Clubs are significant expressions and effective landmarks.³⁸

Art historian Deborah Cherry has also described how artists who painted women would have been mindful, like female activists, of new visual imagery of women in the public attention, such as cartoons in the national press.³⁹ I consider women’s presence and agency in culture as a central frame for the artworks, a nexus through which the gap between image and context may be reconciled.

Norma Broude and Mary Garrard also described in 2005 a ‘reclaiming’ of female agency within the writing of art history. Their scholarly approach includes an emphasis on how ‘women have exercised agency as artists, patrons, viewers, and taste-makers.’⁴⁰ This agency affected the production and visual nature of artworks. An awareness of the violent transgressions of the militant Suffragettes was unavoidable and comparable to pervasive cultural knowledge of the ‘New Woman.’ However, alongside these extraordinary examples of female agency, there was an equally significant ‘continuous destabilizing pressure’ exerted by women on patriarchal culture, which is clearly evident in the many feminist texts explored in the thesis. My thesis attempts to recognise the power and agency women

have had and continue to exercise...[creating] a cultural dynamic that consisted not of men’s cultural dominance and women’s occasional achievements, but rather of a steady and ongoing participation of women in culture, as active agents at every level – from artistic creation to patronage and reception, and as a conceptual force that threatened a fragile and sometimes desperate masculine hegemony.⁴¹

These paintings are part of the visual culture of an important historical moment for the feminist movement in which feminists across Europe and in America undertook reassessments of society and culture and also took part in violent acts of unmaking or

³⁸ A. G. P Sykes, ‘The Evolution of Sex,’ *Westminster Review*, 143, (1895), pp.396-400, in Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis (eds), *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact: Fin de Siècle Feminisms*, (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), p.1. Swiney acknowledges that her ideas of the ‘Eternal Feminine’ developed later in *The Cosmic Procession*, 1906 for example, originated in articles published in the *Westminster Review* and other journals: Frances Swiney, *The Cosmic Procession*, (London: Ernest Bell, 1906. This reprint by Forgotten Books, 2015), p.vii

³⁹ Deborah Cherry, *Beyond the Frame: Feminism and Visual Culture, Britain 1850-1900*, (London: Routledge, 2000), p.2

⁴⁰ Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (eds.), *Reclaiming Female Agency: Feminist Art History After Postmodernism*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2005), p.22

⁴¹ Broude and Garrard (2005), p.22

‘breaking’ with the past. From the late nineteenth century, there were changes in women’s thinking and aspirations, a flourishing of feminist texts and theorisations of male hegemony. The two histories, of these paintings and of feminism, run alongside each other and have connections. Cultural tensions are evident in the visual forms of the paintings and their themes. The specific interactions between the works of each artist and the context of feminism are detailed in the case studies. In engaging with feminism and articulating feminist possibilities, the artists created compelling and complex representations of women. While images were not consciously advancing a feminist agenda, they destabilised and eroded the certainty of dominant gender norms, displaying their unease within those strictures. In this way these paintings contribute to the impact of feminism as a continual, fluid form of discontent and to feminists’ ongoing efforts to ‘challenge, change and ultimately end patriarchy.’⁴²

Spirituality

A key theme of the thesis is the artists’ shared interest in the spiritual, in their lives and their art. I interpret ‘spirituality’ in a broad sense as a pertinent theme of this historic period, but also in very specific ways for each artist. Within the artists’ overall response to modernity, the ‘spiritual’ is understood to encompass an irrational counter to the unchecked progress of the modern world, expressed most notably in theosophical and contemporary occult literature and an umbrella term pertaining to a number of feminist constructs and discourses. In artworks within the thesis, spirituality is gendered as feminine and denotes a range of visual associations, from a more traditional focus on female emotionality, goodness and morality to occult, esoteric or uncanny forms. Women were concurrently negotiating their own constructs of female spirituality based both on older associations of arcane insight, intuition and spiritual connection, and new understandings forged through the experience of the modern world and modern spirituality including theosophy.

Bell, Gotch and Cayley Robinson were working in a cultural environment which displayed acute yearnings to retain the spirit in the face of the immense changes from

⁴² bell hooks, *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity and Love*, (New York: Washington Square Press, 2004), p.108 in Finn Mackay, *Radical Feminism: Feminist Activism in Movement*, (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p.5. These ideas are expressed most clearly in Karen Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700-1950: A Political History*, (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000). Kathryn Gleadle, *British Women in the Nineteenth Century*, (New York: Palgrave, c2001) also provides a useful summary of the key concerns of feminism in this period.

the late nineteenth century. The three artists were broadly shaped by the overall cultural context of the *fin de siècle*, Symbolism, the growth of the theosophical movement in England and the turn to the occult evident across Europe. Efforts to understand the profound secrets of humanity and the Universe through spiritualism or mysticism, far from being a lunatic fringe, were widespread and reflective of key intellectual and cultural concerns of this period.⁴³ Key works of theosophy, such as Alfred Percy Sinnett's *The Occult World* (1881) and *Esoteric Buddhism*, (1883) were widely read.⁴⁴ Maurice Maeterlinck wrote in 1899:

a spiritual epoch is perhaps upon us...A spiritual influence is abroad that soothes and comforts...I will say nothing of the occult powers, of which there are signs everywhere – of magnetism, telepathy, levitation...phenomena that are battering down the door of orthodox science.⁴⁵

Ruth Livesey in *Socialism, Sex, and the Culture of Aestheticism in Britain, 1880-1914*, (2007), described the constructive blending of spiritual and philosophical approaches:

The last two decades of the nineteenth century witnessed a remarkable disregard...of boundaries...an eclectic collation of belief systems: spiritualism, theosophy, Emersonian transcendentalism, Nietzschean notions of the will, Ruskinian medievalism, alongside the more material influences of Marx and Engels⁴⁶

And as Edward Carpenter recalled in 1916:

It was a fascinating and enthusiastic period...The Socialist and Anarchist propaganda, the Feminist and Suffragette upheaval, the huge Trade-union growth, the Theosophic movement, the new currents in the Theatrical, Musical and Artistic world, the torrent even of change in the Religious

⁴³ Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England 1850-1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p.4

⁴⁴ Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), p.228. Scholar John R. Reed summarises the late nineteenth century rise in the occult in *Victorian Conventions*, (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1975), pp.466-473

⁴⁵ Maurice Maeterlinck, 'The Awakening of the Soul', in *The Treasure of the Humble*, (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company; London: George Allen, Ruskin House, 1899), pp.25-6 and pp.30-1

⁴⁶ Ruth Livesey, *Socialism, Sex and the Culture of Aestheticism in Britain, 1880-1914*, (Oxford: published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 2007), p.6

world – all constituted so many streams and headwaters converging, as it were, to a great river.⁴⁷

Mysticism of various kinds, including Spiritualism, theosophy and Indian philosophy provided many alternatives to mainstream empirical science. The connections between spirituality and visuality, art and culture are evident in journals such as *The Studio*. The Hermetic Society of the Golden Dawn, an independent London-based organisation had links with Rosicrucianism and, since its establishment in 1888, disseminated ideas in *The Studio* as well as *The Evergreen* and *The Yellow Book*. Bell published illustrations in the latter while *The Studio* printed works of all three artists featuring in the thesis.⁴⁸ The art world in terms of artistic practise, criticism and literature, was an important locus for the circulation of more widely pervasive cultural ideas about spirituality, including ideas about regeneration and re-enchantment, which countered those of degeneration.⁴⁹

The spiritual context of the period has been explored via a growing body of scholarship on art, spirituality, the occult and magic, which has focussed predominantly on Symbolist and Modernist art.⁵⁰ For valuable insight into the variety of occult manifestations in this period, the ground-breaking studies by Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England, 1850-1914*, (1985) and Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room*, (1989) as well as *The Place of Enchantment*, (2004), were indispensable.⁵¹ My work has been informed by scholars who have considered the experience and function of the spiritual in society. The idea of a pervasive ‘spooky sense’ of the supernatural or spiritual in the period was developed by Nicola Bown, Carolyn Burdett and Pamela Thurschwell in *The Victorian Supernatural*, (2004).⁵² Bown’s work on the continuation of ‘small enchantments’ in the form of fairies, into the twentieth century has also aided my

⁴⁷ Edward Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1916), cited in Oppenheim, (1985), pp.183-4

⁴⁸ Timothy Neat, *Part Seen Part Imagined: Meaning and Symbolism in the Works of Charles Rennie Mackintosh*, (Edinburgh: Canongate Press, 1994), p.124

⁴⁹ Shearer West, *Fin de siècle: Art and Society in an Age of Uncertainty*, (London: Bloomsbury, 1993), ‘Regeneration’, pp.122-140

⁵⁰ Neat, (1994), p.124

⁵¹ Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room: Women, Power and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004)

⁵² Nicola Bown, Carolyn Burdett, Pamela Thurschwell, (eds), *The Victorian Supernatural*, (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.1

theorisation.⁵³ Further, Alex Owen explored the idea of re-spiritualisation or re-enchantment of culture, and allied changes in consciousness which have been important to my analysis of the action of spirit in modernity, spiritual thinking and viewing.⁵⁴

Bell asserted in 1913 that mystery continued:

in spite of the constant communication of modern cosmopolitan life, the speediness with which the smallest new idea or suggestion of a new movement is immediately exploited in a thousand publications with their facile methods of photographic reproduction.⁵⁵ [my emphases]

How modern lives may retain senses of the spiritual has been considered in Lynda Nead in *The Haunted Gallery*, (2007).⁵⁶ Spiritual or magical thinking in modernity was re-evaluated in works such as Pamela Thurschwell, *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking 1880–1920*, (2001) and Leigh Wilson, *Modernism and Magic*, (2013).⁵⁷ These works consider the way modern technologies could foster spiritual experiences and the types of metaphysical transfigurations art could effect. These works enable me to consider my case studies both within their historical context, as well as holding magical or timeless properties, according to the discourses of the period. Through aesthetic strategies and in viewing processes, as explored in the thesis chapters, artists and viewers sought escape and transcendence and achieved this in a number of tangible ways. Art allowed viewers, whilst living through modernity, to experience alternate states within and forms of refuge from modern life. Considering their artworks in these contexts, for Gotch, Bell and Cayley Robinson, the experience of modernity was assuredly a spiritual one.

⁵³ Nicola Bown, *Fairies in Nineteenth-Century Art and Literature*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001)

⁵⁴ Owen, (2004); see also Alison Butler, *Victorian Occultism and the Making of Modern Magic: Invoking Tradition*, (Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan, 2011)

⁵⁵ Robert Anning Bell, 'Craftsmanship', *British Architect*, (3rd October, 1913), p.249-50

⁵⁶ Lynda Nead, *The Haunted Gallery: Painting, Photography, Film c.1900*, (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, c2007)

⁵⁷ Pamela Thurschwell, *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking 1880–1920*, (2001); Leigh Wilson, *Modernism and Magic: Experiments with Spiritualism, Theosophy and the Occult*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, c2013)

Theosophy

Frederick Cayley Robinson had links with the theosophical movement in England, while theosophical ideas permeated culture at many levels from the late nineteenth century.⁵⁸ The Theosophical Society had been founded in 1875 in New York by Helena Blavatsky and her American partner Colonel Henry Steel Olcott. As scholars such as Janet Oppenheim have determined, the Theosophical Society was a product of its late nineteenth century English context, including the popularity of Spiritualism, a wide-reaching ‘lure of the occult’, ‘the East emerging’, anti-materialism and at the same time, was ‘the beneficiary of centuries of occult thought.’⁵⁹ Theosophy means ‘divine wisdom’ or ‘wisdom of the Gods’ and was already a familiar occult term, co-opted into the new movements. Precepts such as a number of ‘initiated adepts, or of secret documents that held, in coded signs and symbols, the key to understanding nature’s deepest enigmas,’ can also be found in the centuries of occult lore.⁶⁰ Theosophy’s link with the older hermetic tradition empowered members’ searches for eternal truths through conscientious scholarship, re-examining a diverse range of texts of ancient religions and occult traditions as well as evolution theory.⁶¹ Blavatsky and her associates, abhorring any systems of clerical authority and scientific arrogance regarding the natural world, revitalised the modern occult, creating a new body of work and teachings in various key texts for the modern Theosophical Society from the 1870s.

Oppenheim states that theosophical tenets included:

the three essentials: - “Maya,” or illusion; “Karma”, or fate; and “Nirvana,” the condition of rest. Coincident...is that of “Reincarnation”, by which each new life is but the entrance upon existence of a spiritual entity which has passed through many other lives, and whose conduct in each of these...is, in fact, its “Karma”, self-created⁶²

⁵⁸ Turner’s thesis, (2009), indicated the links between Cayley Robinson and theosophy.

⁵⁹ Oppenheim, (1985), pp.159-162, 163

⁶⁰ Oppenheim, (1985), p.163

⁶¹ Theosophy made grand claims to synthesise occult knowledge. Types and systems of knowledge included hermetic, Jewish kabbalah, alchemy, neo-Platonic, Dominican, all these doctrines and scriptures were linked together in theosophy’s divine wisdom, in the neo-Platonist tradition

⁶² ‘What is Theosophy?’, reprinted from the *New York Herald*, (18th August, 1889), *Theosophical Siftings*, 2, No.11, (1889), p.9, cited in Oppenheim, (1985), pp.168-9

Within theosophical writings, theories concerned the spiritual planes of existence, the interconnected, spiritual composition of the Universe, as well as guidance to living a higher spiritual life, through the development of the inner life and serving others. The Theosophical Society in England attempted to interrogate and re-frame the boundaries of the material and immaterial, seen and unseen, life and death. This occult focus on the unseen accompanied a widespread contemporary artistic move toward representing the invisible.⁶³ As various scholars have highlighted, scientific advancements such as the ability to see microscopic organisms, invisible to the naked eye, occurred alongside these trends.⁶⁴ The tenets and culture of theosophy aided the divorce from authoritative cultural meanings, the deconstruction of accepted norms and encouraged alternate experiences of ‘reality.’ Such perspectives, interpreted invisible forces in spiritual ways, challenging the cultural authority of science.

I consider Cayley Robinson’s works in relation to a number of inter-related theosophical precepts. Cayley Robinson was connected to the London-based Art Theosophical Circle (ATC), as well as the Symbolist movement through the Nabis and Maeterlinck, as explored in Chapter Three. Theosophy was connected with the Symbolist movement, which also influenced all three artists. The visual efforts of the three artists in this thesis to explore the material and immaterial and to present ambiguous, spiritual modes of womanhood collude with the radical potential of both theosophy and feminism. The overall positioning of the artists alongside feminine spirituality and against narratives of rational masculine progress enveloped them within the sphere of theosophy and its abilities to undermine the established order in this period.⁶⁵

Feminism and Spirituality

Rather than a separate concern, my interest in spirituality is inextricably connected with the parallel subject of womanhood and feminism and both with the conditions of modern life. A number of contemporary languages privileged female spiritual acuity

⁶³ Turner, (2009), p.84

⁶⁴ Sharon L. Hirsh, *Symbolism and Modern Urban Society*, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge, 2004); see also Kate Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)

⁶⁵ As noted by Oppenheim (1985), p.184 and Reed (1975), p.473

and saw in womanhood a source of spiritual regeneration.⁶⁶ Gotch, Bell and Cayley Robinson mourned the neglect of the spiritual life through modern living, while re-affirming the possibilities of new spiritual forms of existence, effected through womanhood. Art historian Michelle Facos has described how, within an over-arching narrative about progress and beliefs that ‘civilisation had strayed from an original ‘“right” path’, spirituality could provide knowledge of the Universe and solutions which science could not.⁶⁷ These ideas were communicated in the artists’ works through the visual medium of womanhood, who becomes the spiritual saviour of humanity. Such artworks expressed the need to trust in the feminine in order to cure a sick culture and coincide with feminist writings about women’s spiritual awakening and an imminent new era for women, in which female emphases on forms of spirituality would create a better world.

Part of the radical theosophical challenge to dominant scientific discourse, was its wholesale re-valuing of ‘feminine’ modes of thinking. Within a larger discourse regarding science and progress, theosophical writings contrasted a forthright, masculine, scientific approach with a more spiritually inclined, feminine, intuitive reverence for the mysteries of the Universe, the retention of wonder, the unknowable, mysticism, through less aggressive and invasive modes of investigation, discovery and learning. ‘Feminine’ intuition would aid a more spiritual life as Blavatsky wrote in *The Key to Theosophy*, (1889). Blavatsky continued to describe the ‘duty [of theosophy] is to keep alive in man his spiritual intuitions’ making a direct contrast with religious and scientific forms of knowledge which ‘oppose and counteract...in [their] irrational nature.’⁶⁸ Theosophist A. P. Sinnett in 1905 described how women were ‘better qualified to exercise the faculty of intuition than that of man.’⁶⁹ Articles

⁶⁶ West (1993), ‘Womanhood’, pp.86-103; Michelle Facos, *Symbolist Art in Context*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2009), pp.117-123, on the French revival of motherhood imagery in the form of the Virgin or Madonna

⁶⁷ Facos, (2009), p.113

⁶⁸ Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, (e-book: Global Grey, 2016 transcription of orig. 1889, Pasadena, CA: Theosophical University Press), location 821; The way that women’s knowledge is subordinated in male-dominated culture, is considered in Sneja Gunew *A Reader in Feminist Knowledge*, (London: Routledge, 1991), which includes chapters on ‘The Spiritual Dimension of women’s liberation’ and ‘The Visionary task’ and broaches feminism’s uneasy alliance with academia. Other scholarship emphasises non-academic or canonical forms of knowledge, excluded from cultural authority such as esoteric knowledge and witchcraft, see Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), for example

⁶⁹ Alfred Percy Sinnett, *Occult Essays*, (London and Benares: The Theosophical Publishing Society, 1905), ‘The Women of the Future’, pp.162-166, (p.166)

in *Orpheus*, the journal of the ATC, continually deferred to intuition in order to access the deeper import of mystical artworks. The works of Gotch and Cayley Robinson especially displayed how a feminine, deferential guise could mask powerful, spiritual acuity, unconscious effects and spiritual viewing processes. Drawing on rich spiritual and occult languages, the artists' sentiments corresponded with feminist aspirations and their representations of women, though humble in aspect, implied greater, unseen potency and power.

Ellen Key described in *The Morality of Women*, (1912), how woman's: great cultural significance remains, however by means of the enigmatic, the instinctive and the impulsive in her own being to protect mankind from the dangers of excessive culture. In the face of knowledge she will maintain the rights of the unknowable; in the face of logic, feeling; in the face of reality, possibilities; in the face of analysis, intuition.

To which a male reviewer in attributed 'a heavy proportion of gush.'⁷⁰ However, feminists used such spiritual, emotional, effusive languages to precise and significant effect, to garner female support, foster female consciousness and confidence and in doing so, reformulated spiritual languages for the modern age, which were gendered female. My explorations of female spirituality are based on a number of contemporary feminist constructs. Just as Deborah Cherry has highlighted the range of 'feminisms' evident in this period, so there were a range of spiritual constructs, which overlapped and combined in various forms for different feminists.⁷¹ Women's power for spiritual regeneration and relationship with spirituality were reconsidered as a central element in feminist reassessments of society, culture and history from the late nineteenth century. The terms 'spirit' and 'spirituality' were used in many fluid and vague ways within such feminist texts.

Women used a variety of spiritual languages, including theosophical, occult and religious, pertaining to ancient, eastern and Christian religions in their reformulation of spirituality in this period. Women inherited a number of older ideas of female spirituality from the nineteenth century and earlier. Evangelical Christianity of the eighteenth century had, for example, created 'the ideology of women's moral

⁷⁰ Carl Kelsey, 'Review of *The Morality of Women*,' Ellen Key, translated Hamah Bouton Bothwick, 1912, *Journal of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology*, Vol. 2, No.6, (Mar.,1912), pp.958-9, (p.959)

⁷¹ Cherry, (2000), p.3

guardianship of society.’⁷² Visual constructs available from the nineteenth century included the polarised areas of awe-inspiring witchcraft, *the femme fatale*, the fortune-teller and relatively passive roles within Spiritualism, the piety and tenderness of women in Pre-Raphaelite paintings.⁷³ These could be recast in new combinations or resurrected with new emphases on female autonomy.

Conservative languages framed some empowering constructs of female spirituality. By the 1890s, a feminist valorisation of spirituality was constructed within the ‘social purity’ movement, built on women’s protection from the public sphere, through middle class ‘separate spheres’ ideology, respectability and ladylike behaviour. These were ideas which held much cultural currency and continued at least to the First World War. Women’s spiritual virtue was delineated in contrast to the problem of ‘the beast’ of male lust and man’s lack of, or disconnection from, his spirituality. This construct was more intensely connected with women’s role as mothers in the Edwardian period. Many feminists, including Frances Swiney, Ellen Key, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Annie Besant, Henrietta Muller, Elizabeth Blackwell and Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy (who also wrote under the pseudonym Ellis Ethelmer) elevated the spiritual nature of motherhood to a venerated, sanctified level. The cult of motherhood employed eternal spiritual qualities to exalt women and their spiritual guardianship of the race. Women advanced these ideas within the spheres of theosophy and the Malthusian League, also using the languages of race, inheritance and later eugenics. Such feminists, whilst employing languages of spirituality, wrote revised evolutionary narratives which incorporated female agency, for example with regard to sexual selection, and deified woman as the spiritual guardian of humanity. Such ideas found significant support in the indomitable voice of Frances Swiney. Swiney’s important work *The Awakening of Women*, (1899), considered women’s role in the evolution of humanity, the past and the future, deploying female spirituality as the central element and identifying the powers of women to shape a better society

⁷² Olive Banks has described how the campaign for women’s emancipation in these years was linked with evangelical religion in *Faces of Feminism: A Study of Feminism as a Social Movement*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), pp.13-27; see also Ann Heilmann, *New Woman Strategies: Sarah Grand, Olive Schreiner, Mona Caird*, (Manchester; New York, NY: Manchester University Press; distributed exclusively in the USA by Palgrave, 2004), p.126 and Kessler, (1984), p.8

⁷³ Griselda Pollock in *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), explored the representation of Elizabeth Siddall and Rossetti’s sensual portraits, pp.91-115 and pp.120-155; see also Jan Marsh, *Pre-Raphaelite Women: Images of Femininity in Pre-Raphaelite Art*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987)

through their heightened spirituality.⁷⁴ This context has been analysed deftly by Lucy Bland in *Banishing the Beast*, (1995), which informs Chapter One.

Seemingly conservative languages of spirituality and motherhood could become less tamed forms, sources of pride and strength for women. Female spirituality could be reclaimed through reconnecting women with forgotten histories of the primordial or with the origins of religions, in feminist and theosophist narratives which reconsidered the past rather than accepting existing man-made accounts.⁷⁵ As explored in Chapter Two, spiritual ideas of motherhood were related to the widespread belief in a previous Matriarchate, focussed on female values and knowledge. In a similar way, spirituality was central to the imagining of possible futures in feminist utopias. Spiritual languages were used in radical, inventive guises, as modes to re-imagine unsatisfactory societal structures. And spiritual thinking could aid feminist activism, women's agency and movements into new areas of activity and influence.

Theosophy, Feminism and the Suffragettes

Many feminists, such as Frances Swiney, were also theosophists. The Theosophical Society was a democratic and inclusive society for women who, between 1900 and 1910, formed two-thirds of the membership. Theosophy offered an alternative pathway to the divine, independent from religion and science and without recourse to the institutional authority of the church. Important leaders, including co-founder Helena Blavatsky and later President Annie Besant, were women. Indeed, the year the London based ATC was founded, 1907, had seen Besant assume the position of President and usher in a more 'feminised' culture in the Theosophical Society, which elevated 'female' intuition, emotion, tenderness and Christian virtues.⁷⁶ Theosophy presented an organisation and doctrine which allowed women spaces to experience spirituality and spiritual art, as well as connect with other women in emancipatory environments. I explore this in Chapter Three in relation to the Orpheus Lodge, Edinburgh. Theosophy investigated ancient religions as well as the origins of Christianity. Feminist-theosophists developed constructs of uncompromising spiritual

⁷⁴ Frances Swiney, *The Awakening of Women, or, Woman's Part in Evolution*, (London: George Redway, 1899. Kessinger Publishing reprint, 2015)

⁷⁵ Swiney, (1899)

⁷⁶ Joy Dixon, *Divine Feminine: Theosophy and Feminism in England*, (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 2001), pp.177-205, cited in Turner, (2009), p.75

potency, such as Swiney's 'Eternal Feminine' and the female Messiah, within texts of esoteric Christianity.

Suffragettes expressed feminist aspirations through spiritual languages and theosophy had a close relationship with the Suffrage campaign, as explored in Chapter Three. As well as a variety of contemporary feminist works, my work has been informed by Joy Dixon's *Divine Feminine*, (2001), in which Dixon considered the connections between suffrage and the spiritual. For a significant number of women, Dixon explores, spirituality 'was a constitutive element in their feminist politics...a political resource.'⁷⁷ Martha Vicinus has also argued that within the suffrage organisations there was an effort to:

forge a new spirituality. Based on women's traditional idealism and self-sacrifice but intended to reach out and transform not only the position of women in society, but that very society itself.⁷⁸

Suffragette struggles were seen as a triumph of spirit over flesh and a feminine triumph over male materialism, as for example by Charlotte Despard, who saw the suffering of the militant suffragettes 'as quite literally a sacrament, an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.'⁷⁹ Gertrude Colmore, who worked and spoke for the Theosophical Society and wrote the play *Suffragette Sally*, (1911), privileged spiritual understandings of political and material conditions, seeing the former as the main mode of existence, of which the latter are mere shadows. Colmore described the Suffragettes' role in bringing:

about the next phase in the development of humanity...Cosmically they are tools, with just the qualities...which fit them to do the work which at this particular time in the world's history has to be done. You may praise or blame them, but the things they do have been planned by a mightier than they.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Dixon, (2001), p.179, p.204

⁷⁸ Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women: 1850-1920*, (London: Virago, 1985), pp.251-2, in Dixon, (2001), p.179

⁷⁹ As described by Dixon, (2001), p.188. Despard was a feminist, theosophist, Communist and pacifist.

⁸⁰ Gertrude Colmore, *Suffragettes: A Story of Three Women*, edited by Dale Spender, (London: Pandora Press, 1984), pp.164-6. Alison Lee discusses the spirituality of the Suffrage crusade, women's spirituality and male materiality in her introduction to Gertrude Colmore, *Suffragette Sally*, edited by Alison Lee, (Peterborough Ontario Canada, Plymouth UK: broadview editions, 2008), pp.28-31, p.33

As well as these less tangible, ideological affinities between theosophy and the Suffragette activism, there were specific connections with the militant campaign for suffrage. Theosophical Lodges supported the Suffrage campaign, associated journals were sympathetic and writings make crucial links between art and social context. Through the radical potential of its tenets, offering possibilities for transcendence and societal change, theosophy had a close relationship with feminism. In this period of momentous change, both feminism and spirituality were inspiring languages of hope for humanity, of change toward a fairer, more democratic future. These languages are evident in the paintings focussed on in the thesis.

Spirituality, Modernity and Art

The three artists featured in this thesis explored visual forms to represent modern spirituality, notably womanhood. My focus on womanhood and spirituality has highlighted the continuities in concerns between nineteenth and twentieth century art, between Modernist artists, Symbolists and the three artists I examine. With reference to Modernism, Linda Dalrymple Henderson described how artists heralded ‘new theories about the nature of reality and the nature of the self [which] created a new openness towards mystical and occult ideas...a major characteristic of modernism itself.’⁸¹ However, while Henderson focussed on Modernist artists, a range of contemporary artists, cutting across boundaries and groupings of category or network, considered how art could engage with and represent forms of spirituality, how spiritual thinking informed modernity and the making and viewing of art. Indeed, I have sought to move beyond ‘Modernism’ as a limiting and stultifying category which may hamper a nuanced writing of the history of British Art.

My work is framed by understandings of modernism which are broader and inclusive. For example, scholarship which has described a plurality of Modernisms within works of literature as well as noting reductive and simplifying ‘Bad Modernisms.’⁸² Art forms in the thesis are considered modern in the most inclusive sense, in that they deal with the ‘intellectual problems of modernity’.⁸³ With this in

⁸¹ Linda Dalrymple Henderson, ‘Mysticism and the Occult in Modern Art, *Art Journal*, (Special issue: Mysticism and Occultism in Modern Art), vol. 46, no.1 (Spring 1987), pp.5-8 (pp.5-6)

⁸² Plurality of modernisms is from Peter Childs, *Modernism*, (London: Routledge, 2000), p.12; Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, *Bad Modernisms*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), pp.1-2

⁸³ Stefan Collini, review of Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker, (eds), ‘The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines,’ *Times Literary Supplement*, (7th October, 2009), pp.3-5, (p.3), in

mind, I seek to emphasise how similar symbols and motifs appeared in artworks across Europe, alongside prevalent ideas of ‘sympathy’ and evinced a shared desire to seek the unknowable and invisible through spiritual experiences of art.

Ideas of spirituality in aesthetics had been expressed prominently in European art from the mid-nineteenth century. Examples range from the Pre-Raphaelites’ ‘truth to nature’, the efforts of the Arts and Crafts movement including Lethaby’s spiritual ideas of architecture in *Architecture, Mysticism and Myth*, (1892), to art nouveau, explored within its social and cultural context by Debra Silverman (1989).⁸⁴ The spiritual in art was recast in the period of modernity, inflected by a heightened interest in the unconscious, the occult and spiritual womanhood, interests which featured more prominently in art reviews of the period. Examinations of spiritual subjects, including the relationship between the material and the immaterial in art, were undertaken by the Symbolists, including the Nabis, the Modernists, Mondrian, Kandinsky (who resisted being defined by a movement) and other practitioners, such as Gotch, Bell and Cayley Robinson, whose works were not so easily categorised.

European Symbolism was an important context for the three artists. This movement was concerned with the Idea beyond the visual and at the same time, considered the nature of the visual with a ‘subversive attitude toward the image and its very structure’.⁸⁵ Symbolist art affirmed its function as medium for humanity to access the ineffable and there was a revival in the belief in the ‘cosmic character’ of art and the making and viewing of art as a spiritual quest.⁸⁶ Symbolism, in its denial of certain meaning, deliberate ambiguity and association with the unconscious, especially evident in Cayley Robinson’s work, could be emancipatory to artists wishing to experiment with the immaterial and spiritual in art. Scholarship has highlighted the mode of visual ambiguity within Symbolism and the close relationship between such aesthetics and new psychological understandings of the unconscious.⁸⁷

Joannou, Marolou, (ed.), *The History of British Women's Writing, 1920-1945*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp.3-4

⁸⁴ Debora L. Silverman, *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France: Politics, Psychology and Style*, (Berkeley, California; Oxford: University of California Press, 1989)

⁸⁵ Rodolphe Rapetti, *Symbolism*, trans. Deke Dusinberre, (Paris: Flammarion, 2005), p.53 cited in Facos, (2009), p.4

⁸⁶ Patricia Mathews, *Passionate Discontent: Creativity, Gender and French Symbolist Art*, (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1999)

⁸⁷ The seminal work by Henri F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry*, (New York: Basic Books, 1970), has been followed by scholarship by Jenny Bourne Taylor on varieties of mental states including trance, dreams and memory. Jenny

Symbolists were concerned with time and timelessness, frozen, iconographic moments, desiring transcendence and spiritual experience and the movement, in its uncertainty, could undermine the 'regime of truth' of hegemonic patriarchal ideology.⁸⁸ Symbolism featured many examples of spiritual womanhood.

Glasgow was a crucial centre for spiritual and mystical art in this period, including artists associated with the Celtic revival. Artists employed at the GSA in this period included the Symbolist Jean Delville, appointed as Head of painting in 1900. Delville was a leading Rosicrucian artist, friends with Maurice Maeterlinck.⁸⁹ Bell and Cayley Robinson also held positions at the same time that Frances MacNair (née Frances MacDonald) lectured there. Maurice Greiffenhagen was employed as the Head of the Life School, from 1906-1929. Greiffenhagen's works showed Pre-Raphaelite and academic elements and also Rosicrucian-type symbols, as does the work of many students who passed through the GSA in this period. Newbery encouraged links between Bell, Cayley Robinson, Greiffenhagen and Symbolist artists.⁹⁰ Bell corresponded with, met and exhibited with Mackintosh, notably in 1902, at the crucial Turin Exhibition of Decorative Art, in which the work of the Glasgow Four was most highly and famously acclaimed.⁹¹ The context of Glasgow and my research at the GSA has revealed pertinent overlaps in artistic concerns and groupings.⁹²

Works on Symbolism in English language works are still comparatively limited, particularly those connecting such sources to visual culture. I contribute to a growing body of scholarship contextualising the movement as modern, engaged and subversive. As a point of departure, I found works by Hirsh, Kuenzli and Mathews

Bourne Taylor, 'Obscure Recesses: Locating the Victorian Unconscious' in J. B. Bullen, (ed.), *Writing and Victorianism*, (London and New York: Longman, 1997), pp.137-180, and Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth (eds.), *Embodied Selves: An Anthology of Psychological Texts, 1830-1890*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998)

⁸⁸ Mathews (1999), p.3

⁸⁹ Neat, (1994), pp.121-2

⁹⁰ For instance when Newbery wrote to Mackintosh suggesting he come and contribute to a lecture, he emphasised that the artist would be in the company of Bell and Robinson. Letter from Francis Newbery to Charles Rennie Mackintosh, 4th December, 1916, Glasgow School of Art Archives (GSAA), GSA/DIR/5/31; The group of juries for design and decorative art diplomas included Mackintosh and Newbery, while the assessor was Bell, GSAA, GOV 2/7, Minute Books, May 1909 –June 1911, p.231

⁹¹Newbery had selected the work for Turin and chose Mackintosh to design the rooms for its display, McKenzie (2009). On the Turin exhibition see Herman Muthesius, 'The Essence of the Glasgow Group', in *Das Englische Haus*, (Wasuth, Berlin: 1904-5), cited Neat, (1994), p.200

⁹² Neat, (1994) and Jude Burkhauser, *Glasgow Girls: Women in Art and Design 1880-1920*, (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1990)

critical in their use of inter-disciplinary research to resituate artists within the historic contexts of science, the domestic, the city and psychology.⁹³ Sharon Hirsh's *Symbolism and Modern Urban Society*, (2004), examined Symbolist painters and their relationship with modern life and the city, a relationship previously abjured. Katherine Kuenzli's *The Nabis and Intimate Modernism*, (2010) applied serious academic attention to the Nabis artists and their use of the modern domestic environment.

The artists had ongoing relationships with artistic Modernism, discussing it in various forms into the 1930s. Although Bell, for example, became aware of his liminal status by 1907 and how reception of his art had become more a matter of taste and tenuous critical favour, artistic groupings were not absolute acts of segregation.⁹⁴ Bell exhibited alongside the Post-Impressionists at the Walker Art Gallery in 1911, the first Post-Impressionist exhibition in the UK, outside of London.⁹⁵ Bell considered the Modernist concepts of 'abstract worth' and 'inward meaning' in a discussion of spiritual art, but he found them lacking and '[in] the clouds.'⁹⁶ Yet he also noted in Modernist art, 'Here and there are evidences of more than rebellion, of a real freshness of outlook.'⁹⁷ Bell described similarities between the Moderns and Burne-Jones, who was 'out of fashion.' Bell noted regarding Burne-Jones's 'very personal use of colour...He has this much in common with the Moderns that he has the same disdain for merely representative painting.'⁹⁸ Gotch wrote at length on the Futurists and their visual experimentations, a group of artists which was also considered by Olive Hockin, Suffragette, theosophist and artist, who Cayley Robinson knew through the ATC.⁹⁹ In *Orpheus*, 1910, Francis Colmer linked Cayley Robinson and Bell together, describing them as artists who were 'a law unto themselves, or the outcome of new influences'

⁹³ Hirsh (2004); Katherine M. Kuenzli, *The Nabis and Intimate Modernism: Painting and the Decorative at the Fin-de-Siècle*, (Surrey, UK, England ; Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, c2010); Mathews (1999)

⁹⁴ Bell confided this in letters curator E. R. Dibdin, in the 'Dibdin Papers', The Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool

⁹⁵ <http://www.artinliverpool.com/walker-art-in-revolution-liverpool-1911/> accessed 7th August, 2016.

David Bingham, *1911: Art and Revolution in Liverpool; The Life and Times of Albert Lipczinski*, (London: Sansom & Co., 2011)

⁹⁶ Robert Anning Bell, 'Art and "Modern" Art: High Sounding Nonsense and Byzantium,' *The Saturday Review*, (18th November, 1933), p.523

⁹⁷ Robert Anning Bell, 'The "Moderns" and Their Problems', *The Saturday Review*, (27th May, 1933), pp.513-4, (p.514)

⁹⁸ Robert Anning Bell, 'Burne-Jones', *The Saturday Review*, (24th June, 1933), p.620-1

⁹⁹ Gotch (1919); Olive Hockin, 'Impressions of the Italian Futurists', *Orpheus*, No.18, (Apr., 1912), pp.55-60

in an article which considered the outlook of modern painting.¹⁰⁰ The boundaries between all these artistic groupings were thus blurred.

Modernist art like Kandinsky's presented a new visual programme for ideas that also structured the works of artists such as Gotch, Bell and Cayley Robinson. The stylistic break which determined the 'Victorian'/'Modern' divide in art history may be true of the appearance of paintings, evident when comparing those in this thesis with Modernist artists for example. However, the superficial differences in appearance fails to acknowledge the continuity in ideas of both the spiritual and womanhood. Francis Colmer perceived this in his article in 1910:

It is as impossible for art to give literal expression to human ideas as to much of the phenomena of the natural world. The lisp [*sic*] and flutter of leaves, the ripple of the brook...can have no actual representation. Sound and motion cannot be literally portrayed by the painter, though indeed in France at the present time the so-called Futurists are endeavouring to give actual effect to the latter of these things.¹⁰¹

Colmer considered the shared interests of a variety of English artists as well as the Futurists, in interrogating the relationship between the material and immaterial in art. Gotch created hieratic, iconic, otherworldly compositions to illustrate his belief, described in lectures, in the primacy of 'spiritual law' over 'physical law'.¹⁰² Bell displayed an ongoing interest in the unknown and ineffable, forever permeating his artistic output. He described the 'mystery of shadow' in churches and mosaic works and the inspiration for artworks coming from spiritual origin: 'I know not whence.'¹⁰³ He also noted the ability of the artist to '[draw] forth the hidden charm in some material – pottery, metal or stone.'¹⁰⁴ Gotch, Bell and Cayley Robinson variously expressed their sympathy with a number of Modernist artists in terms of ideas or symbolism. While there was discord concerning method and form, there were shared desires across Europe for emotional resonance and connection with the spirit through art.

¹⁰⁰ Francis Colmer, 'The Outlook of Painting', *Orpheus*, No.12, (Oct., 1910), pp.204-9, (p.206)

¹⁰¹ 'The Outlook of Painting', Francis Colmer, *Orpheus*, No.12, (Oct. 1910), pp.204-9

¹⁰² Thomas Cooper Gotch, 'Revolution in Art', transcript of lecture, (London, 1919), Tate Archive, TGA 9019/2/6/37-38, handwritten and typescript versions of 'Revolution in Art', p.1

¹⁰³ 'mystery of shadow:' Robert Anning Bell, 'Notes on the Practice of Pictorial Mosaic,' *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects, (RIBA)* vol VIII, (1901), p.28; 'I know not whence,' Robert Anning Bell, 'A Lecture on Stained Glass', Royal College of Art, London, (1922), p.14

¹⁰⁴ Robert Anning Bell, 'Art and "Modern" Art: High Sounding Nonsense and Byzantium,' *The Saturday Review*, 18th November, 1933, p.523

Alternative modern artistic voices existed throughout the period of my thesis. Within British art, there was a rich variety of experimental and eclectic art works that used recast symbolic and figurative forms, adapted and mediated methods such as tempera, unusual combinations and juxtapositions of artistic languages and moods. Bell's wife, Laura Anning Bell, was a known artist from The Slade School and some of Bell's works show the influence of that school. Artists there evidenced similar desires to combine modernity with the classical, such as William Strang's, *Laughter* (1912), which may be considered alongside Bell's *Spring Revel*, 1917, featuring imagery which was contemporary, alongside classicism and allegory. More examples are noted by Corbett (1997) in his chapter 'Other Voices: The Contest of Representation.'¹⁰⁵ On the eve of the First World War, the GSA was central in organising an exhibition of British art at the Louvre in Paris, which included Pre-Raphaelite pictures, works by William Morris and Bell, alongside Symbolist works. The exhibition displayed the pervasive culture of mysticism, significant permeability across art movements concerned with the spirit, as well as resurgence in interest in British Symbolist art, as an alternative to the profusion of Modernist art. Further, the exhibition evidenced an enduring desire to appropriate from older nineteenth century artworks.¹⁰⁶ Varied artworks across a range of groupings broached modern forms of spirituality through the epic reach of religious or devotional sentiment and modern consciousness. Themes of the material and immaterial, womanhood and spirituality were inclusive and transcended boundaries such as school or category.

Methodology

The thesis consists of a series of close readings of selected artworks, informed by a variety of primary sources and historical contexts. I began with survey work in the Witt Library, Courtauld institute, London, to set these artists in context with their peers and to understand their recurring themes and subjects. As 'forgotten' or overlooked artists, many works are held by regional galleries and rarely on display. While the Tate, London, holds works by Bell, Cayley Robinson and Gotch, I viewed them in the

¹⁰⁵ Corbett, (1997), Chapter 6, pp.192-217

¹⁰⁶ *Les Arts Decoratifs de Grande-Bretagne et d'Irlande*, (Louvre, Paris, April-October, 1914). Catalogue examined in the GSA archives. English artists involved in the exhibition included Robert Anning Bell, W. R. Lethaby, Gerald Moira, May Morris, Francis Newbery, Arthur Rackham, C. F. A. Voyesy. Artworks exhibited included Bell's reliefs and drawings, *Cinderella* by Margaret Macdonald Mackintosh.

store, where they are usually held. I then visited a number of provincial galleries including the Walker Art Gallery and Lady Lever Art Gallery, Liverpool, the Alfred East Art Gallery, Kettering, Leamington Spa Art Gallery, the Glasgow School of Art and the Hunterian Art Gallery, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

These viewings enabled me to compare the aesthetic features of the paintings. The artists used a variety of techniques including line, colour and the handling of space to inflect their subjects with spiritual meanings. Visual languages were eclectic, employing combinations of styles and images, such as, for example, references to the Pre-Raphaelites and modern sensibilities. It has been noted that despite being perceived predominantly as detached, introspective figures, the Symbolists engaged with the modern world through unconventional pictorial practises and visual strategies which had political connotations.¹⁰⁷ Similarly, Gotch, Bell and Cayley Robinson used various techniques, temporal and spatial distortions, synthesis and icons, suggestion through overall mood and tone to articulate the visual as a point of access to the world of ideas, the imagination and transcendence. And the worlds of ideas conjured via these artworks are ambiguous and compelling for their intricate connections with the modern world. Visual strategies infuse psychological suggestion, unease, ambiguity, questioning, modes which ally the works with forms of critique evident in theosophy and feminism. Feminist scholarship has informed my analysis of the representations of women and the mediation of ‘types’ of womanhood evident in the works of all three artists. I have considered material on painterly practise, techniques, artists’ statements of intent or ideological commentaries alongside visual readings.¹⁰⁸ My analysis benefitted very much from the artists’ writings which I combined with critical reviews in art journals and newspapers to build the richest picture of the art objects and their related discourses of making, display and reception.

Within my research, close visual analysis of artworks has continually run parallel with rigorous efforts to frame the works within social and cultural history beyond the art object. Thus my visual analysis is not a ‘contents-based approach,’ which was until recently the interpretative norm for Pre-Raphaelite and Symbolist

¹⁰⁷ Facos, (2009), p.6

¹⁰⁸ Facos, (2009), pp.4-5 states that a painting needs both aesthetics and intention to examine the Idea for the it to be considered Symbolist

artworks.¹⁰⁹ My challenge from the outset was to look afresh at these artworks and artists who had been interpreted in terms of content, literary reference and art precedent, and instead position their works in historical context. This necessitated work of deconstruction, peeling away layers of assumption which had reiterated introspective, limited meanings and placed the works in exile as the ‘expression of a completely inner world of ideas and ideals.’¹¹⁰

In order to consider artworks in their historical context and ground them in modernity, I have been informed by existing models in related scholarship, such as Hirsh (2004), a work described as ‘the first social history of the Symbolist movement.’¹¹¹ Similarly to the varied range of methods Hirsh undertakes, alongside visual analysis I adopted a number of readings and methods to gain historical knowledge such as archival work including biographical material, reading literature and literary history. Since the art historical narratives on these artists have been extremely limited, and in order to consider the inter-relationships with feminism, spirituality and modernity, my research benefitted from its inter-disciplinary focus. Facilitated by access to many online works and online newspapers and journals, I undertook an extensive analysis of a range of contemporary texts including many feminist texts as well as works of theosophy and the occult. These readings and feminist theory were central to my methodology. These routes to knowledge have sculpted and directed my work in essential and unforeseen ways.

A range of archival research, including the reading of biographical material, diaries and correspondence for the three artists, enabled me to re-position them in the ‘real’ world rather than a mystical removed realm where reviews of the time, and since, have placed them. The artists shared materials at the Royal Academy Library, the Victoria and Albert Museum National Art Library and Archive, the Tate Britain Archive, the British Library and the Glasgow School of Art. Other institutional connections took me to the Alfred East Gallery, Kettering, the Art Workers Guild, The Houses of Parliament Archives, the University of Liverpool Archive in the Sydney Jones Library, the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. At the Tate Britain Archive, I surveyed their large collection of manuscripts of about twenty boxes relating to Gotch

¹⁰⁹ Facos, (2009), p.1

¹¹⁰ Hirsh, (2004), p.xiii

¹¹¹ Hirsh, (2004), p.i

and his friend and fellow Newlyn artist Henry Scott Tuke. Of particular interest within this collection were papers relating to the Royal British Colonial Society of Artists, (RBCSA), typescripts of lectures by Gotch as well as diaries and a vast quantity of family and general correspondence. Materials at the GSA were significant in relating to both Bell and Cayley Robinson and included minute books, correspondence and annual reports. In provincial art galleries I was able to peruse catalogue and exhibition materials and curatorial notes. The many artworks and decorative commissions viewed as well as research material gathered for my two articles on Bell, much undertaken before I began my PhD research, were invaluable in this process.

The variety of institutional material I examined helped me to build an idea of the ethos and sensibilities of the artists. Archival documents provided a wealth of details about ideological aims, for example in Bell's lectures and notes for students at the GSA and Gotch's papers relating to the RBCSA. Over-arching ideas about social applications of art and design emerged as nevertheless rooted in spiritual ideas. Information about the artists' personal lives enabled me to place them in the context of modernity, of urban life, networks, social and feminist issues. For example, Cayley Robinson's connections with the ATC and theosophy in Scotland, the artistic culture in Glasgow and Bell's membership of the Sandon Society, Liverpool were freighted with cultural meanings and narrative complexities which helped to generate a more integrated understanding of the artworks and artists within culture. Many suggestions for the analytical emphases of my chapters arose by accident through the perusal of a variety of sources, such as Bell's notes on the practise of mosaic work and lectures on the British city and Gotch's lecture on the Futurists and personal letters to his wife Caroline Gotch. The archival research enabled me to discover inter-lacings between the art objects, the personal lives, artistic practise and ideologies of the artists. Their institutional practises, networks, lectures and teaching within the flux and seed-bed of Universities and their making of art emerge as tangible engagements with the modern world.

Bringing these artists and their artworks into the daylight from dusty stores and archives has encouraged my consideration of the study of modernity, how discourses may be retrieved and understood when themes, narratives and voices are obscured and

forgotten due to structures of power, cultural authority and taste.¹¹² My research has pertained specifically to modern ideas of womanhood, feminism and spirituality. However, I have not wished to merely use artworks to illustrate these ideas, to ‘prove’ sympathies with theosophy, the occult or feminism or to partake in any fixed notion of modernity, illuminated or exemplified through images. Instead, I aimed to raise questions about the theorising, definition and understanding of the modern. Artists of the time considered how art could engage with the modern world, or represent it. While Modernist artists directly expressed the desire to paint a new art and an art pertaining to the modern, other artists were more less direct in regard to such aims. My research enabled me to consider the role of these artists and their artworks in the shaping of modern culture as well as their engagement with modernity, encouraging me to think creatively concerning connections between art and cultural meaning.

My focus on spirituality has led me to challenge the idea of the inner life or imaginative vision as by definition escapist and the complementary notion that subjects of real life or social subjects were inherently modern.¹¹³ This assumption was made with regard to literary Modernism and has been to some extent deconstructed. I have considered ideas of spirituality as engaged rather than dreamy and the loss of the inner life as a significant social issue for the modern world, rather than evidence of reactionary nostalgia.¹¹⁴ The tensions between imaginative constructs of the isolated artist-dreamer and their modern lives and contexts have shaped my analysis.¹¹⁵ The idea of artists as removed onlookers to the modern world also allowed their critique of it.¹¹⁶ Spiritual ideas were held in tension with practicalities of modern urban living.¹¹⁷ Constructs of spirituality contributed to the making of meaning through viewing experiences, for example through female-dominated theosophical societies, as explored in Chapter Three. In these instances, art, feminism, spirituality and modernity came together in affective relationships. My work aims to contribute to a more complicated, rich and varied history of modernity. I have considered an unstable,

¹¹² See also Karen Offen’s discussion of ‘knowledge wars’ in (2000), ‘Prologue: History, Memory and Empowerment,’ pp.1-18, (pp.3-4) and Cherry, (2000), p.8

¹¹³ Miller, (1994), pp.10-38, on realist novels

¹¹⁴ The neglect of the spiritual life could be ameliorated through ‘re-enchantment,’ as explored in Chapter Three; Hirsh p.xiii

¹¹⁵ Hirsh balances her understanding of introspective Symbolist notions of ‘individualism, nostalgia and visual reverie [with their] engaging critique of urbanity,’ (2004), p.i

¹¹⁶ Turner (2009), p.45

¹¹⁷ Hirsh aimed to show Symbolist artists as more ‘normal’, (2004), p.xiii

mutable web of thinking, viewing, social relations, psychologies, perceptions as modern context. I hope to have raised useful questions about the relationship between the visual and historical context including feminism and women's experiences, culture and meaning.

Feminist Scholarship

Feminist theory has enabled me to link artworks to feminist writings without interpreting them merely as a translation of those ideas. My research has considered the relationships between feminism, female agency and visual culture, through a number of case studies and had placed art works side by side with visual cultures of feminism, such as print media. Juxtapositions with feminist readings and histories have allowed my investigation of women and representation, posing new questions about the relationships between women's experiences, consciousness, imagination and artworks, including the creation, maintenance and disruption of dominant ideology. I have endeavoured to consider the cultural traces of feminist action, contention and debate concerning gender, through these paintings.

Cherry stated that readers of the *Art Journal* would have been as aware of debates about gender and feminism as those reading a popular magazine such as *Punch*; 'Feminism provided frames for viewing and interpreting, sometimes stated, at other times not. And visual culture brought feminists into the frame', particularly through their own use of print media.¹¹⁸ At times within the thesis, images coincided with feminist ones, such as Cayley Robinson's incarcerated women and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's use of this imagery, or Bell's physically robust women and the women of feminist utopias. However, the aim has not been to use the paintings to illustrate feminist ideas, but to consider the visual alongside related written materials within the art word to analyse and better understand how works are grounded in the historical context of feminism, growing female aspirations and how men and women were involved in the cultural process of women's emancipation.

My methodology draws on feminist scholars in presenting new juxtapositions, types of interpretation, new questions and analyses informed by female agency. Rather than confirming the presence of feminist critique and desires from the 1970s, Deborah

¹¹⁸ Cherry, (2000), p.2

Cherry's important work *Beyond the Frame*, (2000), drawing on Griselda Pollock's scholarship, brought feminism back into the frame of art historical scholarship for the Victorian period. Cherry's research focussed mainly on female artists, however her method was suggestive of ways to consider the representations by male artists in a way that made equally visible the presence of female agency and feminism as prime cultural features shaping the artwork within and beyond the frame.

Indeed, the dominance of representation *of* women *by* men in the established canons of Western art history and in galleries has spawned women's discomfort, rage and an ever-growing body of scholarship in feminist art theory.¹¹⁹ As a counter to my own unease concerning this issue, I found it crucial to place emphasis throughout the thesis on contextualisation with feminist writings, with the histories of female agency and experience. Concentrating on the images of woman I have sought to shift the focus of enquiry away from the artist as 'genius' and medium, evident in contemporary understandings of Symbolism and the critical reception of these artists, to female-led viewing processes. The mode of woman within these artworks is explored in relation to what she may represent and where she may take the viewer, through spiritually and psychologically infused viewing processes.

My research has troubled the concepts of male/female, masculine/feminine, the artist and 'woman artist.' When Patricia Mathews explored the works of Symbolist artists in *Passionate Discontent*, (1999), she encountered issues with using polarised categories of male and female artists in order to understand representations. One interpretative problem was the similarity in works by men and women of the period, such as the prevalence of Pre-Raphaelite types. The idea that work by female artists is inherently different owing to gender may reproduce essentialist definitions of

¹¹⁹ Hilary Robinson has noted that 'feminist theory has always held up to scrutiny patriarchal structures of culture, existing cultural practises and women's potential for making culture.' Hilary Robinson, (ed.) *Feminism Art Theory: An Anthology, 1968-2000*, (Oxford; Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), pp.2-3. Feminist scholars have addressed the problems of the canon and an art world maintaining a number of 'hierarchies of forms of production and consumption, of categories of artists, and of representation' (Robinson, (2001), p.6). The position of female artists has been considered by Germaine Greer in *The Obstacle Race: The Fortunes of Women Painters and their Work*, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1979) and Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology*, (London: Pandora, 1987). The recovery of the works of female artists, as well as the ongoing endeavours for women's self-representation have concerned feminist scholars. Restoring female artists to the canon has been found to be an inadequate challenge to male representational systems, thus scholarship such as Griselda Pollock, *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), has challenged the canon and dominant languages of taste and classification.

womanhood, founded the idea of artist as the masculine norm and ‘woman artist’ as the always inferior appendage to the original male genius.¹²⁰ Men such as Bell, Gotch and Cayley Robinson were aligned with ‘the feminine’ in their identities as artists, and reveal their experience of the limiting, inadequate structures of gendered constructs. J. B. Bullen highlighted these sorts of issues around gendering artistic output in *Writing and Victorianism*, (1997). Bullen noted that major male Victorian poets such as Shelley identified with the ‘contemplative feminine mind,’ as argued by Catherine Maxwell.¹²¹ However:

It is an irony that under the feminist microscope writers who to the last generation seemed most attuned to the feminist mind – Rossetti and Hardy in the nineteenth century and Lawrence in the twentieth – have been most strongly reviled for the sexism. What was once construed as sympathy is now perceived as colonization and appropriation, while former monsters of misogyny, Swinburne with his visceral matriarchs and Wilde with his scathing anti-female aphorisms, have been given a reprieve on account of their feminine temperaments.¹²²

Bell, Gotch and Cayley Robinson embraced ‘the feminine’ or female languages, in various ways. Symbolist artists ‘self-Idealised the feminine’ and sought refuge in the feminine, domestic sphere as highlighted by Ruth Livesey and Sharon Hirsh.¹²³ The femininity of the artists’ works and their association with the Decadent owing to that femininity, countered the hostile ‘t/rough masculine work’ of Modernism.¹²⁴

Male artists could make progressive statements through the representation of women. An example was the case of Laurence Housman (1865-1959), discussed by Lisa Tickner.¹²⁵ Housman was ‘influenced by his sister’s outspoken feminism, and both became members of the WSPU...[He combined] homosexual, socialist and feminist politics,’ designed banners, wrote polemics and was a member of the ‘Men’s

¹²⁰ Mathews (1999); Cherry, (2000), pp.2-3. This is the sort of construct Pollock explodes in (1999). Essentialism is also discussed in Robinson (2001), p.162 and pp.531-2

¹²¹ Bullen notes this in his introduction: ‘to act is to be manly and masculine; to create art, especially poetry is to be feminine,’ Bullen (1997), p.8, with regard to Catherine Maxwell, ‘Engendering Vision in the Victorian Male Poet’, pp.73-103

¹²² Bullen, (1997), p.8

¹²³ Livesey, (2007), p.13; Hirsh (2004), p.246

¹²⁴ Natalya Lusty, Julian Murphet (eds.), *Modernism and Masculinity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014)

¹²⁵ Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign, 1907-14*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp.245-6

league for Women's Suffrage.' Others who signed 'A Declaration of Representative Men in Favour of Women's Suffrage', (prepared by the Men's League), included Bernard Shaw, Granville Barker, Thomas Hardy, Arthur Pinero, Meredith, J. M. Barrie, E. M. Forster, John Galsworthy and H. G. Wells.¹²⁶ Ben Elmy was the husband of Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy, a life-long campaigner for women's rights. Ben Elmy wrote on sex education under the pseudonym Ellis Ethelmer.¹²⁷ David Doughan has also noted that Frances Swiney, in 1913 and 1914, wrote a series of major articles on sexuality for *The Awakener*, the journal of the Men's League for Women's Rights, a body campaigning against the traffic in women and for women's suffrage.¹²⁸ While few men took public positions on the women's movement, the variety of stances adopted by both men and women, suggest possibilities of support within a wide spectrum of attitudes. Cayley Robinson's theosophical allegiances brought him close to the feminist movement and Gotch supported his wife's activities in relation to suffrage.¹²⁹

Artworks examined in the thesis reflect more fluid constructs of sexuality, evincing masculine vulnerability and leading Mathews to state that: 'the debate on women and gender can be understood as a debate over masculine identity.'¹³⁰ Artworks by men examined in this thesis may, in the words of Griselda Pollock, allow the 'viewer [to be] positioned against the patriarchy' through the self-conscious employment of a variety of visual methods.¹³¹ The cutting and placing and assembled effect of repeated imagery of women in Bell creates distance and incoherence within the dominant ideological system within which it was produced. The use of fantasy

¹²⁶ Tickner, (1988), p.183

¹²⁷ Edwin Landseer is also cited as supporting female emancipation in Cherry, (2000), p.2. Some of Ben Elmy's works were published under the auspices of the Women's Franchise League, formed in 1889, with Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy as Secretary. See Sandra Stanley Holton, 'Elmy, Elizabeth Clarke Wolstenholme (1833–1918)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2007: <http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/view/article/38638>, accessed 17th August, 2016

¹²⁸ David Doughan, 'Swiney, (Rosa) Frances Emily (1847–1922)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, <http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/view/article/41247>, accessed 17th August, 2016

¹²⁹ On men's role in supporting the suffrage campaign see *The Men's Share?: Masculinities, Male Support and Women's Suffrage in Britain, 1890-1920*, Angela V. John and Claire Eustance, (London : Routledge, 1997). On men's relationship with feminist activism see Alice Jardine and Paul Smith (eds.), *Men in Feminism*, (New York: Methuen, 1987)

¹³⁰ Mathews, (1999), p.4

¹³¹ Pollock, (1988), p.152

locations, somehow outside of the normal structures of time and place, hieratic iconography and mysticism by Gotch and Cayley Robinson are techniques which may challenge and subvert patriarchy's naturalised and dominant 'truths'.¹³² I have considered 'escapist' genres like the feminist utopia in relation to Bell's artworks in Chapter Two. This has illuminated shared strategies and subversive vision alongside shared contradictions and constraints of conservatism. For feminists, the mediation and negotiation of older visual 'types' of womanhood co-existed with radical thinking.¹³³

In 'The Flight from Womanhood,' (1926), Karen Horney described male-dominated culture as a form of ideological oppression. In a world where representation is controlled by men as the cultural authority, Horney described, woman is constructed as weaker and inferior, a 'truth' then confirmed through representational systems:

In this ideology the differentness of the weaker one will be interpreted as inferiority...It is the function of such ideology to deny or conceal the existence of a struggle.¹³⁴

Feminists within the period 1880-1930 critiqued cultural systems of representation, perceiving how the visual image helps to naturalise and enforce dominant ideology. Feminists anchored their analysis of cultural structures and production, with politics and economics, building an understanding of the ideological work of patriarchy.¹³⁵

Simone de Beauvoir wrote in *The Second Sex*, (1949):

Representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men. They show it from their own point of view, which they confuse with absolute truth.¹³⁶

Hilary Robinson in *Feminist-Art-Theory*, (2015), demonstrates de Beauvoir's comment with an analysis of John Berger's, *Ways of Seeing*, (1972) and Lynda Nead's,

¹³² Ann Heilmann (2004) has described strategies used by new woman writers; on the subject of spirituality and subversion see Elizabeth Janeway, *Powers of the Weak*, (New York: Knopf, 1980), p.320; Robinson, (2001), p.468, p.478 and Cherry, 'Tactics and Allegories' in (2000), pp.142-219

¹³³ Artists constrained by inherent conservatism: Hirsh (2004), p. xvii

¹³⁴ Karen Horney, *Feminine Psychology*, (New York, Norton, c.1967), p.116 in Sheila Rowbothom, *Woman's Consciousness, Man's World*, (London: Verso, 2015, orig. Pelican Books, 1973), pp.38-9. Horney was a psychoanalyst, now credited with founding feminist psychology.

¹³⁵ Robinson, (2001), p.9; Kate Millet wrote that she was attempting an pioneering attempt to theorise patriarchy in Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics*, (New York: Avon Books, 4th Edition, 1971, orig. c.1969), introduction; Patricia Stubbs, *Women and Fiction: Feminism and the Novel 1880-1920*, (Bristol: Methuen, 1979), p.ix

¹³⁶ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972; orig. France, 1949), p.175

The Female Nude, (1992). These works deconstructed the representational assumptions surrounding the female nude.¹³⁷ In a similar way, I use the term representation, to mean:

In an expansive way...the realm of symbolic and cultural practise that produces images, ideas and fantasies of gender, and therefore as a key battleground for feminism...[Representation] is understood to have the capacity to construct, reflect and resist existing meanings of gender and sexuality.¹³⁸

Representation is explored in this thesis as part of the production of images and the ways they may be ‘implicated in the broader maintenance and disruption of patriarchy.’¹³⁹ Using the words of Laura Mulvey, the paintings within this thesis were created within a visual system where woman is ‘tied to her place as bearer and not maker of meanings.’¹⁴⁰ However, my case studies reveal the many nuances and contradictions in the representational systems of the period and the possibilities for these works by male artists, to articulate feminist possibilities and collude with feminist interests.

Working as a feminist scholar, the thesis considers the possibilities of art for female viewing pleasure and related to feminist desires.¹⁴¹ I have been informed by scholars such as Cherry, Mathews and Pollock and have been aware of my own ‘feminist desire’ to re-read these artworks and emphasise their positioning with the feminine and against patriarchy. In the mid-nineteenth century, Alma-Tadema produced images described contemporaneously as ‘lovely girls.’¹⁴² Such images enact ‘pleasures and problems’ for women viewing them today, an area fraught with questioning for feminist art historians.¹⁴³ Lisa Tickner in 1985 delineated problems of

¹³⁷ Hilary Robinson highlights in *Feminist-Art-Theory*, (2015), how ‘images produce representations’ which may function in various ways, but that: ‘The relation between an image and a representation is often implicit in discussion of art, and the two words are often used interchangeably.’ Despite this interchangeability, representations cannot be simply factually described, they hold inherent cultural and political meanings: Hilary Robinson, *Feminism-Art-Theory: An Anthology 1968-2014*, (Oxford and Malden, Massachusetts: Wiley Blackwell, 2nd edn, 2015, orig. 2001), pp.288-9, pp.288-322

¹³⁸ Mary Evans et al, (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Feminist Theory*, (Los Angeles: Sage, 2014), p.14
¹³⁹ Evans et al (eds.), (2014), p.144

¹⁴⁰ Laura Mulvey, ‘Visual Pleasure and the Narrative Cinema,’ *Screen*, 1975, 16 (3), pp.6-18, (p.7), in Pollock, (1988), p.147

¹⁴¹ ‘feminist desire’ defined by Pollock in (1999), p.xvi and the concept is also discussed in Cherry, (2000), p.2

¹⁴² Cherry, (2000), p.182

¹⁴³ Evans et al (eds.), (2014), p.146

female pleasure in male representations, citing ‘discomfort and collusion’ in the process of identification with male artists.¹⁴⁴ Women may be defined and obscured by the ‘male gaze’, as Lynda Nead described in *Myths of Sexuality* (1988) with regard to artworks by George Elgar Hicks. But such conservative, and in some ways limiting representations may also speak of pleasure and pride.¹⁴⁵ Equally, Mulvey in her classic essay of 1975, considered the role of female viewing pleasure in images of women in classic Hollywood movies, challenging artists to consider ‘how they were creating representations of women, and to attempt to resist the cycle of producing and confirming male (heterosexual) desire.’¹⁴⁶ Current scholarship on women and representation continues the theme of pleasure and challenge, asserting that ‘the feminine’ may be understood as an ‘arena of pleasurable consumption as well as oppression’.¹⁴⁷ As well as a way to maintain ideological hegemony, art emerges from the case studies in this thesis as a fluid and potent channel for subversion, unexpected and unpredictable pleasures. Contradiction and visual complexity which incite questioning, are features which anchor these works to feminist practise.

Types

Representations by Gotch, Bell and Cayley Robinson deal with, challenge and negotiate a number of reductive female ‘types’ found within artistic conventions of the period. The focus on these types and their reworking reflect the gender crisis, the confusion and blurring of gender roles, characteristics and related assumptions that had been under way since the late nineteenth century.¹⁴⁸ The chapters discuss ‘types’ including Pre-Raphaelite, Symbolist, devotional, Gothic, domestic, the self-abnegating ‘angel’, the evanescent waif of Symbolism, the *femme fatale*, Amazons and pagan, mythological figures. Bell, Gotch and Cayley Robinson however, used

¹⁴⁴ Lisa Tickner, ‘Sexuality and/in Representation: Five British Artists,’ (1985), from Kate Linker, (ed), *Difference*, (London: ICA, 1985), pp.19-30, in Robinson, (2001), p.459-474, (p.468)

¹⁴⁵ Lynda Nead’s analysis of George Elgar Hick’s popular series of paintings, *Woman’s Mission: Companion of Manhood*, 1863 may be found in *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988) and is discussed in Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klonk, *Art History: A Critical Introduction to its Methods*, (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2006), pp.160-1

¹⁴⁶ Mulvey, (1975) and in revisions to this essay took into account the role of female desire in these exchanges, in Robinson, (2015), p.289

¹⁴⁷ Evans et al, (eds.), (2014), p.146

¹⁴⁸ Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle*, (London: Virago, 1992)

visual complexity, contradiction, ambiguity and constructs of spirituality to suggest feminist possibilities for women and mediate these types.

In artworks by Bell, Gotch and Cayley Robinson, woman, constructed from a male perspective, is endowed with romance, reverence and sentimentalism. This is in contrast to the forging of images through the distrust or hatred of women prevalent within Symbolism, from the Rose+Croix, to Klimt and artists of the Vienna Secession. The Pre-Raphaelite or deferential mode of 'good' woman, where spirituality was presented in order to idealise womanhood as a passive innocent, has been problematic for a number of feminists, such as Deborah Cherry and Griselda Pollock. Lisa Tickner, in her important review of Suffragette visual culture, *The Spectacle of Women*, (1988), noted the regrettable use of a Pre-Raphaelite aesthetic in Suffragette media.¹⁴⁹ However, whereas Hirsh (2004) focussed on the fear of women evidenced in works by male Symbolist artists and the profusion of *femme fatales* in the period, I emphasise more complicated and positive constructs of women made by the three artists and their viewers.¹⁵⁰ There were slippages between and across gendered types and designated qualities; characteristics which had been divided and assigned to each gender within the rubric of 'separate spheres' were now a conflicted area of confusion, of 'sexual anarchy'. There were 'effeminate men' and dangerous women,' but more importantly, as evidenced in my research, a fluidity and spectrum of positions and combined forms in between.

Contemporary feminists also re-considered female 'types' and modes of female representation within their theorisation of 'new womanhood.' Women, such as Millicent Fawcett and Ellen Key, at times resisted conventional feminine 'types' and also deployed them to various ends. The contradictions of visual forms of the feminist and the New Woman have been considered in scholarship by Richardson and Willis (2001) and Cherry (2000).¹⁵¹ Sarah Turner as well as Lisa Tickner, have noted how

¹⁴⁹ Tickner wrote: 'Representations of the ethereal feminine for instance, borrowed from Pre-Raphaelite painting and art nouveau illustration, were adapted with difficulty to the needs of a militant campaign,' (1988), p.x; Pollock (1988), cited her review (with Deborah Cherry) of the 1984 Tate Pre-Raphaelite exhibition, determining this as propagating patriarchy in (1988), pp.16-17. Rowbothom, (1973), p.x described how sentimentality regarding the oppressed can infantilise women and thus counter a revolutionary feminist movement.

¹⁵⁰ Hirsh, (2004), p. xv

¹⁵¹ Richardson and Willis (2001), intro pp.1-38 on the several versions of the 'New Woman', with a number of images reproduced

older constructs were re-deployed by women to express more radical feminism.¹⁵² Women observed photographs, images and caricatures which became more prolific in the national press and which could be adopted, eschewed, renegotiated or moderated. A variety of types of emancipated women also proliferated: the Suffragette, the Freewoman, the college girl, the spinster for example. Some were employed by the feminist movement as avatars of feminist progress and others to show the inequity of social life in Britain, such as the spinster.¹⁵³

The artists' reformulation of female 'types', mediated older forms of womanhood and appeared to echo Fawcett's beliefs that emancipation for women would come through reform (for example of marriage) rather than radical, violent changes to sexual relations.¹⁵⁴ Cherry noted the importance of historical context in understanding the use of the Pre-Raphaelite type, and its complex, insightful adoption by women in various contexts.¹⁵⁵ In this period of re-assessment, feminists explored both traditional and modern types and moderated them to look to the future. In order to analyse, deconstruct and critique these types, my work has drawn upon the large body of scholarship on the representation of women in art in the nineteenth century, including Lynda Nead's seminal *Myths of Sexuality*, (1988)¹⁵⁶ Such works have re-considered well-known paintings with regard to the complex and contradictory nature of their representations of women, for example Leighton's much reproduced *Flaming June*, in Humble and Reynolds, *Victorian Heroines*, (c.1993) or Alma-Tadema's works in Cherry, (2000).¹⁵⁷ A theme of this work has been the compromises women have made in order to advance their own emancipation and retain 'femininity', emerging in Lucy Bland's commentary 'Women Defined' in *Banishing the Beast*, (1995), Lisa Tickner's chapter on 'Representations' in *Spectacle*, (1988) the chapter entitled 'Feminist Perspectives and Responses' in by Carol Dyhouse, *Girls Growing up in late Victorian and Edwardian England*, (2013) and the introduction to the 2008 edition of Gertrude Colmore's *Suffragette Sally*. Contemporary feminist constructs of

¹⁵² Turner, (2009), pp.111-3; Tickner, (1988), p.x

¹⁵³ Tickner, (1988), Part Four: 'Representation' (pp.150-226) including section 'Why Types?' pp.167-226; Miler (1994), p.86

¹⁵⁴ Barbara Caine, *Victorian Feminists*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p.256

¹⁵⁵ Cherry, (2000), p.182

¹⁵⁶ Nead, (1988); Tickner (1988)

¹⁵⁷ Nicola Humble and Kimberley Reynolds, *Victorian Heroines: Representations of Femininity in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Art*, (New York; London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, c.1993)

spirituality are considered in relation to all artworks in the thesis, since spiritual languages were used within the work of mediating, deconstructing or unmaking of types. The unusual combinations of forms and visual languages in these paintings coincided with such feminist reassessments and with the piecemeal and fractured experiences of change within women's everyday lives.

Chapter Outline

Chapter One concerns Thomas Cooper Gotch, who created deified visions of woman as innocent and mother combined as a female Messiah. Gotch expressed anxieties regarding decline and beleaguered masculinity, whilst finding hope in womanhood and allied spiritual languages. Gotch's images suggested an alternative spiritual and feminist awakening for girls, alongside the well-worn narrative of sexual awakening. Visual languages deployed in Gotch's paintings corresponded with feminist reassessments of youth and womanhood and with embryonic considerations of the possibilities of female sexuality. For this chapter I examined archive material in Gotch's home town of Kettering as well as extensive material in the Tate Archive, including lectures and material relating to the RBCSA. Feminist texts contextualised the research, including works on childhood, adolescence, sexual awakening and works of esoteric Christianity, by Annie Besant and Dr Anna Bonus Kingsford, which imagined a female Messiah. Gotch's aesthetics reveal a lack of ease with the gender norms of the society he lived in.

Chapter Two explores Robert Anning Bell's representations of women, in which women's bodies are liberated, connected with a physical, strident form of spirituality. The artist engaged with women's physical culture, speaking of the confidence of new feminist imaginations, reassessments and reconsidered forms of female spirituality. Bell's use of settings which remain somehow outside of time are considered alongside the writings of contemporary feminists who also engaged with imagined pasts and possible futures, matriarchy and Amazonian myth. Texts examined included Johann Bachofen's seminal work *The Mother Right*, (1861) and Elizabeth Burgoyne Corbett's work of feminist utopian fantasy, *New Amazonia*, (1889). Bell's works subverted conventional female 'types', presenting the mode of woman instead as modern, a challenge to conservatism and expressing the hope of the 'feminist voice.' The two pictures examined, *The Arrow* (1909) and *The Echo*, (1915) provide

different historical contexts but in both paintings, woman maintains her spiritual promise for humanity. As well as contemporary reviews, I was able to use Bell's many writings and material pertaining to his post in the GSA, alongside contemporary feminist works, notably by Frances Swiney and Ellen Key.

Chapter Three examines works by Frederick Cayley Robinson. These artworks, informed by theosophy and mysticism, expressed pervasive doubts regarding material life, deconstructed the domestic genre and domestic types of womanhood. Similarly to Bell, Cayley Robinson highlighted the incarceration of woman in the private sphere. However instead of seeking open fields and windy prospects to express emancipatory possibility, like Bell's paintings, Cayley Robinson looks to transcendental, spiritual planes and to magical, spiritually infused experiences of art guided by women, to find humanity's salvation. The spiritual languages in these artworks, gendered female, evidence the wide-reaching belief in the potential positive impact of women's movement into new fields of politics and the public sphere. My research on Cayley Robinson involved the reading of a variety of contemporary materials relating to theosophy including *Orpheus*, the journal of the London-based ATC, 1907-1914, material relating to the Orpheus Lodge of the Edinburgh Theosophical Society, King Street, Edinburgh, archival documents at the GSA and the journal *Theosophy in Scotland*, 1910-1923. Cayley Robinson had strong connections with European Symbolism, the Nabis and Maeterlinck, which I explore through contemporary readings. Cayley Robinson's works shared affinities with feminist critiques of the domestic, by Frances Power Cobbe and Charlotte Perkins Gilman and articulated possibilities for spiritual transcendence and liberation, expressed by a number of feminists including Gertrude Colmore and Charlotte Despard.

Chapter One: Thomas Cooper Gotch

Introduction

A beautiful, golden-haired girl sits on an historic throne. Layers of decoration surround and enclose her in a constricted compositional space, while heavy brocades engulf her small body. The naturalistic, delicate rendering of her face shines through the turgid weight of pattern, more brightly even than the solid gold aureole above her head. Her hands firmly grip the arms of her throne while she gazes out at the viewer with regal authority. This painting, *The Child Enthroned*, (1894), (Fig.1.1) by Thomas Cooper Gotch, is one of many inter-connected works featuring children, adolescents and mothers, painted by the artist from the 1890s to his death in 1934. I explore *The Child Enthroned* and *The Dawn of Womanhood*, (1900) (Fig. 1.2), in Parts One and Two of this chapter. Gotch gained popularity and acclaim through such works which honoured and sanctified a female cycle of life and the spiritual powers of woman. However, in limited secondary material, these paintings have been interpreted in a simplistic manner, as patriotic, sentimental or maudlin, rather than complex. My analysis reveals how these paintings are anchored in the fraught cultural context of the late nineteenth century and employed the languages of contemporary feminism as a counter to cultural malaise.

The Child Enthroned was conceived and painted in a period which saw feminist outrage following the ‘Maiden Tribute’, women’s organisation into the social purity movement alongside the advent of the ‘New Woman’ and a flourishing of writings which celebrated woman’s spiritual attributes and potential for emancipation. This period was widely believed to be the beginning of a new era of change for women.¹ Frances Swiney summed up the multifarious aspects of the woman’s movement in her important work entitled *The Awakening of Women*, (1899), describing a:

¹Matthew Beaumont describes widespread expectancy of an imminent new order in ‘The New Woman in Nowhere: Feminism and Utopianism at the *Fin de Siecle*’, in Richardson and Willis, (2001), pp.212-223, (p.213). See also Sheila Rowbotham, *Dreamers of a New Day: Women who Invented the Twentieth Century*, (London; New York, Verso, 2010). Frances Swiney wrote that the ‘woman’s era is dawning’ in (1899), p.296

simultaneous awakening of womanhood in all the civilised centres of the world – wherever the heart of woman is beating for freedom against *man-made, not* God-made, *not* Nature’s barriers.²

Key feminist themes, of inherent female morality, spirituality as well as the possibility of awakening such virtues and marshalling them to new personal, social or political purposes, are prominent in Gotch’s paintings. Feminists continued to deploy the language of female purity and the innocent child within feminist texts and campaigns from the 1890s and in Suffragette imagery beyond 1900. The pure innocent girl of *The Child Enthroned* is a feminist virginal icon who may slay ‘the beast’ of male lust.³ *The Dawn of Womanhood* may suggest the ‘awakening’ of young women in feminist terms, to new forms of knowledge and possibility evident from the 1890s.

Death the Bride, (1894), (Fig. 1.3), explored in Part Three of the chapter, saw Gotch depart from painting the innocent, instead he developed a positive representation of mature, sexual and spiritual woman. This vision contrasted with main thrust of artistic responses to the ‘New Woman,’ which crystallised in the negative conventions of the *femme fatale*. Instead Gotch presented a potentially dangerous, sexual woman in the guise of the female Messiah of feminist esoteric Christianity, the Redeemer of humanity. The overarching frame of feminism within this chapter, shapes my corrective historic contextualisation of Gotch and displays the faith he constantly placed in womanhood. While expressing *fin de siècle* anxiety concerning masculinity and cultural decline, Gotch found hope for renewal in womanhood and feminism. His works explored new feminist possibilities for culture in the face of decline and Decadence and shared feminist languages of spiritual acuity, revelation, righteousness and hope.

Part One: *The Child Enthroned*, 1894

For *The Child Enthroned*, Gotch used his only child, Phyllis, as the model. Gotch’s biographer Pamela Lomax has described how the painting was considered by viewers and art critics as seminal, Gotch’s masterwork.⁴ This owed largely to the power of his

² Swiney, (1899), p.294

³ Lucy Re-Bartlett, *The Coming Order*, (London: Longmans, Green & Co.), 1911, pp. ix-xii, in Bland (1995), p.xiii. Another sanctified icon was the Suffragette patron saint, Joan of Arc.

⁴ Pamela Lomax, *The Golden Dream: A Biography of Thomas Cooper Gotch*, (Kettering; Penzance: Sansom & Company Ltd, in association with the Alfred Easy Art Gallery, Kettering Borough Council and Penlee House Gallery and Museum, 2004), p.1

striking Symbolist style, transcending an identifiable historic subject or temporal location. The image was hieratic, formal and iconic, aiming at a mystifying effect and, in the words of art critic Alfred Lys Baldry, 1898, the ‘worship of the child life’.⁵ The painting caused strong reactions at the Royal Academy, due to its intensity and peculiarity, demonstrating the artist’s new style of ‘imaginative Symbolism’ and new guise of ‘Realist as Mystic,’ in the words of Baldry.⁶

Gotch lived in Newlyn from 1887, first gaining notice for works in the style of the artists’ colony there. Newlynians were artists who were ‘distinguished as realists, and shared with the Glasgow men [the Glasgow Boys], who were then beginning to attract attention, the distinction of representing the most modern and progressive element in British painting.’⁷ However the artist spent the winter of 1891-12 in Florence and following that visit, Gotch worked in a new, Symbolist style.⁸ Despite having been part of the artistic vanguard in Newlyn, Gotch had not found in realism the best expressive material for his spiritual message. Gotch’s trip to Florence in 1891 changed his ‘soul and his skies,’ in the words of an article written by Marion Hepworth-Dixon, and inspired him to change his relationship with form, colour and meaning, producing strange, recurring compositions of enthroned women and children with conscious ‘mystical’ import.⁹ Lewis Hind initiated a mythical narrative of a spiritual quest in 1896, wherein Gotch, in need of a new mode of artistic expression:

[did] the pleasant thing and the wise thing. He went straight to Italy – to Florence, where he surrendered himself to the calm and radiant pictures of Botticelli and those frescoes of Benozzo Gozzollos in the Palazzo Riccardi at Florence.¹⁰

Contemporary viewers recognised an aspect forgotten by secondary sources, that upon more than a superficial glance, this picture is not a standard Victorian apotheosis of the child, but differs from the many contemporary genre pictures of ‘simple,

⁵ Alfred Lys Baldry, ‘The Work of T. C. Gotch,’ *The Studio*, 8/60 (March, 1899), pp.73-82, (p.73)

⁶ ‘a sensation amongst viewers’, Lomax, (2004), p.1; Baldry (1899) describes Gotch’s ‘imaginative symbolism’ and ‘imaginative expression’, p.73-82

⁷ Charles H. Caffin, ‘A Painter of Childhood and Girlhood,’ *Harper’s Monthly Magazine*, 120/720, 115 (American Edition), (1910), pp.922-932, (p.923)

⁸ *Childhood: A Loan Exhibition of Works of Art*, (exhibition catalogue, Sothebys, London, 2nd January, 1988-27th January, 1988), *The Child Enthroned* is cat.273, p.138

⁹ Marion Hepworth-Dixon, ‘A Painter of Womanhood’, *The Lady’s Realm, Best of 1904-1905*, (1905), pp.58-65, p.58

¹⁰ Lewis Hind, ‘T. C. Gotch and his pictures’, *Windsor Magazine*, 4th July, (1896), pp.272-9, (p.279)

inconsequential, homely episode[s]’ as well as from portraits by J. M. Whistler and John Singer Sargent, who, while they painted children with penetrating psychological depth, still employed compositions featuring children in the context of ‘real’ lives, contemporary time and physical bodies.¹¹ Instead, Gotch presented a serious, even severe, formalised enthronement. Despite the connection with Symbolism and ambiguous elements, the depiction of the pure child and Englishness of the image appeared to conform to conservative discourses, resulting in its reductive interpretation as a work of patriotic revivalism.

Imperialism, Pre-Raphaelism and English Art

The perception of *The Child Enthroned* as a distinctively ‘English’ work of Pre-Raphaelite revival, has subsequently obscured both its complexity and its contemporary affinity with feminist discourse. Due to Gotch’s connections with Empire, through the Royal British Society of Colonial Artists (RBSCA), *The Child Enthroned* was linked with ‘what was foremost and best in British art of the period.’¹² A note about an RBSCA exhibition in Sydney detailed that Millais, Whistler, Leighton and Watts had previously exhibited with the group, being ‘thoroughly representative’ of the best of the nation’s art.¹³ Gotch’s categorisation as a new wave Pre-Raphaelite, his use of the image of the child as innocent and bright, Gothic colours, appeared to confirm imperial allegiances.¹⁴ In Gotch’s obituary in *The Daily Telegraph*, the artist was described as the ‘great imperialist’ whose ‘marvellous schemes of colour, were much admired.’¹⁵ *The Athenaeum* described the painting as ‘remarkable and noble...bright, pure, beautifully drawn.’¹⁶ An article in the *Birmingham Daily Post*, 1894, enthused that this painting displayed ‘not the slightest trace of decadence.’¹⁷

¹¹ Leslie Parris, (ed.), *Pre-Raphaelite Papers*, (London: The Tate Gallery, 1984), p.126

¹² Tate Archive, TGA 9019/2/5/4: Royal British Colonial Society of Artists

¹³ *Ibid*

¹⁴ Artists and architects within the Gothic revival and who decorated the Palace of Westminster were connected with this patriotic sentiment. See Rosemary Hill, *God’s Architect: Pugin and the Building of Romantic Britain* (London: Penguin, 2008) and Malcolm Hay and J. Riding, *Art in Parliament* (London: Jarrold Publishing, 1997) regarding mural paintings in the Palace of Westminster by a number of artists including Henry Payne, Frank Cadogan Cowper, George Frederic Watts, John Liston Byam Shaw. Themes included British history, Shakespeare and legends of King Arthur. See also <http://www.parliament.uk/worksofart/collection-highlights/british-history> accessed 30th July, 2016

¹⁵ ‘great Imperialist’ from ‘Thomas Cooper Gotch: Obituary’, *The Daily Telegraph*, (1934); ‘marvellous’ from Anon, ‘Note in Appreciation,’ Tate Archive, TGA 9019/2/6/36 - Writings and Papers

¹⁶ ‘The Royal Academy’, *The Times*, (16th May, 1894), p. 7

¹⁷ ‘The Royal Academy’, *Birmingham Daily Post*, (Saturday, 2nd June, 1894)

Within this type of celebratory, imperialistic reading of Gotch's work, *The Child Enthroned*, with its emblazoned colours and iconic format, could broadcast a positive message of Empire, functioning as a proclamation or religious herald. Millais' extremely popular painting *Cherry Ripe*, (1879) or *Bubbles*, (1885-6), was being disseminated across the Empire at the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁸ Gotch's child could equally be interpreted, as it was described in a Sothebys exhibition in 1988, as an 'object of adoration, the focus of the aspirations of a prosperous, forward-looking society.'¹⁹ The familiar Victorian artistic convention of the innocent child functioned within dominant discourses of racial stock, health, fitness and degeneration, as a wholesome, clean figure, in contrast to Decadent European art.²⁰ Gotch's painting of the pure child seemed to affirm his desire to export patriotic ideas of Englishness through a known artistic convention.

Gotch's association with the Pre-Raphaelite tradition in art was also interpreted by viewers as signalling patriotic imperialism. In his lecture, 'Phases in Art', (1898), the artist espoused a very similar artistic creed of beauty, sincerity and conscientiousness, rating artworks of the 'primitive' early Renaissance far higher than those after the 'fatal influence of the school of Raphael'.²¹ Gotch's use of pure colour and inspiration from 'primitive art' linked him directly with the Pre-Raphaelites, affirmed by Percy Bate in *The English Pre-Raphaelite Painters*, (1899), wherein Gotch was placed within the noble category of 'Pre-Raphaelism Today.'²² Holman Hunt's lecture in 1895, 'Fears for English art', had linked Pre-Raphaelism with 'healthy' and wholesome Englishness, vitality, clean-mindedness, the antithesis of immoral Decadence.²³ Scholars Michaela Giebelhausen and Tim Barringer have

¹⁸ Jason Rosenfeld and Alison Smith, *Millais*, (London: Tate, 2007)

¹⁹ Sothebys, (1988)

²⁰ Sara Holdsworth and Joan Crossley, *Innocence and Experience: Images of Children in British Art from 1600 to the Present*, (Manchester: Manchester City Art Gallery, 1992)

²¹ Thomas Cooper Gotch, Transcripts of Lectures: 'Phases of Art: Past' and 'Phases of Art: Present' given at the Royal Institution of Great Britain, Albemarle Street, London, 19th and 26th April (1898), Tate Archive, TGA 9019/2/6/2-12, TGA 9019/2/6 - Writings and papers. See particularly pp.19-23

²² Bate, (1899), especially pp.112-117

²³ Holman Hunt's lecture, 'Hopes and Fears for Art', 1895 is cited in Rebecca Virag, 'Images of Inheritance: the influence of eugenic ideas and socio-biological theory in late- nineteenth century and early-twentieth century British art, (c.1890-1918)', Ph.D Thesis, (London: The Courtauld Institute, 2003). See also *The Age of Rossetti, Burne-Jones and Watts: Symbolism in Britain, 1860 –1910*, (exhibition catalogue, London, Munich, and Amsterdam, 16th October, 1997 – 30th August, 1998), eds Andrew Wilton and Robert Upstone, (London, Tate Gallery Publishing, 1997), p.41

explored how the Pre-Raphaelites, an avant-garde and rebellious group at their inception in the 1850s, had become centralised and canonised by the 1890s.²⁴ Baldry, writing in 1898, was reassured by the association with the style and mythology surrounding the Pre-Raphaelites, finding *The Child Enthroned* to be ‘admirable decoration full of healthy invention and hitting happily the safe middle course between phantasy and literal reality.’²⁵ A number of peers revealed the influence of the Pre-Raphaelites including the artist’s friend John Liston Byam Shaw, Frank Dicksee and Frank Cadogan Cowper.²⁶ Alongside developments such as the revival in pageantry, the Gothic revival in architecture and the decoration of the Palace of Westminster, the heraldic nature of the composition could ignite a ‘John Bull’ element of Pre-Raphaelite connection. Gotch’s works could be adopted by the conservative forces of reaction, which privileged political interpretations, while the unreconciled and more ambiguous spiritual aspects were overlooked.

Gotch’s work for the RBSCA appeared to confirm political messages in his paintings, when instead, his work was consistently concerned with art, education and spirituality. The artist had founded the Anglo-Australian Society of Artists in the 1880s while establishing a colony of artists in Australia, this later became the Royal British Colonial Society of Artists, for which he served as President from 1913 to 1928.²⁷ In 1912 Gotch was elected a member of the Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolour and painted landscapes in South Africa, where he had also set up an artist’s colony.²⁸ As well as helping to establish colonies of artists in Australia and South Africa, Gotch worked on RBSCA exhibitions held in a variety of locations including Johannesburg and Durban.²⁹ Gotch was later connected to the Westminster-based Imperial Arts League and was described in relation to the 1915 Imperial

²⁴ Michaela Giebelhausen and Tim Barringer (eds.), *Writing the Pre-Raphaelites: Text, Context, Subtext*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), p.72 explains the canonising of the works of the PRB

²⁵ Baldry, (1899), p.80

²⁶ Christian, (1989), p.122; Gotch exhibited alongside Cowper and Bell in the RBSCA Exhibition in South Africa, 1914: Tate Archive, TGA 9019/2/5/9/45-73 -Royal British Colonial Society of Artists. Tim Barringer, ‘Not a “Modern” as the word is now understood: John Byam Liston Shaw (1872-1919)’, in David Peters Corbett and Lara Perry (eds), *English Art, 1860-1914: Modernities and Identities*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000)

²⁷ Tate Archive, TGA 9019/2/1/1 Diaries and volumes, ‘Biography of TCG’; Anglo-Australian Society of artists met at Gotch’s house in 1887: TGA 9019/2/1/1 Diaries and volumes

²⁸ Caroline Fox, *Painting in Newlyn*, (Newlyn: Orion, 1985), p.132

²⁹ Tate Archive, TGA 9019/2/1/1, Diaries and volumes

Exhibition at Earls Court as ‘one of our greatest artists’.³⁰ Formal documents relating to the RBSCA in the Tate Archive, wartime material and Gotch’s obituary deploy patriotic imperial language. For example, a note about an RBSCA exhibition in Sydney describes the society’s hope for an ‘unbroken continuity of exhibitions’ forging one link more in the ‘great Imperial chain which binds together the Mother Country and Her Children beyond the seas.’³¹

However, in a period where acceptance of Empire was almost universal, determining the more precise nature of Gotch’s imperialism is critical to the close analysis of his works.³² The RBSCA was a popular group, including a range of members including Robert Anning Bell, George Frederic Watts, Arthur Hacker, Frank Brangwyn, Henry Tuke, Herbert Draper, Frank Dicksee, E. R. Hughes, Laura Knight, while deceased honorary members in 1920 included Millais, Leighton, Poynter, Whistler.³³ Thus the group encompassed a range of artistic styles and outlooks. Gotch’s idea of Empire should further be nuanced by his ongoing interest in spirituality. The artist’s desire for spiritual art coincided with new forms of imperialism which featured an optimistic faith in human progress.³⁴ The painting of *The Child Enthroned* corresponded with a ‘reshaping of the public images of imperialism from that of military conquest and economic exploitation to that of a social mission spreading Christianity and civilisation.’³⁵ Gotch’s type of imperialism was shaped by compassion and spirituality. The Alfred East Gallery’s *A Memorial Exhibition of Pictures*, (1932), described Gotch’s promotion of ‘unity and good will [and] Art in its most ennobling aspect’ and ‘his effort to promote the bonds of sympathy and mutual service between those engaged in the arts and crafts of the Empire.’³⁶ An article in *The Times* described his advancing of ‘artistic reciprocity’ in

³⁰ Tape of lecture by Rebecca Virag, ‘Thomas Cooper Gotch: Images of Inheritance’, 1997, Tate Archive, TGA 9019/2/5/9/17

³¹ Tate Archive, TGA 9019/2/5/4 - Royal British Colonial Society of Artists

³² Acceptance of Empire was almost universal with very little writing which was directly anti-imperialist. Brantlinger, (1988), p.227 and p.274

³³ Tate Archive, TGA 9019/2/5/4: Royal British Colonial Society of Artists

³⁴ Scholarship has increasingly explored the spectrum of varying types of imperialistic values, including the languages of feminism and imperial reform. See for example Clare Midgley, *Feminism and Empire: Women Activists in Imperial Britain, 1790-1865*, (London; New York: Routledge, 2007)

³⁵ Midgley, (2007), p.6

³⁶ Kate E. Pierce (Curator), *A Memorial Exhibition of Pictures by Thomas Cooper Gotch*, 23rd March, 1932 – 20th April, 1932, (Kettering: Alfred East Gallery, Urban District Council, 23rd March, 1932)

1932.³⁷ The ‘pursuance of this ideal’, according to the curator in his home town of Kettering, meant that Gotch ‘met with considerable opposition, but in spite of this he went on...and it was the result of his efforts that the first exhibition of Colonial art was held in Burlington House.’³⁸ Articles upon Gotch’s death in *The Kettering Leader*, 1932 described: ‘his success in the task he set himself of bringing about a fuller understanding in Art between the countries forming the Empire.’³⁹ The artist was:

intensely interested in the work of artists overseas...his ideal of a unity of arts and crafts was not confined to the British Empire but embraced all countries and all sections of the community...He laboured hard to have the best examples of home art sent to the Dominions overseas, and this did a signal service to the countries concerned on account of the inspiration to artists of which the works sent out would be the source.⁴⁰

When organising exhibitions for the RBSCA, ‘in a way that has never yet been attempted’ Gotch endeavoured to ‘bring home to the people of the United Kingdom some idea of the real conditions of the life of their kindred and fellow subjects overseas.’ To this end, Gotch exhibited at Burlington House, ‘original Bushmen paintings from South Africa, settlers’ works, art, religious objects, arts and crafts, musical instruments, weapons, clothing and ornament, prints and drawings, models of buildings.’⁴¹ Further exhibitions in Australia and South Africa placed local colonial art alongside the works of British artists to encourage rapport, connection and reciprocity.⁴² Gotch’s democratic impulse inspired him to improve the access of the general public to these exhibitions, hoping that schools would come often so as to ‘not

³⁷Gotch had ‘done much to increase reciprocity in artistic matters between the Dominions and the Mother Country when reciprocity was by no means as well thought of as now. The ties of Empire were not entirely material. In artistic matters the Dominions and the Colonies had a great deal to give us, their artists often had great clarity of vision and sometimes great frankness in presentation, while the mother country could offer the old and sound traditions,’ Our Special Correspondent, ‘Gotch Exhibition At Kettering,’ *The Times*, (24th March, 1932), p.10

³⁸‘The Genius of T. C. Gotch: Sublime Art’, *Kettering Leader and Guardian*, (Friday 25th March, 1932) unknown page no., press cutting consulted at the Alfred East Gallery, Kettering

³⁹ Continues ‘he did signal service to the world of art and the cause of Empire unity,’ from ‘The Gotch Memorial Exhibition,’ *Kettering Leader and Guardian*, (Friday 25th March, 1932)

⁴⁰ ‘The Genius of T. C. Gotch: Sublime Art’, *Kettering Leader and Guardian*, (Friday 25th March, 1932) unknown page no., press cutting consulted at the Alfred East Gallery, Kettering

⁴¹ Notes in the Tate Archive for Gotch’s address as President of the RBCSA in 1916 describe his aim to create ‘better understanding of the achievements, aspirations and the needs of Empire,’ and notes that the Royal Academy hosting this exhibition was ‘proof of the seriousness with which this is viewed.’ (Tate Archive: TGA 9019/2/5/11/55, Royal British Colonial Society of Artists, 1916)

⁴² Tate Archive: TGA 9019/2/5/8 Royal British Colonial Society of Artists

merely take away a superficial recollection of the many beautiful works but might have time to carefully study the methods and techniques employed in producing them.’⁴³ These comments and related letters expressed a pioneering interest in ‘stimulating...interest in artistic culture.’⁴⁴ Gotch expounded similar philanthropic values in his work teaching industrial classes in Newlyn.⁴⁵ Gotch’s idea of imperialism was described as ‘warmed and energised by comradeship and goodwill.’⁴⁶

Gotch’s work for the RBCSA reflects his reading of socialist and transcendentalist thinkers Edward Carpenter and Walt Whitman, as well as contemporary artist George Frederic Watts’ construct of Empire as promoting fraternity and brotherhood.⁴⁷ The *Daily Telegraph* noted in 1932 that he worked ‘unobtrusively’ and quietly, consistently concerned with the spiritual and mystical possibilities of imperialistic bonds between people and nations and the important responsibility of the Empire in disseminating the arts to unite, educate and elevate, rather than commercial exploitation.⁴⁸ A connection had been established, however, with a more strident and political form of imperialism, prompting Kate Pierce, curator of the Alfred East Art Gallery in Gotch’s home town of Kettering, to qualify Gotch’s association with Empire in 1932. When organising the artist’s retrospective exhibition she affirmed: ‘He was not an Imperialist in the political sense of the word.’⁴⁹

While fellow artists such as Byam Shaw were looking for a ‘pictorial equivalent to imperial modernity,’ Gotch’s interests were in tune with the other artists within this thesis, developing spiritual, eternal and resounding forms to express the intangible and

⁴³ Tate Archive, TGA 9019/2/5/12, Royal British Colonial Society of Artists, Press Cuttings: *Natal Mercury*, Durban, (19th May, 1914)

⁴⁴ Tate Archive, Royal British Colonial Society of Artists: TGA 9019/2/5/9/1-44: Letters relating to South African Exhibition, 1912. Tate Archive, Royal British Colonial Society of Artists: TGA 9019/2/5/9/55: Letter from Leo Francois to Gotch, (2nd October, 1914). These letters show regret for the lack of development of the arts, for example in South Africa, where there is such rich landscape as subject matter

⁴⁵ Lomax, (2004), p.7 and p.107

⁴⁶ Pierce, (1932); ‘The Late Mr T. C. Gotch: Imperial Unity in Arts and Crafts,’ *Daily Telegraph*, (1932), unknown page number cited in Pierce (1932); H. T, ‘Tribute to a Newlyn Artist: The Late Mr T. C. Gotch’, *Kettering Telegraph and Leader*, (Wednesday, 6th May, 1931), unknown page number, press cutting in archive material at the Alfred East Gallery, Kettering.

⁴⁷ Mark Bills and Barbara Bryant, *G.F. Watts: Victorian Visionary: Highlights from the Watts Gallery Collection*, (New Haven [Conn.]; London: Yale University Press in Association with Watts Gallery, c2008); Veronica Franklin Gould, *G.F. Watts: The Last Great Victorian*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004)

⁴⁸ ‘The Late Mr T. C. Gotch: Imperial Unity in Arts and Crafts,’ *Daily Telegraph*, 1932, unknown page number, cited in Pierce, (1932)

⁴⁹ Pierce, (1932)

universal and to seek human connection.⁵⁰ Gotch's own words on his connections with the Pre-Raphaelites betray the primacy of spiritual thinking for the artist. In *Black and White*, (1895), Gotch related how, during his visit to Italy:

some of the Pre-Raphaelite men – the real ones – caught hold of me: not so much by their cleverness – they were not clever – but by their attitude towards their art. I began to paint something more than I saw if you understand: to try for beauty, which is beyond mere truthfulness⁵¹

Gotch aimed, similarly to Symbolist efforts for synthetic artworks which could communicate eternal ideas and to create a mystical icon. The artist expressed in his lecture 'Phases in Art', (1898), his desire to disseminate sincere, emotionally resonant artworks, as a method of nurturing and reviving humanity's spiritual life.⁵² Gotch's knowledge and travel within the Empire rather than fomenting political ideology, heightened his interest in forms of spiritual interconnection which could be forged through artworks. Gotch described in 1898:

It is not enough that artists should only address themselves to artists. The real crux of the problem lies in addressing those who know nothing about the technical side of art...Singers, masters of their art, can thus charm the uninitiated and by sheer beauty hold spellbound thousands who know no more about the singer's art than that when they hear it at its best, they love it. So should it be with pictorial art...The completed work is for the world at large, neither to fatigue or puzzle the uninitiated but to reveal the purpose of the artist, simply, clearly, fully, and with such compelling beauty and character that it is an enchantment and delight to him who sees.⁵³

⁵⁰ Barringer, (2000), p.79

⁵¹ T. C. Gotch, 'Realist as Mystic: An Interview with Mr. Thomas Cooper Gotch,' *Black and White*, (21st September, 1895), cited in Lomax, (2004), pp.107-8.

⁵² Gotch (1898), p.24

⁵³ Thomas Cooper Gotch, Handwritten and typescript versions of 'Revolution in Art,' 1918, p.18. Tate Archive, TGA 9019/2/6/37-38 Writings and Papers. Notes in Tate Archive: TGA 9019/2/1/1, Biographical Notes Folder, describe Gotch's singing lessons and practise which began in 1880. Gotch and his wife Caroline sang at St. John's Church Hall on Boxing Day, 1887. There is a note of a 'dramatic club performance', May 1888. Gotch encouraged his daughter's singing career, described in Lomax (2004)

A simple, resonant image such as *The Child Enthroned* could appeal to the largest number of viewers in an edifying spiritual interaction. As Gotch described: ‘it is mind speaking to mind with a pleasure that never fails, and the subject is beauty.’⁵⁴

Feminism and Spirituality

While prominent features of *The Child Enthroned* seemed to project a conservative, imperialistic message, Gotch created a mystical icon which echoed contemporary languages of feminism. Gotch employed the art historical convention of the child as ‘the innocent’, representing virginal purity and unsullied joy in this painting as well as *The Child in the World*, (1900), (Fig. 1.4), *Innocence*, (1902), (Fig. 1.5) and *The Flag*, (1910), (Fig.1.6). *The Child Enthroned* was received with superlative, emotional language citing refinement, nobility, the ‘ideal womanhood.’⁵⁵ The child could offer a viewer heady levels of ‘serene sweetness’ inspired by ‘the pure, innocent, lily-white character of childhood...the white-sailed spirit of childhood unblurred by any mundane or sordid thought, happy in its ignorance of evil and wretchedness, full of love, guileless.’⁵⁶ In 1911, feminist Lucy Re-Bartlett included an allegorical tale within her work, *The Coming Order*:

Once upon a time there was a terrible dragon which held the whole countryside in terror, for it devoured the men, the women and even the little children. And though many knights went against it, none could slay it...Then a child came forward – a girl child.

Through the girl’s fearless direct gaze into the dragon’s face, the creature was vanquished, since its power existed through men’s fears.

And then a great force sprang up among the men and women of that village – they had learnt a life-giving truth – that no brute force, no brute force whatsoever, could stand against the human spirit when it rose.⁵⁷

The ‘beast’ in this familiar allegory, tamed by the ‘girl-child (womanhood)’ was the ‘lower self’ or ‘beast within’ of lust.⁵⁸ Feminists from the 1890s used the figure of the innocent girl to attack the sexual double standard and demand a new sexual morality

⁵⁴ Gotch (1898), p.3; see also pp.2-3 and pp.24-5

⁵⁵ ‘The Royal Academy’, *Birmingham Daily Post*, (Saturday, 2nd June, 1894)

⁵⁶ ‘The Royal Academy’, *Birmingham Daily Post*, (Saturday 2nd June, 1894)

⁵⁷ Re-Bartlett, (1911), pp.ix-xii

⁵⁸ Re-Bartlett, (1911), pp.ix-xii

where men lived in accordance with morality and ethics as women.⁵⁹ The idea of the innocent, saintly, chaste woman featured in the Suffragette campaign with a girl confronting the male beast of lust forming the cover of *The Suffragette* as late as 1913 (Fig.1.7). Gotch later painted *The Vow*, (1916), (Fig. 1.8) which corresponded with Suffragette images of saintliness.⁶⁰

As feminist activists in London highlighted from the 1890s, the complacent enjoyment of images of innocence like *The Child Enthroned* was being tested to breaking point. The legal age of consent for sex was thirteen in the 1880s fuelling concerns about ‘white slavery’ following W. T. Stead’s ‘Maiden Tribute’ expose. In the same year in which *The Child Enthroned* was painted, the Children’s Charter completed a Victorian programme of protecting the young.⁶¹ Feminist activism arose from ‘the social purity movement, the outrage over the Contagious Diseases Acts and the moral imperatives of Evangelical Christianity’ and included the ‘sanctity of the female body’, sexual chastity and abstinence as central concepts.⁶²

Charles H. Caffin described Gotch’s *The Child in the World* in detail in 1910:

The glittering opulence of the dragon is set up against the tenderness of the child, as one of a series of contrasts: inner and outer, real and ideal, gross worldliness and purity.⁶³

In several works, including *The Child Enthroned*, Gotch struck a note of tension through juxtaposing the tender naturalness of a child on the one hand, with a decadent weight of societal structures on the other. In *The Child Enthroned*, imperial pageantry seems complicit in humanity’s decline and decadence, and possibly linked with sexual danger, as another deceitful, masculine form of pomp and glitter, concealing various

⁵⁹ Bland, (1995), p.xiii

⁶⁰ Bland, (1995), p.255; Tickner (1988). *Figure; Portrait; Symbolism*. In *The Vow*, a young woman wears contemporary dress, holding a sword by its blade in the pose of a medieval knight taking an oath before the cross. A note at the Alfred East Gallery reads: ‘it has been suggested (C. Gotch, letter, 9.11.98) that the image may be linked to Gotch’s wife Caroline’s interest in the Suffragette movement, or, possibly, in view of the date (1916), the contribution of women to the War effort.’ Note courtesy Katie Boyce, Gallery Officer, Kettering Museum and Art Gallery.

⁶¹ *Childhood*, (1988), p.138

⁶² Kathryn Gleadle, *British Women in the Nineteenth Century*, (New York: Palgrave, c.2001), p.146. See also Bland, (1992), p.xiv; Maroula Joannou, ‘Chloe Liked Olivia’: The Woman Scientist, Sex and Suffrage,’ in Helen Small and Trudi Tate (eds.), *Literature, Science, Psychoanalysis, 1830-1970: Essays in Honour of Gillian Beer*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp.195-211; Anna Davin, ‘Imperialism and Motherhood’, *History Workshop Journal*, 5 (1978), pp. 9–65; Taylor and Shuttleworth, (1998)

⁶³ Caffin, (1910), p.928

evils. Caffin continued with regard to *The Child in the World*, in words also relevant to *The Child Enthroned*:

[the] fascination of allurements; voluptuous lines and masses and a splendour of iridescent colour...the beast forming a superb contrast to the tender simplicity of the child...the hard glitter of the scales...dangerous beauty...[suggestive of] the sensualist that cynically hides its opportunity, till the prey is hypnotised by the glamour, shall be sucked into the maw.⁶⁴

In this construction, sensuality or vivid intensity of colour could seduce, like the commercial world. R.A.M. Stevenson described paintings such as *The Child Enthroned* as ‘scorchers’ because of their bright colour, whilst other critics implored the artist to lessen the too brilliant hues, which, by comparison with the child, emanate the crass, brazen, unsanctified forces of commerce and lust.⁶⁵ There were connections made in cultural discourse between womanhood and commerce, mass production and urban consumption. Rather than propounding associations with the vampiric elements of capitalism, in Gotch’s construction, woman is the noble vanguard of purity in a predatory, masculine modern world.⁶⁶ An article in *The Graphic* concerning Gotch’s *The Flag*, (1910) described: ‘As a study of a pretty, serious child, the work has much attractiveness but better than this, behind her dainty dignity there lurks the potent suggestion of a spiritual force.’⁶⁷ This imagery positioned the resources of femininity and spirituality against male vices of lust and the unchecked growth of capitalism and cities. Gotch described *The Child in the World* as depicting the child ‘standing alone and unafraid in the innermost, horriddest home of the Dragon, called the World, who is powerless against her innocence.’⁶⁸ The artist, like feminists, used a visual form of female innocence to critique late nineteenth century culture and civilisation.

In *The Child Enthroned*, Gotch boxes the girl in by militant symmetry and architectonic forms; orderly systems of pattern are evocative of the ritualistic and ceremonial yet articulate doubt in their confining authority. In his lecture ‘Phases in

⁶⁴ Caffin, (1910), p.928

⁶⁵ R. A. M Stevenson, (‘R.A.M.S.’), ‘The Royal Academy IV,’ *Pall Mall Gazette*, (Tuesday 16th June, 1896)

⁶⁶ Hirsh, (2004), pp.163-216; such ideas were notably expressed in Karl Marx, *Das Kapital* (1867-1883)

⁶⁷ *The Graphic*, 1910, cited Lomax, pp.137-8, regarding *The Flag* (Fig.1.6)

⁶⁸ Lomax, (2004), pp. 105-106

Art', (1897), Gotch exclaimed, 'But a picture – a mere pattern on a wall!'⁶⁹ His later lecture 'Revolution in Art,' (1919), investigated the theme of the art object and the abstract nature of art in more depth, with reference to various Modernist movements including the Futurists:

certain lines and masses of colour may be so disposed as to provoke emotions of pleasure, terror, serenity...this is no new device. It has been practised constantly, either consciously or unconsciously, by artists [adding] force to what they have to say. It is an essential part of the art, not of representation, but of presentation. The device is akin to the music and rhythm of literature.⁷⁰

Close texture and rich pattern on the child's cloak, the hieratic composition including steps to the throne, rugs and the chequerboard floor are among a series of formal elements which unite to frame the girl. Enclosed in an unnatural, excessively animated, congested and cropped interior, she is a captive of ideology. The deliberate de-naturalisation and emphasis on the rigours of design could be read superficially as a confident allusion to stability. However, instead, the notably garish and excessively unnatural colours create doubt and undercut the confidence of the image; aesthetic ruptures and contradictions serve to challenge hegemonic ideology.

The tensions between the humanity of the child and the inhuman structures around her are further enacted through the contrast between her hands and face and their visual surrounds. The disparity was noted by contemporary viewers: 'the modelling and painting of the hands are among the triumphs of the year', the work, wrote F. G. Stephens in *Athenaeum*, was 'beautifully drawn...especially the face and hands' and the resulting picture, a combination of the 'real and ideal.'⁷¹ The girl is fitted into overly large clothes and placed within a patterned background and confined frame. Gotch's heightened realism is interpreted as steely or hollow in its perfection: 'the lines of the picture, the arrangement of the hands are not pleasing, there is a mathematical exactness of balance that amounts to hardness and formality.'⁷² In his

⁶⁹ Gotch (1898), pp.2-3

⁷⁰ Gotch (1919), p.15

⁷¹John Oldcastle, *Merry England*, 23, (13th May, 1894), pp.77-80 in Tate Archive, 9019/2/10 Press Cuttings; F. G. Stephens, *Athenaeum*, (5th May, 1894), p.587

⁷²'Fine Art Institute,' *Glasgow Herald*, (Friday, 29th March, 1895)

full-size charcoal study for the painting, (Fig.1.9), Gotch's interest in the certitude of pattern, such as the embroidered edge of the girl's robe, is clear.

The refined definition and tenderness of the face, adjacent to a solid gold aureole and enclosed by brighter, medieval, Gothic colours, referred to artists like Piero della Francesca and Gozzoli, whose work Gotch had greatly admired in Florence in 1891 and in particular, Fra Angelico's *The Virgin Mary with the Apostles and Other Saints*, about 1423-4 (Fig. 1.10). In this mode, the isolation of the face divides the child's body and elevated the face to a spiritual plane, akin to a floating, cherub-like angel head. This disparity is exaggerated in the later *Souvenir of The Child Enthroned* held in the Royal Collection, (Fig 1.11), where the child has become doll-like. In Gotch's later portrait of a Judge, *Sir Henry Briggs, A Posthumous Portrait*, (Fig.1.12) the tension between the face and body has become a visible dividing line echoing the 'Mind-Body dilemma' within various occult works.⁷³ The contemporary 'gender crisis' challenged the sacrifice of the personality, the fragmentation of identity in order for women to maintain the ideals of polarised gender roles.⁷⁴ Feminists perceived an increasing gap between idealised, saintly icons of girlhood and womanhood.⁷⁵ Artistic conventions jarred with a variety of changing experiences for girls and women's new, more varied existence in historian Deborah Cherry's words, 'beyond the frame.'⁷⁶

Gotch's ambiguous visual language suggested more complex meanings, especially through associations with the mystical, undermining the simplification of the painting as an icon of imperialism. The painting was seen by the artist and viewers as a self-consciously Symbolist work, as intimated a review in *The Standard*: 'It is a canvas by which Mr Gotch for the time being places himself among the "Symbolists." But what is his meaning?'⁷⁷ Further comments included: 'if Mr Gotch, who paints so well, would only give us paintable subjects!' and 'we cannot understand Mr Gotch's

⁷³ Oppenheim, (1985), p.205

⁷⁴ Carol Dyhouse, *Girls Growing up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, (London; New York: Routledge, 2013), pp.115-175; Bland (1992); Tickner (1988) discusses 'types', the compromises of work or family, the denial of sexual desire to be a good, chaste wife, especially pp.167-226

⁷⁵ Dyhouse, (2013), especially chapters four and five on adolescence and feminist responses and Susan Sidlauskas, *Body, Place and Self in Nineteenth-Century Painting*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), discusses tensions between the body and the self, p.xii

⁷⁶ Cherry (2000); Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture*, (New York; Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1986), p.325

⁷⁷ '2. The Royal Academy,' *The Standard*, (Saturday, 19th May, 1894), p. 4, in Tate Archive - 9019/2/10/1: Press Cuttings

work.⁷⁸ The picture was deemed in a review in *The Times*, to be the ‘most original in the room’ at the Royal Academy.⁷⁹ The artist also described *The Child Enthroned* as ‘the most original’ work he had completed.⁸⁰ According to a review in *Athenaeum*, the pictures presented a ‘beautiful and, to many we fear, enigmatical figure.’⁸¹ Despite popularity, acclaim in many positive reviews, being hung ‘on the line’ at the Royal Academy and the artist gaining a medal at the Paris Salon, the painting ultimately defied explanation. As Tim Barringer writes regarding the art of Byam Shaw:

the gender roles of the upper-middle-class family, the social and political structures of British society and the very fabric of the British Empire, all presented to the world as indestructible ideals were in fact all strained to breaking point during Shaw’s lifetime, and these fractures can be perceived even in his most celebratory images.⁸²

Prevalent concerns about race decline and ‘fitness’, unrest in the Transvaal from the 1880s and the Boer Wars from 1899, displayed fractures in the prevailing ideology of an Empire in crisis. Through escalating formality and detachment, Gotch created a visual form for the ideologies of the modern empire, which, in common with Byam Shaw, ‘tacitly demonstrate[ed] the hollowness and fragility of these same phenomena.’⁸³ Gotch’s ambivalence to Empire was coupled with visual expressions of anxiety over masculine vulnerability and cultural decline.

Decline and Artistic Revival

Gotch filled these paintings with historical design features such as wood panelling, decorative friezes and the religious art of the altarpiece, echoing works of the Aesthetic movement, the art and architecture of Pugin’s Gothic revival and the tenure of works being created for the Palace of Westminster.⁸⁴ Ever since Gotch’s trip to Florence in 1891, wrote Baldry in 1898, Gotch

⁷⁸ Caffin, (1910), p.925; ‘The Royal Academy. (Third Notice),’ *The Times*, (Saturday, 9th June, 1900), p. 16; ‘The Royal Academy’, *Birmingham Daily Post*, (Saturday, 2nd June, 1894)

⁷⁹ ‘The Royal Academy’, *The Times*, (5th May 1894), p.16. Another article described ‘There was so much that was original and new in Mr. Gotch’s *The Child Enthroned*,’ ‘The Royal Academy. First Notice,’ *The Times*, (Saturday, 2nd May, 1896), p. 15

⁸⁰ Gotch (1895), (‘Realist as Mystic’)

⁸¹ ‘T. C. Gotch’, *Athenaeum*, No. 3471, (5th May, 1894), p.587

⁸² Barringer, (2000), p.82

⁸³ Barringer, (2000), p.82

⁸⁴The decoration included murals by Byam Shaw. See Hay and Riding (1997)

has been a lover of sumptuous combinations and has revelled in the representation of the gorgeous textures, the brocade and embroideries, the laces and adornments which are so lovingly treated in the works of the Italian masters.⁸⁵

The desire to be around old things, rooms, tapestries, in a nostalgic, ‘quiet retrenchment from modernity...in aged interiors’ was a feature of Symbolist art.⁸⁶ Another loss and ill advance of urbanisation was a desensitisation to fine art objects and such concerns fuelled the protection of past art forms and buildings and their revival to counteract the degrading effect of mass culture.⁸⁷ Gotch’s collection of brocades were displayed alongside paintings in the Kettering Memorial Exhibition, 1933.⁸⁸

the blue robes of “The Child Enthroned” [are] included in the collection of brocades also being exhibited. These brocades are a portion of a unique collection made by Mr Gotch and introduced into several of his works. In the case of the child’s robes, they were designed by Mr Gotch and embroidered for him by a circle of ladies.⁸⁹

However, the purpose for the artist’s use of the past is uncertain. Gotch deliberately confused and multiplied sources of reference in *The Child Enthroned*. Reviews attempted to confirm and fix the source of the imagery with various examples of religious iconography: Byzantine, early Renaissance, Greek Church, Flemish art of the seventeenth century. In 1894, the *Magazine of Art* described an ‘almost Gothic conviction of feeling’ while the *Athenaeum* determined multiple sources of visual inspiration, writing that Gotch ‘paints Biblical subjects without the conventionalities of older Italian art, and imitates the grave and sincere naturalism of some Flemish masters of the seventeenth century...There is something almost Byzantine.’⁹⁰ The eclectic mixture caused viewers to question: ‘what may have been the artist’s precise intention in setting on a throne this little girl in a gorgeously embroidered robe, with a halo round her head, it is not easy to say.’⁹¹

⁸⁵ Baldry, (1899), p.73

⁸⁶ Hirsh, (2004), p.236; Kuenzli, (c.2010)

⁸⁷ Hirsh, (1998), pp.239-40

⁸⁸ Tate Archive, TGA 9019/2/8, Exhibition Materials Folder

⁸⁹ ‘The Gotch Pictures,’ *The Northampton County Magazine*, (15th April, 1932), p.131

⁹⁰ ‘T. C. Gotch,’ *Athenaeum*, No. 3471, (5th May, 1894), p.587

⁹¹ ‘The Royal Academy: (Third Notice), *The Times*, (5th May. 1894), p.16

Interiorised enthronements of women, lacking external horizons, continued to feature in much Aesthetic art of the nineteenth century, such as Albert Moore's *A Revery*, (1892) and Frederick Leighton's *Flaming June*, (c.1895). There were also many mythological portraits of powerful, destructive women by Watts, Alma-Tadema and Waterhouse, such as *Cleopatra*, (1888) or *Circe Offering the Cup to Ulysses*, (1891).⁹² However, the use of a contemporary innocent child combined with Florentine or Greek Orthodox Church, hieratic religious iconography, with Byzantine overtones, did not fit within these conventions, nor those of European Symbolism. The inability to place the style aided Gotch's endeavour to remove the work from certain place and time, according with an eternal, synthetic image and created an uncertain relationship with revival and nostalgia.

Many artistic revivals were occurring in the late nineteenth century, including Classical, Byzantine and Celtic and Gotch is connected to the Pre-Raphaelite revival.⁹³ However, Gotch's various appropriations display an unresolved and ambivalent relationship with these movements. The artist bemoaned the lack of new growth in art in 1897:

Except as regard landscape there have been no large, fresh impulses of overwhelming strength; the period is marked rather by...efforts to revive the past, and by brilliant episodes. The stream no longer flows with resistless power from its rugged source nor with a serene and buoyant confidence through the ample meadows, but its impulse (it would seem) nearly spent, it meanders through a network of minor channels.⁹⁴

And he reiterated these thoughts in 1898: 'the history of painting shews that both the aim and method are subject to a constant change; indeed the aim and method of one period become alike impossible in another.'⁹⁵ Notably, Gotch's rich brocades were made especially for the artist rather than being historic artefacts, unlike, for example,

⁹² Flint, (2000) discusses the lack of horizon in such works, p.275; see also Nicola Humble and Kimberley Reynolds, *Victorian Heroines: Representations of Femininity in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Art*, (New York; London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, c.1993) and Christopher Wood, *Victorian Painting in Oils and Watercolours*, (Antique Collectors' Club, Woodbridge. Surrey, 1996), p.64

⁹³J. B. Bullen, *Byzantium Rediscovered*, (London; New York: Phaidon, 2003); Christian (1989); Gotch features in Bate, (1899), especially p.114, which cites 'such work of T.C. Gotch's as *The Child Enthroned* and *Alleluia* and other pictures in a similar style' as representative examples of his work as a successor to the PRB

⁹⁴ Gotch (1898), p.10

⁹⁵ Gotch (1898), p.2

the large and famous collection of Edwin Austin Abbey and Rossetti's use of historic jewellery in his portraits.⁹⁶ And when describing his insight from the Pre-Raphaelite artists in 1895, Gotch reassured the journalist that he meant 'the real ones,' in a manner which seems disparaging to those following or emulating their efforts.⁹⁷ He further downplayed his association with the Pre-Raphaelite movement, stating that his work can be seen to be ruefully 'smiling at its techniques.'⁹⁸ James Sully had considered the untrustworthy nature of memory in *Illusions: A Psychological Study*, (1881), explaining that memory can restore only 'fragments of our past life' which we fabricate into an idealised version of the past, projecting current ideas back, infusing a note of caution in what it is possible to learn from the past.⁹⁹ Gotch's comments and methods simultaneously infer concerns about authenticity, the sincerity, worthiness or iniquities, of artistic revival as they project nostalgia and faith in the past.

The Child Enthroned may also be compared to *The Western Roman Emperor Honorius*, (1880), (Fig.1.13) by the French academic painter Jean-Paul Laurens, featuring the child Emperor on his throne. Through alluding to the Laurens painting, *The Child Enthroned* may function as a warning of investing too heavily in the past. Lewis Hind wrote that Gotch 'sat at the feet of Jean-Paul Laurens' when he was studying in Paris in the 1880s, so it is likely he saw this painting, with its very similar composition.¹⁰⁰ In vivid contrast to *The Child Enthroned*, the Roman youth in Laurens' painting, through his immature and contemptible expression, reflects the shameful neglect of his duty, which resulted in the eventual sack of Rome. The story of Honorius had also been featured in *The Favourites of the Emperor Honorius* by J. W. Waterhouse, (1883), (Fig. 1.14) which, along with other Aesthetic works, enacted allegorical historical warnings of decline and fall for a Victorian audience, in order to rehearse the problems and anxieties of the present.¹⁰¹ The decline of the Roman Empire, surfaced in the *fin de siècle* context, when works from the Decadent movement formed an anti-imperialistic strain in literature. Even amongst those pro-

⁹⁶ Christian (1989), p.119 describes Edwin Austin Abbey's 'huge purpose-built studio at Fairford [which housed] his enormous collection of costumes and other properties "classified with such care, love and pride as an entomologist might display in the arrangement of his specimens," M. H. Spielmann, *Magazine of Art*, 1899, p.196'

⁹⁷ Lomax, (2004), pp.107-8

⁹⁸ Gotch (1898), p.2; Bate, (1899), p.114

⁹⁹ James Sully, *Illusions: A Psychological Study*, (New York, 1881), p.262 in Reed, (1975), p.417

¹⁰⁰ Hind, (1896), p.276

¹⁰¹ Prettejohn, (2008), p.92

Empire, an aesthetics of the apocalyptic and doubtful surfaced, befitting the pessimistic cultural mood.¹⁰² Percy Bate wrote in 1899: ‘it is pleasant to see that...[the work of the Pre-Raphaelites] has ‘a distinct following of disciples today.’¹⁰³ The ‘principles of Pre-Raphaelism remain as essentially true as when first promulgated,’ continued Bate. The artist’s enactment of a role in artistic revival, through ‘honest acceptance’ of these principles and ‘carrying on the work of Pre-Raphaelism’ however, is unfulfilled, his aesthetics unsatisfying.¹⁰⁴

This painting is one of several works dealing with concerns over modes of inheritance, broaching themes of female responsibility or destiny, male fears over legacy, history and memory, forms of loss and revivalism. Aesthetic contradictions articulate the suspicion that girls may decide not to become mothers and that this historically invested image may represent a finite memory, a veneration of a time gone by. Gotch’s sombre feel, as Caffin described in 1910, ‘a touch of seriousness shadows Gotch’s vision,’ confirms an overriding sense of misgiving and doubt and the desire to place faith in girlhood instead.¹⁰⁵ Gotch reveals his hopes for humanity’s regeneration lie in youthful rejuvenation and in women, rather than the past. Honorius’ unsympathetic, morally vacant depiction is in stark contrast to the lofty grandeur of Gotch’s child, from which emanates the rich potential of the future.¹⁰⁶ Gotch’s anxieties about masculine decline are countered by hopes placed in women to redeem humanity.

The Child Enthroned as a Feminist Icon

In *The Child Enthroned*, aesthetic structures and allusions to Rome impart ‘Byzantine rottenness’, part of an historic context of cultural atrophy, as described by historian Henri Ellenberger, rather than straightforward historic veneration. In Gotch’s image, the evil excesses of the commercial world are conflated with the sins of men and may

¹⁰² Brantlinger, (1988), p.230

¹⁰³ Bate, (1899), p.115

¹⁰⁴ Bate, (1899), p.117

¹⁰⁵ Caffin, (1910), p.930; Reed (1975) on memory and regret

¹⁰⁶ Honorius became Emperor at the age of eight and presided over the sack of Rome during his precarious, chaotic reign. This was discussed in J. B. Bury, *A History of the Later Roman Empire from Arcadius to Irene*, Vol. 1, (Place of publication and publisher not identified, 1889, re-issued as e-book, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, viewed 26th August, 2016). This history had also been detailed in Wilkie Collins’ novel of 1850 *Antonina; or, the Fall of Rome*. A moral of the story is the ‘sycophantic acquiescence in the Emperor’s delinquency’, Elizabeth Prettejohn (et al), *J.W. Waterhouse: The Modern Pre-Raphaelite*, (London: Royal Academy of Arts, c.2008), p.92

be countered by the girl's spirituality.¹⁰⁷ The child is an emblem of the loss of historical innocence, suggesting beleaguered masculinity and the transferral of faith of human progress to womanhood. Contemporary feminist writings reclaimed eternal forms of female spirituality and identified womanhood as the source for humanity's spiritual regeneration.¹⁰⁸ Within the theosophical movement, feminists reconsidered Christian narratives and constructed versions of a female Messiah.

As historian Joy Dixon has described, in response to the masculine model of spirituality in theosophy, esoteric Christianity offered an alternative which valued feminine virtues of love, intuition and feeling. Elizabeth Blackwell, the first woman doctor in England, joined the Christo-Theosophical Society, while the esoteric Christian Union, (ECU) founded in 1892, expressed a 'feminine and western religious sensibility.'¹⁰⁹ The ECU disseminated the teachings of Kingsford and Maitland, the latter stated that 'there is no religion as high as that of Love.'¹¹⁰ Theosophist-feminists such as Anna Kingsford, Annie Besant and Edward Maitland, undertook a rehabilitation and re-writing of esoteric Christianity, creating the feminine Christ and retaining elevated feminine qualities of the 'Law of Love', self-sacrifice, sentiment and intuition.¹¹¹ Dr Anna Bonus Kingsford wrote *The Perfect Way*, (1882), and had links with the 'Woman-Messiah' movement in France.¹¹² Annie Besant described how within the 'intuitional sphere' of theosophical thinking, the 'Christ-nature unfolds' in humanity.¹¹³ The female Christ within such works, could offer a compelling vision of love and emotional tenderness, since these already functioned as 'natural' female qualities in Victorian art, literature and culture. In a broader sense, love was deemed the central force of the spiritual life and thus an empowering source of power for women. In Rider Haggard's *She*, (1886), love fuels the *femme fatale's* latent powers into political life.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁷ Caffin, (1910), p.929; Ellenberger, (1970), p.280

¹⁰⁸ West (1993), 'Womanhood', pp.86-103; Facos, (2009), pp.117-123

¹⁰⁹ Dixon (2001), p.166n

¹¹⁰ Dixon (2001), p.166n

¹¹¹ Dixon (2001), p.165, 166, 168; An obituary published in *Shafts*, 1897, wrote approvingly of Maitland that he had understood the spiritual significance of the woman's movement.

¹¹² Oppenheim, (1985), p.187, p.439, p.440; James Webb, *The Occult Underground*, (LaSalle, Illinois: Open Court, 1974), p.342

¹¹³ Annie Besant, *Theosophy*, (London: T.C & E, C. Jack, 1912), pp.21-42, cited Oppenheim, (1985), p.196

¹¹⁴ Brantlinger (1988), p.234

Gotch's versions of the female Christ were also female virgin icons. In a similar way, Gotch's image is both a female Christ child and a Madonna.¹¹⁵ In correspondence held in the Tate Archive, Gotch noted in 1900 that *The Child Enthroned* was 'both Child and Mother at the same time.'¹¹⁶ Appropriately, *The Child Enthroned* effected gender inversions during viewings at the Royal Academy and the Paris Salon where it was taken to represent the Boy Christ.¹¹⁷ F.G. Stephens described in the *Athenaeum*, 1895: 'There is something almost Byzantine in the...comely boy with Flemish features.'¹¹⁸ Gotch appropriated techniques and forms of representation, such as 'aristocratic dignity' a presence he described was evident in Old Masters portraiture, to infuse authority into his representation of the girl, rendering her mature, detached and inaccessible:

There is one other quality common to the work of the great masters; it is a certain reticence, reserve, absence of self-consciousness, a certain aristocratic dignity in the work which does not solicit the attention of the spectator.¹¹⁹

The child looks beyond the viewer and our inability to fathom her psychology keeps the figure distant, elevating her composure and power. Her steady gaze, endowed with resolution and intensity contrasts with the construct of an easily distracted, 'flexible', 'feminine' gaze.¹²⁰ Gotch's *My Crown and Sceptre*, (1892), (Fig.1.15), made a strong visual allusion to Ingres, *Napoleon I on his Imperial Throne*, (1806), (Fig.1.16) and other art historical precedents dealing in male authority figures. The hands are rendered with defined rigour and are positioned to denote concentration, intelligence, the conscientious rendering of Albrecht Durer for example, rather than soft fleshiness of female hands in many Old Masters portraits.¹²¹

Despite some 'masculine' qualities, this is not a hermaphrodite form, as was commonly visualised in the Symbolist movement, and sometimes featured as the ideal

¹¹⁵ Oppenheim (1985), p.188

¹¹⁶ Letter from Thomas Cooper Gotch to Maxwell Smith of the Gainsborough Studio, 1st October, 1900: Tate Archive, TGA 9019/2/3/7/1-50, Gotch Correspondence - G

¹¹⁷ Christian, (1989), p.122

¹¹⁸ 'T. C. Gotch,' *Athenaeum*, No. 3471, (5th May, 1894), p.587; 'The Royal Academy,' *Birmingham Daily Post*, (Saturday, 2nd June, 1894)

¹¹⁹ Gotch, (1898), pp 24-25

¹²⁰ Flint, (2000), p.26

¹²¹ On the representation of women's hands in Old Masters see Mary D. Garrard, 'Artemisia's Hand,' in Broude and Garrard, (2005), pp.63-80

form of humanity in the distant future within theosophical texts.¹²² Gotch's image accorded with Swiney's later construct, in an article entitled 'The Maternity of God', in *The Westminster Review*, and in *The Cosmic Procession*, (1906), of a:

Virgin-Mother endowing Adam with the living soul. The Creatress...holds in her hand the cross, the symbol of motherhood, of man-in-the -making. This delineation of a feminine Supreme Cause...[and] sublime feminism... The virgin Goddess preceded the God, the Mother, self-procreative, produced the Father and the Son¹²³

Caffin, writing in 1910, related the picture directly to contemporary feminism, describing how the child differs from the historic representation of the child, originating in ancient Egypt:

in all these conceptions the child is of the male sex and is deified: whereas to the imagination of this artist the regality of the child is displayed in this world and the sex which his idea involves is the woman's. In both respects he is abreast with modern scientific thought. As an organism, considered functionally with a view to nature's scheme of reproduction, the female is now recognised as superior to the male; while in the spiritualising of the world, woman has already proved her supremacy. The truth of this is being discovered today in a fuller sense than in any previous age. Men are growing to realise more clearly than before the possibilities of betterment in allowing woman freer scope for her capacities and the woman herself is becoming more alive not only to the privileges but also to the responsibilities of her sex.¹²⁴

Feminist languages of female spirituality forged within theosophy, could be radical and unapologetic in inverting male histories of religion and origin. Swiney described an original 'all-mother' as well as various modes of 'Earth-Mother' or 'woman-soul' in 1899, while in 1906, she added: 'Now, Life is feminine. The female organism was

¹²² *Death the Bride* is a female form, rather than the popular androgyne/hermaphrodite as the knowing Sphinx who, noted Mathews, was effectively a feminised male effecting a censure of female sexuality, Mathews (1999), pp.112-125

¹²³ 'The Maternity of God', in *The Westminster Review*, May and June, 1906 within Frances Swiney, *The Cosmic Procession*, (London: Ernest Bell, 1906. This reprint by Forgotten Books, 2015), p.96, p.98

¹²⁴ Caffin, (1910), pp.925-6

the first conscient living entity.¹²⁵ Swiney's 'Eternal Creative' was a version of superior female spirituality and creativity which exists outside of time's strictures. Charlotte Despard's contribution to a collection of articles by leading feminists, *The Case for Woman's Suffrage*, (1907), invoked the 'great-woman-principle' of ancient cosmogonies such as Egypt and Greece.¹²⁶ Such writings, sought to develop a durable construct of eternal female divinity.

Gotch's mystical icon seeks a comparably infinite, timeless status. Compared to the fleeting naturalism of his work in Newlyn, Gotch's language in 1897, reveals his desire in *The Child Enthroned* to challenge the notion of linear time as enforced through scientific rationalism and aspects of modernity:¹²⁷

Art is not related to progress in the same way as the forward movement of industrialisation: of progress in the sense of growth there is abundant proof, but of progress in the sense of improvement there is none. ... All the inventions of the present century, the application of steam and electricity all the wonderful discoveries of science...improved railway facilities, improved postal arrangements...though they have doubtless had their effect on the art of today have resulted in no improvement...[Art] springs into being, flourishes, and decays; again springs into being, flourishes and decays as the conditions favour it, throughout the ages.¹²⁸

Like the eternal feminine creative force, this child is an infinite icon, a universal image positioned as Gotch describes above, outside of time, progress and 'physical law,' abiding instead by greater transcendent spiritual laws. The image accorded with feminist reclamations of spirituality, using languages of the cosmic and universal to

¹²⁵ Swiney (1899), p.20, p.200 and 207. Swiney cites Lester Ward: 'Life begins with the female organism, and is carried on a long distance by means of females alone,' *Pure Sociology*, p.313, in Swiney, (1906), p.204.

¹²⁶ Despard also included medieval abbesses in Charlotte Despard, 'Woman in the New Era', in Brougham Villiers, (ed.), *The Case for Women's Suffrage*, (London: T. Fisher Unwin), 1907, pp.190-1, in Dixon, (2001), p.186. Despard described how all the old mythologies recognised the 'woman principle' in the creation, preservation and destruction of life. This was a mystic truth best preserved in India. Charlotte Despard, *Woman in the New Era*, (London: Suffrage Shop, 1910), pp.34-40, in Dixon, (c.2001), p.188.

¹²⁷ See Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, c.1983), introduction; Lynda Nead, *The Haunted Gallery: Painting, Photography, Film c.1900*, (New Haven, Conn., London: Yale University Press, c.2007), pp.1-3. Gotch, (1898), pp.7-8

¹²⁸ Gotch, (1898), pp.7-8

express hopes for the future spiritual regeneration of the race.¹²⁹ In *The Dawn of Womanhood*, Gotch continues to explore this theme, focussing on the critical moment of adolescence.

Part Two: *The Dawn of Womanhood*, (1900)

In a darkened room with aged, rich decorations, the girl of *The Child Enthroned* has become a young woman. Either side of her are a fairy and a ghostly figure of ‘approaching womanhood,’ in radiant white robes.¹³⁰ With some similarities to Gotch’s *The Awakening* (Fig.1.17) and to Christian annunciation scenes, *The Dawn of Womanhood* superficially suggests the awakening of a girl to womanhood, in terms of her sexual maturity and approaching life as wife and mother. However, the visual languages are contradictory. The painting is set in an ominous windowless room, with a sombre palette, seemingly riddled with doubt and uncertainty which exudes from the gloom of old furniture and apparitions. At the same time, the scene is brightened by the beauty of the young woman and the blinding light of the glowing, spiritual revelation of womanhood: glorious, shining, smiling.¹³¹ Feminists often used the language of a new dawn, in their anticipation of a future of emancipation.¹³² Womanhood, as represented in this painting, stands for change, prophetic revelation and awakening, in the languages of Spiritualism and feminism.

Adolescence was the subject of many paintings such as Paul Gauguin’s *Loss of Virginity*, (1890-1) or Edvard Munch, *Puberty*, (1895), (Fig. 1.18) particularly in its association with sex and shame.¹³³ Gotch’s vision of adolescence is contradictory. The image of womanhood is bright and hopeful and instead of evincing shame, casts doubts on the certainty of the male-defined destiny of marriage and motherhood. *The Dawn of Womanhood* visualises light from darkness, the spiritual transcendence of material boundaries and the revelatory experience of knowledge experienced by

¹²⁹ Advertisement in the front cover of Swiney, (1906) includes a quotation from *The Scotsman*’s review of Swiney, (1899), states that the book would appeal to those feminists who ‘believe[d] that the future of the race lies in their hands.’

¹³⁰ *The Royal Academy*, (London: 1900), catalogue entry

¹³¹ A similar visual contrast is made in *The Flag* (Fig. 1.6). Chapter Two discusses similar radiant women in feminist utopias of the period.

¹³² Beaumont, (2001), p.213; The idea of women escaping from a darkened room is also evident in Chapter Three.

¹³³ Facos, (2009), pp.141-144; Hilary Marland, *Health and Girlhood in Britain, 1874-1920*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p.3; Dyhouse (2013)

clairvoyants and mediums. Gotch places faith in indeterminate spiritual processes of séances, unconscious memory, visions, hauntings and fairies. The work thus privileges broadly 'feminine', irrational modes of understanding the world, which ran counter to the dominant rationalistic languages of modernity and to the Modern languages of art, in a positive representation of women and their spiritual acuity. However, while referencing the hopes invested in women, the painting exhibits a number of tensions pertinent to the cultural context. Contradictory visual languages include the past and the future, inheritance and responsibility for girls and women, versus new forms of autonomy and choice. The picture marries languages of revival and prophecy with staid tradition in ambiguous combinations.

A Feminist Awakening

In a period in which feminists revised versions of past histories and reconsidered established 'types' of womanhood, girls were undertaking new behaviours and considering new possibilities in the future of womanhood. Like the negotiations being made within feminist thinking, the enthroned girl in Gotch's painting manages a relationship with both the past, of the historic darkened room and the future of radiant womanhood. *The Dawn of Womanhood* was created at a turning point when the concept of adolescent girlhood was being understood increasingly as a separate stage of existence, with its own values and experiences, in thought which had evolved from the 1870s. Girls were 'becoming modern' and their aspirations were changing through 'increasing engagement with knowledge and the workforce as well as their changing appearance,' resulting in a more self-assured 'New Girl' with her 'modern body' and emancipatory potential.¹³⁴ This 'New Girl' did not presume marriage was her destiny.¹³⁵ Through new agency and behaviours, a growing range of activities and in changing feminist ideology, women and girls were forging their own future.

The feminist idea of female 'awakening,' used in Swiney's work, could connote an awakening to new forms of knowledge, awareness and consciousness available to the 'New Girl'. Feminists were concerned with the personal development of women as autonomous individuals with distinct personalities, as a counter to the 'clinging'

¹³⁴ Marland (2013), p.7

¹³⁵ See also Sally Mitchell, *The New Girl: Girls' Culture in England, 1880-1915*, (New York; Chichester: Columbia University Press, c1995)

dependence and self-abnegation promoted in Victorian ideology.¹³⁶ Confidence and altered expectations could be forged through new educational and vocational prospects as well as engagement with feminist writings. Referring to Gotch's *The Awakening* as well as to *The Dawn of Womanhood*, art critic John Caffin wrote in 1910:

In neither of these pictures should the symbolism be interpreted as confined solely to the idea of dawning and awakening womanhood; still less that of womanhood leading necessarily to motherhood. It embraces, as all these pictures do, the general idea of physical, mental, moral and spiritual evolution of the child into the adolescent.¹³⁷

Within the context of contemporary feminism, Gotch's works reflect alternative hopes for women's dawn or awakening, replete with unbound possibility.

Unconscious Memory and Inheritance

However, for girls, new freedoms of thought and action existed in tension with duties and responsibilities taught at home and in school and the effect of the new was experienced in relation to the past. Many feminists recognised that in whatever forms women sought an emancipated future, they would retain a relationship with both established constructs of womanhood and with their historic responsibilities of motherhood. Ellen Key wrote in 1912:

Even if all fields are made accessible to them, "God's law in their nature will always lead the majority of women to the home, to the intimacy of the family life, to motherhood and the duties of rearing children – but with a higher consciousness."¹³⁸

Gotch deployed the figure of the girl to broach issues of inheritance, as well as alternative hopes for the future.

Gotch believed that a child sitting on old furniture or donning old robes as in both *The Child Enthroned* and *The Dawn of Womanhood* would automatically inherit the knowledge or memories of ancestors, our cultural heritage through unconscious

¹³⁶ This was expressed by many feminists including Ellen Key, in Kelsey (1912), p.959. Tickner described the Victorian 'clinging woman', (1988), pp.167-226

¹³⁷ Caffin, (1910), p.932

¹³⁸ Quoting from *Hertha*, the 'book containing the tenets of the Swedish women movement.' Ellen Key, *The Woman Movement*, (TheClassics.us, 2013. This is an e-book reprint of the 1912 edition: London and New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons and The Knickerbocker Press)

memory.¹³⁹ This was the belief that contact with meaningful, historic objects allowed transmission of important thoughts and emotional residues from the past, of cultural import, received automatically through the body. Unconscious memory had been explored in several areas of science, psychology, anthropology and archaeology from the 1860s and, though it should have been discredited by evolutionary theory, proved resilient due to its comforting spiritualistic language. It was still widely believed by the late nineteenth century deployed in key works within the newly developing area of child psychology as well as featuring in artworks ranging from Symbolist painting to the poetry of Thomas Hardy.¹⁴⁰

Gotch's allegiance to the idea of unconscious memory is most explicitly expressed in *The Heir to All the Ages*, (1899), (Fig. 1.19), frequently exhibited at the time and which the artist described as, 'one of my best works.'¹⁴¹ Gotch explained the historical and cultural transmission, occurring by way of a reliquary, describing the child as:

the inheritor of accumulated wealth – *mental not physical* of the past, the bearing of the child speaks for itself – the reliquary symbolises her rich inheritance.¹⁴²

Gotch ensures that we understand that this is a mental process and not just the inheritance of material possessions. Along with others such as prominent psychologist James Sully, Gotch connected this 'rich inheritance' with the rights and privileges of a spiritual and cosmic connection with the race, in tension with a newly developing focus on the dynamics of the modern, individual self.¹⁴³ Frances Swiney used the phrase the 'heir of the ages' in 1906. Swiney invoked motherhood and inheritance within her construct of eternal female spiritual power or 'cosmic consciousness.'¹⁴⁴ With his representation of unconscious memory, Gotch equally privileges the female and her universal spiritual connection with humanity.

¹³⁹ This concept is detailed in Athena Vrettos, 'Displaced Memories in Victorian Fiction and Psychology', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 2, (Winter, 2007), pp. 199-207

¹⁴⁰ Bland, (1995), p.85

¹⁴¹ Tate Archive 9019/2/3/2/105e – Correspondence B, letter from Gotch to the Royal West of England Academy (Bristol), regarding exhibiting a painting

¹⁴² Lomax, (2004), p.113

¹⁴³ As explored for example in Taylor and Shuttleworth (1998)

¹⁴⁴ Swiney, (1906), pp.202-3

At Heatherley's Art School, London, in the 1870s, Gotch met the older student Samuel Butler who had already published the subversive, utopian text *Erewhon*, 1872, through fellow students Charles Gogin and Harry S. Tuke. Samuel Butler was a major proponent of unconscious memory theory.¹⁴⁵ Gotch's correspondence and other material in the Tate Archive features Herbert Spencer, Gogin and Butler in connection with evolution debates.¹⁴⁶ Indeed Gogin, who remained a life-long friend with Butler painting his portrait in 1896, wrote to Gotch regarding Butler's book *Evolution Old and New*, 1879, in 1880:

Poor Butler's book is being [criticised] I consider he is the victim of a great crime!! It makes one's blood boil to find a man like him treated that way. You know he is a giant in his time. I spent Saturday morning with him. Jones was there.¹⁴⁷

Gogin's reference to Butler's closest male friend Festing-Jones, implies that Gotch was also acquainted with him at this stage and thus within Butler's closest circle of friends. The file further notes that Gotch sent Butler a photograph, cooperating with Butler's pioneering investigations in that medium. Butler wrote to Gotch in 1880: 'My book should be out in another fortnight or so, it contains a lively attack upon Darwin, but there is a lot of heavy stuff in it.'¹⁴⁸ The same year that Gotch was corresponding with Butler, 1880, the latter published *Unconscious Memory*, one of several works about Darwinism, where he displayed his 'Lamarckist interest in the role of forms of heritable memory of experience.'¹⁴⁹ Lamarck's theories of evolution had remained

¹⁴⁵ W. L. MacDonald, 'Samuel Butler and Evolution,' *The North American Review*, Vol. 223, No. 833 (Dec., 1926 - Feb., 1927), pp. 626-637. E. Shaffer, *Erewhons of the Eye: Samuel Butler as Painter, Photographer and Art Critic*, (1988); Lomax detailed the art school relationship in *A Long Engagement, 1878-1881*, (Unknown publication place: Shears and Hogg Publications, 2002)

¹⁴⁶ Tate Archive 9019/2/3/2/128- Correspondence B: extract from *The Athenaeum*, (31st January, 1880). This is an article about Samuel Butler's book *Evolution Old and New*, 1879, discusses evolution theory and Darwin.

¹⁴⁷ Tate Archive -9019/2/4- a book of Transcripts of selected letters by B. Price, p.93; letter from Charles Gogin to Gotch, 29th July, 1880, Tate Archive, 9019/2/3/7/25: Correspondence G

¹⁴⁸ Tate Archive 9019/2/3/2/128- Correspondence B, letter from Samuel Butler to Gotch, 20th October, 1880

¹⁴⁹ Examples include *Life and Habit*, (New York: 1923, orig. 1878), *Evolution Old and New*, (1879), *Unconscious Memory*, (New York: A. C Fifeild, 1910, orig. 1880, transcription for kindle, 2013) and *Luck or Cunning?* (1886); Shaffer wrote that: 'Butler is due for renewed attention, especially in light of recent developments in molecular biology which make a reconsideration of the subtler modes of inheritance and transmission possible.' The idea of unconscious memory was generally believed in this period, notably influencing George Bernard Shaw for example, and which only subsequently lost favour in historiography. Elinor Shaffer, 'Butler, Samuel (1835-1902)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2011, <http://O-www.oxforddnb.com.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/view/article/32217> accessed 27th August, 2016)

appealing throughout the nineteenth century due to their emphasis on organism's 'effort, will or intelligence', design or 'cunning' as Butler put it, in the evolutionary process of adaptation to environment.¹⁵⁰

Many of Gotch's paintings include historical artefacts. The artist's interest in revival, his conscientious rendering of pattern and decoration, use of heightened realism and vivid colours when painting such forms, evidence his belief in the material as a conduit for the spiritual. Gotch asserted in 1897 that the workings of spiritual law, including unconscious memory, were equally if not more important than the physical laws of the Universe, though the spiritual activity may be unseen or imperceptible:

Physical law, (the law of gravitation for instance)...we are bound to obey or we perish. So too we must believe with regard to spiritual law. Those who excel in spiritual achievement do so in obedience to spiritual law, whether they can give an account of it or no. *Unconscious knowledge is our heritage*...if we want to build a bridge, navigate the seas, or send a message to America...some conscious knowledge of physical law is essential. So too with spiritual things.¹⁵¹

Such ideas were a foundation for belief in unconscious memory, as Samuel Butler wrote in *Unconscious Memory*, 1880, 'the distinction between the organic and the inorganic is arbitrary' in common with occult and theosophical writings of the period.¹⁵² Feminist Frances Swiney equally asserted in 1906, 'the first principle governing the Universe...the hypothesis that Spirit and Matter are one. We must get rid of that fatal Duality that is the root of all our misapprehensions and misconceptions of the Cosmic Law.'¹⁵³

A number of Gotch's paintings featured prominent items: robes, a weighty curtain, a throne, a reliquary, a flag, a necklace and a table. Several feature in the later painting *The Footstep*, (1931), (Fig.1.20), as sources for spiritual connection and the transmission of unconscious memory operating through contact with things. Within Symbolist and Decadent European art and literature the knowing child or Seer is able

¹⁵⁰ Oppenheim, (1985), p.325; 'Luck, or Cunning, as the Main Means of Organic Modification?', by Samuel Butler (1887) <http://www.joh.cam.ac.uk> (accessed 27th August, 2016)

¹⁵¹ Thomas Cooper Gotch, 'Revolution in Art', transcript of lecture, (London, 1919), Tate Archive, TGA 9019/2/6/37-38, handwritten and typescript versions of 'Revolution in Art' by Thomas Cooper Gotch, p.1

¹⁵² Butler (1880), p.11

¹⁵³ Swiney (1906), pp.4-5

to see the animation of objects in the room about her, the mystical secrets of that other world unbeknown to the adults, reflecting hope for regeneration through unsullied, sincere, arcane insight. For example in Ensor's *Haunted Furniture*, 1885, (Fig. 1.21), an unsettling image of female spiritual acuity, wood panelling and ornately carved Victorian furniture hide supernatural presences, in this case masks and skulls, a 'hidden life of things' present and unseen to adults around.¹⁵⁴ Furniture may hold onto emotional and spiritual charges, picked up through physical contact, such as when William Morris described being transported into a higher removed spiritual state, by a meditative response in 1899 to 'an old tapestry...now faded into pleasant grey tones.'¹⁵⁵ Thomas Hardy wrote several poems about old furniture and wooden floors retaining spiritual traces, connections and memories, the weakening of the threshold between the past and the present, the material and the immaterial, with results laced with remorse and doubt, from the late nineteenth century. A later example which developed the poet's earlier, recurring concerns was 'Old Furniture,' 1917:

I know not how it may be with others
Who sit amid relics of householdry
That date from the days of their mothers' mothers,
But well I know how it is with me
Continually.

I see the hands of the generations
That owned each shiny thing
In play upon its knobs and indentations,
And with its ancient fashioning,
Still dallying¹⁵⁶

In Gotch's paintings, physical forms forever co-exist in a pointed and self-conscious way, with the immaterial and with ghosts of the past.

¹⁵⁴ Hirsch, (2004), pp.236-7 and p.238

¹⁵⁵ Hirsh, (2004), p.240, note 94, cited William Morris, *News from Nowhere. Or, An Epoch of Rest: Being Some Chapters from a Utopian Romance*, ed. James Redmond. (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1966 (orig.1890)), chapter XXXI, p.218

¹⁵⁶ See also 'The Self-Unseeing', cited in Chapter Three, 'The Ghost of the Past' and other examples in Patricia Clements and Juliet Grindle (eds.), *The Poetry of Thomas Hardy*, (London: Vision, 1980) and Jane Thomas, *Thomas Hardy and desire: Conceptions of the self*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)

Through the invocation of unconscious memory, Gotch recalled hopeful mid-century Victorian constructions of memory as benevolent, a repository of consoling histories, a treasury associated with youthful innocence, beauty and truth in the writings of the Romantic poets, or the possible connection with a simpler, purer time expressed by William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones and the Pre-Raphaelites.¹⁵⁷ The child may access the vast and expansive store of memory unknown and inactive in human minds.¹⁵⁸ Critic E. S. Dallas who wrote the important and comprehensive work on psychology and aesthetics, *The Gay Science*, (1866), believed that human memory retains everything absorbed and touched by the mind, ‘like a magpie’, but many forms of knowledge are dormant in this ‘immense involuntary life’ of ‘the Hidden Soul.’¹⁵⁹ The strange interior of *The Dawn of Womanhood* may illustrate Dallas’s words in 1866, ‘How and where we hide our knowledge so that it seems dead and buried; and how in a moment we can bring it to life again, finding it in the dark’ indicating the vast wealth of knowledge which the child inherits automatically and unthinkingly. Inspired by such hopeful concepts of memory, Gotch hints that unconscious memory may recover the sanctity of the past. The child engages with a cultural life that is vast, mysterious and activated through representation in spiritual artworks.¹⁶⁰

However, the idea of preserving a now vanished, idealised past and the fabrication of this through nostalgia also baulked within the artist. Gotch’s aesthetics suggested the errors of self-deception and his misgivings in the project of revival. Words of caution and restraint were issued by writers such as James Sully, William James and Henri Bergson, which emphasised the fragmentary, unreliable and personal nature of memory.¹⁶¹ Nostalgia, imparted through the historicised room and art historical references, was contemporaneously perceived as a dubious source of psychological atavism or degeneracy, undermining progress.¹⁶² Recast in the more pessimistic mood at the end of the century, alongside social change, feminist critique and the increased popularity of the occult, Gotch’s exploration of an older concept of

¹⁵⁷ John R. Reed *Victorian Conventions*, (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1975), p.407-8

¹⁵⁸ Eneas Sweetland Dallas, *The Gay Science*, 2 vols. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1866), pp.209-11, 213, 216-7, 220-1, cited in Taylor and Shuttleworth, (1998), p.150

¹⁵⁹ Dallas in Taylor and Shuttleworth, (1998), p.150. ‘Hidden soul’ cited in Bourne Taylor in Bullen, (1997), p.155

¹⁶⁰ Reed, (1975), p.413

¹⁶¹ Reed, (1975), p.420

¹⁶² Bourne-Taylor, (1997), p.157; Hirsh described how nostalgia evident in Symbolist paintings is pathologised in medical discourse, (2004), pp.8-10. (See also p.156 and p.281)

unconscious memory has become inflected with inertia and unease. *The Dawn of Womanhood* is far from a straightforward celebration of impending motherhood, which may occur surrounded by family, in daylight. The doubtful aesthetics of the painting injected uncertainty, a sense of instability, transition or change, especially through the focus on hauntings and spirituality.

Hauntings: Doubts and Hopes

The girl encounters future womanhood as a ghost. In moving the subjects of his art from realist locations to confined, artificial, imaginative compositions, Caffin asserted in 1910, ‘something else has crept into it.’¹⁶³ Within contemporary culture at the end of the nineteenth century, there were several ‘ghosts’ and hauntings, of the past, of degeneration, through technological encounters, resulting in an ever-present ‘spooky sense’, a tenacious feeling of the uncanny.¹⁶⁴ Within culture and the English development of the discipline of psychology in this period, many continued to hold onto ideas of the spirit.¹⁶⁵ Gotch deployed the spiritual as a mode to elevate womanhood and at the same time express a sense of insecurity, casting shadows on many cultural certainties which were eroding.

Bringing us to the ‘darkened room’ of séances, Gotch makes a direct allusion to Spiritualism, using the visual form of ‘ectoplasmic projections’, ‘diaphanous’ white robes and ‘opalescent drapery’, commonly recognised visual manifestations of Spiritualist practise.¹⁶⁶ In séance settings: a medium, usually a young girl would be placed in a cabinet, while a spirit would issue forth, ‘in a diaphanous white gown.’¹⁶⁷ While women in the nineteenth century were deemed particularly suited as Spiritualist mediums due to their ‘natural’ traits of impressionability, gullibility, passivity and chastity, inversions occurred when the female mediums became vessels for male

¹⁶³ Caffin, (1910), p.925

¹⁶⁴ Nead (2007); Bown et al (2004), p.1; Thurschwell (2013)

¹⁶⁵ Brantlinger (1988), pp.241-2. Oppenheim, (1985), notes that some held that those who believed in Spiritualism and communication after death were holding onto irrational subconscious desires for child-like or fairy-tale beliefs, pp330-190

¹⁶⁶ Brantlinger, (1988), p.251; Frank Rinder also described how *The Dawn of Womanhood* is ‘handled with the utmost daintiness. The spirit of childhood, a winged figure, is taking leave forever of the throned girl, as Womanhood, in opalescent drapery, the face partially hidden by a gauze veil, approaches on the left,’ in ‘The Royal Academy, 1900,’ *Art Journal, 1839-1912*, (June, 1900), pp. 161-183, (p.183) (painting illustrated p.179)

¹⁶⁷ Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*, (London: Virago, 1992), p.171, note 36

spirits. On these occasions, women spoke authoritatively as male spirits, through fragmentations of their own identity, reversing the usual sexual hierarchy of knowledge and power.¹⁶⁸

By the end of the nineteenth century, women's spirituality in the more distant past was being reclaimed by feminists who were eager to use this rediscovered female potency in the contemporary public and political spheres. Women were awakening to their spiritual capacity and such feminine languages or voice had started to become more prominent, more insistent in a culture concerned about the direction of progress and about the results of unchecked male behaviours, evident in the outrage following the 'Maiden Tribute'. The spiritual encounter in Gotch's work may be read as an expression of female spiritual acuity as in Swiney's review of this subject in 1899:

The best subjects for mesmeric and hypnotic experiments are always found among women; not from any inferiority of will-power, as is often cynically suggested, but because they possess sympathetic receptivity, and physical adaptivity (*sic*) to meet the exigencies of a new force...

Maeterlinck thus recognises this attribute in woman. "...it is chiefly in communion with woman that the average man enjoys a 'clear presentiment' of that life which does not always run on parallel lines with our visible life, and it is often a woman's kindly hand that unlocks for him the portals of mystical truth."¹⁶⁹

Two contemporary paintings where men encounter spirit visitations in the present day were Frank Dicksee's *A Reverie*, 1894 (Fig. 1.22) and Millais's, *Speak! Speak!* 1895, (Fig.1.23).¹⁷⁰ In both pictures, beleaguered men are in awe of female spiritual manifestations. Dicksee's male figure is reclined, morose and subdued in response to a spiritual revelation controlled by the girl at the piano, who is bathed in light in contrast to the male figure, hidden in shade. Similarly in Gotch's *The Awakening*, c.1898, the figure of the girl is poised and calm.

¹⁶⁸Walkowitz, (1992), p.176, 177 (notes 37 and 38); Alex Owen, 'The other voice: women, children and nineteenth century spiritualism', in Steedman, *Language Gender and Childhood*, (1985), pp.45-7; Alison Winter, *Mesmerized: Powers of Mind in Victorian Britain*, (Chicago; London : University of Chicago Press, 1998); Florence Marryat, *There is No Death*, (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & co., 1891), pp.202-4

¹⁶⁹ Swiney, (1899), pp.37-38

¹⁷⁰ Flint, (2000), pp.259-262. See also Jill L. Matus *Shock, Memory and the Unconscious in Victorian Fiction*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)

The apparition of womanhood is, according to Gotch's accompanying note, a good spirit like perhaps the fairy spirit of Maeterlinck's later *The Blue Bird*, 1908, who is manifested as an older lady. However, in Maeterlinck's work, the enchanting mode of the fairytale effected through the cozy, comforting cottage setting, ensures we experience the spiritual encounter in an uplifting way. Gotch on the other hand does not clearly appropriate the mode of the fairytale and its comforting magic, but instead adheres more closely to conventions for Gothic-infused ghost stories, charging his image with the associated adult feelings of foreboding, regret and remorse.¹⁷¹ The gloomy setting, and presence of the ghost, highlight the vagaries of inheritance and types of physical or spiritual transmission.

Inheritance, 'racial stock' memory, the past and the future, were central concerns of the period and discussions highlighted how negative forces may be inherited or transmitted secretly through the unconscious process. Invoking unconscious memory generated elements of doubt since, through heightening passive absorption, it endowed simple actions with more alarming spiritual consequences. M. R. James' well known ghost stories of the period see ghosts appear in antiquarian settings, recalled through contact with an historic object or old book which have attracted the attention of an unwanted supernatural presence. According to James, the story must 'put the reader into the position of saying to himself, "If I'm not very careful, something of this kind may happen to me!"'¹⁷² This is echoed in the words of scholar Athena Vrettos who, in a compelling study of memory in the Victorian period, considered 'why it might be disturbing to collect antiques, rent a furnished house, or sit in someone else's chair.'¹⁷³ Theosophists feared that a Spiritualist medium may become proxy to and embodied by a malevolent spirit, meaning theosophists generally steered clear of séances, expecting as historian Janet Oppenheim described, 'no good to come from [them] and much evil.' Séances would force the 'Ego of the departed ...back to earthly conditions' when it should be allowed to elevate to a higher spiritual plane. The astral plane of theosophy was inhabited by a variety of nonhuman spirit forms masquerading as

¹⁷¹ M. R. James also noted regarding his stories that 'another requisite, in my opinion, is that the ghost should be malevolent or odious: amiable and helpful apparitions are all very well in fairy tales or in local legends, but I have no use for them in a fictitious ghost story,' M. R. James, 'Preface to *More Ghost Stories of an Antiquary*' in S. T. Joshi, (ed.) *Count Magnus and Other Ghost Stories: The Complete Ghost Stories of M.R. James*, Volume 1, (London: Penguin Books, 2005), p. 217

¹⁷² Joshi, (2005), p.217

¹⁷³ Vrettos, (2007), p.199

friends of relatives.¹⁷⁴ Gotch's words highlighted doubts regarding the figure of 'approaching womanhood,' a strange, masked presence:

The child enthroned sees in a vision approaching womanhood. The phantom figure wears a mask – since all who are no longer children must conceal themselves - the familiar spirit of childhood on the steps of the throne is aware of a strange presence and prepares to fly away.¹⁷⁵

This visual imagery of doubt and uncertainty cast shadows over a 'natural' transition to motherhood. This choice may not be free of danger and may be rejected.

The presence of the fairy further blurs fantasy and reality. With reference to Gotch's *A Golden Dream* (1893), (Fig. 1.24), Lewis Hind writes that the painting 'may picture a real maiden plucking fruit in a Kentish orchard or she may be a dream-child gathering phantom blossoms in fairyland. Read into it what you will.'¹⁷⁶ The girl 'sits with her back to a sealed door, which, as an inscription implies, leads to adolescence,' rather than fairyland, the closing of the door to which was played out repeatedly in Victorian and Edwardian culture.¹⁷⁷ The fairy is almost the size of the girl and she invades 'real' space, unlike usual conventions for fairy pictures.¹⁷⁸ Her size combined with overly naturalistic rendering and mature expression results in unsettling viewing experiences.

A review in *The Times*, 1900, perceived the sense of strangeness imparted as a visual failing, a use of outmoded forms which obstruct understanding of the visual: 'Allegory is a terrible snare to the painter, and ghosts, angels, and their kith and kin still more so.'¹⁷⁹ Despite the fairy and the ghost being consigned to irrelevance, deemed embarrassing remnants from the past and sentimentalised 'types' harking back to the mid-century sensation novels and fairy tales, they provided expressive

¹⁷⁴ Oppenheim, (1985), p.165. Gotch's use of spiritual manifestations may articulate the various fears of invasion evident in literature of the *fin de siècle*, including the carrying or transmission of disease, deformities or degenerative forces through inheritance, which became a more pressing fear in later eugenic theories. This is evident in writing on *Dracula*, transfusions, transmissions and invasions. See Rebecca Stott, *The Fabrication of the Late-Victorian femme fatale: The Kiss of Death*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992) and Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst (eds.), *The Fin de Siècle: A Reader in Cultural History, c.1880-1900*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). These themes are revisited in Gotch's painting *Death the Bride*.

¹⁷⁵ *The Royal Academy*, (London: 1900), catalogue entry

¹⁷⁶ Hind, (1896), p.279

¹⁷⁷ Caffin, (1910), p.932. Bown notes this in (2001) introduction. See also Bown et al (2004)

¹⁷⁸ In works by J. E. Millais or Richard Dadd for example, the fairies are miniature. Examples may be found in the Tate Gallery, London: <http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/f/fairy-painting>, accessed 16th October, 2016.

¹⁷⁹ 'The Royal Academy,' *The Times*, (9th June, 1900), p.16

possibilities which were disruptive and could make social statements for which language was lacking.¹⁸⁰ The transgression of arbitrary rational, materialistic boundaries, and the permeability of the material and immaterial worlds, are evoked through spiritual presences, projecting an atmosphere of doubt and resulting in the inability to ascertain a correct reading of the painting.

Far removed from the quaint image Hind described above, Gotch's painting, like the ghost stories of M. R. James, May Sinclair, Henry James and the poetry of Thomas Hardy, was a complex 'response to the technological and psychological disturbances that marked the end of the Victorian era,' using similarly fragmented, equivocal or parodic references to the Gothic, medievalism and ghosts to articulate non-alignment and ambiguity.¹⁸¹ Gotch signals his sense of transience, of being in-between, looking back to the past while finding hope in women of the future. Drawing on the supernatural, Gotch expressed complex psychological engagements with modernity, which were evident in British culture into the 1920s.¹⁸²

Youth and Feminist Freedoms

Alongside Gotch's imagery of doubt and anxiety, there are indications of hope and imminent change. Girlhood presented a short period of youthful freedom, a key moment distinct from the main responsibilities of adult life, increasingly viewed as a small window of opportunity for personal development.¹⁸³ Gotch's painting of a girl in a windowless room was strangely incongruous with contemporary events which saw girls avidly obtaining new forms of knowledge and movement. By consciously denying these youthful freedoms, the visual complexities of the painting situate it in centre of intense contemporary cultural debate surrounding girlhood and adolescence. Gotch's subject seemed to express the concerns of feminist Jane Clapperton who wrote in 1885:

¹⁸⁰ Brantlinger (1988), p.241, such as Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1859), discussed in Jenny Bourne Taylor, *In the Secret Theatre of Home: Wilkie Collins, Sensation Narrative & Nineteenth-Century Psychology* (Victorian Secrets Limited ebook edition 2013. Orig. London: Routledge, 1998)

¹⁸¹ Luke Thurston, *Literary Ghosts from the Victorians to Modernism: The Haunting Interval*, (New York: Routledge, 2012), p.1

¹⁸² Daunton and Rieger, (2001)

¹⁸³ Smith, (2011), introduction; the superiority of women's health was strikingly noted in, for example, advertisements for colonial emigration. See Marland (2013); masculinity and degeneration broached in works by John Collier, discussed in Corbett and Perry (2000), p.90; Smith, (2011), introduction; Gleadle, (2001)

We hedge our girls round securely, we tether them with strict conventional rules; we keep them ignorant of real life, and feed them on romance and fairy-like illusions...We hint at marriage and a possible future of grave and important duties...but we *only hint*. We give no positive instruction in reference to wifehood or motherhood, but leave all vague, and vagueness within a girl's mind we call innocence, and treat it as a charm. The general result is that our girls are discontent...the bolder natures rebel.¹⁸⁴

The confined, closely panelled basement room suggests denial, oppression and the constrictions of the social responsibilities imposed on the girl. The composition may be framed by allusions to the 'confinement' of pregnant women, the sexual oppression of girls and women and their depiction as princesses in the palaces and dungeons of Victorian fairy tales as well as older religious-imbued discourse about adolescence.¹⁸⁵ These older frameworks are held in tension with forces of anticipation and promise provided by the languages of feminism and modern girlhood.

The room has an uncertain and understated sense of portentous foreboding and despondency, a 'subdued and almost cavernous atmosphere,' which suitably suggested the fears surrounding the critical and risky moment of adolescence.¹⁸⁶ The painting presented the room as a box containing the girl and her sexuality enclosed, within the outer layer of the walls, levels of decorative patterns, steps and robes, veiling and deifying her innocence within. Flowers are clustered in sensual red and pink heaps, the evocation of the flowers' scent alluding to the young girl's sexual awakening, uncomfortably juxtaposed with the fairy. The Victorian period's fascination with adolescence had found a potent symbol in flowers, associated with the decay of beauty, eroticism, as well as purity. Alma-Tadema, Waterhouse and

¹⁸⁴ Jane Clapperton, *Scientific Meliorism and the Evolution of Happiness*, (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1885 reprinted at <https://www.forgottenbooks.com> accessed 27th August, 2016), pp.158-9

¹⁸⁵ Explored in Adrienne E. Gavin, (ed.), *The Child in British Literature; Literary Constructions of Childhood, Medieval to Contemporary*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely*, (Cambridge, Mass ; London : M.I.T. Press, 1992); Julian Wolfreys, Ruth Robbins (eds), *Victorian Gothic; Literary and Cultural Manifestations in the Nineteenth Century*, (Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan, 2000); Hilary Grimes, *The Late Victorian Gothic: Mental Science, the Uncanny, and Scenes of Writing*, (Farnham, Surrey; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, c2011)

¹⁸⁶ Press cutting: 'The Royal Academy,' *Observer*, (12th May, 1900) in Tate Archive, TGA 9019/1/8 - Miscellaneous Personal Papers, Exhibition Catalogues and Press Cuttings. The interior echoes the uncanny haunted houses of Gothic fiction with their psychological overtones, as explored in Taylor (1998)

Robert Anning Bell used strewn flowers and petals to suggest female sexuality.¹⁸⁷ Comments by contemporary viewers included Baldry's description in 1899 of 'dainty fresh girlhood' and Caffin's words in 1910 on the 'loveableness of what is fresh and fragrant and simple.'¹⁸⁸ These examples indicate the pervasive fetishisation which co-existed with the protection of the child. The girl is being kept in the dark with a 'fairy-tale' lack of sexual knowledge, disconcertingly sitting alongside her fairy spirit, unprepared for her 'dawn' as a woman. The painting suggests cultural hesitancy and nervousness around adolescence, which was one of the last areas to be approached, with reticence, by the new discipline of child psychology.¹⁸⁹

However, the girl's encounter with the shining light of womanhood could also express new, positive, feminist types of 'awakening' or consciousness for the girl. Although 'speaking of sex' could not very easily occur in 1900, 'New Women' writers had achieved startling work exposing the iniquities of marriage and inadequate, pernicious sexual relations, including the particular dangers for girls with no sexual knowledge.¹⁹⁰ New forms of enlightenment were provided by such writings, which were throwing light on the darkness of ignorance and shame surrounding sex and starting to reject fairy tale concealments and prudery, in order to effect a new sexual morality.¹⁹¹ Ibsen's work *Ghosts*, 1881, had highlighted the fact that girls who entered marriage and sexual relations similarly protected and uninformed were easy prey to

¹⁸⁷Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture*, (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p.320; see also Prettejohn (2008), J. W. Waterhouse, 'Gather ye Rosebuds While Ye May,' 1908, p.170; Rosenfeld and Smith (2007) regarding Millais' *The Bridesmaid*, (1851), p.58; Christina Bradstreet, 'Wicked with Roses': Floral Femininity and the Erotics of Scent', *Nineteenth Century Art Worldwide*, (Spring 2007), at <http://19thc-artworldwide.org> accessed 27th August, 2016; Edwin Becker, Elizabeth Prettejohn (et al), *Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema*, (Zwolle (Netherlands) and Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum, c.1996); Chapter Two on Robert Anning Bell's *Battle of the Flowers*, 1910, (Fig.2.9)

¹⁸⁸Caffin, (1910), p.924; Baldry, (1899), p.82. For discussion of a range of unspoken desires, determined by contemporary psychological investigations into the broader nature of the sexual instinct, such as the relationship between parents and children see the writing of French philosopher Arreat, who wrote in 1886 about parents' love for children and sexual undertones cited in Ellenberger, (1970), p.303; see also James R. Kincaid, *Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture*, (New York; London: Routledge, 1992)

¹⁸⁹ Marland, (2013), p.4

¹⁹⁰ Detailed in Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997). The example of Jane Clapperton is discussed in S. M. den Otter, 'Clapperton, Jane Hume (1832–1914)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/view/article/55282>, accessed 27th August, 2016]. The taboo of even speaking about such matters is captured in a number of works including Bland, (1995), 'Speaking of Sex,' pp.250-296; Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality since 1800*, (Harlow, UK; New York; Pearson Education, 2012)

¹⁹¹ The possibilities of a new sexual morality are described in Bland, (1995), p.xiii

another ‘ghost’, of a future husband’s possible profligacy, drunkenness, sexual lust or even ‘slow inherited disease.’¹⁹² Caffin suggested this doubt in his comments on the painting in 1910: ‘the sunniness of [the girl’s] thoughts is suddenly diverted by the vision of a figure, not winged, in whose gesture and expression she may read the message of responsibility and preparation for pain.’¹⁹³ Marie Stopes later wrote in *Married Love*, (1918), ‘in my own marriage I paid such a terrible price for sex-ignorance that I feel that knowledge gained at such a price should be placed at the service of humanity.’¹⁹⁴ In the same text, Stopes cited Robert Herrick’s: ‘Fairy Dreams of Pleasure’ as shaping cultural preferences for female ignorance.¹⁹⁵ Herrick’s verses later inspired Waterhouse’s two paintings *Gather Ye Rosebuds While Ye May*, 1908 and 1909, which emphasise Stopes’s assertion of the pervasive nature of the construct of female innocence.

Though puberty was ‘a most trying time’ in a woman’s life, ‘necessitating care and watchfulness,’ this girl is undergoing an undetected, private, intimate encounter, indicating that there remained mental spaces where girls were unwatched.¹⁹⁶ The room is an undetermined space, with the provocative suggestive of an unreal location in the mind, such as the basement or antiquated storehouse featuring within psychology, or imaginary spaces in Lewis Carroll’s *Alice* books.¹⁹⁷ Gotch suggested the idea of autonomy and personal development for girls in other pictures of his daughter, such as *Holy Motherhood*, 1902 (Fig.1.25). In this composition Phyllis looks away from the mother and child figures, mature and thoughtful, her askance gaze indicates autonomous desires not reconciled within the vocation of the mother figure. Gotch’s sketches of Phyllis (Figures 1.26 and 1.27) further communicated a sense of educated evaluation, choice and possibility encouraged by new forms of knowledge and autonomy for girls.¹⁹⁸ Gotch’s concept of ‘aristocratic dignity’ is reflected in the

¹⁹² Bland, (1995), p.146

¹⁹³ Caffin, (1910), p.932

¹⁹⁴ Marie Stopes, *Married Love*, (New York: The Critic and Guide Company, kindle edition 2013, orig.1918), location 49-50

¹⁹⁵ Stopes, (1918), location 210. June Rose, *Marie Stopes and the Sexual Revolution*, (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Tempus, 2nd edn, 2007, orig. 1992)

¹⁹⁶ Marland, (2013), p.5

¹⁹⁷ Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, (London: Macmillan, 1865). Vidler (1992), on the psychological spaces of buildings. See also Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw*, (1898); Matus (2009); Taylor (1998); Ledger (1997) on William James and new psychology

¹⁹⁸ New forms of knowledge for girls are described in Dyhouse (2013); Marland, (2013) p.4 and p.11; Helen Small and Trudi Tate (eds), *Literature, Science, Psychoanalysis, 1830-1970: Essays in Honour*

bearing of the girl in *The Child Enthroned* and *The Dawn of Womanhood*: ‘He has chosen a young girl clad in rich brocade who looks proudly and without concern at the spectator’ and suggests the modern woman, in the words of Millicent Fawcett, woman ‘thinking wisely.’¹⁹⁹

The unprecedented increase in female agency from the late nineteenth century meant that young women were increasingly able to make more educated choices which could increase their autonomy. New choices ranged from modes of dress, physical culture and travel to enjoying alternatives to marriage, including spinsterhood, free unions or eschewing motherhood. The definition of womanhood through sexual initiation in marriage had meant that women could remain ‘girls’ into their 30s.²⁰⁰ More women were choosing to remain single and were therefore indefinable according to these older categories. While ‘new girls’ undertook a range of new physical activities, reactionary theories concerning the biological limitations of female adolescence were challenged by a growing emphasis on the importance of education and individual behaviour in producing good health. Thus, as Hilary Marland has noted: ‘girls were increasingly deemed responsible for taking care of their own wellbeing.’²⁰¹ Embryonic drives for sex education, as well as the rethinking sexual mores and conventions, accompanied these bids for increased autonomy, choice and responsibility.²⁰² Women made efforts to control their own destiny as opposed to older cultural expectations of becoming ‘child-like’, dependent and passionless wives.²⁰³ In relation to these many changes, adolescence was necessarily undergoing a redefinition as a broader life experience.

of Gillian Beer, (Oxford ; New York : Oxford University Press, 2003), introduction; Gallati, ‘Cult of the Child’, *Art Quarterly*, 2005, pp.50-4; Ellen Key, *The Century of the Child*, (New York : Arno Press, 1972 (orig. c.1909); see Lesley A. Hall, ‘Stopes, Marie Charlotte Carmichael (1880–1958)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Sept 2015 [<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/view/article/36323>, accessed 27th August, 2016) on the efforts of Marie Stopes to develop sex education. On the other hand, the re-enchantment of the child is discussed in Adrienne E. Gavin and Andrew F. Humphries (eds.), *Childhood in Edwardian fiction: worlds enough and time*, (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire [England]; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009)

¹⁹⁹ Mr. W.T. Wright and Miss Kate E. Pierce, *Exhibition of Pictures and Sketches by T. C. Gotch, Alfred East Art Gallery*, (Kettering: Kettering Urban District Council, May 1916), no.29, p.3. Millicent Fawcett, ‘Old Ideals of Womanhood,’ *Woman’s Signal*, (7th May, 1896), p.279

²⁰⁰ Kathryn Gleadle, *British Women in the Nineteenth Century*, (New York: Palgrave, c2001); Dyhouse, (2013)

²⁰¹ Marland, (2013), p.3

²⁰² Otter (2004) on Clapperton. Such efforts were framed predominantly by the languages of protection rather than pleasure, Weeks (2012), p.206

²⁰³ Smith (2011), introduction

Historian Carol Dyhouse has demonstrated how the socialisation of nineteenth century girls through inadequate education and popular literature and reinforced by family dynamics, created subordinate, dependent women.²⁰⁴ However, while girlhood has been considered in largely negative terms, for Gotch's daughter Phyllis, her singing career, travel, including South Africa, and artistic friendships, such as with Laura Knight, were emancipatory. This provides evidence of the possibilities for some middle class girls for self-development through 'cultural exposure', in spite of, or alongside, the cultural emphasis on marriage.²⁰⁵ Indeed, Phyllis did not get married or have children until she was nearly thirty and described in letters to her artist friend Laura Knight the 'adventurous life she would lead' upon marriage and moving to South Africa.²⁰⁶ There is substantial evidence that Phyllis was not brought up in a conventional fashion. Fellow Newlyn colony artist Stanhope Forbes 'disapproved of Caroline's habit of dressing Phyllis as a little boy.'²⁰⁷ Gotch encouraged an independent and free spirit in his daughter, fostered by many theatrical, musical and social activities which the family undertook in Newlyn:

Phyl's habit was to plan and stage innumerable parties as well as dramatic events ...Costumes, singing, dancing and planning...planning...planning the next big event was wilful Phyllis' wont and none could resist her...in preparation for the special events ordained by Caroline Gotch (also an artist) and her daughter Phyllis. Gotch himself found most of this activity wild, expensive, as well as disruptive to his work, and tried hard to curb some of the excesses.²⁰⁸

The rebellion of youth and its relationship with more emancipated, feminist possibilities for women was broached by feminist, social activist and 'New Woman' Jane Clapperton in *Scientific Meliorism and the Evolution of Happiness*, 1885. Clapperton's discussion evidenced a ferocious, unkempt level of change, the 'loud and rampant modernisation' of youthful lives, evident in the modern 'girl of the period'

²⁰⁴ Dyhouse (2013)

²⁰⁵ Especially through occupations such as artists, scientists and musicians: Gleadle, (2001), p.150 and Lomax (2004), on Phyllis' friendship with Laura Knight, p.145

²⁰⁶ Gleadle calls this the 'potential for empowering aspects of girls' socialisation,' (2001), p.5. Letter from Phyllis Gotch to Laura Knight, December, 1912, cited in Lomax (2004), p.145

²⁰⁷ Fox, (1985), p.173, note 13 cites letter from Stanhope Forbes to his mother, 18th July, 1886

²⁰⁸ Untitled extract of a history of the Newlyn artist's colony, Archive Material, Alfred East Art Gallery, Kettering, pp38-43. 'Mornie' was the child model of *The Flag*, (Fig. 1.6), born when Phyllis was 22. See also Lomax, (2004), pp.138-9

versus girls' traditional, bashful, tender modesty.²⁰⁹ Clapperton described the youthful impetus of girls as 'an exuberance of life that is ever-ready to bubble up and overflow [noting that] society is bound to find safe and ready channels for all this surplus energy [in] useful activities.'²¹⁰ Gotch's painting may be usefully framed by Clapperton's feminist investigations into girlhood. In 1910, Caffin described youthful rebellion in Gotch's works, 'the effervescence of the young life bubbles up.'²¹¹ While in letters to his wife in 1895, while painting *Alleluia*, 1896 (Fig.1.28), Gotch divulged the difficulties of being a painter of children: 'My children are difficult, for tho' they are very nice and rather pretty they all make faces and I feel I have too many of them to tackle.'²¹² In Gotch's lecture 'Phases in Art,' 1898, he employed common metaphors of growth, decay, rejuvenation to describe the re-energising force of youthful rebellion:

Everybody knows something about mid-Victorian colour succeeded by the 'greenery yallery' period, in its turn superseded by the cornflower blue, the tango, and the more barbaric colours of today. It looks as though each period, sick of a phase which has ceased to stimulate, were born in a daring and enthusiastic revolt from the past and having achieved a mellow prime, in its turn ceased to stimulate a jaded taste, and so produced the conditions necessary for a new revolt.²¹³

In this painting, Gotch suggested that cultural responsibilities, inheritance and unconscious memory, sat awkwardly with natural youthful rebellion and energy, as well as the widened prospects for the 'New Girl'. Though the enthroned girl seems imprisoned, Gotch is able to encapsulate ideas of escape and rebellion, through viewers' understandings of youth as a moment of superfluous energy, will and irreverence: 'for this child, though momentarily exalted where our imagination places it, will slip down from the throne, glide out of its brocaded furnishings, and relax its limbs and mind in a heedless romp.'²¹⁴ And in Gotch's *A Jest*, (Fig. 1.29), the artist

²⁰⁹ Clapperton (1885), pp.141-2

²¹⁰ Clapperton, (1885), p.144

²¹¹ Caffin, (1910), p.930

²¹² Letter from Gotch to his wife Carrie Gotch, (undated, 1896), cited in Lomax (2004), p.112

²¹³ Gotch (1898), p.7

²¹⁴ Caffin, (1910), p.927

deployed *trompe l'œil* effect visual trickery to create a constricted architectural niche from which Phyllis emerges with jubilant triumph.²¹⁵

The Dawn of Womanhood articulated the contradictions in cultural discourse between venerating and, as Clapperton described, 'hedging in' girls, and allowing their freer development and behaviour. The painting simultaneously presented conventional forms of idealisation and a type of 'protection' bordering on imprisonment, alongside new democratising impulses for autonomy and knowledge through female agency and the feminist movement. Clapperton's description of youth flooding culture with unstoppable new energies and infectious spirit was firmly conjoined with her ideas for radical feminism and revisions to sexual conventions.²¹⁶ The figure of the girl in *The Dawn of Womanhood* may thus present the hope of youth's fearless rupture with the past as a vehicle for wider social change and feminist possibility. The new generation of girls would enact the changes which feminism prophesied in a feminist 'dawn of womanhood.'

A Feminist Dawn of Womanhood

By painting a girl enacting unconscious memory, the artist explored the choices faced by girls in adolescence and the tensions this moment brought. Within British culture in the late nineteenth century girls were torn between the renunciation of the self which would be inherent to motherhood and the allied preservation of transcendent cultural memory, and concurrent desires for autonomy and personal development expressed within feminism and also within child psychology.²¹⁷ Gotch represented the innocent child in *The Child Enthroned* and the un-self-conscious girl in *The Dawn of Womanhood*. In doing so, the artist engaged with ongoing debates especially active in

²¹⁵ Patrick Bruce Hepburn, *Thomas Cooper Gotch: The Making of the Artist*, (Kettering: Alfred East Gallery, 1994)

²¹⁶ Clapperton advocated unitary homes for example and maligned marriage as a dead convention. Her 'new woman' novel is discussed in Ledger, (1997)

²¹⁷ Anne Digby, 'Women's biological straitjacket', in Susan Mendus and Jane Rendall, *Sexuality and Subordination: Interdisciplinary Studies of Gender in the Nineteenth Century*, (London; New York: Routledge, 1989), pp.192-220, explored the limiting nature of woman's role as 'race mother'. Other scholarship emphasises the attractiveness of motherhood and later eugenics to feminists desiring increased autonomy and influence, including Bland (1995) and Maroula Joannou, 'Chloe Liked Olivia': The Woman Scientist, Sex and Suffrage,' in Small and Tate (2003), pp.195-211

the last three decades of the nineteenth century, about the child, the individual and social role.²¹⁸

In performing the duty of unconscious memory, Gotch depicted the child in a heightened state of passivity noted by various viewers. Psychologist James Sully commented in 1885: ‘we are learning to connect the individual life with that of the race’ and this process could result in the ‘loss of the child voice,’ subsumed into the evolution of the race.²¹⁹ John Caffin wrote in 1910 regarding *The Child Enthroned*: ‘Very remarkable indeed is the convincing assertion of this child without a vestige of self-assertion or self-consciousness.’²²⁰ A catalogue for an exhibition of Gotch’s paintings at the Alfred East Gallery, 1916 deployed the following text to describe *The Flag*, 1910: ‘The child had “the Flag” thrust into its unconscious hand, and must carry it on. All we hold dear must be entrusted to the successive generations, to be cherished and maintained.’²²¹ The same catalogue also explained *The Heir to All the Ages*, 1899: ‘The child enters unconsciously into the possession of the treasures of the past.’²²² This description echoes Caffin’s of 1910:

She holds a reliquary, the repository of the bones and relics of the past. It has been put into her hands, which also seem to have been arranged around it, for they do not consciously grasp their burden. Nor in the child’s face is there any comprehension of its meaning or value, only a certain awed submission, as if she had been summoned from her play to assume this role.²²³

In Gotch’s paintings, the child and the girl become vehicles of automatic actions, deriving import from the instinct of ages. Gotch shows the influence of Butler’s ideas about unconscious memory in *Life and Habit*, 1878, where Butler described a child’s memory of actions undertaken ‘when in the persons of its forefathers’, ‘the latency of that memory until it is rekindled’ and ‘the unconsciousness with which habitual

²¹⁸ Debates questioned the ‘rights’, responsibilities and privileges of cultural inheritance and the boundaries of personal identity as described in Taylor and Shuttleworth, (1998) and Taylor, (1997), p.143

²¹⁹ Sally Shuttleworth, ‘The Psychology of Childhood in Victorian literature and Medicine,’ Small and Tate (2003), pp.86-101; James Sully, Introduction to Bernard Perez, *The First Three Years of Childhood*, (London, Swan Sonnenschein, 1885), pp.v-ix, cited in Taylor and Shuttleworth, (1998), p. 345

²²⁰ Caffin, (1910), p.927

²²¹ Wright and Pierce, (1916), p.2

²²² Wright and Pierce, (1916), no.29, p.3

²²³ Caffin, (1910), p.929

actions come.’²²⁴ Scholars Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth have highlighted how the child in this period was perceived variously as the sum of ancestors ‘acting a drama,’ an ‘unconscious witness’ and a ‘stage on which old battles are endlessly re-enacted’, rather than an independent individual.²²⁵

In his writings on unconscious memory, Samuel Butler had also provided hope of immortality, conceiving of all life interconnected in backward extension, as part of an immense, continuous spirit life, a ‘huge compound creature, LIFE.’²²⁶ Throughout his writings, Butler implored humanity to:

extend our conception of memory so as to make it embrace involuntary (and also unconscious) reproductions of sensations, ideas, perceptions, and efforts; but we find, on having done so, that we have so far enlarged her boundaries that she proves to be an ultimate and original power, the source and, at the same time, the unifying bond, of our whole conscious life.²²⁷

Feminist spiritual constructs similarly featured the absorption of the individual within a greater cosmic whole.²²⁸ The ‘awakening’ of women, in contemporary languages of feminism, was always about more than the personal development of women and invested hope in womanhood for the regeneration of all humanity. Notably in *The Awakening of Women*, 1897, Frances Swiney considers an awakening to feminist consciousness contiguous with women’s special role in the spiritual and moral revival of humanity. In a much wider context, feminism embraced roles of motherhood and moral guardianship of the race, which conjoined duty and diligence akin to martyrdom, with more significant roles in the evolution of humanity. These views, propounded by many feminists including Ellen Key, Annie Besant, Charlotte Perkins Gilman and many others, enjoyed extensive cultural currency amongst men and women. These ideas could be expressed through Gotch’s icons of ‘frozen perfection.’

²²⁴ Butler, (1880), p.1

²²⁵ Taylor and Shuttleworth, (1998), p.72

²²⁶ Reed, (1975), p.419; Butler, (1878), p.104. William Sharp also promoted a version of racial heredity in *Flavia Alaya*, (1905), pp.37-8, which expresses ideas also encapsulated in Sharp’s poem ‘Motherhood’, cited in Reed (1975), p.430

²²⁷ Butler, (1880), p.68

²²⁸ This idea pervades Swiney (1906) and Blavatsky (1889)

Gotch's images are like mystic pronouncements in which women are the key to a divine pattern. As art critic Lewis Hind wrote, 'These pictures were heralds.'²²⁹

The radiant woman the girl encounters in *The Dawn of Womanhood* presented great and undetermined hope for the future. This was a period, described historian Sheila Rowbotham, 'marked by an imaginative fluidity in which fictional allegories and utopias could have practical consequences.'²³⁰ In an American feminist utopia published in 1902, the future is also revealed by 'a radiant' woman 'in flowing, graceful robes.'²³¹ Ennobled, dazzling women in elegant robes appeared in various socialist and feminist imaginings in this period of a better, fairer future.²³² In Gotch's *Holy Motherhood*, 1902, Caffin further identifies a broader spiritual role for women. The two older figures in the painting:

have realised their vocation. It is not motherhood, but of art, of those who, in some specific art or in the general art of living, make the music of life and help on the regeneration of the race by the inspiration of the ideal...The minds of both sexes ...are fixing their hope of human amelioration more and more upon their belief in womanhood: that she has it in her to be the perpetual Rising Sun, the Redeemer, and the Saviour.²³³

Such related hopes for humanity's regeneration are evident in both *The Child Enthroned* and *The Dawn of Womanhood*. Feminists located sources of power and strength for women through roles which were both dutiful and divine. Deified womanhood could also advance women's personal autonomy and fulfilment in a feminist awakening. Gotch further invested hopes in emancipated, sexually mature women, whose potential in terms of development and fulfilment, as well as for the redemption of the race, are explored in *Death the Bride*.

²²⁹ Gotch (1898), p.9; Hind, (1896), p.279

²³⁰ Sheila Rowbotham, *Dreamers of a New Day: Women who Invented the Twentieth Century*, (London; New York, Verso, 2010), p.12

²³¹ Winifred Harper Cooley, 'A Dream of the Twenty-First Century,' (1902), in Carol Farey Kessler, *Daring to Dream: Utopian Stories by United States Women, 1836-1919*, (Boston; London: Pandora Press, 1984), p.207. Cooley was an American Suffragist and novelist, see also Rowbotham (2010), p.245

²³² Beaumont, (2001), p.213; Chapter Two of the thesis; Kessler (1984); Rowbotham (2010)

²³³ Caffin, (1910), p.932 and pp.925-6

Part Three: *Death the Bride*, 1894

In *Death the Bride*, Gotch turned his attention away from the virginal innocent, to the mature woman as the Bride. Here the smiling, enigmatic figure of *Death the Bride* beckons humanity to journey with her to new, unknown frontiers. While the painting featured aspects of the *femme fatale* which would have been familiar to viewers, Gotch moved beyond this convention. Instead of using the Symbolist construct of woman as demonic, bestial or perverse, the diseased, malignant purveyor of death, Gotch countered phantasmagorical, erotic elements of his painting with elevated spiritual meanings.²³⁴ The painting dealt with a familiar matrix of sex, death and spirituality but recast womanhood as both sexual and spiritual, in a more positive combination than the polarised dichotomy of ‘virgin’ and ‘whore’. In the Bride’s role, bringing death as a form of new life, the image may be framed by feminist writings about woman’s spiritual potency as the redeemer of humanity. Despite being forged within *fin de siècle* gloom, fear of the ‘New Woman’ and ominous signs of degeneration and decline, Gotch’s complex image featured woman, rather than a vampire-like force for decline, as the heroic saviour of the future.

When *Death the Bride* was exhibited in the 1890s, viewers noted the conspicuous features which accorded with the polarised visual convention of the *femme fatale*, described by art historian Sharon Hirsh as ‘the evil seductress who tempts man and brings about his destruction.’²³⁵ Such images proliferated in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Gotch’s willingness to court the Decadent created uncomfortable viewing and censure of the ‘ghastly grinning female figure, covered with a diaphanous black veil,’ with an ‘unpleasant’, ‘malignant expression.’²³⁶ Viewers connected the *Bride* with the convention of the monstrous woman, a vampire, a bestial woman, or a snake: ‘It is not a pleasant figure look at, this woman with sneering face and snake-like eyes.’²³⁷ The life-size work had the ability to stun or paralyse the (male) viewer, stopping them in their tracks: ‘taking a glance of the

²³⁴ Dijkstra (1986); Mathews (1999), pp.92-107, especially on women and bestiality

²³⁵ Hirsh, (2004), pp.130-2

²³⁶ *The Globe*, (14th May, 1895), Tate Press Cuttings. Note: this is one of a collection of abbreviated newspaper references to untitled, dated excerpts which are collected together in a Press Cuttings Folder in the Tate Archive: TGA 9019/1/8 - Miscellaneous personal papers, exhibition catalogues and press cuttings. They are noted in this chapter in their abbreviated form followed by Tate Press Cuttings. They are listed alphabetically under Unpublished Material, Tate Britain Archive in the Bibliography.

²³⁷ *Manchester Courier*, (14th May, 1895), Tate Press Cuttings

galleries in their numerical order, attention is first arrested by a curious composition bearing the weird title of *Death the Bride*.²³⁸ The inherent sexual invitation could also induce anxiety: 'As an antidote Mrs Gotch contributes a calm domestic subject.'²³⁹ In *Death the Bride*, the artist shared the Symbolist aim to evince and encourage unspeakable, instinctive, irrational responses from viewers to emerge, from beneath the surface veneer of civilisation, which can fall away under the 'spell' of the *femme*.²⁴⁰

There were a number of cultural constructs of woman and death. Passive constructs included the sick and weakened, consumptive woman or the suicidal 'fallen woman.' One reviewer misnamed the picture, *Death of the Bride* as artistic narratives of aberrant or 'fallen woman' punished by sickness, death and cathartic death-bed scenes were prolific.²⁴¹ The work was also connected at the time and since, with the 'Rossetti tradition.' Rossetti's *Beata Beatrix*, 1870 is the most comparable work. However, Rossetti's Beatrice is a dying victim. Gotch's painting is fundamentally different to these known constructs, in a profound iconic format, the *Bride is Death itself*. Woman is the arbiter of the boundary between life and death, of the journey beyond the veil and offers the experience of death as transcendence or a path to a new life.

These ideas may be contextualised by the occult context of the late nineteenth century, where much hope was invested in interrogating the boundary of life and death. Tennyson's popular mid-Victorian poem *In Memoriam* (1849) had described death in Christian terms as a passage, rather than a snapping shut of life. Contemporary reviews such as the *Oldham Standard* in 1895 deemed the work 'Tennysonian inspired,' a connection reaffirmed in secondary material.²⁴² Gotch's use of the phrase 'the veil

²³⁸ *Hastings Independent*, (9th May, 1895). Other similar comments included: 'The first picture to attract attention,' *Sunday Times*, (5th May, 1894); the picture 'at once challenges attention,' *Newcastle Journal*, (4th May, 1895); "'Death the Bride" strikes us first,' *Echo* (5th May, 1895), Tate Press Cuttings. Lomax also notes that she captivated the viewer with her 'beckoning movement' cited in Lomax, (2004), p.7

²³⁹ *Newcastle Journal*, (4th May, 1895), Tate Press Cuttings.

²⁴⁰ The visual and literary tradition of predatory woman with a mesmeric hold is discussed with reference to Haggard's *She*, serialised in *The Graphic* 1886-7 in Stott, (1992), p.98 and p.38; the vampire sisters in *Dracula*, are cited in Dijkstra (1986), p.345

²⁴¹ *Manchester Courier*, (14th May, 1895), Tate Press Cuttings; there were many examples of aberrant, dying and fallen women in Victorian literature including characters in works by George Eliot, aberrant Cathy in Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, (1847). Figures in paintings by Rossetti, operatic figures such as Mimi in Puccini's, *La Boheme* (1896) and Violetta in Verdi's *La Traviata*, (1853). Symbolism and the death bed scene are discussed in Hirsh (2004), pp.124-6

²⁴² *Oldham Standard*, (11th May, 1895), Tate Press Cuttings; Anderson and Wright, (1994), p.79

divides' in his poem about the painting suggested Spiritualist explorations into communication after death undertaken within the auspices of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR).²⁴³ Journalist William T. Stead, who was responsible for the 'Maiden Tribute' articles also explored the beyond in a series of publicised conversations with the dead in his journal *Borderland* in the 1890s and 1900s.²⁴⁴ The imagery of *The Dawn of Womanhood* had displayed vividly the influence of the Spiritualist movement on Gotch's work. Theosophical tenets promulgated by the Theosophical Society, founded in 1875, offered a promise of higher planes of existence which transcended the physical realm and of reincarnation.²⁴⁵ Belief in telepathy, ghosts and reincarnation could go hand in hand, described historian Patrick Brantlinger with particular reference to Rudyard Kipling and H. Rider Haggard.²⁴⁶ Theosophical and occult interpretations of death influenced Symbolist painters, who desired transcendence of the physical realm.²⁴⁷ Such interpretations co-existed with and embellished the Christian narrative, with new comfort of communication beyond death. New understandings seemed to confirm the Christian message that death is not the end: 'There is no death...still it is but a journey!' as exclaimed in a 1932 review of Gotch's painting.²⁴⁸

'Life Through Death'

The connections between woman and death as new life, were made incisively in Gotch's poem about the painting:

And as I move
Through an obscure and poppied world, behold,
a shrouded form that seems to question me!
Is this the dread Destroyer Death? is this
the end? Ah no! The pallid arms are raised,

²⁴³ Oppenheim (1985) discusses the SPR. See also material on Oliver Lodge in Chapter Two of the thesis

²⁴⁴ Brantlinger (1988) notes that Kipling and Haggard 'often discussed telepathy, ghosts and reincarnation,' p.248

²⁴⁵ Oppenheim (1985), pp.159-197

²⁴⁶ Brantlinger, (1988), p.248. Though many theosophists, such as Blavatsky, wished to keep their distance from Spiritualism and its interest in ghosts, Oppenheim, (1985), p.165

²⁴⁷ Mathews, (1999), p.95

²⁴⁸ 'Memorial Exhibition: T. C. Gotch', *Kettering Leader*, (15th April, 1932), copy consulted in Archive Material, Alfred East Art Gallery, Kettering

the veil divides, a faint sigh breathes my name,
And lo! not night, but dawn; not death but life,
Or better, Life through Death, yea Death the Bride!²⁴⁹

Gotch used exhilarating languages of spiritual renewal and transfiguration, such as his words: 'And lo! not night, but dawn; not death but life'. These languages were found in feminist, socialist, transcendental and theosophical writings from the late nineteenth century. These texts imagined the possibilities of new life through death and reincarnation.²⁵⁰ Socialism with its potential of transformation of social relations could also hope to transform gender and sexual relations; the utopian tradition inherited from Marx and Engels believed in the all-embracing nature of love (between men and women) as part of a new world.²⁵¹ It was noted in an article in the *Kettering Leader*, 1932 that Gotch was 'a lecturer who admired the life and philosophy of Nature-lovers like Edward Carpenter.'²⁵² Carpenter had critiqued 'civilisation' as 'a kind of disease which the various races of man have to pass through...to a more normal and healthy condition,' in *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, 1889. Important symptoms of Carpenter's sick civilisation included women's oppression and capitalism. Passing through the sickness brought the possibility of transfiguration and 'a new life.'²⁵³

Feminists conceived of the death of forms of oppression, the patriarchal order and of restrictive female 'types'. One viewer mistitled the painting 'The Death of the Bride.' However, instead of the familiar image of woman, the passive victim of death, the painting could refer to the death of the stultifying convention of marriage.²⁵⁴ Such a death would mean the consequent passage to a new life, predicated on the death of old forms of patriarchy within a sick 'civilisation'.²⁵⁵ The painting of *Death the Bride*

²⁴⁹ 'Lines on Death by Thomas Cooper Gotch,' undated, Archive Material, Alfred East Art Gallery, Kettering. Acc. No.98

²⁵⁰ West, (1993), p.134; Livesey (2007), pp.6-14. Rowbotham highlights the links between transcendentalists and feminism, (2010), p.28. The writings of Walt Whitman and Edward Carpenter were also being revived at this time by radicals in London writes Livesey, (2007), p.78

²⁵¹ Weeks, (2012), p.216

²⁵² 'Memorial Exhibition: T. C. Gotch', *Kettering Leader*, (15th April, 1932), copy consulted in Archive Material, Alfred East Art Gallery, Kettering

²⁵³ Edward Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, (1889, reprinted at <https://www.forgottenbooks.com> accessed 27th August, 2016), p.15. This idea was developed in Carpenter's later *The Drama of Love and Death: A Study of Human Evolution and Transfiguration*, (1912)

²⁵⁴ *Manchester Courier*, (14th May, 1895), Tate Press Cuttings

²⁵⁵ Types of 'death' included the denial of personhood rather than good health and life. Such ideas feature in the writings of Sarah Grand, Mona Caird, Jane Clapperton, Olive Schreiner (especially *Dreams*); Swiney (1899) and Fawcett, (1896) amongst others

coincided with the arrival of the ‘New Woman’, who inspired a profusion of *femme fatale* images at the end of the nineteenth century. ‘New Woman’ writers unreservedly attacked social conventions such as marriage and motherhood. Various critiques of marriage centred fearlessly on the wife’s duties as akin to prostitution, her defenceless legal and physical position, alongside her atrophying mental position in the private sphere.²⁵⁶

Marriage could pose life-threatening danger to women through lack of sexual knowledge, resulting in violence, imprisonment, disease or marital rape. The ‘pallid face’ of the Bride, as viewers described Gotch’s painting in 1896, was a state produced through the terrors of male sexual transgressions.²⁵⁷ Older Suffragettes recalled in the 1920s the: ‘more sordid problems of sex...And a memory comes of a pallid individual who raised her head from her pillow to whisper that her wedding night had been a dreadful revelation to her.’²⁵⁸ In contrast to the standard *femme* narrative of *male* demise, in contemporary feminist imaginations, such as ‘New Woman’ literature, the Bride could speak of the types of mental and spiritual ‘deaths’ effected by marriage and motherhood. Mona Caird wrote in *The Daughters of Danaus*, 1894:

children have been the unfailing means of bringing women into line with tradition. An appeal to the maternal instinct had quenched the hardest spirit of revolt. No wonder the instinct had been so unimpeded and exalted!²⁵⁹

Such oppression, atrophy and neglect meant that women in the nineteenth century lived with suppressed vitality, self-expression, consciousness or identity, forsaken to the duties of self-abnegation.²⁶⁰ Women existed in a dormant, sleepy state of night and death akin to that pictured in *Death the Bride*. Within feminist scholarship, the metaphorical death of ideals of woman such as the ‘clinging woman,’ the soft, flexible woman, or the passive angel would make space for Clapperton’s ‘girl of the period’

²⁵⁶ Discussed in detail in Bland (1995), pp.124-188, Sarah Grand and the consequences on heredity in *The Heavenly Twins*, (London: William Heinemann, 1893), p.148; see also Ledger (1997)

²⁵⁷ *Sheffield Telegraph*, (May, 1896), Tate Press Cuttings

²⁵⁸ Weeks, (2012), p.208

²⁵⁹ Mona Caird, *The Daughters of Danaus*, (1894), in A. R. Cunningham, ‘The “New Women” Fiction of the 1890s,’ *Victorian Studies*, XVII, No.2, December, 1973, p.183, in Weeks, (2012), p.213

²⁶⁰ Weeks, (2012), p.212; see also Banks, (1986)

or the 'New Woman.' Such women had intelligence, strength and choice: the women of the future.²⁶¹

Feminists used spiritual languages to imagine social change.²⁶² Swiney's poem 'Illumination' of 1906 could describe the emergence of the knowledgeable Bride through the darkness and death of old structures in Gotch's painting:

A voice in the darkness, a whisper,
Low, sweet, insistent, clear;
And, hush! The silence speaketh:
...
A touch of a hand invisible,
A rending of chains of lead;
The old self sinks below me,
And I live, who once was dead.²⁶³

The Bride is a female spirit, rising phoenix-like, 'who once was dead', a potent image of women's 'awakening' comparable to Swiney's.²⁶⁴ From the late nineteenth century, discourses of regeneration echoed religious languages which continued to develop through to the 1920s. Historian Patrick Brantlinger described Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's beliefs in the 'fall of the City of Man [leading] to a new world', wherein Spiritualism and mysticism provided new hope for the 'realm of the spirit...the world beyond reality, an invisible, even more glorious empire rising ghostlike out of the corpse of the old.'²⁶⁵ In a similar way, occult writings evoked women's divinity: 'woman must recover her lost soul, or the consciousness of it...man has deprived woman of the consciousness that she is an immortal soul inhabiting a physical and mortal body.'²⁶⁶ A rapturous reuniting with their immortal spirituality was a key component of women's contemporary 'awakening' in theosophical writings. Passing through the forms of death imposed by patriarchal oppression, woman may be resurrected to new forms of life.

²⁶¹ Clapperton (1885), pp.141-2; Sarah Grand cited in Bland (1995), p.148; Fawcett, (1896), p.279

²⁶² Reed has argued that by the late nineteenth century, occult manifestations in literature were a form of social protest,' Reed, (1975), p.473

²⁶³ 'Illumination', Swiney, (1906), p. xv

²⁶⁴ Swiney, (1906), p. xv

²⁶⁵ Brantlinger (1988), pp.252-3

²⁶⁶ D. Harij, 'Theosophy and the Social Evil', *Lucifer*, May 1891, 189, in Dixon (c.2001), pp.156-7n

As explored in relation to *The Child Enthroned*, feminists also commandeered Christian languages of death and resurrection and imagined a female Messiah. Frances Swiney described in *The Cosmic Procession*, 1906, how, in the Second Coming, Christ would appear in her true form, the Divine Daughter, who would complete the work begun by the 'Son':

It is well to mark that in the apotheosis of the Christ in Revelations He appears with woman's breasts, girt round with a golden girdle. According to an ancient tradition, Christ will reappear on the earth as the Daughter, not as the Son. He will also be perfected in "the Day of the Woman."²⁶⁷

The arrival of the Bride through the darkness in Gotch's painting, could illustrate this Second Coming, of divine woman.

Death the Bride as 'Spiritual Art'

As Gotch identified mature sexual and spiritual woman as the source of humanity's regeneration and redemption in *Death the Bride*, constructs of spirituality also pervaded his creation of the painting. A visionary impetus impelled Gotch to apply carefully layered paint which held inherent possibilities for articulating what the artist termed: 'the phanstasy...the diablerie, the thrill, the mystery and the romance of life and nature.'²⁶⁸ *Death the Bride* started as a realistic portrait of Gertude Boddinar in a black veil (Fig. 1.30) but Gotch described how he had gone beyond this and tried to create something which 'could only be called truth because it was beauty', a spiritual beauty since the woman was 'not of this world.'²⁶⁹ Gotch also intimated that he found an original conception of death that 'came to him suddenly while he was casually making a charcoal sketch...and there emerged the germ of a picture.'²⁷⁰

There was a widespread belief in a transformative, alchemic process occurring during the creation of artworks, which enabled a mystical mode of seeing the secrets of nature.²⁷¹ Alchemy had broader cultural meaning than the historical search for the 'philosopher's stone,' which was believed to create magical, precious substances from

²⁶⁷ Frances Swiney, *The Ancient Road or the Development of the Soul*, (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1918), p.376 and Swiney, (1906), p.75

²⁶⁸ Gotch (1919), p.17

²⁶⁹ Gotch cited in Lomax, (2004), p.106

²⁷⁰ Lomax, (2004), p.107

²⁷¹ Facos, (2009), p.104

base materials. Lewis Hind in 1896, intimated Gotch's persistent interest in this idea: 'many men have sought for the philosopher's stone...drawn to speculation and experiments relating to the secret of the old masters of painting.'²⁷² On learning in 1878 of Mr Samuel Lawrence, whose fame was based 'on the strength of his own pronouncement that he had discovered the secret of the old masters,' Gotch, at the age of twenty-two, eagerly journeyed to his studio to discover them, spending three years under his tutelage. There, Hind claims, the artist learnt something, 'far too technical to explain'.²⁷³ In *Death the Bride*, Gotch developed a number of effects he had not previously employed, such as the exploration of subtle shades and depths of darkness, exploiting evanescent effects and the possibilities of an allied, psychologically suggestive viewing process. Contradicting his well-known use of bright, pure colours and his fondness for light, and due to his reverence for the Old Masters, Gotch felt drawn to the associative effects of a heavy dark palette to emulate the sobriety, authority, austere and meditative impact of such works. Viewers confirmed how 'the method of painting decided, simple, and devoid of brush marks, is peculiarly suited to the subject.'²⁷⁴ Crucially, Gotch employs his conscientious technical methods to mystical ends.

The aspiration to artistic alchemy is effected through the enigmatic figure of woman as a spiritual guide or Seer, holding 'secret knowledge,' as described in a later review, 1932.²⁷⁵ Gotch entrusts woman to guard and manage the secrets of the natural world, of life and death 'beyond the veil', since she is the hope for redemption for humanity's sins of progress and, as death, may access the mystical Eternal rather than rationally determined finite time. Mystery and magic are conjured through the visual reference to the *Mona Lisa*. and the mysterious *Giaconda* smile. Walter Pater, in *The Renaissance*, had described Leonardo:

giving immortality to the subtlest and most delicate effects of painting...possessed of curious secrets and a hidden knowledge...the spirit of the older alchemy [has] confidence in short cuts and odd byways to knowledge...divining the sources of springs beneath the earth or of the

²⁷² Hind, (1896), p.274

²⁷³ Hind, (1896), p.276

²⁷⁴ *Torquay Directory*, (8th May, 1895), Tate Press Cuttings

²⁷⁵ 'Memorial Exhibition: T. C. Gotch', *Kettering Leader*, (15th April, 1932), copy consulted in Archive Material, Alfred East Art Gallery, Kettering

expression beneath the human countenance...[as] occult gifts in common
or uncommon things²⁷⁶

Aesthetic techniques, such as the layering of paint and use of veils, corresponded with contemporary occult languages which imagined the secret nature of the Universe, invisible, lying beyond thresholds; 'divine wisdom' could be found through passing through various stages of initiation.²⁷⁷ Symbolist artists in Britain and across Europe were exploring the imagery of veils and ethereality, haziness and a resulting mystifying viewing experience.²⁷⁸ Gotch's methods encouraged the clairvoyance of viewers to determine what Pater termed 'occult gifts' within his paintings, imagining and exploring knowledge beneath the layers, guided by the figure of woman.²⁷⁹

Viewers consistently highlighted the veil and the poppies as part of a shrouding, layering technique within the painting's composition: 'covered with a diaphanous black veil and standing shoulder deep in poppies.'²⁸⁰ The Bride's face was 'seen through a mist of black gauze and a screen of scarlet and purple poppies that fill the foreground.'²⁸¹ Gotch believed that secrets could be instilled between his layers of paint, as they were in the works of the Old Masters and thus emphasised surface shine using heavy finish to conceal and screen the more significant truths of the Universe, held by the Bride. Contrary to dominant modes of viewing and masculine unveiling of woman, in the *Bride*, the woman has the strength and control to tear aside the veil herself, revealing the prospect of the next world for man. Gotch described this in his poem: 'The pallid arms are raised/The veil divides.' The Bride unveils herself as noted by viewers: 'with her right hand, [she] draws aside her thin black veil revealing a countenance of sweet sadness.'²⁸² Gotch undermined the male dominance of gazing and unveiling, in the same way as he insists on the necessity for all humanity to be humble and modest before the Unseen world and 'Spiritual Law', as described in his

²⁷⁶ Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, orig.1873), pp.68-9

²⁷⁷ Ideas which featured in highly influential occult texts like Edouard Schuré, *Les Grands Initiés*, (Paris: Perrin, 1883); West, (1993), p.116; Stott, (1992), p.92

²⁷⁸ For example, Kuenzli (c.2010), discusses the works of Odilon Redon, p.134; Mathews, (1999), Alphonse Osbert, p.118. Barbara Bryant discusses G.F. Watts and ideas of 'the veil,' in Wilton (1997), p.73

²⁷⁹ Pater, (1873), p.69

²⁸⁰ *Manchester Courier*, (14th May, 1895), Tate Press Cuttings; other examples in *Leeds Mercury*, (13th May, 1895); *Bazaar*, (13th May, 1895)

²⁸¹ *Echo*, (5th May, 1895), Tate Press Cuttings

²⁸² 'Lines on Death by Thomas Cooper Gotch,' undated, Archive Material, Alfred East Art Gallery, Kettering. Acc. No.98; *Torquay Directory*, (8th May, 1895); Tate Press Cuttings; Hind, (1896), p.279

lecture of 1919.²⁸³ Gotch included the following lines in an untitled sonnet dated 4th August, 1915:

O! For some potent charm
To still the throbbing of this world of woe,
Some spell to solve the tangle of these times²⁸⁴

Gotch undoubtedly located in women the hope for such spiritual transformations.

Woman, ‘Companion of Man’

Mediating the profound implications of woman as death or spiritual Seer, the association of Christian ideology meant that the picture conformed to more traditional constructs of womanhood, suited to the conservative audiences of the Royal Academy. Moderating associations with sexual knowledge, the occult and women’s spiritual acuity, Gotch’s female Messiah remained, by definition, the saviour of man. Christian virtues of love and tenderness could also serve to tranquilise women’s assertions and ambitions, lulling or luring her to domestic confinement. Via Christian and other traditional suggestions like the Shakespeare reference in the title, male viewers could imagine the Bride as the contented, waiting woman, providing her beleaguered husband with comfort.²⁸⁵ The idealised ‘household nun’ or household ‘angel’ would naturally rise to meet her returning husband, complete with beaming children in the mode of George Elgar Hick’s popular series of paintings, *Woman’s Mission: Companion of Manhood*, 1863, Coventry Patmore’s poem ‘The Angel in the House’ (1854-63) and John Ruskin’s discussion ‘Of Queens’ Gardens’, from *Sesame and Lilies* (1865).²⁸⁶

Allusions to sanctified, Pre-Raphaelite ‘types’ provided a shortcut to forms of Christian morality, since these spiritual and by that time, canonised, artworks could impart ideals of feminine purity or grace. Viewers perceived allusions to the art of the

²⁸³ Gotch (1919), p.1

²⁸⁴ Thomas Cooper Gotch, untitled sonnet, 4th August, 1915, Tate Archive, 9019/2/6/27 in TGA 9019/2/6/23-35 Poetry probably written by Thomas Cooper Gotch 1914-1915

²⁸⁵ William Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, (London: Penguin Books, 2005, orig. 1969); Claudio, Act 3, scene 1, lines 82-4:

‘If I must die, I will encounter darkness as a bride
And hug it in mine arms’

²⁸⁶ Hatt and Klonk (2006), pp.160-1; Martha Vicinus, (ed.), *Suffer and be Still: Women in the Victorian Age*, (London: Methuen, 1980, c1972), includes discussion of Ruskin’s lecture

Pre-Raphaelites as providing ‘the last refinement of allegoric beauty.’²⁸⁷ Through the Bride’s ‘countenance of sweet sadness, [t]here is a restraint of power and grace about this picture alike attractive’ Gotch rehearsed the Pre-Raphaelite combination of sexuality and spirituality.²⁸⁸ Millais painted *Ophelia*, 1851-2 drifting to death in a surround of flowers and a Tennysonian rumination on beauty and death in *Autumn Leaves*, 1855-6, while Frederick Sandys painted death as sleep and forgetting in the form of a woman with poppies, in a chalk drawing entitled *Lethe*, of c.1874.²⁸⁹ In Rossetti’s *Beata Beatrix*, 1870, a heightened spiritual reverie is also erotic ecstasy, combining love, sex, sanctity and self-sacrifice.²⁹⁰

Pre-Raphaelite modes of womanhood were linked with Christian ideals of female passivity and self-abnegation but also with the positive implications of spiritual strength and goodness. This construct is found in works by Frederick Cayley Robinson as well as Maurice Denis. In Gotch’s trip to Florence, which comprised largely of viewing annunciation scenes and Madonnas, the artist found grace and tenderness, sanctity, yet also wisdom and divinity in these representations.²⁹¹ A similar mode of womanhood to the Pre-Raphaelite or Burne-Jones ‘type’ was adopted as a visual and ideological form by many feminists, who continued to frame their reform endeavours with ideals of female spiritual and moral superiority. Esoteric Christianity developed models of female divinity which were couched within languages of sanctity. Josephine Butler described the desirability for ‘grace’ among the new generation of educated young women.²⁹² While the Bride’s red hair and other elements of the Pre-Raphaelite representations also suggested sexuality, desire and transgression, ultimately the Rossetti allusion encompassed a number of recognisable and comforting associations with womanhood, and served to further stabilise the viewing process for those at the Academy.

²⁸⁷ *British Times*, (4th May, 1895), Tate Press Cuttings

²⁸⁸ *Torquay Directory*, (8th May, 1895), Tate Press Cuttings

²⁸⁹ Noted in Gail-Nina Anderson and Joanne Wright, *Heaven on Earth: The Religion of Beauty in Late Victorian Art*, (Djanogly Art Gallery, University of Nottingham Arts Centre in association with Lund Humphries, London, 1994), p.79

²⁹⁰ For discussions of spirituality, sex and death, see Regina Barreca, (ed.), *Sex and death in Victorian literature*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990)

²⁹¹ Gotch (1898); Hind (1896)

²⁹² Josephine Butler, letter to Stanley Butler, 17th June, 1895, The Butler Papers, The Women’s Library, London School of Economics, cited in Caine, (1992), pp.251-2

Gotch further balanced the potentially disruptive language of the *femme* with methods and conventions that accorded with his position as a male artist within a well-connected family, deriving life-long income from portrait painting, including officials in his home town of Kettering and exhibiting regularly at the Royal Academy. Reading the *femme fatale* is often deceptive, legibility is limited; she has an attractive visual appearance, ‘held in tension with the desire to uncover her hidden essence.’ The secret of her, her motivation, where she comes from gives her a ‘status as a locus of mystery.’²⁹³ However through the subject of the Bride, Gotch dispenses with secrecy; the bride was notably less mysterious in origin, having undertaken the normal ‘coming out’, courting and marital societal rituals.²⁹⁴

Increased knowability was inscribed through artistic method, causing comparisons with *The Child Enthroned*. The face and hands received much attention from viewers who noted ‘the technique is excellent the painting of the face and hands especially good.’²⁹⁵ Other reviews noted ‘the modelling...of the whole figure, particularly the arms and hands is simply perfect’ and ‘the face and hands are painted with wonderful delicacy surpassing even that of *The Child Enthroned*.’²⁹⁶ Notably, the ‘purity of flesh painting,’ as noted in *The Brighton Herald*, could denote an unquestioned level of sanctity, as in *The Child Enthroned*, and create satisfying associations with traditional guises of womanhood, in contrast to the connotations of the ‘Fleshly School’ or the concurrent revival of the nude in academic painting.²⁹⁷ The natural form of skin for domesticated, respectable woman was soft and white, which is held in tension here with the sickened, deathly pallor of the Symbolists. Further, the elegance of Fra Angelico, Gozzoli and Bellini redeem the work for viewers, infusing sanctified purity into their experience of the figure, elevating the safety of the white skin.²⁹⁸

²⁹³ Helen Hanson, Catherine O’Rawe (eds.), *The femme fatale: Images, Histories, Contexts*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp.1-2

²⁹⁴ More detail in Gleadle (2001)

²⁹⁵ *The Sun*, (4th May, 1895), Tate Press Cuttings

²⁹⁶ *Newcastle Journal*, (4th May, 1895); *The Architect*, (10th May, 1895), Tate Press Cuttings

²⁹⁷ *Brighton Herald*, (11th May, 1895), Tate Press Cuttings; Robert Buchanan, ‘The Fleshly School of Poetry,’ *The Contemporary Review*, (October, 1871); Tim Barringer and Jason Rosenfield, *Pre-Raphaelites: Victorian Avant-Garde*, (London, Tate Publishing Limited, 2012); Cherry, (2000), regarding the revival of the nude, p.185

²⁹⁸ *Brighton Herald*, (11th May, 1896), Tate Press Cuttings

Remarks noted further worthy elements of the work. The painting's 'colour is both uncommon and fine,' creating a commendable and pleasing colour 'harmony.'²⁹⁹ 'It is cleverly and intelligently painted' and displayed 'the possession of technical skill of the highest order.'³⁰⁰ 'Mr Gotch has lavished a great deal of excellent work,' resulting a painting which is 'strong in execution'.³⁰¹ Viewers praised the considered aspects of technique and aesthetics, demonstrating the artist's conformity to his training and acceptable standards, including time taken to complete, conscientiousness, seriousness alongside rational qualities of secure and strong form. Such methods provided greater legibility and safety for the male viewer than paintings of the *femme fatale*. Gotch's representation of female sexuality is also more comforting than that of the *femme*. Though the Bride has sexual knowledge, her promise of the 'kiss of death' is also one of comfort, allied to traditional constructs of marriage, woman's mission, companion of manhood. Through retaining such conservative elements, Gotch created a positive image of womanhood and composed a combination of aesthetics with which to consider female sexuality, in particular a sexuality that co-existed with marriage.

Death and Sex

Whilst retaining moderating aspects of traditional, passive femininity, Gotch's painting also dealt with the subject of sex. The painting was an ambiguous representation of married womanhood. The adjacent positions of sexual knowledge and marriage was a contradiction in terms within a culture which widely practised abstinence and read a visual association of marriage as the route to heaven, and sex, through association with sin, adultery, prostitution, disease and the 'fallen woman', the route to death. Although scholarship has liberated the Victorian wife somewhat from the confines of 'separate spheres' ideology, she remained 'naturally' passionless and passive within dominant ideology.³⁰² Yet Gotch's image conceives of a sexual,

²⁹⁹ *Bazaar*, (13th May, 1896), Tate Press Cuttings

³⁰⁰ *Leeds Mercury*, (13th May, 1896) and *Newcastle Journal*, (4th May, 1895), Tate Press Cuttings

³⁰¹ *The Globe*, (14th May, 1896) and *London Weekly News*, (4th May, 1896), Tate Press Cuttings

³⁰² Amanda Vickery has reviewed the scholarly debates and questions the usefulness of the historiographical construct of 'separate spheres,' writing: 'Most historians now concede that few women actually lived up to the fantasies of Ruskin and Patmore.' Amanda Vickery, 'Golden Age to

seductive bride, not a passionless ‘angel.’ The painting coerces marriage into a jarring, inchoate position within an accepted matrix of woman, sex and death.

In the face of wide-reaching cultural hesitancy and powerful taboo, sex was an area feminists were beginning to claim and explore, questioning sexual morality and conduct and working to eradicate the shame espoused through Christian ideology in women’s association with sex. This relationship of sex with sin was viewed as the dispiriting, ‘horrifying darkness of the Middle Ages’ which, according to Millicent Fawcett in 1896, resulted in such damage to women.³⁰³ Theosophist-feminists such as Annie Besant also considered this period of Christianity a patriarchal evil.³⁰⁴ Due to women’s lack of sexual knowledge, views of sex as a wifely obligation or duty to perform, along with problems of sexual danger and legally defended marital rape, meant that discourses of women’s protection, sexual purity, chastity and restraint, rather than languages of pleasure, dominated feminist and sexual reform movements into the twentieth century. Historian Lucy Bland has described how feminists connected issues of female sanctity and ‘the beast’ of male lust with other problematic areas of women’s lives such as ‘women’s experience of sexual objectification, sexual violence and lack of bodily autonomy.’³⁰⁵ Thus feminists reconsidered sex in a number of ways.

Feminists worked to redeem the figure of Eve, the archetypal and original *femme fatale*. Millicent Fawcett in 1896 described the popular version of ‘Milton’s Eve’ a construct so pernicious to the woman’s movement:

“Softness and sweet attractive grace” are her chief characteristics. “Submission” comes next, and through it runs her complete absorption in her husband...It is not, perhaps sufficiently recognised or pointed out that the practical result of this attitude on Eve’s part was disastrous...Poor Eve, with her soft attractive grace, “herself though fairest unsupported flower” fell an easy prey to the serpent’s wiles, and wrought evil to her husband,

Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History’, *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (Jun., 1993), pp. 383-414, (p.391)

³⁰³ Fawcett, (1896), p.279

³⁰⁴ Oppenheim, (1985), pp.190-3

³⁰⁵ Feminists found selfishness, ego and lust to be more evident in men, more contained in woman, in constructs from the 1880s to the First World War., (1995), p.xiii

not good all the days of his life...No! Milton's Eve can never be an ideal woman³⁰⁶

Milton intimated in *Paradise Lost* that when tempted by the knowledge of the apple, Eve chose to 'eat Death', learning the fatal knowledge of sex as well as that of life and death. However, Milton emphasised Eve's weak will, inferior intelligence and her culpability in acquiring this knowledge.³⁰⁷ As the Victorian shorthand to woman and sexual knowledge as well as the popular Symbolist *femme fatale*, Eve was the foundation for the construct of the 'fallen woman', who upon transgressing man's laws, was alike punishable by disgrace and death, socially and physically. Thus Fawcett concluded that 'Milton's Eve is perhaps more truly representative of what I call the old ideal than any other example I could cite [the apotheosis of the] false ideal of feminine excellence.'³⁰⁸ Redeeming Eve, as a 'knowing woman', but whose knowledge is wisdom rather than sin, Ellen Key wrote in 1912:

the first "woman movement" was Eve's gesture when she reached for the tree of Knowledge – a movement symbolic of the entire subsequent women's movement of the world. For the will to pass beyond established bounds has constantly been the motive of her conscious as well as of her subconscious quest.³⁰⁹

Feminists' reassessment of this founding example of the knowing woman enabled questioning of the core relationship between female sexuality and 'original sin', exploding the ideological hypocrisies which maintained woman's oppression through the denigration of female sexuality in narratives of Eve and 'the fall'.³¹⁰

Gotch's Bride has sexual knowledge, inferred by the 'fatal smile' of the knowing woman, or Eve. However, this knowledge is matched by her goodness. In contemporary novels, when the *femme fatale* is unveiled, the woman is revealed as a predatory or vile creature, 'a hideous relic from the past, waiting to consume men,

³⁰⁶ Fawcett, (1896), p.279

³⁰⁷ John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, (1998, A. Fowler (ed.), 2nd edn, London: Longman, orig. 1667), (9.792), cited in Karen L. Edwards, 'The Mother of All *Femme Fatales*: Eve as Temptress in Genesis 3', in Hanson and O'Rawe, (2010), pp.34-45, (p.40)

³⁰⁸ Fawcett, (1896), p.279

³⁰⁹ Ellen Key, *The Woman Movement*, translated by Mamah Bouton Borthwick, (Memphis, USA: General Books LLC, 2012, orig. 1912), p.1; offering man the knowledge of morality, good and evil, essentially the knowledge of maturity and adulthood: 'the knowledge [Eve] offers ought to be called 'wisdom' (rather than fatal knowledge) and the aim of her 'temptation' is not destruction but adulthood.' Edwards, (2010), p.44.

³¹⁰ Edwards, (2010), p.36

heavily disguised as an attractive young woman'.³¹¹ 'Good' women were described as open and guileless in their manner, willing to share their thoughts and knowledge with male authority figures. Accordingly, the *Bride* is willing to unveil herself and in a striking contrast to female sexuality as bestial or repugnant within Symbolism, there is no vile monster beneath the veil, and thus no celebratory rape, conquest or punishment of woman.³¹² Two studies for the painting, both 1894, (Figures 1.31 and 1.32) have more frightening, deathly faces, in the final painting, the woman's face is endowed with natural beauty and radiance, moving the image back more closely to his original conception (Fig. 1.30). Gotch confirms that what lies beneath the veil is a comforting constant, the sanctity and morality of a good woman.

Gotch's poem and aesthetics of the painting suggest reassuringly that the *Bride* would not sap, weaken or emasculate the male like the *femme* or vampire. In contrast, the *Bride*, through a loving marital sexual encounter, would redeem and revive him.³¹³ The *Bride* could provide a respectable fantasy for men. In Hind's words of 1898, her face has:

a whisper of invitation upon it, as if she would say, "I am a little serious I know, and my clothes are not bright and beautiful like a bride's; but I am your friend nevertheless, and when you are ready for me you will find me ready for you"...if you are lonely, I am very patient.'³¹⁴

The sensual allure indicated by Gotch's words of poetry: 'a faint sigh breathes my name,' is thus also one of comfort.³¹⁵ Gotch's painting reformulates sexual transgression as a pathway to new knowledge, rather than sin, contributing to feminist efforts to redeem her. Gotch's 'Eve' is equally wise and spiritual, her transgression is a possibility akin to transcendence, a mode of movement beyond established boundaries and a journey to discover new knowledge. Re-ordering the relationship between love, sex and death could suggest a new life of radically revised, more equitable sexual relations. Further, this positive conjunction of marriage and sex allowed female sexuality to be explored within the 'real world', rather than relegated

³¹¹ Stott, (1992), p.116, and also cites Bram Stoker, *The Lair of the White Worm*, (1911)

³¹² Stott (1992), cites *Dracula*, p.44

³¹³ Stott, (1992), p.118

³¹⁴ Hind, (1896), p.279

³¹⁵ 'Lines on Death by Thomas Cooper Gotch,' undated, Archive Material, Alfred East Art Gallery, Kettering. Acc. No.98

to the irrational or unspeakable realm of the abhorred Other.³¹⁶ The painting affirmed that ideas of the married woman and sex could co-exist in a combination that denoted goodness rather than shame. This combination encouraged open and healthy conversations about sex.

Feminists considered sex within marriage and how it could be practised in ways which considered women's safety, autonomy and pleasure. Catherine Hartley, Alice Vickery, along with many other feminists, invoked the spiritual, writing revised narratives of evolution and manifestos for the future.³¹⁷ Such feminists placed women at the centre and highlighted women's active role in sexual selection, rather than evoking a 'passive automaton.'³¹⁸ Evolution in the future, described Alice Vickery, would be governed by conscious selection, by women in a 'spiritual evolution of the race.'³¹⁹ These texts were feminist responses to the ideas propounded by Darwinists, like St. George Mivart, who identified 'vicious feminine caprice' in the idea of female choice effecting evolutionary changes.³²⁰ Such feminists evoked the cosmic, alongside practical changes in the present. Both Swiney and radical feminist Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy described the need for women to regulate sexual intercourse and make decisions about pregnancy within marriage while Swiney invoked the 'law of the mother' to detail woman's role managing marital sex.³²¹ Alice Vickery instructed women in birth control methods.³²²

There was a growing desire for knowledge and frankness in conversations about sex. Feminist works described women's potential to rise from the obscurity and darkness of sexual ignorance. As scholar Ruth Livesey has described, changes in

³¹⁶ 'Lines on Death by Thomas Cooper Gotch,' undated, Archive Material, Alfred East Art Gallery, Kettering. Acc. No.98

³¹⁷ Bland (1995), p.79, pp.78-85 – re-evaluating the course and direction of evolutionary progress, women's moral superiority and important role

³¹⁸ Swiney (1906), p.69; Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008)

³¹⁹ Alice Vickery, 'Response to Galton's "Studies in National Eugenics"', *Sociological Papers*, vol.2, (London, Macmillan and Co., 1906), pp.21-22, in Bland, (1995), p.233, note 50. Such views were later espoused in *The Freewoman* and many men also held this view, Bland (1995), p.357

³²⁰ George Levine, ' "And If It Be a Pretty Woman All the Better" – Darwin and Sexual Selection,' in Small and Tate (2003), pp.37-51, (p.43): Mivart was a strongly Roman Catholic scientist

³²¹ David Doughan, 'Swiney, (Rosa) Frances Emily (1847–1922)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, <http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/view/article/41247> accessed 27th August, 2016. Bland notes the appeal of languages of eugenics in furthering issues of female autonomy (1995), pp.229-30

³²² Lesley A. Hall, 'Alice Vickery [Drysdale], (1844-1929), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (2004), accessed online 31st July, 2016

sexual conventions required ‘frank discussions’, dispensing with obscuring fairy tale ideals and myths. Livesey cited the work of the Marx Avelings about sexual reform requiring: ‘men and women...[to] discuss the sexual question in all its bearings, looking frankly into each other’s’ faces.’³²³ The Bride’s act of unveiling enabled her to meet the male gaze openly and honestly and, significantly, without shame. Since the visual mode of unveiling used in the painting was also an artistic allusion to sex, this could now begin to be reimagined as a warm, loving encounter of equals, rather than solely a dangerous prospect for women.³²⁴

Death the Bride also suggested new languages of sexual pleasure being explored by women. Jane Clapperton and later Marie Stopes emphasised the importance of women’s pleasure during the sexual experience within marriage. Meanwhile ‘New Women’ and free love advocates were practising more sexual freedom outside of marital conventions. Lacking the language to satisfactorily explore the nature of female sexuality, women approached the subject in a variety of ways, connecting the sensual and the spiritual in new combinations, for example, through the classical. Visions of the mystical rebirth of the pagan Goddess Aphrodite or Venus featured as part of a re-discovery of the erotic freedom of Greek mythology.³²⁵ Marie Stopes later described in *Married Love*, 1918 the reversal of the normal custom during sex, ‘for the man to lie above the woman as she reclines on her back.’ Stopes suggested that women take more active positions to encourage a pleasurable experience during sex, which may lead to ‘an exquisite grace in the event, as though there had entered into it the poetry and beauty of the picture of the sleeping Endymion over whom the floating goddess Diana stopped.’³²⁶

Symbolist artists created representations which combined: ‘sensuality and spirituality [which] appears paradoxical, but only when one regards it through the lens of Christian morality.’ The occult study of eastern and pagan religions encouraged further reformulations of womanhood including the sensual.³²⁷ The Bride wears a ‘pagan garland of roses’ also worn by Primavera, and which featured in Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening*, 1899. Gotch’s visual reference to *Primavera* invoked vital, pagan

³²³ Eleanor and Edward Marx Aveling, *The Woman Question*, (London: Swann Sonnenschein, 1886), p.13, in Livesey, (2007), p.83

³²⁴ Mathews, (1999), p.106

³²⁵ Gilman in Chopin (1899), pp.19-20

³²⁶ Stopes, (1918), location 1382

³²⁷ Edwards, (2010), p.51

possibilities from constructs of classical female sexuality, such as rebirth following death in the regeneration of Spring. The Bride shares the gesture of welcome of the central figure of Venus and also moves like Flora, the figure of regeneration.³²⁸ Elizabeth Kendall described how the American artist Isadora Duncan, in 1899 mused ‘for days before the *Primavera*, the famous painting of Botticelli’ dreaming of the ‘sweet, half-seen pagan life, where Aphrodite gleamed through the form of the gracious but more tender mother of Christ’ seeing the pagan rising through the constraints of the Christian morality and iconography.³²⁹ Gotch combined his pagan allusions with a pose which is also that of the Madonna in an annunciation painting.

Late nineteenth-century mysticism encompassed a fluid and mutable conception of death invoking the spiritual and the sensual and imagined a return to the profound and eternal through the power of love. Gotch’s painting employed the ecstatic language of sex to reinforce the exultant languages of Christianity and Spiritualism. A review in *The Kettering Leader*, 1932, described how the Bride’s eyes ‘hold the message – Death is the union with love.’³³⁰ Such ideas inform a later work by Alfred Gilbert (1854-1934), a sculpture for a funerary monument in 1904 for a Wigan GP, whose wife wished him immortalised true to his atheism. Without using Christian imagery Gilbert adopted a Latin phrase *Mors Janua Vitae* or ‘Death, the Door to Life,’ which has been interpreted as concerning an eternal life after death, through the transcendence of love, rather than a Christian after-life.³³¹ Sex was described from the late nineteenth century as involving levels of experience, higher levels of spirituality or consciousness.³³² In Symbolist narratives of the male encounter with the *femme*, sex could be a mystical, transcendental, liberating ‘ritual act’, a surrender of the male self, permitting an escape from ‘civilised’ society, into an

³²⁸ Anderson and Wright, (1994), p.79

³²⁹ Elizabeth Kendall, “Before the World Began”, *Ballet Review*, 6, (1977-8), pp.21-32, in Gilman’s introduction to Chopin (1899), p.33. Gilman also notes that feminist classicist Jane Ellen Harrison recovered the matriarchal origins of ancient Greek religion.

³³⁰ Gotch’s family ‘were of good Nonconformist stock, his grandfather having been one of the founders of the Baptist Missionary Society,’ Hind, (1896), p.274; ‘Memorial Exhibition: T. C. Gotch’, *Kettering Leader*, (15th April, 1932), copy consulted in Archive Material, Alfred East Art Gallery, Kettering

³³¹ Liverpool museums website:

<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/picture-of-month/displayPicture.aspx?id=340>, accessed 31st July, 2016

³³² Dixon discusses these ideas in (c.2001), p.96

unknown beyond.³³³ Though restricted texts at the time, works of sexology such as Havelock Ellis's *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, (1894), broached ideas about spiritual experience as a form of sexual mania. Ellis described:

the activity of the religious emotions sometimes tend to pass over into the sexual region; the suppression of the sexual emotions often furnishes a powerful reservoir of energy to the religious emotions.³³⁴

Annie Besant, as Jeffery Weeks has suggested, found an avenue to explore languages of sex in mysticism.³³⁵

Feminists explored sex through spiritual languages which could, indirectly, encompass exuberant, rapturous and joyous possibilities.³³⁶ The transcendental poets inspired many feminists, including Frances Swiney and Olive Schreiner. As Edward Carpenter described in 1906: 'Love...was a large and generous passion, spiritual and emotional of course, but well rooted in the physical and sexual also.'³³⁷ Whitman's mystical illumination merged into a sexual experience, where sensual frankness is conjoined with expressions of the vitality of the earth and stylistic freedom. The heroine of Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, 1899, evoked a haunting of 'vague dreams of spiritual liberation' in writing that also combined the classical and the sensual, but which dealt with the converse area of sexual suppression, wherein comes the 'far, faint voice of a woman...[which] rose from the depths of some infinite gloom.'³³⁸ Gotch's appreciation of the works of Carpenter may have helped him create a modern idea of spiritual and the sexual united and the poppy field in *Death the Bride* is a compelling space evoking sensuality and suppression. *Death the Bride* may advance Chopin's

³³³ Stott, (1992), p.31, note 3: Ann Rosalind Jones, 'Inscribing Femininity: French theories of the feminine' in Gayle Green and Coppelia Kahn (eds), *Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism*, New Accents Series (London and New York: Methuen, 1985), pp.80-112

³³⁴ Havelock Ellis, *Auto-Erotism*, in *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, (New York: Random House, 1936, orig 1894), vol.1, part I: 324-25 in Dixon, (2001), p.96

³³⁵ Weeks described that the lack of acceptable language to speak about sex meant that women sought languages through evangelical Christianity (Josephine Butler), theosophy (Annie Besant), spiritualism, eugenics and sexology, (2012), p.213

³³⁶ Examples include, Kate Chopin, *The Awakening and Selected Stories*, (London; New York: Penguin Books, 2nd edn edited with an introduction by Sandra M. Gilbert, 1984, orig. 1899), the writings of Olive Schreiner, which presented an autonomous female eroticism, noted in Weeks, (2012), p.214, Catherine Hartley, *The Truth about Woman*, (1913), Teresa Billington-Greig (co-founder of the WFL with Charlotte Despard); Judith R. Walkowitz also writes on feminists with unconventional lives in *Prostitution and Victorian society: Women, Class and the State*, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p.123

³³⁷ Edward Carpenter, *Days with Walt Whitman: With Some Notes on his Life and Work*, (London: George Allen, 1906), 'Whitman in 1884', p.57

³³⁸ Kate Chopin, *The Haunted Chamber*, cited in Chopin (1899), p.8

vision of women's indeterminate, mystical dreams of darkness, disorientation, death or divinity, dreams which allowed spiritual infinitude, visions of 'amplitude and awe', intimately connected to sensual and sexual sensibilities.³³⁹

Conclusion

Death the Bride presented these indeterminate and inclusive languages of the spiritual and the sexual, where the transgressive qualities of sex may encourage the imagining of social change. Connections were made in cultural discourse between the 'New Woman', capitalism and the vampire. Amidst the ongoing threats of the underclasses, social protest and mob mentality, the figure of the *femme* united concerns about eroding gendered stabilities, social class and economic mobility. The body of the woman '[became] a trope of capitalist modernity, as in the vampire, [which] by 1900 had come to represent woman as the personification of everything negative that linked sex, ownership and money.'³⁴⁰ Lynda Nead has further noted, when the woman entered the public sphere 'she [became] currency; hence the slippage between the figures of the actress, the prostitute and the *femme fatale*, the female *flaneur* and the prostitute.'³⁴¹ It was noted with regard to *Death the Bride*, how 'the expression of the face lacks subtlety and is rather commonplace.'³⁴² This conformed to the association of women with the commercial, mean and low-brow or crass in fine art discourse of the period, concurrent with the rise of mass production and female consumption.³⁴³ However, the *femme fatale* in the 1890s was, through its visual possibilities of sexual transfiguration, also able to reflect the changing types of mobile woman and 'sexuality out of bounds precisely as a result of women's revised relation to space.'³⁴⁴ While using the visual and cultural currency of the *femme fatale* to speak of sex, Gotch retained ideas of female purity and thus juxtaposed constructs of 'New Woman'/Vampire/ Redeemer as part of an open-ended, complex construct rather than a closed, simplified dichotomy.

³³⁹ Gilman in Chopin (1899), p.24; see also Weeks, (2012), pp.208-9

³⁴⁰ Stott, (1992), p.29, pp.44-5, p.124; Dijkstra, (1986), p. 351

³⁴¹ Nead, (1988), p.94

³⁴² *The Sun*, (4th May, 1895), Tate Press Cuttings

³⁴³ Pamela F. Fletcher, 'Masculinity, Money and Modern Art: *The Sentence of Death* by John Collier,' in Corbett and Perry (2000), pp.85-99, (pp.98-99). See also Fletcher (2003) and Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Problem Pictures: Women and Men in Victorian Painting*, (Aldershot: Scolar, 1995)

³⁴⁴ Mary Ann Doane, *Femmes fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis*, (New York; London: Routledge, 1991), p.263

Gotch presents woman as triumphant and divine, traversing darkness and thus overcoming threats arising through sexual danger and shame. The emerging woman, the feminist, 'New Woman' or modern woman, may more fully embody her sexuality, consider new forms of sexual morality and conduct.³⁴⁵ The positive visual juxtaposition of sex with the married woman echoed the hopes of many feminists who believed that the roles of wife and mother could be reformed to offer women more knowledge, autonomy and pleasure, to advance emancipation rather than reinforce oppression.³⁴⁶ However, as in representations throughout the thesis, the more emancipated Bride remains redeemer, rather than destroyer, of man. Instead of the 'New Woman'/destructive *femme* matrix, the Bride has the divine redemptive power of Jesus: 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me.'³⁴⁷ The Bride is endowed with both Christian and feminine grace, far from reinforcing the matrix of woman, sex and sin, in Gotch's construct, female sexuality is a positive, divine force.³⁴⁸ In this painting, rather than the innocent girl, mature woman, even in new, more liberated forms, undoubtedly remains humanity's spiritual saviour.

³⁴⁵ Rowbotham, (2010), p.15 describes this process in Britain and America through journals such as the *Freewoman*, 1911

³⁴⁶ Caine discusses the example of Fawcett, (1992), p.256

³⁴⁷ *Holy Bible*, King James version, (London: Collins, Box Lea edition, 2011), Psalm 23:4

³⁴⁸ And in contemporary examples of Eve in Mathews (1999), p.87 or 106

Chapter Two: Robert Anning Bell

The ‘Woman’s Era is dawning’¹

Introduction

In *The Arrow*, 1909 (Fig. 2.1) and *The Echo*, 1915, (Fig.2.2) the artist Robert Anning Bell painted groups of women in undetermined, vast, empty and quiet settings, shooting an arrow into the air and listening to an echo. Contemporary viewers noted how both pictures were invested with ‘a sense of remoteness from [the] present-day environment;’ the vague, unnerving settings, somehow outside of history, also suggested primordial and matriarchal communities acclaimed by contemporary feminists.² In *The Arrow*, the women are ‘Amazons’, with active and robust bodies reflecting contemporary women’s more liberated physical culture. This emancipation was founded on new knowledges borne out of unprecedented female agency and bolstered by a wide-reaching contemporary reassessment of old forms of accepted knowledge, a re-writing undertaken by feminists and others. This broader rethinking of womanhood embraced female spirituality as a central element, a theme explored by Bell in *The Echo*. Feminism invested significantly in the spiritual, which served as a mental reinforcement for feminists undertaking challenging physical transgressions during militancy and also as a crucial component in feminist prophecies of a better, more female-centred, future society. Both of Bell’s paintings envisaged emancipatory possibility, forged through similar spiritual languages.

Part One: *The Arrow*, 1909:

We seem to see the happy maidens of Mr Anning Bell’s art issuing forth into the
open³

The woman movement is the most significant of all movements for freedom in the
world’s history.⁴

The Arrow features a group of women in open hills and mountains; the representations of women are notably exhilarated, their clothing rippling in the wind as they gaze with visible joy and abandon, at the path of the arrow they have released. In an image

¹ Swiney (1899), p.296

² ‘Current Art Notes,’ *Connoisseur*, Vol.51, (1917), pp.111-170, (p.169)

³ T. Martin Wood, ‘Mr. Robert Anning Bell’s Work as a Painter’, *The Studio*, Vol. 49, (1910), pp.255-262, (p.255)

⁴ Key, (1912), p.8

reflecting both contemporary events and the artist's mature period of experimentation in aesthetics, Bell explored a primal, comparatively freer composition, in contrast to earlier works, which conformed more closely to certain artistic conventions.

In his prolific artistic career, Bell had painted many works featuring groups of women outside. In the years prior to painting these works, Bell had achieved reliable critical acclaim when exhibiting regularly at the Royal Watercolour Society (RWS) from 1904, projecting the artist's ideal of Venetian art as a Golden Age.⁵ When the 'distinguished' picture *Music by the Water*, 1900, (Fig. 2.3) was exhibited at RWS, 1904, reviews noted 'a good deal of romantic beauty.'⁶ Bell 'made his mark' with these exhibitions, noted an article in *The Times*, 1906, through presenting a type of 'modernised Renaissance,' exhibiting 'most accomplished studies of line and sumptuous colour' and designs which displayed sophistication and skill.⁷ Alison Smith noted in the Tate exhibition catalogue *Watercolour*, how *Music by the Water*, echoed the artistic convention of the festive *fête champêtre*.⁸ Other paintings of female figures outside continued to feature religious narratives, such as *The Women Going to the Sepulchre*, 1912, (Fig. 2.4) *And the Women Stood Afar Off Beholding These Things*, 1920, (Fig. 2.5) possibly featuring the subject of women observing the crucifixion, and pagan festivities, such as *Spring Revel*, 1917 (Fig. 2.6). A review in the *Art Journal*, June 1907, discussed how Bell is able 'to evoke from the outer an inner world, where, in Renaissance gardens, or some dream-palace of marble and

⁵ Rose, (2004; online edn, Sept 2010); 'Royal Water-Colour Society,' *The Times*, (11th April, 1904)

⁶ 'The Royal Society of Painters in Water-Colours,' *The Times*, (14th November, 1904), p. 6

⁷ 'The Royal Water-Colour Society,' *The Times*, (9th April, 1906), p.4

⁸ Smith, (2011), cat. 116, p.160. The *fête champêtre* genre featured garden parties or 'pastoral festivals' in the eighteenth century and may have involved romantic courtship. Venetian artists such as Giorgione and Titian originated the genre with such scenes in the sixteenth century and the genre was gained popularity in France from the early nineteenth century. Bell has drawn upon Giorgione and Titian, later noting with ardour the immense effect that viewing Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne*, 1520-3, at the National Gallery, had upon him as a student. (Robert Anning Bell, 'The "Moderns" and Their Problems', *The Saturday Review*, 27th May, 1933, p.513). Bell's setting and original title for *The Listeners*, 1900 was 'The Garden of Sweet Sound' which alludes to traditional genres and tropes such as the idyll in art, depictions of the mythical, pastoral Golden age, the country idylls of Italian Renaissance painting, the tropes of women in a garden hearing music and the garden of love and romantic courtship.

cypress, hill-ramparted, he shows fair women in gracious concourse.’⁹ Viewers at the Royal Academy were familiar with Bell’s output within these mediated conventions.¹⁰

However, in the period when he painted *The Arrow* and *The Echo*, Bell shifted from conventional genres to less conventional, more experimental, designs. Martin Wood wrote in an important and insightful article on Bell for *The Studio*, 1910, in which he asserted:

In chronicling an artist’s record, his most interesting period is not always identified with the moment of writing, but with Mr. Anning Bell’s work, it is so; it seems now on the threshold of its most expressive achievement. In paint he now seems to be finding more of the freedom and emotionalism that he used to show...[combined with] an elaborate and difficulty acquired technique.¹¹

I have chosen to focus on *The Arrow* and *The Echo* partly for the reason Wood identifies, that in important ways, they stand in contrast to Bell’s vast body of work. As explored in the two articles I have written on the artist, prominent public commissions including mosaic and stained glass were undertaken until the artist’s death in 1933.¹² He was an artist well known for his command and versatility of art forms and for Arts and Crafts allegiances.¹³ This period also saw great academic success in his painting of the Chancery Bequest work *Mary in the House of Elizabeth*, 1917, (Fig. 2.7) for the Tate and his gaining of Academician status at the Royal Academy.¹⁴ Bell’s assured status as Arts and Craft exponent, his career of diligence,

⁹ ‘London Exhibitions’, *Art Journal*, (1907), p.185. Indeed Nicola Kalinsky, in an exhibition review for the Dulwich Picture Gallery, 1989, wrote: ‘Robert Anning Bell’s medieval ladies (not his Amazons) continue a theme of Venetian wistfulness began by Charles Fairfax Murray.’ Nicola Kalinsky, Dulwich Picture Gallery, ‘Review of the *Last Romantics* Exhibition,’ in *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 131, No. 1033, (Apr., 1989), pp.311-313, (p.313)

¹⁰ Bell’s work since the 1890s featured narratives from the Bible, poetry and Shakespeare. See also Alice Eden, ‘Robert Anning Bell and the Mosaics in the Houses of Parliament’, *British Art Journal*, Volume X, No. 2, (Winter, 2009), pp.22-32. Alice Eden, ‘Robert Anning Bell in Liverpool: Arts and Crafts and the Creation of a Civic Artistic Culture, 1895-9’, *The Burlington Magazine*, Volume CLIV, Number 1310, (May, 2012), pp.345-350; Mary Bennett, *The Art Sheds 1894-1905: An Exhibition to Celebrate the Centenary of the University of Liverpool 1981*, Liverpool, Merseyside County Council, 1981; Christian, (1989)

¹¹ Wood, (1910), p.260

¹² Eden, (2009); Eden, (2012)

¹³ Bell exhibited regularly at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, had had long-term friendships with W.A.S Benson, Walter Crane and C.F.A Voysey amongst others. He was life-long member of the Art-Workers’ Guild, London and appointed master in 1921. See also Rose (2004)

¹⁴ With *The Women Going to the Sepulchre* as his diploma work. This painting is discussed in *Connoisseur*, 66 (1923), p.111

productivity and commitment to reviving conscientious craft methods, on which he wrote many times, emphasised all the more the significance of his departure into what Wood describes as a ‘new chapter’ at this point. Differences in aesthetics and artistic practise to previous works help to illustrate the alternative expressive possibilities he believed were offered by new methods.¹⁵ *The Arrow* and *The Echo* reflect a moment where Bell felt confident to use his long-practised skills to experiment, to consider new subjects and forms, to suggest the intangible and indeterminate. As becomes apparent in the analysis of these paintings, Bell’s feelings and commitments to types of aesthetics, corresponded with a freer more emancipated subject, of women outside.

The Arrow engaged with and can be read alongside the growth of the women’s movement and several aspects of women’s physical culture. I will consider the painting first in relation to women’s movement in space and the new feelings that accompanied this escape. The incisive image of archery, along with physical control, referenced mental acuity and precision, bringing the painting close to the imagery of the women’s movement in its intellectual as well as physical potential. I also consider how the painting may also be contextualised by underlying intellectual work undertaken within the feminist movement, which included feminist constructs of matriarchy and the primordial and the writing of feminist utopias, employed as modes to rethink gender and civilisation of the past and to anticipate the future. In such works, feminism united forms of physical emancipation with spirituality. Women in *The Arrow* are like ‘Amazons’, strong, free, roaming, self-sufficient with greater physical control, formidable might, determination, akin to Emmeline Pankhurst’s ‘suffrage army.’¹⁶ The reclaiming of inspiring matriarchal and Amazonian pasts provided feminists with the reassurance of historic examples in their spiritual quest for suffrage.¹⁷

By the time *The Arrow* was painted, the woman’s movement had grown significantly: ‘Today, after a century of struggle,’ wrote Madame Avril de Sainte-Croix in her 1907 history, *Le Feminisme*:

the effort of women to acquire more justice and more independence seems poised on the brink of success. Feminism no longer provides a smirk...the

¹⁵ Wood, (1910), p.260

¹⁶ Diane Atkinson, *The Suffragettes in Pictures*, (London: Sutton Publishing, 1996), p.1

¹⁷ For more information on this seeking of evidence of women in history as ‘proof’ for women’s emancipatory potential see Beaumont, (2001), p.212

forward march of feminism is a fact that no one can deny, a movement that no force can henceforth bring to a halt. Woman...has become a factor to be reckoned with.¹⁸

The language of the above extract notably concerned movement and forward advancement. The growing women's movement had affected both women's everyday and extraordinary physical culture, encouraging women's surging desires for freedom.¹⁹ Women rode bicycles, wore looser clothes, enjoyed the exuberance of a greater variety of physical exercise including self-defence and moved more freely in cities and new public spaces.²⁰ Extraordinary physical changes included sporting achievements in the 1908 Olympics held in London and the extreme activities of the Suffragettes, which had begun with only occasional acts of militancy from 1903-6. The growth of the women's movement meant that feminists in the 1900s were less isolated than their 1890s 'new woman' counterparts. Rebellious women could find emancipated friends or role models in a swelling of the movement, which saw, by the time *The Arrow* was painted, in 1909, three major Suffrage organisations: Millicent Fawcett's suffragist National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS, 1897), the Pankhursts' militant Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU, 1903) and Charlotte Despard's Women's Freedom League, (WFL, 1907).²¹ And from January 1906, including the years these pictures were painted, 1909-1915, witnessed the most militant Suffragette activity in regular, organised militancy and their cessation with the outbreak of war.²²

During this period, feminist campaigners combined together nationwide to move in protest marches or parades, slashed pictures, threw stones, smashed windows, cut telegraph wires, set fires, carved slogans into golf greens, engaged in physical confrontations with the police and experienced new acts of physical endurance

¹⁸ Mme Avril de Sainte-Croix, *Le Féminisme*, (Paris: V. Giard & E. Brere, 1907), p.6, cited in Offen, (c.2000), p.188

¹⁹ Discussed by Jane Eldridge Miller, *Rebel Women: Feminism, Modernism and the Edwardian Novel*, (London: Virago, 1994), p.1

²⁰ New aspects of women's physical culture encompassed fitness, exertion and militancy. These features are explored in Emelyne Godfrey, *Femininity, Crime and Self-defence in Victorian Literature and Society: From Dagger-Fans to Suffragettes*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) and Wendy Parkins, *Mobility and Modernity in Women's Novels, 1850s-1930s: Women Moving Dangerously*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008)

²¹ Miller, (1994), p.126. The latter was in response to autocratic rule by the Pankhursts and the dissolving of ties to the labour movement and working classes which Charlotte Despard wanted to keep.

²² Of many histories of the suffrage struggle, I have found the works of Atkinson (1996) and Tickner, (1988) most helpful

including hunger strikes and force-feeding.²³ There was a general change in the visual iconography of women in popular media such as cartoons, posters and advertising and in literature and culture more widely, reflecting physical freedom and emancipatory possibility.²⁴ The autonomous nature of the physical freedoms being asserted, were allied with freedom of thought, choice and experimentation, in bold transgressions of behavioural norms. Bell's painting reflected both the camaraderie of group activities and the potency of new feats of physical exertion women were undertaking.

Looking back at the limited domestic life of middle class women in the mid-Victorian period, Edward Carpenter wrote in 1916: 'every girl could not find an absorbing interest in...watercolours; athletics were not yet invented; every aspiration and outlet, except in the direction of dress and dancing, was blocked.'²⁵ However, by the time of this Edwardian painting of 1909, women were, in the words of one reviewer, 'issuing forth into the open,' echoing the feminist sentiment of an unsigned drawing of 1900: 'The door to success is always labelled PUSH.'²⁶ Women's forward march eschewed stuffiness, requiring acts of bravery and exposure in the public arena, the breaking free from various modes of restraint. Several literary heroines of the period also expressed impatience and rebellion against the 'wrapped' suburban or domestic life.²⁷ In H. G. Wells' 1908/9 novel *Ann Veronica*, the heroine elopes to trek the Alps with her lover, the outdoor activity an exhilarating escape from the confined domestic environments of Victorian life.²⁸ Ann Veronica in the words of H. G. Wells is 'eager for freedom and life. She was vehemently impatient ...to do, to be, to experience' and elopes to the Alps with her lover, hiking in the mountains, practising sexual equality, dressing alike, sharing physical burdens and practising contraception.²⁹ Ann Veronica's movement has been 'away from enclosed spaces towards openness, and in particular toward the natural world' as she escapes from various enclosures – locked bedrooms, confined rooms and prison cells after a Suffragette raid. Sybylla in Miles Franklin's, *My Brilliant Career*, 1901, and Lucy

²³ Alison Lee summarises these activities in her introduction to Colmore, (2008), p.15

²⁴ Facos, (2009), p.131 shows women commandeering the bicycle.

²⁵ Edward Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1916), p.31, in Stubbs, (1979), p.4

²⁶ A feminist cartoon reproduced in Cherry (2000), Figure 1.1, p.18. Wood (1910)

²⁷ H. G. Wells, *Ann Veronica*, (1909. London: Virago, 1980), pp.3-4, cited in Miller, (1994), p.166

²⁸ Miller describes such desires for freedom, (1994), p.4

²⁹ Wells, (1909), pp.3-4, cited in Miller (1994), p.166

Honeychurch in *A Room with A View* 1908, had also expressed the desire for escape from stuffy domestic confinement and cloistral, ‘medieval’ existence.³⁰ Bell’s painting echoed the flourishing of imaginative expressions of freedom, of female desires, as described by scholar Jane Miller, for ‘open, natural space – both literally and spiritually.’³¹

The confluence between Bell’s imagery and women’s physical culture of the period was reflected in the figures’ evident happiness and joy in physical movement; the painting allowed the viewer to reflect on the exhilaration women were feeling with these new movements and, in keeping with feminist ideology, encouraged viewers’ imaginative freedom, to visualise woman ‘unshackled’.³² The women in *The Arrow* appears liberated and content, feeling ‘unembarrassed and confident’.³³ One figure reclines in peaceful consideration of the arrow, another appears jubilant behind the central figures. The figure grouping provides movement and a sense of swift impromptu, positive action; an image of women moving without constraint. In reference to another work by the artist, the *Art Journal* described in 1907, a ‘blithe woman and child, moving with the breeze in real comradeship with the wide landscape,’ ‘blithe’ inferring blissful joy and fearlessness. The draped clothing provided a sense of affinity, of bodies attuned with the natural forces of the wind.³⁴

The spirit of the figures also betrayed modern sensibilities and changing psychological experiences, the anxieties and possibilities through new movements. This imagery accorded with aspirational images of freedom associated with the Suffrage campaign and the opportunities it afforded for acts of bravery, defiance and visibility.³⁵ There were many possibilities for excitement and unlady-like behaviour away from domestic confinement, where physical activities could be in the word of

³⁰ Reed attributes this idea to the character of Lucy Honeychurch in E. M. Forster’s, *A Room with a View*, (London: 1908), in (1975), p.36

³¹ Wells also contrasts stuffy domesticity with a freer type of interior room in the biology lab where Ann Veronica loves her scientific work. This space is open, airy and light writes Miller, (1994), p.169

³² This is the title of Christabel Pankhurst’s retrospective account of the Suffrage Campaign, *Unshackled: The Story of How We Won the Vote*, (London: Hutchinson, 1959)

³³ Ann Veronica describes ‘that delightful sense of free, unembarrassed movement,’ Wells, (1909), p.81, cited Miller (1994), p.167. This sense lies in contrast with the feelings of exposure that Suffragettes experienced while campaigning on the streets. Miller (1994), p.154. The combination of excitement and other more challenging feelings is a theme running through Atkinson (1996). There was also, by contrast, a growing, new sense of entitlement in urban space. This is explored for example in Parkins, (2008).

³⁴ With reference to *Cowslip Gatherers* (Untraced), ‘London Exhibitions’, *Art Journal*, (June, 1907), p.185

³⁵Atkinson (1996), xviii, p.3

historian Diane Atkinson, ‘daring, stylish, highly visible and noble’ and bring a range of emotional experiences.³⁶ The actions of the Suffragettes in public broaching new spaces such as the streets required a new configuration of womanhood, far removed from the constructions of the ‘clinging’ or ‘reclining female’ as well as presenting challenging feelings of exposure.³⁷ The boldness of shooting the arrow made a physical declaration and echoed contemporary women’s experiences of the psychological conquests to be made whilst contributing to such a campaign. Being visible and unwomanly on the streets was both dangerous and exposing for women who nevertheless felt this necessary to achieve success in their struggle, while maintaining ‘womanly’ pursuits and attributes was an ongoing consideration of the campaign. The physical movement in women’s activities and in *The Arrow* was predicated on new knowledge, as well as indicative of other transgressions of behaviour and decorum accompanying a changing sense of the body in space. The affront such actions made to woman as reticent, retiring, self-abnegating brought associated challenges to all aspects of demeanour, carriage, physicality, speech and imaginative expectations.

The clothes the archers wear in *The Arrow* also marked a fundamental disparity to the constrictions afforded by usual Victorian female dress, analogous instead with the earlier Rational Dress movement, the ongoing ‘feminist politics of outdoor activity,’ and debates about the body and physical activity outdoors from the late nineteenth century.³⁸ Women increasingly re-thought and altered their dress from the late nineteenth century, in relation to new deportment and uses of the body, new physical culture and freedoms. Bell’s figures conceived of freedom of dress enabling

³⁶ In political meetings, Suffragettes heckled, were demanding and irate, had to be forcibly removed and were arrested for obstruction and assault, Lee in Colmore (2008), p.15. Atkinson, (1996), p.3. More descriptions of such feelings occur in working class accounts by for example Annie Kenney. Further readings may be found in the bibliography of Atkinson (1996), Miller, (1994) (chapter on Suffragette stories) and Jill Liddington, *Rebel Girls: Their Fight for the Vote*, (London: Virago, 2006)

³⁷ Tickner, (1988), pp.167-226. These could be very tangible transgressions. For example, women had to walk in the road, alongside policemen sometimes, otherwise they could be arrested for obstruction, photograph in Atkinson (1996), p.55, p.141. Women were at an intoxicating ‘threshold of unarticulated but exciting possibilities’ and the next generation were less hindered beneficiaries of the Edwardians’ work in ‘breaking’ from convention, p.123

³⁸ Cherry, (2000), p.40. For useful material on the eschewing of traditional dress see: Cherry (2000), p.13 regarding Reform Dress; *Gustav Klimt*, (Tate Publishing, 2008); Pamela Robertson and Timothy Neat, ‘Margaret Macdonald,’ in Jude Burkhauser (ed.), *Glasgow Girls: Women in Art and Design 1880-1920*, (Edinburgh, Canongate: 1990), pp.107-122; Patricia Marks, *Bicycles, Bangs and Bloomers: The New Woman in the Popular Press*, (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, c1990) shows the adaptations to clothes and undergarments to enable riding on bicycles

greater possibilities of movement of the body outdoors. The choice of more practical clothing, for example unsupported skirts without a hoop and stout boots, was a concern for feminists, as well as being adopted by a broader number of women.³⁹ The physicality of Bell's figures bears an interesting comparison to contemporary pictures of women shooting arrows in the Toxophilite Society, as illustrated in the *London Illustrated News*, 1894, (Fig. 2.8), wearing conventional restrictive corsets and long skirts. High-fashion clothes had accompanied the fashionable, upper class activity of archery from the eighteenth century, which emphasised the corseted silhouette. Articles describing archery meets in the late nineteenth century described the fashion news, at much greater length than any shooting results.⁴⁰

The women in *The Arrow*, however, have the 'body of a modern woman' as described by art historian Deborah Cherry, 'honed by rigorous physical activity and unconstrained by corseting, the bodily form advocated by dress reformers, proponents of hygiene and sports promoters,' indicative of healthy mind and body.⁴¹ Cherry discusses Louisa Starr, then president of the art section of the International Congress of Women and her paper on 'The spirit of purity in art and its influence on the well-being of nations' 1899, which outlined the acceptable use of the female nude. Starr, who loathed tight lacing, advocated the representation of women enjoying 'perfect health and ease of natural delight in movement.'⁴² The shorter skirt of the central figure in Bell's painting reveals sturdy, tanned legs, implying outdoor living and practical clothes for physical activity rather than being soft, unmuscular and passive, as a clinging object for male eroticism.⁴³ Images of the body undertaking physical exertion in nature reflect prevalent intellectual concerns with fitness and health across Europe. Ruth Livesey has noted how feminists such as Edith Lees and Olive Schreiner were describing women of the future as physically active and undertaking labour alongside

³⁹ Cherry, (2000), p.13, p.46

⁴⁰ Ruth Goodman, *How to be a Victorian*, (London: Penguin, 2013), p.339. The pastime was fashionable when it featured in Anthony Trollope's novel, *The Prime Minister*, (1875).

⁴¹ Cherry, (2000), pp.185-186

⁴² The nude figures need to be removed from the urban setting. L. Starr, 'the spirit of purity in art and its influence on the well-being of nations' in I. M. Gordon, ed., *Women in the Professions: being the Professional Section of the International Council of Women: Transactions, 1899*, (London: Fisher Unwin, 1900), 1, pp.86-7, in Cherry, (2000), p.185. Beauty to Starr was thus 'the expression of a beautiful mind, a beautiful body[,]...perfect health and ease of natural delight in movement,' E. S. Canziani, *Round about Three Palace Green*, (London: Methuen, 1939), pp.36-7, pp.43-4, cited in Cherry (2000), p.186

⁴³ Fawcett's description of Eve with her 'soft feminine grace' as a masculine ideal harmful to the cause of emancipation: Fawcett, (1896), p.295

men.⁴⁴ Feminists approving of robust physical activity applauded certain nude figures set in nature in paintings as heralding more liberated meanings than others. Starr approved of the *Venus de Milo* and Watts' *Daphne*, extolling in 1899:

a human figure, robust and mellowed by air and sun, with firm limbs, frank eyes, innocent and severe, and joyful in the life of woodland and mountain.

There is nothing demoralising here.⁴⁵

While fashionable clothes could be visually stunning and were a notable aspect of archery meets, fostering the fashionable, elegant and ladylike mystique to these publicised events, Bell's imagery was quite distinct from such iconography. Bell considered the question of 'Long Skirts or Short?' in an article in *The Times*, 1922, which discussed modern changing fashions and modes of life alongside them:

The voluminous skirts were better suited to the character of the women of 25 years ago, which represented a more romantic period, than they are to the modern athletic girl.⁴⁶

Bell implied admiration for the courage and 'gusto', to use H. G. Wells's term, of the younger generation of women, echoed visually in their more liberated dress and movements; their lives meant they were more suited to the wearing of short skirts.⁴⁷

The Arrow and a more Liberated Aesthetics

The vaguely classical robes of the figures in *The Arrow* also echoed artistic negotiations of self-image and dress which female artists had undertaken from the late nineteenth century. Such artists, at the Slade for example, where Bell's wife attended in the 1900s, undertook self-fashioning whereby they adopted looser, comfortable

⁴⁴ Ruth Livesey includes examples from socialists and feminists where women are confident physically: Edith Lees wrote that the "Womanhood of tomorrow...[would be] free...and strong" standing "shoulder to shoulder" with men "as both fulfil their sex and work," Edith Lees, 'Women and the New Life', *Seed-Time*, (3 Jan.1890), p.6, in Livesey, (2007), pp.87-8. Olive Schreiner described: "The perfect ideal of that which the modern woman desires to be," she claims, is "labouring and virile womanhood, free, strong, fearless and tender." Schreiner, *Woman and Labour*, (London: Fisher Unwin, 1911), p.258, in Livesey, (2007), pp.98-9

⁴⁵ Thus to make the nude figures acceptable they need to be removed from the urban setting: L. Starr, 'The Spirit of Purity in Art and its Influence on the Well-being of Nations' in I. M. Gordon, (ed.), *Women in the Professions: being the Professional Section of the International Council of Women: Transactions, 1899*, (London: Fisher Unwin, 1900), p.1, pp. 86-7, in Cherry, (2000), p.185

⁴⁶ 'Long Skirts or Short? Artist's Views,' *The Times*, April 24th, 1922, p.17

⁴⁷ Wells thus described his heroine Ann Veronica in H.G. Wells, *An Experiment in Autobiography: Discoveries and Conclusions of a Very Ordinary Brain (Since 1866)*, (1934. Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1962), p.395, in Miller (1994), p.165. See also Sally Mitchell, *The New Girl: Girls' Culture in England, 1880-1915*, (New York; Chichester: Columbia University Press, c1995) on new modes of girlhood. Bell's comment is from 'Long Skirts or Short? Artist's Views,' *The Times*, (24th April, 1922), p.17

robes and sported uncorseted ‘big waists.’⁴⁸ Rather than more mundane athletic clothing, Bell’s robes still endowed the figures with feminine grace and classical grandeur and with the beauty of line that painting such drapery afforded, resulting in an aesthetic wherein, ‘instead of the prevailing fashions we copied the long graceful lines of costumes in old paintings,’ forging a modern construction of dress by way of the classical.⁴⁹ Bell’s tunic was noted as ‘classical’ and accords with artists, such as the Olympians, who savoured the lines of draperies and robes in their paintings, but the clothing is also sufficiently non-specific and ambiguous to heighten its formal, suggestive elements.⁵⁰

Bell was interviewed for an article in *The Times* regarding the best robes for artistic use, incorporating a discussion of when, historically, ‘fashions [were] most becoming and graceful.’⁵¹ This was a subject dear to the artist who owned a book of costumes and researched and taught on this subject.⁵² Bell commented that ‘many artists...recall these old styles so that, being of no prevailing fashion, they are never out of date.’⁵³ The artist also described how he ‘highly approves the modern revival of the shawl, not only for the grace of the draperies, which can be adjusted to the figure, but because of the play it gives to the hands thus emphasizing the grace of movement.’⁵⁴ ‘Drapery designs, fine in the forms of their lines and folds,’ were a subject of the discussion following Bell’s lecture on mosaic in 1901.⁵⁵ Drapery was a crucial expressive feature in Bell’s art, informing his use of line and fashioning of compositions, a route to express ideas of nature, mystery and the unknown.

⁴⁸ Cherry (2000), pp.197-8. This idea is reflected in Elizabeth Burgoyne Corbett, *New Amazonia: A Foretaste of the Future*, (first published London: Tower Publishing Company, 1889. This edition: Seattle: Aqueduct Press, Heirloom Books, 2014, accessed via Amazon Kindle). When witnessing the ‘Amazonians’ of the future utopian society bathing, the female narrator exclaims, ‘I was positively thankful that I measured quite twenty-six inches around the waist. Had I measured a fraction less, I should have been looked upon as deformed in this land of goddesses,’ p.94.

⁴⁹ As described by an American student in Newnham College, Cambridge, in the early 1880s: M. A. Wilcox, in Ann Phillips, ed., *A Newnham Anthology*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp.14-15, in Cherry, (2000), p.198

⁵⁰ *Catalogue of a Memorial Exhibition: The Works of the Late Professor Anning Bell*, (London: Fine Art Society, 1934), p.5, describes Bell’s use of line and desire for mystery in sketches

⁵¹ ‘Long Skirts’

⁵² Bell owned a copy of Francis M. Kelly and Randolph Schwabe, *Historic Costume: A Chronicle of Fashion in Western Europe, 1470-1790*, (London: 1925), private knowledge noted in Eden, (2009), p.31

⁵³ ‘Long Skirts’

⁵⁴ ‘Long Skirts’

⁵⁵ Robert Anning Bell, ‘Notes on the Practice of Pictorial Mosaic,’ *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, (RIBA) vol VIII, (1901), pp.25-38, (p.34)

Martin Wood in a detailed discussion of Bell's works in 1910 described how such draperies and lines can be very 'pagan' as in *Spring Revel*, 1917 or more restrained as in *The Echo* and other works.⁵⁶ Wood's article implied that 'pagan' draperies and forms in works such as *The Arrow*, and *The Battle of Flowers*, (?1904), (Fig. 2.9) are frivolous, as opposed to restrained, 'pagan', 'a little more gay', allowing 'freedom of movement.'⁵⁷ In contrast to 'solemn' or 'rigid' robes, as perhaps in *The Women Going to the Sepulchre* or *And the Women Stood Afar Off Beholding These Things*, where the robes hang in vertical, immovable forms and appear heavy and statuesque, drapery in *The Arrow* displays a surrender to freedom, happiness, abandon and joy, features which are noted in Wood's article. This forms a complete contrast to the practise of tight-lacing and wearing of heavy undergarments that women were accustomed to in the 1900s. And though the clothing in both paintings is similar to those on classical statues, Bell resisted emulating this closely. By contrast Waterhouse's early version of *Miranda*, 1875 (Fig.2.10) featured more accurate classical robes with a tie across the breast for example. In terms of painterly practise, the robes in *The Arrow* are impressionistic, less bound by a defining line, at times lacking distinct edges. This style emphasised movement and energy. The drapery is less substantial; as in *The Battle of Flowers*, the pliability of fabric could suggest nimble, agile and swift activity. The image presents an undemanding, untaxing and effortless wearing of light drapery, rather than burdensome weight of constrictive clothes.

In such drapery Bell celebrated his preference for the watercolour medium due to its greater emotional possibilities, fluidity and imprecision, in stark contrast to 'gothic', architectural, strong and determined vertical lines of earlier paintings and illustrative work.⁵⁸ Painting in watercolour became particularly attractive and personal to him, his 'principal form of expression,' most evident from 1904.⁵⁹ He displayed

⁵⁶ Wood, (1910)

⁵⁷ Unlike 'stiff ecclesiastical robing' repeated below: Wood, (1910), p.255

⁵⁸ Such works include book illustration, prolific decorative commissions in plaster relief and stained glass illustrated frequently in *The Studio* from its first issue in 1893. For details see Eden (2009); Eden (2012); Rose (2004); Christian, (1989), p.155

⁵⁹ Rose, (2004)

twenty-one paintings in the medium from 1901-1933 and wrote an article on the virtues of watercolour for the society's annual journal in 1925.⁶⁰

The choice to abandon his 'gothic' line in painting these figures was striking. Bell, as an Arts and Crafts practitioner, along with others such as his friend Walter Crane, was much influenced in the 1890s by the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphilo*, 1499. This appeared a principal model for the artist's outpouring of acclaimed book illustrations and bookplates from the 1890s, offering a type of medieval rigour, defined line and conscientiousness of form. Influenced by its scholarly woodcuts, with unerring lines, as well as its model of Renaissance artistic practise, Bell continued to deploy leaded divides and demarcated compositional structures in keeping with his ongoing Arts and Craft allegiances, working in many tougher, almost immovable media of mosaic and stained glass into the 1920s, including important commissions in the Palace of Westminster.⁶¹ Bell also lectured about these historic methods.⁶² The clear choice Bell made to move away from hieratical and vertical composition in *The Arrow* as well as *The Echo* can be seen by comparing them with the painting *Mary in the House of Elizabeth*; the latter is definitely created within the modes of religious art and in relation to Rossetti's *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*, 1848-9, (Fig.2.11): cloistral, confined, domestic and devotional.⁶³

Bell expressed emphatically his sheer exhilaration at creating more 'pagan' pictures, such as *The Arrow* and *The Echo*, as: 'the secret of his happiest inspiration as a painter.' Martin Wood prefaced his lengthy article with the image of *The Arrow*, presented perhaps as an archetype of Bell's mature style and initiating Wood's detailed

⁶⁰ *Old Watercolour Society's Club*, Annual Volume II, 1925, cited in Christian, p.155. Christian writes that he had 'always had a preference for watercolour' which was expressed fervently in article. The medium was deeply personal to him as is noted later.

⁶¹ Eden (2009). This influence was noted by MaryAnne Stevens who states that Bell 'was impressed by both the austere and graceful lines of these famous [black and white] illustrations, and the sensitive balance between image and text,' like other artists involved in the revival of fine book illustration: William Morris, Walter Crane, Ricketts and Shannon. MaryAnne Stevens, (ed.), *The Edwardians and After: The Royal Academy 1900-1950*, Royal Academy Exhibition Catalogue, (London: 1988), p.58

⁶² Such lectures included: 'Notes on the Practice of Pictorial Mosaic,' *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, (RIBA) vol VIII, (1901), p.38; 'Painted Relief', *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, 18, (1911), pp.485-500; 'A Lecture on Stained Glass', Royal College of Art, London, (1922)

⁶³ Bell 'is generally successful in impregnating his work with devotional sentiment...a certain dignified austerity...generally distinguishing his pictures.' While a picture may have 'no obvious connection with [a] biblical story, yet its seriousness of feeling appears to invest it with recondite significance.' 'Current Art Notes,' *Connoisseur*, Vol.51, (1917), pp.111-170, (both p.112).

discussion.⁶⁴ Wood described Bell's lighter touch, use of less finish creating an 'impromptu' feeling and fluidity of form, including space on the canvas.⁶⁵ Wood indicated that the artist followed the development of the artwork intuitively, as suggested by the first lines on the paper, more so than a design in his mind. Through this organic method, 'there is a sense in which a picture finishes itself.'⁶⁶ Bell abandoned himself to the emotional experience of creating the picture, as Wood described, such works are 'on the threshold of [Bell's] most expressive achievement...finding more freedom and emotionalism – an abandon, a forgetfulness of the model that gives play to intellectual feeling.'⁶⁷

Bell's methods display his interest in line as a way to suggest and effect spiritual transformations and resonance. Bell had developed an interest in fluid and organic lines, influenced by art nouveau, Symbolism and mysticism in an attempt to create spiritual art. Bell's works were described in *The Times*, 1907 as illustrations of works by the 'dreamy Belgian prose-poet' Maeterlinck, reflecting the contemporary links made between Bell, mystical art and the unknown.⁶⁸ Seminal works of art nouveau, by Mackmurdo, who Bell knew from his time as Master of the Art Workers Guild, included his well-known chair of 1893, (Fig. 2.12). The swirling organic design on the back, had a significant effect on Bell's work, both on the artist's use of line and form and on the corresponding spiritual or mysterious meanings he aspired to relate.⁶⁹ Looking back on his time in Liverpool for an article in 1929, Bell recalled dining surrounded by Mackmurdo's period furniture vividly, describing him as 'a great man in the nineties...one of the beginners of things.'⁷⁰

Bell later worked alongside the designer and artist C.F.A. Voysey at the GSA, an environment which fostered links between art and spirituality. Voysey wrote in a report to the GSA in 1918 how 'mystery has its charm' and warned against the

⁶⁴ This painting seems to have made a strong impression on him through its indefinite suggestion and spirit, noted by Christian (1989), p.155

⁶⁵ Wood (1910), p.256

⁶⁶ Wood, (1910), p.260

⁶⁷ Wood, (1910), p.260

⁶⁸ 'Art Exhibitions: At the Fine Art Society,' *The Times*, (Wednesday, 1st May, 1907)

⁶⁹ Mackmurdo also attended meetings when Bell was Master of the Art Workers Guild, London in the 1900s.

Art Workers Guild, London, visit 9th August, 2007, Minute books 1900-1902; Facos, (2009), p.3

⁷⁰ Robert Anning Bell, 'Looking Back: A Notable Circle', *Liverpool Daily Post*, (1929); see also Arthur H. Mackmurdo, 'The Spiritual in Art' an excerpt from 'The Guild's Flag Unfurling', in *Hobby Horse*, 1, 1884, pp.1-13, in Henri Dorra (eds.), *Symbolist Art Theories: A Critical Anthology*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, c1994), pp.95-7

‘didactic enforcement’ of the ‘spirit’ of texts. The ‘hidden meanings’ he continued, and all the qualities in nature, cannot be represented.⁷¹ This echoed the language of Lethaby’s important work, *Architecture, Mysticism and Myth*, 1892, which influenced Arts and Crafts practitioners like Bell as well as later theosophists such as Mondrian and Kandinsky in the 1900s. The culture of the GSA reinforced Bell’s exploration of ideas and forces which Wood described as located where the ‘real’ world ends. Wood wrote that Bell examines the ‘greater realities which begin where a so-called realist would have exhausted his subject.’⁷²

Bell used more fluid lines in *The Arrow* to suggest spiritual potency. Wood also situated Bell’s movement toward freer line in the painting within an artistic shift away from the Gothic revival, towards Impressionism or impressionistic painting. Wood saw this change as part of a broader cultural movement towards greater freedom, expressing itself in art as a reverential certitude changing to more sensual possibilities of line:

When Mr. Anning Bell exchanged the restrictions and embarrassments of design in coloured plaster or glass for the freedom of a liquid state of painting in oils, tempera, and watercolours, his art itself won a freedom, which while still decorative, was perhaps in a sense new...At the time that outline was becoming nothing to the impressionists...

The tendencies that to-day follow the Gothic revival...Rigid lines are falling away, not being forced down, but surrendering as life itself moves religiously to freedom.⁷³

Bell’s lightness of form is interpreted as gladdening and prophetic, signalling a new departure for Bell whilst also suggesting a broader cultural sense of alleviation, freedom and release. Writing several articles on the medium, Bell exulted:

Of all the plastic arts that of watercolour painting – may be most aptly described as the Joyous Art. Joyous! Yes, but oh how exasperating! So easily done and yet how impossibly difficult! So light and so swift⁷⁴

⁷¹ C. F. A. Voysey, ‘Report to the GSA,’ June, 1918, GSAA /2/11

⁷² Wood (1910), p.262

⁷³ Wood, (1910), p.255

⁷⁴ Mrs S. Erskine, ‘Robert Anning Bell RA’, *Old Water-Colour Society's Club*, 12, (1934–5), p.57; Eden (2009), (2012)

Movement, space and exhilaration in *The Arrow* were linked by viewers with a more emancipated spirit in the subjects of women.⁷⁵ Wood perceived elements of relaxed informality in natural and unceremonious figures which further radiated refreshing honesty through a lack of inhibition. Bell's looser painterly touch exhibited in flowing lines of the robes in *The Arrow*, aided the vagueness and removal from reality inherent to his Symbolist, fantasy setting and allowed the play of new suggestions, for example related to the unconscious.⁷⁶ Using these new forms, less tangible possibilities, such as the expression of new forms of spirituality and consciousness emerged from Bell's liberated figures. The freeing effects of watercolour encouraged the artist to work in new ways and allowed his compositions to become more abstruse and ethereal. Bell's aesthetics could suggest changes for women, relating to both the physical and the spiritual. However, these freedoms of Bell's later style remained tempered by conventions and negotiated a contradictory relationship to the contemporary construct of 'Amazons'.

'Amazons'

Perhaps the votaresses of Artemis may have looked like this, with their formidable spears and their blue or lilac tunics⁷⁷

After 1900, women in Bell's compositions were linked visually with ancient warriors or 'Amazons,' as above from *The Times*, 1909, regarding *On Going to the Hunt*, (Fig.2.13).⁷⁸ 'Amazons' was a contemporary construct of womanhood, speaking of longevity, physical culture, power and aggression, which allows insight into the context and visual forms of both paintings. Though the women were seen as Amazons, aspects also carefully diluted and dissipated the reference. Bell retained the promise of female strength, while shedding the erotic and more reductive aspects of the mythology and combining the strength with both grace and grandeur.⁷⁹ The

⁷⁵ Wood (1910), p.255

⁷⁶ Wood, (1910) p.262. This was the same year in which Wood wrote with sensitivity and insight also in *The Studio*, on Frederick Cayley Robinson's use of the unconscious in his illustrations for Maeterlinck's *The Blue Bird*, 1909.

⁷⁷ Text continues 'and at all events we may admit that there is fine movement in the drawing and a feeling for design which is rare at the present day,' 'Art Exhibitions,' *The Times*, Monday, (8th November, 1909), p. 9

⁷⁸ Figures in Bell's works also described in secondary writings as 'his Amazons' for example by Kalinsky, (1989), p.313; Christian (1989), p.155

⁷⁹ Cheri Kramarae and Paula A. Treichler, *A Feminist Dictionary*, (Boston and London: Pandora Press, 1985), p.261. Rosalind Miles also notes that there are physical freedoms displayed in the history of

voluminous genealogy of the Amazons, stretched back to ancient Greek mythology, in which they were female warriors of Artemis, Goddess of the Hunt, as noted above, and the Amazon Queen Hippolyta features within the mythological tales of Hercules' Labours.⁸⁰ Amazons in the art of ancient Greece carry bows and arrows and as cited above, flowing tunics. Bell drew Hippolyta as early as the 1880s-1890s within his illustrations for Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and continued to feature her in several important paintings including *Queen Hippolyta's Bath*, *The Amazon Guard*, 1908, and *The Amazon Guard* (c.1911), shown at the International Exhibition in Rome, 1911.⁸¹

However, these specific mythological references are absent in *The Arrow*, which thus implied a broader suggestion of Amazonian behaviour and spirit, and is able to communicate more complicated and pervasive contemporary cultural constructions of female athletic prowess and warrior imagery. Just as H. G Well's novel *Ann Veronica* has been re-examined in 'the cultural context of the development of self-defence for ladies...as a testament to the growth of women's sports [and] the accompanying proliferation of women's martial arts classes promoted by Edith Garrud, the trainer for the Suffragette Bodyguard,' so *The Arrow* presents testimony to the unprecedented explosion in women's physical activity.⁸² The painting coincided with a contemporary use of the term Amazons in a loose sense, rather than referencing a specific myth; instead the term suggested the idea of bands of fearsome and brutal female warriors, who were virgins, withholding sex from, independent from and battling men.⁸³ There had been a Victorian mystique and romanticism surrounding the figures as a rare historical example of formidable female violence, while popular knowledge in the Edwardian era was expounded through histories such as Rotherby's

Amazonian women as well as classical women, which women in the 1980s may envy: Rosalind Miles, *The Women's History of the World*, (London: Paladin, 1989), pp.1-3

⁸⁰ Hippolyta wears a girdle, a symbol of sexual power kept bound within civilisation; in ancient Greece, the loosening of the girdle by the bridegroom meant the end of her free maidenhood and the opening of her body to her husband and pregnancy. On this subject, Lyn Webster Wilde, cites *Diodorus of Sicily, Book IV*, 15-16 in *On the Trail Of Woman Warriors*, (London: Constable, 1999), pp.11-12. In Greek mythology, Artemis was the goddess of the hunt, wild animals, wilderness, forests and hills, archery, childbirth and virginity, protector of young girls and reliever of disease in women. She has often been depicted with golden bow and arrows, hunting dog and the crescent moon. See Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths: The Complete and Definitive Edition*, (London: Penguin, re-issue edition, 2011), p.83

⁸¹ Christian (1989), cat. 239, p.155

⁸² See Godfrey (2012)

⁸³ Wilde, (1999); Pauline Schmitt Pantel, (ed.), *A History of Women in the West. 1. From Ancient Goddesses to Christian Saints*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992), pp.226-9

The Amazons, 1910. Amazons were used as a warning from history exemplifying how wild, unkempt and dangerous women with power would be.⁸⁴ Pertinently, the term was further concurrently reprised, especially from 1906-1913, as a derogatory term for the Suffragettes, a term which militants themselves additionally employed to distinguish themselves from the law-abiding suffragists, exploiting the association with strength, determination and ruthlessness.⁸⁵

In its broad, popular usage in the Edwardian press, Amazons was applied in casual and vague, derogatory applications, applied almost nonsensically, in equal manner to an all-women marching band in a Suffragette parade, including young women, and to Suffragettes committing acts of arson.⁸⁶ Like the term *femme fatale*, 'Amazons' is a malleable construct. Its inexact nature, non-intellectual and careless usage in popular culture as a negative stereotype of women, at the same time asserted the tangible challenge of emancipated women's potential brawn, might and autonomy, betraying the potency of the threat of female agency.⁸⁷ Particularly since the term was also co-opted by feminists, it held greater cultural import than casual usage initially suggests. Amazons in Edwardian media could describe prehistoric brutal warriors, militant Suffragettes employing covert tactics of deceit or disguise, female sportswomen such as equestrians or cricketers, or housewives exercising greater autonomy by daring to neglect their housework in order to support the Suffrage campaign or read *Votes for Women*.⁸⁸

In its multiple uses, the term provides an inside route to nuanced, slippery, complicated and subversive contemporary constructs of womanhood, central in

⁸⁴ Kramarae and Treichler (1985), detail this patriarchal myth, pp.43-4, p.261

⁸⁵ Miller, (1994), p.126

⁸⁶ 'All the bandswomen were attired in the special uniforms, the colours of the material representing the Union colours. This is said to be the first amazon drum and fife band which has ever existed...The strange sight of a feminine band attracted the attention of a considerable number of passers-by and in some of the busier streets the crowds became so dense that the traffic had to be temporarily held up.' *News of the World*, quoted in *Votes for Women*, May, (1909), p.693, in Atkinson, (1996), p.87. The photograph shows young women at the front of the parade.

⁸⁷ Connected with the construct of the *Femme Fatale*, discussed in Chapter One and in Hanson and O'Rawe, (2010)

⁸⁸ 'An Anti-Suffrage Alphabet', 1911, in Atkinson (1996), Plate 14, opposite p.78. This cartoon by Laurence Housman lampooned the opponents of the Suffragette campaign with the following words:

W's the Washing which woman must do
Day in & day out;
& on polling day too
If she wants a day off
You had better say "Bosh"
And tell her such fanciful notions won't wash.

locating shifting boundaries of behavioural norms within these paintings and their reception. Pertinently, it reveals several layers of meaning at once when referring to Bell's paintings, often indicating both a mythological inference or connection to Artemis in visual form and a more generalised, elusive and intangible modern spirit in the images of women, most usefully captured in *The Arrow* and related discourse.⁸⁹ With regard to *The Arrow*, the word provided both a titillating sexual inference, perhaps disguised admiration, as well as male aggression, dismay and repugnance toward those commandeering new liberties so brazenly in the public arena. However, although hinting at the power of Amazons through the figures' strength and self-reliance, there is little violence or aggression in Bell's image, which is noble, uplifting and heroic. *The Arrow* is removed from the polarised contemporary use of the term 'Amazons,' presenting instead a positive image of female agency and showing how such a term, though generally essentialising could, when contextualised, be revealed to carry varying levels of misogynistic charge.

Archery

The Arrow tempered the extreme, misogynistic and erotic aspects of Amazonian associations. Bell retained the figures' strength, autonomy, determination, focus and potential, whilst they also conform to aspects of acceptable ladylike behaviour and to conservative ideas of the British class system and patriotism. The compromise is similar to those made in campaign imagery within the Suffragette movement.⁹⁰ For example, Bell infused his representation of women in ancient groupings, with associations of the eighteenth century. The eighteenth century saw the revival of archery as an elegant, noble and revived upper class pastime and was an era the Victorians much idealised stylistically, as pretty and elegant.⁹¹ Archery remained a socially acceptable sport for girls of the upper classes from the late nineteenth century, comparable with walking, calisthenics and croquet. Since becoming a fashionable pastime in the eighteenth century, women archers featured in the 1908 Olympics and

⁸⁹ Guy Cadogan Rotherby, *The Amazons*, (1910, Didactic Press, ebook, Amazon Kindle Edition, 2014). Capturing the boundaries of 'the feminine' and of misogynistic rhetoric is like the metaphor of 'water in the hand' used to describe the supernatural or spooky sense in Bown et al (eds) (2004), p.1

⁹⁰ The article notes that in France, archery was much practised by working men and tradesmen, whereas in England, 'members are of a different social class,' in 'Archery (From a Correspondent)', *The Times*, (Friday, 17th July, 1908), p.10

⁹¹ 'Archery', p.10

in Bell's painting the next year. This association mediated wilder, Amazonian connections, resulting in women which were noted to be 'much more like' Bell's previous illustrations to Shakespeare and the Romantic poets, 'than to those grim and mysterious stories of Amazons which have come down to us from an immemorial past.'⁹²

Coverage of the 1908 Olympics competition in *The Times*, shows how Bell's image could be acceptable and conservative in its connection of women with power and physical strength and also with the practise of archery, history and Englishness: 'Shooting with the bow is a peculiarly appropriate part of an Olympiad taking place in England, the ancient home of the long-bow.' Bows were used to defend the country 'from the earliest times.'⁹³ Women were surmounting new heights of sporting achievement since first competing in 1900. The winner of the archery competition in 1908 was Sybil "Queenie" Newall, at 54 years old, she was the oldest woman ever to win an Olympic gold medal and she also used bows with equal draw weights to those used by men.⁹⁴ The runner-up, Charlotte "Lottie" Dod, was another formidable sportswoman, having won the Wimbledon tennis singles on five occasions, taken the British Ladies golf crown four years earlier, represented England at hockey, and was of the highest standard at skating and tobogganing. Press coverage confirmed the class status of these women and the privilege of undertaking archery as a pastime, revealing them to be 'descendants of the man who commanded the victorious British archers at the battle of Agincourt.'⁹⁵ The female archers were photographed with their long bows, the same type which appeared in *The Arrow*, (see photograph, Fig. 2.14). This was a similar bow, noted *The Times* to those used in the Battle of Agincourt, 1483.⁹⁶ The association with the noble protection of England in a conservative history and the allusion to upper class athletes, strengthened Bell's image for consumption within the

⁹² This comment regards *Hippolyta's Bath*, (*The Amazon Guard*), (Bradford Art Gallery, 1908): 'The Royal Water-Colour Society,' *The Times*, (Saturday, 7th November, 1908), p. 10. See also Christian (1989), cat.239 p.155

⁹³ 'Archery', p.10

⁹⁴ Goodman, (2013), p.340

⁹⁵ 'Charlotte's brother William won the men's archery Olympic gold medal on the same day. Not surprisingly, it was revealed that they were descendants of the man who commanded the victorious British archers at the battle of Agincourt nearly 500 years before.' This is from Stan Greenberg, 'The 1908 London Olympics Gallery,' 3rd March, 2011, BBC History website: http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/britain_wwone/olympics_1908_gallery_08.shtml, accessed 19th July, 2016

⁹⁶ 'Archery', p.10

conservative art world, applying a tempering to the imagined primitive and female-dominated society. At the same time, the associations related the painting directly to contemporary female physical successes, rather than relegating such athletic feats solely to fantasy locations, such as feminist utopias.⁹⁷

Votes for Women

The female figures in *The Arrow* may also be compared with contemporaneous Suffragette imagery, such as the *Votes for Women* Poster of the same year (1909), (Fig.2.15), by Hilda Dallas who attended the Slade School 1910-1911 and was responsible for a number of designs within the movement.⁹⁸ Culture manifested changing representations of women across many media, as old stable polarities of the nineteenth century were broken down and new arenas of female activity opened up. Similarly to *The Arrow* there is a ruffling freedom of the women's clothes in robust and exhilarating climatic conditions in the hills. As well as the windy prospect, the flowing clothes, ties and hat-ribbons provide energy for the piece, as does the figure's pose, as she turns around momentarily towards us to brandish her paper *Votes for Women*, in a gesture soaring unhesitatingly skyward, whilst continuing her unobstructed journey in the fields.

The direction and position of the woman's arm in the poster is strong and uncompromising in a similarly unhesitating position to the arm of the central figure in *The Arrow*. The extended arm is a key focus of both of these images, as well as the *ILN* illustration. In Bell's painting, the shape of the arm and the arrow provide angularity and visual force, while Dallas further moulds the arm and body of her figure to form an abstracted and simplified shape and a pointed upward movement, suggesting woman as an avatar of change. In the *Illustrated London News* image, despite the women's conforming, corseted figures, the focus on the tension in the powerful, extended arms evidences 'masculine' incision, concentration, strength and firmness rather than female softness and flexibility.⁹⁹ The figures are commanding, absorbed and serious, their poses resolute. Archery was an acceptable sport since it

⁹⁷ Both Stubbs, (1979), xvi and Miller (1996), p.127, make the point that power for women, public activity and society which encourages female communities was largely only imagined in fantasy literature

⁹⁸ Note on Dallas in Atkinson, (1996), Plate 8, opposite p.78

⁹⁹ The contrast of masculine hardness/ feminine softness is noted in Bland, (1995), pp.48-91

did not require great movement of the body and caused minimal alteration in dress.¹⁰⁰ However the movement that *is* deployed, in its penetrative force, requires strength, skill and mental acuity. As Deborah Cherry describes, women's skills in horse-riding 'and their pleasures in this form of physical exercise [had acted] as metaphors for autonomy' in art works, and here this power could apply to the archery practised by the figures, which afforded women the opportunity to be competent, controlled, decisive and direct, and to enjoy the experience.¹⁰¹

The Suffrage campaign provided further opportunities to experience the pleasures of strength and physical application, following Emmeline Pankhurst's motto 'Deeds not words!' or joining her self-styled 'suffrage army.'¹⁰² The arrow was a symbol which recurred within the Suffragettes' campaign appearing on prison uniforms and in Suffragette campaign material (Fig. 2.16). Arrows on the top of placards carried by Suffragettes in protest demonstrations or marches in the 1900s, including the years exactly contemporary with the painting and the poster, symbolised that the Suffragette had been to prison (Fig. 2.17). Women practised self-defence, chauffeuring, engaged in physical altercations with police, actively forging a whole range of new conceptions of the body and female behaviour. However, the Suffragette campaign had several other strands alongside and essential to the physical exertions of their 'deeds' and which provide further layers of meaning to the symbol of the arrow.

The Suffragettes co-opted conservative imagery and historical allusions in their patron saint Joan of Arc, who was featured in campaign literature and propaganda in armour, mostly with a sword and which indicated a noble, holy campaign.¹⁰³ Such imagery deployed classical references adding grandeur to their simultaneous militant activities. The Suffragette use of new mass printing media and modern modes of dissemination meant that such imagery was part of a powerful intellectual campaign which ensured that the arrow signified not only decisive militancy, but a mental journey towards emancipation. Indeed, since the 1860s, the arrow had been used as a symbol of women's battle for emancipation and the suffrage. On the cover of *Shafts:*

¹⁰⁰ Goodman, (2013), p.338

¹⁰¹ Cherry, (2000), p.45

¹⁰² Atkinson (1996), p.1

¹⁰³ Emmeline Pankhurst was unapologetic in her militant stance and use of the rhetoric of a holy crusade stating in response to accusations of authoritarianism: 'Autocratic? Quite so.' From Emmeline Pankhurst, *My Own Story*, (1914. Reprinted Virago Press, 1979), in Atkinson, (1996), pp.2-3.

A Paper for Women and the Working Classes, 1893, for example, a female figure in neo-classical robes drew a bow ‘with an arrow bearing ‘Wisdom’, ‘Justice’, ‘Truth’ while another arrow piercing the title letters, has a message attached: ‘Light comes to those that dare to think’ (Fig.2.18).¹⁰⁴ Like the prominent brandishing of *Votes for Women* and the use of the arrow in feminist literature since the mid-nineteenth century, the shooting of *The Arrow* in Bell’s painting also issues thoughts or suggestions, it has dynamic and affronting energy, direction and acuity provided by the poses of the women and the entirely absorbed faces. Feminism had its origins in the anti-slavery movement in England, wherein the notion of freedom originating with an idea, perhaps stirring the conscience, like a carefully aimed dart, was an imaginative concept. The association is made in both works between the physical liberation in the targeting of the arrow and the moral and intellectual fight for the free acquisition of knowledge or enlightenment and a mental journey to freedom.

In Dallas’s poster, instead of the weapon of the arrow or the sword, as in many other Suffragette images of Joan of Arc, the ‘weapon’ of the written word, in the form of the newspaper *Votes for Women*, is held aloft.¹⁰⁵ There was ongoing debate over the methods used by the militant Suffragettes, which escalated closer to the war, spawning the disapproval of the general public.¹⁰⁶ Perhaps, as historian Diane Atkinson noted, the ‘methods proper to writers – the use of the pen’ would be perpetually more acceptable to many men and women, as were the images of women sewing banners, but not the dismaying sight of them parading, debating and confronting people on the streets.¹⁰⁷ The positioning of the arm holding the newspaper speaks of the confidence to assert moral indignation and superiority, as does the white

¹⁰⁴ Cherry, (2000), Figure 5.26, p.211

¹⁰⁵ A poem in *Punch*, referred to the New Woman as living on nothing but ‘ink’:

There is a New Woman, and what do you think?
 She lives upon nothing but Foolscap and Ink!
 But though Foolscap and Ink are the whole of her diet,
 This nagging New Woman can never be quiet!

Ellen Jordan, ‘The Christening of the New Woman: May 1894’, *Victorian Newsletter*, no.63 (Spring 1983), pp.19-21, in Offen, (c.2000), p.188; see also Adrienne E. Gavin, Carolyn W. de la L. Oulton, *Writing Women of the Fin de Siècle; Authors of Change*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) and F. Elizabeth Gray (ed.), *Women in Journalism at the Fin de Siècle; 'Making a Name for Herself'*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012)

¹⁰⁶ Despard created the WFL, described in Atkinson (1996), pp.2-3 and see also pp.4-6 on the escalating violence of Suffragettes prior to the First World War

¹⁰⁷Atkinson (1996), p.84

dress and the elevated, landscape, suggesting a lofty, exalted altitude. The female confidence of the moral high ground, as featured in posters of women dressed in armour as 'Justice', continued the visual language of woman as crusader and the performativity of the 'moral purity' feminists of the previous decade.¹⁰⁸ The poster emphasised woman's attributes of beauty, elegance, pragmatism, thought, nobility and action, all unified by the figure in white. However, the use of the mass media and other aspects of modernity supporting the Suffragette campaign, including modern transport and offices in central London, affirm the poster's Edwardian context.¹⁰⁹ The feminists' militant campaign was continually underwritten by scholarship, written, spoken and visual, a constant thinking and re-thinking of the nature of a free society for women. Dallas's poster combined visually both the physical and intellectual aspects of the woman's movement, its making reflects the greater possibilities and expectations for women being forged through the modern context.

Comparison with the poster effectively displayed what Bell gained by removing his picture to a remote and vague setting rather than a specific, modern day reference. Bell's painting could display more abandon, could privilege more artistic and suggestive draped robes, the epic romance of the setting, the grandeur and ambition of heightened emotion and symbolic gesture, while his vaguely historical figures could provide greater heroism. The figure in *The Arrow* who holds her bow straight up to the sky has the heroic pose of an ancient male warrior such as Hercules. The forceful, commanding pose differs from the usual depictions of Artemis, or her Roman counterpart Diana, which are more 'feminine'; for example in a sculpture of Diana at the Louvre, the bow and arrow are lowered and the figure is in an elegant, rather than a combative or physically exalted pose.¹¹⁰ Notably in two paintings by Walter Crane, Bell's friend through his Arts and Crafts connections, Diana is walking with her hunting dogs, in pastoral countryside or forest, in a poetic, Romantic mode; her figure is more delicate and elegant and the classical clothing mimetic, (Figures 2.19 and 2.20). Bell's figures acquire heroism through these mythological references, but the vague, draped clothes provide a much more unkempt and spontaneous feeling

¹⁰⁸ Bland, (1995), pp.95-124; such imagery is explored in Tickner, (1988) who illustrated murals by Christabel Pankhurst for example

¹⁰⁹ Turner has noted the cosmopolitan nature of the poster in (2009), p.76

¹¹⁰ *Diana of Versailles* statue, (1st or 2nd century, AD, Louvre, Paris. This is a Roman copy of a Greek sculpture by Leochares also in the Louvre, c.325 BC)

than a more rigorous adherence to classical motif could have. The energy and emotion of the group of women, their position cutting across the corner of the image, is more fearless, pagan, liberated providing a much more compelling and provocative image than an attempt at classical revival.

Whereas the Suffragette poster made a direct political statement, Bell's made a more universal, ideologically evocative one, which suggested the soaring, imaginative possibilities of freedom for women. Bell's arrow does eject a thought and a soaring imagination, but without bounds, the feminist poster displayed the visual iconography of a purposeful movement, which had determined aims and targets. Women in *The Arrow* are not, in the words of feminist Rosemarie Tong, 'earthbound, immanent and determined [watching] man fly off into the realm of transcendence [and] the zone of freedom.'¹¹¹ Instead the figures in *The Arrow* are free to enjoy and become subsumed within listening to the noise of the arrow in flight and live an enriched intellectual and spiritual experience, lofty from the mundane earthly duties of many women. Unlike the archers in the *ILN* illustration, who are focussed on a narrow, specific target, the act of shooting the arrow directly up into the air, into nowhere, the open expanse of the sky in a remote hilltop location, suggested a world of possibilities through women's actions. The painting's debt to Symbolism includes profoundly metaphysical, transcendental implications. In its idea and representation, and considered in the context of the contemporary conservative culture and art-world, the picture contains great transgressive and imaginative emancipatory possibility.

Feminism: Pre- and Post-Patriarchal Possibilities

The Arrow and *The Echo*, in their representations of women and uncivilised landscape, their expression of emancipatory possibility and visualisation of freedom, accorded with a number of feminist writings of the period. Feminists, through an assortment of textual modes, enacted a rethinking, an emptying of imaginative space, in order to start again and to rewrite an historical narrative subsequently co-opted and distorted by dominant patriarchy, as well as to anticipate and effect a feminist future. Within this project, feminists sought the distant past, the evolutionary beginnings of humanity, primordialism, matriarchal communities and Amazonian warriors, the originating

¹¹¹ Rosemarie Putnam Tong, *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction*, (Boulder Colorado: Westview Press, Second Edition, 1998), p.195

stories of religions as well as the ‘nowhere’ spaces of utopias in various writings.¹¹² The indeterminate natural setting of Bell’s picture could suggest the freedoms of female-oriented living in imaginative pasts or fantasy vistas of the future. The *Votes for Women* poster, like *The Arrow* used the image of open fields presenting free space to be traversed. However in the poster, the fields are evocative of the English landscape in the present day, rather than barren, remote and icy mountains of Bell’s and other Symbolist works.¹¹³ The possibilities suggested by the liberating movement and enjoyment of the arrow in Bell’s painting are accentuated when completely removed from the moorings of social convention and taken visually into a remote unknown place which is pre-patriarchy and pre-modern and which, existing outside of time, could also anticipate the future.

Matriarchy

American suffragist, Elizabeth Cady Stanton had written in 1891:

The period of woman’s supremacy lasted through many centuries – undisputed, accepted as natural and proper wherever it existed, and was called the matriarchate or mother-age.¹¹⁴

Within the pervasive feminist re-imagining of women in the past and the future, theories of matriarchy were developed. These existed within psychological and anthropological writings, prompting widespread belief in intellectual and popular culture from the mid-nineteenth century in the existence of a previous ‘Matriarchate.’¹¹⁵ The philosopher Bachofen had reignited modern debates with his well-known work *The Mother Right*, 1861, while the American Lewis Henry Morgan’s

¹¹² As Matthew Beaumont has described regarding the ‘nowhere’ space of feminist utopias, feminists sought historic ‘evidence’ of the certainty of their ideal, anticipated future. (2001, p.212) Feminists sought ‘an alternative, feminist epistemology...a proleptic (rather than empirical) type of political “proof” that the abolition of patriarchy was imminent and that the future emancipation of women would be realised. (p.212)

¹¹³ Such as the banishing of women as a punishment for their sexuality in *The Punishment of Lust* (also known as *The Punishment of Luxury*), Giovanni Sergantini (1858-1899), 1891, (Liverpool Museums), which features a similar remote, icy prospect. For detail on the painting and others, see Facos, (2009), p. 125

¹¹⁴ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, 1891, “The Matriarchate or Mother-Age” in *Transactions of the National Council for Women of the United States*, Philadelphia, pp.218-27. Excerpt taken from Aileen S. Kraditor, (ed.), *Up from the Pedestal: Selected Writings in the History of American Feminism*, (New York: Quadrangle, 1977), pp.140-7, p.143 and cited in Kramarae and Treichler (1985), p.262

¹¹⁵ Summarised in Ellenberger, (1970), pp.218-223 and Maryanne Cline Horowitz, (ed.), *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, c.2005), cites Tylor who described the Minangkabau of Indonesia as one possible matriarchy, pp.1384-1389

intensive studies of the Iroquois documented political institutions in which women played important roles. Morgan's *Ancient Society* (1877), as well as work by E.B. Tylor on comparative anthropological evidence, formed the basis of Engel's speculations in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884), resulting in Engel's words: 'The overthrow of the mother-right (Matriarchy) was the world historical defeat of the female sex.'¹¹⁶ Feminist writings overlapped with those within the socialist movement, and with anthropology in universally determining pre-capitalist societies as more egalitarian and in identifying private ownership as the source of aberrant aggressive male domination as well as the later 'separate spheres' ideology that resulted in incarceration for women in the home.¹¹⁷ Serious debates took place within many intellectual arenas: anthropology, evolutionary science, medicine, sociology, psychology, the feminist and socialist movements as well as in the popular media well into the twentieth century.¹¹⁸

Bell's artworks were completed during this period of ascendancy for the concept of matriarchy, complemented by the peak expansion of the women's movement and soaring female agency as a visible force as well as by a troubled or ambivalent sense of masculine modernity, progress and technology.¹¹⁹ Remaining a widely accepted theory in 1903, the 'case for the existence of a primitive matriarchate' was expounded in a notable and widely read later example by the American sociologist Lester Ward in *Pure Sociology* that year.¹²⁰ And revealing how naturalised and familiar such theories were, H. G. Wells satirised the concept in his novel *Ann Veronica*, 1909 specifically mentioning Lester Ward: 'The Matriarchate! The Lords

¹¹⁶ Engels cited in Kramarae and Treichler (1985), p.262. Horowitz (c.2005) cites Tylor who described the Minangkabau of Indonesia as one possible matriarchy, pp.1384-1389

¹¹⁷ Horowitz (c.2005)

¹¹⁸ Controversy around this term from the early twentieth century resulted in the concept being largely discredited, Horowitz, and it was reprised or reclaimed by Second Wave feminists as an idea which, regardless of historical 'fact' and male appropriation, may still empower women, in for example Kramarae and Treichler (1985), p.262

¹¹⁹ This context is explored in in Stephen Arata, *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin de Siècle*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988); Facos (2009)

¹²⁰ Lester F. Ward, *Pure Sociology: A Treatise on the Origin and Spontaneous Development of a Society*, (London: Macmillan, 1903). Scholar Maroula Joannou described Ward as 'a pioneering American sociologist [who wrote] controversial gynocentric theories about the innate superiority of the female species,' in Maroula Joannou, 'Chloe Liked Olivia': The Woman Scientist, Sex and Suffrage,' in Helen Small and Trudi Tate (eds.), *Literature, Science, Psychoanalysis, 1830-1970: Essays in Honour of Gillian Beer*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp.195-211, (p.203)

of Creation just ran about and did what they were told' while 'among the first animals there "were no males, none at all."'”¹²¹ Bachofen's seminal work, whilst deploring male aggression in destroying matriarchy, simultaneously assumed that patriarchy *was* undoubtedly the superior societal state.¹²² Indeed, later feminism has found the entire concept of matriarchy to be a patriarchal myth, wherein matriarchy is conceived of as a complementary, female version of patriarchy, dealing in dominance and the oppression of one gender over the other, 'proof' that women were not inherently any better than men and would behave just as badly if they were dominant.¹²³

In this period, however, a number of British feminists, such as Frances Swiney and Catherine Hartley, embraced the widely believed concept within female-centred narratives. In the context of late nineteenth century discourses about sexual morality, marriage, prostitution and within languages of evolution and religion, such feminists proposed that women's current subordination was due to men's past and present 'transgression of 'natural laws'' through aggressive lust, de-railing the laws which maintained our health and humanity.¹²⁴ Swiney wrote in 1909 that the 'male is...a mere afterthought of nature' who had destroyed a more natural state in order to create an unnatural order of patriarchy, re-deploying Darwinian language, but reversed the ideas in order to re-assess women's position in a professed 'natural' hegemonic order instead as fabricated and mutable.¹²⁵ Feminists expounded detailed alternate histories

¹²¹ H. G. Wells, *Ann Veronica*, (London: Mills & Boon, 1909) p.31, in Joannou, (2003), p.203

¹²² As compared to women's barbarism – a point Livesey makes, (2007), p.83

¹²³ Kramarae and Treichler, (1985) include in their detailed definition of matriarchy, p.261:

- a) an actual society believed to be governed by women long before the current patriarchal epoch, b) a hypothesized or visionary society in which the practices and values of 'women's culture' would prevail, c) a myth created by men to envision and contain the idea of governance by women

Horowitz has noted that:

Joan Bamberger's contribution to *Women, Culture, and Society* argued specifically that myths and legends about female rule were told not because they reflected a previous history of matriarchy (as Bachofen believed) but instead as "social charters" for male dominance...the myths themselves justify the rule of men "through the evocation of a vision of a catastrophic alternative—a society dominated by women. The myth, in its reiteration that women did not know how to handle power when in possession of it, reaffirms dogmatically the inferiority of their present position" (p. 279).

From Joan Bamberger, 'The Myth of Matriarchy: Why Men Rule in Primitive Society,' in Michelle Rosaldo, and Louise Lamphere (eds), *Women, Culture, and Society*, (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1974), pp.263–280, cited in Horowitz, (c.2005), p.1389. See also Wilde, (1999), pp.1-10; Miles (1989) and Pantel (1992)

¹²⁴ Bland (1995), p.79

¹²⁵ Frances Swiney wrote in a number of texts summarised by Bland, (1995), p.220 and p.79; see also Doughan, (2004); Gillian Beer's text *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009) is also useful, particularly the introduction.

of the sexes, countering the dominant view that women were naturally passive. Instead the past was re-imagined as a way to foresee a future in which women were ‘active agents of change.’¹²⁶ Women had not always been oppressed argued Swiney: ‘Under the Matriarchate “women reigned supreme,”’ echoing Cady Stanton’s words of 1891, above.¹²⁷ In the 1960s, feminists developed an idea of matriarchy as a powerful imaginative space for women. As Kate Millett later described in the seminal text *Sexual Politics*, 1969, even the possibility of matriarchy challenged:

patriarchy’s claims to eternal authority, primeval or primordial origins, and biological or environmental necessity...patriarchy [is] but one era of human history and therefore, theoretically as capable of dissolution as it was of institution.¹²⁸

Matriarchal imaginings of this period privileged, rather than subordinated, several female-centred aspects of culture.¹²⁹ The concept of matriarchy allowed the consideration of what form a ‘female orientated society led by women, with social values that operated in harmony with Nature and women’s needs’ would take.¹³⁰ Regardless of historical ‘facts’, ‘the *idea* of matriarchy is powerful for women in itself,’ enabling women to think about ‘what society would be like where women were truly free.’¹³¹ This was a concept women of this earlier period already understood.

Feminist Utopias

Feminist utopias of the period corresponded with contemporary knowledge of matriarchal societies. Examples included Elizabeth Burgoyne Corbett’s, *New Amazonia: A Foretaste of the Future*, 1889, Florence Dixie, *Gloriana; or, the Revolution of 1900* and Charlotte Perkin Gilman’s trilogy: *Moving the Mountain*, 1911, *Herland*, 1915 and *With Her in Ourland*, 1916.¹³² Though isolated, detached

¹²⁶ Bland (1995), p.79; see also Martha Vicinus, (ed.), *Suffer and be Still: Women in the Victorian Age*, (London: Methuen, 1980, c1972); Greer, (1999)

¹²⁷ Swiney, (1899), p.86, in Bland, (1995), p.217. Many feminists accepted that there had been a Matriarchate. (Bland, (1995), p.79). See also: Alice Vickery, *The Malthusian*, March, May, July, 1904 on Matriarchy theory, (in Bland, (1995), p.353). Described also in Reed, (1975), pp.35-36; see also Joannou (2003)

¹²⁸ Millett, (1969), p.154, cited Kramarae and Treichler, (1985), p.262

¹²⁹ Kramarae and Treichler (1985), p.262

¹³⁰ Kramarae and Treichler (1985), p.262

¹³¹ Margot Adler, (1979) and Paula Webster and Esther Newton, (1972) in Kramarae and Treichler (1985), p.262

¹³² Charlotte Perkin Gilman, *Moving the Mountain*, (1911), *Herland*, (1915) and *With Her in Ourland*, (1916) were serialised in *The Forerunner*, 1911-1916. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Charlotte Perkins*

from the rest of humanity, women in Gilman's utopian community of *Herland* are not alone, they are in an all-female community, a 'close-massed multitude, women, all of them.'¹³³ This was one of the panaceas of feminism, imagined by Olive Schreiner and utopian writers such as Corbett and Dixie as a way forward, the result of conquering women's internal divisions and standing together.¹³⁴

Whether referenced directly or indirectly, 'Amazons' also featured in such works. This important historic example of women with power enjoying physical exertion informed many feminist constructs of future or utopian womanhood.¹³⁵ Sharing Bell's emphasis in *The Arrow* on women's physique and physical activity, the women in Corbett's *New Amazonia* are colossal yet graceful, strong yet feminine, while men are relatively weak. Women have 'magnificent build...superb proportions' they are beings 'close upon seven foot in height.'¹³⁶ A corset appears in a museum as an instrument of torture and the narrator's big waist enables her to fit in.¹³⁷ Women are physically liberated, unfatigued as they undertake feats of diving, somersaults which lunge them forcefully into the water.¹³⁸ Both *New Amazonia* and Gilman's *Herland* featured a ubiquitous, brilliant tunic, loose enough to permit a variety of physical activities, echoing the women's tunics in *The Arrow*.¹³⁹ Indeed, in *Herland*, male explorers stumble upon 'frolicsome girls' in tunics with 'gay laughter' in the

Gilman's Utopian novels: Moving the Mountain, Herland and With her in Ourland, edited by Minna Doskow, (Madison, N.J.; London: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press and Associated University Presses, c1999). Utopian fiction was a male-defined genre with well-known proponents in Edward Bellamy, William Morris, Robert Blatchford, Edward Carpenter and H. G. Wells. Feminist works have been interpreted as a diluted form in-between the male-defined genre of the utopia and romance, fantasy and science fiction writing, particularly as many women writers included more conventional marriage-related or romantic plots. See Fredric Jameson, "Magical Narratives: Romance as Genre," *New Literary History* 7, no. 1 (Autumn 1975): 133-63, esp. p. 158; and Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, (NY: Methuen, 1981), p. 9. Much needed recent scholarly attention has begun to redefine feminist utopias as a new, unreconciled and radical art form. See Beaumont, (2001), Rowbotham (2010) as well as Kessler (1984). See also Judith R. Walkowitz, 'Science, Feminism and Romance: The Men and Women's Club, 1885-1889', *History Workshop Journal*, 21, (Spring, 1986), pp.37-59 and Jean Pfaelzer, *The Utopian Novel in America, 1886-1896: The Politics of Form*, (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 1984), p.158

¹³³ *Herland*, in Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Works of Charlotte Perkins Gilman*, (1935. Amazon Kindle edition 2012), location 2269-70

¹³⁴ Heilmann, (2004)

¹³⁵ Features such as physical prowess, women only communities existing in isolation and women comfortable in nature in Gilman's *Herland*, 1915, are clearly based on the historic example of Amazons

¹³⁶ Elizabeth Burgoyne Corbett, *New Amazonia: A Foretaste of the Future*, (first published London: Tower Publishing Company, 1889. This edition: Seattle: Aqueduct Press, Heirloom Books, 2014, accessed via Amazon Kindle), p.36 (kindle, location 269)

¹³⁷ Corbett, (2014), location 269

¹³⁸ Corbett (2014), location 1297

¹³⁹ Gilman, *Herland*, (2014), location 2204-5

forests at the edges of the undiscovered, isolated settlement. The women of the society are extraordinary, described with a plethora of noble adjectives: serene, assured, fit, grave, wise, gracious, unsmiling, sure-footed.¹⁴⁰ The narrator exclaims: ‘what Gorgeous Girls! To climb like that! To run like that! And afraid of nothing.’¹⁴¹

In a number of ways, Bell’s works correspond with these feminist ventures. Both paintings are set somehow outside of time, featured all female groups which evidence both physical and spiritual acuity and fulfilment. Bell also imagined epic, removed vistas and monumental time scales which corresponded with the isolated societies of feminist utopias and with the imagination of a point centuries in the future, as well as the past. Feminist utopias such as Corbett’s *New Amazonia* sought cleared space, removed from present modern British civilisation; Corbett noted that this is ‘Corrupt, Degraded...Rotten to the core’ and so dispensed with the existence of Britain altogether.¹⁴² While the ‘Amazonians’ in Corbett’s utopia were descendants of a successful suffragist movement of the nineteenth century, in the future the whole notion of Britain has entirely vanished. Gilman’s *Moving the Mountain*, 1911 also begins in Tibet, as a suitably remote desolate position from which to imagine the new society in America.¹⁴³

The text of Charlotte Perkin Gilman’s *Herland*, 1915, mirrored contemporary anthropology and the feminist act of rediscovery of ancient histories of Amazons or matriarchies. The utopia is discovered through ‘legends and folk myths of these scattered tribes...[of a] strange country where no men lived only women and girl children.’¹⁴⁴ However, in contrast to male myths of these ancient societies, the future is a pastoral, co-operative or socialist structure where ‘purity, peace, health, harmony and comfort reigned.’¹⁴⁵ The male explorers who find *Herland* have their assumptions thoroughly quashed. Dominant historical discourse had highlighted the barbarous

¹⁴⁰ Gilman, *Herland*, (2014), location 2269-70

¹⁴¹ Gilman. *Herland*, (2014), location 2246

¹⁴²The future utopia, the country of ‘New Amazonia’ was once Ireland and taken over by Amazonian women who hold all the important political roles. Corbett, (2014), p.30

¹⁴³ The narrator, John, has been lost in Tibet and finally, at the opening of her text, found by his sister Nellie. In the thirty years they have been absent, the women of the USA have finally ‘woken up’ to their subordinate position and transformed the capitalist patriarchal society the protagonists knew. Chloé Avril, *The Feminist Utopian Novels of Charlotte Perkins Gilman: Themes of Sexuality, Marriage and Motherhood*, (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, c2008.), p.19

¹⁴⁴ Gilman, *Herland*, (2014), location 2032

¹⁴⁵ This is from Gilman, *Herland*, (2014), location 2011. These utopias suggest that female governance will give a better society without disease, war etc. Dixie also discusses evils such as prostitution in her utopia. The utopia in *Herland* is a pastoral, socialist ideal.

nature of ‘Amazons’ only to simultaneously relegate them to a brutalised, and safely aberrant, past through what feminist scholar Karen Offen describes as ‘knowledge wars’ and collective acts of forgetting.¹⁴⁶ While Gilman’s imagery accorded with contemporary knowledge of the matriarchy of the distant past, with its remote, natural, pre-modern and untouched location and the mystery surrounding it, crucially, the society found in the narrative is civilised, peaceful and prosperous.

Bell’s works accord with feminist reclamations of these histories in presenting a more positive representation of feminine culture. Such works could, in the words of feminist scholars Cheri Kramarac and Paula Treichler in 1985, privilege ‘women’s values...[which] linked the physical with the spiritual.’¹⁴⁷ Bell’s image of female warriors in empty space is freeing and emancipatory, speaking to a much richer imagining of female values and culture.¹⁴⁸ Instead of an essentialising and controlling patriarchal myth of ‘Amazons,’ between both paintings, Bell explores women’s strength, community, self-sufficiency and autonomy, control of the means of production and the privileging of nature and spirituality, in primordial, uncivilised locations. Both paintings depict women who are more physically liberated and who retain their eternal spiritual strength and connection with nature. In *The Arrow* the possibilities of physical liberation are emphasised alongside women’s heroic past and future. In *The Echo*, Bell’s subject of women on a desolate hilltop in a similarly remote space, may equally be contextualised by feminists’ concern with the reclamation of transcendent forms of female spirituality, of the distant past and the claiming of the future.

¹⁴⁶ Offen, (c.2000), ‘Prologue: History, Memory and Empowerment,’ pp.1-18, (pp.3-4)

¹⁴⁷ ‘and were monist and holist rather than spilt and dualist’, Kramarac and Treichler (1985), p.261

¹⁴⁸ Offen (c.2000); Germaine Greer, *The Whole Woman*, (London: Doubleday, 1999). Swiney’s constructs of women in primitive and primordial times also highlights women’s important role in confirming that matriarchy achieved civilised things. Swiney attributes the paramount role in primitive culture and subsequent development of civilisation and humanitarianism, to women: ‘the way was prepared in savagery by mothers and by the female clan groups.’ (Frances Swiney, *The Cosmic Procession*, (London: Ernest Bell, 1906. This reprint by Forgotten Books, 2015), describes woman’s impact through primitive culture on subsequent cultural development, p.36. In Swiney’s construct, the agricultural, pastoral, undeveloped nature of the primordial and archaic world, before the rise of male supremacy, is prominent:

If we study the scant records of archaic civilisations... We find we have not added a single grain from the wild grasses of the field to our list of foods... a long, an incalculable period of peaceful agricultural industry, of a time when man pursued an undisturbed occupation of the land, and enjoyed the fruits of his labour during the unaggressive rule of the matriarchate, that lost Golden Age

Part Two: *The Echo*, 1915

In *The Echo* Bell depicts a group of women listening to an echo in a strange, barren, premodern natural setting. The subject of the painting is supplied by the intense emotional listening experience of the group, the varying representations of women and the attitude of the listening figure in blue. The drama is intensified by the organic shape on the right, which provides a sense of movement and echoing sound reverberation sweeping from the left, across and upwards. The title is ambiguous, hinting at the possible mythical subject of Echo, in the depiction of women in nature, without confirming any specific connection and employing instead a deliberately vague suggestion of unresolved mystery and occult 'resonance'.¹⁴⁹ The women exist in the same premodern world featured in many of Bell's works of the period including *The Arrow*, where they enjoy the liberation of open space and limitless horizons, free of domestic rigmarole. Able to control the interruptions of modern noise, they are absorbed by meaningful natural sounds. Instead of practising physical culture as in *The Arrow*, however, *The Echo* portrayed a metaphysical idea of women listening, considering the possibilities of female-oriented culture, where women access profound and unseen, spiritual knowledge. In the tension between hope and loss, emptiness and the possibility of spiritual interconnection, Bell contemplated a universal theme of humanity's fate and women's culture and spirituality as a source of deliverance.¹⁵⁰

Listening

It is unclear what form the sound takes in *The Echo*, though the intent listening stance of the figure on the right implies that the echo is meaningful and significant despite, or perhaps owing to, its indistinct, faint or distant nature. Bell had treated the subject of women listening in various forms already. In *Music by the Water* and *The Listeners*, (*The Garden of Sweet Sound*), 1906, (Fig. 2.21) women listening outside, though still vague and suggestive, is presented within knowable frames of references such as the medieval, Venetian or eighteenth century garden setting and of upper class leisure pursuits such as listening to music. In other contemporary paintings in his later, more

¹⁴⁹ The picture accords in some aspects to paintings of mountain nymphs including Echo, by various painters including Waterhouse, (1903), Claude, Poussin, (1875) and Talbot Hughes, (1900) a genre painter who had exhibited *Echo* at the Royal Academy

¹⁵⁰ Heightened by the recent start to World War One, though not a specific subject of the painting, the war infuses melancholy and anxiety into other works of the period too, for example Waterhouse's *De Cameron*, 1916, (Prettejohn et al (2008), cat.65, p.198) or Charles Sims, *Clio and his Children*, 1916

abstract style, Bell's treatment of women listening is more driven by fantasy and myth. The artist evoked the sounds of a 'call to the hunt' for primitive female warriors, perhaps in ancient Britain, in *Going to the Hunt*.¹⁵¹ And in 'Horns of Elfland Faintly Blowing', (1908), Bell revisited fantasy worlds of his earlier career, which featured poetry or fairy tales, knowable conventions to explore the 'inner life' and the imagination, showing the influence of the Pre-Raphaelites.¹⁵² Compared to these other paintings of listening in Bell's output, listening in *The Echo* is vaguer and more suffuse with suggestion. The specific subject is unknown, abstruse even, aligning itself with arcane and potent forms of female spirituality in its ineffability.

Historically, sound had been eternally fugitive and ephemeral, mysterious, a force of nature, fairies or spirits, but in the nineteenth century, indeterminate or unperceivable sounds were being amplified as the subject of scientific investigation. Thomas Edison's phonograph, 'voice-writer' or gramophone of 1877 had made and replayed recordings and, as a response to the modern world, the listening experience was becoming increasingly selective and thoughtful.¹⁵³ Thus this act of listening to an ethereal, evanescent echo was painted at a time when modes for determining, rationalising, recording and replaying sound were increasing.¹⁵⁴ Far from the real-life subject of concert-going, popular amongst contemporary painters, or other sounds of the machine age, Bell's subject is enigmatic. In painting an act of listening to profound sound or communication in a primordial setting, the artist engaged with humanity's

¹⁵¹ The suggestion that the location is 'ancient British' is made by Christian (1989), who notes that this is also suggested by the figures in the watercolour *The Alarm* (?1909, Liverpool Museums), p.156. *Going to the Hunt* (1909) is illustrated in *Victorian Pictures*, (London: Sothebys exhibition catalogue, 8-9th June, 1993), lot 59, pp.102-3

¹⁵² The title is from Tennyson's *Princess*:

O hark, O hear! how thin and clear,
And thinner, clearer, farther going!
O sweet and far from cliff and scar
The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!

See Christian (1989), p.155; Tennyson's *Princess* was a popular artistic subject, also painted by Bernard Sleight, 1925 and discussed in Taylor and Shuttleworth (2003), pp.387-8. 'Horns of Elfland Faintly Blowing' was considered in *The Times*, (16th April, 1909), p.6

¹⁵³ David Hendy, *Noise: A History of Sound and Listening*, (London: Profile Books Ltd, 2013), p.255. This captured famous voices such as Robert Browning in 1899 and Florence Nightingale in 1900. Hendy describes how bodiless voices were heard in middle class living rooms, 'like séance experiences.' Conan Doyle called recorded sound a 'communion with the past' (Hendy, (2013), pp.256-7). The development of the understanding of the science of sound and technologies of recording dispelled some of the mysteries of listening, making it a more tangible and less sublime experience and later a commodity, as a sound recording. See also John M. Picker, *Victorian Soundscapes*, (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, c2003), pp.7-8

¹⁵⁴ Hendy, (2013), Nead, (c2007), regarding hauntings and the 'ghost in the machine'

origins, past histories and possible fate, considering beginnings in order to rethink the values of a culture contemporaneously being redefined through technology and materialism.¹⁵⁵ The unknown sound in the painting could be a communication back from distant peoples, a return echo of one's own call, in the form of spoken words, rhythmic beats, music, song, or some form of intangible spiritual call. In Bown et al, *The Victorian Supernatural*, the late Victorian sense of the supernatural is described as 'water in the hand', using words from Catherine Crowe's *The Night-Side of Nature*, 1852.¹⁵⁶ Like the '*Wilo-the-Wisp*', sketched by Bell, in 1891, (Fig. 2.22), the echo remains slippery, indefinable, even magical, uncanny or supernatural, a form which can be evoked or suggested but not captured or retained, like 'water in the hand'.

Through his ultimately indeterminable subject, Bell makes important allusions to contemporary feminism, such as the movement's recourse to the primordial and nature in constructing an eternal female spirituality, grounded in the modern belief in imminent emancipation. Bell's representation of women may also be contextualised by contemporary occult and theosophical writings. Such writings in turn were forged through interaction with technological breakthroughs and scientific discoveries of the modern world, with developing psychological understandings, with modern ideas of listening and the modern soundscape, providing a rich context for the painting's vision of listening.

Bell cleared space in his painting in order to amplify natural sounds. One consequence of noisier times was the recognition, as historian John Picker described, that 'ambient sound [is] ubiquitous and inescapable,' leading to the Symbolist desire for silence; such noise is carefully extricated from the painting.¹⁵⁷ From 1880 to the 1930s, 'the sounds of the city changed' from an organic 'human or animal cacophony to a mechanical roar and hum...and – more intermittently - the drone and throb of the aeroplane in the sky above.'¹⁵⁸ Bell's removal of his composition to a barren unknown place, relate to his contemplation: 'Liverpool as I first knew it in the 'nineties, pre-motor, pre-wireless, pre-aviating [*sic*], and pre-war, was a very happy place to live

¹⁵⁵ Preferring to retain nature's mysteries and the unknown was also a Symbolist concern; Maeterlinck is also discussed in Chapter Three

¹⁵⁶ Catherine Crowe, *The Night-Side of Nature, or Ghosts and Ghost-Seers*, (3rd edition, London: George Routledge, 1852), p.8, in Bown et al, (2004), p.9

¹⁵⁷ Picker, (2003), p.6

¹⁵⁸ Kate Flint, 'Sounds of the City: Virginia Woolf and Modern Noise', in Small and Tate, (2003), pp.181-194, p.181

in.’¹⁵⁹ Noise in modern urban life dislocated and disorientated, disrupted, disturbed and interfered, affecting perceptual relationships and mental health, according to many writers including psychologist James Sully, sociologist Georg Simmel and many Symbolist artists, who retreated from cities.¹⁶⁰ In 1853 Thomas Carlyle had built a silent room to work in due to the incessant noise of London, yet found that his silent room in fact amplified invasive noises.¹⁶¹ Bell provides such a deliberately cleared environment in *The Echo* encouraging echoes by removing the clutter of what he described in 1933 as these ‘hurried times.’¹⁶²

By silencing ambient noise, Bell denied various elements of the modern world, such as urbanisation, technological and transportation developments and instead allowed a visual focus on eternal forces of nature such as the wind.¹⁶³ Softer, more natural sounds become amplified, exaggerated, aggrandised by the emptiness, which allowed space and time to listen and to think, to re-imagine the past and possible futures like in utopian and science fiction writings of the period. The painting considered how natural, organic, human-scale noise, like the echo, could exist in an era of all-consuming noise.¹⁶⁴ Bell’s premodern setting emphasised older forms of communication and listening, when the rhythms of nature and tribal communications between groups, were the focus of life. Maeterlinck wrote in 1899: ‘when we venture to move the mysterious stone that covers up these mysteries, the heavily charged air surges up from the gulf.’¹⁶⁵ These words describe an act of opening up a space, the removal of an obstruction, allowing spiritual forces, which were forcibly suppressed, to be released. From the late nineteenth century there grew a taste, or a cultural need, for the rediscovery of such age-old magical qualities of mysterious, natural sounds, which were associated with a corrective, responsible relationship to nature and spirituality.¹⁶⁶

¹⁵⁹ Bell, ‘Looking Back: A Notable Circle’, *Liverpool Daily Post*, 1929

¹⁶⁰ Woolf found this ambient noise both disturbing and exhilarating, Flint (2003), p.181 and 186; Hirsh, (2004), discusses Symbolist artists, George Simmel and the city; Kuenzli, (c2010)

¹⁶¹ Hendy, (2013), p.244

¹⁶² Robert Anning Bell, ‘The “Moderns” and Their Problems’, *The Saturday Review*, (27th May, 1933), p.513

¹⁶³ Bell also painted this subject in *The South Wind*, a frieze, 1913

¹⁶⁴ Hendy, (2013), p.266

¹⁶⁵ Maeterlinck, (1899), ‘Mystic Morality,’ pp.68-9

¹⁶⁶ Philosophers such as Henri Bergson were concerned with the increasing pace of life and the consequent loss of the richness of experience especially when compared to lost natural sounds Hendy, (2013), p.267; The Symbolist valorisation of the past discussed in Facos (2009); Hirsh (2004); Picker (2013)

Primordial or Utopian Space:

By the time Bell painted *The Arrow* and *The Echo*, his artworks had become more abstract, the composition freer. Layers of cultivation, settlement, history are disbanded with in *The Echo*, stripped back to reveal clear, innocent spaces; through his pronounced acts of removal, Bell engaged with the deficiencies of the modern urban environment and materialistic world, which many felt had effected an undervaluing of the pervasive spirituality of the Universe. *The Echo* particularly focussed on the qualities of emptied space, the near silence which could consequently emerge and the related spiritual connection with nature possible in such pre-modern space.

These forms of spirituality could be accessed by women, according to feminist and occult discourse. Frances Swiney wrote in *The Cosmic Procession*, 1906, a feminist-theosophical text:

In the Archaic ages, when [man] lived in closer touch with Nature, in more open communion with the realities of life, the chief Divinities were feminine, the spring of the universe was the Eternal Feminine, and consequently the Matriarchate was supreme in the various social organisations¹⁶⁷

Bell moved away from the Victorian garden, of Ruskin's 'On Queens's Gardens' and the 'separate spheres' ideology, or the romanticised 'corner of an old-world Italian garden', as a review described Bell's painting *The Garden of the Sleeping Beauty* in 1917, (Fig. 2.23). In a similar way, feminists observed how modern female novelists were moving into bolder imaginative spaces and connected these new movements back to the primordial field.¹⁶⁸ Elizabeth Robins, Suffragette and playwright, wrote in 1910: 'You have such a field as never writers had before. An almost virgin field. You find woman at the dawn.'¹⁶⁹

The primordial context of *The Echo* becomes more evident when viewed in comparison to Bell's two earlier watercolour works *Music by the Water* and *The Listeners*, (*The Garden of Sweet Sound*), 'both representing the figures of girls in

¹⁶⁷ Swiney, (1906), p.3 and cites the Kabbalah p.37

¹⁶⁸ Miles, (1989); John Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies*, edited and with an introduction by Deborah Epstein Nord, (New Haven: Yale University Press, c.2002)

¹⁶⁹ The text continues: 'Of such stuff, [her children's children shall say] 'our mothers were! Sweethearts and wives – yes, and other things besides: leaders, discoverers, militants, fighting every form of wrong,' Elizabeth Robins, 1910 cited Miller, (1996), p.125

garden surroundings' and in notably more recognisable artistic settings such as the Renaissance.¹⁷⁰ While similarly evoking woman's spiritual relationship with sound, such works are 'charming', in the words of Martin Wood, 1900, 'suggesting a garden and woman as the loveliest flower in it.'¹⁷¹ Such compositions used large dark areas of hedge or wide pillars in order to frame and demarcate woman's spirituality within familiar Victorian visual conventions and modes of womanhood.¹⁷² In *The Listeners*, the original title *The Garden of Sweet Sound* identified the garden as the subject. The hedges indicated cultivation and human ordering, the women's clothes are more recognisable as a Renaissance period, the woman laying down reads a book, referencing Romantic images of figures in nature. The distant area in the middle evoked Leonardo's landscape features and suggested the remote and classical, however this is delimited and served to contrast with the cosy aspect of the sheltered group of figures. Comparing this painting with *The Echo* nine years later, reveals the primordial context of the latter distinctly. Specific references through clothing have been removed in favour of the evocative mysteries of drapery, in line and shadow.¹⁷³ There is an absence of books or other references to civilisation. The vastness of the natural, barren landscape has overtaken the composition with its gaping whiteness and the paper allows fuller delineation of far distant land forms.

Feminists worked to re-situate and reaffirm women's significance from the origins of life and beginnings of history. Despite physical engagements fought out by Suffragettes in the modern streets of London, the primordial and the origins of civilisation were intellectual spaces being fought over in terms of their implications for the current position of women.¹⁷⁴ Swiney reached back as far as the unicellular organism, amoeba and to 'the primordial speck of protoplasm' in establishing human origins as female.¹⁷⁵ Whereas Havelock Ellis described the 'primordial urge' of the

¹⁷⁰ These were 'typical works' for Bell as stated in, 'Obituary. Mr. Anning Bell, R.A.', *The Times*, (Tuesday 28th November, 1933), p.19

¹⁷¹ Wood (1910), p.255

¹⁷² Wood, (1910), p.256; such as the *fête champêtre* or the theme of synaesthesia, art and music, as noted in Smith (2008)

¹⁷³ Bell, (1901), p.34

¹⁷⁴ For 'evidence' or precedent for women's previous greatness: Beaumont, (2001). This may be considered in relation to Offen's writing of the 'forgetting' of women's history, (c.2000, pp.1-18)

¹⁷⁵ Swiney (1906): 'in the primordial female life cell the consciousness of life manifests itself,' pp.132-5, p.198, p.207

female as the desire to be conquered, in contrast, Swiney finds the ‘eternal feminine’ to be powerful, the key to life, creative and unifying as opposed to destructive, divisive man.¹⁷⁶ The origins of religions were reconsidered by feminists and theosophists who looked to eastern constructions of female goddesses. Corbett wrote in her prologue to *New Amazonia*, for example:

Only a rib, fosooh! How do they know that women was made out of nothing better than a man’s rib? We have only man’s word for that, and I have proved the falsity of so many utterances that I would like some scientific proof as to the truth or falsity of the spare-rib argument before I give it implicit credence.¹⁷⁷

Olive Schreiner recast women’s modern spirituality through looking back to the epic landscapes of the Old Testament.¹⁷⁸ Using a monumental time scale in *Dreams*, 1890, and an image of woman recumbent and shackled to man, Schreiner had showed how: ‘in the pre-patriarchal era women enjoyed equality and companionship with man: “she who now lies there once wandered free over the rocks with him.”’¹⁷⁹

H. G. Wells’s heroine Ann Veronica of 1909, says defiantly she ‘was going to be as primordial as chipped flint!’, using the primitive and ideas of ancient, Amazonian strength and passion, removed from the stultifying conventions of the domestic interior and from societal conventions to express her modern spirit and choice of an unconventional embracing of a more elemental existence.¹⁸⁰ Maeterlinck wrote in ‘On Women’, 1897, ‘when we are with [women, we are aware] that that primeval gate is

¹⁷⁶ Bland, (1995); Ellis (1936, orig.1894), p.259; Swiney asserted throughout her works that woman was the key, originating and driving sex, citing Lester Ward, ‘man was an after-thought.’ (1906), p.7, in Bland, (1995), p.220

¹⁷⁷ Corbett (2014), location 483. Frances Swiney described the opposite scenario for the origin of the male in *Woman and Natural Law* (1912): ‘[t]he first male cell, and the first male organism, was an initial failure on the part of the maternal organism to reproduce its like, and was due to a chemical deficiency in the metabolism or physique of the mother.’ This mistake had malign consequences explored in much of her writing, writes Doughan (2004). Ellen Key described Eve’s ‘transgression’ as ‘the first “woman movement”’, Key, (1912), p.1 in a text full of the language of movement, re-writing the narrative to value women’s agency: ‘After a stability of centuries...women finally realised they could accelerate their own progress and with it also the somewhat snail-like course of universal human culture. And so woman asserted herself and increased her motion. The faster this movement became, the more she was seized by the intoxication which always accompanies every vigorous physical or psychological movement, and when has movement of the time advanced more rapidly?’ Key, (1912), p.15

¹⁷⁸ Heilmann (2004). Bell evoked a biblical, epic landscape in *Sepulchre* and *The Two Marys at the Sepulchre*, (Untraced), illustrated ‘The Grosvenor Gallery’, *The Studio*, Vol. 57, (1912), p. 153

¹⁷⁹ Olive Schreiner, ‘Three Dreams in a Desert,’ *Dreams* (1890; Fisher Unwin, 1895), pp.65-85, (p.69), cited Heilmann, (2004), p.128

¹⁸⁰ Miller notes how the primitive is also linked with basing decisions on sexual feelings rather than moral codes. Wells, (1909), p.260, in Miller (1996), p.169

opening.¹⁸¹ Similarly, Florence Dixie's utopia, *Gloriana; or, the Revolution of 1900*, created a vision of female prehistory connected with physical freedom in nature:

A graceful, girlish figure, lithe and fair,
Small, slim, yet firmly knit with Nature's power-
Unfetter'd Nature!
...
Long ere religion's dogma intervened.
Child of a chieftain o'er whose broad domains
She roamed, a happy, free, unfetter'd waif,
Loving the mountain crag and forest lone¹⁸²

Interrogating origins was a feminist act which resulted in new connotations of women and spirituality. Feminists examined old associations of woman, nature and the primitive, resurrecting and recasting them in new powerful forms, which were further deployed with modern purposes of social critique and betrayed irrepressible new forms of feminist consciousness. Bell's complicated representations of women in *The Arrow* and *The Echo*, reflect such intricate feminist negotiations of womanhood, modernity and spirituality. Bell's mediation of established female visual 'types' rehearsed both the contradictions and possibilities of contemporary feminism which drew on the past, prophesied the future, whilst situated in the present.

Representations of Women: 'Curious Combinations'

An article in the *Athenaeum*, 1907 found Bell's repetition of female 'types' across paintings in his career to have become stale, insincere and mawkish and described a:

lack of invention which is increasingly apparent in the work of this artist...a very narrow and monotonous range of character and a still more monotonous sentiment seems to have been repeated until they have lost their original significance, and have become conventional picture furniture, to be cast together in new combinations whenever a new work is required.¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ Maeterlinck, (1897), p.90

¹⁸² Lady Florence Dixie, *Gloriana or, The Revolution of 1900*, (London: Henry and Company, 1890), pp.2-3 (www.forgottenbooks.com accessed 21st July, 2016)

¹⁸³ 'Mr. Anning Bell's Works,' *Athenaeum*, No. 4149, (4th May, 1907), pp.547-8, (p.548). The article is a review regarding his one-man-show at the Fine Art Society, 1907

Bell deliberately employed and adapted various ‘types’ in line with his ideas about the value of design forms and the related visual imagery acquired by an artist-designer over their career. He expressed this in 1916:

It takes less time to become a painter of average ability than to attain an equal level in Design. The first does not require such an amount of general knowledge as the second. A large mental store of material for design is first of all necessary and then reiterated practise to give flexibility to the inventive powers; all of which takes a long time.¹⁸⁴

Bell recommended using and re-using images, re-working iconography from this ‘mental store’ in order to develop the most resounding and universal symbolic representational forms. Bell’s efforts to recast ‘types’ are situated in the modern context which saw the ability to collate, copy and reproduce both text and image through the typewriter, printing, photography and film, and the associated speeds of such processes.¹⁸⁵ Bell believed in the continuing spirituality of painting in contrast to such mechanic processes.¹⁸⁶ Within his efforts to synthesise symbolic types, Bell deployed line to transcend the particularities of the models and infer spirituality.¹⁸⁷

In his writing on mosaic in 1901 Bell described how ‘the characters should be types, the incidents symbolic.’¹⁸⁸ In his reports for the GSA, 1911-16, the artist emphasised the importance for art students of training longer in design.¹⁸⁹ Years of serving as head of the Design School and teaching classes in stained glass and mosaic, while working in these media into the 1920s, meant that the relationship between simplified form, design and inner meaning, was important in Bell’s paintings of this later period.¹⁹⁰ The artist’s use of line and figure groupings in *The Echo* showed the

¹⁸⁴ Bell, ‘Report to the Governors on the Design Section, 1911-1916,’ GSA Minute Book, No.11, Oct 1916-June 1920. ‘Summary Report,’ p.4 of 9, GSAA /2/11

¹⁸⁵ Nead (c.2007) discusses these ideas in her sections on ‘Ghosts and Machines,’ ‘The Haunted Gallery’ and ‘Animating the Everyday’

¹⁸⁶ Expressed especially in Robert Anning Bell, ‘The “Moderns” and Their Problems’, *The Saturday Review*, (27th May, 1933), p.513

¹⁸⁷ Elizabeth Prettejohn describes how artists such as Rossetti, Burne-Jones, Albert Moore, (to name a few), and Waterhouse created an ‘archive of gazes and poses that he could orchestrate into new compositions,’ in her discussion of Waterhouse’s sketchbooks. Prettejohn, (c.2008), p.208

¹⁸⁸ Bell, (1901), p.26

¹⁸⁹ Such as the design of rooms: Bell, ‘Report to the Governors on the Design Section, 1911-1916,’ GSA Minute Book, No.11, Oct 1916-June 1920. See also ‘Summary Report,’ p.2 of 9, GSAA /2/11 and Minutes of the Meeting of the School Committee, June 23rd 1917 p.27 and Bell’s ‘Report on the Design Section,’ p.28

¹⁹⁰ GSA Annual Reports list the classes Bell led in 1910-11 and 1915 sessions, as well as noting his appointment in the Governors Report, p.10, GSAA GOV 1/3

influence of his decorative commissions: altarpieces, friezes and compositions for stained glass windows. Bell's lecture on stained glass in 1922 described the development of figures 'typifying virtues' or symbolic 'type-figures', which he also explored in *The Echo*.¹⁹¹ And with specific reference to watercolour works, such as *The Arrow* and *The Echo*, Bell described a time-consuming method involving: 'distilled knowledge and what a brood of sorrowful failures go to the making of even a small achievement.'¹⁹²

In Bell's mature period and particularly in *The Echo*, the artist's negotiations between form and spiritual meaning are displayed in a heightened and effective tension between the 'decorative' line and a more fluid line and lighter finish. Despite his movement towards a more organic and spontaneous use of line, the artist never entirely disbanded with 'gothic' lines; an oscillating relationship with line is evident, with losing and finding edges. Wood described when Bell is his most pagan, he 'slips *the outline* altogether, becoming almost impressionistic.'¹⁹³ Meanwhile when working in the Gothic 'spirit', Bell's form emulated the Ideal, a spiritual, hieratic, vertical, heavily worked, hierarchical visual form, found in Burne-Jones, Arts and Crafts decorative work and in many Symbolist works, which celebrated the vertical as inferring the highest sanctity. In the pagan 'mood' the gods and men are familiar, wrote Wood, and thus groupings are diffuse, horizontally placed across the canvas and there is 'frivolity without irreverence.'¹⁹⁴ These variations can be seen within the figures in *The Echo*.

Through painting female bodies in *The Echo*, Bell explored line, as expressive of nature and spirituality, varying from vertical or 'gothic' sculptural forms to more languorous, flowing or 'pagan' shapes and lines, with erotic connotations; the latter use of line is similar to Jean Delville's treatment of women's bodies, to evoke spiritual resonance in *Love of Souls*, 1900, which hung at the Glasgow School of Art during the time Bell was employed there.¹⁹⁵ In several lectures to students in Glasgow, Bell

¹⁹¹ Bell, 'A Lecture on Stained Glass', Royal College of Art, London, (1922)

¹⁹² Bell cited in Mrs S. Erskine, 'Robert Anning Bell RA', *Old Water-Colour Society's Club*, 12, (1934–5), p.57

¹⁹³ Wood, (1910), p.255

¹⁹⁴ Wood, (1910), p.255

¹⁹⁵ McKenzie, (2009); Facos reproduces this p.105

extolled the ‘sort of design which is manifestly intended to play up to Architecture.’¹⁹⁶ Bell had by 1915, practised with diligence an aesthetic which he described in 1901 as ‘austere and definite – a sort of raw representation of the idea only, with no drapings or ornament to it.’¹⁹⁷ And again in 1911, the ‘architectural convention in the treatment of the figures...readily attained’ in plasterwork relief.¹⁹⁸

This aesthetic endeavour certainly applied to the overall theme and structure of *The Echo*, its aspiration for the grandeur of the classical, the profound and eternal, the painting’s raw, elemental nature. And some of the women, particularly the two formal simplified figures on the left, are more two-dimensional and sculptural, reminiscent of Bell’s stained glass, mosaics and other religious paintings. Wood noted ‘a certain formal, a certain conventional feeling, which was given to the treatment of the figure,’ providing qualities of august majesty, stiffness, simplicity.¹⁹⁹ However, the women’s poses and bodily forms in *The Echo* vary. There are statuesque figures, a separated figure in blue, undertaking active listening, experiencing ecstatic revelation and slumped figures in mesmerised absorption. The slumped figures appear transfixed in a more eroticised, sensual mode, while the vertical figures appear in religious reverie and higher spiritual contemplation. The varied construction of figures was part of Bell’s broader use of line and form within these paintings to explore female spirituality.

In a period when line and form observed in nature and effected in art were intensely and consciously linked with the profound spiritual inter-connections of the Universe, line could evoke ideas of spiritual resonance, vibrations, ripples or ‘spiritual rhythms’ and advance the painting’s subject of listening.²⁰⁰ Sketches from across Bell’s career, including ‘the delicate studies of hands and drapery’ displayed in his Fine Art Society Memorial Exhibition, 1934, showed his keen and persistent interest

¹⁹⁶ GSA Minute Books, May 1909 –June 1911, p.201. By ‘feminine’ the contextual reading infers a more popular style that has ‘crept in everywhere.’ By contrast, in Bell’s lecture, ‘Painted Relief’, *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, 18, (1911), pp.485-500, the grandiose, historic buildings such as cupola in Milan and the Parthenon are discussed for their high-minded aims, longevity, ambition and basis in intellectual ideas.

¹⁹⁷ Bell, (1901), p.38

¹⁹⁸ Bell (1911), p.494-495

¹⁹⁹ Wood (1910), p.260

²⁰⁰ Turner, (2009); vibrations and sound are discussed in Anne Leonard, ‘Picturing Listening in the Late Nineteenth Century’, *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 89, No. 2 (Jun., 2007), pp. 266-286

in abstract elements of drapery and gestural forms of the body.²⁰¹ The folds of robes, frozen poses and gestures, in sketches and book illustrations for example emphasised less tangible elements such as floating layers of clothing and evidenced his consistent desire to witness and express ‘mystery’ in his works. As Bell described in 1933, the breeze or the ‘turn of a wrist’ were suggestions of the immaterial world and the mysteries of the Universe, ‘beyond the veil.’²⁰² The sinuous lines of Mackmurdo’s chair of 1893, (Fig. 2.12) and the spiritual suggestion of art nouveau organicism, impacted on many of Bell’s sketches and works, not least evident in the windswept figures and setting in *The Echo*.

In 1912, Ellen Key described the pervasive reach of feminism in similarly spiritual terms:

The very finest effects of the woman movement – mere shades of feeling which cannot be enumerated nor discussed – have reached our present time through lines, movement, rhythm, cadence, through the timbre of a voice, the gesture of a hand, the glance of an eye, the tone of a violin.²⁰³

This in turn echoed pervasive Symbolist constructs of form and Ideal, where physical form corresponded to deeper meanings connected with nature.²⁰⁴ Bell’s interest in making visual the spiritual and immaterial forms of the Universe coincided with feminist discourse which reiterated the costs of modern progress and its concomitant neglect of the spirit. The artist’s use of line and form in both works evidence an artistic practise which long prioritised the instinctive, subconscious and intuitive in an endeavour to create spiritual art. In *The Arrow*, these freer artistic methods visually echoed the subject of women’s emancipation. In *the Echo*, freer, more abandoned line and aesthetics suggested the communication of an eternal unknown and a loosening of boundaries to other types of irrational knowledge.

Bell’s concern with spirituality was an important part of his engagement with the modern. A number of tensions inherent in navigating modernity’s contradictions, for example between the spiritual and the sensual, the traditional and the modern, are

²⁰¹ *Catalogue of a Memorial Exhibition: The Works of the Late Professor Anning Bell*, (London: Fine Art Society, 1934), p.5

²⁰² Bell, ‘Long Skirts’; Robert Anning Bell, ‘Art and “Modern” Art: High Sounding Nonsense and Byzantium,’ *The Saturday Review*, (18th November, 1933), p.523

²⁰³ Key (1912), pp.11-12

²⁰⁴ This idea was influenced by Baudelaire, especially *Correspondences*. See Wilton and Upstone, (1997), pp.30-1 and Dorra, (c.1994)

revealed through the composite features of Bell's figures. While using aspects of known types, Bell noticeably complicated them with other associations. For example when Bell deployed classical allusion in these works, it is combined with contemporary concerns; Bell's figures in *The Arrow* were deemed Amazons, but with the 'reflection of altar light in their eyes and the restraint of those who have once followed in solemn procession behind an image of the Virgin,' as described by Martin Wood in 1910.²⁰⁵ Olive Schreiner used similar words in 1890 to describe woman rising from her enchained present, suffocated by being shackled to man: 'Eventually, the woman raises herself to her knees: a mere "creature" as yet, but with the "light in her eyes" affording hope for her spiritual awakening.'²⁰⁶ Schreiner's imagery of religious exaltation shared Wood's perception of spiritual light in the women's eyes.²⁰⁷ But this was a new spirituality, recast for the modern period which saw women's rise in consciousness and desires for emancipation.

Contradictory tensions also included, as described by Wood, the ambivalence of:

a romanticist trying to be classic. The interpretation of classical themes not in their own convention, the use of a classic *motif* by a mind that is distinctly a product of romantic influences, always gives us that unusual savour of remote, fantastic experiences that has made the work of Botticelli so acceptable to this present age²⁰⁸

In *The Echo*, Bell reflected the influence of Giorgione and Titian, an inspiration he noted in 1901 and 1933.²⁰⁹ Such artists have been seen to combine most successfully the styles of the Classical and contemporary worlds. The contradictions of the resulting visual collations, echo the feminist appropriation of the language of Christianity. This was generally deemed to have been oppressive historically and yet re-framed women's quest for freedom. This complexity is encapsulated by the synthetic language of women's faces in Bell's painting. Women's faces accommodate artistic conventions

²⁰⁵ Wood, (1910), pp.255-6

²⁰⁶ Schreiner, (1890), (p.75 and p.74)

²⁰⁷ Also the subject of Annie Swynnerton's, *The Sense of Sight*, 1895, Liverpool Museums

²⁰⁸ Wood, (1910), p.262 and p.260: 'The romanticists at the beginning of the nineteenth century waged war upon the classic; we are as romantic as ever, but we regard the classic itself romantically...Pictures always reflect intellectual tendencies of the time.'

²⁰⁹ Noted in Smith, (2008); Bell's comments re Titian are cited above: Robert Anning Bell, 'The "Moderns" and Their Problems', *The Saturday Review*, 27th May, 1933, p.513). 'Titian's wonderful blue drapery' had been discussed following Bell's lecture on mosaic: Bell, (1901), p.34

for beauty and nobility as well as women's current intellectual stridency, physical courage and political and spiritual aspirations in a representation of modern consciousness.

The figure in blue may be explored in detail as an example of these complicated combinations. In contrast to his stiff, architectural figures on the left in *The Echo*, Bell explored the 'intimate...play of facial expression or momentary gesture,' in the figure in blue, who incited emotional connection most dramatically.²¹⁰ This figure is a complex compound of artistic reference and modern context. The pose of the figure combined a number of known artistic conventions together: the spirituality and tenderness of Burne-Jones' Symbolist work, *Vesper, or the Evening Star*, 1872, with the more pagan abandon of Leighton's *Clytie*, 1895-6, a combination echoed in Bell's painting *The Mermaid* with its tempestuous seas (Fig.2.24).²¹¹ In classical or pagan guise, blonde-haired women throw their heads back, hair trailing down their backs, in an impassioned, abandoned, exalted and ecstatic pose, while the 'Pre-Raphaelite' influence on *The Echo*, exudes a 'reverential', gentler, emotional femininity.²¹² The facial expression suggests a deeply moving experience, recalling the emotional intensity of narrative paintings or 'problem pictures' of the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century such as Frank Dicksee's *The Confession, or Reverie* ¹⁹⁰⁰ and the windswept, classically imbued nature of Walter Crane's *La Primavera*, 1883 and Waterhouse's *Windflowers*, 1902 and later version of *Miranda*, 1916, (Fig. 2.25) painted the year after *The Echo*.

The figural pose in Waterhouse's latter work is honed to combine the emotional tenderness in the placing of the hand to the breast, with the passion of the connection with nature in all these works, as wind rippling through the hair, drapery and body, a combination Bell had developed in *The South Wind*, 1911, (Fig. 2.26). Bell had worked on the connections between poses and emotional associations in works throughout his career, including book illustrations. One sketch held at the British Museum, possibly for *The Tempest*, (Fig. 2.27) reveals the artist's development of poses similar to those in *The Echo*. Bell was clearly influenced by works such as

²¹⁰ Bell, (1901), p.26

²¹¹ Wilton and Upstone, (1997), p.130, cat. 26; or even the emotion of the tenderness and emotion of works like Arthur Hughes' *April Love*, (1855-6, Tate Gallery, London)

²¹² 'reverential' from "Current Art Notes: The Royal Society of Painters in Watercolour", *Connoisseur*, Vol. 49, (1917), pp.236-8, (p.238)

Leighton's *The Spirit of the Summit*, 1894, in its intense attitude of spiritual connection.²¹³ However, the removal from the certainty of Leighton's affirmed classical setting, the fusion of the Romantic and the classical, with the Symbolist emphasis on psychological experience, inner meaning and modern uncertainty, resulted in a new, eclectic representation. In line with other artistic contemporaries, Bell's visual language is multifarious, employing conventional references and the liminal, suggestive elements of modernity in unreconciled combinations.

A prominent example of these negotiations may be seen in the dark-haired figure kneeling down in *The Echo*. Through her suggestive proximity to an amorphous mass of mossy rock, she conformed to representations of mermaids, found especially in Symbolist art. Bell reflects his modern context, wherein a rediscovery of such folklore and myths took place.²¹⁴ The rock is very similar to those in Waterhouse's *A Mermaid*, 1900, (Fig. 2.28). The figure and pose echoed Bell's earlier painting *The Mermaid* (Fig. 2.24) as well as his painted *bas relief* panel *Mermaid*, 1899, *Le Bois des Moutiers* (Fig.2.29).²¹⁵ The young woman was specifically chosen by Bell to model owing to her striking mass of dark hair and is featured in a seductive pose in *Spring Revel*.²¹⁶ The dark-haired woman by water was a type, evident for example, in Frederick Cayley Robinson's painting *Water*, c.1911, (Fig.2.30).²¹⁷ In a sketch entitled 'Caliban', for *The Tempest*, Bell featured mermaids entangled and bound by organic forms, in a variety of poses, (Fig.2.31). These efforts confirmed Bell's interest in the artistic convention of unkempt dark hair, its associations with sex, seduction and more demonic female forms. The dark-haired figure suggested the essentialising and reductive mythology of the *femme fatale*, where mermaids are Sirens, whose songs lure men to their doom, adding another possibility for the sound of the echo.²¹⁸

²¹³ Leighton illustrated in Wilton and Upstone, (1997), p.261, cat. 121

²¹⁴ Prettejohn, (2008), p.144

²¹⁵ Many artists painted mermaids, including Burne-Jones and Klimt, as a familiar *fin de siècle* image. Dijkstra (1986) includes examples. Bell treated the subject on many occasions: Peter Rose, 'The Coloured Relief Decoration of R. A. Bell', *Journal of the Decorative Arts Society*, 14 (1990), pp.16-23, (Fig. 11, p.23). Prettejohn (2008), includes Evelyn de Morgan's painting, *The Sea Maidens*, (1885-6), The De Morgan Foundation, London, p.59

²¹⁶ Curatorial notes at the Walker Art Gallery indicate this. This painting was also purchased by Lord Lever.

²¹⁷ On hair see Lucetta Johnson 'Beyond the Hair-Line: The Representation of Hair in the work of Dante Gabriel Rossetti', unpublished PhD thesis, The Courtauld Institute of Art, 2011

²¹⁸ There are similarities to the figures in Waterhouse, *Nymphs Finding the Head of Orpheus*, (1900), Prettejohn (2008), cat. 41, pp. 152-3

The kneeling figure's undetermined bodily form evoked the divided form of the mermaid and, as in the art of Arnold Böcklin for example, the hybrid status may engender melancholy.²¹⁹ Centaurs were further hybrid creatures painted by Symbolists and Bell featured one in *The Archers*, 1907 (Fig. 2.32). Prettejohn described how Waterhouse, around 1892, created a companion study to *A Mermaid*, which depicted a 'merman wallowing in the shallows,' (Fig.2.33) Though this never resulted in a full-scale painting, it betrayed male vulnerability, expressing divided, anxious forms of modern consciousness.²²⁰ In Bell's suggestion of the mermaid, his clarity of line disappears and fluidity instead allows transgressions of clear forms and meanings. The permeability of boundaries, the echoing of the lines of the girl's body in the sensual, organic masses in the foreground of the landscape determinedly link her with natural forces of water, wind and the windswept landscape and contrasts effectively with the higher sanctity of the blonde listener, who is almost positioned hovering above the ground.

Bell's sensual, dark-haired version of femininity is founded on a blurring of the boundaries between body, earth and nature rather than a definite reading of the mermaid or *femme fatale*. Compared to *The Listeners*, the artist denies demarcation or sheltering of his figures in *The Echo*. The clarity of the boundary between the water and the land in *The Listeners*, which looks artificially produced, gives way to an immensely fluid, sensual transgression of such natural boundaries in *The Echo*. The lower half of the latter picture allows forms such as the drapery and rocks to dissolve and drift indeterminately into the bottom edge of the canvas, leaving some uncertain shapes deposited, such as the blue area of cloth on the left and the mossy rock near the dark haired figure on the right. Further, even the large mass on the right, which frames the whole painting, suggesting epic scale, is left unexplained, blurry, sketchy and suggestive. The nature of the mountain or perhaps ancient structure is unconfirmed. The way the lithe 'mermaid' blends into the composition, echoed Wood's comments about Bell 'slipping the outline.'²²¹ In this context, the multiplicity of suggestions allowed a wider variety of interpretations and forms of resonance with modern life. The sensual elements may reflect debates concerning women's emerging

²¹⁹ Prettejohn (2008), p.144 and 120

²²⁰ Prettejohn (2008), p.144

²²¹ Wood, (1910), p.255

considerations of their own sexual fulfilment and autonomy, which had been discussed more openly and boldly in *The Freewoman*, 1911-12, for example.²²² The division of the body aided the erosion of categorising and formal boundaries and instilled ‘modern anxiety’ since, though the artist included a mermaid or sensual female ‘type’ any definite meanings are simultaneously blurred and confused. Developments in modern psychology emphasised the fractured, multiple nature of the self and personality. The overall assemblage, simultaneity of contradictory types and resulting confusion and unsettling feeling, suggests the psychological experience of modernity.²²³

The complexity of Bell’s female figures in *The Echo*, as part of his relatively vaguer, more instinctive artistic method, resulted in many problems in interpretation. An article about the Royal Academy exhibition in May, 1917, described women in Bell’s paintings: ‘the faces are insipid in their prettiness. An artist, if he is to succeed with this kind of picture must not care about prettiness at all, and must surrender himself utterly to his sense of pure design.’²²⁴ Whilst a description in 1920 contradicted itself within the same passage:

the expression of their faces there is either too much or too little realism...Mr Bell...is half primitive, but half shy in a modern way and so fails of the complete tragic intensity at which he seems to aim. But the picture remains impressive in its conception.²²⁵

The indecision in this statement may exemplify the consternation felt by many viewers trying to categorise and understand Bell’s works. Viewers could not decide whether the figures and faces are too realistic or not realistic enough, works were compelling in their aims for grandiosity, but something in various works failed to ‘fit’, in its time, place, subject, or within academic standards of representation.²²⁶ Bell was discussed alongside Frank Cadogan Cowper (1877-1958) the year *The Arrow* was painted, 1909,

²²² Sexual autonomy in embryonic form in works such as Key (1912) and later in Marie Stopes, *Married Love or Love in Marriage*, (London: A. C. Fifield, 1918) and Dora Russell (Mrs. Bertrand Russell), *Hypatia: or, Woman and Knowledge* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1925)

²²³ A key feature of modernity: Daunton and Rieger, (2001) p.1

²²⁴ ‘The Royal Academy’, *The Times*, (5th May, 1917), p. 9, re Robert Anning Bell, *Titania and the Indian Child*, (?1917), Untraced

²²⁵ ‘Royal Academy’, *The Times*, (1st May, 1920), p. 15: ‘primitive’ refers to Giotto or the medieval Germans, artists which inspired the PRB. Comments concern *And the Women Stood Afar Off Beholding These Things*, 1920

²²⁶ Herbert Furst, ‘Art News and Notes’, *Apollo*, 11, (1930), p.65

united as artists whose figures transgressed boundaries and resulted in contradictions such as ‘a very *modern* damsel.’ An article in *The Times* describes how Cowper’s:

curious fancies...sometimes...do not quite fit. Another artist who hankers after the classical, but who modernises it in a different way is Mr Anning Bell.²²⁷

The figures in *The Arrow* wrote Wood, are: ‘pretending to be Amazons, but not belonging to the early world.’²²⁸ Some difficulties of interpretation may be explained by the epistemological problems of presenting a ‘curious combination of modern methods and the Rossetti tradition,’ a keen anxiety felt by novelist Ford Madox Ford in the 1920s.²²⁹

However, these apparent contradictions suggested inherent features of the modern condition. For example, commentary proposed that humanity’s modern consciousness now prevented the innocence of a primitive art which could truly gain ‘tragic intensity.’²³⁰ Bell’s work with line and bodily form within his representations of women, reflected struggles with the inherent religiosity and nascent sensuality of his time: ‘ideals which used to strive against each other’ in art, are fused and combined with other eclectic influences in this period.²³¹ From early in the artist’s career, when he revived the older art of painted *bas relief*, the relationship between art of the past and modern sensibilities was made. In 1893 an article in *The Studio* ran:

In this work on archaic lines...we find the distinct note of today, which is needed to distinguish any revival of a half-forgotten art. To imitate a bygone period in a dull and listless manner is hardly worthy serious consideration; but to adopt just so much of the old style as is worth reviving, and infuse into it the qualities modern are deems essential, is in its way a new creation. This quality is present in the angel heads...the most

²²⁷ ‘Art Exhibitions,’ *The Times*, (Monday, 8th November, 1909), p. 9

²²⁸ Wood, (1910), p.255

²²⁹ Ford Madox Ford, *Parade’s End*, p.xiii: ‘But for him [Joseph Conrad – a Modernist] I should have been a continuation of Dante Gabriel Rossetti,’ Ford wrote in *Letters of Ford Madox Brown*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), p.127, cited in Ford Madox Ford, *Parade’s End*, p.xiii; ‘Art Exhibitions’, *The Times*, ‘At the Fine Art Society (Small Exhibition)’, *The Times*, (1st May, 1907) describes how Bell’s figures present ‘curious combinations’ of representational components. Another example of such conflicts is presented by Evelyn Waugh who wrote biography of Rossetti.

²³⁰ ‘Current Art Notes,’ *Connoisseur*, Vol.51, (1917), pp.111-170

²³¹ Wood, (1910), p.260

casual glance shows them to be modern [bringing them into] harmony with the surroundings of modern life.²³²

Later, Bell reflected these sentiments in a lecture, at the GSA, 1905, professing his equal interest in ‘subjects from contemporary life...remember that that is the best sort of Historical painting for the future.’²³³ By 1908 an ‘eclectic’ interaction between past and present styles, forms and spirit was noted regularly, including in *The Times* regarding *Cupid Disarmed* (Untraced):

one of his curious eclectic works, Venetian figures, troubled with little modern morbidity, and a romantic landscape, troubled with a little modern uncertainty; the whole quite pretty, but belonging neither to this world nor to any other that can be imagined.²³⁴

The Athenaeum in 1907 had also noted the need for ‘distilling from the highly particularised character of actuality the generalised character’ to create ‘conventionalised types,’ but the writer felt that Bell’s were lacking meaning.²³⁵ This statement betrayed changing tastes, the onset of Modernism and new conventions regarding sentiment, meaning that Bell’s works were becoming unreconciled and unfashionable. However, Bell took conventions and amended them, refusing to conform to particular formats, despite such responses. Bell’s paintings engaged with the experience of modernity in the unreconciled, complex nature of the women: ‘Bell has put too much vague modern wistfulness into his faces.’²³⁶ Bell’s varying freedom of line and eclectic combinations of female representations in *The Echo* used the past, the present, the well-known and the unexpected in jarring proximity, creating increasing problems with reading the image and classification, engaging with the troubling and complex experience of modernity.²³⁷

Contradictions in Bell’s representations, reflected a working through of appropriate visual languages with which to consider and represent fundamental changes taking place to the social order through female agency and the cataclysmic

²³² ‘Coloured Bas Relief: A New Treatment of Bas-Reliefs in Coloured Plaster,’ *The Studio*, 1, April-Sept, 1893, pp.53-5, (p.55); this sentiment may be applied to the artist’s expressed social aim of painted relief in architecture and public art in cities.

²³³ Robert Anning Bell, ‘Decorative Art and the Modern City’ transcript of a lecture, GSAA/DIR/5/27

²³⁴ ‘Art Exhibitions,’ *The Times*, (Friday, 10th April, 1908), p. 10, referring to *Cupid Disarmed*

²³⁵ ‘Mr. Anning Bell’s Works,’ *Athenaeum*, No. 4149, (4th May, 1907), pp.547-8, (p.548)

²³⁶ ‘The Riddle Art Club,’ *The Times*, (6th February, 1914), p. 9, re *Marriage at Cana* (Untraced)

²³⁷ Daunton and Rieger, (2001), Corbett (1997), Prettejohn (1999)

onset of a gender ‘crisis’. The problems identified in reviews indicated the notable challenge Bell’s compositions were making to conservative, acceptable languages of art.²³⁸ Bell’s composite visual forms corresponded with a range of feminist considerations concerning representation, identity, understandings of the self and the unconscious. Bell’s artistic negotiations echoed the complex languages of feminism, which, in their aspirations for an emancipated future negotiated a variety of mediated ‘types’ and conventions. Female artists such as Evelyn de Morgan and Eleanor Fortescue-Brickdale negotiated female types, including the mermaid and Pre-Raphaelite imagery.²³⁹ Feminist Winnifred Harper Cooley’s description of the female figure of the future in her utopian work, ‘A Dream of the Twenty-First Century,’ 1902, initially conformed to various conventions for female beauty and elegance: ‘My instructress was a radiant creature, in flowing, graceful robes – a healthful and glorious girl of the period: the product of a century of freedom. “Tell me,” I said, “what evolution has done for you, my fair Feminine Type.”’ However, this ‘maiden’ gives an answer which is entirely and uncompromisingly radical:

We have made such advances that I fear to seem egotistic if I tell you, for I have heard that at the beginning of the twentieth century, the world actually considered itself civilized!...[with] a corrupt government...where only one sex voted...Now we have unqualified equal suffrage – for all the citizens are educated and women are among the best voters.²⁴⁰

Given political freedom in the utopian future, women ‘went to work with enthusiasm...effect[ing] transformations’ in terms of health and sanitation in cities, marriage and child-rearing, education. This future, rather than ‘sordid, selfish, grasping and sensual’ is conceived as more spiritual.

The rethinking of types pervaded feminist writings and was notably expressed by Ellen Key in 1912. Key explored at length a variety of types, such as:

the fundamental types of single women...The diametrical antithesis of the curvilinear type is the rectilinear. It has, just as the preceding type, existed at all times. It is the woman who never really demanded anything of life

²³⁸ Further Wells was ‘perceived by contemporaries as a feminist’ (even if this has been later debated) and there were outspoken female antifeminists, (Stubbs, (1979), vii)

²³⁹ For Eleanor Fortescue-Brickdale, see Christian, (1989), pp.130-1 and Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *A Pre-Raphaelite Journey: The Art of Eleanor Fortescue-Brickdale*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press: National Museums Liverpool, 2012)

²⁴⁰ Kessler, (1984), p.207

but “a work and a duty” and finds both in abundance in all positions of life...There are many varieties of the new type of woman. There is for instance the tom-boy...There is the girl consumed with ambition...There is the ascetic, ethereal girl, who looks upon marriage and child-bearing as animal functions unworthy of a spiritual being, but above all as *unbeautiful*.²⁴¹

This passage shows a bewildering and growing range of new types or modes of womanhood forged through modernity. Art forms such as Bell’s paintings, and feminist thinking, incorporated elements which conformed and elements which re-negotiated the conventional. In new combinations, images contained inherent contradictions which effectively subverted synthesising interpretations. Bell, alongside feminists, developed new complicated languages of womanhood, modernity and the spiritual.

The City and the Sky

Bell’s mediation of types suggested the challenges he faced in creating an art that engaged with modern life and consciousness, particularly in terms of women’s lives. The contradictions of modernity were worked through the faces and figural forms of the women and also through various negotiations of space and narrative in in both works. Large areas of space and sky are a feature of both pictures; the figural group in *The Echo* circles around white empty space. The deliberate vastness of the scale is another tool which ensures viewers’ bewilderment as to time, place and meaning, estranging the artist from fixed artistic conventions and a knowable relationship between space and narrative. The uncertainty and openness of space and sky articulated both anxiety and possibility, charging the painting with somewhat indefinable drama and emotion as well as spiritual import. Olive Hockin, Suffragette and member of the ATC wrote in 1912 regarding Frederick Cayley Robinson’s use of blank space and simplified forms, how they signalled a new direction in modern art. The spaces, Hockin described: ‘ring out convincingly that message – so happily coming to be realised by the twentieth century – of the vital importance of space and air and emptiness – treasures in themselves that make us loth [*sic*] to allow more detail

²⁴¹ Key, (1912), pp.17-19

to intrude upon.’²⁴² Thus Bell’s empty spaces could be a freeing element speaking of modern sensibilities and psychology. The use of space and sky could suggest the eternal and transcendental and also express Bell’s ongoing interest in the modern relationship with space and nature, in cities and new forms such as model industrial villages, Garden Cities and suburbs.

Bell’s elevation of beauty in cities, particularly for the working classes maintained the important focus of ‘clean sky,’ and his use of whiteness in painting expressed his desire for space and air, versus smoke and filth, a theme of the Garden City movements and other philanthropic efforts in British cities from the nineteenth century.²⁴³ Women had focussed on the ills of the city through the social purity movement as well as through the work of social reformers such as Octavia Hill, from the late nineteenth century. Feminist utopias imagined the beneficial impact of women on cities, connecting dirt, ill-health and unhappiness, a similar relationship was suggested in Bell’s writings and lectures.²⁴⁴ The blackness of dirt and grime, piled onto the monotonous greyness of the architecture in cities concerned the artist repeatedly over time, considered when producing outdoor mosaics for Westminster Cathedral and the Horniman Museum, London, where the artist’s use of a white background was criticised in lengthy discussions.²⁴⁵ Bell also notably used stark, white backgrounds on relief panels for the Seaman’s Church, Liverpool, 1899/1900.

An intensified theme of contemporary visual culture, a battle for whiteness was evident in discourses surrounding cleaning and laundering, the city, nursing and medical discourses. Just as control of noise and the pleasure of silence became more important in times of increased urbanisation, so did access to clean, beautiful vistas and containment of the ‘smoke difficulty’ which Bell believed would soon be

²⁴² Olive Hockin, ‘The Cayley Robinson Exhibition at the Leicester Galleries’, No.17, Jan 1912, pp.28-30: (p.28). Also cited in Turner, (2009), pp.61-2

²⁴³ For philanthropy: Swiney (1899) discusses Octavia Hill. See also Bland (1995), Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*, (London: Virago, 1992); Barbara Caine, *Victorian Feminists*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), who discusses Josephine Butler and Florence Nightingale. For art and visual culture see: Lynda Nead, *Victorian Babylon: People, Streets and Images in Nineteenth-Century London*, (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, c2000), Frances Borzello, *Civilising Caliban: The Misuse of Art 1875-1980*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987). Articles regarding Bell and Robinson and the role of art in the city, see: Robert Anning Bell, ‘Take Art to the Public: Professor Bell’s views’, *The Times*, 18th March (1921), p.11 and ‘Posters by Royal Academicians: New Series for L.M.S Railway’, *The Times*, 24th December, (1923)

²⁴⁴ Cooley in Kessler, (1984), p.209

²⁴⁵ ‘smoky, foggy England’ was a factor to consider when advancing the revival of mosaic. Discussed in ‘Mosaic for England’, *The Times*, (5th November, 1926), p.15

overcome.²⁴⁶ Urban life, space, art and their effect on happiness and inner peace were discussed by the artist in a series of lectures and articles in 1913-14 where Bell described:

Town planning is a decorative art as well as a Hygienic study. The arrangement of open spaces, squares and parks, the distribution of trees, the treatment of river banks and bridges, the proper methods of showing to advantage natural beauties of the neighbourhood such as mountains and *above all, the sky* [my italics].²⁴⁷

This was not the first time Bell had considered the aesthetics of the city, connecting art, spirituality and social life. Around 1900 Bell had caused some irritation when he had publicised ideas to bring colour and decoration to cities. Drawing on historic art, Bell's desire to bring colour to cities meant rebellion according to conventions of the art world: 'I should like to see gayer paint used on doors – window bars and street palings and lamps...playgrounds, public sports buildings,' where he was perceived as shaking up artistic conventions.²⁴⁸ This furore may have prompted him, when revisiting the subject of the city in his series of lectures and articles around 1913-14, to reassure his audience that 'more attention to decorative art in the modern city' did not mean it would be:

smothered up in ornament and "applied art"...Not at all. A considerable part of the work of a Decorative artist would be to remove Decorations. An appreciation of the value of simplicity and of the use of the broad spaces is an essential part of his equipment.²⁴⁹

Though reference to the urban subject was noticeably absent from these paintings, an indirect dialogue with the urban, through features such as white space, was ever-present in Bell's aesthetics and forms.

²⁴⁶ 'smoke difficulty' noted in Robert Anning Bell, 'Decorative Art and the Modern City' transcript of a lecture (?1913), GSAA/DIR/5/27. (Bell gave a lecture at the GSA entitled 'Decorative Art and the Modern City,' which is noted in the prospectus, 15th February, 1913. This is most likely the transcript of that lecture and similar to the lecture given at the Kelvingrove Art Gallery, Glasgow, 16th January, 1914. The latter lecture is discussed in 'The Modern City', *British Architect*, Jan 23rd, 1914, p.88. Regarding whiteness and cleanliness see Caroline Davidson, *A Woman's Work is Never Done: A History of Housework in the British Isles, 1650-1950*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1982)

²⁴⁷For Bell's discussions on the modern city see: 'Take Art to the Public', *The Times*, (18th March, 1921), p.1; Bell (?1913) and 'The Modern City'

²⁴⁸ 'gayer paint', Bell (?1913)

²⁴⁹ 'The Modern City'

Through the artist's writings on methods and practise, his lectures about art in the urban environment, newspaper interviews and his ongoing urban decorative commissions, Bell considered the urban condition throughout much of his career, making contemporary engagements with debates and discourses about cities, town planning and salubrioness and the place of art. A few years before he finished *The Echo*, Bell wrote this important extract, from his lecture in Edinburgh, 1913:

I have heard the line taken that the town was the place for real hard-headed men to do real work in: it was meant to work in, not to look at...Now this sort of acceptance of grimy ugliness, of smoke and dirt – this sort of contemptuous talk of any attempt at beauty, when reduced to its real meaning, expresses simply the sordid idea that a city is a place to make money in – nothing more – and then to get out of it. And their city too often expresses that idea too well. But a city is more than that. A city is a place where knowledge is studied where the Arts are followed, where Science is developed and above all, where numerous lives are lived. A city is an expression of the sort of civilisation you have got and a criticism upon it.²⁵⁰

Bell expressed socialistic concerns for the welfare of lower classes, describing working people's hideous tenements, when they should have 'beautifully designed' homes.²⁵¹ By living in the major industrial cities of Liverpool and Glasgow, as well as London, for many years, Bell witnessed first-hand the intense urban development of modernity, 'the monstrous growth of industrial towns' and most likely based his observational comments on these experiences.²⁵²

The Echo was bought by the industrialist Lord Leverhulme, who had created the famous model industrial village, Port Sunlight, in Merseyside, on which houses were still being built in 1914.²⁵³ The Arts and Crafts movement had developed an ideology with social and civic aims of public art and Bell was particularly interested in taking 'art to the public' as he described in an article in *The Times*, 1921, through the integration of art and urban living on a daily level, 'in the streets' and on public

²⁵⁰ Bell (?1913) and 'The Modern City', p.88

²⁵¹ 'The Modern City', p.88

²⁵² 'The Modern City', p.88

²⁵³ Lord Lever bought *The Echo* in 1917 and it is now housed in the Lady Lever Art Gallery adjacent to the village.

buildings, rather than just within museums. Bell believed there were eternal models in ancient art, evident in glorious forms of Roman mosaic floors, with their ‘consciousness that they were creating art for the ages.’²⁵⁴ Bell taught such artistic aspirations to his students in Glasgow, calling on them to design art to improve the city around them, while in Liverpool he worked with his students in collaborative groups to design and decorate civic buildings.²⁵⁵

Bell’s practical consideration of the modern city environment from the 1890s, his ongoing interest and connections with Liverpool and with the Arts and Crafts movement highlighted the boldness of his choice of a cleared environment for the painting and inspired consideration of what this might represent in terms of the elements of life lost in the modern, urban world. Bell painted a wild, unknown, more radical landscape, rather than an ordered example of the new suburbs and model villages which were developing in the period, combining town and country. He attempted an epic reach, beyond his life-long commitment to the Arts and Crafts ideology, expressing a more experimental vision.

His effort, particularly in *The Echo*, painted 1915, can be read alongside the allied interest in the mystical, ineffable and transcendental and the growing Spiritualist movement from the First World War.²⁵⁶ Movements related to socialism and the Arts and Crafts, such as the ‘Back to the Land’ and Garden City movements, as well as the model industrial villages of Lever and Bourneville, were based on ordered planning, socialist ideals of work and co-operation and harmonious combinations of urban and rural values and forms.²⁵⁷ However, the space Bell creates is not regulated within these conventions. In contrast to the movements Bell had long been associated with, both paintings are endowed with strangeness and uncertainty, archaic, unbound barrenness,

²⁵⁴ Bell (1901). This aspiration can be seen in mural painting into the 1930s discussed in Alan Powers, ‘Public Places and Private Faces – Narrative and Romanticism in English Mural Painting, 1900-1935,’ in Christian (1989), pp.63-70 and also noted in Schupbach, (2009), p.3

²⁵⁵ Eden, (2012). In discussions on civic art, Bell described a need for ‘finding and educating good artists to do the work’ to obtain good quality civic work. Art education, as well as a good understanding of art were essential to manage urban aesthetics. Taste, Bell stated, should be governed by a varied group, not just artists: ‘it would be a good idea if engineers were added to the committee,’ Bell described with reference to the ‘Committee of Taste’ that had been discussed in a number of articles in *The Times* with regard to public art. These discussions revealed interest in ‘a more general alliance of art with common things.’ This is from Robert Anning Bell, ‘Take Art to the Public: Professor Bell’s views’, *The Times*, 18th March (1921), p.11.

²⁵⁶ Brantlinger, (1988), pp.255-274

²⁵⁷ Jan Marsh, *Back to the Land: The Pastoral Impulse in England, from 1880 to 1914*, (London: Quartet Books, 1982); Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter: A Life of Liberty and Love*, (London: Verso, 2009); Ebenezer Howard, *Garden cities of to-morrow* (1902. London: Faber and Faber, 1965)

aided by their position outside of time, history, current civilisation and culture.²⁵⁸ An article in *Connoisseur* described *The Garden of the Sleeping Beauty*, 1917: ‘Framed between a couple of dark, high columns were a bevy of sleeping maidens...The melody of the rich colour scheme, and the even, rhythmic balance of the composition, all help to invest the picture with a sensuous charm and an aspect of tranquil beauty.’²⁵⁹ By contrast with *The Echo*, *The Garden of the Sleeping Beauty* has a warm, comforting glow, is peaceful and ‘fascinating.’²⁶⁰ *The Echo* is more bewildering, emanating instead a vague religious fervour and tragical lament. The idea of Bell enacting a comforting ‘Pre-Raphaelite’ revival is thoroughly scuppered. The vision of the painting seems to evoke messianic, Spiritualist languages, elevating the simple act of listening to the echo in nature to a biblical moment of vision or prophecy. The empty, asymmetrical, unsheltered space helped advance the sense of melancholy.

The artist’s words about ‘hard-headed men’ aligned him with female spiritual values which could improve an uncontrolled, masculine, potentially brutal environment, privileging a morally charged feminist discourse.²⁶¹ The aesthetics of *The Echo* subtly critiqued masculine rationalism, as Bell endowed his figures with abundant space, peace and quiet to listen to the echo and to contemplate threatened values of spirituality and harmony with nature through that listening experience. Perhaps the emptied landscape could suggest humanity on the wrong path and the chance to start again and rethink our connection with spirituality and nature.²⁶² The emptiness suggested a less hopeful mood in the context of the First World War and the desire to reach further back in time, to the eternal and profound sources of spirituality which remain governed by women, to try and rebuild humanity’s neglected spirit.

The Primordial and Modern Sound

Alongside empty landscape, the inclusion of whiteness and empty space in *The Echo* provided the artist with greater possibilities to suggest various unseen forces in the air and sky. This area was commandeered as an imaginative space for primordial sounds

²⁵⁸ Beaumont, (2001), describes the creation in feminist utopias of ‘nowhere’ spaces.

²⁵⁹ ‘Current Art Notes,’ *Connoisseur*, Vol.51, (1917), pp.111-170, (p.169)

²⁶⁰ ‘Current Art Notes,’ *Connoisseur*, Vol.51, (1917), pp.111-170, (p.169)

²⁶¹ Which had developed from the ‘social purity’ movement of the 1890s in new forms: Owen, (c2004) and discussed in Chapter Three

²⁶² Facos (2009), p.37

of the past as well as for modern forms of spiritual connection. The area was being actively examined by occultists and scientists. *The Echo* is concerned with the implications of the emptying of the soundspace through near silence and the closeness to nature that would afford.²⁶³ Whereas sight had become fused with the modern experience, an article in *Macmillan's Magazine* in 1893 considered how:

We are always looking but rarely listening...The present complete ascendancy of sight prevents us from realising that there might have been, and probably was, a time in the past history of man when sounds were of far more importance relatively to sights than they are at present.²⁶⁴

The sound in *The Echo* is likely to be a 'lower' form of song, the call of a horn, or other outdoor instrument, far removed from orchestral music.²⁶⁵ Scholarship in the late nineteenth century was drawn, via the theory of evolution, to locate the origins of music in primitive life. Rational, categorising forces of positivist science determined that the development of music was progressive, in a patriarchal narrative leading to the highest achievement of individual, male, genius, canonical composers.²⁶⁶ In 1878, the psychologist James Sully had written a sustained consideration of humanity and noise in terms of human evolution wherein savages may appreciate more lowly sounds, like the beating of drums, as opposed to the higher form of Western music.²⁶⁷ Such origins of music long before its triumphant, male success, were found within such discourse, to be in 'female' atavistic or regressive sources, outside of the canon, such as tribal expression, dances, emotional and ritual activities, or, as described scholar Jules Combarieu in London, 1910, magic rites.²⁶⁸ Song and music, in their mysterious nature, were thus not easily reconciled as a subject of scientific enquiry, as Darwin wrote in 1861:

as neither the enjoyment nor the capacity of producing musical notes are faculties of the least direct use to man in reference to his ordinary habits

²⁶³ The act of listening becomes a spiritually significant act, like Swiney describes in (1906), p.230

²⁶⁴ J.B.C, 'In the Realm of Sound', *Macmillan's Magazine*, 67 (1893), p.438, in Small and Tate (2003), p.193

²⁶⁵ A horn is featured in Bell's *Going to the Hunt*, (1909)

²⁶⁶ Contemporary histories of music saw 'individual achievement ...as parts in a huge developing flow of history...with 'forerunners,' or 'followers'' who progressed to become increasingly complex and civilised, Bojan Bujic (ed.), *Music in European Thought 1851-1912*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p.3

²⁶⁷ James Sully, 'Civilisation and Noise', *Fortnightly Review*, OS 30 (1878), p.715 and p.704, in Small and Tate, (2003), pp.182-3

²⁶⁸ Bujic (1988); Pantel (1992)

of life, they must be ranked amongst the most mysterious with which he is endowed. They are present ...in men of all races even the most savage...[though] their music is to us hideous and unmeaning.²⁶⁹

And further, hearing and responding emotionally to music produced an atavism at a physiological level, as Darwin continued in 1871: ‘The sensations and ideas excited in us by music... appear from their vagueness, yet depth, like mental reversion to the emotions and thoughts of a long-past age.’²⁷⁰

Occult and theosophical writings also connected an echo heard in nature with the origins of language. Theosophist Rudolf Steiner described how dialect is founded on sound and word-forms, ‘within which there is an echo of the happenings outside us in nature,’ developed through listening to the undisturbed rhythms of natural world.²⁷¹ Bell’s painting evoked the natural rhythms that women in matriarchal societies, or other tribal groups may have lived by.²⁷² Echoes and rhythmic drum beats were ways that women and children in primitive cultures were likely to have made sound, bonded and shared across empty spaces or through cave systems, in communal or group experiences.²⁷³ The large shadowy form on the right in *The Echo*, is an unknown and pre-modern form, evoking primordial scale and immensity, suggestive of such echoes made with stone by ancient tribes. Echoes made in caves, could resonate imposingly, with uncanny effects or supernatural suggestion. An uninitiated echo could be, to prehistoric peoples, a new sound from a spirit or supernatural force, in communication or dialogue.²⁷⁴ Oral histories, largely continued by women, told the stories of these mystifying and unknown sounds.²⁷⁵

Feminists drew together matriarchal prehistory, tribal life and the origins of music, sound and oral history in new, positive combinations. In Swiney’s histories for

²⁶⁹ Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, (London: 1871), vol.2, pp.333-7, in Bujic, (1988), p.317

²⁷⁰ Darwin, (1871), in Bujic, (1988), p.318

²⁷¹ Rudolf Steiner, *The Genius of Language*, (New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1995), p.24, in Wilson, (c2013), p.86

²⁷² Explored by burgeoning contemporary anthropological investigations: Lewis H. Morgan, *Ancient Society: Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery through Barbarism to Civilisation*, (1877). Primitive cultures feature in feminist works which connect the primitive, primordial and the spiritual in women’s past. Swiney (1899), p.207, *The Bar of Isis or The Law of the Mother*, (1907) and *The Ancient Road*, (1918). Others who made similar connections included Annie Besant, Helena Blavatsky, Charlotte Despard, Ellen Key, Anna Bonus Kingsford.

²⁷³ Hendy, (2013), p.7

²⁷⁴ Hendy, (2013), p.7

²⁷⁵ Swiney emphasises women’s roles in this (1899), pp.37-8

example, Darwin's 'hideous and unmeaning' tribal forms, emerge as natural, beautiful, profoundly meaningful:

To a woman crooning over her infant may be assuredly traced the first notes of harmony, of music and of song. She imitated in gentle tones the whisperings of the summer breeze, the rustle of the quivering leaves, the flow of the murmuring stream, all voices of nature, of the beautiful earth-mother she loved so well.²⁷⁶

Swiney's words betray the author's pride and joy in a female affinity with nature, spirituality, natural sound and music. Feminism began to reclaim music in this period, as a continuous form of communication from human ancestors and early tribal peoples and from mothers to their children.²⁷⁷

'Modern' Listening

While listening in *The Echo* takes place outside and seems to place women in a familiar relationship with nature, spirituality, magic and mysticism, the work is contextualised by the complexity of modern sound, listening and new relationships with spirituality. In terms of the feminist re-examination of spirituality, Bell's group of women are guardians and mediators of the spirit of nature. In the writing of Ellen Key, woman of the prehistoric era was 'the conservator [*sic*] of civilisation and probably developed her psychic power in a more comprehensive manner than his.'²⁷⁸ As such, the women are conduits for the authentic, sincere and essential in primeval and elemental energies.

However, science was examining the modern airspace. The eminent physicist Sir Oliver Lodge, privileged the unseen forces of the spirit just as highly as matter. Lodge wrote in his autobiography *Past Years*, 1931: 'Matter alone is what appeals to the senses...[Yet] our animal senses give us no clue as or indication to the wealth of existence operating in the intangible and unseen.'²⁷⁹ Lodge's work on unseen forces

²⁷⁶ Swiney, (1899), p.202

²⁷⁷ Music, and its primal origins, were later reclaimed within women's history in scholarship such as Sophie Drinker, *Music and Women: The Story of Women in their Relation to Music*, (New York, Coward-McCann, 1948); Pantel (1992); Miles (1989); Amber E. Kinser, *Motherhood and Feminism*, (Berkeley, California: Seal Press, 2010)

²⁷⁸ Key (1912), p.1

²⁷⁹ Oliver Lodge, *Past Years: An Autobiography*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1931), p.174, pp.345-6

included invisible presences in the air and many forms of sound. Lodge studied electricity, magnetism, telegraphy, radio waves and fog as well as telepathy, séances, Spiritualism, undertaking research for the Society for Psychical Research (SPR).²⁸⁰ Bell recalled his friendship with Lodge in Liverpool in the 1890s: ‘Oliver Lodge was then making those experiments in wireless telegraphy which have since shortened space and obliterated time; he was also I think making an attempt to dispel fog.’²⁸¹ Bell was intrigued by an apparently empty cone perennially atop Lodge’s laboratory and was still undecided, when looking back in 1929, as to which unseen force it related to.²⁸² Lodge continued to investigate ‘the ether’ as a scientific hypothesis, beyond the 1900s when its intellectual respectability waned.²⁸³ Lodge described how there was ‘a nonmaterial, continuous ether into which all particles of matter were integrated.’²⁸⁴ When J. J. Thomson delivered the Adamson lecture at the University of Manchester, 1907, he called the ether, ‘the invisible universe’ that served as ‘the workshop of the material universe.’²⁸⁵ Lodge’s work reflected the overlap between scientific forays into this space and cultural knowledge of the ether or air as a location for the spirit.²⁸⁶

Indeed, while science imagined an increasingly populated airspace, the occult charged this space with spiritual activity and powers, wherein sound was a crucial force, effecting spiritual transformation. The idea of sound had long been related to magic, through the effect of Sirens or Mermaids on men or the overpowering emotional effects of music.²⁸⁷ The Spiritualist séance had privileged the voice and within contemporary occult, magical or theosophical writings, sound was constructed as a live, unruly element which may be ‘located or dislocated, contained or released, recorded or generated’, having ‘transforming effects.’²⁸⁸ Since sound vibrations are

²⁸⁰ Hendy, (2013), pp.240-1

²⁸¹ ‘Looking Back’; Picker, (2003)

²⁸² ‘Looking Back’

²⁸³ Peter Rowlands, ‘Lodge, Sir Oliver Joseph (1851–1940)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2011 [http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/view/article/34583, accessed 3rd August, 2016]

²⁸⁴ Exponents of this theory including Lodge, were opposed to new relativity theory, Oppenheim, (1985), p.380

²⁸⁵ J. J. Thomson, *On the Light Thrown by Recent Investigations on Electricity on the Relation between Matter and Ether. The Adamson Lecture Delivered at the University on November 4th, 1904*, (Manchester: The University Press, 1908), p.21, in Oppenheim, (1985), p.380

²⁸⁶ As well as the connection with Spiritualism through telepathy and the SPR, theosophy had an ongoing interest in the ether (and vapours). This is explored in Chapter Three.

²⁸⁷ Griselda Pollock has written on the power of the Sirens’ song in ‘Ecoutez la Femme: Hear/Here Difference,’ in Hanson and O’Rawe, (2010), pp.9-34

²⁸⁸ Suspensions or rapt listening are discussed in Wilson, (c.2013), p.75. See also Connor, (2000) and

airborne, they are not earthbound or capable of being inscribed or captured, but released, mobile and potent.²⁸⁹ Within occult, theosophical and artists' writings, concepts such as vibrations, resonance, movement of the air, were used frequently to connote a range of spiritual connections, being 'in tune' with others and with the Universe.²⁹⁰ Blavatsky noted in *The Secret Doctrine*, 1888, 'such or another vibration in the air is sure to awaken corresponding powers, union with which produces good or bad results.'²⁹¹ Kandinsky described in 1907 that he found the spiritual side of the Universe to be 'manifested chiefly by vibrations as in sound.'²⁹² In these occult terms, the listeners in *The Echo* are inter-dependent receivers and partakers in a system of greater knowledge, of over-arching and ever-present fluid flows of communication and spiritual energies, echoing the flows of electricity in the modern world. Both theosophical writings and practise privilege sound as a 'magically creative' element 'and to that extent in need of constraining'.²⁹³ Bell used such contemporary occult concepts of the power of sound to animate the power of his image.²⁹⁴

Thus the nature of the air itself had changed since the indeterminate primordial, classical or Old Testament periods Bell evoked. Like the effect of the microscope, scientific focus on the air had illuminated this space as cluttered and teeming with a host of new inhabitants - atoms, germs, invisible electrical currents. These scientific revelations appeared to confirm the countless unseen forces claimed in occult writings, which visualised sound in impressive ways and proposed many more undiscovered etheric energies.²⁹⁵ The modern soundscape thus encompassed complicated inter-

Kahn, (1992), p. 14, cited in Wilson, (c.2013), p.82. Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle and Modern Culture*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, c1999)

²⁸⁹ Wilson, (c.2013), p.82

²⁹⁰ Ralph Waldo Trine, *In Tune with the Infinite: or, Fullness of Peace, Power and Plenty*, (London: G. Bell, 1921); Kandinsky in Leonard (2007)

²⁹¹ Helena Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy*, (London: Theosophical Publishing Company, 1888), in Wilson, (c.2013), p.75

²⁹² Jerome Ashmore, 'Sound in Kandinsky's Painting,' *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 35.3 (1977), pp.329-36, (p.329).

²⁹³ Wilson, (c.2013), p.85

²⁹⁴ Frederick Cayley Robinson also described: 'I would wish to merge myself in my subject to make my own workmanship as invisible as a sheet of glass – to stand aside as it were and let Nature speak through one – Nature so passing through a mind harmoniously attuned with her, form and colour will become infused with intellectual suggestion, falling into a rhythmic oneness and harmony – the unity of man and the Universe will once more be attained - the great chord of artistic expression struck,' Letter from Frederick Cayley Robinson to A. L. Baldry, (Sunday 17th May, 1896, V&A National Art Library)

²⁹⁵ Several examples in works by Charles Webster Leadbeater and Annie Besant in chapter Three

relationships between scientifically determined presences, the sounds of nature and occult vibrations, mystical connections and reverberations.²⁹⁶

Surrounded by the busier, more complicated air, as discovered by science and the occult, the women in *The Echo* accordingly exude a 'modern anxiety' rather than a languid innocence; while placed in the premodern, the figures experience it through modern sensibility and new forms of knowledge. The intricacies of the contradictory female 'types' amongst Bell's listeners in *The Echo* reflected the emphasis on multiplicity within modern psychological debates regarding the fractured self, the unconscious and the nature of listening.²⁹⁷ The figures are modern in their disconnection and concentration, evidencing an 'actively intelligent' modern listening required in an era of ubiquitous noise. Such acts were described by the German philosopher Theodor Lipps in 1903, in works widely read and reprinted in English.²⁹⁸ *The Echo* showed women as receptors for sound in the manner of Freud's construct of 1912, which described neutral listening in psychoanalytic treatments, in which the analyst acts as a telephone receiver for unconscious thoughts and associations, which arrive and connect with her own unconscious.²⁹⁹ The technology of the telephone, picking up the electric vibrations which resonate, had seemed to confirm occult ideas of sympathetic vibrations and unconscious communication as well as informing psychological practise. Experiences of such modern technology, hearing a disembodied voice over the telephone for example, or its imperious, authoritative new ring heard in households, could also effect the uncanny.³⁰⁰

Reconsiderations of listening and of the nature of the spiritual and inner life, had been prompted as responses to the modern city, technology and soundscape.

²⁹⁶ Oliver Lodge cited in Hendy, (2013), pp.240-1

²⁹⁷ Oppenheim, (1985), p.251; Small and Tate (2003), p.9

²⁹⁸ Theodor Lipps, *Asthetik, Psychologi des Schönen und der Kunst*, vol. 1, *Grundlegung der Asthetik*. pp.478-81, (3rd edn, Leipzig: 1923), cited in Bujic, (1988), pp.303-4. Lipps (1851-1914) gained a high reputation in Psychology and several editions of his work *Aesthetics, the psychology of the beautiful and of art* (1st edn. 1903-6) were widely read and republished in English.

²⁹⁹ Sigmund Freud, Recommendations for Physicians on the Psychoanalytic Method of Treatment, (1912), quoted in Roland Barthes, 'Listening', in *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art and Representation*, trans. from the French by Richard Howard, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), p.252, in Flint (2003), p.192

³⁰⁰ This idea is notably expressed in Thurschwell, (2013). Thurschwell suggests that talking to the dead and talking on the phone both offered previously unimaginable forms of contact between people, within a concept of modern, 'magical thinking'. The author looks at the ways in which psychical research and the occult impact novels as well as the development of psychoanalysis. The idea of the uncanny in the modern is also explored in Nead (c.2007) and Bown et al, (2004). Other useful reading regarding women, listening and modernity includes Leonard (2007) and Matus, (2009)

Imagining the premodern world was an engagement with the modern. Michelle Facos has identified this as ‘an era when noise from the industrial and urban environment supplanted both silence and the sounds of nature.’³⁰¹ In this context, the figures in *The Echo* are privileged as listeners, undertaking a more selective or ‘close’ listening required in a new age in which, as historian John Picker has asserted: ‘acts of sounding, silencing and hearing [were imbued] with broad physical and symbolic significance.’³⁰² By the time of this painting, sound was increasingly determined, shaped, analysed and recorded, rather than passively consumed. Indeed, the increase of sound in the modern age, required thoughtful and careful listening. This concentrated and cherished act of listening exudes a modern sense of anxiety and urgency. These sentiments are expressed through complicated figural representations, the mood of precariousness, of the message being faint, the sound nearly lost, connecting the painting with contemporary narratives of losses through modernity.³⁰³

Conclusion: The Call of the ‘Feminist Voice’

The Echo could also suggest the intent listening of the disenfranchised and articulate the modern condition of women’s oppression. Whereas silent, reticent and static woman was a foundation of Victorian patriarchy, the silence of woman in these constructs is an informed, monumental silence, of wisdom and a listening attitude of expectancy.³⁰⁴ Women are empowered through their re-discovered connection with eternal spiritual knowledge; they wait and listen, with patience and forbearance others lack. As Symbolist works such as Khnopff’s *Silence*, (1890) had implied, there were small, subtle sounds that were worthy of attention, being forgotten in a vulgar torrent of modern noise. Women here, in occult discourse, akin to acts of meditation or channelling, detect the barely perceptible echo in the middle of nowhere.

The anti-feminist press commandeered silence as a masculine idyll: ‘This nagging New Woman can never be quiet!’, noted a verse in *Punch*, 1894.³⁰⁵ Whilst

³⁰¹ Facos, (2009), p.14

³⁰² Picker, (2003), p.6

³⁰³ This is a theme of much scholarship on this period such as Patrick McGuinness, (ed.), *Symbolism, Decadence and the Fin de Siècle: French and European Perspectives*, (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000); Arata, (2009), Facos (2009). The theme has arisen within events organised by the Edwardian Culture Network (www.edwardianculturenetwork.co.uk, accessed 21st July, 2016). The sense of enchantment being lost, frontiers closing up, vistas drawing in and the door to fairyland closing in the Edwardian period are documented well in Bown et al (2004) and Brantlinger (1988), pp.255-274

³⁰⁴ Monumentalism and statuesque forms were found within Symbolism, suggesting spirituality and power such as the Sphinx

³⁰⁵ Jordan, (1983), pp.19-21

these paintings silence the frozen group of women, the figures are also neatly removed from the crass and ugly recriminations surrounding the entrance of women into the political arena.³⁰⁶ The image silences loud antifeminist voices too and takes the viewer back to an elegant, quiet space, which also becomes a space for empowered ‘listeners.’ Rather than *making* noise, like masculine cultures of war, movement and mechanisation, celebrated by some Modernist artists, Bell’s painting shows an alternative experience of modernity, and mode of modern art, which was quiet and thoughtful and in which women could access sounds that modern, masculine culture has forgotten or forsaken.³⁰⁷ Bell’s paintings, like the works of Gotch and Cayley Robinson, privileged a more ‘feminine’ approach to modernity.

Silence could also witness the nurturing of a modern feminist consciousness of an army in waiting, of sisterhood forged through a shared disempowered, voiceless state.³⁰⁸ In their humble, quiet condition, one of the sounds women could pick up from the air, was the ‘feminist voice,’ as described by Ellen Key in 1912. Key described the woman’s movement as a spirit, which ‘from lonely heights sent out [an] awakening call to the time.’³⁰⁹ This voice, its awakening of feminist consciousness, was imagined as an instinctive or intuitive call, a mystical or religious revelation, an ancient and

³⁰⁶ The image of silence is contradicted by the noisiness of feminist activity, the idea of the ‘shrieking’ woman as well as the loudness of anti-feminist attacks. Women were simultaneously increasingly connected with the sounds of modernity, such as noises of factory work and white-collar work. The latter included the typewriter and the machinery of printing, as used in the campaign offices of the Suffragettes, Atkinson (1996). Beaumont (2001) describes the significant patriarchal stake in maintaining ‘women’s enforced political silence by an ideological insistence on their ‘natural reticence,’ maintaining a female population which is ‘silent and static.’ Women ‘in order to save the quiet of Home life from total disappearance...should not do violence to their natural reticence,’ p.218. By contrast women in utopian works like *New Amazonia* are ‘talking, writing and attending public meetings.’ Beaumont, (2001), p.218. Author Corbett herself was a ‘go-to-meetings-woman,’ (Beaumont (2001) p.218. Within feminist scholarship on women and representation, problems identified include a lack of voice for women and for marginalised groups, of women being silenced. Mary Evans [and six others], (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Feminist Theory*, (Los Angeles: SAGE reference, 2014), p.145.

³⁰⁷ For an overview of modern art and masculinity see Natalya Lusty and Julian Murphet, (eds.), *Modernism and Masculinity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014)

³⁰⁸ Sheila Rowbothom later discussed how the feminist consciousness of the 1970s radical movement was forged by the powerless and voiceless through gesture, signs and silence: ‘The underground language of people who have not power to define and determine themselves in the world develops its own density and precision. It enables them to sniff the wind, sense the atmosphere, defend themselves in a hostile terrain.’ Sheila Rowbothom, *Woman’s Consciousness, Man’s World*, (London and New York: Verso, Radical Thinkers, 2015. Parts originally published in 1973), p.32. Rowbothom also noted the need for feminists to listen with an ‘ear to the ground’, (2010), p.243. The condition of silence enabled mental regrouping and a readiness for combat, similar to the mentality of the ‘suffrage army.’ Atkinson, (1996), p.1

³⁰⁹ Key, (1912), p.16

modern voice, resonating in the modern world, an echo from a forgotten past. The ‘feminist voice’ embraced the ancient and eternal, Key’s ‘primeval yearning of the woman soul’, but through a contemporary spirit of the age.³¹⁰

Contemporary feminism investigated female spirituality, reaching back further than the origins of organised religion and encouraging women to reclaim the infinite and timeless. In such locations, feminists identified a better relationship between woman and nature than man enjoyed in the present and used these examples to look to the future. In feminist utopian works, women were connected with attributes of the distant past, both physical and spiritual, and such features were applied to women’s current social conditions and future possibilities.³¹¹ A character living in the utopian world Florence Dixie created in *Gloriana; or, the Revolution of 1900*, does not doubt the equal physical prowess of women, if given the same advantages as men. At the same time, however, physical strength is made more potent through women’s spirituality:

“if a legion of Amazons could be rendered amenable to discipline they would conquer the world.”...The physical courage, of which men vaunt so much, is as nothing when compared with that greater and more magnificent virtue, “moral courage”, which women have shown they possess in so eminent a degree over men.³¹²

Discourse about female spirituality featured in the Suffragette campaign and in utopian writings, wherein the history and future of women were determined as eternal and infinite, like the image presented in both *The Arrow* and *The Echo*.

Rather than looking to the more immediate past of women’s relatively confined function within mesmerism for example, women such as Frances Swiney and Ellen Key drew ever further back in history and prehistory, to the dawn and to the eternal.³¹³ Ellen Key asserted in 1912 a monumental continuity of female spirit from the mists of time and described that in:

³¹⁰ Key, (1912), p.11

³¹¹ ‘assuming...that a utopian future was inevitably unravelling,’ Rowbotham (2010), p.27. The anticipated future is also noted in Beaumont (2001), p.213

³¹² Dixie (1890), p.92

³¹³ As indicated in Chapter One, to Frances Swiney the female is infinite, creative and synthesising force towards assimilation and oneness while the masculine is finite, destructive and divisive. Men have contradicted the ‘law of the mother’ and thus lost the ‘natural order’ of human origins, which was female, (1906), pp.132-5

what can be called the “prehistoric” woman movement...[woman] developed her psychic power in a more comprehensive manner than [man]...through many of the important and difficult tasks of the mother...[were] numerous possibilities for spiritual development...By the side of these innumerable nameless women who, century after century, in and through the material work of culture which they performed, increased their psychic power, we must remember all the unnamed women who with flower-like quiet mien turned their souls to the light...it is not the illustrious but the nameless women who most clearly reveal the will of the woman soul, in antiquity for light and life.³¹⁴

These words suggested a profound sense of woman’s spiritual history, ever-present and submerged beneath the advances of male-defined history, of the named and illustrious. From the primordial to the classical periods, Key described an obscured and nameless rise of the mass of women towards the spirit.³¹⁵

Feminist acts which sought and engaged with ancient and eternal spirituality were inherently modern. Driven by the conditions and concerns of modernity these acts questioned or critiqued advances in progress, expressed ambivalence, loss, regret, isolation and spiritual atrophy.³¹⁶ Modern life was seen to interrupt or distort the natural flow of women’s spirituality which must be remembered, reclaimed and nurtured. Due to modern life, Key noted that lamentably woman’s ‘spiritual talent must be a field that lies fallow.’³¹⁷ At the same time, modern life prompted the nurturing, re-valuing and renewed focus on lost qualities of spirituality: the ‘soul life’

³¹⁴ Key (1912), p.2

³¹⁵ Key’s words anticipate several components of the later feminist movement, notably the idea of the submerged female consciousness resurrected by Simone de Beauvoir and Betty Frieden as described by Rowbotham, (2015), p.4, 11. Other comparable ideas include the notion of a history of women’s own as a counter to the history which excluded women, the development of women’s consciousness within patriarchy which denied and obscured it, the privileging of women’s spirituality within feminism, the reclamation of the lives of the masses of oppressed women denied liberation, personal development and ‘greatness’ within men’s writing of history, current ideas about the women’s movement as ever-present molten magma beneath the surface of man-made civilisation. Karen Offen has written that the model of ‘waves’ of feminism ‘seems to understate the dimensions of the phenomenon.’ Instead, Offen looks at ‘feminism as a threatening and rather fluid form of discontent that repeatedly presses against (and, when the pressure is sufficiently intense bursts through) weak spots in the sedimented layers of patriarchal crust, the institutional veneer of organized societies.’ Offen, (c.2000), pp.25-6

³¹⁶ Hirsch on the city and artists’ removal from it; West, (1993) and Facos (2009), pp. 147-166 on the Symbolist interest in nature

³¹⁷ Key, (1912), p.1

of woman and her ‘psychic power.’³¹⁸ Frances Swiney found such concerns reflected the need for man, in the form of male, modern rationalistic culture, to listen to woman, to reunite with the Mother Law and with the ‘divine feminine’, sentiments expressed vehemently in 1906:

“We have come into a false position to Nature.”

Man is always extolling his war with Nature – his deadly struggle to wrest her secrets from her for his own exploitation and gratification. The woman had in days of peace and humble, patient toil already discovered the best of Nature’s gifts and paved the way for him to follow in the agricultural, pastoral and industrial arts of life...

The cry of the present day is:

“Away with this hideous excrescence of civilisation! Get back to Nature, to the Mother that the Son has disowned – back to the freer, purer, happier life wherein man may breathe once more the air of heaven and learn once more of woman the things that belong to his peace!”³¹⁹

Bell’s elusive subject in *The Echo* corresponded with contemporary feminist reclamations and reformulations of spirituality. The painting presents a modern, spiritualised act of listening. Like a group waiting for the medium to interpret sound in a séance, the picture charts the breaking of the near silence of the scene, as a faint echo is received from across the airwaves by the figure in blue.³²⁰ The picture is comparable to a much earlier work by Waterhouse, *Listening to the Oracle* of 1884, (Fig. 2.34) and in a similar way, the composition helped represent anticipation and prophecy. Bell, like contemporary feminists expressed optimism, hope and expectancy in the possibilities of the future, through forms of spiritual womanhood, inextricably intertwined with feminist languages.

Bell’s painting may visualise a moment of ‘fervent exaltation,’ in the artist’s words. The aspect of the figure in blue may be compared to a visionary moment described by the artist in a lecture to his students at the RCA, 1922. Artworks are:

better, I think, when conceived in a moment of fervent exaltation. It may be religious, it may come from poetry, from music, from the external

³¹⁸ Both terms are from Key (1912), p.1

³¹⁹ Swiney, (1906), p.166 and p.180

³²⁰ The figure also accords with older constructions of female mediums and Spiritualism as well as with Schopenhauer and the Romantic listening experience.

beauty of Nature; it may come as the wind comes, one knows not whence, but it sets a flame, as it were, to the imaginative mind, and in that flame the artistic subject is born.³²¹

This notion may be reconsidered in terms of the intangible and primeval, spiritual call of the woman's movement. Bell's figure in blue receives and connects with intangible forces in the air in a spiritual exaltation similar to that experienced by women in their emancipatory journey. Ellen Key used the same metaphor in 1912:

When [the women's movement] began, the Biblical expression about the wind was quoted, "Man knows not whence it comes nor whither it goes." Now all know it. Now the spirit of the time speaks with a feminist voice. The ideas of emancipation "are in the air." Like bacilli³²²

Both comments evoked the elemental forces of the air and wind, like the echo, which arrived with or on the wind and existed in the air, defying representation with its absolute indeterminacy and transitory nature. Feminism could equally ignite flames of inspiration and aspiration to women, like the Symbolist narratives of special artistic insight.³²³ Further, the commitment to feminism was a mentally vigorous experience, a type of awakening, akin to the personal, spiritual experience of artistic inspiration.

Instead of the artist receiving psychic or spiritual vibrations, as in common constructs of the Symbolist artists, in *The Echo*, women do so, directed by the figure in blue. Swiney composed in 1906 a description of the higher female 'cosmic consciousness', which was informed by a combination of her comprehensive knowledge of theosophy, religious languages of the nineteenth century and constructs of female beauty and sanctity epitomised by the figure of Dante's Beatrice as a 'beautiful Lady.'³²⁴ Swiney's description fits Bell's figure in blue, whose soul and consciousness equally:

vibrates to the manifold harmonies of the universe, responds to the stricken chords of human life, suffers with those who suffer, is glad with those who

³²¹ 'A Lecture on Stained Glass', Royal College of Art, London, (1922), p.14. This quotation is also cited in Eden (2009), p.30

³²² Key, (1912), p.15

³²³ Symbolists adopted a language of artistic genius which endowed artists with special insight, divine knowledge and vision. Occultists claimed the same for clairvoyant seers. Facos, (2009), p.37; Mathews, (1999)

³²⁴Swiney (1906), p.219

rejoice, weeps with those who weep, is compassionate, loving, pitiful, and unselfish³²⁵

While displaying traditional feminine virtues, Swiney's construct is an invocation to radical feminism, for women to awaken to their own divinity and power and shape the future, described by reviewers as a 'trumpet call' and a 'clarion call' to women.³²⁶ Thus feminist languages found potent forms of expression through spirituality.

Feminists invoked a number of languages of evangelical righteousness, sacrifice, cosmic spirituality and messianic spirit. Olive Schreiner, in *Dreams*, 1890 imagined a solitary, monumental figure on a mountain top creating a visual image which was of great inspiration to Suffragettes in prison.³²⁷ Schreiner undertook a 'secular reclamation of biblical tropes and paradigms for her new religion of humanity', which historian Ann Heilmann has noted, correlate with theosophical cosmology.³²⁸ Bell's image may express a feminist condition of loneliness, of pioneering spirit or religious martyrdom.³²⁹ Bell noted in 1933: 'the flow of drapery in the wind...Titian's leaping Bacchus with his streaming cloak in the National Gallery, was a marvel to us as it had been to his pupils three hundred years back.'³³⁰ The figure in blue, with her rippling blue drapery, intense listening experience, oracular power and dramatic emotional pose suggested the modern transformative experience of the feminist consciousness, particularly in her position looking towards unknown expanses to the right, witnessing new mental vistas and expanded fields of vision.

Since Bell concurred with Kandinsky's assertion regarding the 'spiritual nature of art', painting could mobilise the occult attributes of resonance, charging and bolstering the image with an eternal supernatural, spiritual power. Indeed, Bell's use of sound in *The Echo* also becomes a defence of the possibilities of painting as a

³²⁵ Swiney, (1906), pp.219-20

³²⁶ Swiney (1906) frontispiece

³²⁷ Heilmann, (2004), p.119; in relation to Suffragettes, pp.129-130

³²⁸ Heilmann, (2004), pp.120-122

³²⁹ This type of spirit is reflected in the Suffragette's adoption of Joan of Arc as their patron saint while women undertook challenging acts of militancy and revolt Atkinson, 'A Poster advertising the *Suffragette* newspaper, 1912,' Plate 7, opposite p.78, features Joan of Arc, also created by Hilda Dallas. Constructs of women on the mountain top are also found in Swiney's *The Bar of Isis; or The Law of the Mother*, (1907)

³³⁰ Drapery showing the effect of whistling wind was a concern of contemporary artists such as Waterhouse. Regarding the artist's 'knowledge of the visible expression of movement,' Robert Anning Bell, 'The "Moderns" and Their Problems', *The Saturday Review*, May 27th, 1933, p.513

representational form.³³¹ Woman becomes a symbol of the transfigurative powers of art in the modern age. The power of sound remains live through art's mystical, transforming potential, though the use of potent, distilled imagery, psychological suggestion and spiritual resonance.³³² Bell visualised the intangible idea of the echo, through the rippling effect of wind on the female figures, contagious emotional effects and in the use of line, notably the sweeping movement of the background form on the right. Charles Leadbeater, clairvoyant and theosophist discussed sound in *The Hidden Side of Things*, 1905. In 1901, Annie Besant had written *Thought Forms* with Leadbeater, in which sound is presented visually, in great structures, strengthened in its presence from the invisible to the visible.³³³

Bell felt that painting, in contrast to what he described as inferior methods of copying the world, such as effortless photography, could capture the intangible spirit or sound of the times, enact transgressions of material boundaries, connect the viewer with forces 'beyond the veil', engaging at an unconscious level. Bell described in 1933:

And then comes along that petty little engine the snapshot camera with its development the cinematograph; and all this difficulty, this mystery disappears. Slow movement in the cinema shows the mechanism of all moving forms...And the camera brings another shock: it gives tones and values and effects of light and shade so near what the eye sees as to take the zest out of the study of these subjects. The young artist who has been familiar with all this from his childhood and regards it as the normal state of things (how different to us when the world held much more mystery and wonder!) naturally does not regard these aspects of Nature as being of sufficient interest to merit serious study.³³⁴

Bell's comment broached issues of the relationships between spirituality, magic, mystery and visual medium.³³⁵ The artist's subject of listening to the echo is

³³¹ Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, translated by Michael T.H. Sadler, (London: Tate, 2006); Owen (c.2004)

³³² Idea from Wilson, (c.2013), p.85

³³³ Charles Webster Leadbeater, *The Hidden Side of Things*, (Adyar: Theosophical Publ. House; Madras; Benares, 1913, orig. 1905) and Annie Besant and Charles Webster Leadbeater, *Thought-Forms*, (Adyar, Madras, India: Theosophical Pub. House, 1941, orig. 1901); Wilson, (c.2013), p.85

³³⁴ Robert Anning Bell, 'The "Moderns" and Their Problems', *The Saturday Review*, May 27th, 1933, p.513

³³⁵ Jacobi and Kingsley, (2016); Nead (2007); O'Connor and Tweedie, (c.2007)

indeterminate in its original form and thus can never be replayed; it is an intangible and evanescent subject co-opted to affirm the artist's beliefs in the superior mystical power of art to communicate profound meanings and to enact modern spiritual transformations. The painting becomes a paradigm or manifesto for a spiritual life, retaining the magical power of sound and of painting, enacted through Symbolist viewing process and the medium of women, a representation existing against the grain of dominant contemporary art orthodoxies.

As the spirit is not based on the masculine exigencies and structures of power in contemporary life but on indeterminate essential qualities, spirits, energies and primeval yearnings which long pre-dated masculine constructions of patriarchy, the force of the women's movement is paramount and untouchable. This again allied the 'feminist voice' with the primal and unstoppable forces of nature such as the flame, the wind, the ocean or an echo. Since such a spirit was autonomous, unlike the art institutions and schools and other spheres which denied access to women, it was truly transcendent and universal. In its contemporary formulation, the spirit could reach viewers through a Symbolist, spiritually imbued and unconscious viewing process. The spiritual and psychological anxiety, the consciousness of the women anchor the image within its modern context, rather than an earlier idea of woman in nature, in Greek mythology or Romanticism. The wind, as an eternal or universal symbol informed new occult and theosophical writings, replete with modes of energy transfer such as diffusion, permeability, receptivity; such works which were in dialogue with modern scientific and technological developments. In conjunction with mysterious, evanescent natural forces, the echo could effect spiritual transformations, as it passes through the women. Bell's visual language accorded with Wood's metaphor of transmission regarding Bell's ability to, 'impart historical allusions that have passed through his veins.'³³⁶ And while emanating from irrational, eternal knowledge such as the soul or spirit, rather than science politics, philosophy, the call to feminist consciousness was a tool sought for and constructively applied to women's *modern* decisions, such as whether to marry, the resistance to 'conventionalism' and becoming a 'submissive wife', the choice to develop personality, individualism rather than to nurture the spirit of self-abnegation.³³⁷

³³⁶ Wood, (1910) p.255

³³⁷ Discussed several times in Key, (1912), p.21, 23, 26

The women in *The Echo* subverted the strictures of Victorian womanhood and evidence the dissembling and uncertain experience of modernity. In their unconstrained complexity and positioning in inscrutable resistance to conventions, the figures may articulate new possibilities and the hope of the ‘feminist voice’, speaking through the woman’s movement and correspondingly awakened forms of female spirituality.³³⁸ Notably, a figure like Oliver Lodge, who perceived air to be full of potential scientific and spiritual discovery, also perceived of the potential of the women’s movement, supporting women’s suffrage and other progressive forces for change.³³⁹ Occult possibilities corresponded with feminism and the embracing of the spiritual as a source to improve the present and the future. Whereas we only witness an insubstantial trace of the energies, spirits and forces filling the intangible airspace in the reverberation of *The Echo*, the potential power of such spiritual forces is potent and infinite. As Ellen Key asserts, the feminist spirit was now airborne and contagious, with the power to, using a medical metaphor, ‘infect’ women like ‘bacilli’ in the air. *The Echo* bears witness to the pervasive cultural tensions of 1915, in its borderline position between loss and hope. However, ultimately the women’s generous offering of spiritual knowledge, shown in the form of exalted listening, may offer salvation and the path to spiritual regeneration in a troubled modern age. Ellen Key wrote in 1912:

All points of departure, the natural rights of man, individual freedom, social necessity - all led out into the sun, which in society and in nature, should radiate over woman as well as over man; they led up onto the summit where man and woman both should breathe the air of the heights.³⁴⁰

While *The Arrow* is a picture of great, unbridled physical exuberance, both pictures evidence the overwhelming surge of contagious emancipatory possibility, imagining both physical liberation and spiritual re-vitalisation through the emancipation of women.

³³⁸ Key, (1912), p.17, 26

³³⁹ Rowlands, (2004)

³⁴⁰ Key, (1912), p.15

Chapter Three: Frederick Cayley Robinson

Introduction

In the fading light of day, in dimly lit rooms, women stand silently around tables, thinking pensively and pouring milk for children. Firelight, traditional domestic activities and the quietness of these scenes suggest calm. Very soon, however, the viewer begins to notice the cramped nature of the rooms, the dungeon-like windows, the hooks on the walls, the towering cabinets with locked drawers. There are puzzling features such as circling birds outside the window, clustered objects in the corner, a tall Mackintosh chair and visual allusions to the artworks of Rossetti. Heightened stillness, the weighty looks on the faces of the figures, their isolation from one another and uncomfortable seating arrangements start to engender misgivings about the initial ordinariness of these scenes.

In this chapter I consider the art of Frederick Cayley Robinson, focussing particularly on *A Winter Evening*, (1898), (Fig.3.1), a later version, (1906), (Fig.3.2) and *The Depth of Winter*, (c.1900), (Fig.3.3). These pictures exemplify many recurring images of women in psychologically charged interiors, painted from the 1890s until the artist's death in 1927.¹ In these paintings Cayley Robinson presented 'everyday subjects – groups of children by the fire,' providing a 'poetry of domesticity', which seemed to expound Coventry Patmore's ideal of the 'angel in the house,' as described in the artist's Obituary in *The Times*, 1927.² Thus paintings superficially accorded with features of the domestic, a subject which was a comfortable staple in Victorian painting.

However, in these paintings apparently reassuring forms were carefully made uncertain, unnerving and challenging. Notably, the female figures were not the simple, happy female figures, accompanied by delighted children, found in genre paintings of the period. Instead these were described in *The Times* in 1908 as 'strange, ascetic figures', intellectually removed and separated from one another.³ Far from

¹ It was noted upon his death that Robinson had deployed 'frequent reiteration of detail, pictorial setting, and sameness of expression.' James Greig, 'Frederick Cayley Robinson, A.R.A.' *Old Watercolour Society's Club, 5th Annual Volume*, (London: The Club, 1927-8), pp. 61-71, (p.66)

² 'Mr F. Cayley Robinson: Obituary,' *The Times*, (6th January, 1927), p.12

³ 'Art Exhibitions', *The Times*, (5th December, 1908), p.10

unthinkingly satisfied with domestic routines, women were presented as serious figures with important spiritual import and insight.

Part One of this chapter explores how these unsettling interiors challenged the certainty of humanity's material existence and laid the groundwork for a wider questioning of social structures and gender roles. The artist presented an image of spiritual woman, related to theosophy and feminism, which went beyond dominant Symbolist conventions and exhibited more positive forms of female spirituality, explored in Parts Two and Three. Part Four considers the women's positioning with regard to the private and public spheres, the connections between the spiritual and the political forged through feminism and the modern context.

Part One: The Material and Immaterial

Unsettling Interiors

Green-tinged pink tones fade...

In the half-light of lamps which casts

Question-marks on everything⁴

A Winter Evening was exhibited in the Royal Society of British Artists' *Winter Exhibition*, London, 1899. Viewers of this work perceived various inherent contradictions, such as the troubling and evocative conjunction of the everyday and the profound. Cayley Robinson's pictures were serious: 'to be remembered when the pet dog and cackling duck themes have gone to their long home,' as a viewer noted in *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 1899.⁵ In their small size and delicate rendering the works suggested fairyland and enchantment. *A Winter Evening* was positioned indeterminately between drawing and painting. However, whilst being deliberately tempered and modest, the paintings were 'distinguished by high seriousness', imbued with an ominous or foreboding sense of the profound belying their intimate scale.⁶

Despite an initially conservative appearance, many unsettling aspects were evident in both of these compositions. Areas of wall are left vague and unworked in *A Winter Evening* while things are clustered and obscured in the right hand corner. *The*

⁴ Paul Verlaine, 'Brussels: Simple Frescoes I', in E. H and A. M Blackmore (eds.), *Six French Poets of the Nineteenth Century: Lamartine, Hugo, Baudelaire, Verlaine, Rimbaud, Mallarmé*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, orig. 2000), p.213

⁵ 'Two Art Exhibitions,' *The Pall Mall Gazette*, (Saturday, 4th November, 1899)

⁶ Greig, (1927-8), p.65

Depth of Winter features compositional crowding in the right-hand corner, enhancing the atmosphere of uncertainty and anxiety. A bulky, over-sized cabinet, with many closed drawers, looms over the figures in both paintings entrapping them. Figures are constricted by being set so close to the table and through pictorial demarcation which lowers the ceilings and crops the windows. Cayley Robinson alters the height of the central table in the two compositions and in *A Winter Evening* it appears to hover with no legs. There are strange, unmatched chairs of varying heights in *The Depth of Winter* and some are too high to sit under the table. Two figures on the right in this painting seem to merge and sit on one seat at a right angle to the table, the figure in the forefront perches on another, mismatched seat, which does not fit under the table. There is additional vagueness regarding the age, adult or child status of figures, undermining the certainty of domestic and familial hierarchies and norms. There are various obscured objects or unexplained forms of which we obtain a glimpse, such as on top of the cabinet in *A Winter Evening*, or circling birds in *The Depth of Winter*. Notably, sharp, pointed or vertical objects which recur in many works, are here represented by scissors, wooden chair backs and hooks on the wall, injecting disturbing, or threatening magical qualities. In both paintings, additional focus is given to the inconsequential, such as table cloths, shadows and walls.

These paintings gestured to matters of significance, transcendence and spirituality but these were presented via visual forms which were familiar, humdrum and, as noted by art critic James Greig in 1927, ‘very real.’⁷ Female figures seemed strange, removed, haunting and lifeless, whilst the objects, such as the saucepan in *The Depth of Winter*, appeared uncanny in their vitality and presence. *A Winter Evening* features a number of objects: a newspaper, clock, electric light, a painting and a harp. *The Depth of Winter* includes embroidered fabric, scissors and sewing paraphernalia, a key in the drawer of the table, cups and saucers, a saucepan, a high-backed Mackintosh chair and toy sheep, most likely from a Noah’s Ark set. In the artist’s Obituary it was noted: ‘In these interiors every inanimate object was made to yield its contribution to the mood of the picture by an affectionate dwelling upon surfaces and textures.’⁸ Objects were given heightened degrees of life through an enhanced level of materiality perceived by viewers.

⁷ Greig, (1927-8), p.67

⁸ ‘Mr F. Cayley Robinson: Obituary,’ *The Times*, (6th January, 1927), p.12

Yet despite these potentially meaningful objects, concrete meanings and substance were deliberately denied and unattainable. Hélène Stafford explored the concept of the ordinary in a study of the Symbolist poet Mallarmé. Her words may usefully be applied to these paintings, which also effect ‘a paradoxical understanding of the everyday, constantly undermin[ing] its recognisable, safe and transparent status.’⁹ The normal furniture of the domestic interior including objects, human figures and walls were recast in a domestic space which becomes unsettling and psychologically charged. Seemingly ordinary rooms evoked awe, anxiety and the uncanny. The concept of an ordinary world filled with knowable objects is crucial to this work, as Stafford described, ‘abundantly gestured towards, both implicitly and explicitly,’ only for certainty to be vaporised.¹⁰

Cayley Robinson’s links with theosophy and Symbolism, including Maeterlinck and the Nabis, helped shape the aesthetics of these two paintings and their emphasis on the unknowable, invisible and profound. Maurice Maeterlinck was at the heart of Symbolist movement and a leading Rosicrucian.¹¹ Cayley Robinson created set and costume designs for the first staging in England of Maeterlinck’s play *The Blue Bird* from 1909 at the Haymarket Theatre, London. The staging was enormously popular and ran to 402 performances, deftly evidencing the crossovers between Symbolism in Britain and Europe. In 1911, Maeterlinck wrote to Cayley Robinson, in praise of his drawings for the illustrated book of *The Blue Bird*.¹² Cayley Robinson’s artworks relating to *The Blue Bird* were discussed in detail in Martin Wood’s article of 1910 in *The Studio*. James Greig linked the artist with the poetry of Paul Verlaine in his article upon Cayley Robinson’s death in 1927 and Maryanne Stevens’s detailed article on Cayley Robinson in 1977 further proposed links with Puvis de Chavannes, the Belgian

⁹ Hélène Stafford, *Mallarmé and the Poetics of Everyday Life: A Study of the Concept of the Ordinary in his Verse and Prose*, (Amsterdam, Netherlands; Atlanta, Ga. : Rodopi, 2000), p.17

¹⁰ Stafford, (2000), p.16

¹¹ Neat, (1994), pp.22-3

¹² Letter from Maurice Maeterlinck to Frederick Cayley Robinson, dated 1911, quoted in *Watercolour Drawings Illustrating Maeterlinck’s the Blue Bird by F. Cayley Robinson, ARWS*, (exhibition, Leicester Galleries, London, Nov – Dec, 1911), cited Wilton (2007), p.278. For more details on the staging of the play see Jane Munro, *Chasing Happiness: Maurice Maeterlinck, The Blue Bird and England*, (Cambridge: Fitzwilliam Museum, 2006). See also MaryAnne Stevens, ‘Frederick Cayley Robinson’, *Connoisseur*, (Sept., 1977), pp.23-35, (p.33); Christian, (1989), p.154. Maurice Maeterlinck, *The Blue Bird: A Fairy Play in Six Acts*, translated by Alexander Teixeira de Mattos, (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1911, 35th edition, orig. 1909)

Symbolists and the Nabis. Cayley Robinson attended Academie Julian, Paris when the Nabis were exhibiting, 1891.

The interiors I explore have similarities with the works of the Symbolists. Cayley Robinson's paintings elevated simple everyday tasks of daily life into majestic, sombre statements, negotiating the material and immaterial world.¹³ This effort can also be seen in works such as *The Cook*, (1892, Fig.3.4), by Nabis artist Felix Vallotton, as well as the writings of Maeterlinck, notably *The Treasures of the Humble*, (1897).¹⁴ Cayley Robinson employed shared symbolic visual languages evident in Symbolism including use of a 'serious God-like, patrician figure,' voyages beginning by boat, use of light, half-light and twilight, traceable throughout his works.¹⁵ However, while paintings superficially conformed to a number of Symbolist conventions, particularly constructs of spiritual woman, the influence of theosophy framed more complex representations.

Theosophy informed Cayley Robinson's construction of women as spiritually insightful, prescient and responsible. In a long letter to art critic A. L. Baldry in 1896, Cayley Robinson outlined an artistic practise which used materiality to convey the Idea and spirit rather than the physical world and his works may be considered in relation to a number of inter-related theosophical precepts. Cayley Robinson wrote that he sought to express 'the consciousness of the infinite in the finite' or the 'Mayavic' nature of physical existence.¹⁶ In their visual contradiction and anomalies, *A Winter Evening* and *The Depth of Winter* elevate the invisible connections and correspondences between forms of matter active in the Universe behind the scenes and emphasise the Mayavic or illusionary nature of all finite, visible, material existence. In these paintings, figures, objects, walls are all 'veils' and material 'reality' is an intriguing palimpsest, an assemblage of things disguising the true nature of the Universe beyond. Cayley Robinson's assertions corresponded with core theosophical principles which affirmed that the end of evolution would be the sublimation of

¹³ Claire Frèches-Thory and Antoine Terrasse, *The Nabis: Bonnard, Vuillard and their Circle*, (Paris: Flammarion, c1990), p.47

¹⁴ The important essays 'Mystic Morality', 'The Tragical in Daily Life,' 'Silence', 'The Awakening of the Soul' and 'On Women' are all found in Maurice Maeterlinck, *The Treasure of the Humble*, (London: trans. Alfred Sutro, George & Unwin, 1897)

¹⁵ Used in Rosicrucian art and the works of Charles Rennie Mackintosh, Neat, (1994), pp.120-1 and pp.126-7

¹⁶ Letter from Frederick Cayley Robinson to A. L. Baldry, (Sunday 17th May, 1896, V&A National Art Library)

material differences, an increased awareness of the interconnectedness of all life and the grounding unity underlying all existence. This is particularly evident in the artist's repeated visual emphasis on walls, surfaces and obstruction of sight in his compositions, his denial of various scientific boundaries, such as life and death in representing human figures and objects and his visual representation of indeterminate forms such as vapour or shadows.

The artist's theosophical terminology reflected his connections with the London-based Art Theosophical Circle (ATC). In 1907 this group was founded by a number of artists with interests in the spiritual qualities of art.¹⁷ The purpose of the circle was to foster unity through a spiritual movement in art and promote beauty in modern art. Cecil French, a patron of Cayley Robinson, was a member and wrote several articles on the artist within *Orpheus* and *The Studio*. Cayley Robinson provided artworks for their journal, *Orpheus*, (published 1907-14) and was admired by various members. The Orpheus Lodge of the Edinburgh Theosophical Society, founded in 1910, was also dedicated to fostering relationships between theosophy and the arts.¹⁸ Strong links had been developed between the Orpheus Lodge and the London Lodges of the Theosophical Society, described in *Theosophy in Scotland*, 1911, as their 'friends in London.'¹⁹ Cayley Robinson worked part of the year at the Glasgow School of Art (GSA) from 1914. The spiritual art movements evident in Glasgow were connected with the theosophical movement in Scotland. John Duncan for example became a member of the Theosophical Society from 1909, during the time of Cayley Robinson's position at the GSA.²⁰ Jean Delville was Head of Painting at the GSA from 1900 and was also connected with the ATC, London, dedicating the introduction of his work, *The New Mission of Art*, (1910) to its members.²¹

In *A Winter Evening* and *The Depth of Winter*, the physical and material world suggests the spiritual, immaterial and unseen world. Woman is advanced as Seer, enchantress and spiritual guide. The variety of disorientating distortions, visual

¹⁷ Turner (2009) was the first art historical work to consider the Art Theosophical Circle in any depth.

¹⁸ Minute Books, Edinburgh Theosophical Society, King Street, Edinburgh, consulted 2012.

¹⁹ 'Peer Gynt to be performed at the English Convention, 8-9th July, 1911', *Theosophy in Scotland*, Vol. 2, (May 1911-April, 1912), p.6

²⁰ Clara Young, 'Duncan, John (1866-1945)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Oct 2009; online edn, Sept 2010 [http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/view/article/94434, accessed 1st September, 2016]

²¹ Jean Delville, *The New Mission of Art*, (London: Francis Griffiths, 1910)

complexities and anomalies in these paintings denied the certainty of the domestic as a safe, unassailed bastion for the traditional, and ensured the images could not function as spaces of comfort and privileged complacency. This was especially pertinent with regard to the representations of women, women's functions in the home and place in society. Cayley Robinson used what was normally a safe, comforting space of the home to question the boundaries of life, death and materiality, to assert the ineffable and arcane in the everyday, to privilege the inconsequential or invisible, presenting profound transfigurative possibilities and spiritual experiences through art. These efforts lay the foundations with which to question social structures and roles for women. Moving beyond the more reductive elements of many female visual 'types' to be found within European Symbolism or Pre-Raphaelitism, these paintings reinforced and promoted the radical projects of both theosophy and feminism and explored complex, modern forms of womanhood.

Deconstructing the Domestic: Negotiating the Material and Immaterial

Cayley Robinson's interiors deconstructed the knowable and denied the certainty of the material world, using physical forms as a sign for the beyond. The boundaries of life and death were even flouted as faith was placed in the feminine spirit rather than 'man-made' material world. Such efforts eroded the sanctity of the home and the authority of the 'separate spheres' ideology, predicated on traditional domestic 'types' of woman. In *A Winter Evening* and *The Depth of Winter*, the artist both gestured towards various constructs of the Victorian home, whilst simultaneously dissolving the comfort and certainty of those references.

These paintings evoked the significance attached to the hearth as a meditative place, the English tradition of 'normal,' narrative, social moralist pictures by William Powell Frith or Millais, Ruskin's ideas of the sanctity of the home and the influence of William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement. Cayley Robinson's earlier painting *The Foundling*, (1896), (Fig. 3.5), had suggested the Victorian home rich with ornament and things, straying into the cluttered and shambolic. Viewers had noted, for example in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, 1899, the solidity, the 'sheer mastery of paint, the polished and reflecting surfaces of the chest of drawers to the left should be an object

lesson to many.’²² However, Cayley Robinson’s lesson was not just one in conscientious painting technique; the ‘real’ is courted as a means to access divinity and material things have spiritual import. Symbolist Jean Moréas wrote in ‘Symbolism: A Manifesto,’ 1886 that despite the material being the subordinate handmaiden to a vastly superior Idea, the Idea, however, ‘must not allow itself to be deprived of the sumptuous trappings of external analogies.’²³ Martin Wood stated in 1910: ‘As [Robinson’s] craft increases in perfection, the unseen element which gives to it its peculiar meaning is more clearly to be felt.’²⁴ Upon closer examination of Cayley Robinson’s works, viewers found that simple objects were suggestive of deeper meanings and that objects evoked the immaterial.

Material forms in various works appear simultaneously to be something else, such as the side of the fireplace in *The Foundling*, visibly commensurate with the stone obelisk form in *The Renunciants*, (1916), (Fig. 3.6). The wooden pole in *Interior*, (1915), (Fig. 3.7), the beacon tower in many works, or the trees in set designs and illustrations for *The Blue Bird*, (1911), such as ‘The Forest’, (Fig. 3.8) and in *The Two Sisters*, 1908, (Fig. 3.9) are all are similar vertical shapes, abstracted masses, increasingly dislodged from their material meanings. In *The Depth of Winter* the boundaries between the decorated dresses on living women and the cut piece of cloth laying on the table are indistinct as textural depiction and patterns coalesce. The left edge of the figure pouring milk blends into the murky wall region, the legs of the girls sharing a chair on the right disappear, echoing the chair’s lack of legs. The drawers blend into an indistinct background behind the figure of the girl in *A Winter Evening*.

Objects communicated the unknowable or invisible. Over-emphasised physical qualities of everyday and tangible objects, such as the shininess of the scissors, indicated the deceptiveness of the surface and the artist’s awareness that this is just one aspect of a thing’s nature or truth in the neo-Platonic discourse of the theosophists. The Symbolist idea of ‘the soul of things’ is reflected through the shininess of the polished wooden surfaces and the gleam on the milk pitcher in *The Depth of Winter*,

²² ‘Two Art Exhibitions’, *The Pall Mall Gazette*, (Saturday, 4th November, 1899)

²³ Jean Moréas, ‘Le symbolisme,’ *Supplément littéraire du Figaro*, (18th September, 1886), p.150 in Henri Dorra (ed.), *Symbolist Art Theories: A Critical Anthology*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, c1994)

²⁴ Wood, (1910), p.206

all of which communicate the innate vibrations of the Universe.²⁵ Thus the scissors gleam with a passion, the milk looks richer and creamier, the fabric more luxuriant and supple, the wood notably shinier, than their counterparts in the ‘real’ world. Features of objects were used that in the context of ‘social realist’ paintings would denote moral qualities. For example, shininess may indicate care of objects and use in daily routines and shared rest around the fire could reflect fatigue following physical labour.²⁶ Cecil French wrote in 1910:

These little pictures gleam and flash...Herein are represented such conditions as Morris delighted to appraise, dwellings within the reach of all, wherein everything is made for use as opposed to empty display, which, being in accord with the way of nature, are possessed of an ideal beauty and fitness.²⁷

However, the heightened intensity of surfaces, shininess, animation, the glimmers of reflected light, the shared glow of the fire, here articulate additional, stranger, unseen and pervasive forms of spirit. In Maeterlinck’s *The Blue Bird*, Light, Bread, Water, Sugar, Fire and Milk are all characters or spirits.²⁸ Frederic W. H. Myers, psychical researcher and President of the Society for Psychical Research in the 1890s described ‘our lesser lives [woven] into one shining fabric.’²⁹ The placement of ‘specks of light’ that Greig draws attention to in 1927, seem also to be clues to a greater, unseen ‘All’ behind the surface of our lives.³⁰

Indeed, while the figures in *A Winter Evening* and *The Depth of Winter* and other interiors often acquire heightened flatness and reduced life force, shadows, patterns of light and other unknown forms, including shapes formed through the

²⁵ This idea, the title of an exhibition, 1895, by Symbolist artist Xavier Mellery, is discussed in Hirsh, (2004), pp.226-230; Oppenheim attributes the phrase to Hippolyte Leon Denizard Rivail (a Frenchman known to the public as Allan Kardec) where it relates to ‘spiritism’ cited in Oppenheim, (1985), p171

²⁶ Ideas featuring in social realist paintings, see Julian Treuherz with contributions by Susan P. Casteras, *Hard Times: Social Realism in Victorian Art*, (London: Lund Humphries in association with Manchester City Art Gallery, 1987) and also discussed in the context of the domestic interior in Inga Bryden and Janet Floyd, *Domestic Space: Reading the Nineteenth-Century Interior*, (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), especially Carolyn Steedman, ‘What a rag rug means’, pp.18-39

²⁷ Cecil French, ‘A Note upon the Art of F. Cayley Robinson’, *Orpheus*, No. 11, (July, 1910), pp.163-7, (p.166)

²⁸ Maeterlinck, (1911). Ensor’s Symbolist painting *Haunted Furniture* (1885) also revealed the ‘hidden life of things’, noted in Hirsch, (2004), pp.236-7 and p.238

²⁹ Frederic W. H. Myers, ‘In Memory of Henry Sidgwick,’ undated, p.460 in Oppenheim, (1985), p.155

³⁰ Greig, (1927-8), p.65; Swiney also wrote: “‘all Nature is a vast symbolism! Every material fact sheaths a spiritual truth,” and brings to light the things that are unseen,’ (1906), p.13

hanging of cloth, are given heightened, uncanny presence and meaning through an emphasis on abstract formal qualities. This is particularly evident in *The Farewell*, (1908), (Fig. 3.10) and *The Renunciants*. Intangible forms such as steam vapour and shadows have heightened materiality in for example *Mother and Child: Threads of Life*, (1894), (Fig. 3.11) *Winter Evening*, (1906), and *Childhood*, (1926), (Fig. 3.12). Cayley Robinson privileges the play of light on a wall in *The Farewell* and *The Renunciants* where animated forms of light and shadow are explored with the conscientiousness of still life painting, becoming subjects in their own right. Such rendering accorded with Maeterlinck's observation of flashes of universal spirit available through glimpses, shadows and raindrops.³¹ Theosophy amongst other indeterminate forms, considered light and shadow seriously, as betraying unseen forces unknown to science, using the language of materiality for immaterial things. For example, 'the ether of space, though defying instrumental examination, comes within the scope of the clairvoyant faculty,' as noted in Besant and Leadbeater's *Occult Chemistry*, 1919.³² And as Olive Hockin, artist, Suffragette and member of the ATC, described in an article in *Orpheus*, 1912: 'in the bare stone wall with shadows flung across...unearthly things [are present].'³³

As well as privileging the inconsequential, ineffable and invisible, Cayley Robinson also flouted the boundaries of spirit and matter, life and death in these interiors with the ghostly female figures. Greig described figures 'doubtless intended to be lifelike, were as stiff as the statue set in the wall [and] certainly in relation with the cold marble-toned atmosphere' of the picture.³⁴ Cayley Robinson's flattening and abstraction of female forms was more extreme in *Twilight*, (c.1902) (Fig. 3.13) and *Night*, (Fig. 3.14), illustrated in Hind's article in *The Studio*, 1904, where figures appeared to demonstrate interchangeability between organic life and inanimate object, flesh and stone, life and lifelessness.³⁵ Art critics such as Martin Wood commented on 'limitations,' an increase in symmetry and simplified form and 'unpliant' statuesque

³¹ Maeterlinck, (1897), p.61

³² Annie Besant and Charles Leadbeater, *Occult Chemistry*, (1919), Chapter One: http://www.anandgholap.net/AB_CWL_Occult_Chemistry.htm#chap2b accessed 27th August, 2016.

³³ Olive Hockin, 'The Cayley Robinson Exhibition at the Leicester Galleries', *Orpheus*, No.17, (January, 1912), pp.28-30, (p.29)

³⁴ Greig, (1927-8), p.65

³⁵ Hind (1904), p.236

figures.³⁶ James Greig noted ‘failures in respect to human symbols’, ‘certain hardnesses, angularities, lack of gracefulness’ across the artist’s works.³⁷ ‘Errors’ in the artist’s draughtsmanship as noted in *The Graphic*, 1897, included the ‘absurd stiffness of figures...an affectation utterly fatal to the artist, and sternly, in his own interest, to be repressed.’³⁸

Without deploying more extreme versions of statuary forms in *Winter Evening*, (1906), the female figures are presented as subtly contiguous in life force and presence with the tall, Mackintosh style chair-back visible to the right, behind the table. Friedrich Ahlers-Hestermann, a German painter, noted that Mackintosh chairs could ‘upstage people’ with their human qualities, upon their exhibition in Turin, 1902, blurring, in his description female forms and furnishing features, stating:

Here we found the strangest mixture of puritanically severe functional forms and lyrical sublimation of the practical. These rooms were like dreams...[with elements that were] so straightforward that they look as innocent and serious as young girls about to receive Holy Communion – and altogether unreal

He continued: ‘two upright chairs, with backs as tall as a man, which stood on a white carpet looking at each other over a slender table, silently, like ghosts.’³⁹ Greig described Cayley Robinson’s ghostly figures in detail following the Carfax Gallery Exhibition in 1908: ‘He creates visions of men, women and children who are voiceless; their passion has reached the silent, if not the peace, stage, it still smoulders.’⁴⁰ Greig’s description seems to imply the figures are beyond life, in some lifeless or higher state where there is ‘quietness but no rest...The willowy or angular figures in his pictures look weary [with] no sign of joy of life or eager ambition.’⁴¹ In 1890, Maeterlinck, for whom Cayley Robinson later created set designs, wrote about the issue of life and lifelessness in staging his Symbolist dramas:

³⁶ Wood, (1910), p.204

³⁷ Greig, (1927-8), p.65

³⁸ ‘M. Bazin’s Roller Steamship,’ *The Graphic*, (Saturday, October 30th, 1897)

³⁹ Friedrich Ahlers-Hestermann recalled his viewing of the Turin exhibition in 1902, in the 1940s. Quoted in Nikolaus Pevsner, ‘Charles Rennie Mackintosh’ in *Studies in Art, Architecture and Design: Volume Two: Victorian and After*, (London and New York, 1968; Crawford notes this was a revised and translation of *Charles R. Mackintosh*, Milan: 1950), pp.152-75, (p.161). Cited in Alan Crawford, *Charles Rennie Mackintosh*, (London: Thames and Hudson World of Art, 1995), p.99

⁴⁰ Greig, (1927-8), p.67

⁴¹ Greig, (1927-8), p.67

Will the day come when sculpture...will be used onstage? Will the human being be replaced by a shadow? a reflection? a projection of symbolic forms, or a being who would appear to live without being alive? I do not know...It is difficult to foresee how one might replace humans onstage with lifeless beings, but it seems that the strange impressions experienced in galleries of wax figures, for instance, could long since have led us to the traces of a dead art or a new art⁴²

Feminist Ellen Key also discussed the inter-relationship between flesh and stone, noting in *The Century of the Child*, 1909, the impact of ‘dead’ forms, such as artworks and statuary, on the evolution of the race, an area unexplored by science.⁴³ Regarding the impact of environment on the ‘souls’ of unborn babies, Key notes:

people have pointed to the influence of art; it has been shown how Burne-Jones created the new English type of woman... This was the type regarded by him as the model one... Mothers of the present day are supposed to have passed on to their children the Burne-Jones type in the same way in which the charm of the Greeks was influenced by the beauty of their statuary.⁴⁴

The appearance of figures as dead, statuary forms could depict the theosophical ‘astral plane.’ This was one of several higher levels of existence which could be attained after physical death through the working of reincarnation. In *A Textbook of Theosophy*, 1912, Leadbeater writes that higher spiritual forms of ‘astral bodies are conscious side by side with physical man’ and ‘the dead...wear etheric bodies...just beyond the range of ordinary physical sight.’⁴⁵

Leadbeater continued to describe an interpenetration of matter through solids, echoing the visual inter-changeability of Cayley Robinson’s figures’ between stone

⁴² Maurice Maeterlinck, ‘Small Talk—The Theater’, (1890) (‘Menus propos—le théâtre’), *Jeune Belgique* (September 1890), pp.331–36, in Dorra (1994), p.143

⁴³ Key, (c.1909), pp.31-2, a work purchased by the library of the Orpheus Lodge of the Edinburgh Theosophical Society

⁴⁴ Key (c.1909), pp.31-2, adds that science has not considered seriously such spiritual elements of environment. Sport and physical activity are noted to effect the children mothers produce, but the effect of art, of looking at pictures in books is uncertain.

⁴⁵ Charles Webster Leadbeater, *A Textbook of Theosophy* (Unknown place of publication, RareBooksClub.com., 2012, orig.1912), p.19. Leadbeater was a clairvoyant and prominent lecturer within the theosophical movement in the 1900s. Oppenheim notes that The astral plane ‘was intertwined with the plane of daily life,’ (1985), p.168

⁴⁵ Leadbeater (1912), p.24

and flesh: 'just as air, water, glass and table are alike interpenetrated all the time by the finer physical matter which we have called etheric.'⁴⁶ Women, as still figures and flattened compositional forms, interacted with and, according to the theosophical doctrine of the spheres and planes of existence, actually interpenetrated the etheric energies of these objects and other architectural, textural and spatial aspects of the painting. These acts denied the normal features of the natural world and in doing so advanced a theosophical assault on the cultural authority of scientific explanation. Deconstructing the dominant source of authority cleared the way for alternative perspectives, ways of looking and understanding the natural world, which featured women in a prominent role, unlocking these mysteries.

The Walls: Surface and Insight

As the normal forms and properties of people and things were exploded, large empty areas of wall recur across many of Cayley Robinson's compositions and are another element of the everyday, material world, used to communicate spiritual meanings. The walls were a central feature in many paintings. (See examples in Figures 3.1, 3.2, 3.6, 3.10, 3.18-3.21, 3.39 and 3.45). Cayley Robinson was employed as Professor of Figure Composition and Decoration at the GSA in 1914, a post he held until 1924 and which required him to be in Scotland three months a year. Cayley Robinson was already well-known for his murals, set designs and related skills in ordered compositions.⁴⁷ In such works, walls, columns and architectonic structures were significant compositional devices, important, recurring, geometric features.⁴⁸ Director Francis Newbery actively pursued Cayley Robinson's employment, following consultations and recommendations by colleague, Robert Anning Bell, and was delighted in this coup for the school, particularly owing to Cayley Robinson's conscientious mastery of composition. Historian of the GSA, Ray Mckenzie has also noted the attraction of Cayley Robinson's 'style of firm but exquisite linearity' and how Newbery wished to prioritise the creation of large-scale decorative figure composition as the best way for students to contribute to the art of the city.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Leadbeater (1912, kindle version), p.44.

⁴⁷ Christian (1989), p.153; McKenzie, (2009), p.71

⁴⁸ GSAA, GOV 2/9 Report by Newbery to Staff Sub-committee, 9th October, 1913 (inserted at p.58A), p.6

⁴⁹ Mckenzie (2009), p.68, p.71

Cayley Robinson's mastery included a formal approach to architectural forms, walls and columns as well as vertical, simplified treatments of the body.⁵⁰ Martin Wood described Cayley Robinson's 'dignified architectural sense of drawing.'⁵¹ Greig complained that Cayley Robinson's emphasis on calculated composition meant that works verged into 'mechanical pastiches...methodically designed [with] every secondary object...deliberately placed.'⁵² Walls were part of a formal compositional language associated with masculine rationality and provided technical security for viewers, described by several reviewers.⁵³ Walls within artworks could ostensibly provide sound structure, symmetry and framing and a stabilising effect, however in Cayley Robinson's interiors, they were used for the opposite purpose, to confound and dissolve certainty. Cayley Robinson's walls are ambiguous, interacting with other visual features to cause destabilising psychological effects. The artist used the walls, and explored their surfaces, as a site for innovation and experimentation. Rather than providing solidity, walls suggested the reverse, the evaporation and dissolution of seemingly permanent matter.

Instead of using oil painting predominantly, Cayley Robinson experimented with methods including watercolour and tempera to alter the painterly surface. As described in his Obituary in *The Times*, 1927: 'technically...he was experimental and resourceful, working out methods of his own, particularly in different forms of tempera.'⁵⁴ Cayley Robinson was a founder member of the Society of Painters in Tempera and he experimented with the method.⁵⁵ When practising tempera, Cayley Robinson kept the gesso ground and when it was dry rubbed it with charcoal and applied watercolour, gouache, pastel and oil in varying combinations within fine lead pencil lines. Hind continued to describe how:

most of his pictures are executed in tempera or water-colour, with occasionally an added touch of pastel. Sometimes he will work on a

⁵⁰ Greig, (1927-8), p.65

⁵¹ Wood (1910), p.204

⁵² Greig, (1927-8), p.65. Nicholas Penny, also notes Robinson's 'tense geometry' in 'Journey to Arezzo', *London Review of Books*, (17th April, 2003), cited in William Schupbach, *Acts of Mercy: The Middlesex Hospital Paintings by Frederick Cayley Robinson (1862-1927)*, (London: The Wellcome Trust, 2009), p.2

⁵³ Alfred Lys Baldry, 'An "Original Painter"', *The Magazine of Art*, 19, (1895-6), pp.465-71, (p.468); Cecil French, 'The later work of F. Cayley Robinson', *The Studio*, 83 (June, 1922), pp.292-9, (p.298)

⁵⁴ Obituary, *The Times*, (6th January, 1927), p.12; And explored in Stevens (1977)

⁵⁵ Rose, (2004)

background of plaster, as in the picture called *The Night Watch*, in which the significance and colour of the bare wall is subtly rendered.⁵⁶

The artist employed erasure, rubbing and scratching out parts of the surface, over large empty areas of wall, in *The Renunciants* and at other times used sepia photographs of his paintings, tinting them with oil and gouache.⁵⁷ Such experiments prompted Greig to state that ‘close examination is often necessary to distinguish the medium’ which is always ‘subservient’ to the idea.⁵⁸ These efforts reasserted the ambiguity and mystery of the natural world, unperceived by humanity.

Indeed, walls, and their role in the veiling of insight are a striking example of the artist’s use of the physical world to evidence humanity’s spiritual disenfranchisement. The deliberate focus on walls aided Cayley Robinson’s depiction of the ‘Mayavic’ nature of existence, heightening the questioning of what is behind. The images of walls echoed constructs by Maeterlinck and Delville of ‘the infinite veil,’ behind which lies the Great Unknown.⁵⁹ Maeterlinck described in 1899 how irresistible spiritual forces were growing in strength: ‘it is as though an invisible wall [had] hemmed it in.’⁶⁰ The walls referenced the metaphor of ‘Plato’s Cave,’ a concept which envisaged humanity’s unenlightened condition. This was visualised as humanity watching shadows on the wall of a cave, ignorant as to their import.

Cayley Robinson’s correspondence with Baldry in 1895 for his article in the *Magazine of Art*, 1896, explored the issues of representation posed by the focus on the surface. Challenging the certainty of knowledge gained through sight, such discourse determined that unknown spirit exists in, between, through and across all physical forms.⁶¹ Delville described artists using natural forms in a sort of ‘occult chemistry’ to reveal the Ideal of the Unseen spirit.⁶² Baldry attributed such views to Cayley Robinson in the article, writing: ‘the artist should only be the medium through which Nature in her purest forms is made perceptible.’ Cayley Robinson was concerned with

⁵⁶ C. Lewis Hind, ‘Ethical Art and Mr F. Cayley Robinson’, *The Studio*, 31, (1904), pp.235- 241, (pp.240-1)

⁵⁷ Stevens (1977). Olive Hockin discussed the varying surfaces in Robinson ranging from ‘perfect finish’ to ‘exquisite suggestion (almost Turner like in its luminous quality)...[the] painter’s compass ranges in fact from the finish of a Holman Hunt to the breadth of a Turner.’ (1912), pp.28-29

⁵⁸ Greig, (1927-8), p.63

⁵⁹ Delville, (1910), p.80

⁶⁰ Maeterlinck, (1899), pp.25-6 and pp.30-1, (‘The Awakening of the Soul’)

⁶¹ Baldry, (1895-6), p.467

⁶² Delville, (1910), p.80

the ‘spirit’ rather than ‘superficial aspect’ of Nature, which Baldry summed up as the ‘intellectual rather than the optical side of [the artist’s] observation.’ Baldry linked this with issues of representation, continuing:

This is a technical idea which is, at any rate, consistent but one which is certainly difficult of attainment because it implies a very peculiar mental attitude and an especially subtle perception of what is really paintable.⁶³

Cayley Robinson’s view was that the mere workmanship of the artist must be ‘as an absolutely transparent surface through which appears, unmodified and unaffected, the real subject.’⁶⁴ Yet the walls particularly highlighted the surface as noted by Hockin who described them in 1912: ‘their surfaces are a continual delight for those who can recognise their subtlety.’⁶⁵ As well as paintings, the development of the walls is traceable in sketches for *The Farewell*, (Fig. 3.15) and ‘Elegy’ or ‘Sketch for *Reminiscence*’, (Fig. 3.16), which reveal this feature as central in building up the form of the pictures. Through the emphasis on the surface, the artist articulated its limitations in terms of knowledge and perception and focussed on the possibilities of deeper spiritual insight.

In familiar Symbolist constructs, it is a male artist Seer who receives intimations of the true, deeper nature of the Universe. But in Cayley Robinson’s interiors, as in writings by Maeterlinck, it is women who are far more capable of receiving and interpreting knowledge both of the spiritual nature of the Universe and the secrets of the ‘psychic plane.’⁶⁶ Feminist scholars Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar determined the image of the cave, within the myth of Plato’s cave, to be female, related to the Mother Goddess and the Sybil, examples of parables and mythology wherein originating cultural authority and knowledge are female.⁶⁷ Maeterlinck described women’s insight in *The Treasures of the Humble*, 1899, writing: ‘for women...[with their] ineffable glances...are indeed the veiled sisters of all the great things we do not see’ and ‘all women have communications with the unknown that are denied to

⁶³ Baldry, (1895-6), p.467

⁶⁴ Baldry, (1895-6), p.467

⁶⁵ Hockin, (1912), p.2

⁶⁶ Maeterlinck, ‘On Women’, (1897); Delville discusses the male Seer, (1910), p.80

⁶⁷ Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2000), ‘The Parables of the Cave’. Annette R. Federico (ed.), *Gilbert & Gubar’s The madwoman in the attic after thirty years*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2009), p.251

us...They are indeed nearest of kin to the infinite that is about us.’⁶⁸ The wall was an obstruction to enlightenment in occult literature. Cayley Robinson’s illustration for *The Blue Bird*, ‘Before the Wall,’ (Fig. 3.17) depicted the wall around a graveyard, as a ‘curtain’ between life and physical death, the threshold to the next stage of existence.⁶⁹ Anglican clergyman turned theosophist Charles Webster Leadbeater described in his classic *A Textbook of Theosophy*, 1912, in the causal life ‘Here the man needs no windows, for this is his true home and all his walls have fallen away.’⁷⁰ Cayley Robinson’s imagery of walls was a visual complement to woman as Seer and spiritual guide, directing the viewer beyond such obstructions and beyond the limited knowledge of the surface.

Through painting a variety of aged or decaying walls, Cayley Robinson suggested the tenuous nature of ‘man-made’ civilisation and structures. In varying states of dilapidation across compositions, walls appeared to emphasise the inevitable decline of man-made, masculine civilisation. In London, Paris and other European cities, urban artists such as Cayley Robinson were witnessing demolition and reconstruction, seeing the abandoned sides of buildings that in the process of being pulled down.⁷¹ There are new, imposing marble columns in *Orphans*, part of the *Acts of Mercy* mural scheme, 1915-1920, (Fig.s 3.18 - 3.21). Marble has a very tight construction and a smooth, hard surface suggestive of its great strength. By contrast to this clean, firm stone, in *A Winter Evening*, where women are painted within the traditional sphere of the home, the wall suggests porosity. Its surface appears crumbly, like the stone of ruins, cathedral crypts or cellars, which has been impacted by the moisture of human presence as well as the elements, resulting in erosion.⁷² This is

⁶⁸ Maeterlinck, ‘On Women’, in (1897), p.92

⁶⁹ *Chasing Happiness: Maurice Maeterlinck, The Blue Bird and England*, (exhibition catalogue The Fitzwilliam Museum, Shiba Gallery, 3rd October, 2006-7th January, 2007), Jane Munroe, (Cambridge: The Fitzwilliam Museum, 2006), p.50

⁷⁰ Leadbeater, (1912, kindle version), p.56

⁷¹ Hirsh, (2004), p.243

⁷² Scholarship such as Shawn Malley, *From Archaeology to Spectacle in Victorian Britain: The Case of Assyria, 1845-1854*, (Farnham, England; Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, c2012) has highlighted the interest in archaeological discoveries and excavations in the Victorian and Edwardian period. Within *Youth*, 1923 (Fig. 3.22) Robinson has painted scenes of excavation, alluding to ‘the passing of once great ancient civilisations’ and the cycle of life through decline and ruination of stone, (Wilton, 1997, p.278). The ceremonial use of stone pillars and tablets is referred to in several works, such as pillars in *The Renunciants*, the ashlar of freemasonry in *The Farewell* and strange columnar forms in *Youth*. Theosophy was concerned with the rediscovery of ancient texts and cultures such as the Egyptians and Chaldeans, cuneiform, hieroglyphics as evidenced by contemporary articles in the journal *Theosophy in Scotland* for example.

highlighted further by the modern apartment blocks seen from the window. The walls in *The Renunciants*, show clear deterioration: the artist's scratchings and markings, ruination in jagged marks particularly near the base of the wall and a clear fracture in the stone step.⁷³ The artist noted that within the paintings of Claude, 'ruins of ancient civilisation are seen melting insensibly away from human use and purpose.'⁷⁴ Deteriorating walls and ruins, visible in other works such as *Youth*, (1923), (Fig. 3.22) may be read as expressing beleaguered masculinity, an overhang of *fin de siècle* millennial thinking and the concurrent hopes for renewal which were invested in women at the dawning of the 'woman's era.'⁷⁵

Cayley Robinson's interiors thus use a variety of visual strategies to undermine the knowable material world. While certainties of material representation evaporated, the insuperable authority of science was also eroded, allowing the potency of spirit, embodied as woman, to emerge. The questioning of material life encouraged psychological journeys which trusted the intuitive feminine voice rather than masculine rational culture. The artist 'lead[s] us across the frontiers of fact' writes Greig.⁷⁶ In Part Two I consider how Cayley Robinson presented woman and spirituality in forms which challenged existing art historical conventions and roles for women. Instead the representations accorded women greater power and insight allied with the contemporary languages of theosophy and feminism.

Part Two: Representations

Representations of Women and Spirituality

Although superficially associated with the weakened spiritual woman of Symbolism, the figures in Cayley Robinson's paintings accorded with theosophical versions of female spirituality, in which women were endowed with more power and presence.

⁷³ The life cycle of a city, urban settlement and the decay of civilisations were themes in Khnopff's work such as *The Abandoned Town*, (*La Ville Abandonnée*, Musée d'Art Moderne, Brussels, 1904), which evoked medieval Bruges, emptied of life, idealised as an unattainable past. See Facos, (2009), p.78 and Hirsh (2004)

⁷⁴ Hind, (1904), p.239

⁷⁵ Wilton (1997), p.278. Ruins were an enduring symbol of the romantic imagination, in the 'Gothic folly' and Wordsworth's cult of ruins. In the context of modernity, ruins were employed within various languages, to express a cultural mood of loss and decline, West described, (1993), p.136. Patrick McGuinness, (2000), has captured the general sense of decline and malaise in this period; see also Jerrold E. Hogle (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to the Modern Gothic*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2014)

⁷⁶ Greig, (1927-8), p.67

Theosophy re-valued ‘feminine’ qualities, such as intuitive, emotional or irrational thinking, denigrated within masculine rationalistic culture. Woman may engender a reawakening of humanity’s spiritual life, described Maeterlinck in 1897: ‘for they know the things that we do not know, and have a lamp that we have lost.’⁷⁷ The spirituality of the women in *A Winter Evening* and *The Depth of Winter* determined the ‘significance of the picture’, as wrote Martin Wood in *The Studio* in 1910:

in his more everyday subjects – groups of children by the fire – the significance of the picture seems not to lie in the scene, but in the feeling that the fates themselves are concealed – that something is portending.⁷⁸

Women’s looks are significant, weighty, enigmatical, thought-provoking and gesture towards higher meanings. Forms of womanhood expressed more positive, hopeful forms of spiritual potency and possible feminist subversion, wherein women hold the key to the innumerable mysteries and clues within the visual forms of the Universe.

As slight, sad figures, suffering from ennui or lethargy, the women were interpreted in a number of reviews as conforming to the features of Symbolist spiritual ‘types’. The Symbolists valorised the everyday life of women in the home. Edouard Vuillard for example painted interiors which noted women’s role to imbue this space with sanctity and purity, as a response to the increasingly distressing, unhealthy public sphere.⁷⁹ Verlaine described women’s ‘pale hands’, a consequence of domestic life, a lack of sunshine, air and healthy outdoor pursuits.⁸⁰ The domestic life of middle class women incurred ‘paleness’ which was connected with the idea that women were ‘naturally’ languid to support a construct of female passivity expressed within Social Darwinist language. This ‘natural’, inherent sexual differentiation ‘prepared [women] for the tiring role of motherhood,’ a necessary preparatory stage of evolution for ‘anabolic beings.’⁸¹ Maeterlinck described women in interiors in a sentimental manner: ‘we see them moving about in their little homes; this one is bending forward, down there another is sobbing, a third sings and the last sews.’⁸² The elevation of

⁷⁷ Maeterlinck (1897), p.93

⁷⁸ Wood, (1910), p. 204

⁷⁹ Kuenzli (c.2010), pp.185-214

⁸⁰ Verlaine, ‘Beauty of Women...’, in Blackmore, (2009), p.223

⁸¹ West, (1993), p.89

⁸² Maeterlinck, (1897), p.93

sacred religious feeling in seemingly ordinary domestic space was part of a trend of honouring the heroism of the ordinary woman and mother.⁸³

However, along with admiration for women's higher spirituality and sanctity, came depictions of physical weakness, sickness and fragility. Verlaine wrote about the pain of insight:

The sadness, the languor of the human body
Move me to pity, melt and weaken me
...
And the eyes, poor eyes, so beautiful, pricked
With the pain of seeing nothing but this world...
Sad body, so sad, and punished so much!⁸⁴

Further, Symbolist women were often pensive or melancholic and sadness was idealised as an artistic state by Symbolists such as Verlaine, who described a 'beautiful sob lost in the folds of a shawl.'⁸⁵ Sadness featured in reviews of Cayley Robinson's works. A review in *The Times* of the artist's one-man show at the Carfax Gallery, 1908, described how Cayley Robinson's 'view of [women is] a little depressing; it is hard to discover a single cheerful, normal face among all, except here and there in the children.'⁸⁶ A review of *A Winter Evening* in *The Glasgow Herald*, 1899 described how: 'three girls are in the evening light under the spell of the waning day, and apparently of sad or pensive thoughts suggested thereby.'⁸⁷ James Greig in 1928 suggested that Cayley Robinson's work as a whole might illustrate Verlaine's lines:

C'est bien la pire peine
De ne savoir pourquoi
Sans amour et sans haine
Et mon cœur est en peine⁸⁸

⁸³ West, (1993), p.97, p.100; Facos, (2009), pp.117-123

⁸⁴ Verlaine, 'The sadness, the languor...' in Blackmore, (2009), p.231, lines 1-2; 12-14

⁸⁵ Verlaine, 'Beauty of Women...', in Blackmore (2009), p.223, lines 7-8

⁸⁶ 'Art Exhibitions', *The Times*, (5th December, 1908), p.10

⁸⁷ 'The Royal Society of British Artists,' *Glasgow Herald*, October 23rd, 1897; 'The Royal Society of British Artists', *Glasgow Herald*, (Saturday, 28th October, 1899)

⁸⁸ James Greig cited the poem 'Il pleure dans mon cœur...' ('Falling Tears...') from *Poèmes Saturniens*, 1866, in French. The following translation in English is from Blackmore (2009), pp.208-9:

By far the worst pain
Is not to understand
Why without love or hate
My heart's full of pain

Some viewers saw the sadness of the figures as exasperating and destabilising, a disappointing lapse on the part of the artist into Degenerate or Decadent art, as described in *The Times*, 1906:

but why in a scene not meant to be unhappy, are the faces so sad, not to say so dismal? The human race could not go on if this were to become the prevailing type of existence; we should all die of *ennui*⁸⁹

Women's pain or weakness, associated with spirituality, was eroticised in Symbolist art. Spiritual figures were evanescent and often associated with nature such as the forest, such as works by Alphonse Osbert and Paul Ranson.⁹⁰ Diffident, slight women glance back at the male artist or poet, enchanting him and encouraging him to follow her as in Verlaine's poem, 'Beams', 1891:

The sun stood tall in a quiet smooth sky;
Her light hair was touched with gold.
Enchanted, we followed her calm steps,
...
She turned around, sweetly anxious
To reassure us.
But seeing that we were thrilled to be her chosen ones,
Off she went again, her head held high.⁹¹

The viewer could catch glimpses of women in obscured light, moving intriguingly through a pattern of trees, partially concealed, glancing backwards or floating numinously in many works by Maurice Denis, which blended diffidence and elusive allure in women's weakened state of spiritual insight.⁹² This model appeared to be echoed in an early work by Cayley Robinson, *In A Wood so Green*, 1893.

However, while according with several features of Symbolism, Cayley Robinson's figures in *A Winter Evening* and *The Depth of Winter* were more complex. Aspects of these representations corresponded with ideas of female spirituality explored by theosophists and feminists, which were more positive than many reductive Symbolist interpretations. Figures appeared fragile, 'awearied' with 'no sign of the joy

⁸⁹ *The Times*, Tuesday, (16th October, 1906), p. 15, regarding *Waning Day*, exhibited Institute Of Oil Painters, 1906

⁹⁰ Alphonse Osbert's works depict white spirit forms amongst trees and a pool in, for example, *Songs of the Night*, 1896. This imagery recurs in Paul Ranson, *Two Women Under a Blossoming Tree*, 1895.

⁹¹ Blackmore, (2009), p.221

⁹² Such as *April*, 1891, *The Orchard of the Wise Virgins*, 1893 or *Apparition*, 1894

of life or eager ambition,' due to their burden of spiritual knowledge and unbearable insight.⁹³ Within theosophical doctrine, however, powerful spiritual insight may be gained through meditative thinking, where one would appear in a weakened state: slowed down, ghostly, due to intense spiritual connection with the Universe. The languor of the women enabled profound insight which could not be represented by a more conventional, happy, domestic woman.

Maeterlinck wrote that the mighty laws of the Universe 'are silent, and discreet and slow-moving; and hence it is only in the twilight that they can be seen and heard, in the meditation that some comes to us at the tranquil moments of life.'⁹⁴ Within theosophy the figures may exist within the astral plane, which many of us access while sleeping. They are in deep thought, undertaking, as Charles Leadbeater described in 1912, the 'unselfish pursuit of spiritual knowledge' which will be the dominant 'activity in the next life.'⁹⁵ Within various occult languages, slowness and meditative remoteness were productive mental states and the women's weighted looks are appropriate to their engagement in the 'slow work' of esoteric knowledge, a pursuit through which women like Annie Besant found fulfilment, beyond the limited prospects of her life as an Anglican clergyman's wife.⁹⁶ The 'Joy of Being Good...is the happiest and also the saddest,' asserted Maeterlinck in *The Blue Bird*, 1909, and his essay 'The Tragical in Daily Life,' 1897.⁹⁷ Theosophical perspectives may be positioned together with Cayley Robinson's representations, within which sadness becomes solemnity or weighty contemplation, a serious subject rather than more trivial heart-ache or boredom.⁹⁸

Symbolist art, including works by the Nabis, practised deliberate vagueness, allusions to insubstantiality and the ineffable.⁹⁹ Symbolists such as Maeterlinck, described historian Janet Oppenheim in her ground-breaking and comprehensive work on the occult in Britain, *The Other World*, were 'groping for knowledge that was

⁹³ Greig, (1927-8), p.67

⁹⁴ Maeterlinck, (1897), p.109

⁹⁵ Leadbeater, (1912, kindle version), p.24. these ideas are also evident in *Orpheus*, Theosophy in Scotland and within the writings of Symbolists

⁹⁶ Oppenheim (1985) on Besant, pp.185-6. Maeterlinck, (1897)

⁹⁷ Maurice Maeterlinck, *The Blue Bird: A Fairy Play in Six Acts*, translated by Alexander Teixeira de Mattos, (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1911, 35th edition, orig. 1909), p.189; Maeterlinck (1897)

⁹⁸ There were many nuanced artistic versions of women thinking, which drew on and revised Pre-Raphaelite types. Mathews discusses Jeane Jacquemin's, *Daydream* c.1892-94? and *Anguish* (undated) in (1999), p.158

⁹⁹ West, (1993), p.116

beyond the scope of physical science either to confirm or deny.¹⁰⁰ However, these interests were not confined to the Symbolist movement, but had wide-reaching, varied cultural contexts. Theosophy's concerns with the unknowable and ineffable and with life beyond physical existence, were central to its tenets. This corresponded with Maeterlinck's thoughts on the unknowable: 'so long as we know not what it opens, nothing is more beautiful than a key.'¹⁰¹ In the sketch for *A Winter Evening*, illustrated in Hind's article of 1904, (Fig. 3.23) a key is discernible held behind the girl's back.¹⁰² In the final version this has disappeared, (Fig. 3.1). Cayley Robinson's deliberate use of vagueness and slippage between life and death, flesh and stone, encouraged unconscious, psychological suggestion through the ultimate lack of certainty, allowing further possibilities of interpretation. As Greig described in 1928 it is: 'Cayley Robinson's uncertainty, his wavering between fear and hope, his confused groping towards a definite state of existence, which relate him to Maeterlinck.'¹⁰³ The indeterminacy of the figures defer and erode certainties of meaning, contributing to this all-pervasive cultural mood of questioning, of the loosening of moorings, of dissolving boundaries between matter and spirit, the tangible and intangible, as a counterpoint to rational discourses of science.

Women in *A Winter Evening* and *The Depth of Winter* appeared to exist at a permeable frontier of life and death, a subject which captivated many artists and intellectuals. Thresholds, between life and death and also mental states between sleep and wakefulness were important in occult discourse, the latter enabled Seers to experience vision and foresight.¹⁰⁴ Psychological implications were made in these paintings through 'dreamy mental states,' a term which, as scholar Jenny Bourne Taylor has explained, stood for various states of the unconscious in this period, including dreams and trance.¹⁰⁵ In *The Depth of Winter*, the clothes and bodily forms of the two girls on the right blend into each other, suggestive of fluid mental states,

¹⁰⁰ Oppenheim, (1985), pp.159-60, p.160

¹⁰¹ A. L. Little, "The Opening Doors: A Study of Maeterlinck", *Theosophy in Scotland*, Vol. 2, (May 1911-April, 1912), pp.22-3, (p.23), cites Maeterlinck

¹⁰² Hind, (1904), p.237

¹⁰³ Greig, (1927-8), p.66

¹⁰⁴ Taylor in Bullen, (1997); Matus, (2009), pp.1-19. Theosophists Anna Bonus Kingsford wrote on dreams as did Frances Power Cobbe in 'Dreams, as Illustrations of Involuntary Cerebration,' in *Darwinism and Morals and Other Essays*, (London: Williams and Norgate, 1872), pp.336-8, 361-2, cited in Taylor and Shuttleworth, (1998), pp.113-5

¹⁰⁵ Taylor in Bullen, (1997)

the unconscious and perhaps the astral plane accessed through sleep. Women in *A Winter Evening* and *The Depth of Winter* appear both at the threshold of and ‘across the divide’ of death, described as fragile and penetrable by the physicist Sir Oliver Lodge.¹⁰⁶

Lodge was an example of an eminent physicist, as Peter Rowlands has described, ‘the recognised voice of scientific authority among the general public,’ who consistently investigated Spiritualism.¹⁰⁷ Alongside Lodge’s many scientific achievements in electromagnetism, radio waves and telegraphy, his long-standing interests in Spiritualism and psychical research later impelled him to write the enormously popular work *Raymond*, 1916. The book detailed Lodge’s prevision of his son Raymond’s death in Flanders in 1915 and his ongoing attempts to communicate telepathically with him after his death. From the late nineteenth century, Lodge had turned to Frederic Myers as a psychic mentor, taking over from him as President of the Society for Psychical Research upon Myers’s death in 1901. Myers had invented the term ‘telepathy’ as he developed a theory to combine psychical research with theories of psychology and hypnotism and described life beyond death most comprehensively in *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, (2 vols., 1903).¹⁰⁸

Cayley Robinson wanted to paint pictures about such eternal and profound themes of human existence, which permeated cultural discourses. Crucially, however, the artist also desired that the experience of his artworks remain grounded in everyday life, rather than a removed, intellectual, esoteric experience. This drew Cayley Robinson away from the Symbolist model. The threat of melancholic and degenerate figures was constantly policed, as described an article in *The Times*, 1901:

The artist used to stand out’ on Suffolk street, ‘when his pictures showed a curious modern development of the influence of Burne-Jones. Since then

¹⁰⁶ Rowlands, (2004); Oppenheim (1985), p.377

¹⁰⁷ After the First World War, Lodge became a well-known radio broadcaster in the early days of the BBC: Rowlands, (2004)

¹⁰⁸ Alan Gauld notes this work was ‘an impressive attempt to systematise a vast quantity of interesting materials’, in ‘Myers, Frederic William Henry (1843–1901)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2011 [http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/view/article/35177, accessed 31st August, 2016]

his types have become more ascetic and his art more tortured, with the result that we see in this very unattractive picture.¹⁰⁹

The artist carefully tempered Symbolist, esoteric or occult associations and, rather than predominantly ethereal or intangible, his figures provide human warmth, meaning and intimacy. Wary of courting the Decadent, several elements adhere the figures to traditional modes of domestic womanhood. Embroidery connoted diligence while caring for children was part of the self-abnegating ‘moral purity’ of figures in *A Winter Evening* and *The Depth of Winter*.

These features, wrote critics, saved Cayley Robinson from lapsing into European forms of *fin de siècle* gloom and exemplified his scholastic, sound tradition within artistic practise. Greig described: ‘a visit to Florence after his marriage in 1898 saved him. The tenderness and spirituality of Fra Angelico and other masters of the Early Italian Schools helped to keep his art pure.’¹¹⁰ Such healthy associations demonstrated that the women were not like Burne-Jones’ figures as described in *The Studio*, 1893, ‘such sad eyed women that could never be mothers’ and who may choose to abandon homely duties.¹¹¹ The artist consistently tempered otherworldly, melancholic associations with conservative, domestic forms, ‘high seriousness’ and conscientiousness.¹¹² The artist combined the ‘wondering humility of the early Flemings and the scholastic prudence of Mantegna,’ according to Cecil French in 1922.¹¹³ The women were deemed tender Madonnas, softened by the ‘quiet key’ of the works.¹¹⁴ Appropriately, the artist maintained enough adherence to acceptable conventional and historical modes of female representation, including motherhood.

However, motherhood was being reconsidered by feminists in wide scale discussions of new womanhood and of women’s roles in public life. These concerns became more urgent, garnering intensified interest in the later Edwardian period. Feminists perceived that traditional and dutiful roles could nevertheless be noble and powerful. Qualities such as duty and self-sacrifice, evident in mothers, were re-imagined by feminists in far more robust modes of womanhood than the Symbolist

¹⁰⁹ *The Times*, (Friday, 24th May, 1901), p.13, regarding *The Depth of Winter*

¹¹⁰ Greig. (1927-8), p.64

¹¹¹ W. Shaw Sparrow, ‘English Art and M. Fernand Khnopff,’ *The Studio*, Vol. 2, No.7, (Oct. 1893), pp.203-207, (p.207)

¹¹² Greig, (1927-8), p.65

¹¹³ French noted ‘a strong synthesis of design, based partly on sound tradition,’ (1922), p.298

¹¹⁴ ‘Art Exhibitions’, *The Times*, (5th December, 1908), p.10

construct of femininity. Women being assailed, ‘pricked’, scarred, wounded and languorous, reflected the preferred male Symbolist modes for representation.¹¹⁵ However, feminist readings perceived hope, assertion, expectancy, activism, physical strength and muscle in Cayley Robinson’s constructs of self-abnegating women.¹¹⁶

Hockin wrote regarding Cayley Robinson’s female figures in 1912:

Neither are his women pretty, their faces are plain and thoughtful...but they are beautiful because they are powerful and tender, and womanly. How refreshing it is to come before the ‘Apotheosis of Maternity’ and find, no simpering doll-like Madonna weakly smiling at her babe – but a great, thoughtful, muscular Mother¹¹⁷

Feminists such as Millicent Fawcett, Ellen Key and Frances Power Cobbe argued that women’s competency in caring roles was evidence of suitability for the vote and new roles in public life. In order to promote ‘woman as noun’, an end in themselves, not an adjective or ‘relative’ being, feminists made various accommodations to combine duty, intellectual and physical strength in modes of womanhood.¹¹⁸

Feminists explored modes of spiritual woman which combined ideas of duty and self-sacrifice with spiritual strength. Feminine qualities of gentleness and tenderness were recast as devotional features of the ascetic life. Through the Madonna and visual associations with Fra Angelico, women’s lives of self-abnegation as mothers were linked with figures undertaking occult paths of initiation like the Dominican friars. Cayley Robinson found the spiritual journey of Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship*, 1795-6, compelling and cited the section ‘The Indenture’ as containing ‘the essence of Goethe’s art teaching [and] the most valuable advice to artists.’¹¹⁹ Goethe’s text featured a mysterious secret society wielding power behind the scenes and Wilhelm discovered that his personal rites of passage and notable incidents of his life are encompassed within a scroll held in the library of the Secret society. Female figures were linked with Wilhelm’s journey of initiation through, for example, the depiction of sacred green cloth and cloth which apes the form of a scroll

¹¹⁵ ‘pricked’ from Verlaine, ‘The sadness, the languor...’ in Blackmore, (2009), p.231, line 12

¹¹⁶ Ruth Livesey includes examples from socialists and feminists where women are imagined as physically robust and confident, as discussed in Chapter Two. See Livesey, (2007), pp.98-9

¹¹⁷ Hockin, (1912), pp.28-30

¹¹⁸ Susan Hamilton, *Frances Power Cobbe and Victorian Feminism*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p.157

¹¹⁹ In Hind, (1904), p.240, Robinson refers to Book VII, Chapter IX of the work

on the table in *The Depth of Winter*. Scrolls also feature in *Twilight*. Women's appearance of holy deprivation and air of self-sacrifice could reflect the journey of occult initiation and the ascetic life, rather than women's inherent physical weakness.

The depiction of women as initiates reflected theosophy's radical re-valuing of female qualities, one of which was self-abnegation. In Blavatsky's chapters on 'Duty', 'Charity' and 'Self-Sacrifice' in *The Key to Theosophy*, 1889, these qualities were described as commensurate with the 'theosophical heroism...of Buddha and Christ-like mercy and self-sacrifice.'¹²⁰ Blavatsky detailed how 'altruism is an integral part of self-development [including] duty to sacrifice his own comfort, and to work for others if they are unable to work for themselves.'¹²¹ Cayley Robinson's forms of the Madonna may be framed by the theosophical development of 'esoteric Christianity,' discussed in Chapter One. This movement specifically compared female self-sacrifice through motherhood with the martyrdom of Christ. Theosophists such as Annie Besant and Dr Anna Bonus Kingsford imagined a female Messiah and developed constructs of divinity in women akin to Christ's meekness and grace.¹²²

Spiritual transcendence and happiness promised through theosophy would be achieved through the curbing of material and earthly appetites. Blavatsky bemoaned a widespread misconception that theosophists are 'vegetarians, celibates, and rigid ascetics.'¹²³ Although, 'we believe in relieving the starvation of the soul, as much if not more than the emptiness of the stomach,' Blavatsky insisted that such asceticism, and any sort of fanaticism, was not a requirement of membership.¹²⁴ Yet the self-sacrifice in women's work caring for children was perceived of as an ascetic life by feminists, which, through the functioning of reincarnation and karma would create future spiritual gains.¹²⁵ Indeed, Frances Swiney implied in 1899, that women's superior spirituality may well be because 'their bodily appetites are kept so much more in abeyance,' referring to diet and sexual activity.¹²⁶

¹²⁰ Blavatsky, (1889), location 3555

¹²¹ *Ibid*, location 3563

¹²² Oppenheim (1985), p.188

¹²³ Here Blavatsky also defines a need to be 'unselfish' rather than fanatical, yet at the same time notes that many members are vegetarians and intend to remain unmarried. Yet she also notes that many members are vegetarians and intend to remain unmarried. Blavatsky, (1889), Section 13, 'On the Misconceptions about the Theosophical Society', location 3823

¹²⁴ Blavatsky, (1889), location 3629

¹²⁵ Swiney, (1897), pp.31-2, 35, pp.37-8

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, p.38

Women's heightened spirituality through self-sacrifice was communicated through the form of the Madonna in *A Winter Evening* and *The Depth of Winter*. Women in these interiors 'depress their heads so naively', in the manner of Botticelli's 'peevish-looking Madonnas,' as described by Pater in 1873.¹²⁷ On one level traditional Madonnas superficially implied passivity and an ongoing willingness to choose motherhood and the home, but by the 1890s, there was a new and undeniable occult affiliation to such images which complicated them as a reactionary statement. Catholic references, such as those used by Maurice Denis in the 1890s for example, had begun to present unnerving occult meanings even while they spoke of tradition. Denis, a Catholic convert whose works influenced Cayley Robinson, sought synthesis and an abstracted, formalised visual language, which he found in the iconography of Catholicism including the Madonnas of Fra Angelico and Botticelli.¹²⁸ These artists and others from the early Renaissance held a mystical and mythic status within the Symbolist movement.¹²⁹

Cayley Robinson in *A Winter Evening* and *The Depth of Winter* alluded visually to Fra Angelico and in particular his frescoes in the corridors surrounding the Dominican friars' cells in the convent of San Marco, Florence, begun c.1437, including *The Annunciation*, (Fig.s 3.24 - 3.25). Cayley Robinson's small scale, tenderness of figures, delicacy of palette including muted, tonal pastel shades of pink and grey, sparse, cell-like interiors and the framing of the small window within a doorway and an arch, confirmed the associations made in these paintings. Conscientiousness and order within Cayley Robinson's artistic practise coincided with the valuing of a convent or institutional type of self-sacrifice, seen for example in the subject and composition of the *Orphans* mural painting.¹³⁰ In the ordinary kitchens of *A Winter Evening* and *The Depth of Winter*, women seemed to be in one 'cell' of many within the larger communal complex of apartment blocks, echoing institutional life.¹³¹

¹²⁷ Pater, (1873), pp.36-7

¹²⁸ Kuenzli, (c.2010), p.109. Denis desired a revival in Christian art: In a diary entry, 5th January, 1886 he wrote: 'If its character has been lost in our impious century, it is necessary to recover it. And the means is to restore the aesthetic of Fra Angelico, who alone is truly Catholic; who alone responds to the aspirations of devout, mystical souls that love God.' Maurice Denis, *Journal*, 3 vols, 1: (1884-1904), (Paris: La Colombe, 1957), 1, p.59, in Facos, (2009), p.96.

¹²⁹ West, (1993), p.97

¹³⁰ Schupbach compares the *Acts of Mercy* scheme to frescoes by Domencio di Bartolo for the Hospital of Santa Maria della Scala in Siena, 1440-1444, Schupbach, (2009), p.3

¹³¹ 'the images living in the silence of the cells are perfect illustrations of "visible prayer"', Scudieri, (2004), p.7

In Cayley Robinson's pictures, women were deemed particularly suitable as initiates. Female figures were endowed with noble modes of self-sacrifice, moral strength and divinity, usually ascribed to male monks, artists, poets for example. The dutiful nature of the female figures in *A Winter Evening* and *The Depth of Winter* echoed feminist debates about the nature of womanhood and her virtues for a greater role in public life. Feminists took 'feminine' qualities such as duty and advanced the urgent need for them in the public sphere. In 1881, feminist Frances Power Cobbe, who analysed women's domestic lives in many writings, feared that women may become 'less *dutiful* by being enfranchised, less conscientious, less unselfish, less temperate, less chaste' continuing to state that if that were the case, 'Nothing we can ever gain would be worth such a loss.'¹³² Millicent Fawcett cited 'duty, thrift, industry, work for the poor,' amongst her list of new ideals of womanhood in 1896.¹³³

However, such virtues were revised by feminists. Duty, previously a subservient quality, defined by the priorities of a father or brother, was redeployed in support of female autonomy. Worthy moral duty, for example, may be confused when wives 'submit patiently to [slavery] under the notion that it is a duty to husband or father.'¹³⁴ Indeed, Blavatsky qualified her words on duty with the warning that 'Theosophy teaches self-abnegation, but does not teach rash and useless self-sacrifice.'¹³⁵ Equally feminists determined that duty should not mean servility: 'women should refuse to be any longer servants to men'¹³⁶ A dutiful, responsible life went hand in hand with a modern, autonomous life, since this requires independent, informed thinking.¹³⁷ In a similar way to feminist discourses, Cayley Robinson's modes of womanhood combined qualities of spirituality and deference with modern autonomy and thinking.

A Winter Evening and *The Depth of Winter* show women thinking, a subject around which there was considerable ambiguity and consternation. Thoughtful poses

¹³² Frances Power Cobbe, *Duties of Women*, Authorised Edn, (London: Williams & Norgate, 1881), p.11 in Hamilton, (2006), p.145

¹³³ Fawcett, (1896), p.279

¹³⁴ Hamilton, (2006), p.157, p.154

¹³⁵ Blavatsky, (1889), location 3563

¹³⁶ Edna Kenton, 'A Study of the Old "New Women,"' Part 1, *Bookman*, (April, 1913), pp.154-8; Part II, *Bookman*, (May, 1913), pp.261-4, in Miller, (1994), p.1

¹³⁷ Along with many other feminists such as Ellen Key and Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Cobbe stressed the 'conduct of women themselves' and personal responsibility in navigating the new era of change for women, (Hamilton, (2006), p.157, p.154). Corresponds with Fawcett's 'thinking wisely' (1896), p.279, discussed in chapter One.

by these women corresponded with feminist evaluations of determined, independent thinking as the remedy to banish the weak, servile, dependent nineteenth century woman, in favour of a frank, honest, courageous, modern one. Women's thinking was policed by various medical discourses from the nineteenth century. Ruminating, pensive women were conflated with Symbolist sadness and thus with troubling mental and physical states of boredom, lethargy, introspection and unhealthy thoughts, Decadent sexual expenditure or excessive interiority. Discourses on female mental maladies circumscribed female thought comprehensively; thinking was essentially aberrant, anomalous and bad for health.¹³⁸ This inflammatory criticism was usually applied to idle affluent women, but excess empty time or energy, monotony or boredom which allowed any women space to think, was fatal.¹³⁹ Women's thinking as a form of sickness carried a longer history as a subversive literary mode used by female authors in the nineteenth century. The Brontes and George Eliot for example, used this trope to describe male punishment for women's assertive transgression of appropriate thoughts or behaviours, enforcing a containment of women's autonomy and discontent.¹⁴⁰ In Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*, 1892, sickness, initially depressive, later madness, is a result of male oppression in the form of the denial of stimulation, fulfilling work as well as incarceration. Featuring female thoughts in these paintings could initiate subversion.

Equally the women's apparent boredom, referenced in a disapproving review of 1906 which concluded: 'we should all die of *ennui*', may be considered instead as evidence of a decline in women's satisfaction with their traditional roles. Feminists were critiquing women's lack of fulfilment, redundancy and 'atrophy' languishing in the private sphere. Fuelled by education, women were questioning of traditional roles and the family, re-evaluating tradition. The languor in Cayley Robinson's works could be the result of education and a consequential disillusionment with limited intellectual outlets. Various of Cayley Robinson's images included reading material, pens and a

¹³⁸ Taylor and Shuttleworth (1998), 'Sex in Mind and Education', pp.373-389

¹³⁹ Such thoughts could turn to sex for example, as expressed in Georges de Feure, *The Voice of Evil*, 1895 (Private Collection) as well as introspection, heightened interiority and nostalgia. The effects of interiority were explored in Fernand Khnopff *I Lock the Door Upon Myself*, (1891), (Bayerischen Staatsgemaldegammlungen, Neue Pinakothek, Munich), Hirsh p.238, (illus p.239). Facos notes that 'hysteria, anaemia, anorexia' were attributed to 'an overabundance of education; thinking itself was considered debilitating to women's health.' (2009), p.125-6, p.144

¹⁴⁰ Hirsh (2004), pp.124-6

desk, such as *Interior*, 1915 and *An Evening in London*, (1920), (Fig. 3.26). Middle class women had much more time to read than men due to their time in the home. With battles for the suffrage taking place outside, images of women thinking and their possible discontentment in oppressive interiors, could reflect modern forms of feminist consciousness.

Despite the female figures' attitude of waiting or expectancy, the meaning has changed from a passive yearning, in a romantic or Pre-Raphaelite sense for the return of a lover, to a self-determined construct of expectation. New types of autonomous thinking explored within feminism did not necessarily mean radical rejection of traditional domestic roles such as motherhood or a duty and self-sacrifice. Indeed, feminists also used older, 'domestic' modes of thinking, both to mediate their current position as well as to negotiate moves into new areas, rather than to seek retreat in an idealised introspective retreat. Pre-Raphaelite type images of women were used within the Suffrage campaign.¹⁴¹ Appropriately, women's thinking was not presented in a reductive mode, as plaintive yearning, waiting, or a contented Pre-Raphaelite daydream. The space given to female thoughts was not clearly anchored to such familiar pictorial conventions, and was perceived as something deeper and potentially subversive.¹⁴²

Equally, the initially timid or diffident figures, particularly the women's bowed looks in *A Winter Evening*, while superficially according to the Symbolist construct, could disguise more profound spiritual thinking, which could also be subversive. In their ghostly, unnatural, weighted and ascetic forms, suggesting the metaphysical, the women are disturbingly 'depressing' or joyless and do not fulfil a frivolous and charming female duty of cheer for a man returning home, to ameliorate his exposure to the frenetic public sphere, according to the role of the 'angel.'¹⁴³ This was not the safe version of the home which historian Sharon Marcus has described, 'to which a man retires to escape the public world, and to find a woman waiting.'¹⁴⁴ Women's

¹⁴¹ John exhibited at the Carfax Gallery, 1903. Cecily Langdale, *Gwen John: with a catalogue raisonné of the paintings and a selection of the drawings*, (New Haven; London: Published for the Paul Mellon Centre For Studies in British Art by Yale University Press, 1987)

¹⁴² Hirsh, (2004), p.239

¹⁴³ 'Art Exhibitions', *The Times*, (5th December, 1908), p.10

¹⁴⁴ Sharon Marcus, *Apartment Stories: City and Home in Nineteenth-Century Paris and London*, (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, c.1999), pp.1-14, (p.5) discusses inner and outer, private cell, patriarchal power base and permeable, modern urban living space.

traditional roles were subverted as familiar tropes of childcare, a group of women in a kitchen, sewing and so on, were steadfastly undermined by the overriding sense of fate or prescience.

Further, the women's deferential poses bely the potency of the 'glimpse' as a mode of spiritual seeing. Less invasive than 'masculine' scientific approaches, the ability to perceive a 'glimpse' of spiritual insight was a much-valued ability of the clairvoyant, visionary or Seer. Herbert Sidley, Secretary of the ATC, wrote in *Orpheus*, around 1909, how in a work of art a viewer might find their:

intuitions confirmed, or perhaps amplified...may catch a fleeting suggestion of something which cannot be taught in terms of reason...the intuitional faculties, it must not be forgotten, are generally acknowledged to pertain to the supernatural or spiritual level of man's consciousness.¹⁴⁵

Women experiencing such insight may look cautious and slow. They may undertake everyday activities but appear thoughtful or in a meditative daze, lost in thought. Modes of female spirituality were represented in these works by subtle glimpses or sideways, 'ineffable glances,' in the words of Maeterlinck.¹⁴⁶ Women's subtle looks suggested that there are secrets and enigmas in nature that may never be known, of which we can only imply a 'glimpse', a term frequently used in theosophical and occult writings to imply the largely unknown nature of the Universe, perceptible only through such intriguing, treasured glimpses.¹⁴⁷

The women's looks indicated alternate perspectives, associating women with the humble, modest, small or seemingly insignificant viewpoint of the Universe. Cayley Robinson used many features in his interiors to question the authority of humanity's knowledge gained by vision and empirical science and instead privileging of the invisible, marginal and ineffable. Leadbeater discussed such alternate perspectives of the Universe in 1912:

A man fusses about in the physical world and thinks himself so busy and so wise; but when he touches even the astral, he realises at once that he has been all the time only a caterpillar crawling about and seeing nothing

¹⁴⁵ Herbert C. Sidley, 'ART-THE-UNIFIER', *Orpheus*, No.4, n.d (1909?), pp.13-16, (p.15)

¹⁴⁶ Maeterlinck (1897), p.92

¹⁴⁷ Used in Maeterlinck's writings: 'I have caught a glimpse of the invisible', Maeterlinck, (1897), ('On Women'), p.80

but his own leaf, whereas now he has spread his wings like the butterfly and flown away into the sunshine of a wider world.¹⁴⁸

Maeterlinck explored alternative perspectives of the bee, the spider, flowers and ants in various works including *The Treasures of the Humble*, 1897 and *The Life of the Bee*, 1901.¹⁴⁹ Frances Swiney cited a Dr. Draper in text from her theosophical work *The Cosmic Procession*, 1906: ‘from bees, wasps and ants, and birds, from all that low animal life on which he looks with supercilious contempt, man is destined one day to learn what in truth he really is.’¹⁵⁰ Knowing cats and dogs featured in Cayley Robinson’s works, such as the *Acts of Mercy* mural scheme.¹⁵¹

The artist referenced Plato on the spine of the book in *The Renunciants* and with him the neo-Platonic strand within theosophical thought, which questioned the nature of knowledge gained by sight. In many of Cayley Robinson’s works, such as this one, we can only see a hint or tantalising glimpse of a window ledge, of windows or doors through layered apertures, restricting our vision, yet enticing us to look further. Cayley Robinson’s colour scheme of faded grey and subtle shades, large areas of obstructive walls, regular depiction of dusk, evening, the ‘Waning Day’ or ‘The Close of Day’, the latter titles of further paintings, flickering candles and distant beacons of light, confirm our limited insight, the truths that Cecil French asserted in 1922, we are only ‘half aware of’.¹⁵²

The women in Cayley Robinson’s interiors appeared sad but dutifully contented in their drudgery, as Cecil French described: ‘Such scenes are occupied (how could it be otherwise?) by a gravely happy humanity.’¹⁵³ However, the ‘weak’ Symbolist woman shared modes of insight with the humble, yet spiritually acute, woman of theosophy. This gentle, feminine approach to the Universe echoed constructs of Christ’s meekness and tenderness, implying righteousness and purity. Modest figures, in the context of theosophy, may provide warnings of human insouciance and an affirmation of the necessity for deference to the natural world: ‘consciousness of the shadow upon [humanity] of the great things from which it

¹⁴⁸ Leadbeater, (1912, kindle version), pp.53-4

¹⁴⁹ Maeterlinck, *The Intelligence of Flowers*, 1907, *The Life of Termites*, 1926, *The Life of the Ant*, 1930

¹⁵⁰ Citing a Dr. Draper’s ‘work on the intellectual development of Europe, Swiney, (1906), pp.198-9

¹⁵¹ Schupbach, (2009), p.13

¹⁵² French, (1922), p.298

¹⁵³ French, (July, 1910), p.165

shrinks'.¹⁵⁴ The making and viewing of spiritual art, in the writings of *Orpheus*, was part of the self-abnegating, gracious mission of theosophy, working, as opposed to material gain or to the modern, 'motor car element,' for the greater spiritual life and universal good.¹⁵⁵ Women's 'serene acceptance of their humble, gracious destinies' in these works, as described by Cecil French, 1910, rather than a celebration of traditional womanhood, presented an ideal mode of living for all humanity, combining grace, responsibility and reverence toward nature, akin to religious devotion.¹⁵⁶ In Cayley Robinson's paintings, woman is the trusted Seer, who brings fairyland into the everyday, making objects and spaces enchanted, magical or charged, guiding viewers to a more spiritualised life, as explored in Part Three.

Part Three: Spiritual Viewing

Clifford Bax wrote in *Orpheus*, close to 1910, that art, rather than aiming at the 'simple repetition of outward beauty, in place of this [seeks] an experience of spiritual states.'¹⁵⁷ Cayley Robinson's paintings created psychological effects through various Mayavic and esoteric suggestions and visual distortions, overseen by female figures, who enabled spiritual viewing processes. A variety of 'sympathetic' and ritualistic viewing processes were inspired by objects within paintings and encountered the paintings *as* objects. *A Winter Evening* and *The Depth of Winter* could be used as talismans for transfigurations or to enact comforting journeys of enchantment, reuniting viewers with the spirit, whilst remaining reassuringly grounded in the furniture of everyday life.

The Unconscious

this intimate penetration in search of something unknowable¹⁵⁸

Psychological effects were a key feature in the reception and interpretation of the works. Acknowledging the unconscious power of the Cayley Robinson's painting, Martin Wood wrote in *The Studio*, 1910, that the artist had 'pressed further than other

¹⁵⁴ Maeterlinck (1897), 'Mystic Morality'

¹⁵⁵ French, (July, 1910), p.163

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p.166

¹⁵⁷ Clifford Bax, 'Metaphors,' *Orpheus*, No. 10, (1910?), pp.190-194, (p.191)

¹⁵⁸ Greig, (1927-8), p.64

people into the unknown regions,' referring to the subject of Maeterlinck's play *The Blue Bird*:

Can the art of the stage ever be the vehicle of *presentiments* and apprehensions instead of deeds? But there is also the question whether the life of all the arts in the future will not depend upon their ability to encounter and interpret secrets of the psychic planes that are only now coming to the surface.¹⁵⁹

Cayley Robinson was linked frequently with Maeterlinck.¹⁶⁰ Though their aesthetics were not the same, noted Wood, Maeterlinck's emphasis on atmosphere and effect endowed Cayley Robinson's works with psychological suggestion.¹⁶¹ While scientific writings on the unconscious still featured the action of spirit, theosophists and artists imagined the nature of the unconscious and the soul and their relationships with art, areas subsequently neglected by Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 1899.¹⁶² Art and the unconscious were important themes to the Theosophical Society in England.¹⁶³ Unconscious effects could be deliberately sought out by those desiring a spiritual experience, such as Cecil French, or, as viewers noted, they could be experienced involuntarily. Wood discussed viewing Cayley Robinson's paintings: 'very definite and material symbol and the indefinite feelings to which these are to give us the key [in] relation with a given mood' and how such artworks could effect involuntary 'transmutations:'

And no one knows how, certainly not the artist. And no one knows that this wonderful transmutation has happened if their own feelings do not give them the key. Or they may be aware that something has happened, that a curious atmosphere has been projected without being in sympathy. They may know it by the fact that here is creation and suggestion,

¹⁵⁹ Wood, (1910), p.209

¹⁶⁰ Herbert Furst even notes, 'his world was too Maeterlinky and Puvisy altogether', Herbert Furst, 'Art News and Notes', *Apollo*, 11, (1930), p.65

¹⁶¹ Wood (1910), p.206

¹⁶² Theosophy had an affinity with psychology due to the shared concern with the unseen, but theosophists were wary of the science of psychology determining 'secrets' which were related to the universal spirit, not physiology: Maeterlinck exclaimed for example: 'We are watched, we are under the strictest supervision, and it comes from elsewhere than the indulgent darkness of each man's conscience!' (1899), 'Mystic Morality' p.63. Further, the focus on the individual childhood in later psychoanalysis moved away from theosophy's emphasis on the universality of life and the sublimation of the ego and personality. Blavatsky's Glossary in (1889), detailed the emphasis on sublimation and the universal as opposed to the individual.

¹⁶³ Evident in *Orpheus* and in material relating to the Orpheus Lodge, Edinburgh

antagonistic to their own nature and desire. Even from that standpoint they are judges of the success of the creation, and, as admission of its power to affect them, even their antagonism is the finest compliment to the artist.¹⁶⁴

Thus even when viewers found such works confusing or irritating, artworks could remain strangely compelling and affective. Frank Rinder, critic of the *Art Journal* and a member of the ATC, commented that *A Winter Evening* was the one painting in the exhibition of the Royal Society of British Artists, 1899-1900, 'toward which, half unconsciously as it may be, one is drawn again and again.'¹⁶⁵ An edition of *The Blue Bird* was reissued in 1911, with illustrations by Cayley Robinson. Maeterlinck was delighted with Cayley Robinson's work, writing to him that year:

When one slowly turns over the leaves, when one lingers long, a charm, powerful, unexpected, and much more fairylike than the most spontaneous fantasies of the most extravagant imagination, escapes, little by little, from your pictures, purposely restrained and subdued. You have interpreted the story from within, instead of translated it from without...I thank you with all my heart for the honour you have done to my little fairy tale.¹⁶⁶

Maeterlinck identified the magical qualities of the work as engendering an involuntary, enchanted response in the viewer, escaping from the images insidiously. Greig described the unearthly figures at the Carfax Exhibition, 1908, in detail and concluded:

He works in a minor key, rhythm rises and falls with deliberate regularity, one has the feeling that the spirit of the dead delight moves noiselessly among magnificent ruins, humble interiors and lonesome landscapes¹⁶⁷

Wood also remarked on the special atmosphere of the Carfax Gallery exhibition: 'A room was hung entirely with the pictures of Mr Cayley Robinson, and one realized above everything in connection with the artist's work, that he was constructing a haunted region.'¹⁶⁸ The psychological effects could take the viewer to strange places, which were described by Greig as a: 'journey towards the unconscious twilight state

¹⁶⁴ Wood, (1910), pp.208-9

¹⁶⁵ Rinder, Frank, 'Autumn Exhibition', *Art Journal*, (December 1902) p.387, painting illustrated, p.377

¹⁶⁶ Maeterlinck (1911) in Wilton, (2007), p.278

¹⁶⁷ Greig, (1927-8), p.67

¹⁶⁸ Wood, (1910), p.204. Wood's phrase 'curious atmosphere', as well as 'quiet key' used in 'Art Exhibitions', *The Times*, (5th December, 1908), p.10, suggest the strangeness of the viewing experience

which [Robinson] afterwards developed as his craftsmanship increased in power.’¹⁶⁹ Greig referred to ‘states of the unconscious’, ‘the fantastic’ and even ‘Martian dreams’, writing in 1927.¹⁷⁰ There was a constant tension in reviews between those who found these effects strange and ‘antagonistic to their nature and desire,’ or those like Frank Rinder and various theosophists, who implied a positive value and desirability, to this irksome, unsettling haunting.¹⁷¹ Crucially, it is the women who control these psychological effects through an undetermined spiritual acuity. The unconscious effects of Cayley Robinson’s artworks deprive male viewers of certainty, assurance and power, instead female figures command the scene.

Objects, Revivalism and ‘Spiritual States’

In *A Winter Evening* and *The Depth of Winter*, Cayley Robinson uses familiar objects and visual forms, including those recognisable as art historical revivalism, along with occult allusions to incite connections and emotional reactions. Spiritual connection and unconscious effects were encouraged by shared viewing of such forms, as a spiritual remedial to urban life. Cayley Robinson had described in his letter to Baldry, 1896:

I think my idea of art is Sympathy – That the beautiful in art is the result of sympathetic insight – subtlety and perception – love of nature for her own sake – the consciousness of the infinite in the finite. [*sic*]¹⁷²

Cayley Robinson sketched his idea of ‘Sympathy’ in a series of inter-connecting circles, (Fig. 3.27) Sympathy, a theosophical construct, embodied and motivated Cayley Robinson’s entire spiritual process of creating art, as well as the possibilities within the viewing process. The artist described how art which ‘strikes upon some deep seated and innate emotion of the mind and make[s] a lasting impression...is a perfect art. The unity of man with the Universe’¹⁷³ To Cayley Robinson, the spiritual,

¹⁶⁹ Greig (1927-8), p.64

¹⁷⁰ Greig, (1927-8), p.67

¹⁷¹ Wood (1910), p.209

¹⁷² Letter from Frederick Cayley Robinson to A. L. Baldry, (Sunday 17th May, 1896, V&A National Art Library)

¹⁷³ *Ibid*

occult and unconscious, emotional effects of art were its ultimate purpose and created the most powerful artworks.¹⁷⁴

The desire for such psychological and spiritual effects was part of a yearning for connection and spiritual experience in many contemporary writings which used the term ‘Sympathy.’ Theosophical texts, such as articles in *Orpheus*, described ‘sympathy [as] an imaginative quality’ and imagination is divine.¹⁷⁵ ‘Sympathy’ was ‘the great bond’ referring to spiritual connection in the sense of a brotherhood collectively ‘drawn ...by a deep inner longing for knowledge’ and the Unseen.¹⁷⁶ In such writings, ‘sympathy’ accompanied the privileging of ‘female’ qualities of spirit and intuition. Baldry in his article on Cayley Robinson in 1896, described a ‘particular mental view, a sympathetic insight into Nature.’¹⁷⁷ Cayley Robinson insisted that ‘cleverness’ of workmanship in painting should always be subordinated to interpreting the ‘intellectual suggestion that comes from true sympathy with Nature.’¹⁷⁸

Leadbeater also visualised the circle in his article ‘The Centre of My Circle’, in *Theosophy in Scotland* 1911, where the circle refers to the scope of individual identity and soul.¹⁷⁹ Circles featured in Ralph Waldo Trine’s *In Tune with the Infinite*, illustrated by Cayley Robinson in 1923, in writings by Maeterlinck, as well as generally in the idea of the theosophical spheres and in cosmologies of the Kabbalah and in the work of the Glasgow Four.¹⁸⁰ In Cayley Robinson’s metaphor of the circles,

¹⁷⁴ In a complementary understanding, a poor, unsympathetic viewing experience could obstruct the spiritual function of art. Robinson explained to Baldry in 1896: ‘During the whole time of my early enforced study of Greek art I never appreciated its true beauty, the drudgery and hateful competition of this period gave me a loathing of those cold dingy casts...I am glad to say that now after much study from the life my eyes are becoming unsealed to the spirit of the Elgin marbles.’ Letter from Frederick Cayley Robinson to A. L. Baldry, (Sunday 17th May, 1896, V&A National Art Library)

¹⁷⁵ Anatolius, (Turner has suggested this author was Clifford Bax (2009), p.285), ‘Imagination’, *Orpheus*, No.5, n.d., (1909?), pp.17-19, (p.18)

¹⁷⁶ Diana Read, ‘Imagination’, *Orpheus*, No. 7, n.d., (1909/10?), pp.86-9, (p.88)

Letter from Frederick Cayley Robinson to A. L. Baldry, (Sunday 17th May, 1896, V&A National Art Library); Art is working to effect ‘universal brotherhood,’ wrote Sidley, (1909?), p.13; Rudolf Steiner; translated by George and Mary Adams, *Occult Science: An Outline*, (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1969), p.25

¹⁷⁷ Baldry, (1895-6), p.467

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p.467

¹⁷⁹ Charles W. Leadbeater, ‘The Centre of My Circle’, in *Theosophy in Scotland*, Vol.1, (Mar., 1910 – April 1911), pp180-1

¹⁸⁰ Maeterlinck, (1897), (‘On Women’): ‘in our struggle to break through the enchanted circle that is drawn around all the acts of our life...we can never emerge from the little circle of light that destiny traces about our footsteps...an impassable ring,’ pp.77-8. Neat discusses circles in the works of the Glasgow Four, (1994) and they are evident in works by Khnopff and Klimt for example. Ralph Waldo Trine, *In Tune with the Infinite or Fullness of Peace, Power and Plenty*, with illustrations by Frederick Cayley Robinson, (London: Foulis Publishers, originally Boston, Mass. USA, 1897, this edition 1926)

his artworks may reaffirm connection between those already ‘in sympathy’, fellow initiates, with awakened sensibilities. At the same time artworks may temporarily unite viewers with others nearby, in adjoining and overlapping circles, through sharing enchantment or as Herbert Sidley wrote in *Orpheus*, ‘some ennobling mood or lofty aspiration.’¹⁸¹ An entry in the minute book of the Orpheus Lodge, Edinburgh, 20th June, 1914, stated directly that: ‘art study attracts and brings into touch with theosophy certain sections of the public and certain types of people that would not probably be reached otherwise.’ The minutes quoted an actor, Mr Benson, who had spoken to the group:

Theosophists cannot put their theosophy fully into words. The artist can help them express it by his powers to reveal the beauty in flowers and bird and beast, and by his efforts to translate something of the music of the spheres...the true artist...can act as a healing force, he can regenerate and create anew the soul of man.¹⁸²

Theosophical writings determined that art could awaken interest and communicate ideas to a broader, uninitiated audience, results that, in contrast, a lecture about theosophical ideas could not produce.¹⁸³ One method was through the depiction of familiar or meaningful objects.

A plethora of objects appear in Cayley Robinson’s interiors, variously arranged, scattered, clustered and obstructed. Simple household and childhood objects are combined with meaningful or revivalist forms as Cayley Robinson makes a number

¹⁸¹ By drawing on qualities ‘which are fundamentally the same in all men’ and ‘are the most nearly in touch with the ever-living Unity behind’ or putting ‘into outer manifestation...those parts of himself, possibly linked onto others, which are universal,’ Sidley continued, art will ‘present the basic qualities of mankind in such a manner as will unite those temperamentally differing from one another in some ennobling mood or lofty aspiration.’ Sidley, (1909?), p.14

¹⁸² ‘Orpheus Lodge Minutes’, 1910-1915, Book 1, Edinburgh Theosophical Society, entry dated 20th June, 1914, informal meeting

¹⁸³ ‘The Theosophical Society: Scenes from “Peer Gynt”’ (*The Times*, 8th July), *Theosophy in Scotland*, Vol. 2, (May 1911-April 1912), pp.56-7, (p.57). This article notes how a *Peer Gynt* recital received attention in *The Times* and the ‘London dailies,’ the highest attention given to a TS convention activity:

the value of various forms of art as channels for the spread of theosophical truth. We commend this idea to the consideration of those of our readers who are in any way artistically endowed...the press, which is too often silent as to our lectures, wakes up to notice anything unusual in the way of artistic endeavour, and many people may be thus brought to take an interest in the movement. Thus the *only* one of the Convention activities which received any notice from the London dailies was the lecture-recital on *Peer Gynt*, noticed elsewhere. Mrs Besant’s whole course of marvellous lectures from which hundreds were turned away – were actually...passed over in silence; whereas art and music insist on making their voice heard, and so make good allies

of non-didactic but intriguing allusions to the occult and to art historical revivalism. Examples include: the Plato text held by the figure in *The Renunciants* and the white-haired figure in the same work, who appears to be an Adept, strange hooks, use of Fauvist colours to de-naturalise and enclose natural forms of water in *Pastoral*, 1923-4, (Fig. 3.28), referring to the Nabis painting by Paul Serusier, *The Talisman*, 1888, Mackintosh chairs, references to Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, freemasonry, stone tablet inscriptions, the Kabbalah, Rosicrucianism, crystal-gazing, birds in flight and Catholic revivalist forms.

Cayley Robinson makes striking and repeated artistic references to the Pre-Raphaelites that sit within his paintings like visual quotations. These are not tentative allusions, but direct 'recreations' a word the artist used in his letter to Baldry, 1896, to refer to his painting *My Beautiful Castle*, (1894), (Fig. 3.29).¹⁸⁴ In Cayley Robinson's works, spiritualised viewing journeys are enabled by objects. The artworks are spiritual objects themselves and objects or symbols depicted within them could become signposts along the shared path of initiates, providing clues to the divine truth or 'secret doctrine' manifest in nature. Regarding symbolism in the works of Mackintosh, Gleeson White wrote in *The Studio*, 1897, that, 'the puzzle of a poet's meaning seems an open riddle to some and a sealed book to others.'¹⁸⁵ Within the inner circle of Cayley Robinson's metaphor, viewers may be on a personal journey of initiation and may perceive of occult hints and clues in the paintings.¹⁸⁶ Jean Delville described in 1910, in *A New Mission of Art*: 'Through the infinite veil, behind which the unseen work of the Great Unknown is carried on, Beauty sheds its light...of which works of art are the objective suggestions.'¹⁸⁷ I will now examine some of the key objects featured in the works, which in simplified, synthesised forms, function as icons or 'hieroglyphics' effecting 'spiritual states'. All of these forms are guarded by

¹⁸⁴ Letter from Frederick Cayley Robinson to A. L. Baldry, (Sunday 17th May, 1896, V&A National Art Library)

¹⁸⁵ Gleeson White, *The Studio*, Vol. 11, (1897), p.227; see also two levels of functioning with images in Neat, (1994), p.21

¹⁸⁶ A. E., (Turner notes that this was Irish nationalist poet and painter George Russell, (2009), p.86), 'Art and Literature', *Orpheus*, No. 6, n.d., (1909/10?), pp.56-9, (p.59), described, regarding the art of G. F. Watts: 'art is a divine adventure in which [the artist] like all of us who are travelling in so many ways, seeks consciously or unconsciously to regain the lost unity with nature, and the knowledge of his own immortal being.' On this journey, objects may be signposts. Hirsch describes a white pitcher in the painting by Xavier Mellery, 'The Staircase' from *The Life of Things* (renamed *The Soul of Things*), 1889, chalk on paper, 57 x 45 cm. Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp, being 'a signpost along [a] journey. An icon of discovery for this ascending initiate,' (2004), p.226, Plate 7

¹⁸⁷ Delville, (1910), p.80

knowledgeable women, gatekeepers to their secrets and decryption and managing their effects. I return to the subject of women and representation in Part Four.

Pre-Raphaelite Quotations and Mackintosh Chairs

Symbolic objects in *A Winter Evening* and *The Depth of Winter* and other works included direct quotations from the Pre-Raphaelites. Just as Cayley Robinson used the conventions of Symbolism, but went beyond its constraints, so he produced new meanings, and possibilities for viewing, through revived Pre-Raphaelite forms. In 1895, *Souvenir of a Past Age* (Fig. 3.30) was noted in *The Times* as demonstrating ‘curious suggestions...of the Pre-Raphaelites.’¹⁸⁸ Hind further affirmed in 1904: ‘the pictures are small, wrought carefully and minutely, recalling the pre-Raphaelite days of Rossetti and Millais.’¹⁸⁹ Bate in 1899 noted that Cayley Robinson ‘may be taken as typical of the present development of Pre-Raphaelism’, due especially to works such as *Souvenir of a Past Age*, (1894), *The Beautiful Castle*, (1894) and *Suzanne* (1894).¹⁹⁰ The cloth on the bed in *Twilight* (Fig. 3.13) looks like the dress of a figure in *Orphans*, (Fig.s 3.18-19). The green cloth behind the girl in *The Foundling* (Fig. 3.5) recurs in the clothing of figures in *A Souvenir of a Past Age* (Fig. 3.30) and it is very similar to dresses in works by Rossetti. Some figures appear more ‘Rossettian’ in features and hair and the table-cloth in *A Winter Evening*, *The Depth of Winter* and *Orphans* echoes the table cloth in Millais’ *Lorenzo and Isabella* (1849) or *Mariana* (1851). Images of hanging cloth echo that in Rossetti’s *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*, (1848-9), (Fig. 2.5) as well as *Ecce Ancilla Domini*, (1850), (Fig. 3.31), as they appear in *A Souvenir of a Past Age* (Fig. 3.30) and *Childhood* (Fig. 3.12).

In the earlier, more ‘Rossettian’ works, it appeared Cayley Robinson was enacting a straightforward desire for nostalgic revival, an idealisation of a nobler and unattainable past of the middle-ages, evident in artworks of the late nineteenth century. This process could provide a bittersweet feeling of ‘heart-ache’ in pleasant reminiscence, comfort and stability through communing with the knowable past.¹⁹¹ Pre-Raphaelite quotations could provide shortcuts to a collection of associations, with

¹⁸⁸ ‘The Royal Academy’, *The Times*, (Saturday 1st June, 1895), p.14

¹⁸⁹ Hind, (1904), p.235

¹⁹⁰ Bate, (1899), p.115, discussed pp.112-117

¹⁹¹ ‘Watercolour Exhibition: Pictures by Well-Known Artists,’ *The Times*, (Friday, 19th October, 1923), p.15; see also Ann C. Colley, *Nostalgia and Recollection in Victorian Culture*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998)

ideal forms of beauty, medieval and moral ideals espoused through artistic practise, providing Cayley Robinson with an instant conscientiousness through association. Cayley Robinson was linked with the: ‘characteristic seriousness and formality which distinguishes the art of the Middle Ages [including] the severe decoration of the medieval Germans.’¹⁹² Baldry described him as ‘a really sincere artist’ with ‘purity of belief’ and Hind defined this as ‘ethical art.’¹⁹³ Such associations motivated Percy Bate to describe Cayley Robinson in 1899 as advancing the Pre-Raphaelite tradition as a ‘disciple’, in language evoking devotion, reverence and a spiritual cause.¹⁹⁴

However, as Cayley Robinson noted, he drew especially from Rossetti and Burne-Jones in early works *before* he developed his own idea of art: ‘I painted “The Beautiful Castle” an attempt to embody the spirit of Medieval Romance as a recreation at a period when I could not clearly see my way.’¹⁹⁵ After painting *Suzanne*, also a Pre-Raphaelite type composition, Cayley Robinson intimated, ‘since then I have worked hopefully...I feel I am on the right tack in the endeavour to achieve as far as possible my own independent development.’¹⁹⁶ As the artist continued to develop his style, and by the time he painted *A Winter Evening* and *The Depth of Winter*, around 1899 he had already found in these familiar objects a way to provide apparent security of materiality to the viewer, whilst also exploiting their spiritual currency as signposts on a journey through a ‘Mayavic’ world.

Cayley Robinson’s connection with the ‘Rossetti Tradition’ could be reconciled within reactionary, conservative discourses of ‘Englishness’ by this time, as described by scholars Michaela Giebelhausen and Tim Barringer.¹⁹⁷ However, the artist ensured these inclusions are deliberately puzzling through fragmentary placement. Recognisable Pre-Raphaelite modes appeared in an uncanny guise, dislocated from stabilising meaning or context. Their unconfirmed presence invited a multiplicity of suggestions and resulted in a fracturing of the comforting whole. Without the comfort of certainty, Cayley Robinson heightened the supernatural presence of visual

¹⁹² Baldry (1895-6), p.471

¹⁹³ Baldry (1895-6), p.465; in the title of Hind’s article, (1904)

¹⁹⁴ Bate, (1899), p.117

¹⁹⁵ Letter from Frederick Cayley Robinson to A. L. Baldry, (Sunday 17th May, 1896, V&A National Art Library)

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁹⁷ Giebelhausen and Barringer, (2009). Though Millais and the early works of the PRB were associated with healthy Englishness by the end of the nineteenth century, this was more complex since allusions to Burne-Jones also linked Robinson with Decadence.

appropriations, which become unreconciled ghostly presences from the past, isolated and prescient like the Mackintosh chairs. The connections with the aesthetics of the fairy tale, interiors that evoke childhood, smallness, toys, doll-houses and these haunting references from older art forms engendered a sense of the uncanny. Use of the uncanny to trouble the domestic was evident in paintings by Ensor (Fig. 1.21), the poems of Thomas Hardy, the ghost stories of M. R. James and in Gustave Doré's illustrations of Edgar Allan Poe, where creepy, otherworldly elements lie just beyond the protagonist's sight.¹⁹⁸ Cayley Robinson's ghostly Pre-Raphaelite inclusions created visual distortions and an unshakable sense of unease. Cayley Robinson deployed revived forms, rather than as forms of comfort, as disturbing presences, unsteady the viewer and creating unsettling psychological effects.¹⁹⁹

Other recognisable images, such as the harp, sewing and hanging cloth, enacted multiple associations at once, through the function of ambiguity, psychological association and a Symbolist denial of certainty, rehearsing both the aesthetic of vagueness found in Khnopff and Symbolist poetry and the unreal doubling and contradiction found in Symbolist drama.²⁰⁰ As objects are clustered and layered over each other in the corner in *A Winter Evening*, so the viewer is encouraged to read them in various competing or complementary ways, through problematic modes of viewing where meaning was becoming increasingly open. The harp in *A Winter Evening* for example, featured in notable works such as Rossetti, *La Ghirlandata*, (1873) and many works by Burne-Jones. A middle-class instrument of leisure and a religious image allied with angels, it is presented dormant and partially hidden by the frame and blocked by the table. Presented thus half-obsured, the harp could also be an image of the lyre, a central form in Symbolist and Decadent art, related to the myth of Orpheus.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ For example, Gustave Dore's image accompanying the words, "Here I opened wide the door: - Darkness there and nothing more," 1883, illustration to Edgar Allan Poe, *The Raven*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1883), reproduced as Fig. 94 in Hirsh, (2004), p.237

¹⁹⁹ These distortions may be read alongside Sigmund Freud's construct of the 'dream work' in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, translated by Joyce Crick, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, original text first published Nov., 1899), pp.211-330, which describes the forms of hieroglyphics in dreams, the work of condensation and distortion.

²⁰⁰ Daniel Gerould, (ed.), *Doubles, Demons and Dreamers: An International Collection of Symbolist Drama*, (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1985)

²⁰¹ Multi-layered associations remind viewers of the various transgressions of spirit, form and matter within Symbolist art, evident in for example Khnopff's, *Art*, or *Sphinx* or *The Caresses*, (1896), oil on canvas, 50 x 150 cm. Musée d'Art Moderne, Brussels

Sewing is represented through cloth, embroidery and other related paraphernalia in *A Winter Evening* and *The Depth of Winter*. Imagery of women sewing held a great deal of currency as a traditional and acceptable female activity, connoting the feminine virtue of diligence, demonstrated in the popular Thomas Hood poem 'The Song of the Shirt', 1843, featured in Pre-Raphaelite paintings and the Arts and Craft movement as well as being prominent in 'social realist' and genre painting.²⁰² Lisa Tickner has noted that since Hood's popular ballad, the sweated seamstress had been sentimentalised as an oppressed but most womanly of female workers. By the late nineteenth century, women's hands were being reclaimed as a site of female work and ingenuity in sewing.²⁰³ Cayley Robinson referred to alternative constructs, such as those in 'social realist' paintings, in *The Old Nurse*, 1926 (Fig. 3.33). Further, Cayley Robinson's painting is similar to a Suffragette poster, 'Votes for Workers,' featuring an old nurse at a sewing machine in a dilapidated room. Rather than a 'consumptive heroine,' Tickner has described how this poster showed 'a sturdy, if impoverished, middle-aged outworker.'²⁰⁴ Cayley Robinson's pictures featured such normal daily routines and traditional iconographies, but they were endowed with contradictory, unconfirmed meanings.

The hanging cloth in several works was a quotation from Rossetti, but also referred to the Roman Catholic 'cloth of honour' and the revival in Catholic imagery amongst Symbolist artists. *The Depth of Winter*, *A Winter Evening* as well as *Threads of Life* featured other religious items such as the Noah's ark pieces and altarpieces. At the same time, hanging cloth, particularly in a straight, vertical pattern such as the curtains in *A Winter Evening*, or as a scroll, was associated with the material culture of occult practise. Cayley Robinson's illustration for *The Blue Bird*, 'Before the Wall,'

²⁰² 'With fingers weary and worn, With eyelids heavy and red, A woman sat, in unwomanly rags', Thomas Hood (1799-1845), 'The Song of the Shirt', first published in *Punch*, or the *London Charivari*, I, (16th December, 1843), <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/hood/shirt.html> accessed 29th August, 2016. See also T. J. Edelstein, 'They Sang the Song of the Shirt: The Visual Iconology of the Seamstress', *Victorian Studies*, (Winter, 1980), pp.183-210

²⁰³ Swiney, (1897), p.29. Mary D. Garrard, 'Artemisia's Hand,' offers useful insights on the power of hands in seventeenth century works by a female artist, in Broude and Garrard, (2005), pp.63-79

²⁰⁴ 'Votes for Workers', designed by W. F. Winter, published by the Artists' Suffrage League, Joint winner with Duncan Grant of the ASL poster competition in 1909, in Lisa Tickner, (1988), Plate II, opp. p.50. Tickner described this as an image closer in style and tone to the work of Kathe Kollwitz in Germany than to the more sentimental traditions of British illustrations. Tickner also explored the latter imagery, such as a poster 'Justice demands the vote', Anon., featuring Pre-Raphaelite figures and a Madonna mother and child figure grouping, (published by Brighton and Hove Society for Women's Suffrage and available from the Artist's Suffrage League, 1909), p.40

(Fig. 3.17) was also referred to as ‘the Curtain.’ In this context the wall surrounds a graveyard, the boundary becoming a ‘final curtain,’ an ominous division between life and death.²⁰⁵ Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship* features ‘green cloth’, which is sacred:

On the green cloth lay a little roll. "Here is your indenture," said the abbé: "take it to heart; it is of weighty import." Wilhelm lifted, opened it, and read... "Art is long, life short...the threshold is the place of expectation...The true scholar learns from the known to unfold the unknown, and approaches more and more to being a master."²⁰⁶

A similar type of cloth reappears in the green curtains in many of Cayley Robinson’s paintings. Cayley Robinson’s subtle act of homage to Goethe invoked freemasonry, mysterious secret societies, rites of passage and initiation.

Another example of multiple associations were the recurring hooks on the walls and on the top of cabinets, evident in Figs 3.1 and 3.3 for example, which seem to originate again in Rossetti’s *Ecce Ancilla Domini*, (Fig. 3.31) where they can be seen on the back of the cloth rail. However, they also made an ominous appearance in Paul Ranson’s Nabis work, *The Attic*, 1893 (Fig. 3.32).²⁰⁷ Ranson was influenced by theosophy including Schure’s *The Great Initiates* and suffered from depression in his yearning for spiritual discovery. Ranson included these hook forms alongside more disturbing allusions to magic, witchcraft and voodoo in works which veered into the occult.²⁰⁸ The hooks echoed creepy, pointed shadows and shapes in works by Ensor, which Cayley Robinson alluded to with the menacing firedogs in *The Foundling*. Similarly to Symbolist art, the heightening and recurrence of abstract patterns and unexplained forms and an ultimate denial of meaning, encouraged confusion, associations with the occult and with transfigurative possibilities.

The artist drew closer to the occult with the inclusion of Mackintosh chairs in several works (Fig. 3.34). These high-backed, spiritually endowed articles appeared

²⁰⁵ Munroe, (2006), p.50

²⁰⁶ The text of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (*Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*), 1795–96, is available at Gutenberg texts: http://www.gutenberg.org/catalog/world/readfile?fk_files=2142008&pageno=321 accessed 31st August, 2016.

²⁰⁷ This work features an ominous hook similar to those which recur in Robinson’s interiors, as well as denial of perspective and objects which seem more alive, veering the work into the occult. Terrasse, (c.1990), p.62

²⁰⁸ Terrasse, (c.1990), p. 306

in works such as *Winter Evening*, (1906) and *Childhood*. Cayley Robinson worked at the GSA from 1914 and Mackintosh maintained connection with the school in this period, exhibiting there alongside Cayley Robinson, corresponding with Newbery and visiting for social occasions. Mackintosh chairs had provoked extreme, fearful responses due to their psychological effects. Regarding the ‘Scottish Room’ of the Vienna Secession Exhibition, 1900, Hermann Bahr and Frank Servaes described rooms as containing, ‘prehistoric magic charms [and] furniture as fetishes.’²⁰⁹ Ludwig Hevesi, a prominent Viennese critic added, ‘the artists would hardly spend their daily lives in such apartments, but they may perhaps have a haunted room in their house, a hobgoblin's closet or something like that.’²¹⁰

However, viewers also noted mystique and spiritual import in the works of Mackintosh and Margaret Macdonald. An account of the 1900 exhibition in the *Wiener Rundschau* noted, ‘There is a Christlike mood in this interior: this chair might have belonged to Francis of Assisi.’²¹¹ Within the mystical, religious mood projected through mostly white interiors, the chairs were perceived as thresholds or gateways, points where transfigurations or transgressions of normal laws of nature could take place. Such transformations could be positive and enchanting. Hermann Muthesius described in his retrospective architectural survey *The English House*, 1904, how the chairs were fit to inhabit the ‘fairy-tale world’ of the designer’s white interiors.²¹² Scholar Fillippo Alison has written that ‘the chairs irradiate [a] vivacious luminosity through their spatial qualities and their spiritual uplift.’²¹³

The subtle, spiritual aspects of Mackintosh’s white rooms coincided with Cayley Robinson’s aesthetic of austere gravity. Muthesius continued to note regarding Mackintosh’s white interiors that: ‘the delicacy and austerity of their artistic atmosphere would tolerate no admixture of the ordinariness which fills our lives,’

²⁰⁹ Werner J. Schweiger, *Wiener Werkstätte: Design in Vienna, 1903-1932*, (London, 1984), pp.246-7, n.72; Eduard Sekler, ‘Mackintosh and Vienna’, in Nikolaus Pevsner and J. M. Richards, (eds), *The Anti-Rationalists*, (London and New York, 1973), pp.136-42, (p.136), in Crawford, (1995), p.79

²¹⁰ Sekler, (1973), p.136; Horst-Herbert Kossatz, ‘The Vienna Secession and its early relations with Great Britain,’ *Studio International*, vol. 181, (1971), pp.9-19, (p.16), in Crawford, (1995), p.79. and Crawford also notes that Bahr, Servaes and Hevesi rather than conservative, were ‘three of Vienna’s most progressive critics and champions of the Secession in the daily press,’ p.79.

²¹¹ *Wiener Rundschau*, 1st December, 1900, quoted in Thomas Howorth, *Charles Rennie Mackintosh and the Modern Movement*, (London: 1990, orig. 1952), p.153

²¹² Hermann Muthesius, *The English House*, (New York: Rizzoli, 1979). (Translation of *Das Englische Haus*, first published 1904-5), p.52

²¹³ Fillippo Alison, *Charles Rennie Mackintosh as a Designer of Chairs*, (London; Milan: G. Marconi; Warehouse Publications, 1973), p.99

echoing contemporary sentiments about Cayley Robinson's 'sympathetic shades'.²¹⁴ Cayley Robinson included hints of the occult with the Mackintosh chairs but managed their unsettling import. In subtle, careful ways, the artist maintained conventional forms in modest, quiet and unobtrusive works. The appearance of Mackintosh chairs was deliberately understated and could co-exist with more acceptable, happier experiences of enchantment.

Edwardian Enchantment

Through the female figures, *A Winter Evening* and *The Depth of Winter* enacted modern enchantments. There was a widespread cultural desire for enchantment or re-enchantment, the experience of beauty and mystery in the everyday. This idea was a response to an increasingly disenchanted, rationally determined, modern urban world and was seen by theosophists as part of a much larger task of regenerating humanity. The willingness to be enchanted echoed the cultural retention of fairies well into the twentieth century, as 'small enchantments.'²¹⁵ The Edwardian period also saw the resurgence in the popularity of children's literature and fairy plays for adults. Cayley Robinson's set designs, costumes and illustrations for Maeterlinck's 'fairy play' *The Blue Bird*, in 1911 saw great acclaim. *The Blue Bird* has since been described as a 'transcendental pantomime' and a 'philosophical Peter Pan,' an important example of Symbolist theatre.²¹⁶ In these guises, enchantment was also connected with discourses of psychology and the unconscious, memory, childhood and fictions of loss in this period.²¹⁷

Theosophical constructs of enchantment were forged through the modern urban environment.²¹⁸ The latter 'with its public crowds, rushed sense of time,' 'overstimulation and impersonality' had fuelled fervent desires to retain mystery, enchantment, slowness and silence. These in turn were gendered as 'feminine',

²¹⁴ Muthesius, (1904-5), pp.52-3. Hind wrote that Robinson was 'one of those inward-looking brooders, seeing things in soft, neutral shades' (1904), p.235

²¹⁵ Bown (2001), pp.1-11

²¹⁶ Wilton, (2007), p.278; Munroe, (2007), p.1

²¹⁷ Stephen Arata, *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin de Siècle: Identity and Empire*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Small and Tate (2003), pp.1-12 and 86-102

²¹⁸ This idea is developed prominently in Owen (c.2004). See also Simon During, *Modern Enchantments: the cultural power of secular magic*, (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 2002) and Rodney K. Engen, *The Age of Enchantment: Beardsley, Dulac and their contemporaries, 1890-1930*, (London: Scala, 2007)

spiritually attuned aspects of life, under siege by materialistic, ‘masculine’ forces of modernity.²¹⁹ In theosophical thought, enchantment could nurture humanity’s spiritual life, particularly important in cities, addressing social problems through the re-spiritualisation of the city, effected through art. Spiritual art enabled humanity to create connections with each other and with the spiritual nature of the Universe. Sidley described in *Orpheus*, 1909, that ‘art is one of the most potent forces working for the regeneration of mankind,’ focussing on the future of the race rather than the ‘mere hunt for pleasure.’²²⁰ Francis Colmer in *Orpheus*, 1910, described that art can enable human beings to be more loving and noble with the result that ‘poverty, misery and all ugliness will speedily be banished from the earth, and the long-looked-for reign of Beauty will begin.’²²¹

Cayley Robinson explored synthetic views of the Universe, through ‘the atmosphere of Fairy-land,’ and through images of women in intimate, cosy domestic interiors. Enchantments were achieved through visual techniques such as an intimate scale of picture and style of painting: delicate, subtle, illustrative.²²² As Hockin described, Cayley Robinson’s works were:

steeped in the feeling of Romance and the atmosphere of Fairy-land...yet there is nothing supernatural – Fairyland is about us all the time in just the home and everyday things²²³

The fairytale is recalled through homeliness and sweet, domesticated subjects, which seem to imply safety and comfort even when broaching, or perhaps especially when broaching, more esoteric, occult or Decadent themes, in *The Renunciants*, *Twilight* or *The Night Watch*.

Cayley Robinson’s works evoked ‘the intense interior glitter of the Victorian tale for children,’ akin to the moment, ‘when we first enter any old giant’s castle, of this cottage in the woods, or that little house’ which are mostly rural (pre-modern) locations.²²⁴ Viewing Cayley Robinson’s interiors could be a fairy tale journey of enchantment, beginning with willingly crossing the threshold, which David in Dickens’ *David Copperfield*, 1849, does in an instant, his gaze taking in the

²¹⁹ Hirsch, (2004), p.xiv, p.xvi

²²⁰ Sidley, (1909?), p.13

²²¹ Francis Colmer, ‘The Outlook of Painting’, *Orpheus*, No.12, (Oct. 1910), pp.204-9, (p.209)

²²² Hockin, (1912), p.29

²²³ Hockin, (1912), p.29

²²⁴ Steedman in Bryden and Floyd, (1999), p.19 and p.26

ramshackle, magical interior, revelling in pleasurable awe, turning the viewer into a child, allowing the play of childish innocence and wonder: 'All this I saw in the first glance after I crossed the threshold - child-like, according to my theory.'²²⁵ As scholar Carolyn Steedman has noted, such viewing journeys incited wonder and trepidation, transporting willing viewers to an enchanted space. Cayley Robinson created such a space, through everything so neatly chosen, 'clean and itemised...[one might have] entered a fairy tale.'²²⁶ Cayley Robinson's temperament was described as 'refined, patient, rather austere, reposeful and very charming.'²²⁷ The grave, sincere nature of many compositions encouraged deliberate, intimate and slow, detailed viewing of careful discovery, like a child poring over a book of fantasy in literature.

In the Edwardian context, such experiences were transposed to adult viewers in art, literature and the theatre.²²⁸ Nicola Bown has discussed the new genre of the 'fairy play' with reference to Maeterlinck alongside J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, (1904) and Walford Graham Robertson's *Pinkie and the Fairies* (1909). A familiar and pivotal moment in the staging of *Peter Pan* was when Peter entreated the audience to clap their hands if they believe in fairies: 'Say quick that you believe!' This type of widespread confidence in magical modes of art, in the power of enchantment, activated the latent powers of Cayley Robinson's works to effect mystical transformations.²²⁹

A small scale and dim light in many works such as *A Winter Evening* and *The Depth of Winter* brought the viewer closer and encouraged respect and hushed reverence. In *The Renunciants*, the artist uses two-dimensionality, a gentle touch and delicate colour scheme, including visible pencil and pastels to deny the usual painterly conventions for watercolour.²³⁰ The work appeared instead to be a page from an illustrated children's book. Cayley Robinson created a visual space in between painting and drawing and between fine art and children's illustration. A matte surface with soft, greyish hues, visible pencil lines, added pastel highlights and other surface elements, all presented an intimate, tactile invitation in opposition to shiny illusionism

²²⁵ Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*, (1849), chapter 3: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/766/766-h/766-h.htm#link2HCH0003> accessed 15th September, 2015

²²⁶ Steedman in Bryden and Floyd, (1999), p.26

²²⁷ 'The Royal Society of British Artists,' *Glasgow Herald*, (Saturday, 28th October, 1899)

²²⁸ Bown, (2001), pp.171-3; Hirsh, (2004), p.225

²²⁹ Bown, (2001), p.172

²³⁰ Smith (2007), p.164

of varnish or high finish. Heightened ‘fairy colours’, including pink, are used in these interiors, while the glow of the fire casts golden, warming light on everyone, like Thomas Hardy’s words in his poem ‘The Self-Unseeing,’ published 1916:

Everything glowed with a gleam;
Yet we were looking away!²³¹

The suggestion of loss and bittersweet memories made through alluding to childhood fantasy, increased the allied sense of urgency to retain fairytale innocence. The Symbolists sought retreat in the female sphere of the domestic in the face of traumatic changes in cities. Cayley Robinson’s works enacted wide-reaching cultural desires for the security and intimacy of the interior, inflected by a new willingness to charge this space with occult and magical forms of spiritual comfort.

Maeterlinck’s *The Blue Bird*, explored through Cayley Robinson’s illustrations, may be examined as an archetypal form of enchantment. The viewing journey through the illustrated book encouraged emotions ranging from awesome inspiration, immensity, vastness and wonder to restorative intimacy, everyday smallness and domesticity. The narrative of the play allowed the viewer to fly, their imagination to soar through fantasy spaces, whilst bringing them back to the comfort of home by asserting that that is where they always remained, by the comforting, crackling fire. At the end the children return home to ‘normality,’ but with a renewed, spiritually infused aspect. The stage directions at the beginning of Act VI, scene 2 described:

The same setting as in ACT I, but the objects, the walls and the atmosphere all appear incomparably and magically fresher, happier, more smiling. The daylight penetrates gaily through the chinks of the closed shutters.

In their new mood of enlightenment, contentment and spiritual knowledge, the children become appreciative of the wonder in the everyday and their cottage home looks different, brighter, shinier, ‘more smiling,’ endowed with positive spirituality. Cayley Robinson’s illustration, ‘The Children by the Fireside Recounting their Adventures,’ 1911, suggested this potent spirituality, whilst still emanating a charged, ominous mood, (Fig. 3.35)²³² In Cayley Robinson’s illustration, ‘The Kingdom of the

²³¹ Thomas Hardy, *Selected Poems*, (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd, 1916), ‘The Self-Unseeing’, p.49. See also Thomas Hardy, *Selected poems*, edited by Tim Armstrong, (London: Longman, 1993)

²³² Maeterlinck, (1911), Act VI, scene 2, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/8606/8606-h/8606-h.htm>, accessed 13th October, 2016:

TYLTYL (*after taking a long look around him*) Daddy, mummy, what have you done to the house?... It's just as it was, but it's much prettier....

Future,' (Fig. 3.36), the physical world of the city lies unseen beneath a larger dream space, wherein the magical journey is taking place. Reassuring and peaceful, the simple suburban houses remain ever-present, a familiar constant. The enchanted journey and the flight of imagination for the children, represented via an efflorescence of blue birds circling in Cayley Robinson's poster, (Fig. 3.37), is mirrored in that of the viewer. An expansive journey, soaring like the birds results in a comforting ending, in coming back down to earth. Cayley Robinson successfully navigates between the two states of wonder and euphoria and of comforting stability, deploying a fairy tale mode of narrative which provided secure resolution. As well as echoing Symbolist desires for the highs and lows of emotion in a spiritual experience, Cayley Robinson's images intertwined the spiritual and material life as in theosophical thought, encouraging the experience of wonder through the everyday.

Icons and Talismans

Cayley Robinson's use of objects illustrates how his paintings radiated nostalgia, enchantment and occult forms of spiritual belonging simultaneously, their meanings and personal spiritual effects were completed by viewers. As well as the artist's reproductions from the Pre-Raphaelite tradition, his use of repeating motifs and mannerisms from within his own repertoire were noted in reviews. Martin Wood intimated that some may find Cayley Robinson's works 'limited, and marks its repetitions.'²³³ Hind noted how Cayley Robinson's designs for paintings run in a 'narrow groove.'²³⁴ However, Baldry, in an apparent contradiction, described at length how Cayley Robinson, unlike other artists, does *not* use mannerisms to conceal artistic weakness, rather his:

originality [provides] freedom from repetition of stereotyped motives...he is not satisfied merely to use over again in a commonplace fashion material which is at the disposal of every worker. He gives fresh food for thought...[He proves] to us that there are still unexhausted possibilities in art to lead us away from the crowd of imitators.'²³⁵

DADDY TYL How do you mean, it's prettier?...

TYLTYL Why, yes, everything has been painted and made to look new, everything is clean and polished.... It was not like that last year....

²³³ Wood, (1910), p.204

²³⁴ Hind, (1904), p.235

²³⁵ Baldry, (1895-6), p.465

This raises a question of how the appropriation and repetition of visual forms may be reconciled with a notion of artistic practise which is fresh and new. Cayley Robinson wrote to Baldry in 1896 describing how ‘epic painting, clever mannerisms, forms and colours without the heart of nature, these “soulless self reflections of man’s skill” seem to me like empty garments.’²³⁶ This supplied an answer for Cayley Robinson’s artworks, in the meanings of such appropriations as they were enacted through the processes of making and viewing paintings.

Cayley Robinson’s deliberate use and re-use of visual forms meant that familiarity with them could thus be assumed and viewing could become a spiritual process rather than a way of gaining new information. An icon in religious culture was not a representation, rather, a mode for the engagement with higher thoughts and experiences, a ‘visual manifestation of a saintly presence,’ a channel or conduit to a higher place, dissolving and suspending time and space and normal laws of the Universe in the moment of viewing.²³⁷ Viewers may form emotional attachment to the icon, through a repetitive viewing pattern, encouraged and enacted by recurring compositions of paintings; both painting and viewing become practises akin to devotion. Suffragette Olive Hockin, a member of the ATC was arrested in possession of militant arsenal and in her studio, police found, alongside books of theosophy, prints of G. F. Watts, *Love and Death* and Burne-Jones, *The Golden Staircase*.²³⁸ These images may have been viewed in a personal, repetitive viewing pattern. Equally, recurring Suffragette images of Joan of Arc for example, were iconic. European painters had become drawn to such symbolic, ritualistic languages from the late nineteenth century. Some Mackintosh chairs featured talismanic motifs, such as abstracted forms of roses, which along with circles and organic forms recurred as a secret symbolic language across a range of artworks by the Glasgow Four.²³⁹ Hermann Muthesius noted the use of ‘gem-like effects’ of small decorative areas in mostly white interiors.²⁴⁰ Icons and talismans were of interest to Symbolists who sought in art

²³⁶ Letter from Frederick Cayley Robinson to A. L. Baldry, (Sunday 17th May, 1896, V&A National Art Library)

²³⁷ Facos, (2009), pp.94-5, p.97

²³⁸ Hockin’s arrest is described in Turner, (2009), p.111

²³⁹ The symbolic imagery of the Glasgow Four was explored in detail in Neat (1999)

²⁴⁰ Hermann Muthesius, ‘Die Glasgower Kunstbewegung: Charles R. Mackintosh und Margaret Macdonald-Mackintosh,’ *Dekorative Kunst*, vol. 9, 1902, pp.193-221, (p.217), in Crawford, (1995), p.94

transcendence of the physical world and who deployed religious iconography to evoke religious ecstasy.

Fra Angelico's *The Annunciation*, begun c.1437 and situated in the communal area of the dormitory hallway of the San Marco monastery, Florence, was physically integrated within the lives of the Dominican community and functioned for communal worship, in a similar way. Photographs from a guidebook to the monastery in Florence, 2011, reveal the location clearly, where the painting was viewed repeatedly by the Dominican monks (Fig. 3.38 and 3.39). Fra Angelico's images did not provide new information, but presented simplified, iconic forms which created mystical relationships with the artwork.²⁴¹ This was an important example of art which could continue to forge and bolster up spiritual collectivity of the group, as well as communicating to less regular guests to the monastery.²⁴² The Dominican friars, of which Fra Angelico was one, were valued within theosophical thought. Their lives were seen as akin to the trials of theosophical initiates, in their self-discipline and humble self-sacrifice, conscientiousness and shared devotional practise. They provided a model for maintaining both quiet introspection and collective spirituality, an inspiring precedent for modern forms of consciousness, of integrating the individual into a greater whole through spiritual interconnection. Fra Angelico was also a model for Catholic, artistic discipline and sincerity, who valued the principles of composition, inspiring Denis. These same traits were of critical importance to Cayley Robinson, whose conscientious methods painting architectural forms and reverence to the Pre-Raphaelite tradition were highlighted positively in reviews; the artist juxtaposed devotional religiosity with artistic practise.²⁴³

Blavatsky had worked to limit the role of ritual and mysterious ceremony within theosophy. Such practises were connected for example with the Rosicrucians or the Order of the Golden Dawn. Blavatsky sought distance from the magic and miracles of Christianity or Spiritualist seances.²⁴⁴ Members of the Theosophical Society were led through stages of initiation in a hierarchical structure, using

²⁴¹ Kuenzli, (c.2010), p.125

²⁴² *Ibid*, p.119, p.126

²⁴³ Note re Denis is from Kuenzli (c.2010), p.119. The convent or institutional was a subject of feminist debate. Cobbe, for example, argued against the enforced rigmarole, discipline and denial of individuality which female institutions could mean for women (Hamilton (2006), p.155) Such self-sacrifice did not fit with Cobbe's agenda for female emancipation.

²⁴⁴ Oppenheim, (1985), p.165

languages of empirical science which appealed to the middle and upper class membership.²⁴⁵ However, despite Blavatsky 'eschewing ceremonial trappings of priesthood', members nevertheless accused her of creating a new sort of priesthood. Blavatsky's doctrine was based on mystical reverence to adepts in Tibet. Members wrote about art in a pseudo-religious manner and experienced an "'afterglow" of church-worship' through Theosophical Society activities.²⁴⁶ Under Besant's leadership from 1907, the Theosophical Society drew more deeply on elements of worship and faith. Besant reinstated Leadbeater, originally a priest of the Church of England, and developed feminist constructs of the female Messiah.

Charged with the artist's spiritual desires and in-keeping with the culture of the Theosophical Society after 1907, Cayley Robinson's paintings became talismans of a new, more secular religious culture. *A Winter Evening* and *The Depth of Winter* could function as ritual religious objects, having the inspiring effect of a sermon, re-confirming occult allegiance and providing a focus for group connection with those 'in sympathy,' as in church worship. In these paintings visual forms and objects become signs and symbols, long used in occult practise as a way of recognising fellow initiates and of maintaining a secret coded language.²⁴⁷

Those who perceived the mystical qualities, actively seeking unconscious effects and mystical transfigurations included Cecil French, who owned a pendant of *A Winter Evening*. The miniaturisation of the painting into the pendant compressed the image into the 'mind's eye' of the imagination, or the 'inner Eye' of the artist as described by Lewis Hind.²⁴⁸ Carolyn Steedman has discussed the desire for the miniature, the joys of creating a silent version of the interior, neat, clean, precious and fairy-tale like, protected from 'real life', as bound up with ideas of childhood and 'the pleasures of littleness'.²⁴⁹ As discussed by Susan Stewart in *On Longing*, 1993, the miniature can have a pleasurable effect within the workings of nostalgia, kitsch,

²⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p.167

²⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p.167

²⁴⁷ As in cults like the Freemasons and the Golden Dawn. See Hargrave Jennings, *The Rosicrucians: Their Rites and Mysteries*, (Place of publication not identified, publisher not identified, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, orig. 1870) and Alison Butler, *Victorian occultism and the making of modern magic: Invoking tradition*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011)

²⁴⁸ 'the emotional and ethical contribution to the world that he sees with the inner eye,' Hind, (1904), p.238

²⁴⁹ Steedman in Bryden and Floyd (1999), p.26

childhood and memory.²⁵⁰ The process of miniaturising the picture for a pendant demonstrated how images could be further transformed to become part of deeply personal, reflective viewing experience, raising questions about the visual form and normative viewing hierarchies.²⁵¹

The transposition of the image into a pendant, manifested the women's ability to 'impart grace' or to haunt the unconscious of the viewer in a more pervasive manner, like portable religious icons of the Madonna. The practise is reminiscent of older methods to alter viewing processes, making a picturesque view from nature using a glass in the eighteenth century and the Victorian convention of the convex mirror, originating in Jan Van Eyck's *Arnolfini Portrait* (1434, National Gallery, London). Looking at the pendant may have been like looking into a spherical glass, such as an orb light, which appeared in several works including *Orphans*, referencing Frank Dicksee's *Crystal Gazer*, (1894), John William Waterhouse, *The Crystal Ball*, (1902) and George Frederic Watts *The All-Pervading* (1887-90, Tate Gallery, London). Such viewing acts manipulated perspective to create domesticated forms, endowed with pleasures of ownership and intimate connection through wear, reinforcing properties of interiority and resonance.

Francis Colmer summarised the idea of using known objects to effect transformations, intimating in *Orpheus*, 1910 how the 'new art uses the forms of the old as symbols or hieroglyphics to express more complicated ideas than the elder artists tried to depict.' Colmer continued:

No, it is not the function of Art to vie with or imitate NATURE...The painter has to translate his impressions and it is by a series of accepted conventions, by a species of hieroglyphics, in fact that he attains his end²⁵²

Cayley Robinson turned known objects such as cloth or chairs, Pre-Raphaelite or occult references, into 'a species of hieroglyphics,' encouraging visual forms to function as condensed visual shorthand for meditation, encapsulating core occult ideas within synthetic images. Hanging cloth, Mackintosh chairs, Pre-Raphaelite references

²⁵⁰ Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, (Durham, N.C.; London: Duke University Press, 1993)

²⁵¹ Further research would be needed to determine the details of the physical features of the pendant, its production and use. Peter Nahum, Leicester Galleries, London, notes that the pendant is in the Cecil French Bequest: <http://www.leicestergalleries.com/19th-20th-century-paintings/d/a-winter-evening/10392> accessed 31st August, 2016

²⁵² Colmer, (Oct. 1910), pp.207-8

and women's faces could function as icons while the resulting whole of the Cayley Robinson interior, using such forms synthesised and repeated, the art object itself, gained iconic value.²⁵³

Objects are used to highlight the possibility of magical transformations or alterations in comfortable viewing processes. Martin Wood also described how everyday objects in Cayley Robinson's interiors, 'tables and chairs and cotton dresses [were] all of this world, all objective, [yet becoming] of another world.'²⁵⁴ Ultimately the visual remains a veil or curtain, concealing the true nature of the Universe. The more beautiful or enchanting the visual forms, the more they could, unconsciously, connect the viewer with the Maya, which was always the true purpose of the artworks.²⁵⁵ As Baldry wrote in 1896, Cayley Robinson's: 'admiration for pictures of a symbolical and unrealistic character arises from his habit of looking below the mere surface of Nature, and of trying to express something of her mystery and profundity.'²⁵⁶ The heightened legibility of references to the art of the Pre-Raphaelites, inciting Bate to believe Cayley Robinson to be one of the best followers, was really a way of undermining such certainty and knowledge. Any solidity of references to the Pre-Raphaelites or the middle ages for example, were overridden in the emphasis on 'the All,' the Universal, on sublimation. The ineffability beyond remained the constant target.²⁵⁷ Cayley Robinson's visual appropriations forged belonging and spiritual comfort found within the occult world, through the sharing of images and symbolic languages. The viewing experience of revived objects encouraged a new zeal for attaining shared consciousness or a universal soul, heightened by the conditions of modern life.²⁵⁸

The Synthetic and the Intimate

A comment in *The Times*, 1923 regarding *The Long Journey* described the multiple functioning of objects in Cayley Robinson's interiors:

²⁵³ Brendan Cassidy, 'Introduction: Iconography, Texts and Audience,' in Brendan Cassidy (ed.), *Iconography at the Crossroads: Papers from the Colloquium Sponsored by the Index of Christian Art, Princeton University, 23-4 March, 1990*, (Princeton New Jersey: 1993), pp.3-11

²⁵⁴ Wood, (1910), p.206

²⁵⁵ This idea is noted re Delville in McKenzie, (2009), p.60

²⁵⁶ Baldry (1895-6), p.471

²⁵⁷ 'the All' described in Blavatsky (1889), location 275 1

²⁵⁸ As Maeterlinck noted in (1897), pp.72-3

there is in all Mr Robinson's works an uncanny power of extracting significance from material objects – the handle of the door, the strap of the window, and the rolled up blinds for example. By their very familiarity they are made to contribute to a heart-aching mood which everybody must have experienced at some time in their lives.²⁵⁹

This article highlighted how familiarity and comfort were conjoined with an 'uncanny power' and spiritual 'significance' in the same objects. Cecil French wrote in 1922: 'The problem of Cayley Robinson is how to combine the opposing attitudes – the synthetic with the intimate.'²⁶⁰ Woman was the mode through which the artist resolved this conflict.²⁶¹

Spiritual woman functioned as the medium in Cayley Robinson's interiors, directing varied types of viewings and harnessing the transformative powers of art. French's pendant speaks to woman's role as spiritual guide through objects such as the crystal ball or the tarot cards, while French also called Cayley Robinson's works 'talismans.'²⁶² Aesthetic forms and practises collaborated to create charged images as a catalyst for personal contemplation and woman herself functioned as the talisman. Indeed, woman effects a number of profound spiritual experiences, projecting magical properties through her visual presence.

The complexity of combining a traditional domestic female role with theosophical views of the Universe, profound occult ideas of initiation, transfiguration and belonging, may be illustrated by two statements from Cayley Robinson's letter to Baldry, 1896 which outlined his 'idea of art'. Cayley Robinson affirmed his praise for Raphael, sealed by his revelatory visit to Florence:

I think Raphael is much more original than has generally been allowed by late writers. The nobleness and sweetness of expression of the figures and the wonderful qualities of design [in the cartoons at South Kensington are one of the grandest achievements of art.²⁶³

²⁵⁹ 'Watercolour Exhibition: Pictures by Well-Known Artists,' *The Times*, (Friday, 19th October, 1923), p.15

²⁶⁰ French, (1922), p.298

²⁶¹ Facos, (2009), p.96

²⁶² A painting featuring this theme was William Shackleton's *Line of Life* (1915), oil on canvas, 95.2 x 101.6, Tate Gallery, London, in Christian, (1989), cat. 341, pp.168-9

²⁶³ Letter from Frederick Cayley Robinson to A. L. Baldry, (Sunday 17th May, 1896, V&A National Art Library)

However, while using terms which accord with a conservative view of women, Cayley Robinson's words were a crucial component in an argument for the innate spiritual qualities in art. Cayley Robinson located haunting, magical and spiritual resonance in canonical works, by Raphael, Michelangelo and Durer, continuing to affirm: 'The Gothic inventions of Albrecht Durer charm and interest one, they seem saturated with the feeling of "Maya" the illusionary nature of sentient existence.'²⁶⁴ Cayley Robinson appeared to comb the Old Masters and 'primitives' for spiritual resonance and occult meanings. This yearning for spiritual experience and profound insight echoed the activities of theosophists (and occultists) poring over ancient texts and systems of belief, collating recurring imagery and secret occult symbolic forms reappearing over the centuries in their search for new contemporary meanings through the resulting 'divine wisdom'. Through acts of cultural inquiry and re-discovery, traditional forms gained new meanings and functions, resurrected to modern ends, within the synthesising agendas evident in Symbolism, theosophy and feminism. Feminists revisited the distant past eager to find inspiration, to appropriate and re-make historic features, newly charged with female spirituality.

Through powers to enchant and haunt the viewer, the female figures in *A Winter Evening* and *The Depth of Winter* offered possibilities of transfigurations of the known world. However, the nature of those transformations are unconfirmed and indeterminate, their faces were inscrutable; the viewing of the pictures therefore remained problematic, it could be immensely comforting, inspiring, or insuperably disturbing. Greig described 'the apparent danger, [in Robinson's works] lurked in abstruse symbolism, where reason might be lost like a fog-bound ship at sea.'²⁶⁵ Such art runs the risk of being 'lost in the depths it attempts to fathom.'²⁶⁶ Martin Wood described in 1910 regarding Maeterlinck's *The Blue Bird*:

The play was wholly atmosphere, like all the rest of Maeterlinck's works, outer things only counting as symbols, as the expression of the inner forces with which the author is concerned. His world to me is not Mr Cayley Robinson's world, and yet perhaps, among English artists [he]

²⁶⁴ *Ibid*

²⁶⁵ Greig, (1927-8), p.64

²⁶⁶ Baldry (1895-6), p.471

has...drawn to the very threshold of the regions of the sub-conscious where Reason has to confess herself at sea.²⁶⁷

Woman oversaw viewing processes which enabled viewers to engage in immense considerations of the human condition, to access portals to magical modes of thinking, effect transfigurations through occult suggestions, experience the immortal and transcendent as timelessness. Eternal and ambiguous dream spaces were privileged over temporal certainties.

In her role to reconcile the profound and the everyday, woman was both a disturbing medium for abstruse symbolism and a stabilising factor, who 'saved' the artist from works being too veiled, foggy, lost at sea, through her motherhood, morality and humble guise. Woman acted as 'a glimmering beacon at the harbour of a land of half lights and flickering shadows.'²⁶⁸ Baldry found the paintings of interiors such as *A Winter Evening*, 'more humanly interesting and less veiled behind a cloud of abstruse symbolism.'²⁶⁹ Lewis Hind explored the bewildering scale and structure of these compositions: 'cloistral, mannered at times, lapsing occasionally into forms that lean to the bizarre.'²⁷⁰ When overwhelmed by 'repetitions' or inundated by Cayley Robinson's visual experimentations and tricks of composition, the resolution and ordinary nature of the women, may bring the viewer back.²⁷¹ Greig described, 'But a visit to Florence after his marriage in 1898 saved him,' implying it was both the art of Florence and his marriage which grounded him, removing him from the tarnishing suggestions of Decadence.²⁷²

Through the mode of woman, Cayley Robinson explored the relationship between the spiritual, social and political in the contexts of theosophy, feminism and modernity. In contrast to Denis for example, for whom the spiritual life was separate and superior to 'nature and civilisation,' Cayley Robinson sought experiences of the spiritual through the real, with woman as the constant arbiter between the 'real' world and the fantasy or spiritual world.²⁷³ In the viewing of Cayley Robinson's paintings, like the end of Maeterlinck's *The Blue Bird*, the viewer is brought safely back to the

²⁶⁷ Wood, (1910), p.206

²⁶⁸ Greig (1927-8), p.64

²⁶⁹ Baldry, (1895-6), p.468

²⁷⁰ Hind, (1904), p.235

²⁷¹ 'Art Exhibitions', *The Times*, (5th December, 1908), p.10

²⁷² Greig, (1927), p.64

²⁷³ Denis discussed in Kuenzli, (c.2010)

modern, urban environment, which despite such flights of the imagination and through the reassuring visual mode of domestic womanhood, they never left.

Part Four: Feminism and Spiritual Expectancy

Despite his being mythologised in the 1890s as an isolated mystic working in St. Ives, in a 'gaunt studio, built on the verge of the Atlantic Ocean...not minding...whether [he lived] in the twentieth century or the twelfth,' Cayley Robinson consistently painted modern urban apartment interiors.²⁷⁴ Later works, created after he moved to a new studio apartment block in Kensington, London, in 1914, reveal a London setting interpreted as 'the quieter Bloomsbury squares' even more prominently out of the larger window.²⁷⁵ These works include *Interior - Evening*, 1915, *Evening in London*, 1920 and *The Old Nurse*, 1926. A writer in *The Times*, 1906, complained: 'Mr Robinson has so much genuine power that one longs for him to shake off his mannerisms and to come closer to the living reality.'²⁷⁶ However, it was precisely by painting settings *near* to but not quite in the 'living reality' of Bloomsbury apartments which caused potent, disturbing and suggestive effects, more so than fantasist paintings, due to the uneasy co-existence of the profound and the everyday and modes of womanhood which combine the spiritual, traditional and domestic and the modern.²⁷⁷ Hockin asserted that Cayley Robinson:

is quite at his best in painting not the elfin creatures and water maidens that Rackham and other painters of fairy-tales delight in so much – but in quite commonplace everyday people. He does not idealise them, in the sense of bestowing upon them some glory from without; but he sees always, what only great artists can see, the essential inner beauty of common things and common people.²⁷⁸

Martin Wood also described in 1910, that when Cayley Robinson paints everyday objects and the 'simplest themes, [when he] comes down to reality, his strong sense

²⁷⁴ Hind, (1904), p.235

²⁷⁵ 'Mr F. Cayley Robinson: Obituary,' *The Times*, (6th January, 1927), p.12. Robinson lived at 1 Lansdowne House, under the patronage of Sir Edmund Davis the South African millionaire who commissioned the artist to create the *Acts of Mercy* mural scheme.

²⁷⁶ *The Times*, Tuesday, (16th October, 1906), p. 15

²⁷⁷ *Ibid*

²⁷⁸ Hockin, (1912), pp.28-30, (p.30)

of the mystery that is behind everything is more apparent.’²⁷⁹ Despite superficially seeming escapist, through enchantment and a fairytale mode, the artist thrusts his imaginative sense of fairy tales, wonder, mystery into the daily urban condition, bringing the unknowable and psychological elements into the realm of the real.

Artistic enchantments, working to re-spiritualise the city, were connected with contemporary feminism. According to feminists like Charlotte Despard, women’s participation in public life and the ‘universe of matter’ which included the world of politics, offered the prospect of these areas being ‘redeemed and sanctified’ through women’s advanced spirituality.²⁸⁰ Women could be the medium for enchantments and hauntings pervasive in our everyday lives, providing we nurtured our spiritual selves and allowed our latent abilities to see them. Hockin discussed Cayley Robinson’s illustrations to *The Blue Bird* in 1912:

Romance and Beauty are at our doors – even if that door be one of a hundred others that line the interminable street of a suburb. There is no need for costly shows, decorations, fabrics and ornaments. Away with palaces and robes...Beauty is not found at the end of a pilgrimage but is with us day after day if we will but open our eyes and see...And the reason for the great success of these pictures surely lies in the fact that in this fundamental thought both writer and painter are in accord. For this also is the message of Maeterlinck. The greatest happiness and the greatest joys are things that come to everyone – to rich and poor alike – the continual homely joys of everyday...for the Blue Bird is waiting at home for the children when they return.²⁸¹

Theosophy offered transcendent possibilities for the female spirit and imagination, but through organisations such as the Orpheus Lodge, also provided practical opportunities for female camaraderie, autonomy and agency. Women as theosophist-feminists, could explore ‘spiritual states’, contributing to their own fulfilment and emancipation and considered the battle for suffrage as a spiritual campaign. Cayley Robinson’s female figures possess the past and the future through ideas such as reincarnation and the planes of existence, defying limitations of the physical body,

²⁷⁹ Wood, (1910), p.205

²⁸⁰ Charlotte Despard, *Theosophy and the Woman’s Movement*, (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1913), pp.15-16, in Dixon, (2001), p.189

²⁸¹ Hockin, (1912), pp.28-30, (p.30)

time and space, but they remain a constant meeting point of the inner and outer ‘real’ contemporary worlds. With images of spiritual transcendence, the public sphere ever-present out of the window and an indeterminate position caught between the inner and outer life, the female figures expressed the concerns of feminism in this period.

Feminism, Spirituality and the Future

Spirituality could offer aspirational and visionary thinking for women, helping them sustain hope in the long and demoralising battle for the vote. Spiritual modes of thinking could help women imagine and enact transgressions of the norms of the society they lived in, buoying up confidence and suggesting future possibilities to be fought for. The spiritual thinking of feminists and the related imagining of alternative futures underwrote and inspired practical Suffragette actions, evidenced for example by Gertrude Colmore’s *Suffragette Sally*, 1911, political writings by feminist Charlotte Despard, as well as feminist fantasy and utopian works of the period. Theosophical writings expressed challenging slippages between gender roles in various central concepts including reincarnation. As intimated by Alfred Percy Sinnett, who wrote the central theosophical text *Esoteric Buddhism* in 1883, ‘the division of the sexes is less severe as many men will have previously been a woman.’²⁸² Elizabeth Severs wrote in an article in *Theosophy in Scotland*, 1910, that ‘perfected men’ of theosophical doctrine have previously been a woman, ‘have known the mother’s love for her firstborn.’²⁸³ Theosophy, alongside its radical transcendence of normal finite boundaries of space and time posited the eschewing of normal gender relations within contemporary society.

The relationship between spiritual and political expectancy may be traced in articles within theosophical journals such as *Orpheus*, *Theosophy in Scotland* and in material relating to the Orpheus Lodge, Edinburgh.²⁸⁴ Material relating to the Orpheus Lodge of the Edinburgh Theosophical Society, situated on King Street, Edinburgh, evidences the close relationship between theosophy, feminism and suffrage. The Orpheus Lodge recorded Isabella M. Pagan as President in 1910. According to the

²⁸² Sinnett, (1905), p.164

²⁸³ Elizabeth Severs, ‘The Masters’, *Theosophy in Scotland*, Vol. 1, (Mar., 1910 – April 1911), pp.148-9, (p.148)

²⁸⁴ Articles may be traced through *Theosophy in Scotland*, including ‘Book Review: W. Lyon Blease, *The Emancipation of English Women*, (London: Constable & Co. Ltd)’, *Theosophy in Scotland*, Vol. 1, (Mar., 1910 – April 1911), p.27.

minute books, women led and dominated numerically most meetings. For example at a business meeting of members Monday 11th March, 1912, the minute books recorded that there were nine members present including Miss Pagan (President), Miss Pinkham (Vice-President) and other, mostly single, women who also served as Treasurer and Secretary. Women conducted intellectual activities such as theosophical lectures, a range of art-related activities, plays, recitals, discussions and teas, followed by a variety of other work during the First World War, in addition to the administrative and financial management of the Lodge. Activities were planned to support the suffrage campaign.²⁸⁵ For example, an entry for May, 1914 included a number of newspaper cuttings pasted into the minute book. One article is entitled: ‘Theosophists and Votes’ and described:

to promote the cause of Woman’s Suffrage and to further the woman’s movement generally are the aims of a league recently formed in the Theosophical Order of Service. This new league will cooperate as far as possible with all organisations and individuals working for the same object...its object being to help the movement by the distinctive methods taught by theosophy, particularly by meditation²⁸⁶

The secretary of the new league was based in central London, demonstrating the connections with the London Suffragettes through modern urban networks and how spiritual activities could further this political cause.

At an informal meeting of the Orpheus Lodge, Edinburgh, described in the minute books, 20th June, 1914, there was an address by a Mrs Baily on the history and activities of the Lodge including especial reference to the desirability of art-related activities. The society wanted:

to represent art in its widest sense and have lectures and group studies on all sorts of other art subjects such as painting sculpture, poetry and handicraft. There is plenty of suitable material in the artworld of a religious, mystical and symbolical significance²⁸⁷

²⁸⁵ Orpheus Lodge Minute book, 1910-1915, Edinburgh TS, King Street, Edinburgh, an undated entry (probably close to the 19th February, 1914) listed many activities that Miss Pagan had undertaken including a lecture tour and speaking to the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies, Edinburgh.

²⁸⁶ Orpheus Lodge Minute book, 1910-1915, Edinburgh TS, King Street, Edinburgh, entry 27th May, 1914

²⁸⁷ Orpheus Lodge Minute book, 1910-1915, Edinburgh TS, King Street, Edinburgh, entry 20th June, 1914

It was affirmed that such activities would not detract from or interfere with the usual, federated activities of the Theosophical Society but would add to them. Spiritual thinking could aid women's imagination of possible futures and expectancy, as well as providing opportunities for agency. As well as mediating experiences for viewers, women, through the matrix of feminism, art and theosophy were exploring their own experiences of spiritual art. Cayley Robinson's images coincided with such exchanges. The artist made visual allusions to the possibilities of spiritual connection, to the 'superhuman' spiritual qualities of figures, to spiritual expectancy through darkness, light and prophetic insight and to a variety of transfigurations - through flight, movement, transcendence, escape.²⁸⁸

Victorian feminists had used imagery of the domestic woman and confinement to critique women's social limitations. Literature of the late nineteenth century increasingly featured women in limited spaces, recognisable as a feminist metaphor for societal 'imprisonment.'²⁸⁹ The bird cage had been used as an image of oppressed women and Frances Power Cobbe linked the anti-vivisection campaigns with the 'woman question.'²⁹⁰ Ibsen had also used the metaphor of *The Doll's House* in 1879. Cayley Robinson includes a doll's house in *Childhood* and a bird cage in *Interior*, 1915. The various compositional features of Cayley Robinson's interiors include encasement, two-dimensionality and limited light and also contest and question proscribed societal roles for women.

In Cayley Robinson's paintings, bars are suggested by a number of vertical forms of entrapment. Tense, geometrical features such as classical pillars feature in many works including *Youth, Reminiscence*, (Fig. 3.40), *The Bridge*, (Fig. 3.41), *Pastoral* and *Orphans*. In other works such as *The Two Sisters*, (1908), (Fig. 3.9) illustrations from *The Book of Quaker Saints* (1914), (Fig. 3.42) and designs for *The Blue Bird* such as (Fig. 3.8), trees provide a pattern of vertical obstructions. Vertical forms of stone and wood recur as trapping or cluttering obstructive agents, denying space in the form of the harp, and the ambiguous, polished wooden form (possibly a chair back) in *Interior*, 1915 (Fig. 3.7). Visual entrapment is repeatedly effected by tables in confined, claustrophobic compositions, including *A Winter Evening* and *The*

²⁸⁸ The description 'superhuman' is from Swiney, (1897), p.38

²⁸⁹ Bryden (1999), pp.1-17, (pp.4-5)

²⁹⁰ Barbara Caine, *Victorian Feminists*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), (1992), pp.105-6

Depth of Winter, indicating a lack of personal space experienced by women in the home and made more unsettling by a high, dungeon-like, sloped window.²⁹¹ Captive women, imprisonment and the inescapable window, echoed Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*, 1892, who also deployed dimmed light to connote the incarceration of her heroine:

At night in any kind of light, in twilight, candle light, lamplight, and worst of all by moonlight, it [the wallpaper in her room] becomes bars! The outside pattern I mean, and the woman behind it is as plain as can be.²⁹²

In Gilman's polemical and nightmarish text, the imprisoned woman creeps about, half-height, and exists behind wallpaper, animated at night. Such forms highlighted physical oppressions, boundaries and limiting rules which demarcated women's lives. The cultural context of Cayley Robinson's later works saw female Suffragettes, including Olive Hockin, imprisoned for their militant activities.²⁹³ Visual material relating to the Suffrage campaign featured women imprisoned, with a similar high window (Fig. 3.43). Suffragettes were inspired by the religious imagery of triumph through persecution within Olive Schreiner's *Dreams*, which was read in prison.²⁹⁴ This context added new meaning to the dungeon window in many works, including *A Winter Evening* and *The Depth of Winter* and brought a closer visual alliance with feminist critique.

Maeterlinck's plays also referenced the emancipation struggle, wrote A.L. Little in *Theosophy in Scotland*, 1911-12, quoting a female character who states: 'the happiness I would live not in darkness.'²⁹⁵ Maeterlinck implied hope was present from within darkness. The King in *Alladine and Palomides*, 1899 had exclaimed: 'Look my children, how dark it is in this room. But I have only to open a blind and see! All the light of the sky! All the light of the sun!' Women in Cayley Robinson's works are endowed with the divine insight that dark will become light, through aesthetics which enact many visual contradictions, where one state anticipates the

²⁹¹ Bryden, (1999), p.12; Steedman in Bryden (1999), p.24. See also Carolyn W. de la L. Oulton, 'I am not by nature domestic:' Mary Cholmondeley and the Politics of Home, in Adrienne E. Gavin, Carolyn W. de la L. Oulton (eds.), *Writing Women of the Fin de Siècle: Authors of Change*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp.85-97 on the confining nature of domestic space in modernity

²⁹² Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, (London: Virago, 2002 edn, first published by Virago, 1981, orig.1892), p.26

²⁹³ Turner, (2009), p.111

²⁹⁴ Heilmann, (2004), pp.129-30

²⁹⁵ Little, (1911-12), p.23

opposite. Setting many interior paintings at the ‘close of day’, ‘twilight’ also implies the inevitability of the sunrise, a new dawn, in the morning. While dishevelled, injured and sick men in various states of undress stand outside the hospital in *The Doctor*, part of the *Acts of Mercy* mural scheme, (1920) (Fig.s 3.20 and 3.21), women oversee and care for them in crisp, neat nursing uniforms. These female figures witness the dawn of the new day which casts sunlight over the shadow they stand in. One holds a large key by their side and rings the bell to commence the working day.²⁹⁶ The figures in Cayley Robinson’s interior ‘caves’ have the power of perception of invisible forms of spirit, of higher insight than that available through rational methods of the academic or learned.

This prophetic insight may be compared with constructs of the Sybil, revived in the late nineteenth century, of interest to feminists and a figure which Cayley Robinson painted in *The Last of the Sybils*, 1920 (Fig.3.44). Miss Pagan, President of the Orpheus Lodge described in a pageant held in Edinburgh, 1911, ‘the great Grey Sibyl wav[ing] the gods of ancient Greece away’ in a gesture of triumph or usurpation.²⁹⁷ Sibyls possessed mental power and authority through divinity and their knowledge was, like the women’s in these interiors, ‘opaque and enigmatic, no more than “signs and symbols.”’²⁹⁸ Though in Virgil’s narrative, Sybils exist in a cave, representations by female artists from the 1860s had emphasised the figures’ contemplation and interpretation, rather than the gloomy, cluttered cave interiors, coupled with corporeal disturbance and frenzy, of witches and sorceresses in art. Instead of female knowledge being deviant, irrational and rapturous, Joanna Boyce and Julia Margaret Cameron presented authoritative female figures which as historian Deborah Cherry described, are ‘poised, calm and contemplative.’²⁹⁹ Rather than the wildness of the witch’s cave, Boyce’s image deployed convent architecture, similar to

²⁹⁶ Schupbach, (2009), p.15. Emily Ford, artist and campaigner for women’s rights described imagery of female emancipation in terms of spirituality and a movement toward light, painting the picture *Towards the Dawn*, which was donated to Newnham College, Cambridge, 1890 by her friend Millicent Fawcett. See Cherry, (2000), p.210

²⁹⁷ ‘When the great Grey Sibyl waved the gods of ancient Greece away, could not a wondrous choir of angels have replaced them? Stately and strong like the archangels of Orcagna, or gentle and tender and clad in the rainbow hues of Fra Angelico, or sportive and playful as the child angels of the great venetian Masters.’ I. M. Pagan, ‘Pageant by Sir Patrick Geddes: The Masque of Learning,’ *Theosophy in Scotland*, Vol. 2, (May 1911-April 1912), p.160

²⁹⁸ Cherry discussed Virgil, *Aenid*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, (London: Heinemann, 1916, 1978), book VI, lines 42-123; book III, lines 443-52, in (2000), p.165

²⁹⁹ Cherry, (2000), p.165

Rossetti's *Ecce Ancilla Domini*. Cayley Robinson's work equally added nobility and grace to a construct of women's knowledge and insight combining female sanctity and moral righteousness with authority, implying spiritual worthiness in commanding knowledge, prophecy and the future. Such relationships were maintained within the languages of the feminist campaign for the suffrage.

The figures in *A Winter Evening* and *The Depth of Winter* had lifeless, frozen or two-dimensional forms and gravitate like ghosts between recurring compositions. These visual efforts heightened the sense of the women as 'types', as roles rather than individuals, which were increasingly mutable, mobile and shifting. Such older conventions, it is suggested, can, and should be, questioned, as was occurring within feminist intellectual reevaluations. The evocation of women as ciphers belied the physical entrapment which the cramped interiors initially imply and endowed the women with transcendent abilities. Though the female bodies appear cramped in small interiors, we are invited to consider their spiritual existence. Perhaps it is implied that the ever-present circling birds, is the more apposite image of the female soul, fitting with Suffragette rhetoric of righteousness or with Charlotte Despard's views that women's spiritual superiority would allow triumph over physical oppression at the hands of men.³⁰⁰ Spirituality allowed flights of the imagination, transcendence of imposed structures and escape from the domestic, the soul or spirit may fly like the circling birds, experience enchantment, undertake dream journeys, or attain higher planes of existence.

Birds in flight featured in many of Cayley Robinson's interiors, including illustrations for Maeterlinck's *The Blue Bird*. Similar patterns of birds featured in John Duncan's mystical artwork *Riders of the Sidhé*, 1911 (Fig. 3.45). John Duncan was an artist central to the Scottish Celtic revival and was connected with Clifford Bax of the ATC and contributed an article about his painting *Riders of the Sidhé* to *Orpheus* in 1912.³⁰¹ Duncan's painting also included a female figure on the left hand side of the composition similar to those in Cayley Robinson's works, who by this time was teaching in Scotland, at the GSA. Duncan was also of interest to the women of the Orpheus Lodge of the Edinburgh Theosophical Society, having been a member of the

³⁰⁰ As described by Dixon, (2001), p.188

³⁰¹ John Duncan, 'The Riders of the Sidhé', *Orpheus*, Vol.17, (Jan.,1912), p.2

Edinburgh Theosophical Society since 1909.³⁰² At a meeting of Council of the Orpheus Lodge, May, 1914, it was agreed to offer Mrs John Duncan honorary membership.³⁰³ At an informal meeting of Orpheus Lodge, June, 1914 the members arranged a date to go and see ‘all the paintings done by Mr John Duncan in St. Peter’s Church and the adjoining R.G. School.’³⁰⁴ It was later noted that this took place, followed by tea and discussion.³⁰⁵ Teas were noted as particularly successful and important functions for spiritual connection and discussion. An entry reporting on the Annual Business Meeting, 6th April, 1914, described how: ‘a highlight of the past year were teas given [which were] a means of forwarding theosophic and artistic work, when musical numbers, readings and short talks were given. Many strangers were present and it cannot be doubted that some theosophic seed was sown.’³⁰⁶ For such women, spiritual and political aspirations converged. Activities relating to spiritual art, to the imagination, were related consciously to the political and public sphere and contributed in a practical way to women’s emancipation. This example also evidences how spiritual art could be used in devotional and ritualistic guises, to bolster women’s re-connection with their spirituality.

In a similar way, in Cayley Robinson’s interiors, the material and immaterial worlds combined and interacted. The visual forms of the apartment block: outside front facades, windows, curtains with sash, and inside rooms, become a spiritual space. The ‘real’ London apartment interiors are a mode to communicate interconnection and correspondences between a theosophical, universal brotherhood and between ourselves and the eternal spirit of nature. The windows in works such as *A Winter Evening* or *The Depth of Winter* are not open, but through them the viewer sees correspondingly lit windows within a larger cityscape and is invited to sense, through the fading daylight, the presence of other groups of women, engaged in similar activities and routines. Even though the women are confined inside they ‘belong to an

³⁰² Turner (2009), notes connections between John Duncan and Clifford Bax, pp.86-7; see also Young (2009)

³⁰³ Minute Books, Edinburgh TS, entry dated 28th May, 1914 confirms Duncan’s membership and notes to send the Duncans *Theosophy in Scotland* once a month

³⁰⁴ Orpheus Lodge Minute book, 1910-1915, Edinburgh TS, King Street, Edinburgh, entry for 20th June, 1914

³⁰⁵ Orpheus Lodge Minute book, 1910-1915, Edinburgh TS, King Street, Edinburgh, entry for Tuesday 14th July, 1914

³⁰⁶ Orpheus Lodge Minute book, 1910-1915, Edinburgh TS, King Street, Edinburgh, entry 6th April, 1914

unseen, unconscious yet animated' community of similar people, through the other lights. They 'share a common physical rhythm,' undertaking ritualistic routines, as described by Maeterlinck in 'On Women' 1897.³⁰⁷

Corresponding with feminist views conflating the spiritual and the physical, the figures are at work, actively engaging in the spiritual renewal of the urban environment, their more mundane tasks in tune with their spiritual transcendence. In this shared work or drudgery, women's unity, could forge a growing connection between isolated women, through latent sisterhood and shared experience. Feminist writings at the time frequently explored the nature of women's shared spiritual and feminist consciousness. Theosophical writings commonly referenced humanity's 'brotherhood' and owing to the dominance of women in the Theosophical Society, this may also have referred to an as yet unexpressed yearning for 'sisterhood'. In Cayley Robinson's works, spiritual languages were used to articulate feminist possibility and imagine possible futures. Cayley Robinson's paintings were visually expressive of women's marginal status in society but at the same time, their challenging potential to transcend this, through spiritual thinking, feminism, and the two combined in the manner experienced within the Orpheus Lodge.

Woman, Immortality and Transcendence

Those who hold this latter view set no limit to human existence³⁰⁸

The heightened spirituality of women in Cayley Robinson's works suggested abilities to transcend their visualised captivity. Woman, in works such as *Reminiscence*, presented the reincarnated face of immortality, allowing a magical suspension of time or suggesting time travel. The viewer is uncertain whether they are viewing the past or the future, some sort of conflation or cessation of time, a higher plane or some other mental or dream space. As an article in *Orpheus* suggested, the women's faces may take us back in time: 'we do not tire considering the long ancestry of expression in a face; it may lead us back through the ages and continued to describe paintings by G. F. Watts effecting a:

³⁰⁷ Ann C. Colley, discusses these ideas in 'Bodies and Mirrors: the childhood interiors of Ruskin, Pater and Stevenson', in Bryden and Floyd (1999), pp.40-57, (p.45). The clock also signals the shared measured time and schedules of urban life, as noted by Kern, (c1983)

³⁰⁸ French, (July, 1910), pp.163-7

lofty temper awakened...aroused by a suggestion of their peculiar characteristics. Association of ideas will in some subtle way bring us back to the Phidian demi-Gods when we look at forms of draperies vaguely suggestive of the Parthenon.³⁰⁹

Pre-Raphaelite visual references in early works such as *Souvenir of a Past Age*, could evoke a Symbolist yearning for the past, as an unattainable ideal.³¹⁰ Through these associations and in seemingly traditional domestic roles, women could speak of nostalgia, memory and tradition.

However, the figures point to eternity, through reincarnation and the explosion of the boundaries of finite time. The continuing presence of modern items such as the clock and machine age items like the sewing machine in *The Old Nurse*, defer resolution. At the Orpheus Lodge of the Theosophical Society, Edinburgh, a Lodge dedicated to the arts, a discussion of the 'mysteries' was undertaken on 9th June, 1910 which Cayley Robinson, in post at the GSA by this time, could have attended. The talk was illustrated by a circulation of photographs of ancient temples of Mexico and Greece where the 'stately ceremonies of old were held;' illustrations formed an important part of members' imaginative connections to these ideas and spiritually to each other, used as a visual aid to resonance and divinity including spiritual connection to the past.³¹¹ Through art, it was intimated, viewers could actually connect spiritually with the past time period, with the people, the temper of the age, as well as enlivening the spiritual connection with each other, in an experience far richer than simply viewing illustrations from history. There are temporal distortions in works such as *The Night Watch*, 1904, (Fig. 3.46) described in *The Times*, 1908:

Moreover, one is puzzled by the anachronisms. He takes us back to the days of the Roman Empire, with legionaries in armour; but the background is a temple in ruins, as it might be today. Assuredly when these soldiers were going to and fro in Rome the temples were standing³¹²

Hind, in his description of Cayley Robinson's works in 1904, contrasted the artist with others of the Cornish colony in St. Ives where he was working at the time, who were

³⁰⁹ A. E. (George Russell), 'Art and Literature', *Orpheus*, No. 7, n.d., (1909/10?), pp.56-9, (p.58)

³¹⁰ Such as Khnopff's *With Gregoire Le Roy. My Heart Weeps for Other Times*, (1889.) This features a bridge similar to Robinson's painting *The Bridge* (Fig. 3.41) and a circular mirror or portal.

³¹¹ Minute books: 9/6/1910. Twenty-five were present, mostly women and a woman hosted the event.

³¹² 'Art Exhibitions', *The Times*, (5th December, 1908), p.10

‘men of their own time, sensitive and alert to the life passing around them.’ Instead to Cayley Robinson: ‘The past and the present are one...He sees the simple, elemental motives that are the same in all climes and ages. Wonder, endurance, labour, joy.’³¹³ Hind describes how the artist dissolved time through representing the ‘wonder before the mysterious laws of the Universe that unites all the centuries, the first with the last.’³¹⁴

Cecil French wrote in detail about the nature of time in Cayley Robinson’s works in *Orpheus*, 1910, finding the normal determination of time too rigid and restrictive to the artist’s spiritual thinking. French described that Cayley Robinson could be living in ancient Rome or modern London, and he transposes figures from both, to articulate ‘certain simple themes’ which run through human history and to present ‘eternal types of men and women.’ French elaborated on:

The question of the past... Shall the artist set himself to represent the manners and actions of his time, a resolution somewhat cold in its conscious determinations...[a] calculated conspiracy to ‘sum up’ our own time...are we beings subject to some mysterious law known as chance, placed in all manner of strange positions in a world carried on for no particular purpose, and which though affording us no outlet nor wider opportunity, must be made the best of by reason of our very necessity? Or are we moving through a world which is but the shadow of a greater world, of which we are an integral part...Those who hold this latter view set no limit to human existence, the span of mortal life being but a day or less when regarded from the standpoint of historic time, aware as they are that the individual unit is verily one with all sentient creatures, a portion of the creative principle which has manifested itself in the past and will manifest itself in the future. The art of Mr Cayley Robinson as I understand it, belongs distinctly to this latter order. Indeed I could point to no other artist’s achievements in which the sense of the past and its continuity with the present is more strongly in evidence.³¹⁵

³¹³ Hind, (1904), p.235, 236. Robinson is also ‘inward-brooding.’ Hind suggests the figures may be Chaldeans, p.235

³¹⁴ Hind, (1904), p.235

³¹⁵ French, (July, 1910), pp.163-7

Hind also described the artist's 'deep desire to "connect the fore-shadowings, or rather the fore-splendours of the past with the hope of the future."'316

French's detailed exposition on art and time challenged the rationalistic, externally determined sense of time and space central to modernity and expounded instead a personal sense of time, the consciousness of one's own immortality and one's own creation of karma, which were central tenets of theosophy. J. D. Crawford, who also lectured for the Orpheus Lodge, Edinburgh, in an article entitled 'Maeterlinck's Message', in *Theosophy in Scotland*, 1911, discussed Maeterlinck's *Wisdom and Destiny*, 1899. Crawford described the building of the spirituality of one's soul and approaching life 'from the inside' rather than accepting random events that happen in a similar way to French's effort. Clifford Bax wrote, around 1910, 'modern art is an unconscious reflection of materialism; the art of the future must, we believe, proclaim anew the immortal nature of man.'³¹⁷ In Cayley Robinson's works, woman presented immortality and the hope of reincarnation to the viewer, partly through transporting us back to the past but also, crucially, exploding the boundaries between past, present and future, collapsing time, inciting transcendence through alternate 'spiritual states' of being. Woman is the face of the past and the future, gaining new spheres of activity, whilst embodying ancient forms of spiritual wisdom and power. These discussions about time indicated that the images were not about merely weeping for other times, to paraphrase Khnopff. The use of time and features of the past serve to distort and transcend. Through such processes, women could have an enchanting, spiritualising effect on viewers.

'A Look That Would Fathom the Future'

Through startling direct gazes, women in Cayley Robinson's interiors look to the future. Viewers, as described in an article in *The Times*, 1908, bemoaned the artist's 'mannerisms which prove a little exasperating, such as his trick of setting two or three truncated figures – often only the heads – in the corner of his composition.'³¹⁸ Such cropped faces with direct gazes featured in many works such as *The Three Sisters*, *The Bridge*, *Orphans*, *The Farewell*, *Reminiscence*, *The Renunciants* and *Childhood*.

³¹⁶ Hind, (1904), p.240

³¹⁷ Bax, (1910?) p.191, p.195

³¹⁸ 'Art Exhibitions', *The Times*, (5th December, 1908), p.10

Martin Wood described such figures in 1910 as ‘standing at the margin of an imaginary world,’ on a threshold, ‘without passing into it.’³¹⁹ The figure in green at the front left hand side of *The Depth of Winter* threatens to exit the frame imminently.

Looking straight ahead had a variety of connotations in art and visual culture, especially in comparison with looking into a mirror, gazing askance, downwards or into water, which could imply poetic nostalgia and rumination, heart-ache and sentimentality, religious faith or inertia.³²⁰ The woman’s direct gaze in art had been connected with brazenness or eroticism but was also deployed as an affront, a representation of moral indignation. Cayley Robinson used direct gazes to permeate the viewer’s unconscious to a greater extent than the oblique, askance or backward glances; direct eye contact could destabilise and undermine the viewer’s authority. Such looks invited the viewer to become involved in questioning of contemporary society, to partake in the artist’s sense of unease, to experience culpability in their accusing guise. Cayley Robinson’s works were created in dialogue with Pre-Raphaelite examples such as William Holman Hunt’s *The Awakening Conscience*, (1853) or Ford Madox Brown’s unfinished *Take Your Son, Sir* (?1851-1892) and with Edouard Manet’s paintings of ‘modern life’ such as *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère*, (1882), which featured women’s direct gaze to similar ends. Khnopff’s *Who Shall Deliver Me?* (1891) had pierced the viewer’s conscience, ensuring that the viewer experienced discomfort. This painting encouraged unconscious effects which promoted insidious feelings of remorse for colluding with the ills of the patriarchal system, or evinced shared anxieties concerning modernity and humanity’s spiritual and moral sacrifices for rational progress.

In Symbolism, looking ahead was often related to prevision and knowing but often such occult prescience was indicated by ‘unseeing eyes.’³²¹ In a powerful contrast to Decadent woman as a ‘blind Seer,’ Cayley Robinson’s figures have open

³¹⁹ Wood, (1910), p.204

³²⁰ Olive Schreiner wrote regarding her friend Eleanor Marx:

She is, oddly enough, like nothing so much as a Christian of the old stamp. She has the same child-like faith which cannot be shaken & all that is great and beautiful for her is bound up in her faith, & for that she lives. She *cannot* understand doubt! She never reasons! She believes & would lay down her life for her faith & sees nothing beyond it.

We look before & after: she looks only straight forward.

Olive Schreiner to Mary Drew, BL Add. Mss. 46344 ff.149. Undated letter, Alassio cat. 1887, (Livesey suggests the letter should be dated late 1888). Livesey, (2007), p.76

³²¹ Dijkstra (1986) includes many examples

eyes and startling, unflinching gazes. Neither are the figures sensual and seductive like Rossetti's portraits or the *femme fatale*, a figure with sexual knowledge, who 'gazes [and] dares to look.'³²² Within Spiritualism, gendered subversions took place between a sexualised 'subordinate' female medium who simultaneously held power through embodying male spirits, transgressing conventional female decorum in many ways.³²³ In Cayley Robinson's works woman as medium was not reductively eroticised and rather than employing 'natural' female 'emotionalism' or suggestibility in her deferential pose, we witness her taking command of the viewing process. Women's resolution, visual stature and reserves of withheld knowledge contrasted with increasingly suggestible, child-like, intuitive and 'feminised' viewers, who could be involuntarily drawn in as a will-less agent. The certainties and authority of looking and viewing, subject and object are entirely overturned.

Continuing the efforts seen in Part One, Cayley Robinson used women's looks to challenge viewing authority and the cultural authority of the masculine voice of rationality and science. The figures looking back challenge, as Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klonk discussed in *Art History*, the 'eye's apparent mastery of the world. In particular, the gaze reminds us that we are alienated from the real world, that we have no direct access to it and are, instead, imprisoned in the symbolic.'³²⁴ Viewers looking using the eye at Cayley Robinson's interiors can perceive a knowable world, but the direct gazes from figures looking out at us destabilises and erodes this power unconsciously. Cayley Robinson's works speak of loss and lack in terms of the writings of psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan and present representations which disrupt the process of reproduction and internalisation of patriarchal values theorised by Laura Mulvey.³²⁵ The interiors, through the insightful female figures, are spaces of disruption and subversion and suggest forms of knowledge which remain forever unreachable.

³²² Unlike art of Rossetti, where eyes appear vacuous or empty, as discussed in Griselda Pollock, (1988), these eyes are searching and piercing. Mathews, (1999), p.111 and 115

³²³ 'Spiritualism, in all its many forms, had a particular appeal to women; not only did it draw on feminine qualities of receptivity and intuition, but in its subversions of gendered conduct women exercised significant power and authority.' Owen, (1989) and Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*, (London: Virago, 1992), pp.171-89, in Cherry, (2000), p.207. See also and Alison Winter, *Mesmerized: Powers of Mind in Victorian Britain*, (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1998)

³²⁴ Hatt and Klonk, (2006), p.192

³²⁵ *Ibid*, pp.190-199; Mulvey, (1975)

The women's direct gazes, meant that viewers were constantly aware of their own viewing process and the negotiation of meaning. Such direct gazes transgressed the boundaries of the painting as a two-dimensional form, opening out the picture into the third dimension, looking 'beyond the frame.' This action included the viewer within the action of the picture, in an uncanny, unsettling way, encouraged the viewer both to look back at ourselves rather than the object of the painting and to identify with the marginalised figures engaging in our space. The gazes point to 'our own existence,' as Cayley Robinson wrote to Baldry in 1896.³²⁶ They implied shared oppression, disenfranchisement of the spirit and the soul, and shared responsibility. 'The figures look as if they felt that they were watched by some invisible watcher' wrote Martin Wood.³²⁷ Maeterlinck similarly articulated awareness of some unknown authority, a 'watcher' in the Universe. This idea expressed male vulnerability in the face of a greater power, alongside an elevation of women's increased insight.³²⁸ The viewer, acting as the 'invisible watcher', was invited to engage with the subject of the picture to consider again Cayley Robinson's assertion as to the 'illusionary nature of sentient existence.'³²⁹ With their dauntless direct gazes women appear to act as the viewer's eyes, and thus challenge the self-satisfied autonomy of male viewing pleasure and question the validity and shape of progress in modernity.

Symbolism used the 'knowing child' to enact direct gazes, as in Cayley Robinson's *Childhood*.³³⁰ In many other art historical examples it is the 'fallen woman' or prostitute. In contrast, in most of Cayley Robinson's paintings it is a good and in Hockin's words, 'commonplace' woman who incites our guilt and shame. Once again, it is the use of the everyday, in this case the domestic woman, who aided critique and questioning. Direct gazes brought the pictures into modernity, through their self-awareness and contiguity with the feminist project, highlighting women's plight and oppressed condition in the ordinary home. They do not allow the works to fall into

³²⁶ Letter from Frederick Cayley Robinson to A. L. Baldry, (Sunday 17th May, 1896, V&A National Art Library)

³²⁷ Wood, (1910) p.204

³²⁸ Maeterlinck, (1897), p.63. French made an allusion to humanity as a child, (1922), p.298 while an article, 'Art Exhibitions', *The Times*, (5th December, 1908), p.10, described how Robinson's works 'had the effect of a voice crying in the wilderness' suggesting male vulnerability. These perspectives present an unsettled aspect of male confidence in his supremacy over nature and woman.

³²⁹ 'invisible watcher' from Wood (1910), p.204; 'illusionary' from Letter from Frederick Cayley Robinson to A. L. Baldry, (Sunday 17th May, 1896, V&A National Art Library)

³³⁰ And in works by Thomas Cooper Gotch, for example

mere nostalgia and escapism and deny complacency. Through ‘looking out upon the world with fearless eyes,’ as Hockin described them, the figures enable the viewer to question the social position of women.³³¹ In this way, the women’s direct gazes haunt the privileged, pricking the conscience of the confident male viewer. Their knowing looks and expectant ‘attitude of waiting’, as described by Maeterlinck, could enact a haunting through the lurking and latent threat of impending challenges to patriarchal security.³³²

When gazing out at us directly, women declare their emancipatory potential and readiness for movement beyond their confinement. Gazes are alert and frank, reflecting the honesty of for example, the ‘New Woman’ writing about marriage and its iniquities, rather than dealing in mystification, nostalgia or looking back. Women’s looks seem empowered to survey the freedom of expansive space, new movements and fields of activity. In the *Acts of Mercy* mural paintings, the nurses reference women’s invigorating independence upon being ‘singled out’ during the First World War. Young orphan women stand alongside columns which appear recently constructed. Several look out at us directly, (Fig. 3.19), connecting hopes for the future with new examples of female, urban employment.³³³ Women’s faces suggest more assertive and forthright new roles in society, displaying the ability to look, think and act as an individual. Virginia Woolf wrote in 1929 about:

The old system which condemned her to squint askance at things through the eyes or through the interests of husband or brother, has given place to the direct and practical interests of one who must act for herself, and not merely influence the acts of others.³³⁴

Alongside the constant presence of the public sphere through the window, the knowing gazes gesture away from the home, heighten urgency and the sense of imminent change, giving the viewer hope for women’s movement beyond the domestic, into the public sphere and the city. Women’s gazes were infused with nobility and a righteous expectation of success in the context of feminist discourses which linked the spiritual with the political.

³³¹ Hockin, (1912), pp.28-30

³³² As related by Little (1911-12), pp.22-3, (p.22)

³³³ Schupbach, (2009), p.13; Virginia Nicholson, *Singled Out: How Two Million Women Survived Without Men After the First World War*, (London: Viking, 2007)

³³⁴ Virginia Woolf, ‘Women and Fiction’, *Collected Essays*, edited Leonard Woolf, Vol. 2, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1966), p.145, in Stubbs, (1979), p.xiii

Conclusion: ‘The Face of a Woman’

Cayley Robinson’s spiritualised visual imagination, found much hope for the world in a ‘view of life, or of that important element of life which is expressed by the face of a woman,’ as noted an article in *The Times* with reference to his work in 1908.³³⁵ However, the ‘face of a woman’ in these paintings incurred a fluid range of readings and meanings, remaining ultimately marked by ambivalence. The artist painted works where women’s looks suggest both the past and the future simultaneously, like the Roman mythical figure of Janus, depicted in sculpture as looking back and forward simultaneously. As scholars Lynda Nead and Sarah Turner have highlighted, this visual mode was apt to this historical period of transition, where people looked back to the nineteenth century, whilst also looking ahead to the twentieth century.³³⁶

The mode is also apposite to women’s position at this moment in British history. Women reassessed and retained modes from the past as they moved into the future. The mode of woman could reassure the viewer that the new did not necessarily mean the loss of all that was believed to be good and true from the past. Cayley Robinson’s painting *The Renunciants*, envisaged various attitudes of looking at once, suggesting woman simultaneously as the guardian of tradition, as mother, Madonna, angel, and a destabilising factor, a figure effecting dissembling change to established structures, evincing modernity through her consciousness and agency: the face of the future.

Rather than espousing traditional domestic roles for women, Cayley Robinson’s images foresaw important roles for women in the future of society, beginning with gaining the vote. The late nineteenth century occult context considered that: ‘Expectation is life. The total absence of expectation on a human face strikes us with a painful sense of incongruity. Nature is always expectant, that attitude of *waiting* which all her moods suggest’ as Maeterlinck described.³³⁷ In contrast to Symbolist sentiments, such as Khnopff’s title, *My Heart Weeps for Other Times*, and rather than the sense of finality or pessimism, Cayley Robinson invoked eternal confidence in the

³³⁵ ‘Art Exhibitions’, *The Times*, (5th December, 1908), p.10

³³⁶ Nead, (c.2007), p.110 and cited in Turner (2009), p.54

³³⁷ Described by Little, (1911-12), p.22

future.³³⁸ The ‘knowledge of destiny is seen in their eyes,’ wrote Martin Wood in 1910, providing viewers with hope of spiritual renewal.³³⁹ Women, depicted here with prescience, wisdom and insight could perhaps perceive of more fulfilling, crucial roles in human evolution as imagined by the Theosophical Society. Women held the future in a political and spiritual capacity believed feminist-theosophists such as Frances Swiney, Alfred Percy Sinnett, Annie Besant and Charlotte Despard amongst others. Indeed, theosophist and journalist Sinnett in *Occult Essays*, 1905, noted women’s centuries of oppression, affirmed his understanding of the antagonism exhibited by the Female Suffrage agitation and explained that the denial of the vote to women is due largely to the ‘natural stupidity of men.’³⁴⁰ Sinnett associated this dogma with a retrograde past and in a chapter entitled ‘The Women of the Future’, declared that women possessed a sublime order of intelligence, ‘ultimately destined to play an enormous part in the activities of the physical world...The future evolution of society will include women in a much more significant role, in an improved situation.’³⁴¹ In Hockin’s words, Cayley Robinson’s figures seem to hold knowledge of such advances, seeing even further than the horizon: ‘gazing away beyond the horizon with a look that would fathom the future.’³⁴²

In many works, Cayley Robinson contrasted humanity’s limited enlightenment with women’s striking, insightful gazes, capturing and championing women’s unprecedented moment to rise from their oppressed position. The wealth of hope found in the prospect of women’s emancipation, wrote A. L. Little in *Theosophy in Scotland*, 1911-12, may ‘silence the pessimistic forebodings of those who see in the present an age of disintegration and ending.’³⁴³ This was particularly the case since the disenfranchised, captive woman in the margins, pushing beyond the frame, piercing our conscience with her ‘fearless’ eyes, also represented the disenfranchised soul and spirit of humanity. The privileging of feminine modes of viewing and spiritual living, cast female spirituality against the ills of male progress. The necessity of women’s spiritual crusade for suffrage was a symptom of humanity’s wider spiritual malaise

³³⁸ The title of Khnopff’s painting, *With Gregoire Le Roy. My Heart Weeps for Other Times*, 1889, illustrated in Hirsh, (2004), Fig. 4, p.11 and also discussed p.156; McGuinness, (2000), p.10

³³⁹ Wood, (1910), p.204.

³⁴⁰ Sinnett, (1905), p.166

³⁴¹ *Ibid*, p.162

³⁴² Hockin, (1912), p.29; work on the limiting feature of the horizon in Flint (2000), pp.285-312

³⁴³ Little, (1911-12), p.22

and a mode for healing it.³⁴⁴ In thinking which grew ever more popular up to the First World War, in order to redeem a damaged, decadent, lost humanity, woman ‘must be free.’³⁴⁵

³⁴⁴ Dixon, (2001), p.200

³⁴⁵ Dixon cites Despard: ‘a new era was coming, and “if the changes are to be in the direction of true spiritual evolution: if we are to progress towards the angels and not retrogress towards the brutes, woman must be free.’ Charlotte Despard, *Woman in the New Era*, (London: Suffrage Shop, 1910), p.46, in Dixon, p.187.

Thesis Conclusion

In 1930, art critic Herbert Furst discussed Frederick Cayley Robinson with the following words:

Mr Cayley Robinson was a painter whose outlook ceased to fit with his times from about 1910 onward, yet I am not so sure that in the judgement of posterity the fault will not be considered to lie with the times rather than with him.

After explaining the contradictions of the painting *The Long Journey*, 1929, in detail, Furst further noted that:

the trouble with it – the trouble as regards the aesthetic artists – is that it really does mean something, something worthwhile...That it is [created] in the terms of the Pre-Raphaelites rather than of the Post-Impressionists proves at most only that there are more ways than one of painting a masterpiece¹

Furst's comments confirmed the increasingly entrenched cultural positioning of 'the Moderns' by 1930, yet they simultaneously attest to the ongoing complications of these categories, the continuity of other artistic and literary languages which expressed contradiction. Despite the apparently conclusive effect of the 'shock of the new' in decisively making British people modern, especially after the trauma of the First World War, a variety of figurative and symbolic artists, including Cayley Robinson, Gotch and Bell, continued to present alternative approaches into the 1930s.² My thesis is testimony to the richness of artistic languages, the varieties of painterly practise between 1880-1930, an area which has begun to be explored within broader efforts to write a more nuanced history of modernity in Britain.

Bell's writings raised issues regarding spiritual art and the ambivalent and uncanny qualities of art and other forms of reproduction such as photography.³ Martin

¹ Herbert Furst, 'Art News and Notes', *Apollo*, 11, (1930), p.65

² Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp.47-8; Robert Hughes, *The Shock of the New: Art and the Century of Change*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 1991); Jose Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: Britain 1870-1914*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1994), p.36

³ Also raised with regard to fairy photography in Bown, (2001); Carol Jacobi and Hope Kingsley, *Painting with Light: Art and Photography from the Pre-Raphaelites to the Modern Age*, (London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 2016); Nead, (2007) and Mary O'Connor and Katherine Tweedie, *Seduced by Modernity: The Photography of Margaret Watkins*, (Montreal; Ithaca : McGill-Queen's University Press, c2007); Robert Anning Bell, 'The "Moderns" and Their Problems', *The Saturday Review*, (27th May, 1933), p.513

Wood described in 1910 that Cayley Robinson used the visual, ‘a medium more difficult than writing,’ to draw closer to the unknown.⁴ The artists’ works were created within a broader context of modern visual culture which involved complex inter-relationships between painting, print, posters, photography and film. However, to Gotch, Bell and Cayley Robinson along with many other artists, painting remained a magical, potent, spiritual force, an unsurpassed method available to communicate the invisible and ineffable, the intangible contradictions and spiritual desires of modern life. In Bell’s words, art:

can and does deal with the symbols of those abstractions which lie beyond the veil of the senses...There is a spiritual force beyond the veil which on this side expresses itself in the manifold forms of beauty⁵

Central to the thesis, the mode of womanhood was the visual form chosen to best express the spiritual and profound themes of the unknown and the condition of modernity, reconciling the synthetic and the intimate meanings of art. Feminism and spirituality were both languages of hope in this time of change and languages of modernity, which have formed inter-connecting strands throughout the thesis.

Forms of the spiritual which had proved so essential to feminism in the Edwardian period, were recast and remained of particular value to feminists in the 1920s and beyond.⁶ Feminists including Christabel Pankhurst, Vera Brittain and Marie Stopes developed the possibilities of love and spirituality as political forces or resources.⁷ Charlotte Despard in 1913 connected the women’s movement by the: ‘thread of love...[it] has opened women up to one another...The vote may go, Parliament may go, but love will remain - spiritual love *is* the women’s movement.’⁸ And in 1917 declared:

⁴ T. Martin Wood, ‘Some Recent Work of Mr Cayley Robinson’, *The Studio*, 49, (1910), pp.204-213, (p.206)

⁵ Robert Anning Bell, ‘Art and “Modern” Art: High Sounding Nonsense and Byzantium,’ *The Saturday Review*, (18th November 1933), p.523

⁶ The concern for the spiritual has been a constant through feminism this century and in the present day, such as bell hooks’ chapter ‘Feminist Spirituality’ in *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*, (New York: Routledge, 2016)

⁷ Dixon also noted Christabel Pankhurst’s ‘defection’ to Seventh Day Adventism, (2001), p.204; Deborah Gorham, *Vera Brittain: A Feminist Life*, (Cambridge, MA : Blackwell Publishers, 1996) and Martin Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain, 1914-1945: The Defining of a Faith*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980)

⁸ Charlotte Despard, cited in Andro Linklater, *An Unhusbanded Life: Charlotte Despard, Suffragette, Socialist and Sinn Feiner*, (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1980), p.244, in Dixon, (2001), p.205

Outside the restless world of politics, in the soul of the mystic, is the spiritual awakening, that like the spring's wind of prophecy is sweeping over the world, and in the intuitive heart of woman, the City Beautiful of the Day that is to be is taking form.⁹

Ellen Key described women in 1912 as 'human beings in whom the life of the heart predominates' and summed up the women's movement thus: 'the demand is made for woman's "freedom and future, and a home for her spiritual life."' ¹⁰ There was a general Spiritualist revival after the First World War including prominent figures such as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.¹¹ A significant number of writers and artists were attracted by the epic reach of religious or devotional languages and sentiments, which were considered through modern forms of consciousness. As Joy Dixon has stressed, feminists were not merely appropriating the rhetoric of spirituality to gain political mileage, but continued to find spiritual modes of life an indispensable part of their modern crusades for suffrage, fairness and emancipation.¹² The paintings examined in this thesis were infused with nobility and a righteous expectation of success akin to feminist discourse which linked the spiritual with the political and which evidence the spiritual as a significant feature in modern life. Painting was the magical mode which could represent and activate forms of spirituality.

Further, feminists' invocation of the spiritual in this period signalled the beginning of a far-reaching 'redefinition of what is personal and what is political.'¹³ The scope of this investigation, the definitions of personal, political, modern, spiritual and feminist concern were expansive. The 1970s feminist rallying cry: 'the personal is political' was a restatement of suffragist and reformer Mary Beard's words in 1912, 'everything that counts in the common life is political.'¹⁴ Languages of spirituality were involved in cultural endeavours to reclaim and redefine female representation and embrace forms of feminist consciousness, emancipation, agency and modernity. My approach in this thesis has understood modernity through the intimate, personal

⁹ Charlotte Despard, *Theosophy and the Woman's Movement*, (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1913), pp.10-12, 23 in Dixon, (2001), p.188

¹⁰ Key, (1912, 2013 edition), pp.vii-viii

¹¹ Brantlinger, (1988), pp.251-3

¹² Dixon, (2001), p.200

¹³ Rowbotham described how: 'the intimate oppression of women forces a redefinition of what is personal and what is political,' (2015), p.ix

¹⁴ Sue Wingrove, Review of Sheila Rowbotham, *Dreamers of a New Day: Women who Invented the Twentieth Century*, (London; New York, Verso, 2010), *BBC History Magazine*, (Jan., 2011), p.69

and spiritual as well as a political, economic and social perspectives. This effort is indebted to the continuous work of feminism to commandeer and re-deploy the languages of the personal and the spiritual.¹⁵

Feminist acts embracing the spiritual were enacted in relation to the visual. For women, representation was a constant part of their modern experience. Representations by the three artists reaffirm the contradictory experiences of modernity for women. Suffragist Dora Montefiore described in 1927 the process of moving *From a Victorian to a Modern*, the title of her autobiography suggesting a clean distinction.¹⁶ However, for women ‘becoming modern’ was a contradictory process, more complicated than previous historical narratives have attested.¹⁷ The paintings considered in this thesis combined constructs of woman as spiritual redeemer, as conservator of the past, an icon of all that is good and eternal in humanity and as a challenging force for change. As women, their lives, activities and aspirations changed, visual types changed too, becoming more complicated.

Traditional and spiritual forms of womanhood remained constructs that were not to be eschewed cleanly and completely alongside feminist gains. Many feminists including Millicent Fawcett, Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Ellen Key deemed the reform of marriage, and by default allied constructs of romantic, heterosexual love, as the foundation for women’s emancipation and improved lives. Such sentiments co-existed with women’s forthright militancy. Millicent Fawcett entreated women during the Suffragette campaign:

Do not give up one jot or tittle of your womanliness, your love of children, your care for the sick, your gentleness, your self-control, your obedience to conscience and duty, for all these things are terribly wanted in politics.’¹⁸

¹⁵ And to allow shifts to a female point of view, re-ordering the perceptions of the world as presented through the field of vision, described by Virginia Woolf. See Maroula Joannou, (ed.), *The History of British Women's Writing, 1920-1945*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp.2-3. Feminism, through a growing emphasis on the personal, has substantiated love, tenderness and sex, as tangible cultural and political forces. Dixon, (2001), p.200

¹⁶ Vera Brittain, *Lady into Woman: A History of Women from Victoria to Elizabeth II*, (London: Dakers, 1953); Dora Frances Barrow Montefiore, *From a Victorian to a Modern* (London: E. Archer, 1927)

¹⁷ For visual negotiations by female artists see also Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *From Victorian to Modern: Innovation and Tradition in the Work of Vanessa Bell, Gwen John and Laura Knight*, (London: Philip Wilson ; New York : Distributed in North America by Palgrave Macmillan, 2006)

¹⁸ Millicent Garrett Fawcett, “Home and Politics. An Address delivered at Toynbee Hall and Elsewhere,” (London: Women’s Printing Society, n.d.1-8), p.3, in Alison Lee, introduction to Colmore, (2008), p.12

However, crucially such forms were reworked in relation to the new. Feminists such as Ellen Key advocated ‘self-assertion’ as the main feature of the new woman, compared to the ‘Conventional Woman’ and her pre-eminent ‘self-renunciation’. Key stated: ‘to free women from conventionalism – that is the great aim of woman.’¹⁹ The retention of the past did not automatically delimit women’s reaching for new freedoms and self-definition. Young women in the 1920s like Vera Brittain experienced new freedoms of education and work in nursing and political roles, whilst retaining ideas of women’s spiritual mission and role as guardian of humanity.²⁰ Similar tensions were experienced by Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell for example.

Women’s complicated experiences of modernity have permeated the artworks in this thesis, through the negotiation and transcendence of types, roles and expectations. Scholar Jane Miller described the modern consciousness of Edwardian women thus: ‘to be a woman...was to live a double life, one that was alternately (or even simultaneously) Victorian and modern, repressive and liberating, traditional and radically new...[causing] self-division that can arise from living in a time of transition.’²¹ Jean Finot had encapsulated these contradictions in 1911:

The Eternal Feminine is in a process of change, and the woman of political and social activity will be different from the domestic woman, no doubt, just as palaeolithic man differs from his neolithic brother, but she will not be any the less Woman...Let us watch the modern woman; no longer doll-like, she is now energetic and assured; not less beautiful, only differently beautiful...This evolution of woman is inevitable. When everything in the modern world is changing, can woman remain unchanged?²²

Simplified dichotomies as frames for interpretation emerged as inadequate in the face of modernity. My research has revealed that such challenges and conflicting bids for

¹⁹ Carl Kelsey, ‘Review of *The Morality of Women*,’ Ellen Key, translated Hamah Bouton Bothwick, 1912, *Journal of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology*, Vol. 2, No.6, (Mar.,1912), pp.958-9, (p.959). See also Torborg Lundell, ‘Ellen Key and Swedish Feminist Views on Motherhood,’ *Scandinavian Studies*, Vol.56, No.4, (Autumn 1984), pp.351-369, (p.351)

²⁰ Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth: An Autobiographical Study of the Years 1900-1925*, (London: Phoenix, an imprint of Orion Books Ltd., 2014; first published by Victor Gollancz Limited in 1933)

²¹ Miller, (1994), p.195

²² Jean Finot, ‘The Passing of the “Eternal Feminine”’ from *La Revue*, November and December, 1910. Translated and abridged in *Votes for Women*, 10th February, 1911, in Tickner, (1988), p.182. Tickner notes that ‘his article was also cited in *The Vote*, 24th December, 1910, which pointed out that he drew on the sociology of Lester Ward to argue against the permanence of sexual characteristics and in favour of women’s evolutionary per-eminence,’ Tickner, (1988), p.310

the languages of cultural authority have shaped modern culture more broadly, as desires for the spirit coexisted with new forms of technology and urban life. Such tensions could be enacted as gendered struggles. The history of women, representation, feminism and female agency are closely interlaced.

The vote was finally won, for all women in England over the age of 21, in 1928. In ‘The Importance of the Vote’, 1908, Emmeline Pankhurst had announced how the gaining of the vote would lead to an intriguing and intangible range of other outcomes. The vote was:

first of all, a symbol, secondly, a safeguard, and thirdly, an instrument. It is a symbol of freedom, a symbol of citizenship, a symbol of liberty. It is a safeguard of all those liberties which it symbolises. And in the later days it has come to be regarded more than anything else as an instrument, something with which you can get a great many more things than our forefathers who fought for the vote ever realised as possible to get with it.²³

Emancipation was symbolised but not circumscribed by the vote. Public and political changes coexisted with new ways women thought and looked at the world, how they experienced the home, their confidence, expectations and aspirations. My research examining artworks was invigorated by imagining the tantalising prospects of Pankhurst’s ‘great many more things,’ the possibilities of modernity and emancipation for women and how these intangible aspects could be expressed through visual culture. This scholarly focus married readily with the desires of the three artists to explore the invisible and the spiritual. As Furst further noted: ‘for the last twenty years or so we have heard so much about aesthetics that we have been inclined to forget that there are other things besides.’²⁴

Through their spiritual suggestions of hope and possibility and through visual forms of contradiction, fluidity and instability, the artists colluded with feminist aspirations. The thesis has demonstrated how feminists looked toward and claimed the future. The necessity of feminists to look to the future, warnings of the peril of

²³ Emmeline Pankhurst, “The Importance of the Vote”, (London: The Women’s Press, 1908), from Cheryl R. Jorgensen-Earp (ed.), *Speeches and Trials of the Militant Suffragettes*, (Madison and London: Associated University Presses, 1999), pp.31-41, (p.31), in Gertrude Colmore, *Suffragette Sally*, edited by Alison Lee, (Peterborough, Ontario, Canada; Plymouth UK: broadview editions, 2008), p.9

²⁴ Herbert Furst, ‘Art News and Notes’, *Apollo*, 11, (1930), p.65

unchecked progress neglecting the ‘female voice’, are issues which have made the thesis increasingly pertinent to the present day than when I began my research.²⁵ Through the artists’ willingness to speak ‘feminine’ languages and privilege feminine modes of representation, artistic representations could enable and encourage women in their ambitious and profound efforts to envisage change. Feminist critic Rachel Blau DuPlessis has noted how contemporary feminists used the utopian genre to ‘estrangle from the rules of the known world.’²⁶ Feminist utopian works ‘acquired a performative and prophetic function, seeking to bring into existence’ through acts of imagination and writing, the vision which was aspired to.²⁷ Carol Farley Kessler asserted that such works could aid ‘potential re-vision...frame a new consciousness.’²⁸ The artworks considered in this thesis could function in this way, as an emancipatory force, both witnessing and advancing this moment of change for women.

The relationships between art, spirituality, feminism and modernity are areas for future research, pertinent to the current cultural context which has seen the rising popularity of revival, fantasy and enchanted worlds created in a variety of artistic forms. My examination of paintings by Thomas Cooper Gotch, Robert Anning Bell and Frederick Cayley Robinson has revealed how the artists celebrated the possibilities for women in modern society and culture and in the future. These paintings, animated by the spiritual, suggest how men and women could imagine and realise women’s emancipation. Such intangible effects would accord with the beliefs of all three artists in the spiritual functions of art.

²⁵ Zoe Williams, ‘What happens when the alpha males run politics?’, (Sunday, 9th October, 2016), *The Guardian* online. Williams wrote, ‘this is what happens when women’s voices are not heard’ and described women’s ‘constant eye on the future [and] calm insistence that not everything of value can be counted...an empathy with the dispossessed: there is nothing essentially female about these ideas, yet where no women are, you never hear them.’

²⁶ Rachel Blau DuPlessis, ‘The Feminist Apologues of Lessing, Piercy and Russ,’ *Frontiers: A Journal of Women’s Studies*, 4 (1), Spring, 1979, pp.1-2, in Kessler, (1984), p.5

²⁷ Heilmann, (2004), p.129

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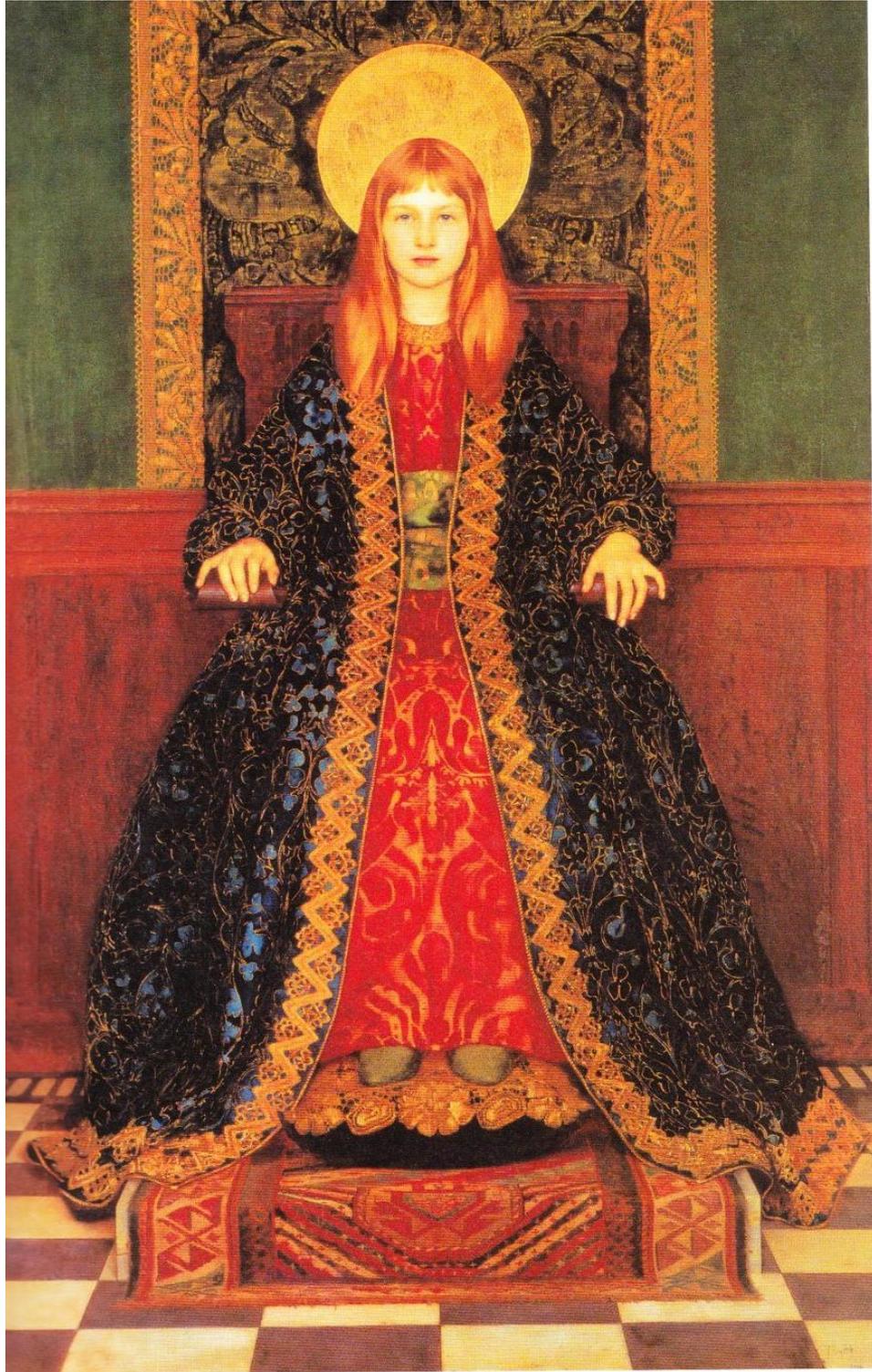
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Images

Chapter One: Thomas Cooper Gotch



- 1.1 Thomas Cooper Gotch, *The Child Enthroned*, 1894, oil on canvas, 100 x 59 cm, (Untraced, Private Collection), reproduced in Lomax, (2004), p.16, image from family archive



1.2 Thomas
Cooper
Gotch, *The
Dawn of
Womanhood*,
1900, oil on
canvas, 114
x 180 cm,
(Private
Collection)



1.3 Thomas Cooper Gotch, *Death the Bride*, oil on canvas, 154 x 121 cm, 1895, (Alfred East Art Gallery, Kettering)



1.4 Thomas Cooper Gotch, *The Child in the World*, 1895, oil on canvas, 127 x 94 cm, from *Black and White*, May 11th, 1895, Untraced (Iomax, p.105)



- 1.5 Thomas Cooper Gotch, *Innocence*, 1904, watercolour on paper, 23 x 19 cm, Falmouth Art Gallery, Cornwall, reproduced in Juliet Heslewood, *Child: Portraits by Forty Great Artists*, (London: Frances Lincoln Ltd Publishers, 2013), p.58. This painting is based on the earlier oil painting *The Child in the World*.



1.6 Thomas Cooper Gotch, *The Flag*, 1910, oil on canvas, 62 x 53 cm, (Alfred East Art Gallery, Kettering)

"The Suffragette," October 17, 1913.

Registered at the G.P.O. as a Newspaper

The Suffragette

Edited by Christabel Pankhurst.

The Official Organ of the
Women's Social and Political Union.

No. 53—Vol. II

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 17, 1913.

Price 1d. Weekly (Post Free)



**THE FORCES OF EVIL DENOUNCING
THE BEARERS OF LIGHT.**

1.7 Front cover of *The Suffragette*, 17th October, 1913, illustrated in Bland (1995), p.255



1.8 Thomas Cooper Gotch, *The Vow*, 1916, watercolour, 930 x 770 mm, (Alfred East Art Gallery, Kettering)



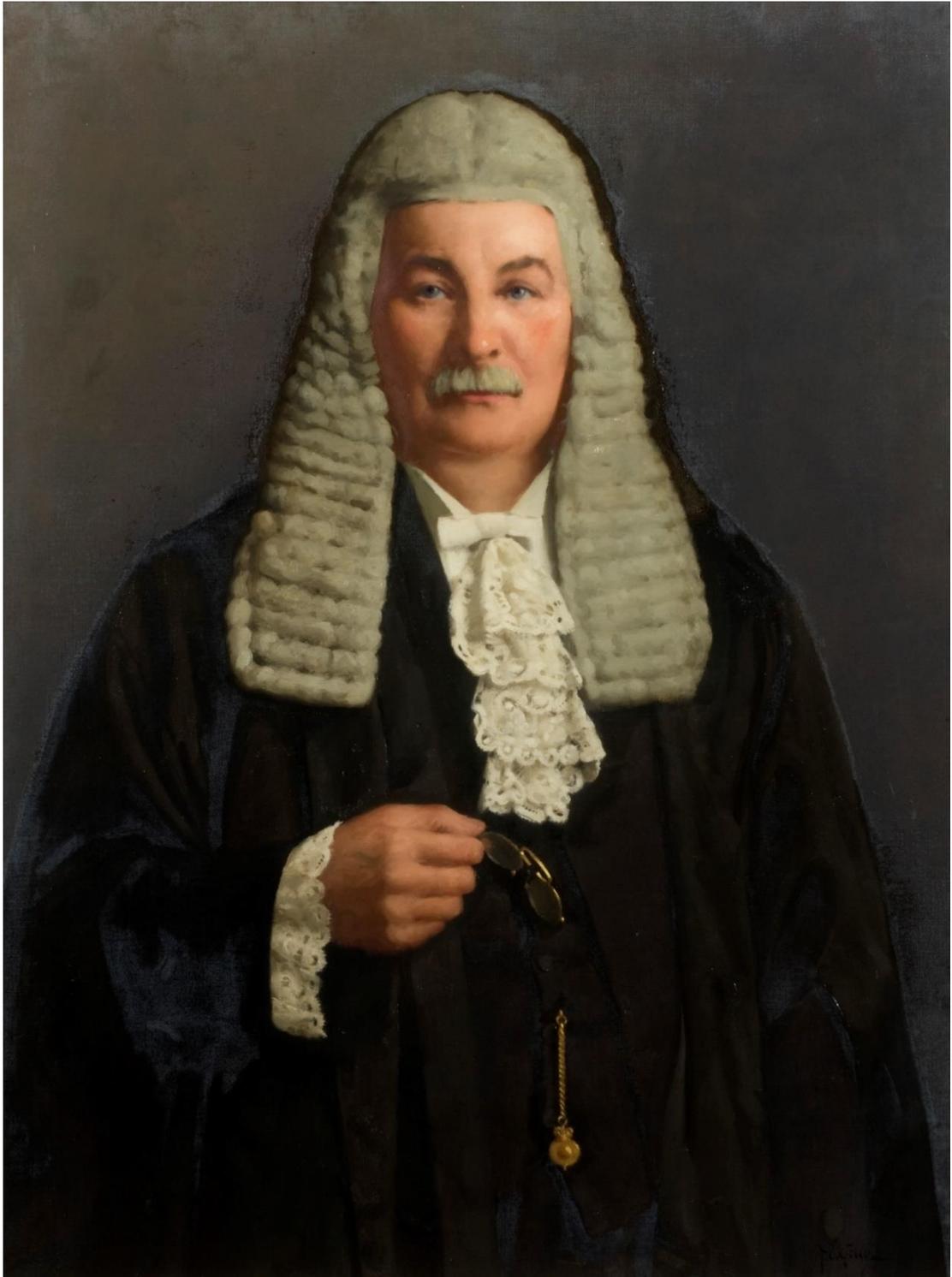
1.9 Thomas Cooper Gotch, 'Study for *The Child Enthroned*', undated, charcoal, 158 x100 cm, Private Collection. Image reproduced on a xerox from Sothebys Catalogue, dated 30th March, 1994, cat. 207, p.128. Viewed at the Alfred East Art Gallery, Kettering.



1.10 Fra Angelico's *The Virgin Mary with the Apostles and Other Saints*, Inner Left Predella Panel, Fiesole, San Domenico Altarpiece, egg tempera on wood, 32 x 64 cm, about 1423-4, (National Gallery, London), acquired in 1860



- 1.11 Thomas Cooper Gotch, *Souvenir of The Child Enthroned*, watercolour, 3.8 x 2.5 cm (image), c.1923, (The Royal Collection). Commissioned for the Library in Queen Mary's Dolls' House:
<https://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/927033/souvenir-of-the-child-enthroned> accessed 5th September, 2016



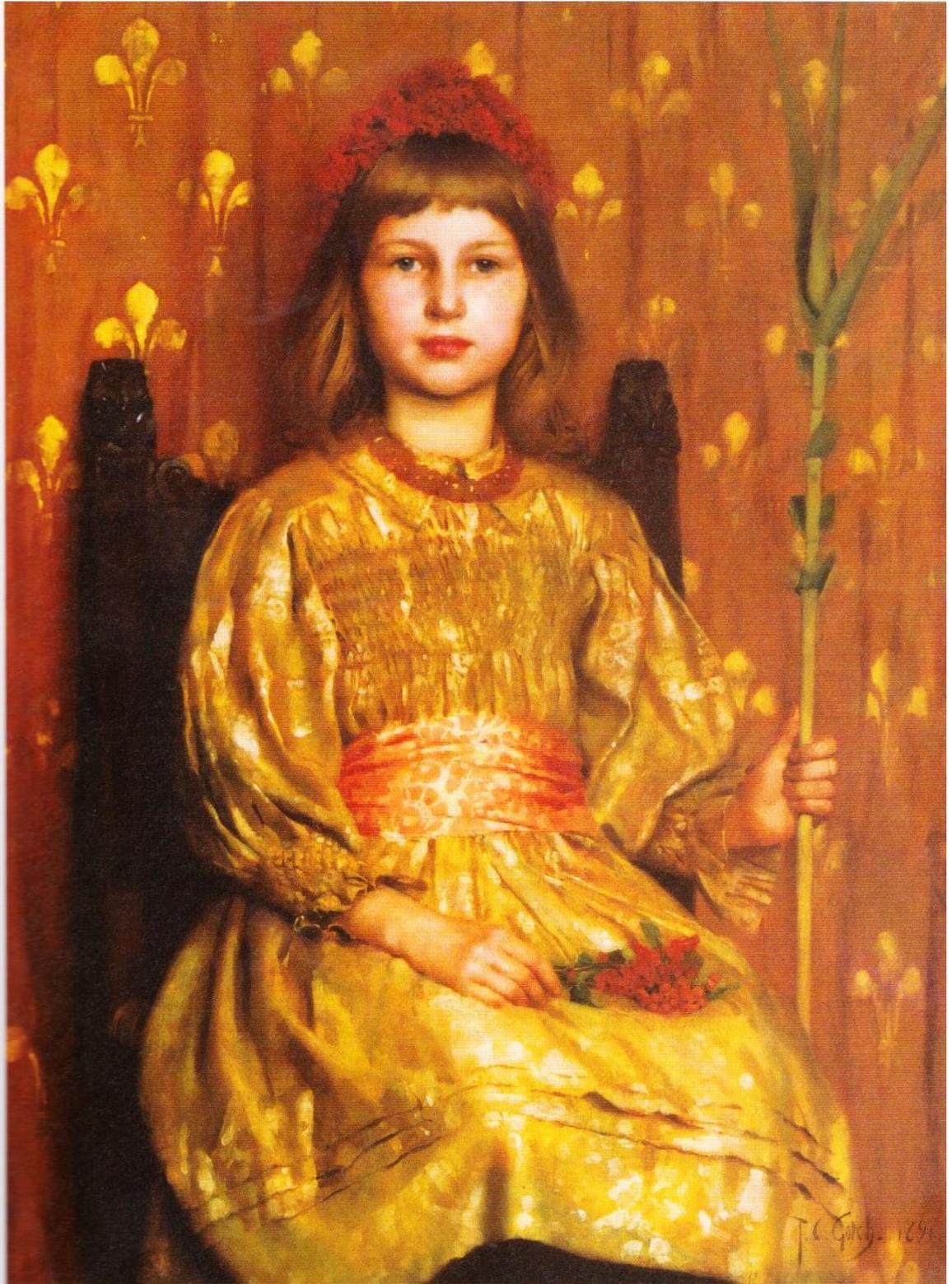
1.12 Thomas Cooper Gotch, *Sir Henry Briggs, A Posthumous Portrait*, oil on canvas, 1400 x 870 mm, unknown date, after 1919 (Alfred East Art Gallery, Kettering)



- 1.13 Jean-Paul Laurens, *The Late Empire: Honorius*, oil painting on canvas, 153.7 x 108 cm, 1880, Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, USA.
[http://collection.chrysler.org/emuseum/view/objects/asitem/search\\$0040/3/tit le-asc?t:state:flow=f96912c4-a942-4ce3-a6ec-a8e79b5f478e](http://collection.chrysler.org/emuseum/view/objects/asitem/search$0040/3/tit le-asc?t:state:flow=f96912c4-a942-4ce3-a6ec-a8e79b5f478e) accessed 13th October, 2016.



1.14 J. W. Waterhouse, *The Favourites of the Emperor Honorius*, 1883, oil on canvas, 119.3 x 205 cm, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide



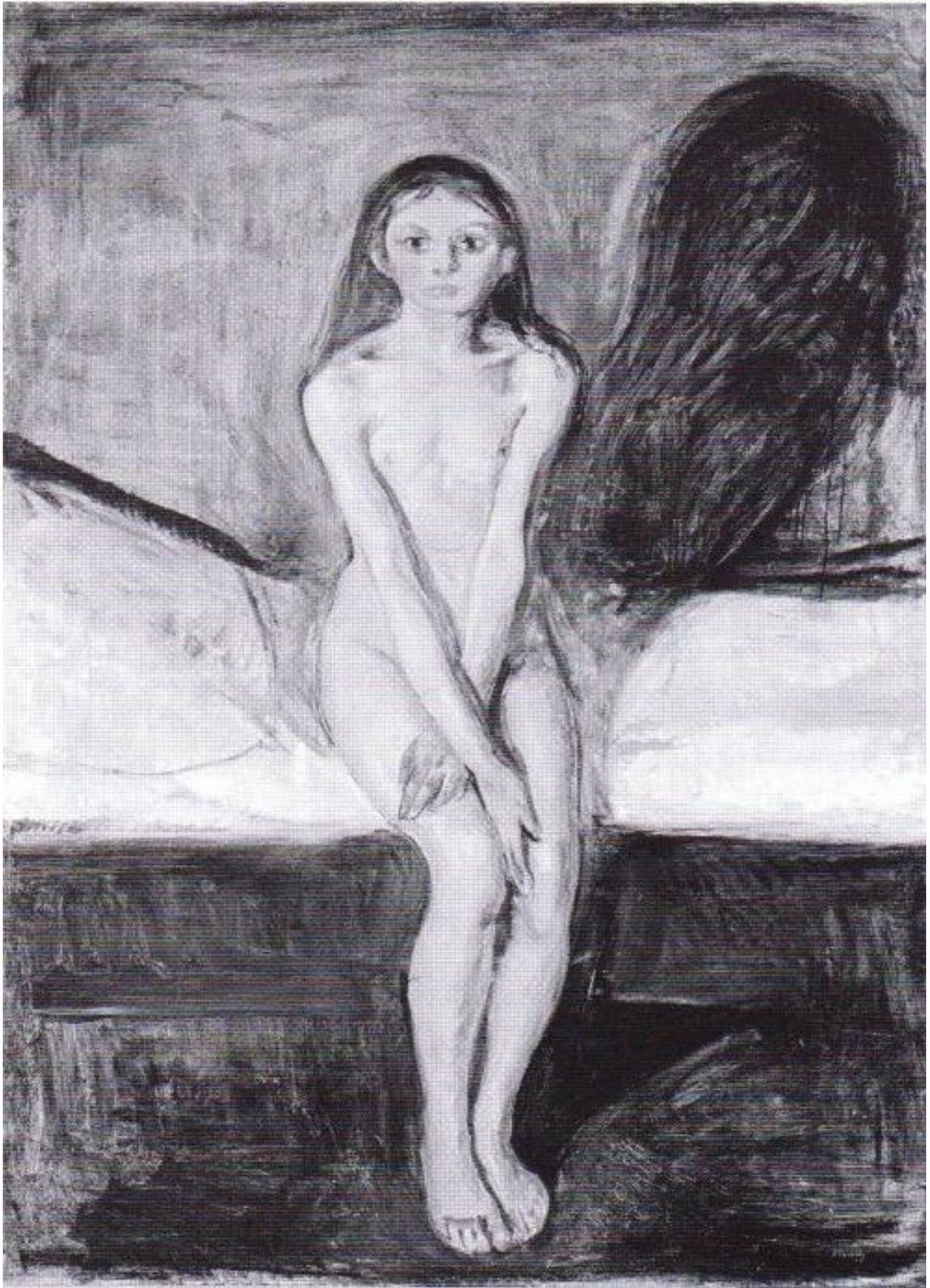
1.15 Thomas Cooper Gotch, *My Crown and Sceptre*, 1891, oil on canvas, 95.2 x 68.3 cm, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney



1.16 Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, *Napoleon I on his Imperial Throne*, 1806, oil on canvas, 259 cm x 162 cm (102 ins x 64 ins), Musee de l'Armee, Hotel des Invalides, Paris



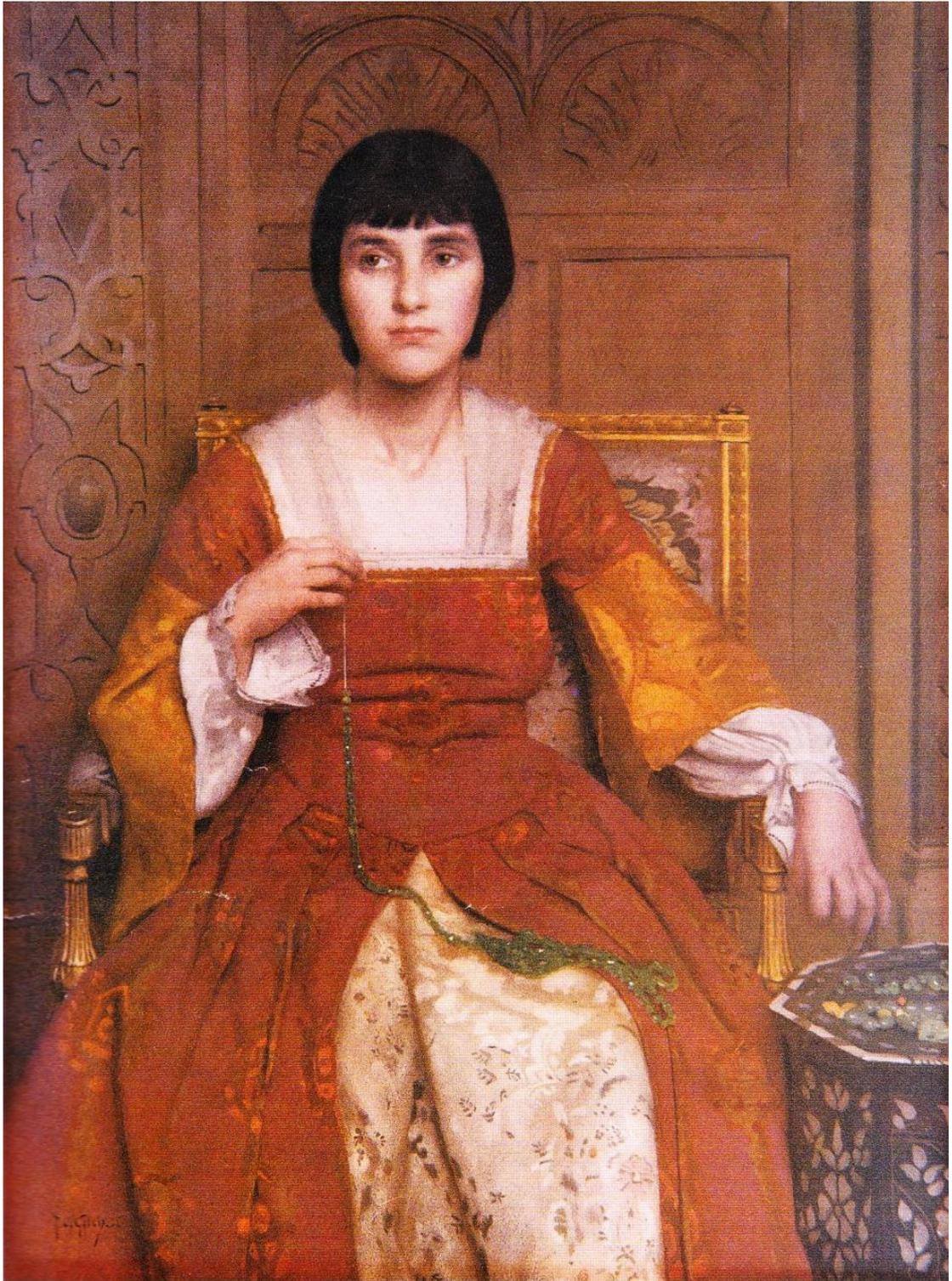
1.17 Thomas Cooper Gotch,
The Awakening, c.1898, oil on
canvas, 133 x 182 cm, (Bristol
Museums, Galleries and
Archives)



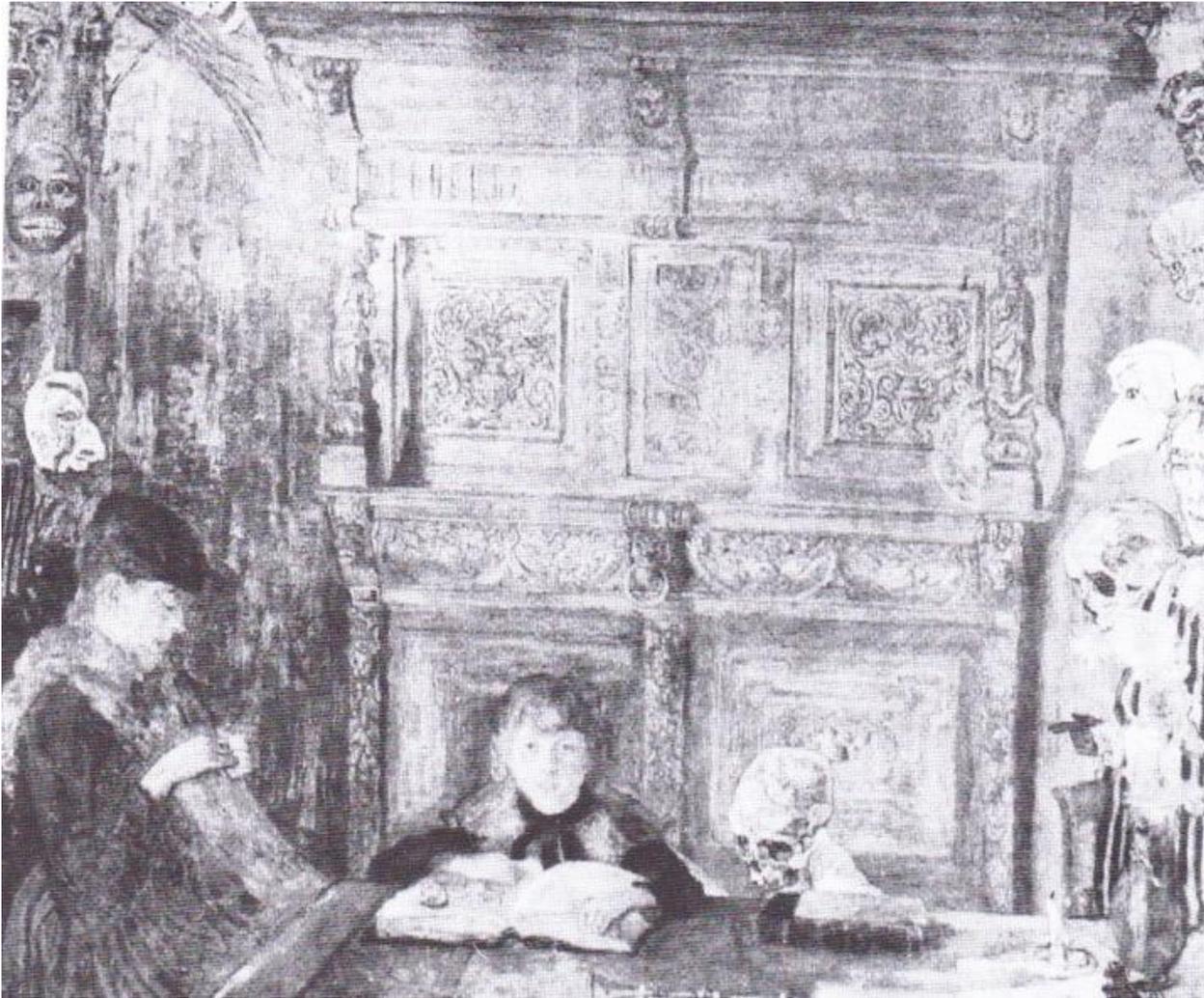
1.18 Edvard Munch, *Puberty*, oil on canvas, 151.4 x 109.8 cm, 1895,
(Nasjonalmuseet for Kunst, Arkitektur og Design, Oslo)



1.19 Thomas Cooper Gotch, *The Heir to All the Ages*, 1897, oil on canvas, 153 x 31 cm, (Untraced, Private Collection)



1.20 Thomas Cooper Gotch, *The Footstep*, 1931, oil, 91 x 71 cm, reproduced in Lomax, (2004), p.19, of an image from family archive



1.21 James Ensor, *Haunted Furniture*, 1885, (original title: *The Old Dresser*), 1885, oil on canvas, 89 x 103 cm. Formerly Stedelijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten (destroyed WWII), reproduced as Figure 95 in Hirsch, (2004), p.238



1.22 Frank Dicksee, *A Reverie*, 1894,
oil on canvas, 104.14 x 137.16 cm,
(Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool)



1.23 Millais, *Speak! Speak!*
oil paint on canvas, 167.6 x
210.8 cm, 1895, (Tate Gallery,
London)



1.24 Thomas Cooper Gotch, *A Golden Dream*, 1893, oil on canvas, 96 x 116 cm, (Harris Museum and Art Gallery Preston), in Lomax, (2004), p.101



1.25 Thomas Cooper Gotch, *Holy Motherhood*, 1902, oil on canvas, 180 x 165 cm, (Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne)



1.26 Thomas Cooper Gotch, *Phyllis Gotch*, c.1897, pencil, 42 x 34 cm, (Private Collection), in Lomax, (2004), p.110



1.27 Thomas Cooper Gotch, 'Study of Phyllis for *Holy Motherhood*,' green oil on canvas, 52 x 39 cm, 1902, (Hanbury-Tenison Collection), in Lomax, (2004), p.120



1.28 Thomas Cooper Gotch, *Alleluia*, 1896, oil on canvas, 133 x 184cm, (Tate Gallery, London)



1.29 Thomas Cooper Gotch, *A Jest*, watercolour, 471 x 229 mm, unknown date, Private Collection. Illustrated in Patrick Bruce Hepburn, *Thomas Cooper Gotch: The Making of the Artist*, Kettering: Alfred East Gallery, 1994.



1.30 Thomas Cooper Gotch, *Study of Gertrude Bodinnar for Death the Bride*, 1895, oil, unknown dimensions, destroyed by fire, 1909, reproduced in Lomax, (2004), p.106



1.31 Thomas Cooper Gotch, *Study for Death the Bride*, 1894, oil on canvas, 33 x 44 cm, (Private Collection), reproduced in Lomax, (2004), p.108



1.32 Thomas Cooper Gotch, 'Study for *Death the Bride*,' 1894, oil on canvas, 590 x 490 mm, (Alfred East Art Gallery)

Chapter Two: Robert Anning Bell



2.1 Robert Anning Bell, *The Arrow*, 1909, watercolour, 67.3 x 73.3, (Private Collection)



2.2 Robert Anning Bell, *The Echo*, 1915, watercolour on paper, 56.0 x 77.0, (Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool)



2.3 Robert Anning Bell, *Music by the Water*, 1900, watercolour and gouache on paper, 38.7 x 54.0, (Tate, London)



2.4 Robert Anning Bell, *The Women going to the Sepulchre*, 1912, oil on canvas, 76.0 x 127.0, (The Royal Academy)



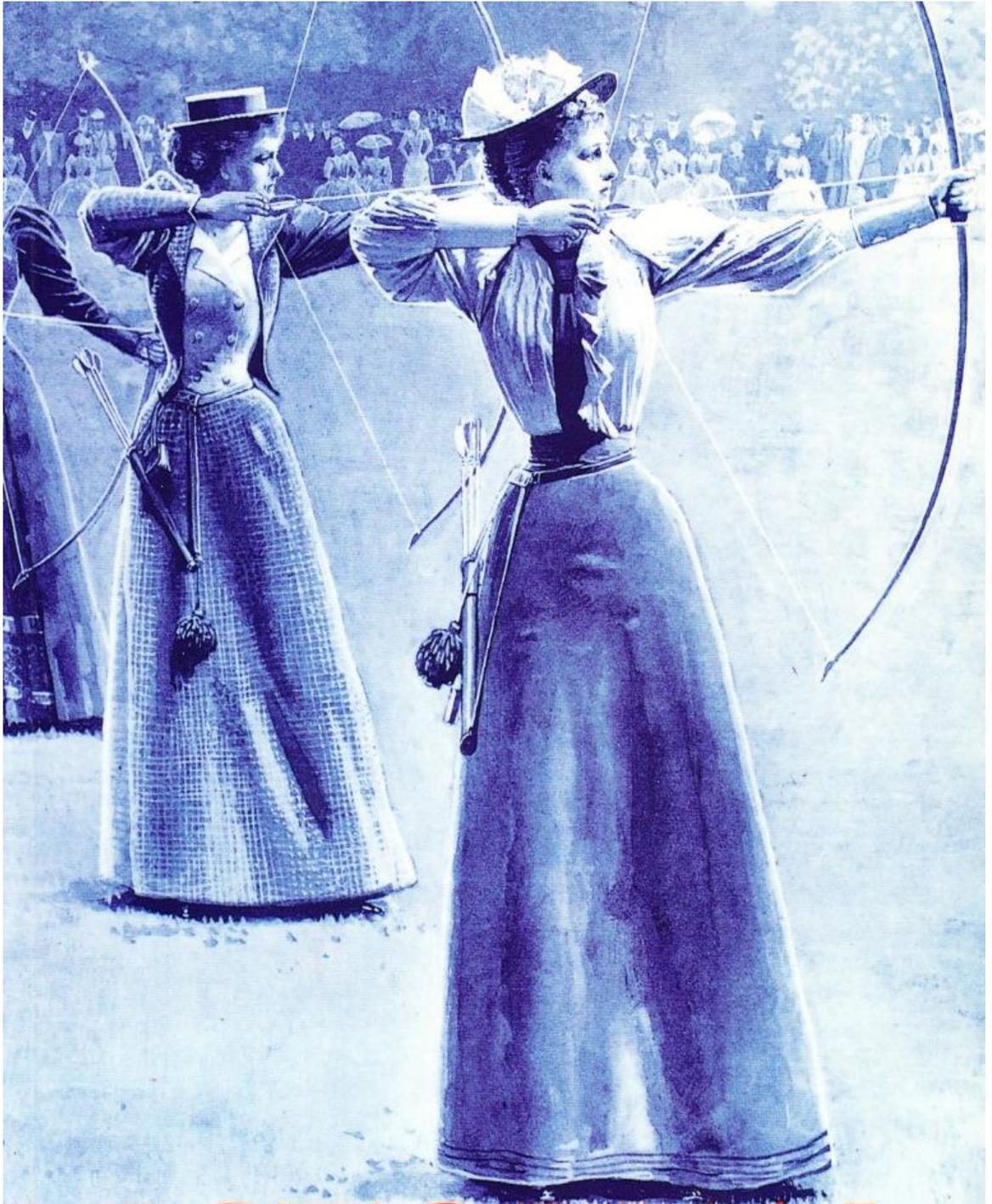
2.5 Robert Anning Bell, *And the Women Stood Afar Off Beholding These Things*, 1920, unknown medium, unknown dimensions, (Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool)



2.6 Robert Anning Bell, *Spring Revel*, 1916, canvas 77.0 x 184.0, (Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight)



2.7 Robert Anning Bell, *Mary in the House of Elizabeth*, 1917, oil on canvas, 142.0 x 76.0, (Tate, London)



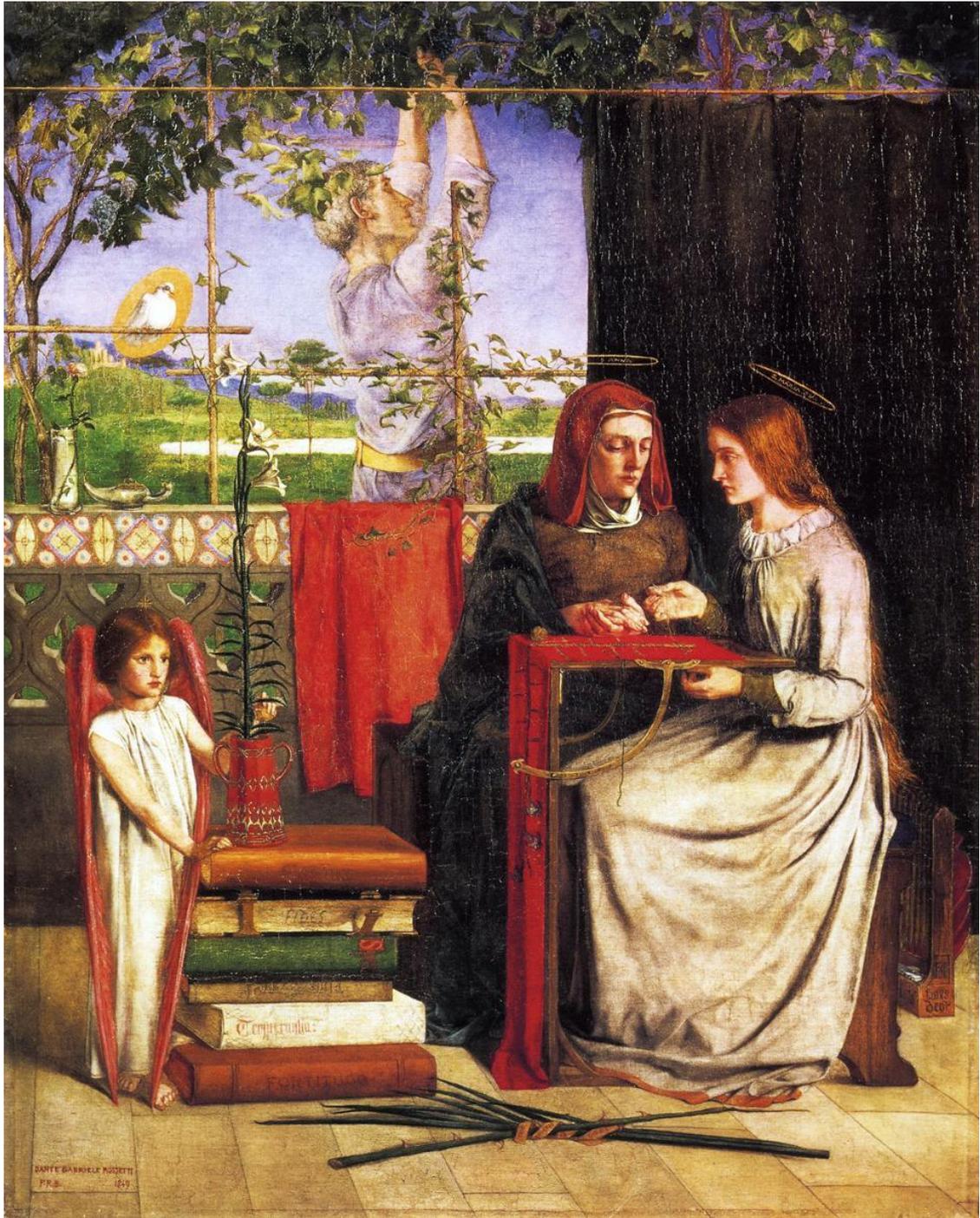
2.8 'Ladies' Meeting of the Toxophilite Society, Regent's Park, 1894,'
Illustrated London News Picture Library. Front cover of Barbara Caine,
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2.9 Robert Anning Bell, *The Battle of Flowers*, (?1904), watercolour, unknown dimensions, (Untraced). Illustrated in T. Martin Wood, 'Mr. Robert Anning Bell's Work as a Painter', *The Studio*, Vol. 49, (1910), pp.255-262, (p.255)



2.10 John William Waterhouse, *Miranda*, 1875, oil on canvas, 76.0 x 101.5, (Private Collection)



2.11 Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*, 1848-9, oil paint on canvas, 83.2 x 65.4, (Tate, London)



2.12 Arthur H. Mackmurdo, Chair, c.1883, Collinson & Lock (probably, maker), London, (probably, made); mahogany with inset mahogany fretwork panel painted on the front only; replacement upholstery, (Victoria and Albert Museum, London.)

Museum Number: W.29-1982.

<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O7926/chair-mackmurdo-arthur-heygate/>,

accessed 20th August, 2



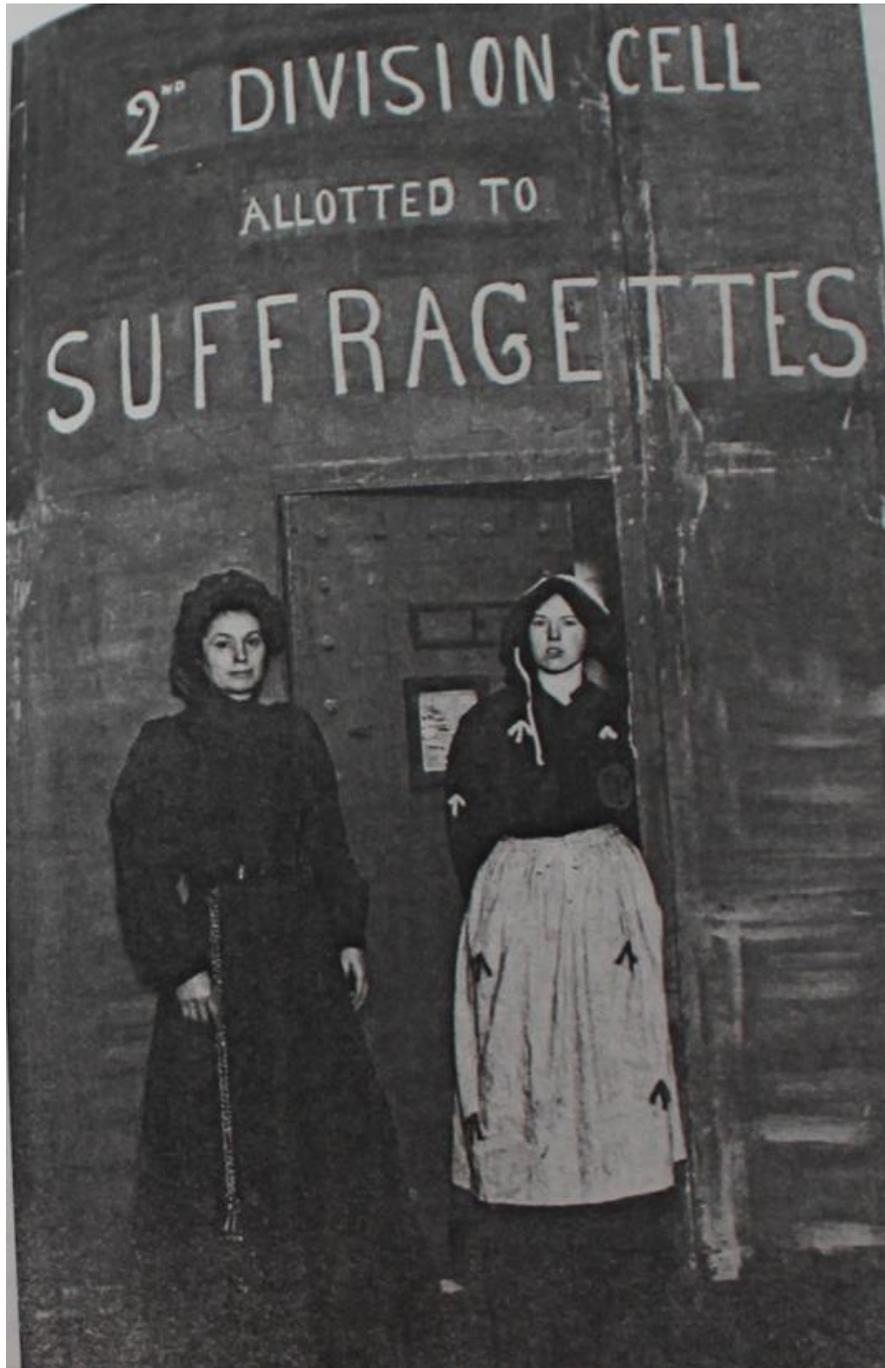
2.13 Robert Anning Bell, *Going to the Hunt*, 1909, watercolour, 60.0 x 101.0, (Private Collection). Image from *Victorian Pictures*, (London: Sothebys exhibition catalogue, 8-9th June, 1993), lot 59, pp.102-3



2.14 'Female Archery Contestants, The Olympics, London, 1908' in Stan Greenberg, 'The 1908 London Olympics Gallery,' http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/britain_wwone/olympics_1908_gallery_08.shtml accessed 15th February, 2016



- 2.15 Hilda Dallas, poster advertising the newspaper *Votes for Women*, 1909.
Reproduced in Diane Atkinson, *The Suffragettes in Pictures*, (London: Sutton Publishing, 1996), Plate 8, opposite p.78

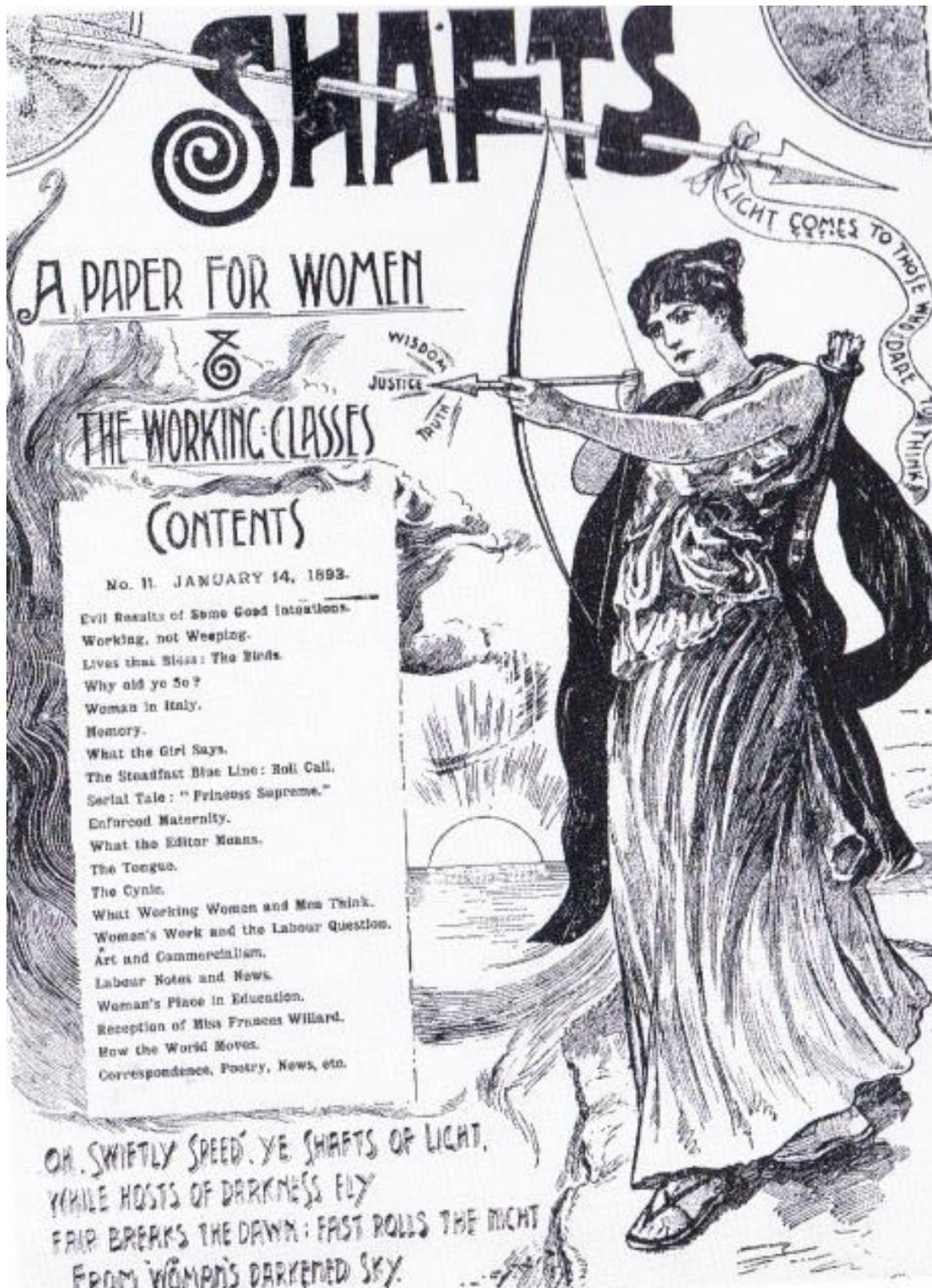


- 2.16 'Suffragettes dressed as prisoner and warden at the Prison Cell Exhibit reconstructed for the Women's Exhibition.' This fundraising and propaganda event was held at Princes' Skating Rink in May, 1909. Photograph, ref No. 1065, copyright the Museum of London, reproduced in Gertrude Colmore, *Suffragette Sally*, edited by Alison Lee, (Peterborough, Ontario, Canada; Plymouth, UK: broadview editions, 2008), p.331



2.17 'Suffragettes demonstrating at the end of Downing Street, several carrying placards decorated with the convict's arrow,' c.1912, photograph reproduced in Diane Atkinson, *The Suffragettes in Pictures*, (London: Sutton Publishing, 1996), p.78.

Atkinson notes: 'This symbol told passers-by that women, often those carrying the placards at that moment, had been imprisoned for their involvement in the campaign.'



2.18 Front cover of *Shafts: A Paper for Women and the Working Classes*, 14th January 1893, illustrated in Deborah Cherry, *Beyond the frame: feminism and visual culture, Britain 1850-1900*, (London: Routledge, 2000), p.211



2.19 Walter Crane, *Diana and Endymion*, 1883, Dundee Art Galleries and Museums, in John Christian, (ed), *The Last Romantics: The Romantic Tradition in British Art: Burne-Jones to Stanley Spencer*, (London: Lund Humphries in association with the Barbican Art Gallery, 1989) [exhibition catalogue, Barbican Art Gallery, London, 9 Feb – 9 April 1989], cat.35, p.89



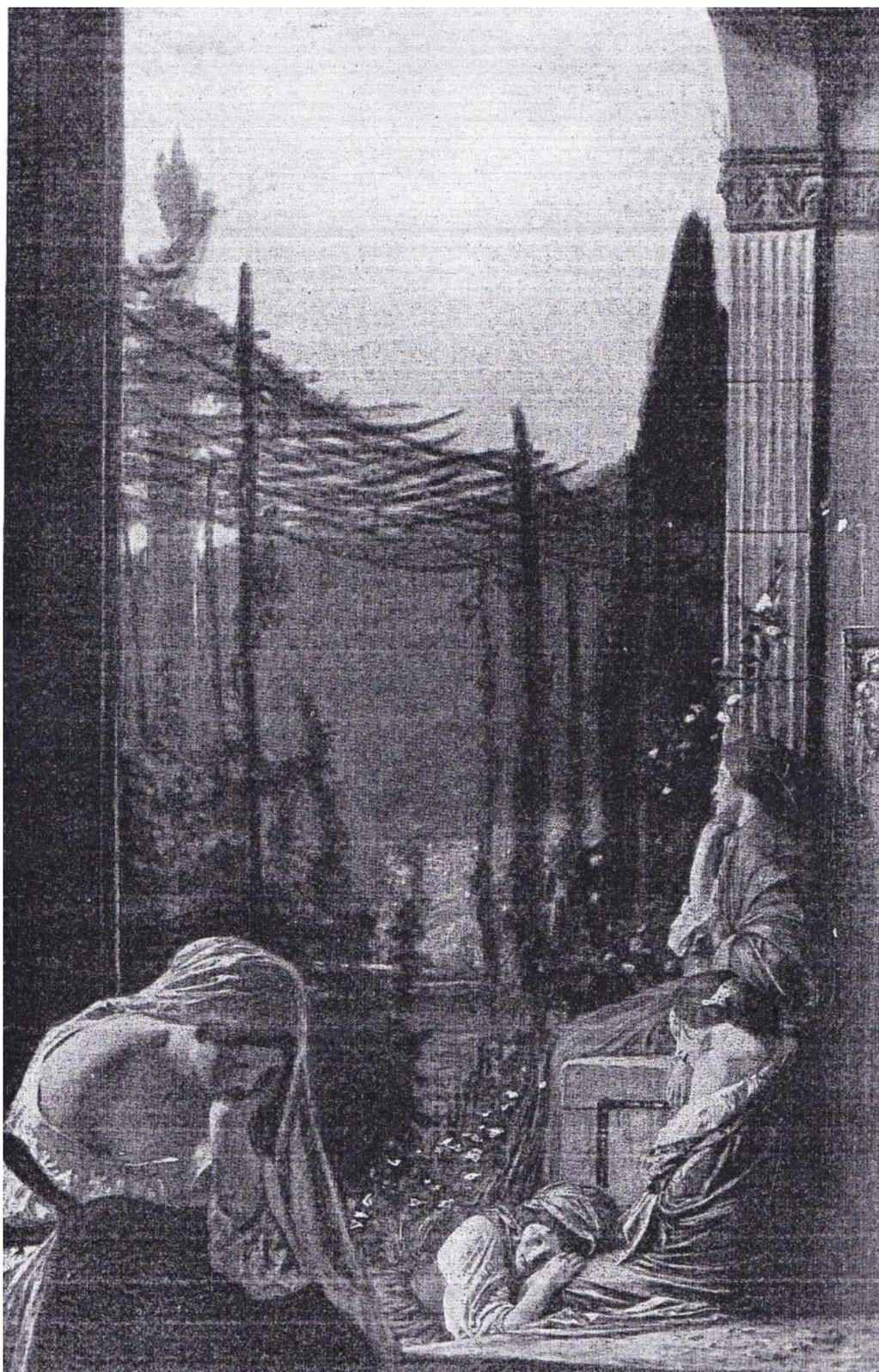
2.20 Walter Crane, *Diana*, 1881, Private Collection, in John Christian, (ed), *The Last Romantics: The Romantic Tradition in British Art: Burne-Jones to Stanley Spencer*, (London: Lund Humphries in association with the Barbican Art Gallery, 1989) [exhibition catalogue, Barbican Art Gallery, London, 9 Feb – 9 April 1989], cat. 34, p.90



2.21 Robert Anning Bell, *The Listeners*, (*The Garden of Sweet Sound*), 1906, watercolour on paper, 49.5 x 74.9, (Tate, London)



2.22 Robert Anning Bell, *Will-o-the-Wisp*, 1891, watercolour on paper, 18 x 36, copyright Peter Nahum Ltd.
<http://www.victorianweb.org/painting/bell/paintings/3.html> accessed 10th August, 2016



2.23 Robert Anning Bell, *The Garden of the Sleeping Beauty*, illustrated in T. Martin Wood, 'Mr. Robert Anning Bell's Work as a Painter', *The Studio*, Vol. 49, (1910), pp.255-262, (p.258)



2.24 Robert Anning Bell, *The Mermaid*, 1891, medium, dimensions, (Bath Art Gallery)



2.25 John William Waterhouse,
Miranda, 1916, oil on canvas, laid on
board, 47.5 x 60, (Private Collection)



2.26 Robert Anning Bell, *The South Wind*, 1911, oil painting, 91.3 x 182.8, (Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia)

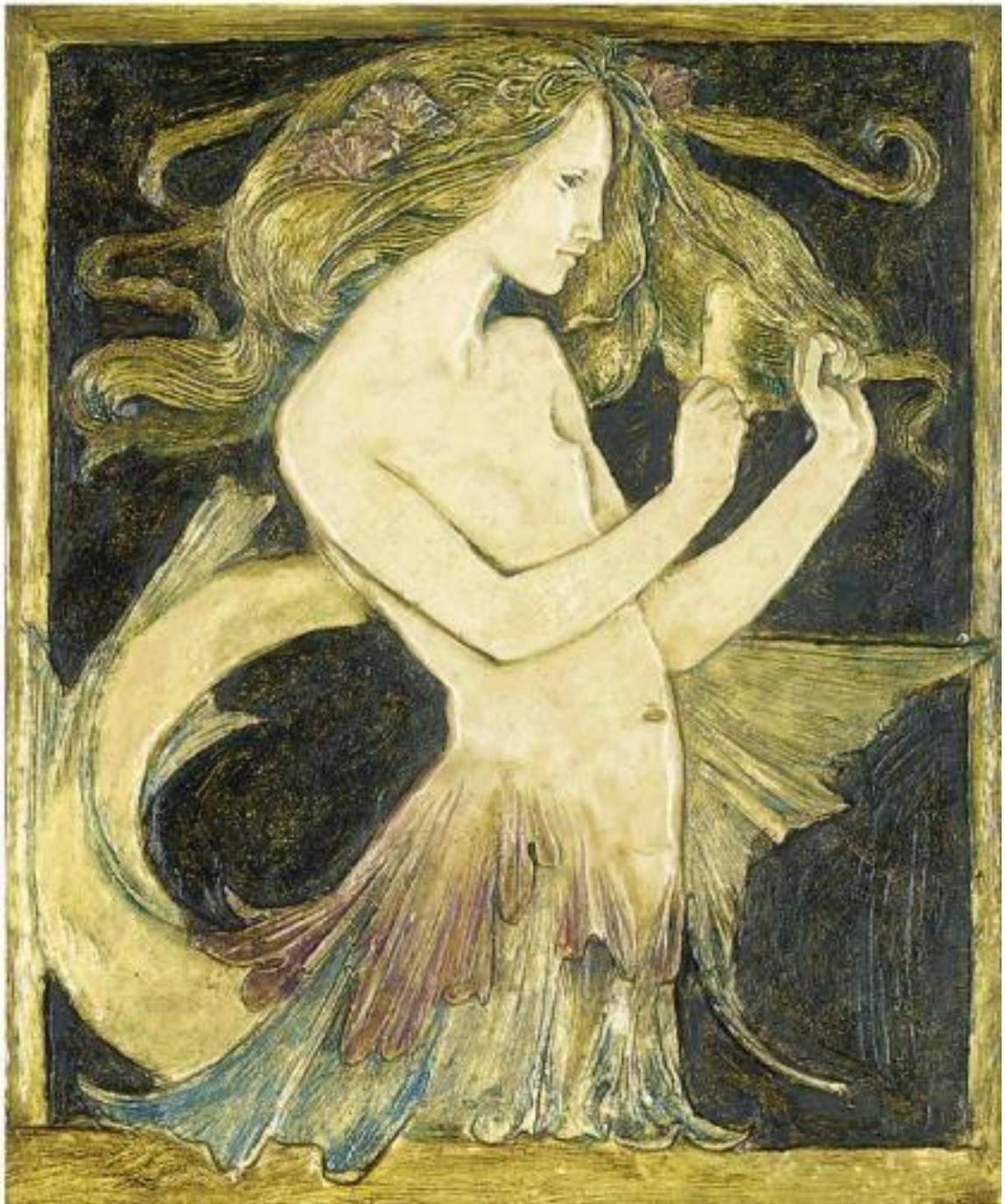


2.27 Robert Anning Bell, 'Sketch of three women; scene in an interior overlooking the sea, a woman stands with outstretched hand, while another lies on the floor, the third kneels and watches the former, all wearing classical dress, within a border,' Pen and black ink, unknown dimensions, (British Museum, London).

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online accessed 20th August, 2016



2.28 John William Waterhouse, *A Mermaid*, 1900, oil on canvas, 96.5 x 66.6 cm, Royal Academy of Arts, London



2.29 Robert Anning Bell, *Mermaid*, 1899, painted *bas relief* panel, *Le Bois des Moutiers*



2.30 Frederick Cayley Robinson, *Water*, c.1911, watercolour and gouache on board, 40.6 x 33.7, (The Fine Art Society, London)



2.31 Robert Anning Bell, 'Caliban,' from William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, (London: Freemantle, 1901), p.xii, Line-block, 19.5 x 13.0, (Royal Academy collections, London).



2.32 Robert Anning Bell, *The Archers*, 1907, unknown medium, unknown dimensions, (Private Collection). Illustrated in, T. Martin Wood, 'Mr. Robert Anning Bell's Work as a Painter', *The Studio*, Vol. 49, (1910), pp.255-262, (p.262)



2.33 John
William
Waterhouse,
The Merman,
oil on canvas,
43.0 x 74.0 cm,
(Untraced)



2.34 John William Waterhouse, *Consulting the Oracle*, 1884, oil on canvas, 119.4 x 198.1, (Tate, London)

Chapter Three: Frederick Cayley Robinson



3.1 Frederick Cayley Robinson, *A Winter Evening*, 1899, oil on canvas, 61.0 x 76.0, (Private Collection); <http://www.leicestergalleries.com/19th-20th-century-paintings/d/a-winter-evening/10392> accessed 29th August, 2016



3.2 Frederick Cayley Robinson, *Winter Evening*, 1906, oil on canvas, 75.6 x 60.5, (Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome). Reproduced in Peter Rockwell, *Spellbound in Rome: the Anglo-American Community in Rome (1890-1914) and the Founding of Keats-Shelley House*, (?Rome, c.2005), cat.14.



3.3 Frederick Cayley Robinson, *The Depth of Winter*, c.1900, (Private Collection)



3.4 Felix Vallotton, *The Cook*, 1892, oil on panel, Private Collection. Reproduced in Claire Frèches-Thory and Antoine Terrasse, *The Nabis: Bonnard, Vuillard and their circle*, (Paris : Flammarion, c1990), p.47



3.5 Frederick Cayley Robinson, *The Foundling*, 1896, oil on canvas, 63.5 x 76 cm, Leamington Spa Art Gallery



3.6 Frederick Cayley Robinson, *The Renunciants*, 1916, watercolour and gouache on card, 30.2 x 37.7, Victoria and Albert Museum, London



3.7 Frederick Cayley Robinson, *Interior*, 1915, Gouache, pencil and wash on paper, unknown dimensions, (Wakefield Council Permanent Art Collection)



3.8 Frederick Cayley Robinson, 'The Forest,' undated set design for *The Blue Bird*, staged at the Haymarket Theatre, 1909; black and coloured chalks and watercolour and oil on illustrators' board, 47.6 x 57.2 cm, The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge



3.9 Frederick Cayley Robinson, *The Two Sisters*, 1908, unknown medium, dimensions, untraced. Illustrated in T. Martin Wood, 'Some Recent Work of Mr Cayley Robinson', *The Studio*, 49, (1910), pp.204-213, (p.205)



3.10 Frederick Cayley Robinson, *The Farewell*, 1907, tempera on board, 14.5 x 20 cm, Leamington Spa Art Gallery



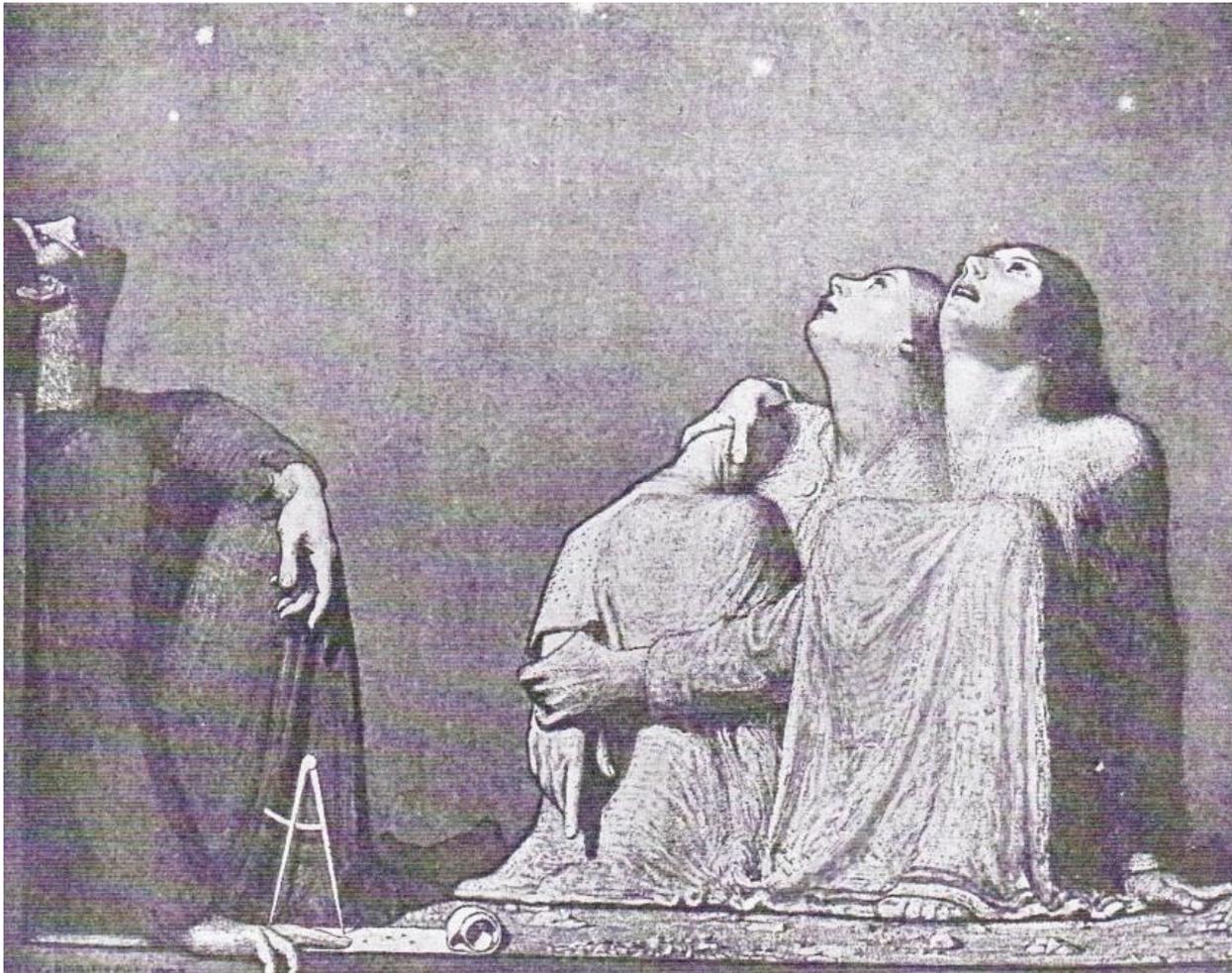
3.11 Frederick Cayley Robinson, *Mother and Child: Threads of Life*, 1894, oil on canvas, 60.9 x 76.2 cm, Cecil French Bequest, London



3.12 Frederick Cayley Robinson, *Childhood*, 1926, oil on canvas, 61 x 76.8 cm, Liverpool Museums



3.13 Frederick Cayley Robinson, *Twilight*, (c.1902), unknown medium and dimensions, untraced



3.14 Frederick Cayley Robinson, *Night*, (?1904), tempera painting, unknown dimensions, untraced. Illustrated in C. Lewis Hind, 'Ethical Art and Mr F. Cayley Robinson', *The Studio*, 31, (1904), pp.235-241, (p.235)



3.15 Sketch for *The Farewell*,
undated, mixed media on board,
14.5 x 20 cm, Leamington Spa
Art Gallery



3.16 'Elegy' or 'Sketch for *Reminiscence*,' undated, drawing on paper, 19.1 x 24.6, British Museum



3.17 Frederick Cayley Robinson, 'Before the Wall,' undated set design for *The Blue Bird*, staged at the Haymarket Theatre, 1909. Black, blue and white chalk, watercolour and oil paint with gold highlights on board, 52.8 x 59.4 cm, The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, reproduced in *Chasing Happiness: Maurice Maeterlinck, The Blue Bird and England*, (exhibition catalogue The Fitzwilliam Museum, Shiba Gallery, 3rd October, 2006-7th January, 2007), Jane Munroe, (Cambridge: The Fitzwilliam Museum, 2006), p.50



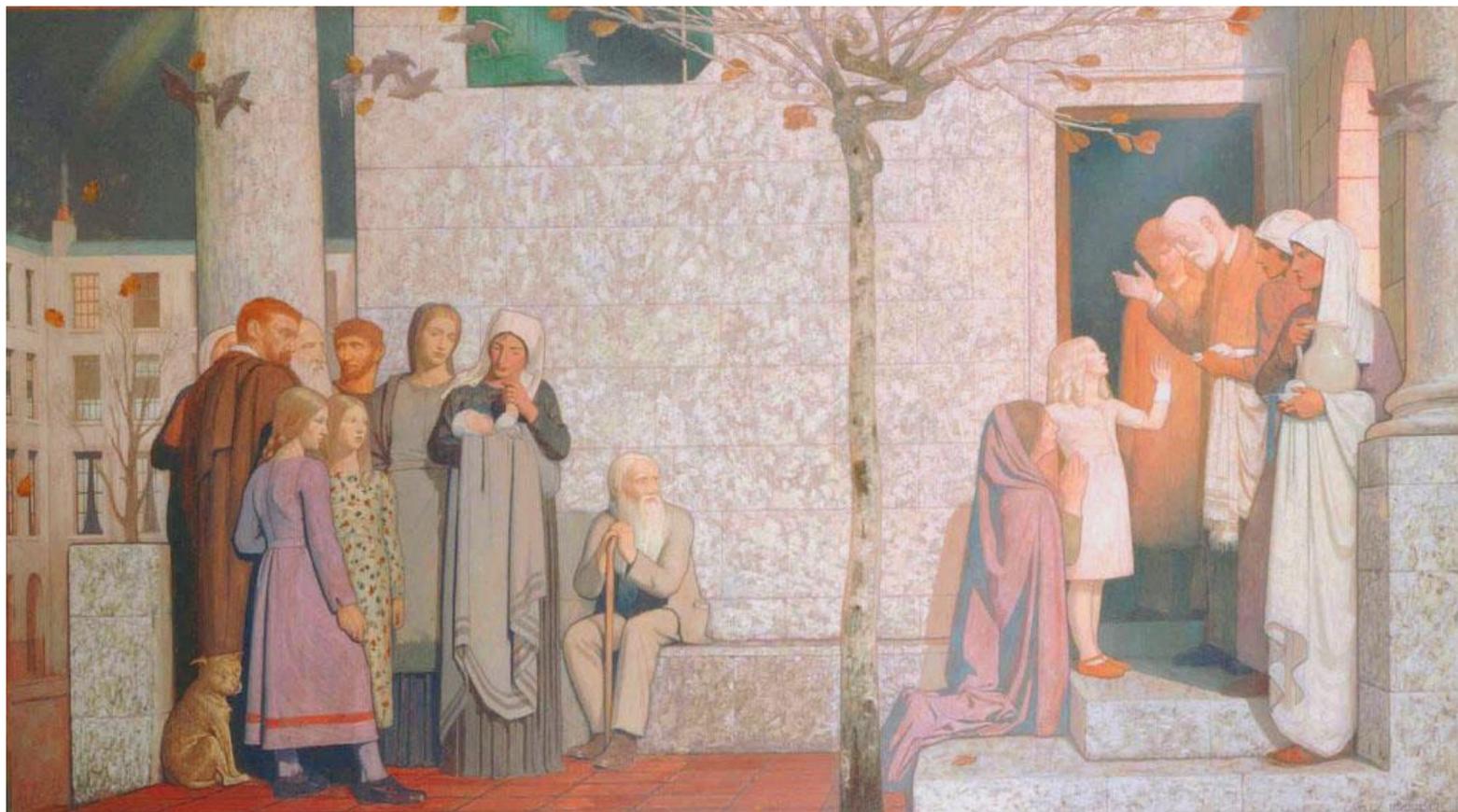
3.18 Frederick Cayley Robinson, *Orphans*, 1915-1920, from the *Acts of Mercy*, two oil paintings on canvas, left hand painting of two, 1920: sight 196 x 336 cm; canvas 198.5 x 339.5 x 4 cm, Wellcome Collection, London



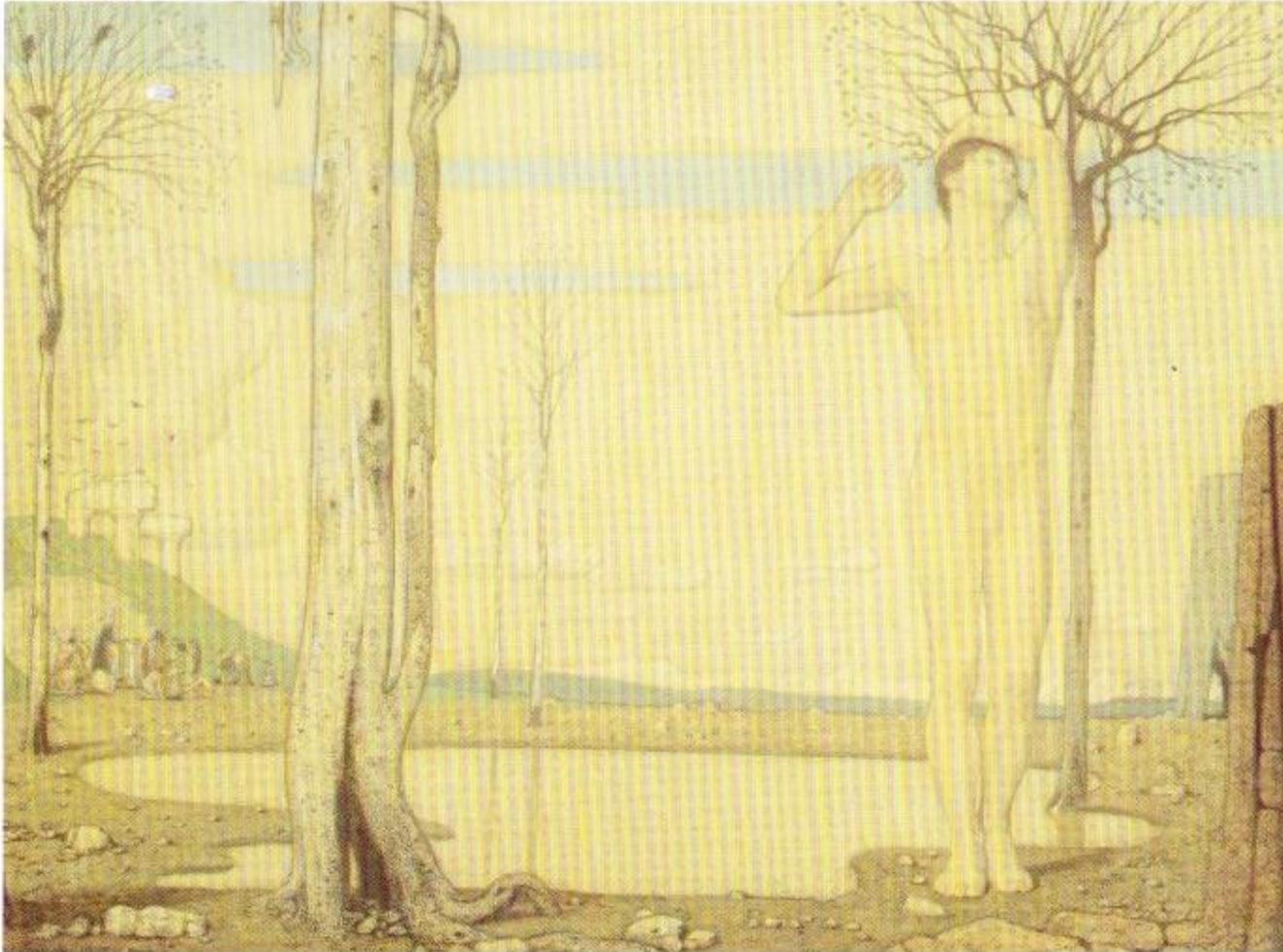
3.19 Frederick Cayley Robinson, *Orphans*, 1915-1920, from the *Acts of Mercy*, two oil paintings on canvas, right hand painting of two: sight 196 x 336 cm; canvas 198.7 x 339 x 4 cm, Wellcome Collection, London



3.20 Frederick Cayley Robinson, *The Doctor*, 1916 - 1920, from *Acts of Mercy*, two oil paintings on canvas. Left hand painting of two, 1920: sight 196 x 336 cm; canvas 198.5 x 339.5 x 4 cm. Wellcome Collection, London



3.21 Frederick Cayley Robinson, *The Doctor*, 1916 - 1920, from *Acts of Mercy*, two oil paintings on canvas. Right hand painting of two, 1916: sight 196.5 x 336 cm; canvas 199 x 338.6 x 4 cm. Wellcome Collection, London



3.22 Frederick Cayley Robinson, *Youth*, 1923, charcoal, watercolour, gouache, pastel, oil and pencil on panel prepared with a gesso ground, 46.3 x 62.2, (Private Collection), reproduced in A. Wilton and R. Upstone, (eds.), *The Age of Rossetti, Burne-Jones and Watts: Symbolism in Britain, 1860 – 1910* (1997) [exhibition catalogue, London, Munich, and Amsterdam, 16 Oct 1997 – 30 Aug 1998], cat. 132, p.278



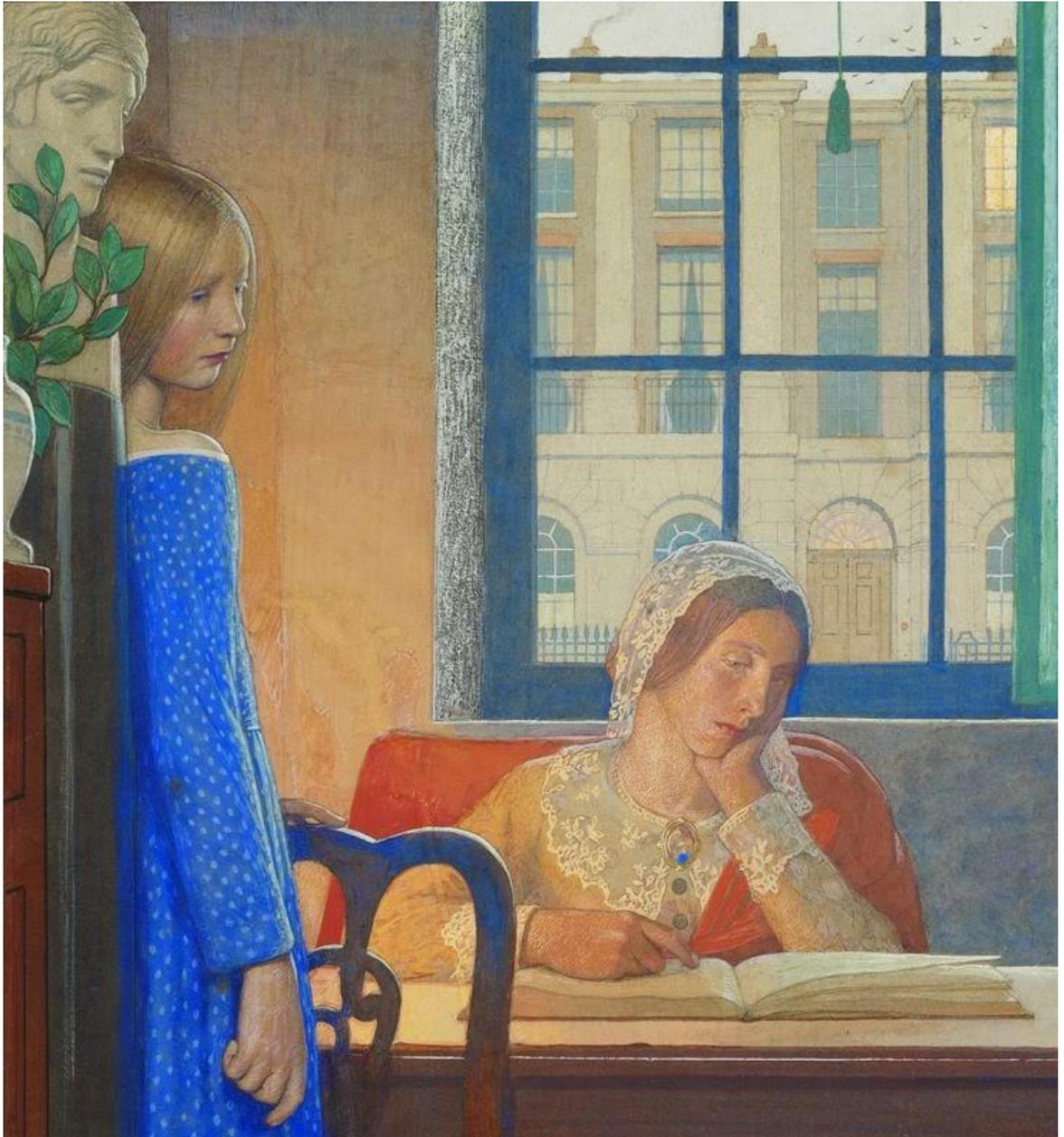
3.23 Study for *A Winter Evening*, unknown date, unknown dimensions, untraced.
Illustrated in C. Lewis Hind, 'Ethical Art and Mr F. Cayley Robinson', *The Studio*,
31, (1904), pp.235- 241, (p.236)



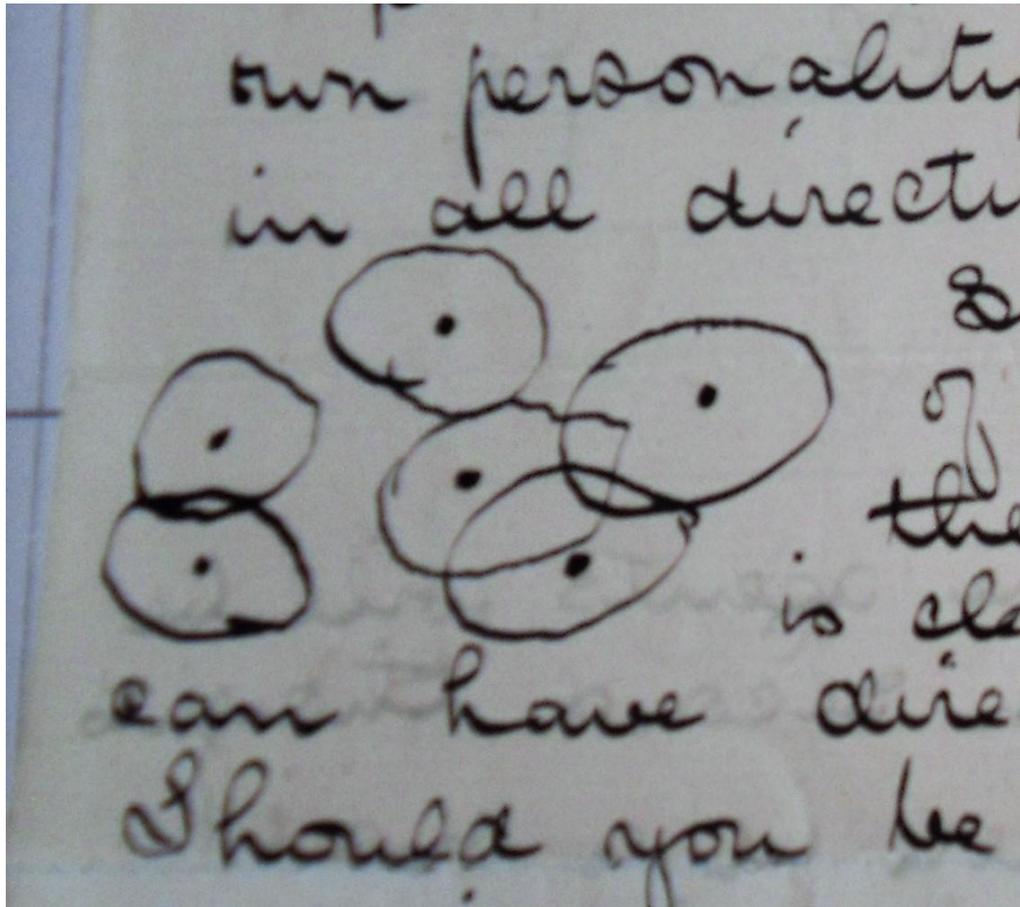
3.24 Fra Angelico, *The Annunciation*, begun c.1437, fresco, San Marco, Florence, from Magnolia Scudieri, *The Frescoes by Angelico at San Marco*, (Florence, Italy: Giunti and Firenze Musei, 2004)



3.25 Fra Angelico, *The Annunciation*, detail from Scudieri, (2004)



3.26 Frederick Cayley Robinson, *An Evening in London*, 1920, tempera and pencil on board, 37.7 x 33.9, (Private Collection)



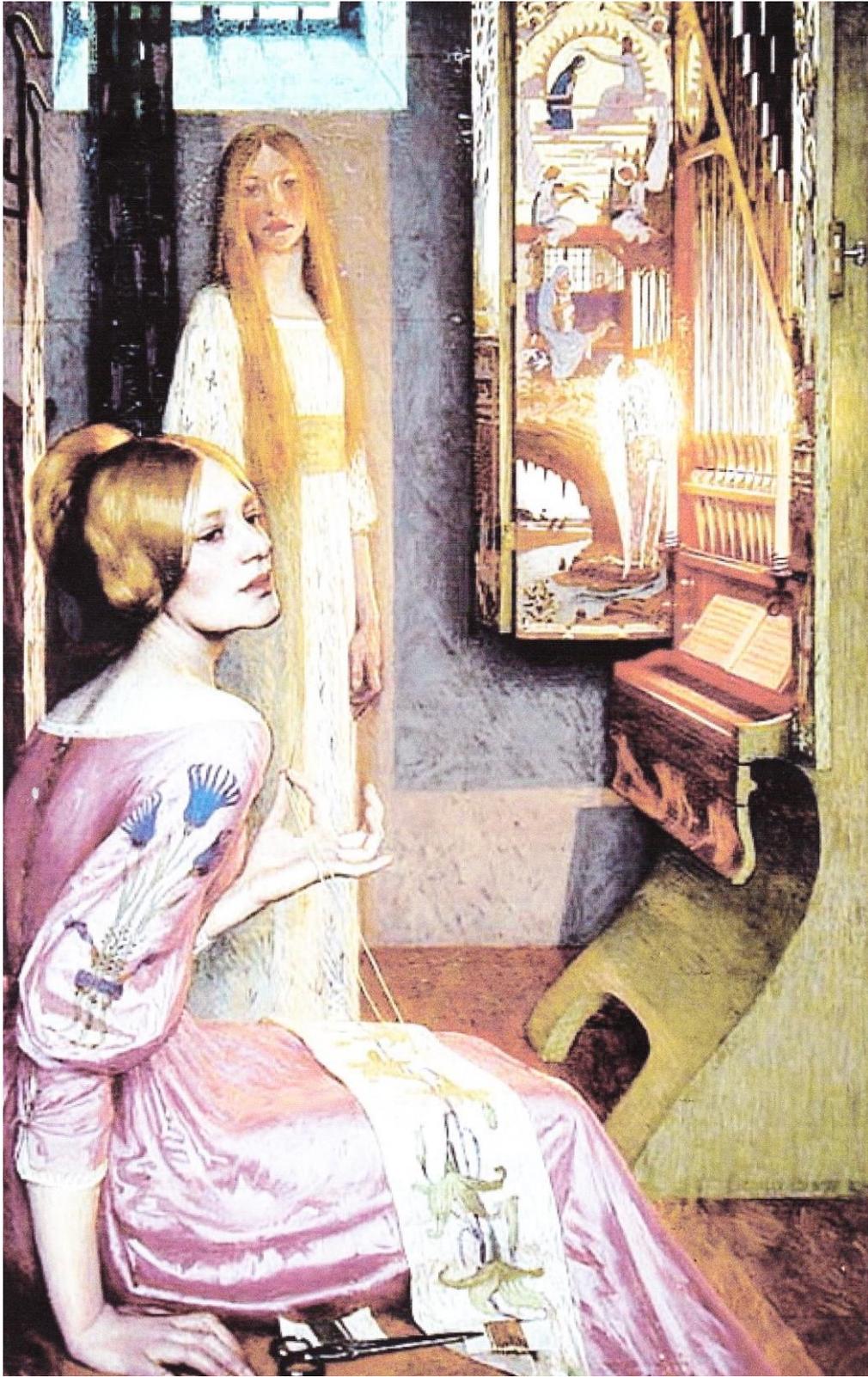
3.27 Frederick Cayley Robinson, Sketch of circles to illustrate 'Sympathy', from his letter to A. L. Baldry, Sunday 17th May, 1896, V&A National Art Library



3.28 Frederick Cayley Robinson, *Pastoral*, 1923-4, oil paint on canvas, support: 90.3 x 116.4, frame: 130.0 x 157.5 x 10.5, (Tate Gallery, London)



3.29 *The Beautiful Castle*, (1894), Present Whereabouts Unknown. Illustrated in Stevens, (1977), p.26



3.30 *Souvenir of a Past Age*, 1895, oil on canvas, 122.6 x 76.8 cm, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide



3.31 Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Ecce Ancilla Domini!* (*The Annunciation*), 1849–50, oil paint on canvas, support: 72.4 x 41.9, frame: 100.2 x 69.8 x 8.8, Tate Gallery, London



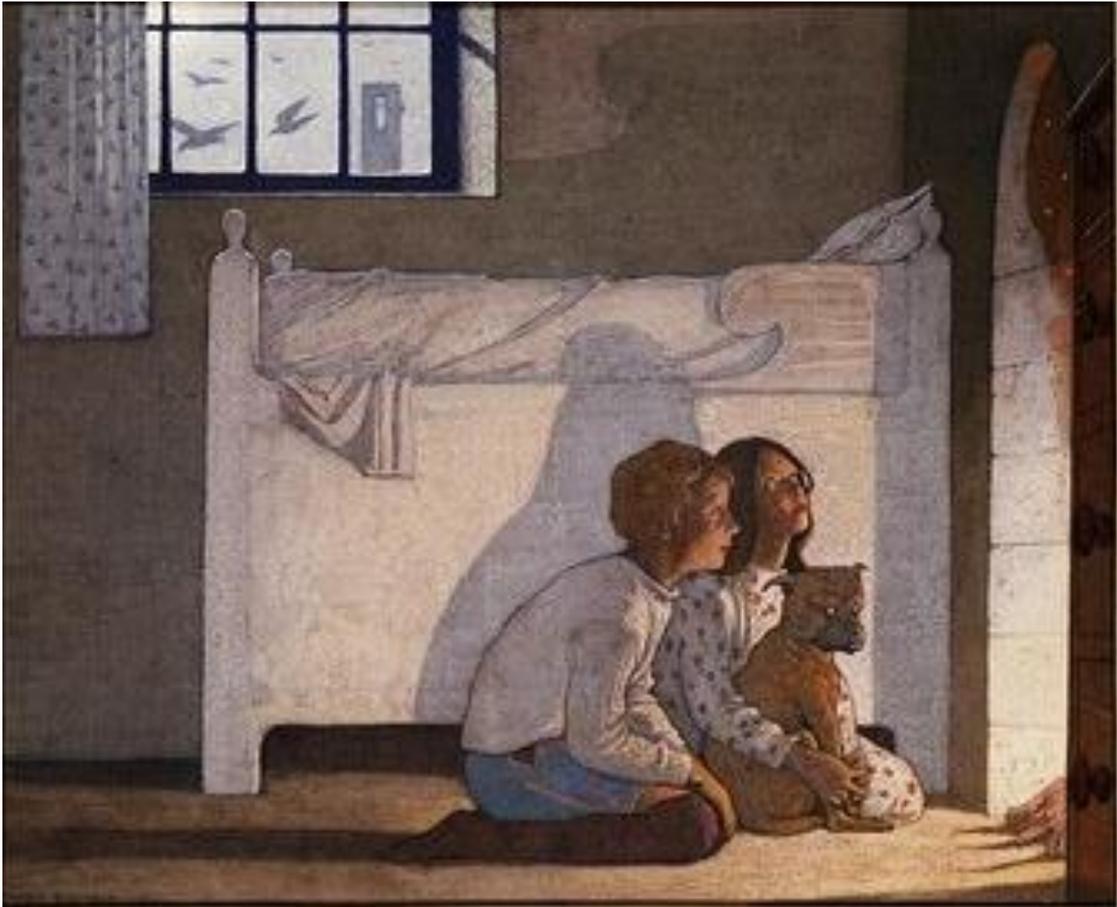
3.32 Paul Ranson, *The Attic*, 1893, oil on canvas, Josefowitz Collection, Lausanne, illustrated in Claire Frèches-Thory and Antoine Terrasse, *The Nabis: Bonnard, Vuillard and their circle*, (Paris: Flammarion, c1990) p.62



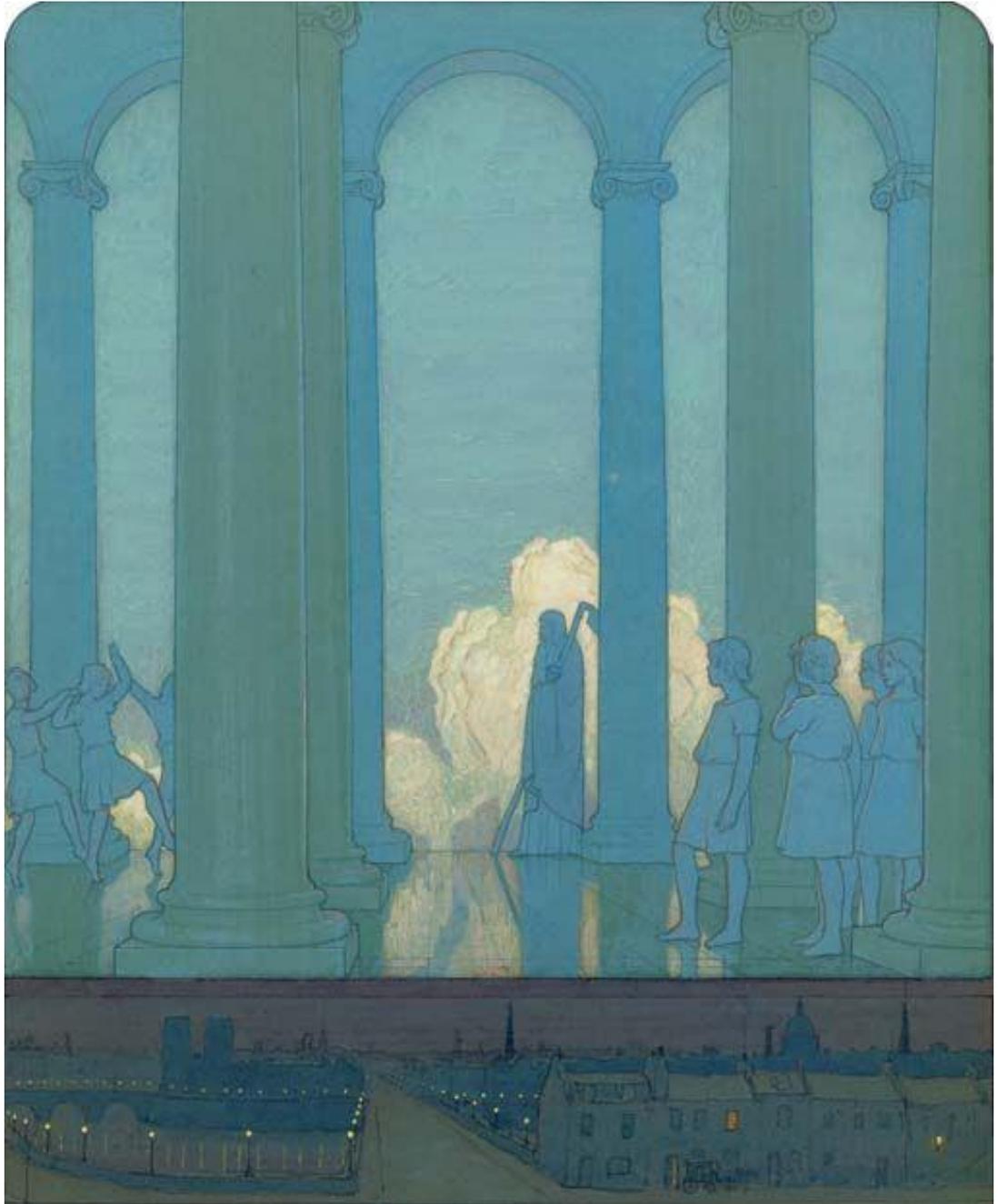
3.33 Frederick Cayley
Robinson, *The Old Nurse*,
1926, tempera on board,
33.2 x 47.0, British
Museum.



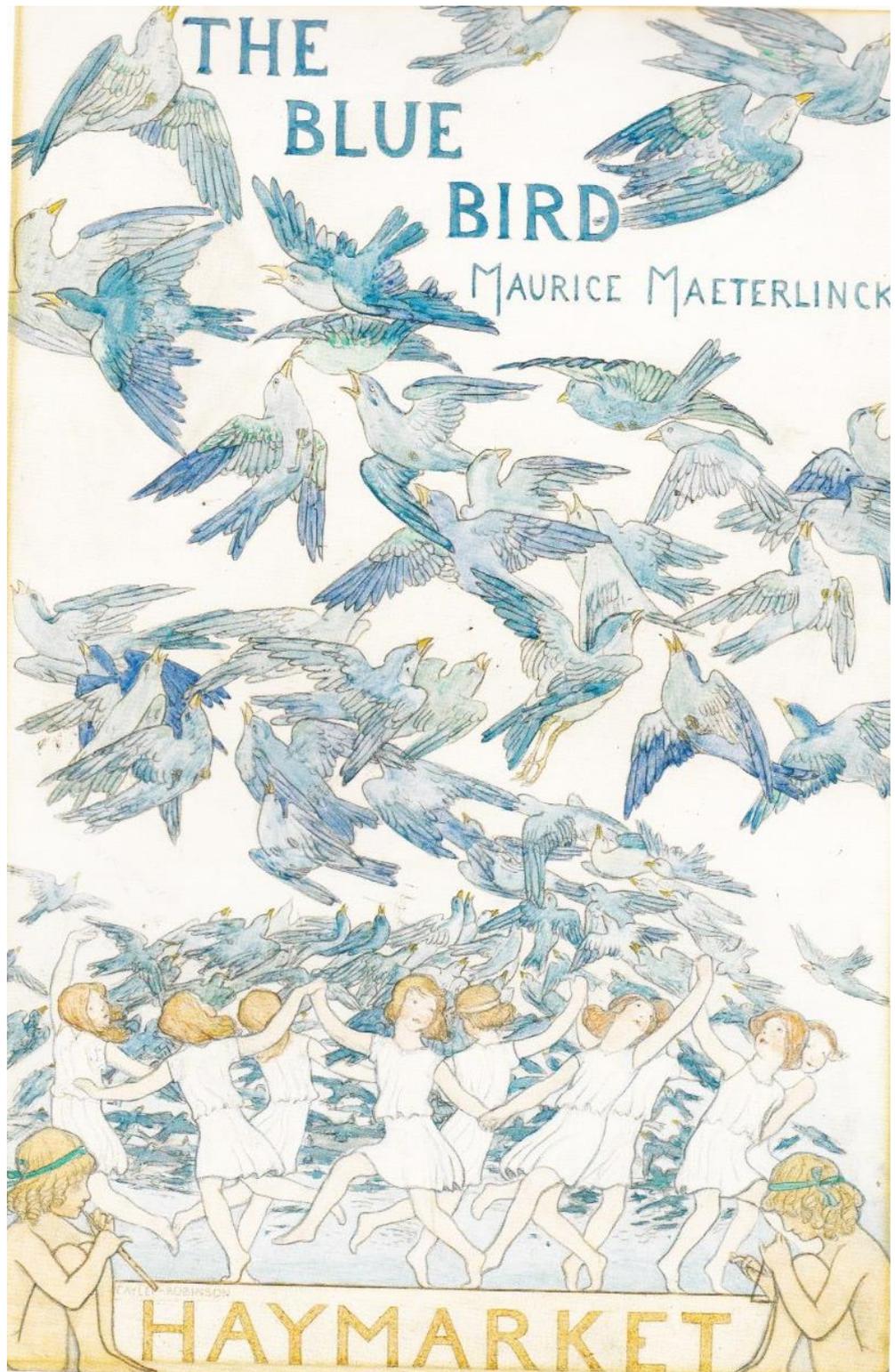
3.34 Charles Rennie Mackintosh, The Warndorfer Chair, 1902, from Roger Billcliffe, *Charles Rennie Mackintosh: the complete furniture, furniture drawings & interior designs*, (Guildford ; London : Lutterworth Press, 1979), p.129



3.35 Frederick Cayley Robinson, 'The Children by the Fireside Recounting their Adventures,' 1911, watercolour and gouache, 40.6 x 33 cm. Illustration to Maurice Maeterlinck, *The Blue Bird: A Fairy Play in Six Acts*, (London: Methuen, 1912). Victoria & Albert Museum Department of Prints and Drawings and Department of Paintings: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O75715/the-children-by-the-fireside-watercolour-robinson-frederick-cayley/> accessed 11th October, 2016.



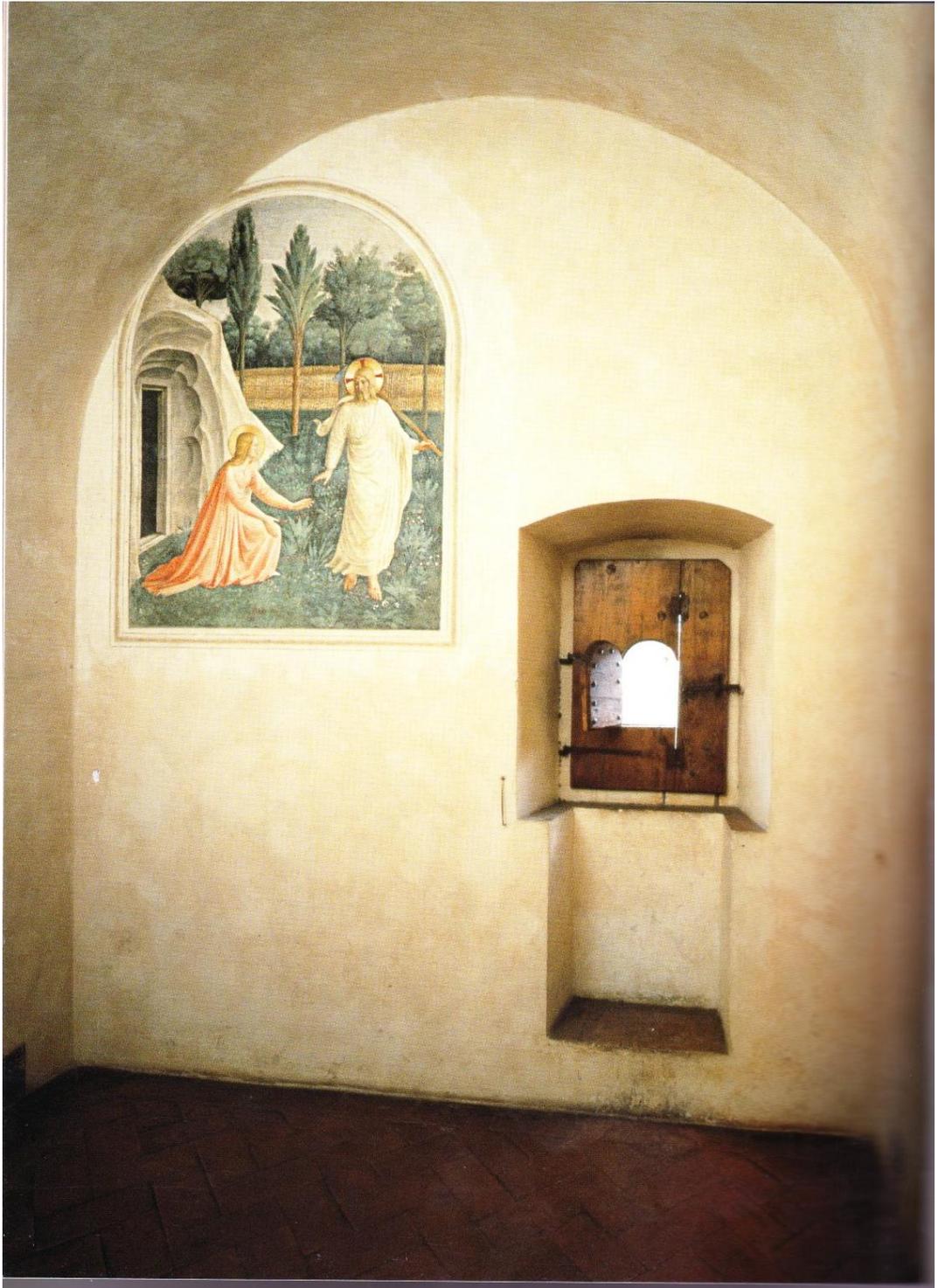
3.36 Frederick Cayley Robinson, 'The Kingdom of the Future,' illustration opposite the title page of Maeterlinck's *The Blue Bird*, (London: Methuen & Co., 1936), reproduced in Munroe, (2006), p.37



3.37 Frederick Cayley Robinson, undated poster design for *The Blue Bird*, graphite, black and blue chalk, watercolour and bodycolour on O.W pasteboard, surface No. 1, 52.3 x 32 cm, The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge



3.38 'View of the East Corridor – Corridor of the Clerics and the corner going to the North Corridor – Corridor of the Lay Brothers, with *The Annunciation* on the wall,' photograph, printed in Scudieri, (2004), p.44



3.39 'Interior of Cell 1', photograph from the San Marco Monastery, Florence, printed in Scudieri, (2004), p.46



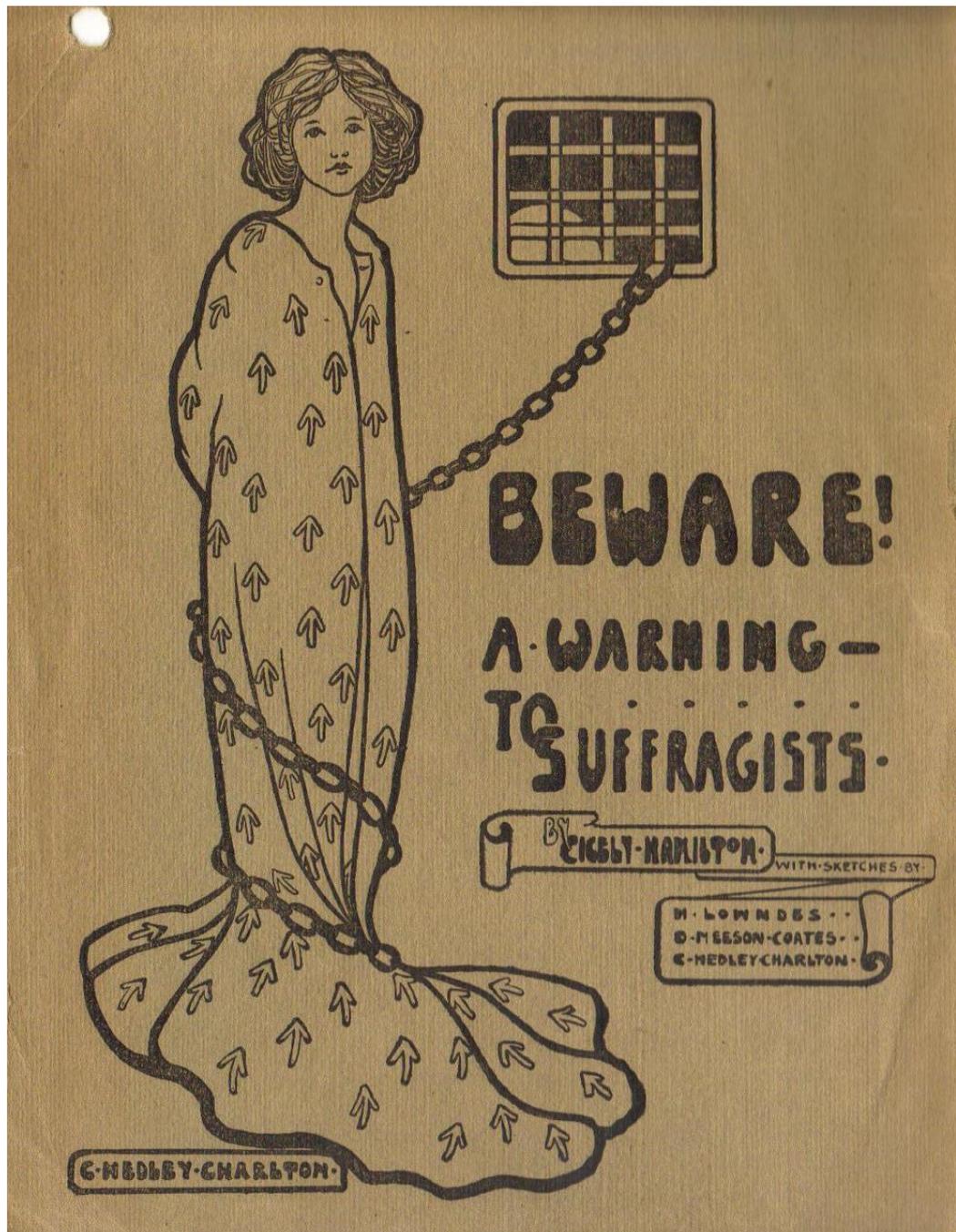
3.40 Frederick Cayley
Robinson, *Reminiscence*, 1908,
tempera on board, 46 x 61 cm,
Leamington Spa Art Gallery



3.41 Frederick Cayley Robinson, *The Bridge*, 1905, mixed media on panel, 22 x 28 cm, Leamington Spa Art Gallery



3.42 Frederick Cayley
Robinson, Illustration from L. V.
Hodgkin, *A Book of Quaker
Saints*, (London: 1922)



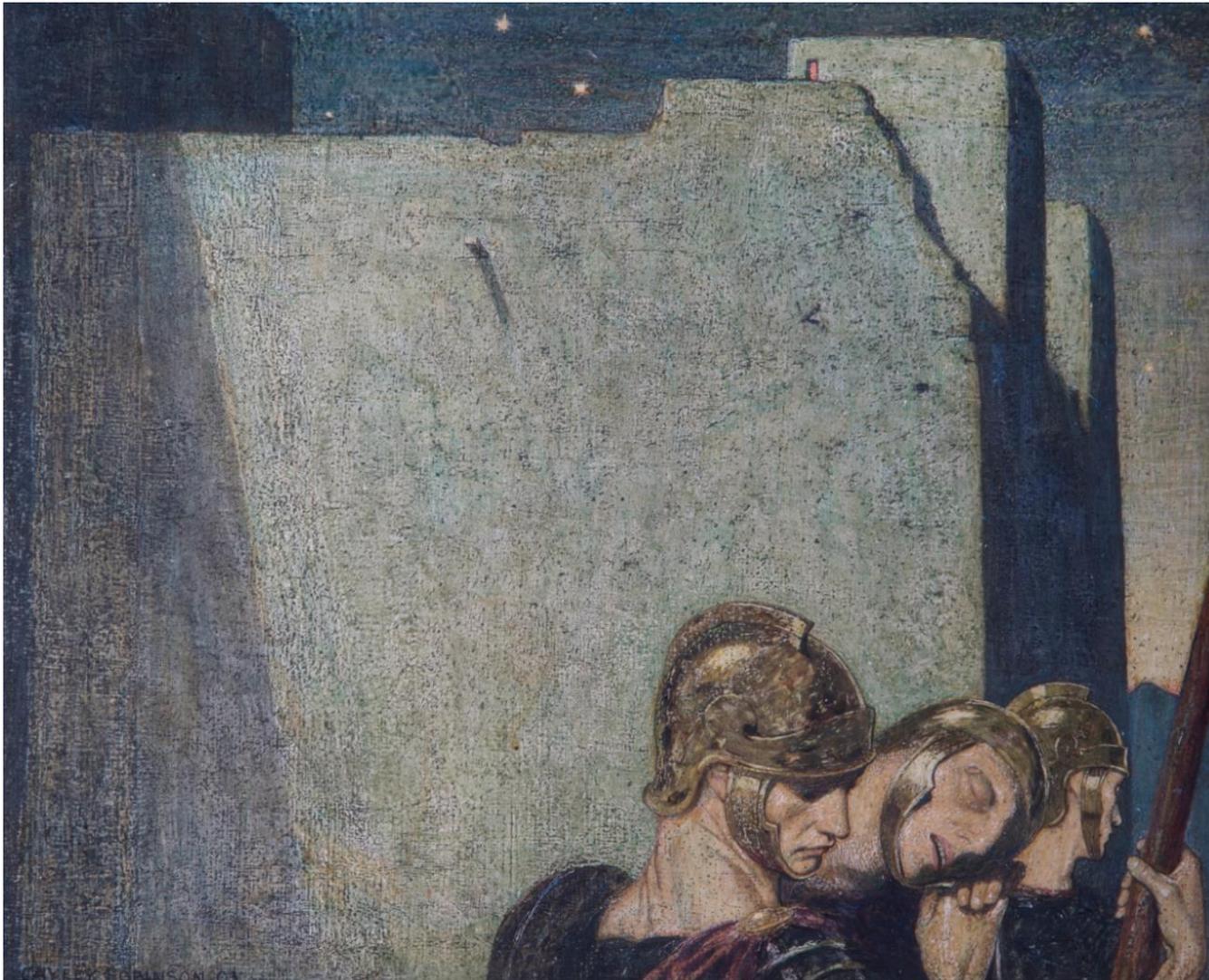
3.43 C. Hedley Charlton, Sketch for the 'Rhyme Book', published by the Artists' Suffrage League, 1909, image from <http://womanandhersphere.com/tag/c-hedley-charlton/> accessed 2nd February, 2016



3.44 Frederick Cayley Robinson, *The Last of the Sybils*, 1920, mixed media on board, 76.2 x 100.33 cm, The Fine Art Society, London, reproduced in MaryAnne Stevens, 'Frederick Cayley Robinson', *Connoisseur*, (Sept., 1977), pp.23-35, (p.29)



3.45 John Duncan, *Riders of the Sidhé*, 1911, tempera on canvas, 114.3 x 175.2 cm, Dundee Art Galleries and Museums Collection (Dundee City Council)



3.46 Frederick Cayley Robinson, *The Night Watch*, 1903, mixed media on gessoed board, 22 x 28 cm, Leamington Spa Art Gallery and Museum