

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: THE SYMBOLIST IMPULSE IN
AMERICAN ART ACROSS MEDIA CIRCA
1900

Abby R. Eron, Doctor of Philosophy, 2020

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This dissertation analyzes the Symbolist movement in American art in the years around 1900. Symbolism was an antinaturalistic tendency that prioritized imagination and the intangible psychological realm. A reaction against Realism (and Impressionism, considered Realism's logical extension), Symbolist art appears otherworldly, fantastic, and obscure. Works gravitate towards shared themes—the femme fatale and *femme fragile*, dreams, the duality of life and death, anguish, and mystical visions. Symbolism was not an organized movement in the sense of artists' membership in a particular association but rather a trend in literary, artistic, and intellectual circles. While Symbolism has generally been considered from a European perspective, this dissertation describes a vital Symbolist impulse in American art through an evaluation of works by four artists: Gertrude Käsebier (1852–1934), Alice Pike Barney (1857–1931), Henry Ossawa Tanner (1859–1937), and George Grey Barnard (1863–1938). Each specialized in a different medium: photography, pastel, painting, and sculpture, respectively. This dissertation attends to surface and technique, and it argues that the animating tension of Symbolism lies in the

relationship between the material and the immaterial. Alongside imagery and historical context, the dynamism of materiality and immateriality points to the evanescent yet undeniable presence of Symbolism in the United States. Though Käsebier, Barney, Tanner, and Barnard worked independently of each other, grouping them allows for a comparative analysis across media and enables contextualization beyond solo biographical accounts.

THE SYMBOLIST IMPULSE IN AMERICAN ART ACROSS MEDIA CIRCA 1900

by

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Introduction

Symbolism was an antinaturalistic tendency that prioritized imagination and the intangible psychological realm.¹ Appearing otherworldly, fantastic, and obscure, works in a Symbolist mode gravitated towards certain themes—the femme fatale and *femme fragile*, dreams, the drama of life and death, anguish, and mystical visions. Situated art historically, Symbolism was a reaction against Realism (and Impressionism, insofar as it could be considered Realism's logical extension), but Symbolism's multiform expressions nevertheless show continuities with these and other movements.² The Symbolist movement itself was not singular or organized in the sense of artists' membership to a particular association or adherence to a strict set of rules. Rather, in literary, artistic, and intellectual circles, Symbolism was a trend underscored by shared motivations and exhibiting shared qualities. The word “impulse” is used here to convey how Symbolism touched many artists' oeuvres.

While Symbolism has generally been considered from a European perspective, this dissertation describes a vital Symbolist impulse in American art

¹ Countless scholars have attempted to define and overview the Symbolist movement. In the art historical literature, some of the sources from which I have drawn are Jean Clair et al., *Lost Paradise: Symbolist Europe* (Montreal, Quebec: Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, distributed in the United States by St. Martin's Press, 1995, exh. cat.), Magdalena Dabrowki, *The Symbolist Aesthetic* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1980, exh. cat.); Henri Dorra, *Symbolist Art Theories: A Critical Anthology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Robert L. Delevoy, *Symbolists and Symbolism*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: Rizzoli, 1982); Michelle Facos, *Symbolist Art in Context* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Robert Goldwater, *Symbolism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979); Jean-David Jumeau-Lafond et al., *Painters of the Soul: Symbolism in France* (Tampere, Finland: Tampere Art Museum, 2006, exh. cat.); Edward Lucie-Smith, *Symbolist Art* (New York: Praeger, 1972); Rodolphe Rapetti, *Symbolism*, trans. Deke Dusinberre, (Paris: Flammarion, distributed in North America by Rizzoli International Publications, 2005); and Pierre-Louis Mathieu, *The Symbolist Generation: 1870-1910* (New York: Skira, 1990).

² Symbolism is often positioned as an inheritor of Romanticism.

through an evaluation of works by four artists: Gertrude Käsebier (1852–1934), Alice Pike Barney (1857–1931), Henry Ossawa Tanner (1859–1937), and George Grey Barnard (1863–1938). Each specialized in a different medium: photography, pastel, painting, and sculpture, respectively. This dissertation attends to surface and technique, and it argues that the animating tension of Symbolism lies in the relationship between the material and the immaterial. Alongside imagery and historical context, the dynamism of materiality and immateriality points to the evanescent yet undeniable presence of Symbolism in the United States. Though Käsebier, Barney, Tanner, and Barnard worked independently of each other, grouping them allows for a comparative analysis across media and enables contextualization beyond solo biographical accounts.

The juncture of the history of American art and the history of the Symbolist movement has gone largely unexplored, with the last dedicated exhibition on the topic appearing forty years ago—*American Imagination and Symbolist Painting* (1979) by Charles C. Eldredge.³ Major accounts of Symbolist art have addressed its American manifestations but generally minimized them.⁴ Twenty-first century

³ Charles C. Eldredge, *American Imagination and Symbolist Painting* (New York: Grey Art Gallery and Study Center, New York University, 1979, exh. cat.). Similar exhibition projects have been undertaken in more recent years in a number of geographical contexts: Andrew Wilton, Roger Upstone, et al., *The Age of Rossetti, Burne-Jones & Watts: Symbolism in Britain, 1860-1910* (New York: Flammarion, 1997, exh. cat.); Ingrid Ehrhardt and Simon Reynolds, eds., *Kingdom of the Soul: Symbolist Art in Germany* (New York: Prestel, 2000 in conjunction with exhibition held at Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, and Prins Eugens Waldemarsudde); Denise Mimmocchi, *Australian Symbolism: The Art of Dreams* (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2012, exh. cat.); and Rodolphe Rapetti et al., *Âmes sauvages. Le symbolisme dans les pays baltes* (Paris: Musée d'Orsay, 2018, exh. Cat.).

⁴ For example, Facos's invaluable *Symbolist Art in Context* features a photograph, *Hypnos* (ca. 1896), by the American F. Holland Day (1864-1933), one of Käsebier's peers in the Photo-Secession, as the cover image, but the text does not explicitly address American contexts, even as Facos does consider national manifestations of Symbolism in Europe:

scholarship has begun to open the field.⁵ Diane Chalmers Johnson, for example, has traced a strain of American Symbolist painting *avant la lettre*, running from Washington Allston (1779-1843) to Albert Pinkham Ryder (1847-1917).⁶ This dissertation looks at artists who have not yet been fully considered under the rubric of Symbolism.

The choice of artists herein is deliberately diverse. In resisting the tendency to silo artists according to medium, race, or gender, this study interrogates the impact of identity, marginalization, and other sociocultural factors on these four artists. For example, scholars have often remarked upon the ubiquity of women as subject matter for Symbolist art and the disturbingly concomitant lack of women as Symbolist artists

Czech, Danish, Finnish, French, Norwegian, Polish, Scottish, Swedish, and Swiss (147-165). Other accounts are more dismissive of a Symbolist impulse in the United States. Lucie-Smith, for example, has written that Americans were “instinctively hostile” to European Symbolist ideas. He counts the American painter Elihu Vedder as a “provincial Pre-Raphaelite [who] deviated into Symbolism in order to suit an occasion” (143).

⁵ There was a session on the topic by the Association of Historians of American Art at the 2012 College Art Association, entitled “Symbolism(s) and their Legacies in American Art, 1880-1920” and chaired by Erika Schneider. According to an e-mail exchange with Schneider, December 21, 2016, Schneider and Emily Gephart are two academics actively working on the topic of American Symbolism. An example of Schneider’s scholarship is her essay, “Shot through the Heart, the Woman Is to Blame: Philip Leslie Hale Performs a Symbolist Game,” in *Locating American Art: Finding Art’s Meaning in Museums, Colonial Period to the Present*, ed. Cynthia Fowler (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2016), 47-59. Gephart, “A Dreamer and a Painter: Visualizing the Unconscious in the Work of Arthur B. Davies” (PhD diss., MIT, 2013), 55-118 considers Arthur B. Davies’s Symbolist inclinations. American Symbolism is also now considered, however concisely, in one of the principal Americanist textbooks, Angela Miller et al., *American Encounters: Art, History, and Cultural Identity* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2008), 239: “In the Symbolist approach, art was the zone of encounter between the material—paint and canvas—and the immaterial—the realm of suggestion, imagination, and escape from the constraints of the body and of nature” (239). This is pulled from a short section of the textbook subtitled “The Antimaterialist Impulse: Symbolism and Tonalism” that explores plurality of late nineteenth-century art movements coexistent with American Impressionism. Artists George Inness, Willard Metcalf, and Albert Pinkham Ryder are situated within this section of Miller’s textbook.

⁶ Diane Chalmers Johnson, *American Symbolist Art: Nineteenth-Century ‘Poets in Paint’: Washington Allston, John La Farge, William Rimmer, George Inness, and Albert Pinkham Ryder* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004).

or writers.⁷ American Symbolism adds another dimension, as evidenced by the women, Käsebier and Barney, who account for two of the four case studies.

Symbolist art notoriously oscillated between polarized, reductive representations of women. This dissertation explores the potential for more complicated subjectivities.

This study also enhances the existing scholarship by presenting Symbolism as an eminently transatlantic phenomenon and assessing artists' movements for points of international dialogue, influence, and exchange. The four artists considered in depth all spent time in Europe, training in Paris and forging international networks.⁸ They also all identified as American and played a role in the emergence of the United States as a center of modern art in the twentieth century.⁹

⁷ Facos has observed that “one of the distinguishing features of Symbolist art in the abundance of female subjects and the concomitant absence of women Symbolist artists, critics, and writers” (116). Allison Morehead, *Nature's Experiments and the Search for Symbolist Form* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University, 2017), 174 has expressed a dilemma common to Symbolist studies: “This study, not explicitly a work of feminist art history but written by a feminist, has been haunted by a group of others, namely, women, overrepresented in the works discussed but largely absent as speaking subjects.” Two texts stand out for the consideration of women in relation to the Symbolist movement. They are both important to this dissertation project: Patricia Townley Mathews, *Passionate Discontent: Creativity, Gender, French Symbolist Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999) and Charlotte Foucher Zarmanian, *Créatrices en 1900: Femmes artistes en France dans les milieux symbolistes* (Paris: Mare & Martin, 2015). Foucher Zarmanian prefers the terminology of milieus over movement, because it better allows for broad interrogation accounting for surroundings, spheres of influence, and networks (22). Thinking about milieus also serves an examination of American Symbolism well. However, I think the idea of milieus inheres in the terminology of Symbolist movement itself, as Symbolism has consistently been understood as a loose conglomeration of attitudes towards artmaking, manifested in various styles, in a way that more regimented movements are not. The terminology milieus makes the women Foucher Zarmanian considers feel more peripheral to Symbolism than I would prefer in an American context, where they seem particularly active and representative.

⁸ For the activities of American artists in France, see Kathleen Adler, Erica E. Hirshler, H. Barbara Weingberg, et al., *Americans in Paris, 1860-1900* (London: National Gallery, 2006, exh. cat.) and Annie Cohen-Solal, *Painting American: The Rise of American Artists, Paris 1867-New York 1948* (New York: Knopf, 2001).

⁹ Though an outmoded notion today, the Americanness of American art was a real question at the turn of the nineteenth into the twentieth century. It was a question that spoke to national

Materiality and Immateriality

Albert Aurier's "Le Symbolisme en peinture: Paul Gauguin" ("Symbolism in Painting: Paul Gauguin") (1891), widely considered the first major articulation of the Symbolist movement's principles in the visual arts, critiqued art that replicated the visible, material world at the expense of capturing the deeper truths of ideas and personal subjectivity.¹⁰ While philosophically drawn to the intangible and esoteric, and put off by the materialism they saw as plaguing modern Western society, Symbolist artists in America and abroad nevertheless used the physical materials of their artmaking in often innovative ways that ultimately underscored the object status of their works.

Reinhold Heller's theorization on the dialectic of surface and content as definitive of Symbolist art guides my approach.¹¹ Heller has looked to criteria of Symbolist art from the 1890s and has highlighted "the very materiality of the paintings themselves; that is, the existence of the painting as a newly created reality juxtaposed to or existing coequal with the objects of ordinary reality."¹² He has asserted that Symbolist artworks affirm their physical construction in order to show themselves to be the subjective expression of ideas, and he explicates two-dimensional works by Paul Gauguin (1848-1903), Fernand Khnopff (1858-1921), and

identity, inclusions and exclusions, and the prioritization or de-prioritization of certain subjects and styles.

¹⁰ G.-Albert Aurier, "Le Symbolisme en peinture: Paul Gauguin," *Mercure de France* 2 (March 1891): 155-164, trans. and excerpted in Dorra, 195-203.

¹¹ Reinhold Heller, "Concerning Symbolism and the Structure of Surface" *Art Journal* 45, no. 2 (Summer 1985): 146-53. Heller's definition has been crucial to numerous later commentators on the Symbolist movement, including Facos, 2, Johnson, 3-5, and Morehead, 14.

¹² Heller, 148.

Edvard Munch (1863-1944) to elaborate upon his theory.¹³ The philosophical route Heller has laid out passes through German Idealists and Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) to French Symbolists such as Aurier (1865-1892) and Maurice Denis (1870-1943). The latter wrote that “in order to perpetuate your emotions it is not necessary to dissimulate the material used and to pervert it into appearance of *trompe l’oeil*; believe that the material of art has the ability to emit suggestions as powerful as the appearance of nature itself.”¹⁴

Furthering Heller’s theorization and intervening in a paintings-only and European-only narratives of Symbolist art, I focus on a variety of art objects and the techniques of their production. These encompass Käsebier’s photographic printings in platinum and gum bichromate and her hand-manipulation of prints and negatives; Barney’s use of the revived pastel medium, which captured the indefiniteness prized by Symbolist aesthetics; Tanner’s tonal palette, tempera recipes, and extensive paint layering; and the *non-finito* qualities of Barnard’s carved marble sculpture as well as the possibilities of bronze casting in 1890s America.

¹³ Heller, 151. He also explicates *Portrait of Mme. Dietz-Monnin (Portrait after a Costume Ball)* (ca. 1878) by Edgar Degas, but he resists committing to this work as a “Symbolist” artwork like the others.

¹⁴ Pierre L. Maud [Maurice Denis], “Le Salon du Champ de Mars, l’exposition de Renoir,” *Revue blanche*, June 25, 1892, reprinted in Maurice Denis, *Théories, 1890-1910: Du symbolisme et de Gauguin vers un nouvel ordre classique*, (1912; Paris: L. Rouart et J. Watelin, 1920), 17, quoted and translated in Heller, 148.

A Transatlantic Phenomenon

In 1893, Aline Gorren wrote an assessment of the French Symbolists for *Scribner's Magazine*, a periodical based out of New York City.¹⁵ In what appears to be the earliest substantive study of Symbolism published in the United States, she confirmed the idea of the movement as rooted in Europe but with multinational networks that included Americans. She asserted that:

It might be possible, perhaps, to believe, on the strength of this variety of nationalities [Greek, Swiss, Belgian, and American], in something more than a local manifestation; but, whether or not the main ideas for which the Symbolists are doing battle at present have their foundation in a wider-spread instinct of impending changes, for the moment this esoteric band suffers no danger from an excess of popularity.¹⁶

Though she was looking mainly at literature,¹⁷ her transatlantic characterization should be extended to visual art as well. The American artists considered herein at times entered the esoteric band of Gorren's description. When they did, they were sometimes met by criticism for less-than-popular works seen as over-manipulated and obscured (Käsebier), frightful (Barney), too mysterious (Tanner), or confusing (Barnard). Other commentators though appreciated work that was more suggestive, open-ended, and indicative of deeper—less immediately apparent—meaning. Those qualities contributed to an appreciation for Symbolist art

¹⁵ Aline Gorren, "The French Symbolists," *Scribner's Magazine* 13, no. 3 (March 1893): 337-52.

¹⁶ Gorren, 352. The Americans she referenced are authors, Francis Viélé-Griffin (b. Norfolk, Virginia, 1864-1937) and Stuart Merrill (1863-1915).

¹⁷ Though the fact has been overlooked in some previous scholarship, Gorren, 351 considered visual art in her article, however concisely relative her consideration of literature. She discussed Puvis de Chavannes, Eugène Carrière, and the Neo-Impressionists. She employed vocabulary related to Aurier's when she describes the latter group as "idealistic, synthetic, [and] symbolic."

and, furthermore, to the advent and acceptance of modern art and abstraction in the United States.¹⁸

Gorren also tried to account for the reason behind the Symbolist turn, a possible “wider-spread instinct of impending changes.” Such impending changes were intrinsic to the *fin-de-siècle*, end of the century, moment of Symbolism’s rise. Change was tangible at the turn of the nineteenth into the twentieth century. Even while maintaining a stance of distance from day-to-day realities, Symbolist art reacted to or helped process such change, which was often framed in the opposition of spiritual versus material concerns.

American history knows the late nineteenth century as the Gilded Age, and there was concern that Americans of this period had lost sight of the spiritual and artistic sides of life because of the material accumulation of wealth and the growth of industry. This had psychological impacts, labeled “neurasthenia” by the American neurologist George Miller Beard (1839-1883).¹⁹ He diagnosed a condition of physical weakness, mental depression, and nervous exhaustion that stemmed from over-civilization in the growth of cities and the accelerated buzz of business competition.

¹⁸ Robert Pincus-Witten, “On Target: Symbolist Roots of American Abstraction,” *Arts Magazine* 50 (April 1976): 84-91 and Michelle Facos and Thor J. Mednick, eds., *The Symbolist Roots of Modern Art* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005).

¹⁹ George Miller Beard, *A Practical Treatise on Nervous Exhaustion (Neurasthenia)*, ed. A. D. Rockwell (1888; New York: E. B. Treat, 1901). Debora Silverman, *Art Nouveau and Fin-de-Siècle France: Politics, Psychology, and Style* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 80 references Beard in her discussion of French *psychologie nouvelle* (new psychology) and its relationship to Symbolism: “Although the Symbolists are usually credited with redefining rational consciousness and with championing a new subjectivist relation to the world, the diffusion of medical psychology facilitated a broader reevaluation of space and self in the French fin de siècle” (78).

By 1900, the United States was a world power, a position solidified by the Spanish-American war (1898) and its imperialistic gains. The country had attracted, and would continue to attract, flows of immigrants. However, with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, it also began restricting access based on origin and ethnicity. Scars of the Civil War remained, and racism and Jim Crow laws eroded advances made by African Americans following the abolition of slavery. The United States of the late nineteenth century had also completed its reach from coast to coast, displacing native populations in its stretch from the Atlantic to the Pacific while also staking part of its relatively new national identity on the vast stretches of the West made increasingly accessible by railways connecting more of the continent than ever before. Electricity spectacularly lit up the 1901 Pan-American exhibition in Buffalo (the site of President McKinley's assassination; he was succeeded by Theodore Roosevelt); Ford motor company was incorporated in 1903; and steamships and ocean liners permitted increasingly reliable transatlantic crossings.

Indeed, the transatlantic circulation of people, styles, and ideas between the United States and Europe is essential to studying the Symbolist impulse in American art. One will note an orientation towards France in this dissertation on art of the United States. Symbolism was not limited to France. An argument has been made that its true capital was Brussels,²⁰ and its reach was immensely widespread.²¹ However, for American audiences, the movement was first communicated, by Gorren and

²⁰ Jean Clair, "Lost Paradise," in *Lost Paradise: Symbolist Europe*, 19. Philippe Jullian, *The Symbolists* (London: Phaidon, 1973), 20 calls Bruges "the capital of Symbolism."

²¹ According to Mathieu, 9, Symbolism reached "from Helsinki to Barcelona, London to Milan, throughout Belgium, Holland, Poland, Austria, and Switzerland with even a small group in the United States." Scholars have not really moved beyond Western traditions.

others, as a highly French phenomenon. Critic Sadakichi Hartmann (1867-1944) visualized it as such in a drawing entitled “Caricatures of Modern French Painting” reproduced in his journal, *The Art Critic: Devoted to the Encouragement of American Art* (1894) (Fig. 1). The “Symbolist School” detail from the image further evidences the female subject’s, and specifically the femme fatale’s, centrality to the Symbolist movement, which is here summarized by a pair of line drawing framed by black rectangles. On the left appears Salome puckering up to the bloody head of John the Baptist, floating just beyond her talon-like fingers, and, on the right, a snake (associated with Eve, temptation, and original sin), with a woman’s head, wraps its coiled body around a blooming lily. Furthermore, the artists who stand as case studies in my dissertation all studied, at least briefly, and some also worked in France, the then-capital of the art world. Not only is much Symbolist art criticism originally in French, but, for the historian looking back, the country is important to analyses of the movement, with scholars such as Charlotte Foucher Zarmanian, Jean-David Jumeau-Lafond, Patricia Mathews, Debora Silverman, and others having developed important frames through which to assess its various facets.²²

Unlike in other locales, in America, the question of Symbolism’s existence, its importance, and the potential for a type of national variety are still at question. My dissertation answers these questions in the affirmative, but with certain limitations. Symbolism existed in the United States. It did not have the consistency of a “true” movement—with manifestoes and societies—but the Symbolist movement has been notoriously hard to pin down in any geographical context. One of its foremost

²² Op. cit.

characteristics is its formal diversity; its modes of immaterial expression have great breadth. It has been described as a movement, but also a period (*fin de siècle*), generation, moment, mood, milieu, attitude towards life, and literary category applied—reasonably or not—to visual production. Much art historical literature on Symbolism is devoted to defining the parameters of the movement, with all its inconsistencies.

However, it is generally agreed upon that Symbolism originated as a literary movement, defined by Jean Moréas in his 1886 manifesto. Moréas privileged what he called the “Idea”: “An enemy of didactic pursuits, of declamation, of false sensitivity, of objective description, symbolist poetry endeavors to clothe the Idea in a form perceptible to the senses.”²³ The “Idea” equates to the immaterial: hidden truths, spiritual heights, the ineffable workings of the soul, emotional profundity, dreamworlds, and visionary experiences. Moréas’s theory transmits the influence of Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) and Baudelaire’s understanding of Swedenborgian correspondences, wherein all material aspects of the world are reflections of a divine, cosmic, or higher level of meaning, and in which the artist alone is gifted with the special ability to reveal such elusive essences.²⁴

Gustave Kahn (1859-1936) elaborated upon Moréas’s manifesto, explaining that “the essential aim of our art is to objectify the subjective (the exteriorization of the Idea) in place of subjectifying the objective (nature seen through a

²³ Jean Moréas, “Le symbolisme,” *Supplément littéraire du Figaro*, September 18, 1886, 150, excerpted and translated in Dorra, 151.

²⁴ See Charles Baudelaire, “Correspondences,” in Dorra, 8-11.

temperament).”²⁵ In this, he prioritized communicating an artist’s interiority over the terrestrial, material facts of the outside world. In 1888, Edouard Dujardin (1861-1949) reviewed the Belgian avant-garde exhibition group Les XX and described how the “the purpose of painting, of literature, . . . is to provide, by means specific to each, the *feeling* of things. Not the image but the *character* should be expressed.”²⁶ He proscribed objective description of material reality as the goal for art.

Aurier, with “Symbolism in Painting: Paul Gauguin,” further critiqued art that merely interpreted matter: “all ideas are purer and more elevated than matter.”²⁷ His text pushed artists to move away from and beyond “ambient material realities,” “imitation of matter” (where he says Impressionism is stuck), “outer aspects,” and “the direct representation of material forms.”²⁸ Nevertheless, he acknowledged that “art by definition . . . [is] but the material representation of what is most elevated and divine in the world.”²⁹ He argues, “the goal of painting . . . cannot be the direct representation of objects. Its end purpose is to express ideas as it translates them into a special language.”³⁰ He delineated five aspects to the true work of art: ideist, symbolist, synthetic, subjective, and decorative.³¹ This “special language” of “ideist” (idea-driven) artistic form is the essence of Symbolist expression. Symbolist poet

²⁵ Gustav Kahn, “Réponse des symbolistes,” *L’Événement*, September 28, 1886, quoted in Richard Schiff *Cézanne and the End of Impressionism: A Study of the Theory, Technique, and Critical Evaluation of Modern Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 38.

²⁶ Edouard Dujardin, “Aux XX et aux Indépendants: Le Cloisonisme,” *La Revue indépendante* 6, ser. 3 (March 1888), excerpted and translated in Dorra, 179. Americans James Abbott McNeill Whistler and Mary Cassatt exhibited with Les XX in the 1880s and 1890s.

²⁷ Aurier, in Dorra, 198.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 196-198.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 198.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 199.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 200.

Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898) offered a further guide: “To *name* an object is to suppress three-quarters of the enjoyment of the poem . . . to *suggest*, that is the dream.”³² The emphasis on suggestion is paramount to Symbolist artmaking.

American Symbolism

Given the rich set of Symbolist ideas,³³ from Moréas to Mallarmé and beyond, I argue that Symbolism is an important and elucidating context for American art. Considering the utility of naming in the history of art, Ashley Lazevick has reflected that “although labels have too often served a dominant narrative, scholarship always has the potential to give voice to a more complex and dispersed history.”³⁴ That potential is precisely the intention of the dissertation, which leans towards an inclusive, though not boundless, categorization of art as showing a Symbolist impulse. To provide focus, I have narrowed in on the years around 1900 as a timeframe that American Symbolism is most strongly evident.³⁵ However, the utter variety of Symbolist art internationally encourages inclusivity. Moreover, as a fundamental component of Symbolism is its intentional engagement with a push-and-

³² Stéphane Mallarmé interview with Jules Huret, *Enquête sur l'évolution littéraire* (1891, *L'Echo de Paris*; Paris: Fasquelle, 1913), excerpted and trans. in Dorra, 141.

³³ And ideas about ideas. Aurier underscores an “ideist” art as the most profound.

³⁴ Ashley Lazevnick, “What’s in a Name?: Precisionism,” *American Art* 33, no. 1 (Spring 2019): 10.

³⁵ Scholars have proposed different chronological bookends to the Symbolist movement, but they are almost always inclusive of the years around 1900. Eldredge’s exhibition and catalog spanned Albert Pinkham Ryder’s mature years, circa 1885, to the year of Ryder’s death, 1917, a year coincident with George O’Keeffe’s second show (the first with her consent) at Alfred Stieglitz’s 291 Gallery (12). Mathieu, 8 uses 1885 to 1910. Jean Clair, “Lost Paradise,” in *Lost Paradise: Symbolist Europe*, 17, offers a more “clearly defined period” than others, from September 18, 1886 (Moréas’s manifesto) to 1905 (with the rise of avant-garde movements).

pull of materiality and immateriality, it is essential to expand beyond the confines of a single medium (painting) to look at artistic production cross-media.

Symbolism consisted of a conglomeration of sometimes conflicting sources, and some of these sources had identifiably American roots. In New York City, Russian emigrant Helena Blavatsky established the Theosophical Society in 1875. She built this brand of Western esotericism from communications with “eternal Indian Masters” and spiritual traditions of the East.³⁶ Theosophy tapped into the period vogue for the “exotic,” as well as the spiritual, occult, and unseen, which also found expression in the cultural phenomenon and religious practice of Spiritualism. Spiritualism, premised on the ability to connect with the dead, originated near Rochester, New York in the 1840s with the Fox sisters’ “rappings.”³⁷ A Scottish author observing America at the turn of the century observed a paradox based on the divide between material and immaterial concerns. He found a “curious contrast to the practical, material, matter-of-fact side of the American is his interest in the supernatural, the spiritualistic, the superstitious.”³⁸ In a similar vein, writer William Dean Howells proposed that Americans “who seem only to live in the most tangible things of material existence, really live more in the spirit than any other.”³⁹ The United States was thus not inimical to a Symbolist impulse, even if it seemed to be on

³⁶ See Facos, 101-105 and Alex Ross, “The Occult Roots of Modernism,” *New Yorker*, June 26, 2017, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/06/26/the-occult-roots-of-modernism>.

³⁷ These raps, or knocks, were said to be communications from spirits. See Robert S. Cox, *Body and Soul: A Sympathetic History of American Spiritualism* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 5-8.

³⁸ . . . Boston, of all places in the world, is perhaps the happiest hunting ground for the spiritualist medium.” James Fullarton Muirhead, *America the Land of Contrasts: A Briton’s View of his American Kin* (New York: Lamson, Wolfe and Company, 1898), 17.

³⁹ William Dean Howells, introduction to *Shapes that Haunt the Dusk: Harper’s Novelettes*, ed. William Dean Howells and Henry Mills Alden (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1907), v.

a surface level. Indeed, Eldredge and Sarah Burns have explored the similarities between Symbolist theory and American idealist and mystical currents as well as Transcendentalist thought.⁴⁰ A specific instance of this is Belgian Symbolist author Maurice Maeterlinck's (1862-1949) admiration for Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), whose essays Maeterlinck translated.⁴¹

Foundational to Symbolism as well were the writings of the American Romantic author Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849). Poe's explorations of mysterious scenarios, psychical distress, and disconcerting juxtapositions made him a favorite of Baudelaire, who translated his works into French.⁴² Poe was also a major influence for Odilon Redon (1840-1916), a key artist of the Symbolist movement in France, who entitled a suite of lithographs *To Edgar Poe* (*À Edgar Poe*) (1882).⁴³ Poe also influenced the American painter Albert Pinkham Ryder, whose work *Temple of the Mind* (before 1885) interpreted Poe's "The Haunted Palace" (1839) and was called by critic Charles de Kay (1848-1935) "a piece of pure symbolism" (Fig. 2).⁴⁴ This

⁴⁰ Charles C. Eldredge, "Nature Symbolized: American Painting from Ryder to Hartley," in *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985*, Maurice Tuchman et al. (New York: Abbeville Press, 1986 in conjunction with exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, and Haags Gemeentemuseum, the Hague), 115-117; Sarah Lea Burns, "The Poetic Mode in American Painting: George Fuller and Thomas Dewing" (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1979): 1-74.

⁴¹ George R. MacMinn, "Emerson and Maeterlinck," *The Sewanee Review* 24, no. 3 (1916): 265-81; Davis LaRocca, "'Eternal Allusion': Maeterlinck's Readings of Emerson's Somatic Semiotics," in *A Power to Translate the World: New Essays on Emerson and International Culture*, eds. David LaRocca and Ricardo Miguel-Alfonso (Lebanon, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2015), 113-135.

⁴² See Dorra, 5-7

⁴³ As André Mellerio, *Odilon Redon* (Paris: Galerie-Durand-Ruel, 1894, exh. cat.), excerpted and translated in Dorra, 57 explained: "What unifies Redon's works and at the same time constitutes their chief inspiration is the impression of the beyond—the beyond that Edgar [Allan] Poe delighted in pursuing."

⁴⁴ Charles de Kay [Henry Eckford, pseud.], "A Modern Colorist," *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* 40, no. 2 (June 1890): 259.

interweaving suggests a network of ideas and attitudes flowing internationally, rather than a one-way street from Europe to the United States.

Albert Pinkham Ryder's Temple of the Mind

Ryder has been the central figure in existing accounts of American Symbolism.⁴⁵ In his time, Ryder was called a mystic, poet, and dreamer. My study is attuned to terms such as these, which form a vocabulary of American Symbolism. The rest of this dissertation moves beyond Ryder, who could also be framed as a late Romantic painter, on to slightly younger artists whose powers matured closer to 1900 and who have received less attention historiographically. However, a brief, closer look at Ryder's *Temple of the Mind* helps to calibrate the dynamic of immateriality and materiality to be used throughout.

Ryder's *Temple of the Mind* interprets the haunted, troubled psyche of Poe's Roderick Usher, the protagonist of "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839), who recites Poe's poem "The Haunted Palace" in the course of the story. The links between text to image are not obvious, which speaks to the minimized importance of narrative storytelling for Symbolist work. Ryder orchestrated an eerie landscape with a glowing, shadow-casting moon low in the sky. A tall, ornamented portal frames the composition on the left, and a silhouetted, draping willow tree frames the composition at right. Ryder conjured some recession into space with a shimmering body of water (perhaps the "rapid ghastly river" in the "The Haunted Palace")⁴⁶ running into the

⁴⁵ See Johnson, 75-94 and Pincus-Witten, 84, who writes "if we have a Symbolist artist of the highest caliber, then surely it is Albert Pinkham Ryder."

⁴⁶ Edgar Allan Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher," (1839; Chicago: Blue Sky Press, 1903), 36

distant hilly ground. Six or seven figures populate the foreground. Three silhouetted female figures, whom Ryder described as “graces,” huddle together underneath the full moon.⁴⁷ They look towards the shaded doorway at left. Proceeding in a path in front of them are a satyr figure and a cupid figure, both casting long shadows towards the bottom edge of the composition. One or two more ambiguous figures seem to linger at a three-tiered Italianate water fountain at right. The temple of *Temple of the Mind* resonates with Aurier’s description of the true artist, who, “alone, tamer of the monster illusion, knows how to stroll as a master in this fantastic temple.”⁴⁸

Ryder’s painting suffers from an overall cracking and darkening, a deterioration that has been attributed to his ignorance of or unconcern for the technical particularities of indirect painting procedures and a recklessness he demonstrated towards the safe and intact survival of his works.⁴⁹ Another view insists that Ryder permitted or even encouraged such deterioration, which in at least in some instances happened during his lifetime. The surface of *Temple of the Mind* was already of interest in 1888, when a critic remarked that *Temple of the Mind* “resembles an enamel, in places it is corrugated” due to the intensity of Ryder’s successive laying on of color.⁵⁰ Ryder resisted having his paintings cleaned and at

⁴⁷ Elizabeth Broun, *Albert Pinkham Ryder* (Washington, DC: published for the National Museum of American Art by the Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989, exh. cat.), 299.

⁴⁸ Aurier in Dorra, 199. Aurier explicates further with reference to Baudelaire’s “Correspondences”: “Nature is a temple in which living pillars / Sometimes emit confused words; / Man crosses it through forests of symbols . . .” (in Dorra, 11).

⁴⁹ Sheldon Keck, “Albert P. Ryder: His Technical Procedures,” in William Innes Homer and Lloyd Goodrich, *Albert Pinkham Ryder: Painter of Dreams* (New York: Abrams, 1989), 180-182.

⁵⁰ *Chicago Journal*, May 26, 1888 quoted in Broun, 300.

least once expressed that he did not mind the cracks.⁵¹ There is a sense that a work of his was a “new creation,” something living and aging on par with the products of nature. Ryder articulated this idea in 1905: “I saw nature springing into life upon my dead canvas. It was better than nature, for it was vibrating with the thrill of a new creation.”⁵² Again there is resonance with Aurier, who wrote about the work of art as a new, living being.⁵³

The degradation of *Temple of the Mind* as an object has poetic parallels with the Poe source as well. “The Haunted Palace” recounts the undoing of a kingdom and a palace’s fall into ghostly ruin, and “The Fall of the House of Usher” concludes with the eponymous house cracked, fragmented, and sinking.⁵⁴ Documentary and technical evidence have revealed that the wood support of *Temple of the Mind* was one-half of a two-sided panel that Ryder had sawed in two.⁵⁵ This, along with the cracking and discoloration of the paint surface, underscores the object’s artificiality, the created-ness of Ryder’s work. It thus participates in the dialectic of Symbolist art, defined by Heller, to the upmost. That *Temple of the Mind* stands for an idea is not only signified by the painting’s title and subject matter,⁵⁶ but by Ryder’s stylistic approach and the

⁵¹ Lance Mayer and Gay Myers, *American Painters on Technique: 1860-1945* (Los Angeles: Getty, 2013), 91.

⁵² Albert Pinkham Ryder, “Paragraphs from the Studio of a Recluse,” *Broadway Magazine* (1905): 10.

⁵³ “L’œuvre d’art complète est donc *un être nouveau*, on peut dire absolument *vivant*.” G.-Albert Aurier, “Les Symbolistes,” *La Revue encyclopédique* (April 1892): 481.

⁵⁴ Even the beginning of the story describes the house’s possession of “an atmosphere which had no affinity with the air of heaven, but which had reeked up from the decayed trees, and the gray wall, and the silent tarn—a pestilent and mystic vapor, dull, sluggish, faintly discernible, and leaden-hued” (Poe, 19).

⁵⁵ Keck, 181, 184n29.

⁵⁶ Poe wrote that the poem on which the painting is based “mean[t] to imply a mind haunted by phantoms—a disordered brain.” Edgar Allan Poe to Rufus Wilmot Griswold, May 29, 1841, *The Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, The Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore, <https://www.eapoe.org/works/letters/p4105290.htm>.

condition of the work's surface. *Temple of the Mind* is aligned with Michelle Facos's qualification that "Symbolist art is art whose composition, technique, and often title conveyed to contemporary audiences its marker's intention to suggest ideas," a qualification this dissertation wholeheartedly supports.⁵⁷

James Abbott McNeill Whistler and Veiling

Despite Ryder's centrality in histories of American Symbolism, the most important singular figure for American Symbolists is arguably the Massachusetts-born artist James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), whose impact is felt throughout this dissertation's case studies. Veiling appears as a motif, aesthetic, and vocabulary for American Symbolism, where it functioned to cultivate suggestion and a sense of mystery. The popularity of its usage can be traced to Whistler, a painter of immense international stature who worked primarily in London and Paris.⁵⁸ Many have noted his generative role as a Symbolist precursor.⁵⁹

Arthur Symons (1865-1945), important for having thoroughly introduced Symbolism to English-speaking audiences with his book *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899), reflected on Whistler's role: "It has taken new names, and calls

⁵⁷ Facos 2009, 7.

⁵⁸ Whistler's impact in the United States is explored in Linda Merrill et al., *After Whistler: The Artist and His Influence on American Painting* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press in conjunction with exhibition organized by the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, 2003).

⁵⁹ Robert Goldwater, *Symbolism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 2-4 and Michelle Facos, *Symbolist Art in Context* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 55. Philippe Julian, *Dreams of Decadence: Symbolist Painters of the 1890s* (1971; New York: Praeger, 1975), 134 noted that Whistler "often bridged the gap between the Symbolists and the Impressionists." Kathleen Pyne, *Art and the Higher Life: Painting and Evolutionary Thought in Late Nineteenth-Century America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 133 has observed that "Whistler seemed to invite interpretation of his art within the context of symbolist mysticism, especially after he positioned himself within the symbolist fold in the late 1880s and 1890s."

itself now ‘Symbolism,’ now ‘Impressionism’; but it has a single thing to say, under many forms: that art must never be a statement, always an evocation. In the art of Whistler there is not so much a momentary forgetfulness of this truth.”⁶⁰ This emphasis on evocation aligns with Mallarmé’s dictum: “to *suggest*, that is the dream.” Artist Jacques-Émile Blanche remembered that, “the Whistler cult became entangled in men’s minds with Symbolism, with Mallarmé and—should I say so—the Wagner cults.”⁶¹ Musicality, evocation, and a Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total work of art) mentality were key to Whistler’s aesthetic, which had various sources, including British Pre-Raphaelitism and Japanese principles of design. He left Realism aside to focus on decorative, formal qualities in art. His water-saturated, tonal nocturnes (night scenes) and even his depictions of women called to mind spiritual planes and ghostly apparitions.⁶²

In Paris, Whistler occasionally attended his friend Mallarmé’s Tuesday night salon, a hub for the Symbolist movement, which Sadakichi Hartmann described in one of the earliest commentaries on Symbolism issued in the United States. In the first *Art Critic*, Hartmann recounted one of these Tuesday evening receptions at the home of “the father of symbolism.”⁶³ According to Hartmann, Mallarmé “speaks as

⁶⁰ Arthur Symons, *Studies in Seven Arts* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1907), 147.

⁶¹ Jacques-Émile Blanche, *Portraits of a Lifetime: The Late Victorian Era, the Edwardian Pageant, 1870-1914*, ed. and trans. Walter Clement (New York: Coward-McCann, 1938), 83.

⁶² In response to Whistler’s *Little White Girl* (*Symphony in White, No. 2*) (1864), Algernon Charles Swinburne wrote “Before the Mirror.” An excerpt reads, “Art though the ghost, my sister, / White sister there, / Am I the ghost, who knows?” See also Charles Colbert, *Haunted Visions: Spiritualism in American Art* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 122-152, especially 140-143.

⁶³ [Sadakichi Hartmann], “A Tuesday Evening at Stéphane Mallarmé’s,” *The Art Critic* 1, no. 1 (November 1893): 9. Among other guests, Hartmann describes “Stuart Merrill, an American and an exquisite writer of French verse . . . the translator of ‘Pastels in Prose’ . . . In a recent article in the ‘Revue Bleu,’ Stuart Merrill and Viélé Griffin were absurdly designate as the two greatest living American poets, notwithstanding the fact that they write

the other symbolists write. He utters any amount of mysterious and harmonious words and his listeners, already a little benumbed, as it were, by the hot punch with which they are served, leave him with the impression that they have received incomprehensible revelations.”⁶⁴ Hartmann met Whistler in Paris as well,⁶⁵ and the critic would go on to praise elements of Whistler’s “mystic touch” in the journal *Camera Notes* and elsewhere, including a monographic account he entitled *The Whistler Book* (1910).⁶⁶

Whistler most famously articulated his own aesthetic precepts in his “Ten O’Clock Lecture” (1888).⁶⁷ Mallarmé and Franco-American Symbolist poet Francis Vielé-Griffin collaborated to translate this lecture, which Whistler delivered in London and then other cities.⁶⁸ Whistler described the special role of the artist as genius, “through [whose] brain, as through the last alembic, is distilled the refined essence of that thought which began with the gods, and which they left him to carry out.”⁶⁹ He also spoke of a veiling effect: “When the evening mist clothes the riverside with poetry, as with a veil . . . Nature, who, for once, has sung in tune, sings her exquisite song to the artist alone.”⁷⁰ For Whistler, this veiling translated visually into

their best works in French. Merrill thought I was to be pitied as I was soon to return to America, which he considered ‘the most unartistic country on earth’” (11). For Hartmann’s role in transmitting Symbolist trends, see Jane Calhoun Weaver, *Sadakichi Hartmann: Critical Modernist* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), especially 2.

⁶⁴ Hartmann, 10.

⁶⁵ Calhoun Weaver, 2.

⁶⁶ Sadakichi Hartmann, “Subject and Treatment,” *Camera Notes* 5, no. 3 excerpted in Calhoun Weaver, 132. Sadakichi Hartmann, *The Whistler Book* (London: L. C. Page & Company, 1910).

⁶⁷ James McNeill Whistler, *Mr. Whistler's Ten O'Clock* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1888), in Dorra, 67-70.

⁶⁸ James McNeill Whistler, “Le ‘Ten o’clock,’” trans. Stéphane Mallarmé (Paris: Imprimerie de la Revue indépendante, 1888); Dorra, 67.

⁶⁹ Whistler in Dorra, 69.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

washes of color, an abstract misty or out-of-focus effect, and the diaphanous white clothing of his female subjects. Whistler's aesthetic of veiling became an important touchstone for the Symbolists considered in this dissertation. Veiling, veiled, and veil were recurrent vocabulary used in assessments of Symbolists artists in the United States and abroad, including the Frenchman Eugène Carrière (1849-1906), "A true symbolism, of a very different kind, is that of Eugène Carrière, that that strange painter who lets his human types glimmer upon us as through a veil of mist."⁷¹

Whistler's veiling has resonance as well with Paul Gauguin's writing in *Cahier pour Aline*. In his notebook, Gauguin quoted Poe describing art as "nature through the veil of the soul."⁷² The veil here is a metaphor for the artist's creativity. While reminiscent of Emile Zola's (1840-1902) Realist dictum (art as "a corner of creation seen through a temperament"), Gauguin's understanding is made more metaphysical through its relationship to the philosophy of Carlyle and its connection

⁷¹ William Sharp, "The Art of the Year," *National Review* 21, no. 124 (June 1893): 468. Sharp's commentary continues in an illuminating way, wherein a woman as *femme fragile* stands as a supposedly universal symbol: "The woman in his 'Maternité' is not a portrait of any one woman: she is the type of suffering womanhood. In her, in this human symbol, he has expressed a hint of the incommunicable yearning, the blended pain and passion of all motherhood."

⁷² "Si j'étais appelé à définir très brièvement le mot (art) je l'appellerai la reproduction de ce que les sens perçoivent dans la nature à travers le voile de l'âme. ... J'ai parlé du voile de l'âme; quelque chose de pareil nous paraît indispensable en art. Nous pouvons toujours doubler la beauté d'un paysage en le regardant les yeux à demi-clos." Paul Gauguin, *Cahier pour Aline*, 1893, Institut national d'histoire de l'art, Paris, Bibliothèque de l'INHA, <https://bibliotheque-numerique.inha.fr/idurl/1/8348>. Translated, quoted, and discussed in June Hargrove, "Gauguin's Maverick Sage: Meijer de Haan," in *Visions: Gauguin and his Time*, Van Gogh Studies 3, ed. Chris Stolwijk (Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum/Waanders Publishers, 2010), 98.

to Poe's Romanticism.⁷³ It recalls, as well, Aurier's praise for Gauguin's lifting of "symbolic veils that the hands of simple souls only manage to half-raise."⁷⁴

Other forms of veiling collude with and enrich these Symbolist notions. There were Orientalist associations with veiling, which connected the veil to the perceived mystery and exoticism of the Middle East and North Africa, especially the region's women.⁷⁵ An example in this realm is the veil of Isis, the Egyptian deity. The rending of her veil was said to reveal deep truths.⁷⁶ Veils were also linked to womanly beauty and healthfulness, but they literally circumscribed female experience by acting as a divide.⁷⁷ Veiling additionally possessed, as it still does, a slew of traditional associations, with marriage (bridal veil), piety (nun's veil), death (burial shroud), and grief (mourning veil).

In the American context, the most impactful evocation of the veil is W. E. B. Du Bois's as it appears in his *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903).⁷⁸ Du Bois used the veil,

⁷³ Dario Gamboni, *Paul Gauguin: The Mysterious Centre of Thought*, trans. Chris Miller, (London: Reaktion, 2013), 29-33.

⁷⁴ Aurier in Dorra, 196.

⁷⁵ Marni Reva Kessler, *Sheer Presence: The Veil in Manet's Paris* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 94-141.

⁷⁶ This was an image that Blavatsky used in her first major Theosophical publication, entitled *Isis Unveiled* (1877).

⁷⁷ Kessler, 1-61.

⁷⁸ W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1903). Du Bois calls the chapters of *The Souls of Black Folk* "thoughts" (viii). Du Bois expands upon the Veil in the later volume, *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Howe, 1920). He conjures a moving image: "And then—the Veil. It drops as drops the night on southern seas—vast, sudden, unanswering. There is Hate behind it, and Cruelty and Tears. As one peers through its intricate, unfathomable pattern of ancient, old, old design, one sees blood and guilt and misunderstanding. And yet it hangs there, this Veil, between Then and Now, between Pale and Colored and Black and White—between You and Me. Surely it is a thought-thing, tenuous, intangible; yet just as surely is it true and terrible and not in our little day may you and I lift it. We may feverishly unravel its edges . . ." (246). Multitudinous studies have used Du Bois's signature image to talk about race and other matters of division as well as inspiration.

often capitalized as the Veil, as a metaphor for the divide between white and black Americans, the latter of whom lived within or behind the Veil. Those within or behind the Veil were “gifted with a second-sight in this American world,”⁷⁹ the peculiar ability to perceive the self doubly, and as if through the outside, and often prejudiced, view of white Americans. Du Bois described this notion of doubleness, a psychic alienation, with the phrase “double consciousness.”⁸⁰ Double consciousness evokes Symbolist *dédoublement*, a Baudelairean positioning of the artist both as active participant in and, simultaneously, passive observer of life’s passions.⁸¹ Du Bois wrote of the Veil as a vast shadowing divide, and of seeing one’s own soul “darkly as through a veil.”⁸² Du Bois’s text has specificity for the African American experience of racism, which is why it is brought to bear in this dissertation on Tanner’s work in particular. However specific to the African American experience though, Du Bois’s text is attuned to the spiritual, metaphysical, and imaginative ethos of the turn-of-century that also informed Symbolism broadly.⁸³

⁷⁹ Ibid., 3.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ The notion of *dédoublement* comes from Baudelaire. It is elaborated upon by Dorra, 6-7, as one of Baudelaire’s “symbolist criteria.”

⁸² Ibid., 8.

⁸³ See Cynthia D. Schrager, “Both Sides of the Veil: Race, Science, and Mysticism in W. E. B. Du Bois,” *American Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (December 1996): 551-576. Elsa Barkley Brown, “Stephanie E. Pogue and the Artist’s Veil,” in *Arabesque: The Art of Stephanie E. Pogue*, curated by Adrienne L. Childs (College Park, MD: David C. Driskell Center, 2008, exh. cat.), 16 links Du Bois’s Veil to “the ‘veiled ladies’ of nineteenth-century mysticism who were the mediums by which those without the gift of sight could come to communicate with and know that which they could not see.” Rebecka Rutledge Fisher, *Habitations of the Veil: Metaphor and the Poetics of Black Being in African American Literature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014), 177 notes how “modern American progress, materialist advancement, and the invention of race were all a piece and together occupied the crucible of Du Bois’s analysis” in his earlier “The Conservation of Races” (1897). While the aesthetic of veiling considered in this dissertation is atmospheric and obscuring, Du Bois’s own visual aesthetic—as a sociologist—was the clean-lined, colorful (red, yellow, blue, green, brown, black, and white) infographic. See Julian Rothenstein, ed., *Black Lives 1900: W. E. B. Du*

Rose+Croix Salon and Pinckney Marcius-Simons

While Symbolism was not a strictly organized movement, exhibition societies and other types of groupings, such as Mallarmé's Tuesday night salon, brought together artists of Symbolist inclination and allowed for an elaboration of their practice. Such associations, which existed at different levels of formality, included Les XX, a group of Belgian painters holding annual exhibitions between 1884 and 1893, and the Nabis, Académie Julian students whose stylistic innovations were fomented by Paul Sérusier (1864-1927) after he worked with Gauguin at Pont-Aven.⁸⁴ Though there are many other such groupings, I note these, as they are touched upon in this dissertation. There are also movement terms related to Symbolism. Among others, there is Decadence, a more antisocial and introverted strain possessed by the degeneration and excesses of society, and Synthetism, a style emphasizing two-dimensional, flat patterning and the decorative arrangement of forms.

Another organizational body of great significance was the Society of the Rose+Croix, founded by the self-styled "Sâr" (high priest) Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918). The Society's annual exhibitions, held in Paris between 1892 and 1897, were a vital outlet for the promotion of Symbolism in the last decade of the nineteenth century.⁸⁵

Bois at the Paris Exposition with introduction by Jacqueline Francis and Stephen G. Hall (London: Redstone Press, 2019).

⁸⁴ Katherine M. Kuenzli, *The Nabis and Intimate Modernism: Painting and the Decorative at the Fin-de-Siècle* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010).

⁸⁵ Péladan issued rules for what was and was not permissible in his Salons. Acceptable were "Catholic subjects, Oriental religious themes, decorative allegories, Renaissance nudes, and

Rose+Croix exhibitors included an American, the today little-known Pinckney Marcius-Simons (1867-1909).⁸⁶ Marcius-Simons also exhibited in New York in 1895-1897. In 1897, Hartmann noted that “Simon[sic], the Symbolist, is once more at Avery’s [Art Gallery].”⁸⁷ The *New York Times* also covered Marcius-Simons’s “Dream Pictures”:

His decorative ideas are entirely original, extremely personal, and of a curiously symbolic nature. Little art of this order has as yet reached this city, but in Paris the Rose Croix and other exhibitions of similar nature have given the men of impressionistic ideas and methods free scope.⁸⁸

The *Times* conflated Symbolism (“symbolic nature”) and Impressionism (“impressionistic ideas”), but it associated both with the French capital and a delayed reception in the United States. Titles of Marcius-Simons’s works included *Jeanne d’Arc*, *Listening to Voices*; *Dreams*, *Preceded by Nightmare*, and *Guided by Sleep*, *Descend into the Town*; *Sardanapalus*; and *In the Gloaming*.⁸⁹ These titles speak to

‘express’ portraits”; proscribed were “historical, military, humorous, illustrative, contemporaneous, landscapes, seascapes and still-life subjects.” Russell T. Clement, Annick Houzé, and Christiane Erbolato-Ramsey, *A Sourcebook of Gauguin’s Symbolist Followers: Les Nabis, Pont-Aven, Rose + Croix* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), 694.

⁸⁶ He showed 11 works across four exhibitions, making him an influential presence in the Rose + Croix Salons. Using a statistical method, Mary Slavkin, “Statistically Speaking: Central Exhibitors at the Salons of the Rose + Croix,” *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 14, no. 3 (Autumn 2015), <http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/autumn15/slavkin-on-central-exhibitors-at-the-salons-of-the-rose-croix> has identified ten “central exhibitors” at these Salons who were they key players. Marcius-Simons is one, along with Fernand Khnopff and Alphonse Osbert.

⁸⁷ [News], *Art News* 1, no. 1 (March 1897): 1.

⁸⁸ “In the World of Art: [. . .] The Dream Pictures of Marcius-Simons [. . .],” *New York Times*, February 24, 1895. See also “Work by Weir and Simons,” *New York Times*, February 19, 1895 and “Pictures by Marcius-Simons,” *New York Times*, February 9, 1896. He showed at Avery’s Gallery.

⁸⁹ *The P. Marcius-Simons Oil Paintings: On Free Exhibition at the Avery Art Galleries* (New York: Avery Gallery, 1896, exh. cat.). Sophia Antoinette Walker, “Fine Arts: Minor Exhibitions,” *Independent* 48, no. 2465 (February 27, 1896): 9, called these “fantastic ‘Symbolistic pictures.’”

the key role that titling plays in identifying work as Symbolist,⁹⁰ and to typical Symbolist themes: visions, dreams, myths, poetry, and darkness.

Overview of Chapters and Artists

Dispersed scholarship has at least obliquely connected the individual artists who are the focus of my project, and some of the objects they created, to Symbolism. It has done this contextually, iconographically, philosophically, and/or stylistically. The diverse nature of this dissertation, however, uniquely fosters a comparative view that elaborates on the relationship between the immaterial ideas underscoring Symbolist art and the various material means of their expression. What follows is a brief overview of each artist, corresponding to each chapter, and a summary of their biography circa 1900.

The oldest in this set of artists, Gertrude Käsebier, was born May 18, 1852 in Des Moines, Iowa. Her father's death in 1864 led to her family's relocation to Brooklyn, New York, where her mother ran a boarding house. At age 37, in 1889, Käsebier started attending the Pratt Institute of Art, studying under Arthur Wesley Dow (1857-1922) and others. In 1894, she turned more seriously to photography, extending a winter abroad in France to travel to Germany in order to study photographic chemistry. Returning from Europe in 1895, she opened a studio of her own after a brief apprenticeship. Her work came to the attention of Alfred Stieglitz (1864-1946), impresario of "artistic" photography in America, who published her

⁹⁰ See Facos, 3-4.

photographs in the July 1899 issue of *Camera Work* and included her as a founding member of the Photo-Secession.⁹¹

Barbara L. Michaels, author of Käsebier's monograph, has recognized a Symbolist current throughout the artist's oeuvre.⁹² This current is most readily apparent in Käsebier's *The Bat* (1902) but also manifested in *The Heritage of Motherhood* (1904) and a series of portraits of Auguste Rodin (1840-1917), the sculptor most readily associated with the Symbolist movement.⁹³ Käsebier's use of pigment-rich gum bichromate printing, and her hand-manipulation of negatives and inter-positives call attention to the materiality of her photographs.⁹⁴ There is a mystic, psychic component to Käsebier's work that this chapter explores as a manifestation of the Symbolist impulse's mediumistic proclivities.

Alice Pike Barney was born on January 14, 1857 in Cincinnati, Ohio, where her father, a philanthropist, built the city's first opera house. Her family relocated to New York City in 1866. Though she was engaged to explorer Henry Morton Stanley (of "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?" fame) she married a man named Albert Clifford Barney instead, and they made their primary residence Washington, DC. In 1897, she

⁹¹ Biographical information from Barbara L. Michaels, *Gertrude Käsebier: The Photographer and Her Photographs* (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1992) and Gertrude Käsebier, "Studies in Photography," *Photographic Times* 30 (June 1898): 269-272.

⁹² Michaels, 164-165.

⁹³ Antoinette Le Normand-Romain, "Le symbolisme," in *La Sculpture française au XIXe Siècle* (Paris: Editions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1986, exh. cat.), 380-392. She explores that Rodin might be the first name one thinks of, but he is far from the only exponent of Symbolism in sculpture.

⁹⁴ Debra Hess Norris, Jennifer Jae Gutierrez, and Greta Glaser, "Käsebier's Photographic Printing Methods and Their Long-Term Preservation," in *Gertrude Käsebier: The Complexity of Light and Shade*, ed. by Stephen Petersen and Janis A. Tomlinson (Newark, DE: University of Delaware, 2013, exh. cat.), 31-42. A large collection of her work at University of Delaware, home to one of the United States' few degree programs in Art Conservation, has invited a relatively sustained technical investigation into her processes and materials.

traveled to France with her daughters, where she studied art with Carolus-Duran (1837-1917) and befriended Whistler. In 1899, she started hosting a Parisian Salon that was frequented by Symbolist artists including Edmond Aman-Jean (1858-1936), Lucien-Lévy Dhurmer (1865-1953), and the American painter John White Alexander (1856-1915). In 1900, her daughter Natalie Clifford Barney's *Some Portrait-Sonnets of Women* (*Quelques portraits-sonnets de femmes*), a book of poetry, was published with Alice's illustrations. When Albert learned that his daughter's book described lesbian relationships, he demanded Alice's return to the United States. Around 1900, Barney was preparing for her solo exhibition at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, which would take place in 1901.⁹⁵

In preparation for that exhibit, Barney worked up two large-scale pastels with female protagonists, *Woman Clothed with the Sun* and *Babylon* (ca. 1901). The chapter culminates in a focus on these works, but it also looks at the pastels she developed for Natalie's publication, such as *Ophelia* (ca. 1900), and others, such as *Medusa* (1902), that innovate on *femme fragile* and *femme fatale* tropes. This chapter evaluates pastel as an eminently Symbolist medium, one expressive of Barney's Symbolist impulse, and it elaborates on Barney's investment (as patron and multimedia maker) in fostering the artistic spirit of her home country, especially in the nation's capital.

Born in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania on June 21, 1859, Henry Ossawa Tanner moved with his family to Philadelphia in 1868. It was during a visit to that city's

⁹⁵ Biographical information from Jean L. Kling, *Alice Pike Barney: Her Life and Art* (Washington, DC: National Museum of American Art in Association with Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994).

Fairmount Park in 1872 that he set his mind to an artistic career. Tanner's father, Benjamin Tucker Tanner (1835-1923), was a major figure in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the first independent African American denomination. In 1900, Henry had been living in France for just under a decade. He moved to Europe in 1891 in order to further the artistic training that he had started at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia, under Thomas Eakins (1844-1916), in 1879-1885. Abroad, he found a measure of release from American racism, and he also found officially sanctioned success, as his *Daniel in the Lions' Den* (1895) was accepted to the Salon of the Académie des Beaux-Arts and awarded honorable mention. During summers in the 1890s, he connected with individuals in Gauguin's broader circle in France's Brittany region. American department store magnate Rodman Wanamaker sponsored Tanner's trips to the Middle East beginning in 1897. By 1900, Tanner had moved away from genre subjects, exemplified by his *The Banjo Lesson* (1893) and *The Thankful Poor* (1894), and turned to more overtly biblical and spiritual content.⁹⁶

Tanner's approach to painting materials has been the subject of recent examination. An essay based on the first systematic technical study of Tanner's works appears in the exhibition catalog *Henry Ossawa Tanner: Modern Spirit* (2012).⁹⁷ Amber Kerr-Allison and her colleagues have described Tanner's uniquely

⁹⁶ Biographical information from Kathleen James and Sylvia Yount, "Chronology," in *Henry Ossawa Tanner: Modern Spirit*, ed. Anna O. Marley (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012, in conjunction with exhibition organized by the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia), 275-280.

⁹⁷ Brian Baade, Amber Kerr-Allison, and Jennifer Giaccai, "Pursuit of the Ideal Effect: The Materials and Techniques of Henry Ossawa Tanner," in *Henry Ossawa Tanner: Modern Spirit*, 157-166.

experimental approach to painting; original formulations and applications of tempera emulsions; and the challenges of conserving his work. The *Modern Spirit* catalog also includes a crucial essay by Robert Cozzolino urging further examination of Tanner's connections to the Symbolist movement, arguing that while "perceptions about the intensity and supernatural aspects of Tanner's vision point to a context for his images that remains largely unexplored . . . few scholars have made the connection [to European Symbolism] explicit or examined the common ground between the allegedly conservative Tanner and the fin-de-siècle avant-garde."⁹⁸ While Cozzolino dismisses Tanner's *Salome* (ca. 1900) as an "anomaly" in the artist's oeuvre, it is this strikingly Symbolist canvas that will serve as an anchor in my examination of Tanner's Symbolist impulse.⁹⁹ This chapter also considers *The Three Marys* (1910), *Angels Appearing before the Shepherds* (ca. 1901) and a still vital, perhaps even more fundamental, Symbolist impulse embodied in late works such as *Return from the Crucifixion* (1936).

The youngest artist to be considered in depth, George Grey Barnard, was born May 24, 1863 in Bellefonte, Pennsylvania. As with Tanner, his father was a religious man, a minister in the Presbyterian church. The Barnard family moved to a succession of small towns in the Midwest, landing in Kankakee, Illinois. By 1900, Barnard was living in New York City and teaching at the Art Students League, having returned from Paris four years earlier. He had studied at the Art Institute of Chicago, and then, from 1883-1887, at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. He would return to

⁹⁸ Robert Cozzolino, "I Invited the Christ Spirit to Manifest in Me': Tanner and Symbolism," in Marley 2012, 121

⁹⁹ Cozzolino, 121.

France again on a commission for the sculptural program of the Pennsylvania State Capitol (1902-1911). There, he began collecting the medieval objects that would form the core of the Cloisters in New York City. Barnard's great early success was *The Struggle of the Two Natures in Man* (1888, carved 1892-1894), shown at the Champs-de-Mars Salon in 1894. The sculpture has been recognized for its engagement with the Symbolist notion of *dédoublement*.¹⁰⁰ My chapter on Barnard looks at *The Struggle of the Two Natures in Man* along with other works from Barnard's oeuvre from the years around 1900, including *Pan*, *The Norwegian Clock*, and *The Urn of Life*.

The latter two works are multifigure compositions that solidify Barnard's Symbolist impulse. Seeing Barnard at work on the *Norwegian Clock* in 1898, Hartmann proclaimed it "the most remarkable piece of condensed symbolism that I have as yet seen."¹⁰¹ Hartmann also noted the unmistakable influence of Rodin. Along with his choice of subject matter, Barnard's process and use of finish affirm his place as an American Symbolist. Barnard insisted on doing much of his own carving, and he articulated a spiritual conception of the transition from clay to plaster to marble. Of his *Struggle of the Two Natures in Man*, he wrote that it "represents the *awakening* nature throwing off the *material* nature that stands apparently master over

¹⁰⁰ Brian Edward Hack, "American Acropolis: George Grey Barnard's *Monument to Democracy*, 1918–1938," (PhD diss., City University of New York, 2008), frames Barnard's never-completed monumental work, a memorial to World War I, as a culmination of Symbolist ideas first manifested in Barnard's early career. He calls Barnard "arguably the first American Symbolist sculptor" (19).

¹⁰¹ Sadakichi Hartmann, "Art Talk," *The Criterion* (January 15, 1898): 14 in Jane Calhoun Weaver, *Sadakichi Hartmann: Critical Modernist* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 289.

it,” putting into words the dynamism of the push-pull of materiality and immateriality definitive of Symbolist art.¹⁰²

The conclusion of this dissertation summarizes the artist case studies, considers the Symbolist presence at the International Exhibition of Modern Art—the Armory Show—in New York in 1913, and suggests some of the longer-term impacts of the American Symbolist impulse. Symbolism is part of the history of American art, and the history of American art is part of Symbolism internationally. Symbolism in the United States was perhaps even less well-defined or understood than European manifestations of the movement, but such ambiguity and ill-definition ultimately suits the Symbolist spirit. Rather than lament this lack of clarity, it can be approached as an opportunity for historical observation and exploration. American artists who produced works in a Symbolist mode engaged the dialectic of immaterial ideas and material manifestations in significant ways, the outcomes of which merit the investigation this dissertation undertakes.

¹⁰² Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Catalogue of Sculpture, 1731-1907* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1908), 12, <https://libmma.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15324coll10/id/14736>.

Chapter 1: Would That I Need Never Wake: Gertrude Käsebier's Pictorialist Symbolism

I wander about and dream and dream and am unconscious of material conditions. I live truly in the spirit. Would that I need never wake. – Gertrude Käsebier, 1899¹

Mystic, almost psychic. – Robert Demachy, 1906²

Gertrude Käsebier (1852-1934) was a pioneer in the field of fine art photography in the United States. Her work is representative of Pictorialism, a category of evocative, artistically minded photography from the turn of the nineteenth into the twentieth century, with images that are often in soft focus and highly personally expressive.³ Pictorialism from around 1900 resonates strongly with the Symbolist movement. Indeed, in the photographic medium, North American Pictorialist production stands out beyond its European counterpart as particularly

¹ Gertrude Käsebier, Newport, RI, letter to F. Holland Day, July 3, 1899, F. Holland Day Papers, 1858-1977, originals at Norwood Historical Society, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, Microfilm Roll 3565, Frame 855.

² “Cette dernière phrase [‘Mais ne dégagent-ils pas, chacun, des vibrations particulières ?’], à elle seule, nous initie au caractère très spécial de Mme Käsebier, nous la comprenons mystique, presque voyante, accomplissant les gestes de son art avec la conviction et le respect d’un sacerdoce.” Robert Demachy, “Mme Käsebier et son œuvre,” *Revue de photographie* 4, no. 10 (October 1906): 293. Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own.

³ For definitions of Pictorialism, see Hope Kingsley, rev. by Dennis Reed, “Pictorialism [Pictorial Photography],” *Grove Art Online*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T067402>, February 11, 2013; Alison Nortström and David Wooters, “Crafting the Art of the Photograph,” in *TruthBeauty: Pictorialism and the Photograph as Art, 1845-1945* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 2008, exh. cat.), 33; Kathleen A. Erwin, “‘Photography of the Better Type’: The Teaching of Clarence H. White,” in *Pictorialism into Modernism: The Clarence H. White School of Photography*, ed. by Marianne Fulton (George Eastman House in association with the Detroit Institute of Arts; New York: Rizzoli, 1996, exh. cat.), 124; Barbara L. Michaels, *Gertrude Käsebier: The Photographer and Her Photographs* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1992), [hereafter Michaels 1992] 45-46; Jonathan Green, introduction to *Camera Work: A Critical Anthology* (Millerton, New York: Aperture, 1973), 9-10; and Judith Fryer Davidov, *Women's Camera Work: Self/Body/Other in American Visual Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 52-54.

awash in Symbolist mood and motifs.⁴ The Symbolist concurrence with Pictorialist practice is especially evident Käsebier's oeuvre.

As the epigraphs indicate, Käsebier partially dwelled in a dream world and had an air of the mystic and psychic. In its spiritual, mediumistic valences, her work speaks to the position of female artists in the Symbolist movement. There is relatively little scholarship on Symbolism's female practitioners, perhaps due to the difficulty of associating women with the movement when it is researched within the parameters of its strictest or most limiting definitions. There is even less on Symbolism's American female practitioners. Nevertheless, Käsebier's formal choices, friendships, and the Photo-Secessionist milieu in which she cemented her reputation reveal a clear Symbolist current.

Käsebier's *The Bat* (1902) stands apart in the artist's oeuvre for its nude figure and the boldness of its femme fatale subject matter. The fuller consideration of Käsebier's Symbolist impulse that this chapter offers, inclusive of the *The Manger* (1899), *Crystal Gazer* (1904), *The Heritage of Motherhood* (1904), and her portraits of Rodin (ca. 1905), shows that while seemingly atypical, *The Bat* is both a meaningful example in and of itself and one that allows us to access key continuities with the rest of her body of work. This is especially true as we track *The Bat*'s many iterations across various photographic processes.

⁴ Uhlrich Pohlmann, "The Dream of Beauty, or Truth Is Beauty, Beauty Truth Photography and Symbolism, 1890-1940," in *Lost Paradise: Symbolist Europe*, Jean Clair et al. (Montreal, Quebec: Montreal Museum of Fine Arts distributed in the United States by St. Martin's Press, 1995, exh. cat.), 430. Pohlmann's chapter was the first sustained study of its kind, and incredibly impactful for establishing the Symbolist proclivities of American Pictorialism. It is also telling that an American Pictorialist work, F. Holland Day's *Hypnos* (ca. 1896) is the cover image for Michelle Facos, *Symbolist Art in Context* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

Käsebier's is an oeuvre seriously engaged with the dialectic of the immaterial (manifest in ideas, emotions, dreams, spirits) and the material method of their conjuration (in her case, photographic). Her work reveals the impact of Whistlerian aesthetics, veiling, and other concerns characteristic of Symbolist art. This chapter's attention to photographic processes and materials, usually siloed from the interpretative and contextual literature,⁵ adds new weight to the Symbolist lens. The themes and technical experimentation in Käsebier's work highlight the animating tension between materiality and immateriality that is definitive of Symbolism.

The contribution of this chapter is a sustained and focused analysis of one photographer's Symbolist impulse, not because other movements or topics are irrelevant to interpretations of her work,⁶ but because the lens of Symbolism, the applicability of which has been introduced by the major Käsebier scholars, is particularly revealing and adds dimension to other avenues of Käsebier studies as well. As a photographer, Käsebier was left out of the first and, so far, only exhibition devoted to Symbolism in the United States, Charles Eldredge's *American Imagination and Symbolist Painting* (1979). This does a disservice to the history of Symbolism in America, to which Käsebier and her Pictorialist colleagues made major

⁵ As in the appendices and chapter of the Delaware publications cited in the historiographical overview below. Also, Tram M. Vo and Dusan Stulik, "Working in Platinum: Gertrude Käsebier," ICOM Committee for Conservation Preprints (Lisbon, 2011), CD-ROM.

⁶ Along with connections to Symbolism, Käsebier's work has also been read for the impact of the Old Masters, Impressionism, Aestheticism, Tonalism, and the Arts and Crafts Movement. There has been extensive consideration of her treatment of motherhood and childhood as well as studies on her photographs of Buffalo Bill's Wild West troop members. See, for example, Michelle Delaney, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West Warriors: A Photographic History by Gertrude Käsebier* (New York: HarperCollins for Smithsonian National Museum of American History, 2007); Elizabeth Hutchinson, *The Indian Craze: Primitivism, Modernism, and Transculturation in American Art, 1890-1915* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 131-170.

contributions. After Eldredge's exhibition, other texts have broached the Symbolism inherent in American Pictorialism, without addressing Käsebier exclusively, and they have done so within the context of European Symbolism.⁷ It is the intention of this study to integrate photography into a cross-media study of American Symbolism, while also offering a depth of analysis by focusing on a singular figure.

Photography Professional: Biographical and Historiographical Overview

While a crucial representative of Pictorialism in the United States at the turn of the century and a founding member of the Photo-Secession (established in New York in 1902), Käsebier's professional success as a portraitist and the commercial facet of her endeavors have positioned her at odds with the stated anti-materialist commitments of Symbolist philosophy. Alfred Stieglitz, empresario of the Photo-Secession, prized Käsebier's work—he devoted the first issue of his journal *Camera Work* (1903) to her pictures—but eventually fell out with the artist over her perceived mercantilism.⁸

⁷ Especially Colleen Denney, "The Role of Subject and Symbol in American Pictorialism," *History of Photography* 13, no. 2 (1989): 109-128; and Pohlmann 1995, op cit.

⁸ C. Jane Gover, *The Positive Image: Women Photographers in Turn of the Century America* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 71. Charles H. Caffin, *Photography as a Fine Art* (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1901), 64 captures some of this conflict as an internal one: "the exigencies of the profession sometimes interfere with the realization of her [Käsebier's] ideal." This friction stems from the growth of opportunities for women to work as professionals in their fields. Käsebier forthrightly encouraged women to enter the photographic profession and mentored female assistants in her studio. While individuals such as Stieglitz saw work with commercial motivations or applications as inferior, "it [the commercial realm] was an arena in which women were increasingly agents" and "could communicate their aesthetic and social ideals with other women," through systems of portrait patronage and publication in illustrated magazines. Elizabeth Hutchinson, "When the Sioux Chief's Party Calls: Käsebier's Indian Portraits and the Gendering of the Artist's Studio," *American Art* 16, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 59-60.

Käsebier's identity as a photographer straddled the artificial divide between the commercial and the artistic. In an early book on fine art photography, Charles H. Caffin entitled his chapter on her "Gertrude Kasebier and the Artistic-Commercial Portrait," starting with the statement: "Mrs. Käsebier will tell you that she is a commercial photographer; unquestionably she is an artist."⁹ Her portrait clients included society figures, starlets, artists, and intellectuals; her images appeared in popular magazines.¹⁰ She possessed a practicality about and appreciation for her work as a livelihood, an ethic that she linked to her pioneer upbringing. Her frankness on these commercial matters can distract from seeing her as a Symbolist, but a denial of them would serve to perpetuate a fundamental "myth of art photography"—that Pictorialism was independent of commodity culture and the materialism of an industrialized society.¹¹ This myth is salient in Symbolism as well.¹² Indeed, Pictorialism and Symbolism's parallel commitment to this myth of non-commercialism, or being above commercialism, speaks to an essential alignment of Pictorialist and Symbolist thinking. The assertion of a professional self made Käsebier a leader amongst female photographers and, more broadly, women entering any field at the turn of the century. Her awareness of her leadership role perhaps encouraged Käsebier to be more transparent about the financial realities of art, and

⁹ Caffin, 55.

¹⁰ The popular magazines in which her work appeared also included *Everybody's Magazine*, *McClure's*, *World's Work*, as well as the widely circulating photograph publications, *Photo-Era* and *The Photographic Times*.

¹¹ Uhlrich Keller, "The Myth of Art Photography: A Sociological Analysis," *History of Photography* 8, no. 4 (1984): 249-275.

¹² Patricia Townley Mathews, *Passionate Discontent: Creativity, Gender, French Symbolist Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 44-45.

she was less likely, compared to her male colleagues, to elide the realities of labor and the marketplace.

The following biographical overview begins in the American West, a background that Käsebier herself emphasized.¹³ It notes elements of religion in her upbringing, as it will become apparent that spiritual commitments are influential in her Symbolist output, though these commitments did not adhere to traditional religious norms.

Käsebier was born on May 18, 1852, in Des Moines, Iowa.¹⁴ In the wake of the gold rush, her father, and then the immediate family, moved to Colorado. Spending her earliest years in the West, Käsebier bragged of being “born and brought up among the Indians.”¹⁵ Notes in her papers indicate that there were “no churches” where her family settled but record the visit of an itinerant preacher who offered communion to the local gold miners.¹⁶ During the Civil War, the Stantons relocated to Brooklyn, New York, where Käsebier’s mother kept a boarding house after Käsebier’s father’s death. For a couple years in the late 1860s, Käsebier attended a Moravian Seminary for Women. She did not actively practice any formal religion as an adult but acknowledged the legacy of a Quaker identity inherited from her grandmother.¹⁷ In 1874, she married Eduard Käsebier, a German shellac merchant. They had three children, one son and two daughters.

¹³ She claimed to be related to Daniel Boone. See “Autobiographical Notes by Gertrude Käsebier,” Gertrude Käsebier Papers, MSS 0149, Manuscript and Archival Collections, University of Delaware, Newark, DE [hereafter Käsebier Papers].

¹⁴ Biographical information in this paragraph from Michaels 1992.

¹⁵ “Autobiographical Notes by Gertrude Käsebier,” Käsebier Papers.

¹⁶ “Autobiographical Notes by Gertrude Käsebier,” Käsebier Papers.

¹⁷ While Barbara Michaels found connections to these denomination and suggests that familiarity with their ideology may have fertilized Käsebier’s sympathy with Native

In 1889, at age 37, she started attending the Pratt Institute of Art, where she studied painting under instructors who included Arthur Wesley Dow.¹⁸ Dow is known for his 1899 book *Composition*, which expounded upon his understanding of Japanese design principles for art education. Among these principles, particularly relevant to black-and-white photography is “Notan,” which he defined as the balance of light and dark.¹⁹ In 1894, during a trip to France supervising Pratt students—Käsebier was about a decade older than the average pupil—she turned seriously to photography. She then traveled to study photographic chemistry in Germany, “realizing the necessity of being able to control [her] medium.”²⁰ Returning from Europe in 1895, she apprenticed with Samuel Lifshey, and soon thereafter opened a studio of her own in New York City. After success at the Philadelphia Photographic Salon in 1898, her work came to the attention of Stieglitz, a man over a decade younger than herself. He published her images in the July 1899 issue of *Camera Notes*, the journal then under his editorship, and included her as a founding member of the Photo-Secession. Stieglitz initially extolled her as “beyond dispute, the leading portrait photographer in this country,”²¹ but tensions grew between them over the years. They mounted in

Americans, she writes, “so little is known about Käsebier’s connection to Quakers or Moravians that is impossible to assess the impact of their beliefs on any aspect of her life.” Michaels 1992, 29.

¹⁸ Dow also taught Georgia O’Keeffe, whose early work also show a Symbolist impulse. See Eldredge 1979, 116-122 and Eldredge, “Nature Symbolized: American Painting from Ryder to Hartley,” in *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting, 1890-1985*, Maurice Tuchman et al. (New York: Abbeville Press, 1986, in conjunction with exhibition at Los Angeles County Museum of Art), 117. Dow also taught Symbolist Pamela Colman Smith at Pratt. Stuart R. Kaplan and Mary K. Greer, *Pamela Colman Smith: The Untold Story* (Stamford, CT: U.S. Game Systems, 2018), 21.

¹⁹ Arthur W. Dow, *Composition: A Series of Exercises Selected from a New System of Art Education* Part I (1899; New York: Baker and Taylor, 1903), 30-31.

²⁰ Gertrude Käsebier, “Studies in Photography,” *Photographic Times* 30 (June 1898): 270.

²¹ Alfred Stieglitz [A. S.], “Our Illustrations,” *Camera Notes* 3, no. 1 (July 1899): 24.

1906 when Käsebier joined the Professional Photographers of New York, a group antagonistic to Stieglitz, and the conflict reached its apex when she resigned from the Photo-Secession altogether in 1912 to focus full time on commercial photography. She continued to run her portrait studio, eventually with the help of her daughter Hermine, until 1927. She died on October 12, 1934, in New York City.

Käsebier, and Pictorialism generally, fell out of favor as the twentieth century progressed and as so-called “straight” photography of the machine age overtook the fuzzy, manipulated aesthetic of Pictorialism. Such straight photography better suited taste as defined by avant-garde painting. Barbara L. Michaels “rediscovered” Käsebier in the mid-1970s.²² In 1979, William Homer organized the first posthumous retrospective of Käsebier.²³ In the accompanying catalog, Homer wrote of the photographer’s intuitive, psychic, and spiritual side, as well as the stylistic qualities of her work, and he addressed the relationship to Symbolism: “In her thinking and mode of visualizing, she was very much a product of the 1890s, the Symbolist generation of Mallarmé and Gauguin, which preferred to suggest rather than describe in a realist manner.”²⁴ Homer’s exhibition catalog also included appendices on Käsebier’s techniques and materials, the first of their kind.²⁵

²² Barbara L. Michaels, “Rediscovering Gertrude Käsebier,” *Image* 19 (June 1976): 20-32. Michaels’s article appeared two years before research began on the Delaware retrospective. See William Homer, *A Pictorial Heritage: The Photographs of Gertrude Käsebier* (Wilmington: Delaware Art Museum, 1979, exh. cat.), 5. Michaels, surprisingly, did not contribute to the Homer catalog, and Michaels’s dissertation, “Gertrude Kasebier: Her Photographic Career, 1894-1929” (PhD diss., CUNY, 1984) followed five years after the show.

²³ His institution, the University of Delaware, holds a substantial archive of her work and papers.

²⁴ Homer, 22.

²⁵ Charles G. Metzger, “Appendix II, Käsebier’s Equipment and Techniques,” and Debra Hess Norris, “Appendix III, Käsebier’s Printing Methods,” in Homer 1979, 32-35. Great credit can be given to the conservation program at Delaware for supporting this technical

The fuller revival of Käsebier's reputation can be credited to Michaels's biographical publication and curation in the 1990s.²⁶ In the epilogue of her critical biography on the artist, Michaels also highlighted the importance of Symbolism for Käsebier's images, particularly around the pervasive theme of solitude.²⁷ This chapter affirms and substantiates Michaels's and Homer's observations.

Photography in Symbolist Theory and the Symbol in Käsebier's Photographs

Critic Albert Aurier, whose writing is definitive of Symbolism in the visual arts, belittled photography and saw it as running counter to a Symbolist agenda. He condemned realist artworks that were "impersonal and banal like photographs."²⁸ He further disparaged art that pursued the exactness and, again, "banality," of daguerreotypes (the earliest publicly available and commercially successful photographic process).²⁹ Seeking to uplift photography from the reputation for unexpressivity and the strict, uncreative reproduction of reality, Pictorialist organizations such as the Photo-Secession had as their primary goal the elevation of

research. A more recent catalog essay further explored her techniques and involved newer technologies for documenting her methods and preserving her works. Debra Hess Norris, Jennifer Jae Gutierrez, and Greta Glazer, "Käsebier's Photographic Printing Methods and their Long-Term Preservation," in *Gertrude Käsebier: The Complexity of Light and Shade* (Newark: University of Delaware, 2013, ext. cat.), 31-42.

²⁶ Barbara L. Michaels, "Gertude Käsebier, Photographer," *MoMA* no. 11 (Spring 1992): 10-11.

²⁷ Michaels 1992, 164-165.

²⁸ "Impersonnelles et banales comme des photographies." G.-Albert Aurier, "Le symbolisme en peinture: Paul Gauguin" (1891), in *Oeuvres posthumes de G.-Albert Aurier* (Paris, Mercure de France, 1893), 211.

²⁹ "La copie myope des anecdotes sociales, l'imitation imbécile des verrues de la nature, la plate observation, le trompe-l'œil, la gloire d'être aussi fidèlement, aussi banalement exact que le daguerréotype, ne contente plus aucun peintre, aucun sculpteur digne de ces noms." Aurier, "Les peintres symbolistes" (1892), in *Oeuvres posthumes*, 295.

photography to the level of high art. The major strategy for reifying their medium was to incorporate the conventions and aesthetics of painting.

However, photographers did not choose just any type of painting to emulate. As French Pictorialist Robert Demachy remarked in his 1901 review of the “New School of American Photography” exhibition, organized by F. Holland Day and held in London and then Paris: “The French public seems to have taken kindly to the transatlantic school of pictorial photography. . . . It is new, in a sense, but only new as a school of photography, for it reflects clearly the style of a well-known modern school of painting, and that is why it has been accepted without the least difficulty by the enlightened portion of the French public.”³⁰

For Käsebier, works such as an early exhibited photograph of a “quaint old Breton peasant woman” and her training, however brief, at the Académie Julian, where Henry Ossawa Tanner also studied, made the artist seem particularly “French” among American photographers, despite her lack of ease with the French language.³¹

³⁰ There were 30 and 29 works by Käsebier present at the London and Paris venues, respectively. Robert Demachy, “Exhibition of the New American School of Artistic Photography at the Paris Photo-Club,” *Amateur Photographer* 33, no. 861 (April 5, 1901): 275.

³¹ Joseph T. Keiley, “The Salon: Its Purpose, Character and Lesson,” *Camera Notes* 3, no. 3 (January 1900), 185. It does not seem that Käsebier spent time in Brittany, but she made photo-essays of her time in Normandy. See Gertrude Käsebier, “Peasant Life in Normandy,” *Monthly Illustrator* 3, no. 11 (March 1895): 269-275; and “An Art Village,” *Monthly Illustrator* 4, no. 12 (April 1895): 9-17. Her essays reveal an attitude about the quaintness and primitiveness of France’s rural inhabitants not unlike that propagated by Americans and other artists who summered in Pont-Aven and the Brittany region of the country. She studied at the Académie Julian in 1894. This was several years after Tanner, but classes at the Academy were segregated by sex, so the two would not have overlapped in their coursework anyway. On Käsebier’s “Frenchness,” see Michel Poivert, “A Taste of the Avant-Garde: The Reception of American Women Photographers in Paris (1900-1901),” in *Ambassadors of Progress: American Women Photographers in Paris, 1900-1901*, ed. by Bronwyn A. E. Griffith (Giverny, France: Musée d’Art Américain in association with the Library of Congress, Washington, DC, distributed by University Press of New England, 2001, exh. cat.), 47.

Like the Nabis, her works exhibit decorative qualities such as flat patterning, graphic simplicity, and emphasis on contour, incorporating the aesthetic strategies of Japonisme also emphasized by her teacher Dow. Unlike Tanner, who ultimately found life abroad in France, away from the worst of American anti-black racism, better enabled him to work as an artist, for Käsebier, who visited France several times, conditions and circumstances proved more favorable back in the United States. In the United States' photographic scene, women were accepted and recognized as an integral presence and one of critical mass.³² Despite challenges she faced from some family members and contemporaries, Käsebier, as a white middle-class woman, could be recognized by the American public as a modern professional and an artist. Moreover, society perceived photography as a particularly suitable medium for female makers and mothers. It was advertised and critically received as such.³³

The Symbolist resonances in American Pictorialism, and Käsebier's work specifically, are no coincidence and speak to the milieu of the Photo-Secession. Among the cadre of house critics for Stieglitz's publications numbered Sadakichi Hartmann. Hartmann participated in Stéphane Mallarmé's ("the father of symbolism") Tuesday night salons in Paris and was one of the first to introduce an American audience to the Symbolist movement.³⁴ He was the most important, though

³² Bronwyn A. E. Griffith, "'Dainty and Artistic or Strong and Forceful—Just as you Wish': American Women Photographers at the Universal Exposition of 1900," in *Ambassadors of Progress*, 15. Toby Quitslund, "Her Feminine Colleagues: Photographs and Letters Collected by Frances Benjamin Johnson in 1900," in *Women Artists in Washington Collections*, Josephine Withers and Toby Quitslund (College Park: University of Maryland Art Gallery and Women's Caucus for Art, 1979, exh. cat.), 104.

³³ Gover, 14-15, 29-30, 35. Even Käsebier herself, 1898, 172 "earnestly advise[d] women of artistic tastes to train for the unworked field of modern photography."

³⁴ [Sadakichi Hartmann], "A Tuesday Evening at Stéphane Mallarmé's," *The Art Critic* 1, no. 1 (November 1893): 9.

not uncritical, early supporter of the American painter and Armory Show organizer Arthur B. Davies, a man whom Käsebier called “the aesthetic joy of [her] life.”³⁵ Hartmann wrote about Davies’s work using the language of dreams associated with Symbolism,³⁶ and he compared Käsebier, however slightly unfavorably, to her good friend: “she is a dreamer, and, if you like, a poet.”³⁷ The temperateness of Hartmann’s praise for Käsebier stemmed in part from a skepticism he had towards the possibility of women as truly creative and original artists.³⁸ Such reservations were typical of his Symbolist colleagues on the other side of the Atlantic, for whom true genius was nearly always reserved for male artists, however much male Symbolists appropriated qualities understood as “feminine”—intuition, expression, and an emotionality bordering on the hysterical or pathological—into their art and personas.³⁹

Another crucial and personal link between Käsebier and Symbolism was her fast friendship with fellow Photo-Secessionist Edward Steichen, whom she met in

³⁵ “Autobiographical Notes by Gertrude Käsebier,” Käsebier Papers.

³⁶ Emily Gephart has unpacked Davies’s Symbolist impulse. See Emily Willard Gephart, “A Dreamer and A Painter: Visualizing the Unconscious in the Work of Arthur B. Davies” (PhD diss., MIT, 2013), especially Chap. 1, “‘A Suggestion of a Higher Ideal:’ Davies and the Psychology of Symbolist dreams, 1894-1900,” 55-118.

³⁷ Sadakichi Hartmann, “Gertrude Käsebier: A Sense of the Pictorial” (1900), in *Valiant Knights of Daguerre: Selected Critical Essays on Photography and the Profiles of Photographic Pioneers*, ed. by Harry W. Lawton and George A. Knox (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 198. Hartmann also alludes in this review to the Symbolist movement without naming it outright: “I may safely say that her work affords one of the examples of the influence of a certain movement in modern art upon photography. In painting, this movement is represented in our country by men like H. W. Ranger, A. B. Davies, and Pamela Smith, etc., all of whom are remarkably clever, but lack concentration” (199-201).

³⁸ See Sadakichi Hartmann, “[On Women as Artists],” extract from “Nineteenth Exhibition of the Society of American Artists,” *Art News* 1, no. 3 (May 1897): 3, in *Sadakichi Hartmann: Critical Modernist, Collected Art Writings*, ed. by Jane Calhoun Weaver (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 77; Gover, 26.

³⁹ Mathews, 216. Sarah Burns addresses this phenomenon among modern American artists. Sarah Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in the Gilded Age* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 159-186.

Paris in the 1890s. The literature has deftly traced Steichen's connections to Belgian Symbolist writer Maurice Maeterlinck and Symbolism more generally, and some of that critical framework will be useful in understanding his Käsebier's Symbolist impulse as well.⁴⁰ Käsebier's photograph entitled *Serbonne* (1900), the standing figure for which Steichen posed, has been held up as an example of the impact of their friendship, dialoguing as it does with his poetic *The Pond-Moonrise* (1904) (Figs. 1-2).⁴¹ *Serbonne* calls to mind as well the eerie spaces and crepuscular light in the 1890s pastels of Belgian Symbolist William Degouve de Nuncques, whose works in turn share the softened, spooky, unpeopled atmosphere of the later Käsebier landscape *Bungalows* (1907) (Fig. 3-4). Other Käsebier photographs, *Ducks in the Pond at Meudon* (1905) and *Untitled (Lily Pads, Major Daniels's Château, Lorraine)* (ca. 1907) recall the haunted watery passageways of the city of Bruges produced by yet another Belgian Symbolist, Fernand Khnopff (Figs. 5-6).⁴²

⁴⁰ See Dennis Longwell, *Steichen: The Master Prints 1895-1914, the Symbolist Period* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1978); Lucy Bowditch, "Eduard Steichen and Maurice Maeterlinck," *History of Photography* 17 no. 4 (December 1993): 334-341; and Kurt E. Rahmlow, "'The admiration one feels for something strange and uncanny': Impressionism, Symbolism, and Edward Steichen's Submissions to the 1905 London Photographic Salon," *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 15, no. 1 (Spring 2016), www.19thc-artworldwide.org/spring16/rahmlow-on-impressionism-symbolism-steichen-1905-london-photographic-salon.

⁴¹ Michaels, 85; Homer, 22.

⁴² Käsebier may not have had first-hand contact with the works of the Belgian Symbolists, but Khnopff, in particular, had received English-language, illustrated press coverage in the 1890s, and was exhibiting in London and Paris. De Nuncques's scenes were compared to an important American Symbolist precedent, Edgar Allan Poe: "Sa *Maison aux hiboux* n'est-elle pas l'illustration qui s'impose à quelque conte d'Edgard Poe?" "La Libre Esthétique (Quatrième article)," *L'Art Moderne* 5, no. 12 (March 24, 1893): 90. For the structure and philosophy of such Symbolist landscapes, see Jean-David Jumeau-Lafond, "Landscapes of the Soul and Painted Landscapes," in *Mystical Landscapes: From Vincent van Gogh to Emily Carr*, ed. Katharine Lochnan (New York: DelMonico Books, 2016, in conjunction with exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario and Musée d'Orsay), 116-117.

Coverage of the “New School of American Photography” show reiterated Demachy’s observations and honed in on Käsebier’s entries specifically. A reviewer for the *Photo-Gazette* called Käsebier’s *Blessed Art Though Among Women* (1899) “a very beautiful work of symbolic intention” (Fig. 7).⁴³ French Pictorialist Constant Puyo explained that Käsebier’s *Mother and Child*, “despite its simple title, by the skillful posing and the chosen values, would easily rise to the symbol.”⁴⁴ Moreover, Puyo remarked generally of the exhibition: “there is symbol there.”⁴⁵

These comments relate to the Symbolist understanding of the symbol—the movement’s very eponym—as articulated most famously by Mallarmé: “*To name an object is to suppress three-quarters of the enjoyment of the poem, which derives from the pleasure of step-by-step discovery, to suggest, that is the dream. It is the perfect use of this mystery that constitutes the symbol.*”⁴⁶ This Symbolist notion of the symbol, which avoids the literary and allegorical in favor of mysterious and even misdirecting evocation, resounds across Symbolist theorizing, including Maeterlinck’s (“all masterpieces are symbols”)⁴⁷ and Belgian poet Émile Verhaeren’s commentary on the art of his countryman Khnopff: “The symbol, therefore, purifies itself through the process of evocation as it becomes an idea; it is a sublimation of perception and sensations; it is not demonstrative but suggestive; it destroys any

⁴³ “Une très belle œuvre d'intention symbolique.” Etienne Wallon, “F. Holland Day et la Nouvelle École Américaine au Photo-Club,” *Photo-Gazette* 11 (April 25, 1901): 106.

⁴⁴ “*Mère et enfant*, malgré son titre simple, par l'habile parti pris de la pose et des valeurs choisies, s'élèverait aisément jusqu'au symbole.” Contant Puyo, “L'Exposition de M. H. Day et de la ‘Nouvelle École Américaine,’” *Le Photogramme* 5, no. 7 (July 1901): 123.

⁴⁵ “Il y a du symbole là-dedans.” Puyo, 121.

⁴⁶ Jules Huret, “Interview with Stéphane Mallarmé” (1891), in Henri Dorra, *Symbolist Art Theories: A Critical Anthology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 141.

⁴⁷ Maurice Maeterlinck, “Small Talk—the Theater” (1890), in Dorra, 145.

contingency; in fact, any detail; it is the highest and most spiritual artistic expression possible.”⁴⁸ In this passage, Verhaeren presents the symbol as idea over matter. The symbol is derived from what the artist has seen or felt, it is communicated in an allusive way, and it has spiritual resonance.

What Rich Vagueness: The Heritage of Motherhood

Such understandings of the value of Symbolism and the symbol inform the progressive transformations in printings of Käsebier’s stirring image, *The Heritage of Motherhood* (1904). Advances in photographic technology by the early twentieth century allowed for multiple versions of the same negative to be created, versus the necessarily unique daguerreotype. Käsebier could make enlargements and crop, as well as undertake different printing processes with relative facility, versus the cumbersome requirements of the earlier collodion wet plate process. The dry, glass plate negative of *The Heritage of Motherhood* is informative as a baseline (Fig. 8). It pictures Käsebier’s friend, the author Agnes Rand Lee, seated, alone in a landscape with her hands clasped over her knee. Lee is the same woman escorting her daughter, Peggy Lee, through a portal in Käsebier’s earlier *Blessed Art Thou Among Women*. Peggy passed away at age seven, and so the photographer now pictures the sitter by herself. As explained by Giles Edgerton, the male pseudonym of female critic Mary Fanton Roberts, Käsebier waited to take this shot for a decade and a half after formulating the general idea, anticipating “to gain her inspiration from some

⁴⁸ Émile Verhaeren, “A Symbolist Painter: Fernand Khnopff” (1887), in Dorra, 61-62.

unconscious sitter posing.”⁴⁹ In her article, “Photography as an Emotional Art,” Roberts calls *The Heritage of Motherhood* an image of “the ghost of radiant motherhood.”⁵⁰

Certain manifestations of Symbolist art cultivated an aesthetic of ghostliness that seems to be part of Käsebier’s project in *The Heritage of Motherhood* and comes out in Roberts’s assessment.⁵¹ One of the earliest analyses of Symbolism in an American periodical presents painter Eugène Carrière as an example. The commentator, Aline Gorren, writes of how “the details of the human face appear to escape in his portraits, drowned in a luminous white-and-gray mist; what is there is something like the ghost of the sitter; in reality his true, psychological self; his spirit’s likeness; suggested, indicated, not explained.”⁵² There are similarities between Käsebier’s body of work and Carrière’s in their largely monochromatic palette, their specialization in portraiture, and their meditations on mother-and-child relationships (Figs. 9-10).⁵³ Whistler too, a touchstone of American Symbolism, incorporated a

⁴⁹ Mary Fanton Roberts [Giles Edgerton, pseud.], “Photography as an Emotional Art: A Study of the Work of Gertrude Käsebier,” *Craftsman* 12, no. 2 (April 1907): 92.

⁵⁰ Roberts, 92.

⁵¹ Symbolism, again, was not a stylistically coherent movement.

⁵² Aline Gorren, “The French Symbolists,” *Scribner’s Magazine* 13, no. 3 (March 1893): 351.

⁵³ There are multiple channels by which Käsebier may have encountered the work of Carrière, though I would not suggest she emulated his style or subject matter directly, or he hers. Carrière was covered in the American press, as evidenced by Gorren’s article. In addition, see, for example, “Paris: The Salon du Champ de Mars,” *American Architect and Building News* 48, no. 1013 (May 25, 1895): 77. American steel magnate and art collector Alfred Atmore Pope, who lent works by Käsebier to the first exhibition of the Photo-Secession, also collected paintings by Carrière. Michaels 1985, 99. Carrière was also particularly close to Auguste Rodin. See Jane R. Becker, “A Cross-Media Kinship: Auguste Rodin and Eugène Carrière,” *Now at the Met* (blog), Metropolitan Museum of Art, December 11, 2017, <https://www.metmuseum.org/blogs/now-at-the-met/2017/auguste-rodin-eugene-carriere>. Scholars have made note, however, how Käsebier’s children generally seem more self-possessed and independent than those portrayed by Carrière. Michaels 1985, 247; Davidov, 246.

ghostly aesthetic, with paintings described as “half-materialised ghosts at a spiritualistic séance.”⁵⁴

The meditative pose and the shoreline environment in *The Heritage of Motherhood* are reminiscent of Edvard Munch compositions, *Summer Evening* (1895) and *The Voice/Summer Night* (1896) (Figs. 11-12). The female figures in all three works share a solitude, upraised chin, and ambiguously half-closed eyes, suggesting an intensively melancholic interiority or semi-unconscious state. In the glass plate negative of *The Heritage of Motherhood*, details reign: the boulders and scrubby grasses of Maine’s rugged coastline where Käsebier captured the image, the pin tucks of Lee’s dress, the hem of her cape and its striped edging, and even in the freckles dotting her cheeks. However, Käsebier deprioritized the particulars of the negative in the resulting prints.

Certain prints feature a trio of crosses Käsebier added by hand into the background over Lee’s shoulder (Fig. 13).⁵⁵ These crosses reference the Lamentation of Christ and are an adoption of a painterly convention, stemming from the early modern period, to signal Jesus’ crucifixion at Golgotha.⁵⁶ The mother in this work has been read as a Virgin of Sorrows.⁵⁷ Such Christological and Mariological references reinforce the links between *Heritage of Motherhood* and Käsebier’s earlier work,

⁵⁴ Review from the *Echo* excerpted in James Abbott McNeill Whistler, *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies* (New York: Putnam’s Sons, 1904), 323.

⁵⁵ A reproduction of such a print, published in the *Craftsman* 12 (1907) was printed in reverse. The crosses themselves are reduced, compared to the version at the Detroit Institute of Art.

⁵⁶ Crosses may also have had special significance to Käsebier’s personal history. She tells the story of a found crucifix, its appearance coinciding with the recovery of her son from illness. “Autobiographical notes by Gertrude Käsebier,” Käsebier Paper.

⁵⁷ Susan L. Taylor, “The Heritage of Motherhood and the Agony of Agnes Lee,” *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts* 75, no. 2 (2001): 20.

Blessed Art Thou Among Women, the title of which quotes a passage from the Gospel of Luke concerning Mary's pregnancy.

The removal of the crosses in other iterations of *Heritage of Motherhood* simplifies the composition and makes the work, per Symbolist priorities, less demonstrative and more suggestive, to use Verhaeren's vocabulary. Subtle traces of the crosses remain in other prints, indicating that Käsebier re-photographed a version with crosses, then altered the negative and/or the resulting print to obscure the handmade additions (Figs. 14-15).⁵⁸ Without the crosses as clear religious references, the landscape itself stands as an essential vehicle of suggestion. While the negative almost certainly pictures solid land, in the prints, the terrain undulates into crests and folds, simplified forms that Käsebier articulated in broader masses of tone that swell and recede like the sea. This artificial seascape helps communicate the tragedy and emotional tumultuousness of the loss of a child.

A platinum print of *The Heritage of Motherhood* at the Library of Congress has a warm golden hue, while the Museum of Modern Art holding, an experimental combined process using gum bichromate over platinum, has a silvery coloring and a velvety texture (Figs. 14-15). Such images feature a reduced tonal range compared to the negative. This lends them a thick, hazy, atmospheric feeling, which relates to contemporary understandings of the dream world and subconscious mind. Roberts insisted that the ideas in Käsebier's work were primary and, therefore, that her art was independent of the mechanistic camera. Still, she acknowledged how the special quality of *The Heritage of Motherhood* evolved in tandem with Käsebier's darkroom

⁵⁸ Taylor, 20.

techniques: “the spiritual side developing during the sitting and being accentuated in the printing.”⁵⁹ Käsebier’s eclectic printing processes, and the variations between individual prints, demonstrate the artist’s attention to the material side of image-making alongside its idea-driven, emotional content.

Intensifying the psychological effect of *The Heritage of Motherhood* further, Käsebier in later versions cropped out much of the landscape background at right and left to narrow in on the figure. One such image, printed in platinum on thin Japanese tissue and adhered to a backing, features blue and yellow tonalities (Fig. 16).

Another, late print, also cropped, prioritizes the weave of the paper support, and, thereby, the object status of the photograph itself (Fig. 17). The streaky fringes at the bottom and top margins of this print are indexical of the brushwork used to apply pigmented gum bichromate solution to the paper. This type of application evokes the seeping of a watery paint into a canvas support. Pictorialists celebrated the expressive, painterly possibilities of gum bichromate printing. It was a method Käsebier first engaged in 1899, becoming more immersed in it over time.⁶⁰ Gum printing aligned well with the non-naturalism, individuality, and anti-realism of Symbolist aesthetics. As described in 1901: “It gives the greatest possible play to the worker’s individuality. . . . It gives the greatest possible latitude in changing the print from the negative. . . . It gives the special effect, rather than the literal fact.”⁶¹

A poem by Lee collaborates with Käsebier’s *The Heritage of Motherhood* and underscores Symbolist themes and ghostliness of the picture, which also run

⁵⁹ Roberts, 92.

⁶⁰ Michaels 1992, 86.

⁶¹ F. A. Waugh, “Gum-Bichromate Printing,” *Photo-Miniature* 2, no. 22 (January 1901): 401-402.

throughout Käsebier's oeuvre. Called "The Dream Child," Lee's poem implies an encounter with her lost daughter through the nocturnal realm of dreams. She writes of a "what rich vagueness," "some shred of a dream," and the knowledge that "she was with me last night."⁶²

Veil as Motif and Effect

As part of a series of well-known Käsebier images of motherhood with Mariological resonances, *The Heritage of Motherhood* also follows *The Manger* (*Ideal Motherhood*) (1899) (Fig. 18). *The Manger* brings to the fore the veil, which acts in Käsebier's work as a motif and effect. For some Pictorialists, who photographed through gauze over their camera lenses, a veiling of sorts acted as a tool for achieving a desired aesthetic.⁶³ Käsebier occasionally printed on silk fabric, furthering the correspondences with a veil at the material level of the work's support. Moreover, in issues of *Camera Work*, the fine photogravure reproductions on which Stieglitz prided his publication were reproduced on or separated with thin tissue paper interleaves, again creating a semi-transparent veiling effect as the reader leafed through an issue (Fig. 19). In the first *Camera Work* number, this effect charmingly echoes the veil that drapes over the woman's head in Käsebier's *The Manger*, printed in that issue (Fig. 20). The veil is even more central as a motif in Käsebier's *The Bride* (ca. 1890/1900), where the shadowed, close-up profile of a woman is ensconced in a veil (Fig. 21). While a veil traditionally connotes the holiness of

⁶² Agnes Lee, "The Dream Child," *Poetry Review of America* 2, no. 4 (February 1917): 54.

⁶³ William Chapman Sharpe, *New York Nocturne: The City After Dark in Literature, Painting, and Photography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 120.

marriage and the bride's purity, Käsebier's own skeptical attitude towards the institution of marriage and her own experience of it—her husband never fully supported her ambitions and was embarrassed by her career-mindedness⁶⁴—helps contextualize the melancholy of *The Bride*.

Encapsulating the primacy of veiling in Photo-Secessionist theory, *Camera Work* published an extract from Oscar Wilde under the pseudonym Sebastian Melmoth, in which he describes art: “She is not to be judged by any external standard of resemblance. She is a veil rather than a mirror.”⁶⁵ In alignment with Aurier's thinking, this passage of text disavows the work of art as a reproduction of reality but affirms it as a product of interiority. Though the essay from which the Wilde quote is extracted is a playful one, the Pictorialist commitment to a veiled and Symbolist aesthetic, drawn in large part from Whistler's blended and abstracted nocturnes, was longstanding and serious. Also, significantly, art is personified as female in the Wilde description. While femininity as an aesthetic and woman as a sign were embraced by Symbolism,⁶⁶ critics sometimes disavowed the fact of an artist such as Käsebier's sex when commending her artistic output. Stieglitz wrote, for example, that the strength of her compositions “never betrays the woman” who created them.⁶⁷ Other reviewers leaned in the opposite direction, framing Käsebier in a category of “femme artiste,”⁶⁸ attributing to her a natural compatibility with genial domestic scenes and the

⁶⁴ Michaels 1992, 14.

⁶⁵ Oscar Wilde [Sebastian Melmoth, pseud.], “Extracts,” *Camera Work* no. 12 (October 1905): 50.

⁶⁶ Mathews, 75.

⁶⁷ Stieglitz 1899, 24.

⁶⁸ Mathews, 2, uses this term to describe a critical subcategory, along with “‘masculine’ woman artist,” into which women were boxed, proscribing their recognition historically.

photography of children and family (she raised three children before embarking on an artistic career). Neither approach of the time fairly considered her work in the less narrowing and more praiseful terms that were available to men.

Kathleen Pyne has written incisively about the “feminine voice” of American modernism. She explains how Käsebier enacted, in her art and in her identity as a white and progressive bourgeois matriarch, a “feminine paradigm, encoded in Whistler’s Symbolist veiling—a feminized syntax of disembodiment invested in the sign of the Mother.”⁶⁹ Käsebier directly quoted *Whistler’s Mother* (1871) in her *Mrs. Ward and Baby* (ca. 1903) (Fig. 22). As a monochrome, Käsebier’s interpretation speaks poignantly to *Whistler’s Mother*’s official title: *Arrangement in Gray and Black*. Even Käsebier’s use of a monogram signature emulates Whistler’s famous butterfly mark, which was based on East Asian seals (Fig. 23). Hers took on the form of a lens stop, a vintage—even in her time—tool for controlling the light coming into contact with the negative.

A Clairvoyant Pictorialism

Käsebier’s *Crystal Gazer* (1904) suggests veiling as a complementary aesthetic to the evocation of psychic proclivities (Fig. 24). Käsebier pictured a young woman bending forward and downward to peer into a crystal ball, which reflects and

⁶⁹ Kathleen Pyne, *Modernism and the Feminine Voice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 1. Following her graduation from Pratt School of Art, Käsebier visited Chicago for the 1893 World’s Fair, where Whistler’s works were on view in the American art exhibition. A major Whistler show had been held in New York in 1889 and *Camera Work* discussed the artist with great frequency. Käsebier was inevitably familiar with his oeuvre. See Jonathan Green, ed., “Index of Selected Names and Subjects,” *Camera Work: A Critical Anthology* (New York: Aperture, 1973), 360.

distorts the light that swirls across and within it. A veil of sorts hovers over the surface, sweeping diagonally from the table on which the ball sits upon its pedestal, up and around towards the seer's shoulder. This transparent curtain is indicated in a series of lighter lines Käsebier spread over the composition. Unlike that in *The Bride*, this veil is unconnected with and unexplained by the woman's attire. The effect appears to be the result of Käsebier's hand interventions, perhaps through the use of glycerin during development.

In a laudatory article on Käsebier, Robert Demachy defended the "obscurity" that had been used to criticize certain Käsebier works.⁷⁰ He implies that more documentary photography, and, though he does not name it as such, what had recently been coined as "straight photography," could not do justice to the full spectrum of emotional expression that was Käsebier's strength as an artist.⁷¹ He considers Käsebier's *Crystal Gazer* as an example. He states that, with this work, "we enter into the imaginative domain."⁷² He explains that critics may fret Käsebier's treatment of the subject—the clearly manipulated aspects in the photograph—but that it is through those very peculiarities of treatment that Käsebier communicates the necessary feeling, in this case of mystery and otherworldly vision. Demachy writes, "Suppress the vaporous trains that float around the sphere whose mirrored depth leads

⁷⁰ Demachy 1906, 290-292. Michaels translates some of the article in her 1985 dissertation, though not the passages quoted here.

⁷¹ Käsebier visited Demachy in September 1905. Hartmann coined the term "straight photography" in 1904, but the phrasing was only taken up by Stieglitz approximately a decade later. Mia Fineman, *Faking It: Manipulated Photography Before Photoshop* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012 in conjunction with exhibition at Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), 31; "Straight Photography," *Alfred Stieglitz Collection*, Art Institute of Chicago, <http://media.artic.edu/stieglitz/straight-photography/>.

⁷² "Avec la *Sphère magique* nous pénétrons dans le domaine imaginaire." Demachy, 292.

to hypnosis, and you would only have a woman looking at a ball.”⁷³ He argues that Käsebier allows viewers to enter a moment of visionary intoxication experienced by the woman pictured.⁷⁴ Käsebier aligns not just the viewer, but herself, with the figure here.

Demachy’s article moves into an interview phase. Käsebier reports that part of her practice is “penetrating the soul of [her] sitter,” and she asks rhetorically, “Doesn’t everyone emit particular vibrations?”⁷⁵ Demachy takes up this phrase, about particular vibrations, as a clue to explain Käsebier’s special character, calling her “mystic, almost psychic [or clairvoyant].”⁷⁶

Käsebier is positioned in Demachy’s article as mystic and almost psychic, a medium of sorts. Charlotte Foucher Zarmanian has examined strategies through which female artists made space for themselves in the male-dominated milieus of French Symbolism. She explains the gendered coding of mediums as female, and a history of women using mediumship as a way of achieving a freer and more critically acceptable creativity.⁷⁷ It is, however, a paradoxical strategy. By fitting into notions

⁷³ “Supprimez les traînées vaporeuses qui flottent autour de la sphère dont la profondeur miroitante conduit à l’hypnose, et nous ne verrez plus qu’une femme qui regarde une boule.” Demachy, 292.

⁷⁴ Demachy, 292. “En somme, Käsebier nous fait voir ce que voit la femme penchée—déjà vacillante sous l’étourdissement proche.”

⁷⁵ “. . . enfin a pénétrer dans l’âme de mon modèle. . . . Mais ne dégagent-ils pas, chacun, des vibrations particulières?” Demachy, 292-293. While Käsebier did not speak fluent French, Demachy spoke fluent English. Michaels 1985, 122. Therefore, the quotations by Käsebier in the article could very well be translated from their talks, but they cannot technically be direct quotations from Käsebier.

⁷⁶ Pyne, 55-58, also meditates upon this passage. She translates “mystique, presque voyante” as “a mystic, almost a clairvoyant,” equivalent to my “mystic, almost psychic.” I am trying to match Demachy’s adjectival form. For me, Pyne’s analysis is extremely important but leaves room to analyze in greater depth.

⁷⁷ “Médiumnisme” is a subset of what she labels the transfer (“délégation”) strategy. Charlotte Foucher Zarmanian, *Créatrices en 1900: Femmes artistes en France dans les milieux symbolistes* (Paris: Mare & Martin, 2015), 134-158.

of feminine receptivity and sensitivity, framed as translators or recorders rather than originators, women-as-medium relinquished some claim to personal artistic generation. A poignant, though not precise, example of this is Pamela Colman Smith. She and Käsebier both studied at Pratt with Dow and both exhibited at Stieglitz's Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession, or 291.⁷⁸ Käsebier even made a portrait of Smith (Fig. 25).⁷⁹ Smith created groundbreaking images for the highly influential Rider-Waite tarot deck. However, the traditional name for the deck, Rider-Waite, does not include her name. Scholar-mystic A. E. Waite undermined Smith's creative role by suggesting that he had dictated the complex imagery, while she simply illustrated the concepts under his "proper guidance." He even claimed to have "spoon-fed" her the well-known High Priestess card (Fig. 26).⁸⁰

While Foucher Zarmanian focuses on the manifestations of mediumship in France, her reference points are highly transatlantic, and other scholars have traced the freeing influence of mediumship for women in the United States.⁸¹ The origins of Spiritualism, a belief system premised on the notion of a penetrable separation between the world of the living and the afterlife, is assigned to the Fox sisters of Rochester, New York. They claimed to have made contact with spirits through

⁷⁸ Their achievement are listed one after another in "Department Notes," *Pratt Institute Monthly* 8, no. 3 (January 1900): 70.

⁷⁹ *Critic* 34, no. 859 (January 1899): 15.

⁸⁰ A. E. Waite, *Shadows of Life and Thought* (Dublin: Bardic Press, 2016), 184-185. "In those days there was a most imaginative and abnormally psychic artist, named Pamela Coleman Smith, who had drifted into the Golden Dawn and loved its Ceremonies—as transformed by myself—without pretending or indeed attempting to understand their sub-surface consequence. It seemed to some of us in the circle that there was a draughtswoman among us who, under the proper guidance, could produce a Tarot with an appeal in the world of art. . . . She had to be spoon-fed carefully over the High Priestess Card."

⁸¹ Robert Laurence Moore traces the parallel phenomenon in American cultural history. Robert Laurence Moore, *In Search of White Crows: Spiritualism, Parapsychology, and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

audible communications. Though eventually discredited, they propelled a larger cultural movement. By 1897, Spiritualism reportedly claimed eight million followers between the United States and Europe⁸²—though for many others, who would not self-identify as devotees, Spiritualism was a feature of their social lives.

Léon Denis, France's "Apostle of Spiritism," argued that women were better at intuition and divination than men, and other prominent figures agreed.⁸³ The overlap with mediumship, and generally the appeal of the occult and esoteric to Symbolism, was the desire to break with a strict positivism and materialism that had seemed overly determinative of the course of the nineteenth century.⁸⁴ Symbolism privileged irrational and interior phenomena over limited, visible reality and over the constraints of standard human perception.

Käsebier's mediumistic inclinations are exemplified in her portraits of Rodin, but they appear earlier in her portrait sitting with Gertrude Simmons Bonin, i.e. Zitkala-Ša. Scholars have identified the "white woman" or *femme fragile* as a one-sided representation of women popular in Symbolist art.⁸⁵ An especially interesting example of this type as treated by Käsebier offers more complexity (Fig. 27). She took a series of images portraying the Sioux activist, writer, and violinist, Zitkala-Ša.

⁸² "Three Forms of Thought; M.M. Mangassarian Addresses the Society for Ethical Culture at Carnegie Music Hall," *New York Times*, November 29, 1897. The other forms considered in this article are Theosophy and Christian Science.

⁸³ Foucher Zarmanian, 135.

⁸⁴ It is important to note, though, that pseudo-science harnessed the experimental techniques of science. See Hélène Valance, *Nocturne: Night in American Art*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), 75 on the relatedness of occult science and burgeoning psychology.

⁸⁵ Vivien Greene, "The Salon de la Rose+Croix: The Religion of Art," in *Mystical Symbolism: The Salon de la Rose+Croix in Paris, 1892-1897* (New York : Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 2017, exh. cat.), 25.

In one of the “white woman” versions, in which the sitter is dressed in a light-colored, high-collared and -waisted Victorian gown and positioned against an obscure light-colored background, Käsebier captures a gaze that is more direct, knowing, and intelligent than typical of the figures in Whistler’s “white woman” arrangements (Fig. 28). Zitkala-Ša’s gaze resembles the dreamy look of the woman in Khnopff’s *I Lock the Door Upon Myself* (1891) (Fig. 29). This gaze—hovering between detached and piercing—articulates the possibility of a more complex subjectivity, one that is also a product of the necessarily reciprocal process between sitter and photographer. Using the asymmetry of Japonisme and a vertical composition reminiscent of a hanging scroll, Käsebier modernizes this work beyond the earlier, Whistler example of the “white woman” type. Zitkala-Ša is pressed further up against the picture plane and nearly leans her back against the image’s left edge. The background is unspecific, highly simplified, and abstract. Paired with Käsebier’s images of Zitkala-Ša in Native American attire, the doubleness of the portraits engages the Symbolist notion of *dédoublement*, two sides of an artistic personality that allowed for a somnambulistic detachment thought requisite for creative production (Fig. 30).⁸⁶ The coincidence of their artistic interests and their first names, Gertrude, may have made Käsebier personally identify with this particular sitter.

While a number of Käsebier’s images have Christian iconography and sentiment, her religious upbringing was eclectic, and her own religious practice as an adult was unorthodox—spiritual rather than doctrinal. Though she jested about being able to read sitters’ minds with the camera, evidence of her prankster personality, she

⁸⁶ Dorra, 7.

at other times claimed sincere psychic abilities.⁸⁷ Her friend from Pratt, Adele Rollins Miller (later Clifton), recounted that Käsebier's earliest psychic experience occurred during her childhood in Colorado, where her father, who ran a saw mill, had moved the family. Young Käsebier played "with an Indian spirit in the woods. . . . She described the Indian girl as a shadow."⁸⁸ Käsebier claimed an affinity with Native Americans based on her childhood in their company in the West, and she took hundreds of images of members of Buffalo Bill's Wild West troop in her New York studio. According to Miller, when Zitkala-Ša came to Käsebier's studio, they fell into conversation and then Käsebier "went into a sort of trance in which she described a landscape of rolling fields and mountains. She saw an Indian chief come down the center of the field and speak in Sioux. She repeated what he said though she herself understood no Sioux. When she finished, Zit Carla Za[sic] was in tears."⁸⁹ Zitkala-Ša explained to Käsebier that she had communicated, without Käsebier herself comprehending, scenes of Zitkala-Ša's childhood and a message from her father that compelled her to return home. While Zitkala-Ša continued to bridge white and Native worlds through a long and complex career, a label on the back of one of Käsebier's photographs is the first recorded appearance of her name written as "Zitkala-Ša," rather than her Christian name,⁹⁰ which lends some legitimacy to the story of revived Native American allegiance that Clifton recounts.

⁸⁷ "Autobiographical Notes by Gertrude Käsebier," Käsebier Papers.

⁸⁸ "From Mrs. Henry Clifton (Adele Miller)," Käsebier Papers.

⁸⁹ "From Mrs. Henry Clifton (Adele Miller)," Käsebier Papers.

⁹⁰ Tadeusz Lewandowski, *Red Bird, Red Power: The Life and Legacy of Zitkala-Ša* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016), 34.

Historically, Käsebier's images of Zitkala-Ša were made during a tumultuous decade of white and Native relations. In 1890, the new religious Ghost Dance movement had culminated in the Wounded Knee Massacre. Even though the Ghost Dance movement was premised on the elimination of whites and the concomitant end of Anglo-American territorial intrusions, displacements, and abuse of tribal people, Käsebier may have responded to the Ghost Dance's underlying spirituality.⁹¹ Integrating Lakotan and Christian beliefs, the Ghost Dance was said to bring the living and dead together. The extent to which the Ghost Dance's radicality was restrained and commodified is revealed by its appearance as an ethnographic show on the Midway of the 1901 Pan-American Exhibition, held in Buffalo.⁹² Furthermore, the Native American as ghost or specter had become a trope in American literature and art.⁹³ The trope expressed the ideology of Native Americans as a "vanishing race."⁹⁴ Indeed, Käsebier's doubled portraits of Zitkala-Ša are reminiscent of the sterile, administrative before and after photographs from Carlisle Indian School, premised on Colonel R. H. Pratt's mission to "kill the Indian, save the man."⁹⁵

⁹¹ She would not be the only white American to be intrigued by the Ghost Dance. An early film, from 1894, records a performed version of the Dance. *Sioux Ghost Dance* (Edison Manufacturing Co., 1894), Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/00694139/>. Using performers from the Buffalo Bill Company, this film could feature some of the same individuals whom Käsebier photographed.

⁹² *Official Catalogue and Guide Book to the Pan-American Exposition* (Buffalo, NY: Charles Ahrhart, 1901), 46.

⁹³ Valance, 128-130. Käsebier's complicity and even furtherance of American imperialism is studied by Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 177-207.

⁹⁴ This is the idea that Anglo-American expansion into the Western United States would lead to the extinction of Native American peoples. See Shannon Egan, "'Yet in a Primitive Condition': Edward S. Curtis's North American Indian," *American Art* 20, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 59.

⁹⁵ See Brenna Farrell, "Photos: Before and After Carlisle," *Radiolab*, WNYC Studios, January 29, 2015, <https://www.wnycstudios.org/story/photos-before-and-after-carlisle>.

Moreover, certain manifestations of Symbolism, and Käsebier's specifically, embraced an aesthetic and rhetoric of ghostliness. Even though such ghostliness is not the dominant note when the entire series of Zitkala-Ša portraits by Käsebier is considered, it may well be at play in the work just examined. The psychic episode attached to the Zitkala-Ša portrait sitting, one of several incidents recollected in the Käsebier papers, offers a particularly American cadence to the syncretic spiritualities feeding Symbolism.

Seeing into the Magic Crystal

The magazine *American Photography* used *Crystal Gazer* as exemplary of what their commentator dubbed “occult line movement,” a compositional structure, which the article illustrates in a diagrammatic black-and-white graphic (Fig. 31).⁹⁶ Outlined by a rectangular black border, a solid black shape loops and curves up and around a similar but smaller white shape. They are separated by a modified S-curve. The two shapes are more bulbous as they bend down (black) or up (white), while their tails taper. The diagram resembles an inverted, distorted yin and yang, pivoted counterclockwise. The occult line movement diagram also resembles an illustration from Dow's *Composition* that simplifies the interplay and balance of dark and light, “Notan,” in a landscape painting by Corot (Fig. 32).⁹⁷ Dow guides his reader: “Claude Lorraine and Corot, in the West, Kakei and Sesshu in the East, owe the light of their

⁹⁶ Elisa Anne Sargent, “Tone Composition: The Adjustment of Value and Value Masses in Space,” *American Photography* 4, no. 4 (April 1910): 198. I have not yet found reference to this designation, “occult line movement” outside this article.

⁹⁷ Dow, 49.

skies and the mystery of their groves to an appreciation of the refinements of Notan.”⁹⁸

In an experimental work created in the company of fellow Photo-Secessionist and friend, Clarence White, Käsebier used a swirl of glycerin developer to create an arabesque that looks even more like the occult line movement diagram than the *Crystal Gazer* does (Fig. 33). The forms in this untitled photograph also resemble those from watercolors by Smith (Fig. 34). Käsebier orchestrated a curled wave of deeper tonality through the selective development of certain image areas by applying solutions of developer mixed with glycerin—the larger the ratio of developer to glycerin, the greater the development—to this passage of her platinum print.⁹⁹ The sketch-like lines that describe the swirl trace the gesture of application. The innovative glycerin developer trend allowed for greater freedom to make manipulations in the process of printing, rather than directly on the negative from which the prints were drawn.¹⁰⁰ It introduced yet another opportunity for photographers to incorporate expressive, painterly brushstrokes into their medium.

While the form of the overall composition might have in some way signaled the occult, the crystal ball motif in Käsebier’s *Crystal Gazer* is itself a source of meaning. Considering the *fin de siècle* in the inaugural issue of *The Art Critic*, Hartmann wrote in anticipation of the coming era: “The rough diamond of our globe will be cut, and recut, ground and polished, until it has the sublime transparency of

⁹⁸ Dow, 31.

⁹⁹ Adrienne Lundgren, “Cyanotype, Platinum, and Palladium Printing: The Siderotype Artistry of Clarence H. White,” in *Clarence H. White and His World: The Art & Craft of Photography, 1895-1925*, Anne McCauley (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018, in conjunction with exhibition at Princeton University Art Museum), 346.

¹⁰⁰ Lundgren, 346.

Japanese crystal balls.”¹⁰¹ This suggests the potency of the crystal ball motif, its exotic and aesthetic valences. Colleen Denney has connected the ubiquitous presence of orbs, bubbles, and globes in Photo-Secessionist works to the iconography of Symbolist paintings by artists including Khnopff (a rare photographic example by Khnopff is *Solitude* [1891] [Fig. 35]) and Odilon Redon, and to the writings of Maeterlinck.¹⁰² There are many Photo-Secessionist examples, including *The Spirit of Photography* (1908) by Anne Brigman, which unites camera, female figure, and orb (Fig. 36). Michael Leja has analyzed the motif’s presence in the more academic American Symbolist oil painting, *The Illusion* (before 1901), by Henry Brown Fuller (Fig. 37). Leja reads the diaphanous veil enveloping the woman’s body in Fuller’s work as “mark[ing] the distinction between the material body and immaterial fantasy.”¹⁰³ While suggesting the presence of something unseen or illusory and a potential passageway between realms, the glass globe, like the veil, functions effectively as a Symbolist motif because its meaning is not overdetermined.

Still, threads of influence can be traced and a context built around the magic crystal’s primacy in Käsebier’s image. A little-known photograph by Käsebier of a woman carrying chrysanthemums may affirm her allegiance to Whistler, Maeterlinck, and a Symbolist ethos (Fig. 38). Hartmann published in *Camera Work* and later in his

¹⁰¹ Sadakichi Hartmann [Critic Fin de Siecle, pseud.], “What is Fin de Siecle?” *The Art Critic* 1, no. 1 (November 1893): 9.

¹⁰² Denney, 222-226. Ulrich F. Keller, “The Myth of Art Photography: An Iconographic Analysis,” *History of Photography* 9, no. 1 (1985): 7, highly critical in his assessment of the repetitiveness and unoriginality of Pictorialism, counted 28 versions of the theme of “crystal balls in the hands of nebulous females” in the oeuvres of Alfred Stieglitz and Clarence White alone.

¹⁰³ Michael Leja, *Looking Askance: Skepticism and American Art from Eakins to Duchamp* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 181.

monographic *Whistler Book* a prose poem about the allegorical pursuit of painting “white chrysanthemums” as a type of aesthetic creed for Whistler.¹⁰⁴ Separately, the popular *Century Magazine* ran an illustrated essay by Maeterlinck, who also wrote for *Camera Work*, entitled “Chrysanthemums.” Maeterlinck created a Symbolist atmosphere, writing: “enter at random one of those crystal museums [hothouses] in which their [the chrysanthemums’] somewhat funereal riches are displayed under the harmonious veil of the days of November.”¹⁰⁵ By this time, Maeterlinck was already recognized in the English-language commentary as a Symbolist. He featured as “Maeterlinck as a Mystic,” a chapter in Arthur Symons’s *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899), a book widely credited for first bringing French Symbolism to English-speaking audiences. In the final illustration accompanying Maeterlinck’s “Chrysanthemums,” a crystal ball floats in a glade of the fluffy white blossoms (Fig. 39). This image, which, along with the article, indicates a wider American audience for Symbolist language and themes than the rarified Photo-Secession, also brings us back to Käsebier and to her *Crystal Gazer*.

An example of the Symbolist impulse in the United States, Käsebier’s work, along with its context and reception, reveal a curiosity about psychic, unseen forces and point to the potential of Pictorialist photography to communicate beyond normally visible realms. Critics Demachy and Roberts agreed that Käsebier principally concerned herself with emotion.¹⁰⁶ Emotions straddle invisible and visible

¹⁰⁴ Sadakichi Hartmann, “White Chrysanthemums,” *Camera Work* no. 5 (January 1904): 119-120.

¹⁰⁵ Maurice Maeterlinck, “Chrysanthemums,” *Century Magazine* 67, no. 2 (December 1903): 165.

¹⁰⁶ Roberts, 80; Demachy, 290.

realms. As reactions to thoughts or feelings, they are interior, fleeting, and intangible. However, even beyond their physiological reality in the brain, un-seeable by unaided human vision, emotions can also be communicated through various, apparent visual cues. At the most universal and basic level, these cues encompass expressions and gestures. Käsebier managed to communicate modulations and ambiguities of human emotion, and she did not limit herself to a straightforward record of likeness or mundane transcription or terrestrial fact. With *The Bat*, she maintained her focus on emotionality, its seen and unseen components, while also entering into a place of deeper fantasy.

The Bat as Femme Fatale

The Bat depicts a nude woman in a rocky landscape (Fig. 40). Käsebier situated her at the top left of the image, her arms outstretched, holding up behind her body a black veil that suggests the nocturnal creature's membranous wings and the bony armature over which the animal's thin skin expands. Her height spans over two-thirds of the entire length of the picture, and "her" space equates to about one-third of the composition's. Bat-like ears adorn the top of her head (maybe handmade additions or a piece of costuming), and they mark the upper frame of the image. A cloth crests the crown of the woman/bat's head and streams down vertically to just below the soles of her feet. Her pose is stiff—her knees and elbows are rigid. Her hips jut to the left. With her pointed left foot, she seems to balance on, almost hover above, the earthy, pebbled ground. Käsebier created this hovering effect with a lack of clearly stable footing and the angle at which her model's heel is raised. The right leg and foot fade and then disappear into shadow.

The Bat's long dark hair, which flows vertically over her right breast, is an echo of the cape behind her. In general, though, the dark fabric sets off the woman's lighter skin in the mode of Franz Von Stuck's *The Sin* (1893), a reproduction of which Stieglitz had hanging in his apartment during a period when Käsebier photographed his wife and daughter (Fig. 41).¹⁰⁷ Two natural elements in more middle gray tones frame the figure's portion of the composition. A branch below her feet marks the upper reaches of a rocky, dirt and twig-filled foreground that spills forward, tilted towards the picture plane. The outer edge of her cape abuts a boulder and contours to its outline. Käsebier seems to have manipulated the boulder's lichen rock face to appear flatter in relation to the picture plane. The general effect of the composition is shallow, especially for a landscape scene. This lends it a feeling of confrontation, an effect which is bolstered by the expansiveness of the figure's wingspan and her slight forward lean, shoulders pitched beyond her pelvis. The delicate balance implied by the pose adds a touch of fragility, a marker—or perhaps masquerade—of the vulnerability with which Käsebier imbued her threatening femme fatale figure.

The Bat is a dark counterpart to *The Manger*. It is its opposite in many ways. Its wild outdoor setting opposes the structured interior barn-boarded space of *The Manger*. Its darkness and black cape contrast *The Manger*'s light, blonde tonalities and white veil. The expansive angularity of *The Bat*'s body language is dissimilar to the posture of *The Manger* figure, who is protectively enclosed around the infant bundle. And the imbalance of *The Bat*'s tenuous tiptoe stance contrasts the stability of

¹⁰⁷ Katherine Hoffman, *Stieglitz: A Beginning Light* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 187.

the woman's seated, triangular positioning in *The Manger*. Both images were posed by Käsebier's female friends. *The Manger* features artist Frances Delehanty; *The Bat* shows Jane Felix White. But despite Käsebier's skill as an incisive and sensitive portraitist, neither is intended to portray an individual as a portrait would. Rather, they stand for two archetypes of woman, and Käsebier presents them in a Symbolist language.

Prints of *The Bat* are object lessons in the variations possible within and among photographic processes. Käsebier printed the image in gelatin silver, platinum, and gum bichromate. A gelatin silver print, a process known for its crispness and precision,¹⁰⁸ offers the greatest clarity and level of detail, but it already shows the artist's interventions beyond the selection, arrangement, and framing of the composition. There are expressive markings at the juncture of rock and cape, a clear example of hand-working; Käsebier perhaps drew these into the negative. The surface of the boulder possesses an un-naturalistic quality with its oddly iridescent glow and amoebic form. This was not intended as a finished print; it is unsigned and markings on the verso indicate croppings to be made. In this gelatin silver print, one can easily distinguish the drapes and folds of the fabric pooling by the woman's toes. Tracking such elements in other iterations of the *The Bat* reveal significant differentiations.

Stieglitz owned a platinum version of the print, now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Fig. 42). It resembles the gelatin silver version, but the detail begins

¹⁰⁸ "Gelatin Silver Print," *Alfred Stieglitz Collection*, Art Institute of Chicago, <http://media.artic.edu/stieglitz/gelatin-silver-print/>. Though in common use since the 1870s, platinum printing became more popular in the Stieglitz circle in the 1920s and 1930s, suggesting a later date for this print and/or its unfinished state. Käsebier is known to have printed photographs from older negatives, as she did for the 1910 Albright Art Gallery show, the final Photo-Secessionist exhibition (Michaels, 134).

to blur. No longer are the individual folds of the fabric visible. The outlines of the boulder blend more subtly into the background. The details of the face begin to dissipate into broader areas of tone and shade—bringing it closer to the sinister contrast of body (bathed in light) and face (darkened by shadow) seen in Stuck’s *The Sin*, Tanner’s *Salome*, and Redon’s *La Mort* (Fig. 43).¹⁰⁹

Käsebier was a master of the platinum printing, also known as platinotype. She, like many of her contemporaries, manipulated their platinotypes considerably, through chemical toning for color effects, the application of glycerin to selectively restrain development, and the addition of secondary materials, such as watercolor, gouache, colored pencil, charcoal, or crayon, to alter the image.¹¹⁰ Platinum was a flexible medium capable of diverse color results: “here very warm brown tones, there some very fine gray, there the strikingly beautiful blacks of engraving.”¹¹¹ Puyo, noting the process’ popularity among American photographs on view in Paris, commented on its “certain veiled and greyish effects.”¹¹² The platinum printing process uses a solution of platinum and iron, sensitive to light, coated onto the paper. The solution seeps into the support, which lends the image the matt quality and the

¹⁰⁹ See Tanner chapter. William J. Naef, *Fifty Pioneers of Modern Photography: The Collection of Alfred Stieglitz* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art in association with Viking Press, 1978), 391, notes that Käsebier also inscribed a charcoal border around the edges of this photograph. This recalls the unexplained outlines Tanner made around the perimeters of paintings including *Salome*.

¹¹⁰ Vo and Stulik 2011, 2.

¹¹¹ “Comme dans l’exposition précédente [a show of American women photographers organized by Francis Benjamin Johnson, in which Käsebier also participated], les épreuves sont, en très grande majorité, tirées sur papiers au platine; elles sont cependant d’aspect extrêmement varié: ici tons bruns très chauds, là des gris très fins, là des noirs de gravure remarquablement beaux: je crois que les artistes américains tirent de ce procédé toute la quintessence.” Etienne Wallon, “E.[sic] Holland Day et la Nouvelle École Américaine au Photo-Club,” *Le Photogramme* 5, no. 6 (June 1901): 103.

¹¹² Puyo, 122.

soft, often velvety texture of the paper on which it has been developed. World War I embargos on metal inflated the price of platinum, making the practice of this method unsustainable, but, in the decades before the war, Pictorialists fully embraced it.¹¹³

Finally, several gum bichromate printings of *The Bat* present another spectrum of expression. Among them are the prints held by the Art Institute of Chicago and the Musée Rodin. The Art Institute's departs most dramatically from the gelatin silver and platinum prints already reviewed (Fig. 44). It is the largest of the prints and therefore would have required Käsebier make an enlargement of a negative. The granular texture of the paper support is highly evident in the speckled passages around her arms and on the ground beneath. Käsebier significantly reduced the range from light to dark and the level of detail in this print. This all contributes to the assertiveness of the object's surface quality. The overall tone is deeper and few of the twigs or stones in the foreground are distinguishable. The overall effect is not only darker, but broader, simplified, and abstract. Käsebier articulated the form of the boulder itself differently here; it enters from the right frame of the picture as a diagonal mass, rather than a floating form.

The version which Käsebier sent to the sculptor Rodin, an artist whom she deeply admired, resists some of the extremity of simplification in the Art Institute print (Fig. 45). The boulder face in this case resembles the drifting orbs of Redon's dream-like iconography. It is a brighter mass enveloped by and suspended in the bone or carbon black pigmentation of the darkest passages. The edge of the figure's black cape has lost definition, and the stream of darkness it creates with the midground

¹¹³ "Platinum Print," *Alfred Stieglitz Collection*, Art Institute of Chicago, <http://media.artic.edu/stieglitz/platinum-print/>.

bends and sweeps underfoot. The multiple mats to which Käsebier mounted this print emphasize the art object as such.

Pictorialists adored the suggestive effects possible with gum bichromate printing. To print with this technique, the artist applies light-sensitive gum arabic combined with pigment(s) (options include carbon [bone] black, lamp black, umbers, or burnt sienna) to a paper support, which is then exposed to light while in contact with the negative. Following exposure, practitioners wash the print in warm baths to release the coating in unexposed areas.¹¹⁴ By softening the gum arabic, the baths also permitted manipulations to be made to the print directly. The painterly, watercolor, or pastel effects of gum bichromates are notable. Variations between the gum bichromate versions of *The Bat* can be attributed to multiple factors or a combination of them. These factors include how Käsebier applied the pigmented coating (her brushwork technique), the type of paper she applied it to, and any manipulations she made in the gum during development.¹¹⁵

The diversity and flexibility in Käsebier's technique, seen through the silver gelatin, platinum, and gum bichromate iterations of *The Bat* (as in *The Heritage of Motherhood*), points to an interest in surface and the work as object that align her output with the priorities of Symbolism. Her granddaughter, Mina Turner, remembered her grandmother's studio:

There was the faint acidic smell of chemicals over everything—stone bowls with pestles, Bottles with wonderfully colorful crystalized chemicals, jars of camels hair brushes—used in coating special papers—and in manipulating prints—granny didn't do much of this, believing that the negative should be perfect—then a straight print made . . . manipulating a print was covering up a

¹¹⁴ "Gum Bichromate Print," *Alfred Stieglitz Collection*, Art Institute of Chicago, <http://media.artic.edu/stieglitz/gum-bichromate-print/>.

¹¹⁵ Norris et al., 7.

bad job—but she experimented with every medium and technique she could learn about.¹¹⁶

While Käsebier would have had to make her own gum bichromate preparations, commercial platinum papers were available. However, Turner's reminiscence suggests that Käsebier was well versed in the process of coating a range of papers for herself.¹¹⁷ Käsebier had in fact felt compelled to study with a chemist in Germany soon after adopting the medium of photography, recognizing the importance of understanding how to work adeptly with the materials of her chosen profession. Turner's quote highlights Käsebier's experimentalism, but it also reveals a degree of ambivalence on Käsebier's part vis-à-vis the manipulation of prints. This ambivalence though has more to do with the era when Turner probably recorded her recollections, a time when straight photography had risen to prominence, than it has to do with Käsebier's actual practice.

Stieglitz did not include *The Bat* in *Camera Work*. He may have already objected to the evident hand-working. Or perhaps it would have occasioned too great dissonance to publish such a confrontational nude by the woman known in the Photo-Secessionist circle as "Granny" (due to her matronly bearing and comparatively older age) and whose identity Stieglitz had delimited by the publication of rather ethereal images of motherhood and female virtue. *Camera Work*, as had *Camera Notes* before

¹¹⁶ "Mina Turner at Käsebier's Studios," Käsebier Papers. A heated debate ensued in the Stieglitz circle about manipulated print. While Käsebier may not have been fond of "touching up" her sitters' appearances, she certainly manipulated prints in ways that ultimately misaligned her with the trajectory of straight photography on which Stieglitz set course.

¹¹⁷ In a study at the Getty Institute, many of her platinum prints revealed the surprising presence of mercury. While commercial platinum prints with mercury were available, Käsebier probably added it to the developer herself, because it allows for greater control over the final product. Vo and Stulik, 7.

it, did feature full-length female nudes at times, as they helped to establish photography's criteria as high art on the level of painting. However, these images were all by male photographers (Steichen, Demachy, Frank Eugene, Puyo, R  n  e Le B  gue, William B. Dyer, and W. W. Renwick) until Brigman's introduction to *Camera Work* in 1909.¹¹⁸ Due to the orientation of the depicted women's bodies or their gazes, none of these men's works reached the level of directness of *The Bat*. Particularly striking is the organization of the issue of *Camera Work* devoted to Steichen, in which female nudes—demure in that they are bathed in deep shadow and turned away from the lens—alternate with images of fully clothed and identified male artists: first a self-portrait of Steichen as painter and then a portrait of the French sculptor Albert Bartholom   (Figs. 46-47).¹¹⁹ This juxtaposition shows the Photo-Secessionist perpetuation of the idea of woman as allegorical sign and as vehicle of expression for male imagination.

Another reason that Stieglitz may have hesitated to publish *The Bat* in *Camera Work* was the question of authorship. On the verso of Stieglitz's copy of *The Bat*, he recorded that Clarence White and Käsebier "did this together" and that "it was his [White's] idea."¹²⁰ White's influence may certainly play a role in the photograph (as noted, the two experimented together with the selective glycerin development process), but it was probably at the level of encouragement and setting rather than execution. Rather than reiterating anything in White's pre-existing oeuvre, *The Bat* seems to foreshadow his *The Pipes of Pan* (1905) and 1909 female nudes in a

¹¹⁸ By this point, Stieglitz had hitched his brand of modernism to the exhibition at 291 of female nudes by European, male avant-garde masters.

¹¹⁹ *Camera Work* no. 2 (April 1903), <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uva.x002129489>.

¹²⁰ Naef, 391.

landscape (Figs. 48-49). *The Bat* does speak, however, to Käsebier's admiration for Davies, to whose earlier painting *Nixie* (ca. 1895) *The Bat* bears resemblance (Fig. 50). Most tellingly, Käsebier consistently exhibited *The Bat* as her own—in Leeds in 1902, Hamburg in 1903, Dresden in 1904, Pittsburgh in 1904, and Newark in 1911.¹²¹ White also exhibited works at all five of these exhibitions, suggesting again that the degree of his participation in the photograph's creation was not significant enough to complicate the assignment of exclusive authorship to Käsebier.

Perhaps Stieglitz's note, which is undated, grew from his own experience photographing female nudes in authentic collaboration with White. However, most of those nudes—which date later, to around 1907—differ significantly in composition and mood from Käsebier's assertive female presence. White and Stieglitz's subjects are positioned as passive and are arranged more classically. There is none of the confrontational bearing of *The Bat*. Even in the most formally radical and erotic shots by Stieglitz and White from this time, the subject averts her gaze by turning her cheek, inviting the viewer's gaze (Fig. 51). When the model holds a cloak behind her

¹²¹ Naef, *ibid.* As no. 798 *The Bat* (medium unspecified) in "International Invitation Exhibition of Pictorial Photographs," in *Leeds Catalogue of the Fifteenth Annual Exhibition of Pictures in Connection with the Yorkshire Union of Artists* (Leeds, England: Tweetie & Co Printers, 1902, exh. cat.), 79, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Digital Collections, Pictorialist Photography Exhibition Catalogs, 1891-1914, <http://library.metmuseum.org/record=b1462930>; as no. 236 *The Bat*, platinum, in *Zehnte Internationale Jahres-Ausstellung von Kunstphotographien* (Hamburg, Germany: Lütcke & Wulff), published in conjunction with exhibition at Hamburger Kunsthalle, <http://library.metmuseum.org/record=b1726193>; as no. 108 *The Bat*, medium unspecified, in *Photographische Ausstellung im Park der grossen Kunstaussstellung zu Dresden* (Dresden, Germany: Grosse Kunstaussstellung, 1904, exh. cat.), <http://library.metmuseum.org/record=b1206128>; as no. 5 *The Bat* in *A Collection of American Pictorial Photographs as arranged by the Photo-Secession and exhibited under the auspices of the Camera Club of Pittsburgh* (Pittsburgh, PA: Carnegie Institute, 1904, exh. cat.), <http://library.metmuseum.org/record=b1165209>; and as no. 9 *The Bat*, medium unspecified, *Modern Photography* (Newark, NJ: Free Public Library, 1911, exh. cat.), 3.

back, it drapes and falls gracefully over her shoulders and soft, curved limbs. Throughout the series, she is centered in the frame. When a black veil is introduced, it serves as a tantalizingly sheer barrier in the classicizing realm of Symbolism characteristic of Fuller's *Illusions* rather than the eerie backdrop of Käsebier's night scene (Fig. 52). In the gum bichromate versions of the *The Bat*, the dark pigment behind the woman begins to suggest the entrance to the recesses of a cave, or even a vaginal opening, at which the figure stands as forbidding guardian. This sort of woman at passageway motif can furthermore suggest the move from external reality to interior subjectivity (a favorite Symbolist conceit); the figure acts as mediumistic guide.¹²²

The Bat is tied in, as well, to Käsebier's friendship with F. Holland Day, with whom she was cordially corresponding by April 1899, writing of her husband's attitude and her pride in working: "Mr. Käsebier says if I do not stop working so hard he will put his foot down. But to work is such a joy."¹²³ Day called on Käsebier during his visits to Newport, where she spent the summer months.¹²⁴ Like White's compositions, Day's *The Vision (Orpheus Scene)* (1907) seems to look back to Käsebier's *The Bat* in the arrangement and topography of the landscape and the nude figure within it (Fig. 53). Day's is a double exposure, in which he explores the popular Symbolist motif of the ancient Greek hero Orpheus. Mythic poet and

¹²² Valance, 81. She observes the gendered nature of such passageways in American painting of this moment: "These [anonymous, allegorical] female presences, which are supposed to serve as intermediaries between the external landscape represented on the canvas and a suggested interiority, assume a role equivalent to spiritualist mediums, opening the way for an experience dominated by darkness."

¹²³ Quoted in Michaels, 52.

¹²⁴ Michaels, 55.

musician, Orpheus inspired Symbolist meditations on the nature and tragedy of creativity. In the myth, lustful, jealous women followers of Dionysus dismembered Orpheus and floated his severed head down the river, as pictured in Rose+Croix exhibitor Jean Delville's disturbingly peaceful *The Death of Orpheus* (1893) (Fig. 54). The double exposure of *The Vision* allowed Day to superimpose an image of the poet's head on the rocky outcropping in his landscape, foreshadowing Orpheus's fate—a fate reminiscent, also, of John the Baptist's.¹²⁵ Day, owner of a Boston publishing firm as well as a photographer, was responsible for disseminating the American edition of Oscar Wilde's *Salome*, with its famous Aubrey Beardsley drawings. Day's publishing feats were important to his friend Käsebier. Even many years later, the photographer's granddaughter fondly recalled flipping through back issues of *The Yellow Book*, also published in America by Day's firm, in her grandmother's attic; she remembered being fascinated by drawings by Beardsley in *The Yellow Book's* pages as well.¹²⁶

The femme fatale of Wilde's *Salome* resonates with Käsebier's *The Bat*.¹²⁷

The fabric behind the figure's back in the Käsebier photograph underscores this, as it hearkens to Wilde's text's famous Dance of the Seven Veils. Again, a memory of

¹²⁵ June Hargrove, "Against the Grain: The Sculpture of Paul Gauguin in the Context of his Contemporaries," *Current Issues in 19th-Century Art*, Van Gogh Studies 1, ed. Chris Stolwijk (Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum/Waanders Publishers), 78 has remarked on Gauguin's participation "in the taste for masks, which grew with the fascination for representations of the severed head, propagated by the symbolist movement." The severed head of John the Baptist appears in Tanner's *Salome* (ca. 1900).

¹²⁶ "Mina Turner at Gertrude Käsebier's Studio," Käsebier Papers.

¹²⁷ The loose, long hair may also reference traditional images of Mary Magdalene, another complex figure—a repentant prostitute of the New Testament—whose status stands between the "femme fatale" Eve and the Virgin Mary. For more on the complexity of Mary Magdalene's hair and its "immodesty," see Daniel Arasse, "Mary Magdalene's 'Fleece,'" in *Take a Closer Look*, trans. Alyson Waters (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 71-87.

Käsebier's granddaughter is telling. Käsebier walked in on Mina dancing about with a "large chiffon motoring veil . . . making all sorts of gestures to make the veil flutter and float," and encouraged her to continue dancing, even suggesting she pursue professional training.¹²⁸ This anecdote adds another layer to the story, as Käsebier's *The Bat* may be compared to images of the American dancer Loïe Fuller (Figs. 55-56). These connections with Wilde and dance suggest correspondences between Käsebier's *The Bat* and Tanner's *Salome*.

The femme fatale of Käsebier's *The Bat* participates in a "complex archetype." As Jess Sully has argued, scholarship has overplayed fear and hatred as the only factors feeding the femme fatale's reinvigoration in the nineteenth century.¹²⁹ While representations of the femme fatale are certainly, and importantly, symptomatic of anxieties about feminism, the New Woman, disease contagion, and social mobility, they also mark a growing interest in mythology and esotericism, and, when women engage with the material, an opportunity for empowerment. One might note, for example, Sarah Bernhardt's *Fantastic Inkwell (Self-Portrait as Sphinx)* (1880) (Fig. 57).¹³⁰ Bernhardt portrayed her sphinx-self with bat wings sprouting behind her shoulders. She bedecked her self-portrait with epaulets picturing the masks of tragedy and comedy, an affirmation of her career as an actor.

¹²⁸ "Mina Turner Dancing," Käsebier Papers.

¹²⁹ Jess Sully, "Challenging the Stereotype: The Femme Fatale in Fin-de-Siècle Art and Early Cinema," in *The Femme Fatale: Images, Histories, Contexts*, ed. by Helen Hanson and Catherine O'Rawe (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 46-51.

¹³⁰ Foucher Zarmanian, 169, points to Bernhardt's *Fantastic Inkwell* as an example of the attraction that the bat held as a melancholic animal and potential vampiress or femme fatale, and Bernhardt's own complex and transformational identity.

Sully finds in Symbolist, as compared to academic, representations particularly ambiguous manifestations of the difficult type. Setting *The Bat* in similar locales to White's *The Pipes of Pan* and Day's *Orpheus*, Käsebier conjured an ancient, mythical environment of her own. Käsebier entered into a strain of the femme fatale circulating in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century cultural production that is not only perverse and erotic, but also powerful and even holy. In the Photo-Secession, the complete intermingling of divinity, spirituality, female sexuality, and nature is not fulfilled in Käsebier's oeuvre, but is taken up by the younger Photo-Secessionist, Brigman. While never an outspoken advocate for women's rights, Käsebier's professionalism, productivity, encouragement and mentorship for other women photographers, support for dress reform, and criticality about the institution of marriage speak to burgeoning feminist values.¹³¹ A Symbolist language allowed Käsebier to explore the femme fatale trope and its multivalent, ambiguous connotations, and to open a space, in the world of *The Bat*, for the potential of a more assertive, if also dangerous, female presence.

Despite the ways in which *The Bat* is defiant of social norms, it also fulfills an ideal type of aesthetic beauty presented by Hartmann in the pages of *Camera Work*. In the second issue of the journal that Stieglitz devoted to Käsebier's work, Hartmann expounded upon the "Elongation of Form." Though he referenced the aesthetic appeal of inanimate long and thin objects, the topic of the text is, ultimately, the female body. The type is "tall and slender, her build is firm and round . . . an increased length (the twenty-two inches that Beardsley considered essential for the beauty of the upper

¹³¹ Michaels 1992, 154-156; Pyne, 18.

leg) from hip to knee.”¹³² Hartmann’s text involves nationalistic, evolutionary rhetoric about American women and the “improvement” of the “race”: “Already the American-born children of emigrants of the very lowest class show certain traits of refinement that one would seek in vain in their parents.”¹³³ Even when nature failed to endow real women with long, slim lines and a willowy stature, he praised artists, historical and contemporary, who attenuated the body in their work. To such stylization, he attached the achievement of the spiritual over the material: “the more we come to understand what form really is—that it is not merely for the senses, but that it may become expressive to the spirit—the better we will like this peculiar elongation of form.”¹³⁴ The text itself is replete with misogynistic, objectifying language on the inferiority of various female bodily characteristics, but the article merits note for the direct connection Hartmann establishes between the female body and the Symbolist dialectic of material and immaterial, spiritual and sensual, read through visual form. Cognizance of this notion of the body as expressive of the quintessential Symbolist dialectic perhaps informed Käsebier’s decision to gift a copy of *The Bat* to Auguste Rodin, an artist whom she held in great esteem and who worked in a Symbolist vein.¹³⁵ She met Rodin in September 1905 at Meudon, where he kept a residence, studio, and gardens, and she created an extensive series of portraits from that encounter.

¹³² [Sadakichi Hartmann,] “On the Elongation of Form,” *Camera Work* no. 10 (April 1905): 27.

¹³³ Hartmann, 34.

¹³⁴ Hartmann, 34.

¹³⁵ See Bronwyn A. E. Griffith, “‘Rodin the Illusionist’ and American Photography,” in *Rodin and America: Influence and Adaptation, 1876-1936*, ed. Bernard Barryte and Roberta K. Tarbell (Stanford, CA: Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts, Stanford University in association with Silvana Editoriale, Milan, Italy, 2011, exh. cat.), 251-253.

The Rodin Portraits

Käsebier's portraits of Rodin solidify her Symbolist affiliations. Käsebier felt a deep allegiance to and sympathy with the sculptor. Her images of him typify Symbolist iconography in their emphasis on the head, often isolated and/or silhouetted against dark or light backgrounds (Fig. 58).¹³⁶ This iconography suggested thought by situating "real people in an ideal, far-away world . . . governed by introspection."¹³⁷ In many of her Rodin images, this emphasis on the head is doubled by the artist placing his hand on the head of a portrait bust of his creation (Fig. 59), again alluding to the notion of *dédoublement*.¹³⁸ While behind him swirl elements from his magnum opus *Gates of Hell*, the portrait bust may have held special significance to Käsebier, whose work traversed the more commercial, grounded world of portrait commissions and the more abstracted, emotional arena of "art" photography. These worlds collide and intermingle in the Rodin images. They are both likenesses of the notoriously hard-to-photograph sculptor and entrées to the immaterial Symbolist arena.

In her dealings with Rodin, Käsebier's conception of herself as psychic comes to the fore. She reported being able to perceive that Rodin "had the greatest aura I [she] had ever seen. It stood around him like a halo."¹³⁹ Believers thought that aura, the luminous emanations surrounding a person's body, could be seen by a sufficiently

¹³⁶ One of the most striking examples of this emphasis on the head is by Rodin himself. It is his *The Thought* (1893-1894).

¹³⁷ Denney, 116-117. For Rodin as a Symbolist, see Magdalene Dabrowski, *The Symbolist Aesthetic* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1980, exh. cat.), 17.

¹³⁸ The bust is a portrait of Baron Paul d'Estournelles de Constant.

¹³⁹ "Rodin," Käsebier Papers, 20.

clairvoyant eye. In one of her photographic portraits of Rodin, Käsebier brought out the sculptor's profile from a field of dark pigmentation and made wispy, light markings around the back of his head (Fig. 60). These markings glow as if she were recording for the viewer the aura that she purported to see surrounding him.¹⁴⁰ The markings rhyme with the lines in his stately, white beard and the whitened wisps of hair at his temple. A mist also emerges to the right of Rodin's profile.

The print is a gum bichromate. Käsebier took advantage of the matte density of pigment to establish Rodin's substantial presence. The tonal range of gum bichromate prints tends to be more limited than that of other printing techniques. Light falls in from the right, hitting Rodin's forehead, cheekbones, and the bridge of his nose. The highlights, though, rest in a gray tonality. Käsebier's composition is essentially a stable triangle in shallow space.¹⁴¹ The background is indistinct and undefined, and it is overall comparable to Carrière's portrait of the sculptor (Fig. 61). Käsebier blurred and softened detail overall.

From other portraits, it can be gathered that Käsebier likely photographed Rodin in front of the *Gates of Hell*.¹⁴² Käsebier's articulations around the back of Rodin's head relate to the sweeping gestures Rodin modeled in the doors' vaporous, variously emergent reliefs. There is a bone-like quality to the shape as well, in its rounded hollows, that echoes certain abstract areas of the *Gates* (Figs. 62). The *Gates*

¹⁴⁰ A similar "aura" effect appears in a portrait of hers picturing Robert Henri. Despite his Ashcan School Realism, Henri was inclined to Spiritualism, psychometry, and clairvoyance. See Charles Colbert, *Haunted Visions: Spiritualism and American Art* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 233-249.

¹⁴¹ It has some of the sense of the gravitas and even perhaps haughty attitude that Rodin had controversially portrayed in his sculpted portrait of Balzac.

¹⁴² Pierre Choumoff's archival photographs from ca. 1917 help place some of Käsebier's images more specifically.

of Hell possess an ossified look, especially in plaster—how Käsebier would have encountered them—due to the matte, white coloring.

A leading Theosophist's publication illustrated aura and described it as "clearly visible to the clairvoyant as a mass of faintly luminous violet-grey mist" (Fig. 63).¹⁴³ Believers also claimed that there was photographic proof of the existence of auras, or aura-like things that went by various names.¹⁴⁴ Parapsychologist Hippolyte Baraduc produced some of these earliest photographs of this sort (Fig. 64). He characterized the soul as "luminous vibration"¹⁴⁵—a description that recalls Käsebier's rhetorical question from the Demachy interview: "Doesn't everyone emit particular vibrations?"¹⁴⁶ One proponent of the existence of aura proclaimed:

Of course, materialistic scientists—who are far from being gifted with clairvoyant vision, since materialistic tendencies destroy psychic facilities, and who consequently cannot see any man's or woman's aura—boldly denied its existence *in toto*. But here comes the photographic camera—this little instrument that cannot lie and which has already revealed so many things which were imperceptible even with the help of the microscope and telescope.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ Charles Webster Leadbeater, *Man Visible and Invisible: Examples of Different Types of Men as Seen by Means of Trained Clairvoyance* (New York: John Lane, 1903), 128.

¹⁴⁴ These alternate names include "Od."

¹⁴⁵ Hippolyte Baraduc, *The Human Soul. Its Movements, its Lights, and the Iconography of the Fluidic Invisible* (1896; Paris: Librairie internationale de pensée nouvelle, ed. G. A. Mann, 1913), 13, quoted in Nicolas Pethes, "Psychiones: Visual Traces of the Soul in Late Nineteenth-Century Fluidic Photography," *Medical History* 60, no. 3 (July 2016): 334. Baraduc, *L'ame humaine: ses mouvements, ses lumières et l'iconographie* (Paris: G. Carré, 1896), refers to "vibrations lumineuses" (287).

¹⁴⁶ Hartmann also wrote of vibrations in the work of Whistler, an avowed Spiritualist who professed belief in ghosts and spirits. Hartmann described the "vibration of atmosphere," "subtle vibrations," and a "vibrating quality" produced by Whistler's gray tonal ranges and thin application of paint to canvas. It was thought that vibrations resulted from the circulation of ether or "imponderable fluid," and that they coalesced in environments welcoming to numinous entities. Colbert, 244.

¹⁴⁷ A. Marques, *The Human Aura: A Study* (San Francisco: Mercury, 1896), 1.

The status of the camera in this quotation is that of the upmost truth-telling instrument, one that can even get at transcendent truths, those that are normally imperceptible or invisible. Käsebier was not making images to prove the existence of aura. Rather, she was attuned to the appeal of what would normally be thought of as invisible, and she was interested in trespassing the boundaries of the visible world. While the line between fine art photography and parapsychological forms was clear, they were both part of a broader turn-of-the-century visual, specifically photographic, culture.

As discussed above, Käsebier's mediumistic approach to Symbolism related to understandings of women as more sensitive to invisible forces than men. The sitters' vibrations Käsebier talks about are also attached to societal perceptions of women's sensibilities. An 1890 report articulated this idea: "Woman is emotionally more resonant than man. . . . In moments that conspicuously call forth [emotional] energy, one can see her whole bodily form vibrating to the particular chord."¹⁴⁸ When challenged by a connoisseur that Rodin never looked as good in person he did in her pictures, Käsebier retorted: "That is Rodin in the presence of a woman."¹⁴⁹ She thereby identified herself with seeing, clairvoyant, and sensitive women of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and with her own *Crystal Gazer*.

After Rodin's death, Käsebier reported that he came to her in a vision. This is recorded in her papers: "One day a cloud formed within the range of my vision (physic) and Rodin appeared to me. He would disappear then return but always in

¹⁴⁸ Grant Allen, "Women's Intuition," *Forum* 9 (May 1890): 334, quoted in Valance, 80-81. He continues by adding that this "emotional endowment . . . is the basis on which are reared the whole vast superstructures of the artistic, the musical, and the imaginative faculties."

¹⁴⁹ Michaels 1992, 105.

profile. . . . This is to demonstrate to you [Käsebier] that I [Rodin] got that profile picture before I passed away.”¹⁵⁰ Her belief in a spirit plane and the ability to communicate with it engages a zeitgeist of Spiritualism at the time.

Käsebier sent Rodin prints from her studio in New York over time. The “profile picture” in the quote above may refer to an iteration of the image that was the strictest example of a profile shot in her Rodin portfolio (Fig. 58). However, the existence of the lost profile photograph in the collection of the Musée Rodin leads one to believe that Käsebier was likely referring to a version of the “aura” image just examined (Fig. 65). In this instance, however, she printed the image in platinum, which does not accommodate the same type of intervention in the developing process as gum bichromate. The aura-like passage in the photograph considered above does not show through in the platinum print. The background is fractured into hazy blocks more so than it evokes the gestural, curved sculpting by Rodin. The comparison between the images in two photographic mediums indicates the range of Käsebier’s interventions.

Indeed, during a period of about four years, Käsebier made at least 40 prints depicting Rodin, spanning light and dark tonalities and a number of printing processes—gelatin silver interpositives, platinum, platinum processed with mercury, and gum bichromate.¹⁵¹ In certain iterations of the Rodin portrait with bronze bust,

¹⁵⁰ “Rodin,” Autobiographical Notes by Gertrude Käsebier, Käsebier Papers, 20.

¹⁵¹ Eastman Museum identifies their gelatin silvers as interpositives, which assumes that she re-photographed these images to get to a final product. This is likely true of the gelatin silver version of *The Bat* discussed above. This total number does not include negatives. I took an accounting of the print holdings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Museum of Modern Art, Art Institute of Chicago, Eastman Museum, National Gallery of Art, Library of Congress, J. Paul Getty Museum, Musée Rodin, Davis Museum at Wellesley College, Bowdoin College

Käsebier plays with the transparency of the sculpture, making the surfaces evaporate or disintegrate in and around it (Fig. 66). Other images show her substantiating and darkening the form of a pedestal beneath the bust (Figs. 67-68). It was originally a white chair rather than a solid block, as made apparent in comparison with the glass plate (Fig. 69). In yet other images, she bleached out the allover color significantly, and occasionally inscribed the surface with text (Fig. 70). She thereby further pushed on the flatness of the photograph's planar surface and hence object status of the print. Michaels links the great variety in Käsebier's Rodin portraits to Rodin's process of sculpting between materials, moving forms between earth-toned clay, light-colored plaster, white luminous marble, and lustrous bronze.¹⁵² But Käsebier's Rodin prints also evidence and reiterate the same experimental attitude towards photography and the construction of surface presented in other photographs such as *The Heritage of Motherhood* and *The Bat*.

The period between 1870 and 1930, during which Käsebier reached the apex of her career, also marks the high point of the interaction between photography and occultism.¹⁵³ Käsebier's Rodin images resonate with Spiritualism's visual language, which took the form of spirit, or ghost, photography. When they believed in an image's legitimacy, Spiritualists variously attributed the presence of spirits as shrouded or incandescent forms in photographic prints to the sensitive

Museum of Art, Harvard Museums, Toledo Museum, Princeton University Art Museum, and auction houses, based on their online collection pages.

¹⁵² Michaels 1992, 174n38.

¹⁵³ Pierre Apraxine and Sophie Schmit, "Photography and the Occult," in Clément Chéroux, Andreas Fischer, et al., *The Perfect Medium: Photography and the Occult* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005, in conjunction with exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), 15.

photographer—the photographer as medium—and the sensitivity of the plate beyond the limits of normal human perception—medium as medium. A classic text of the spirit photography genre, *The Veil Lifted: Modern Developments in Spirit Photography*, used the veil as a metaphor for the penetrable separation between the world of the living and afterlife.¹⁵⁴

Though aesthetic in motivation, and not intended as “proof” in the sense of true spirit photographs, Käsebier’s pictures of Rodin touch select conventions of the genre. The prototypical spirit photograph would picture two figures: one the sitter, one the visiting spirit (Fig. 71). The latter is often white in color, robed, shrouded, semi-transparent, veiled, or misty, a convention that Käsebier, in a way, mirrored with her depictions of Rodin with the bust.¹⁵⁵ The notorious William H. Mumler created the most famous singular example of spirit photography in the United States. It pictured Mary Todd Lincoln visited by the ghost of her husband (Fig. 72). It is curious that Käsebier went on to re-photograph a nineteenth-century carte-de-visite of Abraham Lincoln, and enlarge, print, and work these re-photographs to perhaps an obsessive degree. She made at least 35 prints and negatives of this image (Figs. 73-74).¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ *The Veil Lifted: Modern Developments in Spirit Photography*, ed. by Andrew Glendinning (London: Whittaker & Co., 1894). This association of the veil and a deathly separation is one facet of the image in W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1903), 210-211.

¹⁵⁵ The placement of Rodin’s hand on the head of the bust resembles the same hand position of a “controlling spirit” pictured by William H. Mumler in the 1870s.

¹⁵⁶ “Acquisitions to the Museum 1993,” *Record of the Art Museum Princeton University* 53, no. 1 (1994), 72. The Eastman Museum holds two works entitled *Copy of Portrait of Abraham Lincoln* (1861), gelatin silver negatives, made ca. 1910, 10 x 8 in., attributed jointly to Christopher S. German, the original photographer, and Käsebier.

Beyond the Rodin works' dialogue with Theosophical and Spiritualist notions, Käsebier's portraits are telling because they picture a sculptor who, by the early twentieth century, was already affiliated with Symbolism.¹⁵⁷ Käsebier owned Frederick Lawton's biography, *The Life and Work of Rodin* (1906); she placed a copy in the waiting room of her studio.¹⁵⁸ Lawton described Camille Mauclair's defense of Rodin from accusations of literariness: "He confessed him to be a symbolist, who did not distinguish matter from the ideas it engendered."¹⁵⁹ In an important series of interviews with the art critic Paul Gsell, Rodin expanded upon this approach to art: "Everything is idea, everything is symbol."¹⁶⁰ He regretted that in society today, "mankind believes itself able to do without Art. It does not want to meditate, to contemplate, to dream."¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ See Antoinette Le Normand-Romain, *Rodin* (2013; New York: Abbeville, 2014), 219-228 for a section on "Symbolist Marbles," wherein she considers the suggestive titling of Rodin's works and the Symbolist circles with which he was associated, and 290-335, for a chapter on "Drifting Toward Symbolism in the Portrait."

¹⁵⁸ Michaels, 105-106.

¹⁵⁹ Frederick Lawton, *The Life and Work of Auguste Rodin* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1906), 231. "Seeking, however, to understand every state of the soul, the symbolist came to be able to translate all and every one, by their effects on the body, which accounted for the eroticism of some of his subjects." Criticism around Rodin took on a Symbolist refrain. See Dominique Jarrassé, "Art Between Luminous Fluidity and Expressionist Shading: Defining Symbolist Sculpture Using Modeling," in *Light and Obscurity in Symbolism*, ed. Rosina Neginsky and Deborah Cibelli (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 309; Susan Martis, "Light, Obscurity and Symbolist Themes in American Sculpture, 1890-1920," in *Light and Obscurity*, 327; and Ilene Susan Fort, "The New Symbolism," *American Masters: Sculpture from Brookgreen Gardens*, ed. Robyn R. Salmon (Murrells Inlet, SC: 1999), 7, who writes, "Auguste Rodin was the most famous sculptor to exemplify the late romantic philosophy of Symbolism." I revisit Rodinisme and Symbolism in the George Grey Barnard chapter.

¹⁶⁰ Auguste Rodin, *Art: Conversations with Paul Gsell*, trans. Jacques de Caso and Patricia B. Sanders (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 75.

¹⁶¹ Rodin, 4. Arthur Symons, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, rev. ed. (1899; New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1919), 10 emphasized Rodin's attachment to Symbolism for Anglo-American audiences, as Symons introduced the first chapter of a revised edition with Rodin's sculpture of Balzac: "a novelist is represented as a dreamer."

When Käsebier joked, as she was wont to do, that she could read people's minds with her camera, she evinced both a familiarity with mediumship, if also a lightness, characteristic of her jocular personality, about the nature of reality and the gullibility of friends, family, and clients.¹⁶² She was also able to laugh about ghosts. Her papers recount a story of her friend F. Holland Day, dressing up in a sheet or robe and scaring members of her household.¹⁶³ Nevertheless, there is a true sense of gravity and meaningfulness in her dealings with Rodin.

When, in the 1930s, Walter Benjamin started publishing about his important concept of aura as the spatial and temporal uniqueness of a work of art, he expressed a disdain for photography post-1880, works that "simulate" an aura, rather than truly possess it.¹⁶⁴ He would likely critique Käsebier on this premise. However, it is crucial to remember Käsebier's historical positioning, contextualized conceptions of aura,

¹⁶² "Autobiographical Notes by Gertrude Käsebier," Käsebier Papers, typed page 28: "I had a man one day whom I was photographing . . . who was sort of wooden. . . . I said to this man 'I can read people's minds with my camera. I discovered a criminal that way one time.' He gave a great leap, grabbed his hat and beat it. And I have never seen him since. He was a lawyer."

¹⁶³ Costume called an "angel's robe" in letter from Joseph Keiley to Stieglitz, September 1, 1899, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, Collection of American Literature, The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT, quoted in Michaels 1985, 52; and as letter from Keiley to Stieglitz, September 2 1899, Beinecke, in Patricia J. Fanning, *Through an Uncommon Lens: The Life and Photography of F. Holland Day* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008), 116. This story is corroborated, with some variation in detail, in "Mrs. Henry Clifton (Adele Miller)," Käsebier Papers, in which Day is referred to the "publisher" and his outfit includes a "sheet" and a "turban." Adele Miller's reminiscences also include a humorous story of the "haunted" Newport house, wherein Käsebier's own groans—emitted as she was being crushed by a grandfather clock—are confused with those of the supposed spirit-inhabitant of the house.

¹⁶⁴ Walter Benjamin, "Little History of Photography" (*Die literarische Welt*, September-October 1931), trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter, in *Selected Writings, Vol. 2, 1927-1934*, trans. Rodney Livingstone et al., ed. by Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press or Harvard University Press, 1999), 517. Indeed, he may have had Theosophical notions of aura in mind. See Miriam Bratu Hansen, "Benjamin's Aura," *Critical Inquiry* 34, no. 2 (Winter 2008): 336.

and the circulation of Spiritualism and forms of esoteric thought during this period. Such notions and their visual manifestations enrich our understanding of American fine art photography circa 1900, its investment in picturing the invisible, and its Symbolist resonances.

Conclusion: Symbolist Pictorialist and Professional

Käsebier chose to copyright her Rodin images, showing her business savvy and underscoring her professionalism.¹⁶⁵ Practicalities such as this made her a pioneer amongst women photographers entering seriously into careers. Late in her life, in 1930, an interviewer remarked that Käsebier “rejoices in the modern freedom of woman.”¹⁶⁶ Quoting the artist, this interviewer captured a tension of Käsebier’s Symbolism: “‘My artistic friends,’ she said, ‘lost interest in me because I charged a price for my work’” but, she continued, “‘anything artistic must have a value.’”¹⁶⁷ Her pragmatic attitude, on the surface, is incongruent with Symbolist concerns for the intangible and the desire to escape the materialism of modernity. Yet, neither Symbolists nor Pictorialists managed to free themselves from the mundanities of commercialism and capitalism, despite an aesthetic desire to do so—to flee into private thoughts or away into distant fantasies.¹⁶⁸ This adds another dimension to the dialectic of materiality and immateriality definitive of Symbolist art. Käsebier’s

¹⁶⁵ The copyright registrations are in the Gertrude Käsebier Papers, 1852-1934, MssCol 4476, Manuscript and Archives Division, New York Public Library.

¹⁶⁶ Walter Chambers, “Called Greatest Woman Photographer Gertrude Kasebier Is Now a Cripple,” *New York Telegram*, January 25, 1930, 2.

¹⁶⁷ Chambers, 2. “Value” here might also play on the word for the lightness or darkness of an image, as the orchestration of tints and shades are the essence of black and white photography.

¹⁶⁸ Keller 1984, 249-275.

career, in this way, not only reveals the tensions of being a woman with career aspirations, but also of being a practicing artist wishing to “wander about and dream and dream” who yet eventually has to wake up.

In moving between printing processes, and sometimes visibly altering the surface of her images, Käsebier displayed an interest in medium that aligns with Heller’s proposition on Symbolism and the structure of surface regarding the primacy of materiality alongside the content of ideas. This helps clarify Käsebier’s Symbolist impulse. Her images communicate prominent Symbolist themes: anguish, death, emotionality, thoughtfulness, and singular artistic genius. Käsebier granted the people in her images a depth of emotionality. Her treatment of women and their emotional lives does not altogether defy the typing that dominated Symbolist art, but an image such as *The Bat* pushed against the norm of *Camera Work* and the prim expectations facing middle-class women at the turn of the century. *The Bat* marks a bold choice on Käsebier’s part as it was made at a historical moment when American audiences favored wholesome artistic shows of female innocence and piety.¹⁶⁹ Käsebier’s boldness took on a Symbolist vocabulary, formal and iconographical, which, as this chapter has traced, winds strongly throughout Käsebier’s body of work.

A painting-centric narrative has left Käsebier and her photography colleagues to the side of considerations of the Symbolist impulse in American art. The Pictorialist force in America is, however, the strongest example of a sustained interest in Symbolism in this country. Its study reveals some of the complexities of the formation and spread of Symbolism as an international movement, but it also reveals

¹⁶⁹ See Bailey Van Hook, “‘Milk White Angels of Art’: Images of Women in Turn-of-the-Century America,” *Woman’s Art Journal* 11, no. 2 (Autumn 1990-Winter 1991): 23.

specificities of a national manifestation. Käsebier underscored her identity as American and her Western roots. She was one of only a handful of artists to be included in the back-to-back exhibitions abroad in 1900 and 1901 organized by Frances Benjamin Johnson, “American Women Photographers,” and Day, “New School of American Photography”—both of which presented what was “American” abroad. Yet, through the Photo-Secession, her friendships, her trips to Europe, and her receptivity as a creative person, she attuned her art to transatlantic Symbolism. Her works’ resonances with Spiritualism and even a loose understanding of Native American spirituality highlight American qualities that fit comfortably within, and even informed, the theory and visuality of Symbolism in the fine arts.

Chapter 2: Even the Devil is a Woman: Alice Pike Barney's Idealist Symbolism

This chapter illuminates another facet of American Symbolism by offering a more sustained and contextualized analysis of the art of Alice Pike Barney (1857-1931) than her work has yet received. Barney, who was a philanthropist and ardent patron of the arts, pursued and promoted a range of artistic ventures. While acknowledging the importance of her deft crossing of disciplinary lines, this chapter primarily considers her visual art production, particularly those works in her preferred medium of pastel. I approach Barney's oeuvre and use of medium through the lens of the Symbolist movement, identifying the origins of her aesthetic and considering its features vis-à-vis Symbolist principles. Bram Dijkstra's seminal *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (1986) is a point of reference and refutation in this chapter, as he briefly engaged with Barney's work in a broad study of the cultural construction of the femme fatale in Symbolist and related milieus. Elements of French post-structuralist feminism are also brought to bear in this chapter, as they complement Barney's own forward-thinking precepts.

Analyzing Barney's work engages with issues central to the study of American Symbolism, including its transatlantic nature, sociocultural implications, and its dynamic employment of medium. Moreover, the Symbolist frame provides an inroad to investigate Barney's work with more depth and seriousness of purpose. The Cincinnati-born Barney advocated for the cultural enrichment of her adopted city of Washington, DC, and the United States more generally. In this quest, she frequently turned to a Symbolist idiom, and she deployed a medium—pastel—that proved particularly well-suited to Symbolist expression. This chapter examines the meanings

of Barney's Symbolist impulse through various pieces of her career: her illustrations for her daughter Natalie's chapbook (small volume of poetry) in 1900, her 1901 exhibition at the Corcoran, and critical responses to her Symbolist works—pieces variously called symbolic, suggestive, mysterious, lurid, bizarre, imaginative, or, simply, weird.

An Idealist Strain

Barney's type of Symbolism is best understood as part of the idealist strain of the movement described by Jean-David Jumeau-Lafond for the exhibition *Painters of the Soul*.¹ Jumeau-Lafond distinguishes this “segment” of Symbolist art from the Symbolism of the Nabis or Synthetists.² These idealists were artists particularly concerned with “fighting to recover the ideal” out of the “the metaphysical void that scientific positivism had carved.”³ Jumeau-Lafond explains:

It was therefore imperative to rediscover or reinvent a thematic and formal heritage based partly on tradition and partly on new, imaginary innovations. In addition to rediscovering Christianity and learning about exotic faiths, this meant delving into the world of irreligious mysticism and new esoteric philosophies such as theosophy. It also meant an interest in legends and, in general, the texts and visual repertoire of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance; discovering or rediscovering Celtic and Nordic primitivism; and a predilection for spiritualism and the occult.⁴

In addition to these wide-ranging sources of content and inspiration, the idealist Symbolists developed stylistic approaches “based above all on suggestion,

¹ Jean-David Jumeau-Lafond, “Painters of the Soul: Idealist Symbolism in France,” in *Painters of the Soul: Idealist Symbolism in France* (Tampere, Finland: Tampere Art Museum, 2006, exh. cat.), 11-27.

² Jumeau-Lafond, 9.

³ Jumeau-Lafond, 15.

⁴ Jumeau-Lafond, 12.

indecisiveness, and opacity in order to stimulate the imagination, which was the only way for the viewer to intuit the soul's secrets."⁵ They maintained an interest in the message, be it moral or philosophical, that lay behind their work, and they were less interested in a purely formal or "decorative" approach to art-making.⁶

Jumeau-Lafond points to Albert Aurier's defense of such artists. Aurier wrote, "It should not be forgotten that they appeared as bearers of forgotten words" confronting a "purely materialistic, industrial, and utilitarian age."⁷ Aurier was defending the Symbolists' right to be at times "literary" in their attraction to idealist (e.g., mythological, religious, medieval) subject matter quite different from the leisured or metropolitan contemporaneity that attracted their Impressionist predecessors, and also straying from the more purely formal or "decorative" concerns that dominated other strains of the Symbolist movement.

Echoing Aurier's stance, Barney reflected on the state of the arts, specifically in the United States. She lamented, "if you want to bore a typical American—talk art, talk music. . . . he may go to sleep. If you would interest him, mention the latest automobile record, or the flying machine. Call attention to the largest ship afloat or the fastest train of cars in America."⁸ An appreciative article concerning one of Barney's solo exhibitions pointed out, yet again, the association of

⁵ Jumeau-Lafond, 15.

⁶ Jumeau-Lafond, 18.

⁷ G.- Albert Aurier, "Les symbolistes," *La Revue encyclopédique*, 1892, trans. Jumeau-Lafond, 15.

⁸ "What is Capital Life, After All?' Asks Mrs. Alice Barney. 'Small Talk and Lots to Eat and an Infinite Series of Teas and Dinners. Art? There is None,'" *Washington Times*, 1902, clipping from scrapbook of clippings, Box 4, Alice Pike Barney Papers, 1861-1965, Accession 96-153, Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, DC. (hereafter APB Papers).

United States and technological and industrial progress. It highlighted Barney's unique predilection for cultural production and preservation in the face of her compatriots' materialistic preoccupations: "Mrs. Clifford-Barney belongs to that American elite who . . . without scorning the commercial and industrial genius that has made for the greatness of their country, claims that this genius is not everything and it is necessary to add, for the greater good of the nation, moral, intellectual, and artistic concerns."⁹

Barney was particularly critical of her adopted city of Washington, DC, which she saw as having much potential yet falling far short in its hospitality and encouragement for art and artists. In the course of her time in DC, she would advocate for the opening of a national museum and the bolstering of art educational institutions. She would also build her own Studio House to elevate the city's quality of and capacity for artistic discourse.¹⁰ While not all of her artwork may be classified as Symbolist, it is significant that in her cultural agenda for America, she exerted a distinct Symbolist impulse.

Among the artists Jumeau-Lafond's *Painters of the Soul* show highlighted was Lucien Lévy-Dhurmer. A Rose+Croix exhibitor, who also showed with the Painters of the Soul group in 1890s, Lévy-Dhurmer moved in circles that intertwined

⁹ "Mme Clifford-Barney appartient à cette élite américaine dont la suprématie tend là-bas de plus en plus s'établir et qui, sans mépriser le génie commercial et industriel qui a permis la grandeur de son pays, prétend cependant que ce génie-là n'est pas tout et qu'il faut y adjoindre, pour le plus grand bien de la nation, les préoccupations d'ordre moral, intellectuel, artistique." Francis de Miomandre, "Une Artiste américaine: Madame Clifford Barney," *L'art et les artistes* 5, no. 54 (September 1909): 268-269, APB Papers.

¹⁰ See Wanda M. Corn, "Artists' Homes and Studios: A Special Kind of Archive," *American Art* 19, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 4-5, and "Washington Home a Shrine of Culture, Beauty, and Art," *Washington Times*, July 24, 1904, 12, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84026749/1904-07-24/ed-1/seq-32/>.

with Barney's around the turn of the century. He, as well as the Edmond Aman-Jean and the American painter John White Alexander, were regular guests at Barney's short-lived Parisian salon.¹¹

The visual evidence of Barney's artwork indicates a lively exchange of aesthetic ideas in and around this salon environment at the turn of the century. Lévy-Dhurmer's dexterity in pastel, his technique, and his range of subject matter undeniably influenced Barney's approach to the medium, but pastel, at the time, had already entered into a period of international revival and had long-held associations with women and femininity.¹² Charles C. Eldredge wrote that through her onetime teacher, James Abbott McNeill Whistler, "painters such as Alice Barney were introduced to the rarified ambience of Mallarmé's circle."¹³ I have found no direct evidence of a Barney-Mallarmé friendship, but there are connections that make Mallarmé's presence and legacy—he died in 1898—important to understanding Barney's artistic choices.

¹¹ Jean L. Kling, *Alice Pike Barney: Her Life and Art* (Washington, DC: National Museum of American Art in association with Smithsonian Institution Press), 131.

¹² Edouard Roditi, "The Spread and Evolution of Symbolist Ideals in Art," in *The Symbolist Movement in the Literature of European Languages*, ed. Anna Balakian (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company: 1984), 518, noted with some wonderment that "Lévy-Dhurmer's influence, surprisingly enough, also appears to have spread as far west as America. In the Smithsonian Institution's National Collections of Fine Arts [now the Smithsonian American Art Museum] in Washington, DC, a number of fine Symbolist pastels by Alice Pike Barney . . . all reveal the unmistakable influence of the French artist whom she had met in Paris and who was also a close friend of her daughter." The influence may not have been as unidirectional as Roditi's quote suggests.

¹³ Charles C. Eldredge, *American Imagination and Symbolist Painting* (New York: Grey Art Gallery and Study Center, New York University, 1979, exh. cat.), 23. Eldredge's exhibition included one oil painting by Barney, *Woman and Peacock* (ca. 1900). The show did not include any of the artist's pastels, but Eldredge, 139 did note that it was Lévy-Dhurmer's use of the medium which inspired Barney's own.

In a thin catalog accompanying a 1978 monographic exhibition of Barney's work, Donald McClelland pronounced an assessment which this chapter will further. He wrote that, "refusing to be confined by the proprieties that barred most well-bred women from participating in the controversial art movements of the fin de siècle, [Barney] became a fervent advocate of the French symbolists, and it was something of the symbolist spirit, with its fusion of music, poetry, and art, that she attempted to transplant to Washington, DC."¹⁴ Moreover, he explained, Barney's "imagination found an ally in pastel, with its capacity for indeterminate, chalky vagueness."¹⁵ My analysis of Barney's Symbolist impulse is allied to McClelland's, but I interrogate the specificities of that impulse in greater depth and with more criticality.

Biography and Training

The saga of Barney's life has largely eclipsed her reputation as artist. Her father, Samuel Napthali Pike, inspired her love of creativity and imagination. He opened an opera house in Cincinnati in 1859. Alice was well-to-do thanks to her father's entrepreneurship in the distilling industry, and, after her marriage to Albert Clifford Barney in 1876, she was also wealthy thanks to her father-in-law's successful railway car business. As a teenager, she had been engaged to but ultimately fell apart from Henry Morton Stanley, the explorer of Africa and of "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?" fame, who named his sailing vessel *Lady Alice* in her honor. Her first husband, Albert, chose Washington, DC as their primary residence in 1889,

¹⁴ Donald R. McClelland, *Where Shadows Live: Alice Pike Barney and Her Friends* (Washington, DC: National Collection of Fine Arts, Smithsonian Institution, 1978, exh. cat.), n.p.

¹⁵ McClelland, n.p.

as he believed it offered the couple the best chance for stable placement in the upper echelons of good society.¹⁶ After Albert's death, and when she was in her late fifties, Barney married a man thirty years her junior. Their relationship ended in a separation, then acrimonious divorce.¹⁷ She spent her final years in Los Angeles. Throughout Barney's life, society pages in periodicals tracked her progress, movements, and status: her personal appearance, her vacationing, her luxurious homes, her famous guests, her triumphs, and her failures. Barney's biographer, Jean L. Kling, passionately researched and skillfully summarized Barney's complicated life, and her 1994 book is the foremost resource on the subject, giving fair weight to the visual artwork as a part of a broader biography.

Barney's daughters, Laura and Natalie, made waves of their own. Laura was a sculptor, though her social activism, international diplomacy, and Bahá'í scholarship are the more prominent aspects of her legacy. Alice embraced the new religious movement of Bahá'í along with Laura around 1900, without matching the depth or intellectuality of Laura's religious convictions and activities.¹⁸ They were both

¹⁶ Kling, 90. Barney's biographer, Jean L. Kling, portrays Albert Barney as excessively interested in social standing and appearances. He saw his own wife as having the intrinsic deficit of descending from Jewish ancestors on her father's side, a reality that risked tainting their class position among American elites.

¹⁷ See "How Mrs. Hemmick Astonished Washington Society: Sent Out Invitations to Her Reception but Cut Off Her Husband—Divorced? No. Just Her Way to Announce Her Estrangement," *Washington Times*, January 18, 1920, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84026749/1920-01-18/ed-1/seq-27/>; "Christian D. Hemmick Granted Divorce from His Millionaire Wife," *Washington Times*, August 29, 1920, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84026749/1920-08-29/ed-1/seq-1/>.

¹⁸ See Mona Khademi, "Laura Dreyfus-Barney and 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Visit to the West," in *'Abdu'l-Bahá's Journey West: The Course of Human Solidarity*, ed. by Negar Mottahedeh (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 26. Mottahedeh, introduction to *'Abdu'l-Bahá's Journey West*, 11 lists Gertrude Käsebier and W. E. B. DuBois as among the other admirers of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, leader of the Bahá'í Faith at the turn of the century, who was later canonized in the religion.

attracted to Bahá'í's commitment to the equality of the sexes.¹⁹ A newspaper account of Barney's conversion sensationalized and exoticized the tenants of the religion: "rumor sayeth that many old world secrets of sorcery and mysticism are taught by the cult."²⁰ The practice of Bahá'í suited "the mysticism of Mrs. Barney," according to the article, and "she was made a high priestess of the order."

A classically notorious but ultimately harmless "Barney scandal" took place when a nude sculpture by Laura appeared on the front lawn of the Barney family home in Washington, DC.²¹ The police ended the affair by covering it up with a drape. The model for the sculpture was reported to be Barney's older daughter, Natalie, though the family denied that she modeled any part of the figure below the shoulders. Natalie, a poet, playwright, and novelist, courted her own share of scandal and fame. She lived openly as a lesbian in early twentieth-century Paris, where she hosted a female-centered Salon on Rue Jacob, modeled, at least in part, on her mother's earlier, short-lived Salon on Avenue Victor Hugo and the more lasting activities in Alice's Studio House on DC's Sheridan Circle. Scholars have noted the Symbolist and Decadent valences of Natalie's literary aesthetic.²² Mother and

¹⁹ Khademi, 18, 26.

²⁰ "Is This the World's Cleverest Woman?: Amazing Career of Mrs. Barney, Who Excited Washington by 'Weathering' a Nude Statue of Miss Barney on the Lawn," *San Francisco Sunday Call*, November 27, 1910, 16, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85066387/1910-11-27/ed-1/seq-16.pdf>.

²¹ There was endless press coverage of the event.

²² As well as those of the painterly aesthetic of her long-term romantic partner, Romaine Brooks. Bridget Elliott and Jo-Ann Wallace, "Fleurs du Mal or Second-Hand Roses?: Natalie Barney, Romaine Brooks, and the 'Originality of the Avant-Garde,'" *Feminist Review* 40, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 6-30.

daughter displayed complementary artistic tastes,²³ and their collaboration at the turn of the century is a topic that this chapter will take up.

Starting in the 1880s, Barney managed to acquire formal training as an artist. She began with china painting as an eminently refined hobby for a woman of leisure and means.²⁴ The artist Elizabeth Nourse, from whom Barney had commissioned two paintings, observed her patroness' own unformed talent—Barney painted alongside her—and encouraged Barney to seek an art education abroad. While still living in Cincinnati, Barney first took up beginner classes in drawing at the Cincinnati Museum Association's School of Art.²⁵

In the late 1880s, Barney traveled to Paris to be close to her daughters as they attended French boarding school. While there, she took classes with Jean-Joseph Benjamin Constant (who would, several years later, teach Henry Ossawa Tanner) and Jean-Paul Laurens (also one of Tanner's instructors). Barney painted her daughter, Natalie, by the side of Charles Émile Auguste Carolus-Duran, and then entered his atelier, which was co-founded by Jean-Jacques Henner. Their classes catered to Americans and women of various nationalities who were excluded from the male-only École des Beaux-Arts.²⁶

²³ "The artistic companionship between Mrs. Barney and her elder daughter is one of the delightful features of their home life. The daughter's artistic attainments are not less than those of her mother and their tastes in art run largely in like directions." "Is This the World's Cleverest Woman? . . .," *San Francisco Sunday Call*.

²⁴ Kling, 83.

²⁵ Kling, 85.

²⁶ Isabelle Magnan, "Jean-Jacques Henner: Professeur des Dames," in *Musée national Jean-Jacques Henner: de la maison d'artiste au musée*, Marie-Cécile Forest (Paris: Somogy, 2016), 125-128.

Barney wrote about her training in Paris in a feature for *The Washington Times*, called “An Art Student.” The article includes her striking description of Henner’s typical model: “white skin, vivid red hair, painted eyes and lips. A ghastly, gleaming, brilliant creature, who as you painted seemed to throw out pale, shining, green and violet, until your brain ached with too much light.”²⁷ This description suggests Henner’s Pre-Raphaelite-esque femme fatales. *The Collector and Art Critic* described this type, reminiscent of Whistler’s visions of the Irish model Joanna Hiffernan but taken to a more menacing place: “Henner is noted for his deadly coloring in his women’s faces, making them look like opium or arsenic victims; for his elusive outline and the russet hair of his models.”²⁸ Barney sketched for her “An Art Student” article a pair of typical “Henners,” revealing a deep familiarity with Henner’s work (Fig. 1). One is a semi-draped female nude seen from the behind adjusting her long hair over her shoulder. The other, to the bottom left of the standing figure, is an oddly cropped female bust. The model’s gaze, slightly downturned chin, and heavy, middle-parted hair make her an instantly recognizable Henner type. Barney’s drawings quote Henner works such as *The Bather (Echo)* (1885) and *Solitude* (ca. 1886) (Figs. 2-3). Barney connected the disparate sketches to each other and set them off with a dark background, a tightly crosshatched shadowy form that loosens into emphatic scribbles at its edges. The background suggests Henner’s landscapes. She also noted in this article the experience of modeling for her fellow students, an activity that she appreciated for temporarily freeing her mind to wander

²⁷ Alice Pike Barney, “An Art Student,” *Washington Times*, July 4, 1894, clipping, APB Papers.

²⁸ “Jean Jacques Henner,” *The Collector and Art Critic* 3, no. 11 (September 1905): 147.

in “fancies and dreams.” Modeling for her fellow students, Barney embodied a dual positionality (even a *dédoublement*) that aligned her at once with her fellow artists-in-training and with the female subjects, such as the Henner models described above, that the students observed and represented.

Barney’s formal art education abroad continued intermittently. She returned to Paris in 1896, where she studied again with Carolus-Duran and, additionally, with the Catalan painter Claudio Castelucho. Castelucho was most celebrated for his Spanish themes, which occasionally found their way into Barney’s work as well (Figs. 4-5). Barney returned to France yet again in 1898 with a letter of introduction to Whistler penned by John White Alexander. She studied at Whistler’s academy, the short-lived Académie Carmen, and formed a friendship with Whistler outsider of class as well, socially, in her Paris salon, over tea, and in discussions. She treasured her time with Whistler, the artist whom she most deeply admired, and he inspired a play she wrote in the 1930s, her final theatrical work. The prologue and epilogue to the script of *Whistler* recount his sitting for her for a portrait, while the main acts fade into his memories of the 1860s.²⁹

While Barney’s pastels are generally more closely related to those of Lévy-Dhurmer, her portrait of Whistler from 1898 (Fig. 6) is closer, stylistically, to works by Whistler himself. Like Whistler’s works in pastel, primarily Venetian and London landscapes, the paper in Barney’s portrait is left largely uncovered, giving the work a

²⁹Alice Pike Barney, *Whistler: Episodic Play in Prologue, Two Acts and Epilogue*, 1931, typescript, Box 13, Folder 8, Alice Pike Barney Papers and Related Material, circa 1889-1995, Record Unit 7473, Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, DC [hereafter RU 7473].

quick, breathy quality, and the color palette is restrained.³⁰ Whistler was a type of master for Barney, against whom she wished to define herself. Many years after creating the portrait, she had herself photographed alongside it (Fig. 7). This photograph shows her performing her artistic lineage, and she does so using a composition that recollects images of the Belgian Symbolist Fernand Khnopff in front of his altar to Hypnos, the Greek deity of sleep (Fig. 8). Barney's self-definition recalls similar efforts by the other Americans considered in this dissertation: Käsebier's *Mrs. Ward and Baby* and her adaptation of Whistler's butterfly signature, Tanner's *Portrait of the Artist's Mother* (1897) and his Whistlerian portrait by fellow artist Hermann Dudley Murphy.

Barney's friendship with Whistler primed her to explore a Symbolist impulse. Taking the play as a guide, it is apparent that Barney respected Whistler's prizing of pictorial "atmosphere,"³¹ his disregard of tradition, his independent spirit, his lack of fear for controversy, and his bohemian associations. The play about Whistler also, importantly, speaks to the multidisciplinary of Barney's endeavors. While her *dramatis personae* lists Whistler as "The Artist," she identifies her own character (Mrs. Alice) as "an artist, and other things."³² The fictionalized Whistler reflects, "I know you have your painting and writing. You flirt with both arts."³³ Barney wrote, produced, and directed at least 85 theatrical events throughout her life.³⁴ These were

³⁰ Her character searches unsuccessfully for a canvas to work on: "Close your eyes and rest while I get my pastels. Oh, I've no canvas—this paper will do" (Prologue, 24). After their 40-minute sitting, Whistler encourages her to stop working on the portrait: "Don't touch it. You have something which you may lose" (Introduction, 2).

³¹ Barney 1931, Act I, 7.

³² *Ibid.*, Prologue, 1.

³³ *Ibid.*, Epilogue, 13.

³⁴ See Kling, 316-318, for a complete list.

plays, pageants, tableaux, and musical events. Her embrace of various media both singularly and in elaborately designed pageants mark her multidisciplinary approach.

Multidisciplinarity

Charlotte Foucher Zarmarian has written about strategies by which women artists in French Symbolist milieus were able to create in male-dominated artistic and critical spaces. One of these strategies was mediumistic—an approach which the American photographer Gertrude Käsebier made use of. The description, above, of Barney as a Bahá'í mystic or high priestess recollects the framing of Käsebier as clairvoyant. The crystal ball motif appears again in Barney's *The Crystal Globe* (n.d.) (Fig. 9). A variation of Käsebier's *Crystal Gazer* composition appears in Barney's *Woman and Peacock* (Fig. 10), in which Barney pictured a woman looking down upon a shiny purple vase which ambiguously emits steam or perhaps holds an abstract peacock feather. Furthermore, a crystal ball appears as a portrait framing device for a fantastical illustration that accompanied the newspaper article that discussed Barney's seemingly eccentric and “eastern” Bahá'í faith, a new religion originating in nineteenth-century Persia (Fig. 11).³⁵ In the illustration, a bearded and bespectacled alchemist holds out an oversized orb in which appears a female face representing Barney's. Rings of implied glare and slight hatching at the edges of the circle give it a glassy, ball-like appearance.

³⁵ “New Religious Cult,” *Washington Post*, March 23, 1902, claimed that the movement had six million adherents internationally, and two hundred in Washington, DC. The same article subtitles include “sect greatly persecuted in Persia” and “Abbas Effendi and his mysterious occult influence.”

Another strategy Foucher Zarmanian theorizes is “pluridisciplinarité,” or multidisciplinary. Foucher Zarmanian associates this strategy with Judith Gautier, who is best known for her writing, but who also sculpted and staged marionette spectacles, and Sarah Bernhardt, perhaps the most famous French actress of her day, who was also a sculptor and painter.³⁶ Barney had an ongoing relationship with Bernhardt. Bernhardt was a guest at Barney’s Studio House, and a letter she wrote to Barney was read at the dedication of Barney’s Sylvan Theater in the capital.³⁷ Barney also sketched Bernhardt’s portrait.³⁸

By way of this strategy of multidisciplinary, women participated in cultural activities deemed seemly for the female sex and used their success in those realms to circumvent the mechanisms of the art world that would have excluded them from gaining legitimacy and recognition as visual artists.³⁹ Their multidisciplinary took advantage of the era’s newfound dedication to the fusion of artforms, though it did not free women who practiced the method from critical scrutiny.⁴⁰

This model helps account for Barney’s career, which was, from the beginning, a multifaceted, multidisciplinary one. As commentators put it, “she is interested in

³⁶ Foucher Zarmanian, 158.

³⁷ Kling, 208. “Sylvan Inspires National Drama,” *Washington Times*, Sunday, June 3[?], clipping, APB Papers. Bernhardt wrote, “Many Europeans have thought [the American people] as a commercial people, but they have proved to the world that honor comes before everything.” See also Sandra Fleishman, “Smithsonian Sells Landmark Mansion; Barney House to Become Music School,” *Washington Post*, November 6, 1999, Proquest Historical Newspapers, and United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form for Studio House, 1995, sec. 8, 8, <https://npgallery.nps.gov/pdfhost/docs/NRHP/Text/95000528.pdf>.

³⁸ The work was exhibited at Knoedler Gallery in New York in 1909 as No. 48 “Mme. Sarah Bernhardt” (Sketch). *Catalogue of Portraits and Sketches in Pastel by Mrs. Barney of Washington* (New York: M. Knoedler & Co, May 10-20, 1909, exh. cat.), n.p., APB Papers.

³⁹ Foucher Zarmanian, 161.

⁴⁰ Best embodied in the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Foucher Zarmanian, 166.

everything”⁴¹ and “can do almost anything, from turning out canvases . . . to writing fantastic plays.”⁴² Barney wrote and produced pantomimes, musicals, ballets, and pageants. She collected art and decorated her houses; did charitable work in the DC community; opened two theaters: one in DC, one in Los Angeles; and exhibited in individual and group shows in the United States and abroad.⁴³ She even filed patents for innovations including improvements to parlor-car chairs, wardrobes, and fluid agitators, and educated herself on a lost technique of silk dyeing, which she then taught to residents of the settlement house she financially backed so that they might have a means of earning income.

Certain endeavors fused her range of talents. A charitable pageant, for example, might involve her writing, directing, choreographing, casting, costume and set designing, program cover illustration, poster design for publicity, acting, and dancing, all underscored by a philanthropic mission. Inherited wealth facilitated such opportunities for her. The sale of her works was not necessary for her comfortable survival. One journalist put it thusly: “Art is Mrs. Barney’s profession—vocation might be the better term, because she works for the joy of working and the love of work.”⁴⁴ Indeed her social duties arguably detracted from time spent in the studio.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, she was a conscientious, active, and passionate artistic producer in diverse genres.

⁴¹ “Elle s’intéresse à tout.” Miomandre, 269.

⁴² “Mrs. Barney, Society Woman Who Danced for the President,” unidentified clipping, APB Papers.

⁴³ See Kling, 314-315. Barney primarily exhibited in the United States, including nine instances at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, but also in Paris (including two times at the *Salon des Beaux Arts*) and London.

⁴⁴ ““What is Capital Life . . . ,”” *Washington Times*.

⁴⁵ ““What is Capital Life . . . ,”” *Washington Times*.

Like all strategies Foucher Zarmanian theorizes, multidisciplinary had drawbacks. In this case, a woman's visual art was often seen as a sideline, and therefore not of primary import. This was certainly the case with Barney's reception. Those who praised her works of art marked surprise that they should come from someone in her position: "For a woman of leisure and social prominence to paint so prolifically and well astonishes every one."⁴⁶ Or, "when one considers Mrs. Barney's position in society and realizes the great demand upon her time, the amount of work that she produces is truly amazing."⁴⁷ The newspaper commentary that "Mrs. Barney is as clever as she is good looking. She is an artist, not a dilettante"⁴⁸ captures some of the ambivalence of her position socially and artistically, and the fine line between amateurism and dilettantism especially when applied to a wealthy woman who journalists and gossipers admired for her physical appearance as well as for her impressive productivity.

Medusa and (Anti-)Feminist Readings

One example of the visual product of a multidisciplinary engagement is Barney's pastel entitled *Medusa* (1902) (Fig. 12). Alice's younger daughter Laura appeared as the mythological character who killed men with her mere gaze in Alice's

⁴⁶ James Henry Moser, "Art Topics," *Washington Post*, November 10, 1901, 28, Proquest Historical Newspapers. Moser complements Barney's show as "an epoch-making affair in the annals of the Capital City." He calls her work up to date, "bold, free, original, although often experimental." He anticipates that the critics may negatively comment on Barney's work at first, but that that is to be expected "with anything new and progressive." Whistler is the example of this phenomenon for Moser, and he directly goes on to speak of Whistler for several paragraphs after his review of Barney's exhibition.

⁴⁷ Unidentified clipping, APB Papers.

⁴⁸ Unidentified clipping, APB Papers.

pantomime play entitled “The Reward of Amaryllis,” which was performed at DC’s Chase’s Theatre as a charity function in 1902.⁴⁹

In the Alice Pike Barney Papers at the Smithsonian Institution Archives appears a pair of circa 1898 photographs in mounted, carte-de-visite format depicting Laura as Medusa (Figs. 13-14). The photographs are shocking. The images are unfocused, with Laura’s blurred head floating at the center of the compositions, unanchored in a field of darkness. The dark color of the cloak she wears—its folds are just visible at the neckline—melds into the background, leaving an image of intense tonal contrast. Her face is starkly white and masklike. Her mouth gapes open and her eyes bulge. The prominence of the whites of her eyes is eerie, especially as she gazes to the left in one of the photographs, leaving almost no trace of her irises or pupils. Spindly, slinking, and clearly fabricated snakes play around her head. They dangle down beneath her chin and around her dark hair. Before acting in the Chase’s Theatre performance, Laura had played the role of Medusa in a rendition of the “The Reward of Amaryllis” in Bar Harbor, Maine in 1898,⁵⁰ where the Barneys maintained an impressive residence. These photographs are identified, on their mounts, as being by “Emery, Bar Harbor, Me.,” and hence likely date from on or around the time of that original performance.

Barney’s translation into pastel takes liberty with the photographs but maintains the basic components of the photographic compositions—the head in space, the gaping mouth, the swirling snakes. The pastel is more closely related to one of the photographs, in which Laura looks straight ahead, than the other, where her

⁴⁹ “Society to Aid Charity,” *Washington Times*, January 26, 1902, 8, clipping, APB Papers.

⁵⁰ “Society to Aid Charity,” *Washington Times*.

head, following her gaze, turns to the side. In the disposition of the snakes and the woman's fearsome expression, Barney's pastel recollects Caravaggio's oil rendition of the subject (Fig. 15). With her thick, billowing hair and unnaturally white skin, Laura as *Medusa* also recalls the Henner type as described by Barney herself: "a ghastly, gleaming, brilliant creature."⁵¹

Barney's representation hews most closely, however, to Lévy-Dhurmer's interpretation called *Medusa* or *Furious Wave*, also a work in pastel (Fig. 16). In lieu of the traditional snakes, Lévy-Dhumer introduced seaweed, amassing it in the black hair of his clawing, tormented, and screaming sea creature. Both Barney and Lévy-Dhurmer's renditions isolate Medusa's portrait atop a shelf-like mass of colored pigment in the foreground that distorts any traditional sense of recession into space and makes the figure directly confrontational. Barney's snakes are more twisted and livelier than those in the costumed, photographed image of Laura. They snarl, curl, spit, and overlap one another in their writhing movements. Barney orchestrated the abstracted, shallow background in swaths and streaks of various blues, much as Lévy-Dhurmer had done in his predominantly green palette. Barney seems to have turned her pastel sticks to their side and rubbed them into the paper surface to cover the background's expanses. She drew one claw-like hand, that emerges from space, resting on top of a cloud-like mass—drawing again, perhaps, from Lévy-Dhurmer's work, wherein the mass is an abstracted, capping wave. Barney entered her pastel into the 1902 exhibition of the Society of Washington Artists, an organization for which she served as vice-president.⁵²

⁵¹ Op. cit.

⁵² Kling, 167.

Bram Dijkstra has read a related work by Barney, *Circe*, as a “completely bestial female,” and suggests that it implies that Barney “had uncritically accepted the concept of the feminine established by the fin-de-siècle male establishment, and . . . made this acceptance the basis for personal fantasies of revenge in which [she] saw woman as gleefully hauling the male back into her nature-ordered prison house of degenerative materialism” (Fig. 17).⁵³ *Circe* also treats a mythological femme fatale, the sorceress-temptress who, in Homer’s *Odyssey*, turns men to pigs and holds the hero captive for a year. Yes, Barney’s *Circe* is a snarling and fearsome apparition. She grasps a boar under her right arm with a loop of her thick, red hair swinging around the beast. The frenetic linearity of Barney’s markings across *Circe*’s skin adds to the anxiety produced by the subject’s presence. Barney’s color palette and line work align *Circe* with the beady-eyed wild animal that she draws near to her bosom. However, Dijkstra’s narrow interpretation of Barney’s motivations (her uncritical acceptance of misogyny) ignores a more specific contextualization of Barney’s oeuvre, her feminist philosophy, and the potential for a more nuanced reading of this mythological body of work.

Medusa is a key example of a “monstrous feminine,” as is *Circe*.⁵⁴ Sigmund Freud wrote of the Medusa’s head as an example proving the transhistorical validity of his psychological theory of castration anxiety.⁵⁵ Barbara Creed had reassessed

⁵³ Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 323-324.

⁵⁴ Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (1993; New York: Routledge, 2007), 29.

⁵⁵ Sigmund Freud, “Medusa Head” (1922) in *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 18, ed. and trans. James Strachey et al. (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), 273-274.

Medusa as an instantiation of the monstrous feminine stemming from classical mythology. Creed has done this as part of her larger project to re-evaluate and theorize the presence of women as monsters in cultural production, specifically in horror films, in opposition to traditional readings of women as solely naïve victims or masochists.⁵⁶

Creed has reflected on the misalignment of monstrous females with patriarchal expectations. *Medusa* was indeed received less favorably than Barney's more palatable, gentler examples of Symbolist mystery and evocation. While *Medusa* was called "weird . . . too horrible and too well done to be other than an outrage to true art,"⁵⁷ one of these latter, softer works (perhaps modeled by the same person), *Vision through Woods* (ca. 1908) (Fig. 18), was described as "a little face, yet full of mystery, and with hints of both apprehension and of the fearlessness of perfect innocence . . . a picture to make one think, a suggestion of innumerable subtleties."⁵⁸ Reviewers proved unable to cope with the underlying aggression of works like *Circe* and *Medusa*, perhaps because they were produced at the hands of a woman.

It is telling that 1970s feminist critic Hélène Cixous used the title "Laugh of the Medusa" in her key essay as a metaphor for the empowerment of women authors

⁵⁶ Creed, 26, 46.

⁵⁷ Leila Mechlin, "Art Notes," *Washington Star*, November 2, 1901, unidentified clipping, ca. 1901, APB Papers; quoted and identified in Andrew J. Cosentino and Henry H. Glassie, *The Capital Image: Painters in Washington, 1800-1915* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1983), 181.

⁵⁸ "The Pessimist," November 17, 1901, clipping, APB Papers. The review seems to be referring to this work, a "study . . . an autumn landscape, the ground deep in dead leaves and their air thick with them, flying in circle and straight blasts, and in the midst of it all a child's wistful face as of one wandering or wondering." However, the Smithsonian American Art Museum dates this work to 1908.

to tell their own stories and find their own voices.⁵⁹ Cixous argued, “I write woman: woman must write woman,” and thereby articulated the battle cry of *écriture féminine* (women’s writing).⁶⁰ In 1906, Barney wrote an essay, urging women to take up expressive pursuits, wielding “her pen, her brush, her music,”⁶¹ that seems to presage Cixous and the French feminists’ call nearly sixty years in the future. Furthermore, Barney’s analysis of the conditioning power of gendered expectations portends the feminist turn of art history in the 1970s.⁶²

In 1971, Linda Nochlin famously asked, “Why have there been no great women artists?” Nochlin’s pivotal article refutes the “insidious” idea implied by that question, that women are incapable of genius, but rather ferrets out the traditions of apprenticeship, notions about high art, the exclusivity of nude models, and oversimplification of gender binaries as factors in a system that led to apparently fewer “great women artists” than great men.⁶³ Barney wrote, in 1906, “Remember, it is in the boy’s early years that the seed of example is planted, and from that seed, . . . the man becomes a warrior, a statesman, a scientist or an artist. Boys from the

⁵⁹ Hélène Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa,” trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *Signs* 1, no. 4 (Summer 1976): 875-893.

⁶⁰ Cixous, 877.

⁶¹ Alice Barney, “The Great Painters of the Future Will Be Women,” *Grenada Sentinel*, August 31, 1907, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, Library of Congress, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85034375/1907-08-31/ed-1/seq-6/>. The article appears in various local newspapers between August and October. It is not uncommon that a story would be picked up and re-printed across the country. The title appears in Library of Congress Copyright Office, *Catalogue of Copyright Entries* 1, no. 1 (July 1906): 490.

⁶² Evidence in the Barney Papers, a newspaper clipping (Box 4, APB Papers) and a photograph of a drawing (“Photos of Works by Alice Pike Barney Not in National Museum of American Art Collection,” Box 1, Alice Pike Barney Papers, Accession 96-154, Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, DC) that caricature and stereotype African Americans, suggests that Barney was not as progressive on issues of race as she was on issues of gender.

⁶³ Linda Nochlin, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” (1971), in *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 145-177.

beginning are taught the great deeds of Caesar, Washington, Newton, and Columbus. Who were Michael Angelo and Valesquez[sic]? Were they not men? Were not all the great men but men?"⁶⁴ She notes improvement, that "during the last ten years, women, both painters and sculptors, are no longer a matter of wonder." She goes on to assert that women are even more capable of artistic greatness than their male counterparts: "We know that women are more spiritual then men, and it is the spirit that makes the great artist." The centrality of the spiritual and spirit to her understanding of great art reflects her Symbolist impulse.

She opines on how men have felt threatened by women's advancement in various fields and writes of her anticipation that "women [will] raise art above the art of men," as well as her desire to "arouse in the women of to-day that great faith in themselves, in their possibilities, in their powers, and in the highness of their aim." She encourages women to support each other: "the mere effort to help another would awaken in herself first an interest and then a desire to create." While there is an undeniable essentialization regarding the supposedly superior sensibilities and sensitivities of women, Barney's rhetorical stance does not otherwise evidence Dijkstra's "uncritical acceptance" of "fin-de-siècle male establishment" thinking. Barney continued to show *Medusa* and *Circe* after penning this article.⁶⁵ This is important, because it shows that these images did not contradict her feminist stance. To the contrary, she may have created *Medusa* and *Circe* in order to communicate an assertive female presence. The terrain of Symbolism proved favorable to such a pursuit, as it offered up the femme fatale subject matter as an option for serious art.

⁶⁴ Barney, "The Great Painters of the Future Will Be Women."

⁶⁵ In her 1909 solo exhibition at Knoedler & Co. and elsewhere.

Medusa is also an example of multidisciplinary, because it weaves together Barney's theatrical and visual arts. It also highlights her role in the leadership of arts organizations such as the Society of Washington Artists, where she displayed the work, and whose exhibition purview she expanded beyond the immediate Washington, DC region by drawing in a national pool of artists.⁶⁶ The inter-medial (between media) role of the *Medusa* photographs is of added interest.

Pastel as "Feminine"

Barney's preferred medium, pastel, may have brought her added scrutiny for its associations with women and the supposed weakness of women's work.⁶⁷ Even in a complimentary review of Barney's solo exhibition at Bernheim-Jeune Gallery in Paris, the critic reveals the assumptions around pastel, even as he commends Barney

⁶⁶ Kling, 167. Wanda Corn, "Art Matronage in Post-Victorian America," *Fenway Court* 27 (1997): 9-24 has discussed the phenomenon of arts "matronage" by women of Barney's generation and Barney herself. An important component of what I am describing under the rubric of multidisciplinary is Barney's Studio House, designed for arts and cultural events, and acting as what Corn identifies as "a kind of *gesamtkunstwerk* where the architecture, the indirect lighting, the furnishing, and the art on the wall conspired to wrap the viewer in the effervescent spirit of art itself" (22).

⁶⁷ See Dianne J. Pilgrim, "The Revival of Pastels in Nineteenth-Century American Art: The Society of Painters in Pastel," *American Art Journal* 10 no. 2 (November 1978): 43 for pastel's "traditionally feminine associations," and Kristen Swinth, *Painting Professionals: Women Artist & The Development of Modern American Art, 1870-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 76: "pastelists took a form unappealing because of its associations with the feminine." Anthea Callen, *The Spectacular Body: Science, Method, and Meaning in the Work of Degas* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 111-137, has examined the gendered implications of pastel in Edgar Degas's work, asserting that despite art theorist Charles Blanc's belittlement and feminization of the medium, Degas made it a modern and credible medium for male artists. She describes how Degas's application of pastel encodes a sensation of touch, particularly of illicit female flesh. For more on the pastel revival in the United States, see David Adams Cleveland, "The Democratization of the Tonalist Landscape: Pastels, Watercolors, and Etching, and Their Influence on the Tonalist Landscape and Aesthetic Tonalism," in *A History of American Tonalism: 1880-1920* (Manchester, VT: Hudson Hills Press, 2010), 227-235.

for managing to avoid the “sentimentality and banality that is too customary of women pastel painters.”⁶⁸

Society had deemed pastel an appropriate medium for use by women from the early eighteenth century with the rise to fame of the Venetian pastelist Rosalba Carriera (1673-1757). Compared to paint, pastel was seen as simpler, cleaner, and more interruptible for the household or family tasks expected of women.⁶⁹ “Pastel” refers to both the sets of colored sticks and the works made with them.⁷⁰ Pastels are friable sticks of pigment held together with a binder such as gum arabic.⁷¹ The binder does not adhere the pigment to the paper or canvas onto which the pastel is applied. Rather, it holds the pigment together in a useable stick format. It is the artist’s pressure of application that adheres the pastel to its support.

A perennial problem of pastel has been fixing the medium in place, a problem overcome most simply by glazing the work in a frame. Described as “line and color at the same time,”⁷² pastel is quickly workable, reworkable, and blend-able, and it allows for a diversity of markings and layering of hues and tones at variable intensities. Pastel achieved its golden age in eighteenth-century Europe, where it was

⁶⁸ “La technique de Mme. Clifford Barney n’en reste pas moins dégagée de toute mièvrerie et de cette banalité, dont les femmes pastellistes sont trop souvent coutumières.” “Mme Clifford Barney Expose Aux Galeries Bernheim Jeune,” *New York Herald, Paris*, October 27, 1908, clipping, APB Papers.

⁶⁹ See “The Touch of Color: Pastels at the National Gallery of Art” (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 2019, exh. pamphlet), 3-8.

⁷⁰ “Technical Appendix, Pastel: Materials and Techniques,” in Thea Burns and Philippe Saunier, *The Art of the Pastel* (New York: Abbeville Press Publishers, 2014), 369.

⁷¹ See Marjorie Shelley, “American Pastels of the Late Nineteenth & Early Twentieth Centuries: Materials & Techniques,” in *American Pastels in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, ed. Doreen Bolger (New York: Henry N. Abrams, 1989, exh. cat.), 36.

⁷² Monnier, Geneviève, “Pastel,” *Grove Art Online*, 2003, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/groveart/view/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.001.0001/oao-9781884446054-e-7000065711>.

primarily used for portraits. Those portrayed sometimes took on guises of classical mythology.⁷³ Barney seems to have looked back to this traditional application of the medium, and her oeuvre is heavily weighted towards portraiture and, as in *Medusa*, bridges portrait and fantastical subject matter.

The late nineteenth century was an era of pastel's revival. Organizations, such as the American Society of Painters in Pastel, the London Pastel Society, and the Société des Pastellistes coalesced to help cement the medium's newfound status.⁷⁴ The first show of the American Society underscored efforts to re-assign the gendered associations of pastel at this late-nineteenth-century moment. It gave credit to "the certain men of genius" who "raise[d] it [pastel] from the bog of amateurism in which it floundered."⁷⁵ The same "bog of amateurism" article utilizes adjectives that relate to idealized descriptions of women, describing pastels as "usually extremely refined in color, delicate, and pretty," though in the hands of its major, and, notably, male revivalist, François Millet, the materials could be made "brutal."⁷⁶

A stigma adhered to pastel for women, as evidenced by "constructive" critiques of the artist Juliet Thompson. Thompson was one of Barney's closest friends. They met in DC, where Thompson was training at the Corcoran School of

⁷³ Marjorie Shelley, "Painting in the Dry Manner: The Flourishing of Pastel in 18th-Century Europe, in Pastel Portraits: Images of 18th-Century Europe," in *Pastel Portraits: Images of 18th-Century Europe*, ed. by Katharine Baetjer and Marjorie Shelley (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), 20.

⁷⁴ Doreen Bolger, Mary Wayne Fritzche, Jacqueline Hazzi, Gail Stavitsky, Mary L. Sullivan, Marc Vincent, and Elizabeth Wylie, "American Pastels, 1880-1930: Revival & Revitalization," in *American Pastels in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 11-12.

⁷⁵ "The Painters in Pastel," *New York Times*, March 17, 1884, 5, <https://www.nytimes.com/1884/03/17/archives/the-painters-in-pastel.html>. Also quoted in April F. Masten, *Art Work: Women Artists and Democracy in Mid-Nineteenth-Century New York* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 237.

⁷⁶ "The Painters in Pastel," 5.

Art. Through various cities, they would go on to paint alongside each other, sometimes from the same model, and even on the same work.⁷⁷ Thompson made portraits of both Alice and Laura, which are pastels on canvas. Her large-scale *Woman in White* (n.d.) (Fig. 10) seems an alternate counterpart to Alice's *Babylon*. *Woman in White*'s blushed cheeks, blonde hair, kind expression, and over-the-heart hand gesture present her as good and gentle versus *Babylon*'s anger.⁷⁸ But both pastels are of near-identical dimensions, with equivalent compositions, coordinating color palettes, and the same variety of swirling, flowing, and broad pastel marks. *Woman in White* appears, in a heavy frame, in the dining room of Barney's studio house in a photograph of circa 1911 (Fig. 20).⁷⁹

In April 1901, *Washington Post* critic James Henry Moser commented on Thompson's departure for Paris to study art. While praising her as one of Washington, DC's best talents, he opined: "It is to be hoped that she will relinquish pastel for the more dignified and esteemed art of painting in oil."⁸⁰ He admits that the medium does indeed have "beautiful qualities peculiarly its own," but an artist, he advised, should pursue media more likely to be respected and to be perceived as difficult to master.⁸¹ A later review reiterated this perspective: "It would be well for

⁷⁷ Kling, 101.

⁷⁸ I will suggest that *Babylon* reflects Barney's imagining of her daughter Natalie. A cataloging card in one of the sets of Barney papers at the Smithsonian Institution Archives (there are three sets of papers), identifies *Woman in White* as Natalie Barney as well. Juliet Thompson folder, Box 1, Alice Pike Barney Papers, circa 1890-1994, Accession 96-154, Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, DC. Visually, the model for *Woman in White* closely resembles Natalie ca. 1900. See mis-identified photograph, Item 1.24, Box 1, APB Papers. This photograph has been mis-cataloged as Renée Vivien but clearly depicts Natalie.

⁷⁹ Image in Kling, 18.

⁸⁰ James Henry Moser, "Art Topics," *Washington Post*, April 14, 1901, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁸¹ James Henry Moser, "Art Topics," *Washington Post*, April 14, 1901, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

Miss Thompson to leave pastels alone and work in oils. Pastel is a beautiful medium, but it is only the plaything of painters of first-rate ability.”⁸²

Moser changed his tone somewhat in November 1901 review of Barney’s exhibition at the Corcoran, while he also further underscored pastel’s link to female artists. He wrote, “The art of painting in pastel, which forms the major part of this display, is the leading and predominant art among the local painters of Washington. . . . there is more doing here in pastel than in any other kind of painting. . . . Mrs. Barney, Miss Thompson, Mrs. Childs, Miss Mueden, Miss Sandds, Miss Burdette, and some others have made this beautiful art of Raphael Mengs and Angelica Kauffmann familiar to lovers of art. It would not be surprising, strong as are some of oil and water-color painters, if ‘the Washington school’ should make its first impression on the country as a school of painters in pastel.”⁸³ Washington, DC was a peripheral city for art—an issue at the heart of Barney’s personal mission to improve the cultural life of the capital.⁸⁴ Moser recognized strength in pastel, notably as practiced by a cadre of exclusively female artists, as formative for the city’s art scene, even if he did not see pastel as the most honorable medium. Pastel, as a medium, was certainly fraught.

⁸² *New York Times* article quoted in James Henry Moser, “Art Topics,” December 7, 1902, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

⁸³ James Henry Moser, “Art Topics,” *Washington Post*, November 3, 1901, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

⁸⁴ An unidentified clipping, ca. 1909, in the APB Papers implies this peripheral status of the capital city for art (comparing Washington, DC to Oshkosh or Kalamazoo) and a demeaning attitude towards female artists, especially those of a high socioeconomic standing. While the critic is ultimately pleasantly surprised by Barney’s show, the review begins: “When you are invited to an exhibit of portraits in oil, water colors, or pastels by Mrs. Or Miss Somebody, who holds social sway in Oshkosh or Kalamazoo, you are inclined, should you have had any experience in that line, to ‘fight shy’ of the show.”

The Symbolist Pastel

Pastel also formed a special linkage to Symbolist aesthetics. It is not surprising that this should be the case, given Symbolism's penchant for the cooption of characteristics stereotyped as feminine.⁸⁵ Although pastel had proved its own benefits by the 1890s—in terms of flexibility of usage, non-fading, non-yellowing, and suitability for open-air work—it became a favorite medium of Symbolism, because “it retained an aura of delicacy and fragility that was attractive to these artists.”⁸⁶ A reviewer of the Salons of 1893 observed:

Suddenly, it was understood that this delicate, insubstantial material, with its aura of mystery, lent itself perfectly to the underlying subtleties of this ritualist approach to art. During the earlier era of peasant brutality and commonplace subjects, watercolor experienced a renewal, as well as charcoal and expressive soft pencils. We were interested then in real life, which is often banal, with its unrefined coarseness and rude good health. Then for a brief interlude, everything became clouded, blurred, lost in vague suggestion. For eliminating delineation and avoiding obstacles, pastel is marvelous. It allows the interpenetration of tonalities, with soft, dense mistiness, and all the accents of virtuosic touches that could be desired. For those who are devotees of mystical grays, nothing has ever offered such dreamlike reverence and calm; the most daring may venture to add a hint of pale blue or tender violet.⁸⁷

This description captures the appeal of pastel to Symbolism, without naming the movement outright. While a medium that could be put to diverse usages—there is great clarity to certain pastels—it seemed particularly appropriate to the Symbolist penchant for the clouded, blurred, vague, and crepuscular. In the United States, the *New York Tribune* reiterated this idea, calling pastel “the language of suggestion,” and elaborating:

⁸⁵ Mathews, 75, 216.

⁸⁶ Saunier, “The Symbolist Pastel,” in Burns and Saunier, 339.

⁸⁷ Henri Bouchot, “Les Salons de 1893 (Deuxième Article): Dessins, Gravure, Architecture,” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* ser. 3, vol. 10 (1893): 28, quoted and translated in Saunier, 340.

Imitation of one kind of another has been the bane of nearly all the graphic arts . . . it is pleasant to find artists asserting their individuality in the treatment of their subjects, selecting the points which seem to them essential and leaving something to the imagination.⁸⁸

Imagination and suggestion were the guiding principles of Symbolism. Invoking a musical metaphor, Paul Gauguin wrote of how “painting should seek suggestion more than description, as indeed music does.”⁸⁹ To reiterate Stéphane Mallarmé’s definitive words: “to *suggest*, that is the dream.”⁹⁰

Picking up on the early American commentary on the Symbolist movement, we can follow Sadakichi Hartmann to the Parisian salon of Mallarmé, whom he calls “the father of symbolism.”⁹¹ Hartmann mentions a work of art on the wall of the Mallarmé residence, by Edouard Manet, called *Hamlet and the Ghost* (Fig. 21).⁹² It adorns Mallarmé’s fourth-floor “little parlor,” which is bathed in a “dull light” and filled with “medieval-looking furniture.”⁹³ Hartmann goes on to explain the appeal of this work by Manet to Mallarmé, which mystifies Hartmann himself: “I found but little to admire. . . . Hamlet was a mere sketch in black on a background of snowfields; Mallarmé, however, expressed great admiration for the vague spot representing the ghost that was perceptible on the snow, and pronounced it to be a

⁸⁸ “The Pastel Club’s Exhibition,” *New York Daily Tribune*, May 7, 1888, 6, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030214/1888-05-07/ed-1/seq-6/>.

⁸⁹ Quoted in Dore Ashton, “The Other Symbolist Inheritance in Painting,” in Balakian, 524.

⁹⁰ Jules Huret, “Interview with Stéphane Mallarmé,” 1891, in Henri Dorra, *Symbolist Art Theories: A Critical Anthology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 141.

⁹¹ [Sadakichi Hartmann], “A Tuesday Evening at Stéphane Mallarmé’s,” *The Art Critic* 1, no. 1 (November 1893): 9. Identification of the work by provenance information from Denis Rouart and Daniel Wildenstein, *Édouard Manet: catalogue raisonné* (Lausanne, Switzerland: La Bibliothèque des arts, 1975), P4.

⁹² [Hartmann], 10.

⁹³ [Hartmann], 10. Later, Barney would bedeck her Studio House with medieval revival style furniture.

chef d'oeuvre, realized as it was with so little effort; ‘there was really nothing to be seen and yet it was wrought with such deep meaning.’”⁹⁴

Importantly, here, the work in question is a pastel. It depicts Hamlet, at the composition’s right, facing his father’s ghost, to the left. It is sketchy, a study for a work realized in oil in a different form,⁹⁵ and limited in its colors—a blue sky, Hamlet dressed in somber black, all on gray paper that shows through in major passages of the landscape. There is an energy and quickness to the work’s execution. Manet used loose outlines to set out Hamlet’s figure, filling it in inconsistently. Manet colored the protagonist’s leg and pointed foot in a quick, dark back-and-forth, tightly zig-zagged line. The sky is built up in a few, soft layers of purple and blue tones over the support. Hamlet withdraws a cloak as he faces the ghost of his father. The ghost is a white, semitransparent form—the “vague spot” in Hartmann’s description—hovering just above the end of a long, gray shadow that stretches from Hamlet’s extended toe. While Hamlet’s shadow is cast in gray, the ghost seems to cast its own sort of iridescent shadow in white. The ghost form appears as if it could be an erasure, but on closer inspection, it is likely Manet’s addition or white pastel on top. The form has a human stature, equivalent to Hamlet’s height, a vertical uprightness, and some suggestion of the shape of shoulder and heads, but it is otherwise quite blank. Henry Ossawa Tanner’s *Annunciation* (1898) resembles Manet’s composition. Tanner rendered the angelic streak of light representing Gabriel similarly to the ghost of Hamlet’s father by Manet.

⁹⁴ [Hartmann], 10.

⁹⁵ The finished Hamlet painting by Manet has a full-length, single-figure format.

That Mallarmé, one of the leaders of a movement that so prized evocation, should fancy a work such as *Hamlet and the Ghost* is unsurprising. Though the Symbolists were neither first nor last to embrace pastel, the qualities of Manet's sketch and particularly the undefined ghost show the value of the medium to the Symbolists. Pastel's velvety texture evoked the atmospheric spaces of Symbolist imagination—not unlike Mallarmé's dimly-lit parlor itself. Pastel's soft edges invite suggestiveness while resisting hardness and definiteness of form.

This complementarity of Symbolist aesthetic and pastel is underscored in a transatlantic context by a book of translated poetry, *Pastels in Prose*, published in New York in 1890.⁹⁶ It includes verses by Mallarmé. His works and the other French poems in the collection were translated by the volume's editor, American Symbolist poet Stuart Merrill. The introduction of *Pastels in Prose* relates the literary and visual artistic forms: The prose poem's "wonderful refinement, which is almost fragility, is happily expressed in the notion of 'Pastels;' and more than once, forgetting that modern invention has found a way of fixing the chalks, I have felt, in going over these little pieces, that the slightest rudeness of touch might shake the bloom, the color, from them."⁹⁷ This quotation, linking Symbolist literature with the pastel medium, also highlights some of the technical properties and treasured qualities of pastels. Indeed, surface bloom is a phenomenon specific to the pastel medium.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Stuart Merrill, *Pastels in Prose* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1890). It is worth noting that this book was not a commercial success, and its reception, or lack thereof, prompted Merrill to return to France. Bruce A. Morrisette, "Early English and American Critics of French Symbolism," in *Studies in Honor of Frederick W. Shipley* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1968), 167.

⁹⁷ William Dean Howells, introduction to *Pastels in Prose*, viii.

⁹⁸ "The Touch of Color," 3. The celebration of bloom comes up several times in Birge Harrison, "The Case of the Pastel," *Art and Progress* 6, no. 5 (March 1915): 154-157. The

Bloom describes effect produced when light hits pastel, producing a velvety, matte, and luminescent quality that is particularly convincing for describing a sitter's complexion. This effect results from the composition of powders (of which pastel is an example), made up of countless and irregular particles that reflect light diffusely.⁹⁹

Merrill was one of a couple Americans active in the Parisian literary Symbolist scene. It was Merrill who was Hartmann's entrée to Mallarmé's circle.¹⁰⁰ In the first American article on Symbolist poetry, one of Merrill's poems is reproduced and analyzed.¹⁰¹ Bearing the title "Rêverie," one might link it to Alice Pike Barney's pastel of the same name (Fig. 22). This work by Barney exemplifies the properties of the medium that would appeal to a Symbolist aesthetic—blurred lines, utter indefiniteness, softness, and an atmospheric quality that is hazy and dreamlike. The medium's application to the unique support of pulpboard adds to this effect. On close examination, the curled fibers of the paper show through. The colors pass from one tone into another, tints into shades, with no linear barrier or definition. In areas, Barney's application of pastel only picks up on the raised areas of the

artist, a proponent for the cause of the medium's advancement, discusses how he "produced a series of paintings in pastel which are as sound and lasting as the best oil paintings while retaining the exquisite bloom and atmospheric quality which is the distinctive beauty of the pastel, a quality which is due, of course, to its soft, dry, unreflecting surface" (155). He describes "the delicate surface bloom which is the pastel's chief glory" (156), and pastel paintings' "exquisite and precious surface 'bloom'" (157).

⁹⁹ Sir Isaac Newton described this effect in *Opticks* (1704). Marjorie Shelley, "Painting in the Dry Manner: The Flourishing of Pastel in 18th-Century Europe," in *Pastel Portraits: Images of 18th-Century Europe*, 11-12.

¹⁰⁰ Jane Calhoun Weaver, *Sadakichi Hartmann: Critical Modernist* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 2. Belgian Symbolist Jean Delville portrayed Merrill's wife, Madame Stuart Merrill, in an remarkably intense pastel, holding an occult text with a bulging forehead, light-colored eyes in unrelenting, possessed gaze.

¹⁰¹ T.S. Perry, "The Latest Literary Fashion in France," *Cosmopolitan* 13 (July 1892): 360. Cited as the first by Morrissette, 167.

support. The lips, for example, are composed of red pigment scumbled overtop a gentle pink. Soft rays and swirls of color render the background abstract.

Titles of Barney's works, such as *Reverie*, evidence her authorial intention. Michelle Facos uses a two-pronged approach to delineate the criteria required for a work to be considered Symbolist. One prong is formal, a relative indifference to naturalistic appearance, and the other is authorial intention—the “artist's desire to represent ideas.”¹⁰² Facos underscores the importance of titles for understanding this desire.¹⁰³ With works entitled *Dreamland*, *Reverie*, *Dream Woman*, *A Memory*, *Dream Book*, *Mystic*, and *The Crystal Globe* (Fig. 23), Barney showcased her commitment to the intangible psychological realm and to subjects that were compelling to Symbolists, particularly idealist Symbolists, across the board. For example, Edmond Aman-Jean, an attendee of Barney's Salon and a Painters of the Soul exhibitor, also has multiple works bearing the title *Reverie*.¹⁰⁴

Moreover, a work such as *Reverie* is reminiscent in its compositional structure and theme of pastels by Jeanne Jacquemin, the female artist who is most firmly associated with the Symbolist movement in France (Figs. 24-25).¹⁰⁵ Stylistically, Barney's *Reverie* is comparatively more amorphous, featuring few of the hard outlines that Jacquemin used to define form. Jacquemin utilized pastel to present

¹⁰² Facos, 1.

¹⁰³ Facos, 3.

¹⁰⁴ At the Art Institute of Chicago, at the National Museum of Western Art (Japan), at the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Dijon, and in private collections.

¹⁰⁵ See Gaston Lesaulx, “Les Peintres symbolistes,” *L'Art français* 6, no. 293 (December 3, 1892), n.p. He illustrates one of Jacquemin's works, using it as a prime example of Symbolist art. See also Foucher Zarmanian, 246-250; Mathews, 166; and Leslie Stewart Curtis, “Jeanne Jacquemin: A French Symbolist,” *Women's Art Journal* 21, no. 2 (Autumn 2000-Winter 2001): 27-35.

dreamy, pondering subjects. Her oeuvre also includes a work bearing the title *Reverie*.¹⁰⁶ Echoing now-familiar attitudes towards female artists and pastel, Rémy de Gourmont commended Jacquemin's skillful use of the medium "with a precision and a technical knowledge . . . rare among women."¹⁰⁷ In 1903, Jacquemin was disturbed by a former collaborator's fictionalized representation of her that described her as a "species of spider-crab with the head of Medusa, with her expressive mouth and large, imploring eyes."¹⁰⁸ This description underscores the potency of the Medusa image for the Symbolists as well as the belittling, distracting implications such femme fatale imagery could hold for a woman centrally involved in the Symbolist movement.

Some Portrait-Sonnets of Women

During her stints in Paris in the 1890s, Barney could have seen Jacquemin's work exhibited at the Barc de Boutteville exhibitions of *Impressionist and Symbolist Painters* (*Peintres Impressionnistes et Symbolistes*). She also might have seen Jacquemin's illustrations for *Le Courrier français*.¹⁰⁹ These periodical images exemplify another one of the ways in which female artists in Symbolist milieus infiltrated the male-dominated territories of Symbolist art. They did so through the so-called minor arts, inclusive of the book arts and the art of illustration.¹¹⁰ The

¹⁰⁶ Curtis, 27.

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in Curtis, 29.

¹⁰⁸ Quoted in Curtis, 33.

¹⁰⁹ Jean Lorrain, "Conte de Noel," *Le Courrier français*, December 30, 1894, 8-11.

¹¹⁰ Foucher Zarmanian, 109-10, 121-27.

Belgian artist Louise Danse, for example, made original designs as well as engravings after images by Odilon Redon.¹¹¹

Barney also utilized this strategy of infiltration via acceptable “female” forms, when she illustrated her daughter, Natalie’s *Quelques portraits-sonnets de femmes* (*Some Portrait-Sonnets of Women*) (1900), a collection of love poems to women. The volume was 24-year-old Natalie’s first publication.¹¹² The pairing of female author and female illustrator (mother and daughter) along with the subject matter of the poems make Alice’s infiltration, if via acceptably feminine modes, all the more remarkable.

The literary merit of Natalie’s *Some Portrait-Sonnets* has been debated, with her earliest biographers dismissing it as amateurish.¹¹³ More recently, however, scholars have seen that the “substance” makes up for the “style,” finding Natalie’s forthright claim to authorship—she signed this work clearly as her own, not remaining anonymous or using a pen name—as a bold declaration of her disregard for patriarchal tradition and indifference to heterosexual conventionality.¹¹⁴ This first publication set the tone for what became, for Natalie, a lifelong dedication to living an artistic life and defying social norms. In *Some Portrait-Sonnets*, Natalie’s traditional form, the sonnet, belies the sexually revolutionary and personally definitive subject matter contained within.

¹¹¹ Charlotte Foucher Zarmarian, “‘Aux femmes surtout la gravure’? La reproduction dans les œuvres de Marie (1866-1942) et Louise Danse (1867-1948), artistes symbolistes,” *Nouvelles de l’estampe*, no. 249 (Winter 2014-2015): 40-52.

¹¹² See Francesco Rapazzini, “Postface: Deux histoires d’amour,” in *Quelques portraits-sonnets de femmes* (1900; Verona, Italy: Articolor, 1999 reprint), n.p.

¹¹³ George Wickes, *The Amazon of Letters: The Life and Loves of Natalie Barney* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1976), 45-46.

¹¹⁴ Suzanne Rodriguez, *Wild Heart: A Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), 115.

It is unclear how cognizant Barney was of her daughter's romantic relationships with women and, by extension, to what degree Alice understood the contents of Natalie's chapbook. This has been a matter of discussion amongst the many scholars of Natalie's life and work. Karla Jay explains that Alice condoned Natalie's romances so long as Natalie remained discreet, but that her sense of propriety was betrayed when the press publicly identified Natalie's poetry's lesbian content.¹¹⁵ As far away as San Francisco, reviewers reported on *Some Portrait-Sonnets* as "poems of passion, and a perverted passion at that, addressed to women."¹¹⁶ Compared to Jay, Diana Souhami portrays Alice as more ignorant of the circumstances, writing that her "French was poor" and that "she thought Natalie's friends made beautiful models, and did pastel portraits for the book, happy at the professional collaboration with her daughter," with the idea that her models were Natalie's lovers never even entering her mind.¹¹⁷ Some doubt may be cast on assertions of Alice's total ignorance when one observes the correspondences between some of Alice's illustrations and Natalie's poems. Even if Alice did not understand *Some Portrait-Sonnets* fully, Alice and Natalie's artistic expressions were thought of as complementary.¹¹⁸ Moreover, Natalie's attraction to the mode of portraiture, while in literary terms, corresponds with Alice's preference for the genre as a visual artist.

Alice evidently meditated on certain parts of the book, though perhaps only after publication. She created a grisaille-like drawing of Natalie's head in black and

¹¹⁵ Karla Jay, *The Amazon and the Page: Natalie Barney and Renée Vivien* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 4.

¹¹⁶ "A Society Girl's Verse," *Town Talk*, San Francisco, February 2, 1901, 6.

¹¹⁷ Diana Souhami, *Wild Girls: Paris, Sappho, and Art—The Lives and Loves of Natalie Barney and Romaine Brooks* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005), 23.

¹¹⁸ "Is This the World's Cleverest Woman? . . .," *San Francisco Sunday Call*.

white on medium-gray paper (Fig. 26). The depicted expression captures the first line of Natalie's poem in *Some Portrait-Sonnets*, "De moi-même" (By myself), which Alice inscribed at the bottom of the sheet of paper: "Sombre sans ennui et triste sans détresse."¹¹⁹ This translates as "Somber without worry and sad without distress."¹²⁰ Alice's printing of the text is slightly off-centered to the right; it is counter-balanced by Alice's signature to the left. The line of poetry bends somewhat upwards in the center, as if slightly drifting up on the page, pulled by the gravity of its author. Natalie is framed by her voluminous hair, which observers often remarked upon as her crowning glory of physical attributes. She stares ahead, somewhat vacantly. Her expression is somber and serene. Alice used definite lines to draw out her daughter's hair, quite similar to the type of lines that Alice used to structure Natalie's face. She has not softened them away. Thus, the texture of the skin does not suggest Natalie's youthfulness, but a coarseness. The color palette, the implied volume, and the consistency of line treatment throughout the composition give this relatively minor portrait a sculptural quality. It has a sobriety that reflects the content of the poetry in *Some Portrait-Sonnets* far more than Natalie's actually gregarious and warm personality, which drew a devoted coterie of artists and writers to her over many decades.

Natalie dedicated one of the poems in her volume to the memory of Mallarmé, who had died two years before the publication of *Some Portrait-Sonnets*.¹²¹ This tribute to Mallarmé, who was not only "the father of symbolism" according to

¹¹⁹ Natalie Clifford Barney, "De moi-même," *Quelques portraits-sonnets de femmes* (Paris: Société d'Éditions littéraires et artistiques, 1900), 24.

¹²⁰ Translation by Kling, 138.

¹²¹ Barney 1900, xiii.

Hartmann, but also one of Aline Gorren's "high priests and . . . chief glories of the Symbolist movement," underscores Natalie's Symbolist affiliations.¹²² Natalie "transformed the images of the Symbolist poetry . . . into an expression of a spiritual transcendence achieved through the devotion to an unapproachable woman."¹²³ What has generally gone unremarked upon is how Alice's illustrations for *Some Portrait-Sonnets* augment the Symbolist aesthetic of Natalie's work. For example, the faint waterlily paired with a woman's profile on Alice's front cover illustration thread together the proliferation of woman-as-flower references in Natalie's text (Figs. 27-28). In particular, Natalie writes of "fleurs du mal"¹²⁴—a pointed reference to Charles Baudelaire's book of poetry, *Les Fleurs du mal* (*The Flowers of Evil*) (1857), which was a lodestar of Symbolist inspiration.¹²⁵ If Natalie "pattern[ed] her poetics after Mallarmé and Verlaine,"¹²⁶ then Alice did some of the same vis à vis Symbolism's visual prototypes and representatives—artists such as Redon, Jacquemin, Aman-Jean, and Lévy-Dhurmer.¹²⁷

¹²² [Hartmann], 9; Aline Gorren, "The French Symbolists." *Scribner's Magazine* 13, no. 3 (March 1893): 342. Not to mention that Mallarmé is identified by Moréas in the original Symbolist manifesto (1886) as one of the men responsible for the developing current in literature.

¹²³ Jay, xiv.

¹²⁴ Barney 1900, 50.

¹²⁵ Early American writing on French Symbolism by Theodore Child, "Literary Paris," *Harper's* 85, no. 507 (August 1892): 339 cites Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal* as the germination point of the movement.

¹²⁶ Rodriguez, 89.

¹²⁷ Whistler may be added to this list as well. Rapazzini, postface, n.p. calls Whistler an "artiste symboliste de renom" and mentions Alice's studies with him, without delving into any of her illustrations for Natalie's chapbook.

Beauty of Dormant Desires

Admiration for a distant, idealized woman is a prominent theme in the verses of *Some Portrait-Sonnets*. Natalie's "La Belle aux désirs dormants" (The beauty of dormant desires) proclaims a reverence for a "flower among flower, beauty among beauties."¹²⁸ Situated on the page facing "The beauty" is the first of Alice's five images for the interior of the book.

The suggestion that Alice's French was not advanced enough to understand the only slightly veiled meaning behind her daughter's poems, and Suzanne Rodriguez's assertion that Alice was "cheerfully blind to her daughter's proclivities" becomes somewhat less convincing when one observes that Alice managed to create images responsive to the specific content of Natalie's poems.¹²⁹ The conversations around their collaboration have passed into oblivion, but Rodriguez assumes that the works were created "at Natalie's behest."¹³⁰ Perhaps Natalie gave Alice a general indication of her desires for the portraits without providing draft manuscripts. Moreover, a cursory, or even slightly more significant, reading of such obtuse poetry in a foreign language may not have registered the overall effect.¹³¹

Nevertheless, in "The beauty of dormant desires" Natalie writes, "I would like to love you without breaking your wings," and Alice depicted a woman in profile

¹²⁸ "Fleur parmi les fleurs, belle entre les belles" Barney 1900, 5, trans. Jay, 58.

¹²⁹ Rodriguez, 114.

¹³⁰ Rodriguez, 114. One might question the reliability of Rodriguez's text on matters of visual art. She calls Alice's images "watercolors" (114), when they are in fact pastels.

¹³¹ Even a reviewer, who presumably read the work multiple times, maintained that Natalie's words were addressed to men (*Washington Mirror*, March 9, 1901, quoted in Rodriguez, 121).

holding in her palm a dead bird—an almost too-literal interpretation of Natalie’s line (Fig. 29).¹³² The model gazes downwards at this representation of delicate, fleeting life and mortality, and her thick hair swirls up and around her shoulder, hanging loose on the opposite side and framing her face. A fallen leaf, a remembrance of passing seasons and hence the inevitable advancement towards death, is perched atop her head. With such flowing locks, wistful expression, and robe-like gown draped below her shoulders, this “belle” emulates the Pre-Raphaelite women of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. It also relates to illustrations by Louise Danse (Fig. 30). Barney’s and Danse’s images share an emphasis on interiority, and both, to achieve this effect, use an image of a singular figure, a woman in profile, with closed eyes. While Danse turned her model’s chin up, a position of vision beyond this world, the indistinct backgrounds, long hair, flowing robe-like attire, composition, and overall mood have much in common with Alice’s illustration of a few years earlier.

Vamp of 1900

The next image by Barney appears opposite Sonnet V, which is identified in the index to *Some Portrait-Sonnets* as “Mlle L. S.” (Fig. 31). Among the members of Natalie’s circle at this moment numbered the actress Charlotte (i.e. Lottie) Stern, and it is with her that this portrait—or, truly, portraits, in word and image—have been identified.¹³³ Alice’s illustration is also still extant as a colored pastel on fiberboard (Fig. 32). In this form, it bears the title *Vamp of 1900: Lottie Stein[sic]*. Derived from “vampire,” the shortened form of “vamp,” meaning “a woman who uses her charm or

¹³² “Je voudrais t’aimer sans briser tes ailes.” Barney 1900, 5.

¹³³ Rodriguez, 101, 114.

wiles to seduce and exploit men,” only appeared in the English lexicon in the 1910s, suggesting that the title was attached to the work later in its history.¹³⁴ Perhaps the title *Vamp of 1900* derived from the moniker given to one of Natalie’s first and most significant paramours and intellectual interlocutors, Renée Vivien, nicknamed “Sapho 1900.”¹³⁵ In relation to the poem, Alice’s image probably received its title thanks to the first line of Natalie’s last verse to Sonnet V: “You are the vampire of souls.”¹³⁶

The lines of Natalie’s Sonnet V play with images associated with visual art, calling the woman “a living picture of the new art” crowned with a diadem of “half-tones of happenstance.”¹³⁷ Natalie’s words in Sonnet V create a monstrous portrait of a woman whose “green complexion scorns makeup.”¹³⁸ Unlike Alice’s “belle,” whose downward, profiled glance emits a passivity, she makes the *Vamp of 1900* stare penetratingly ahead and off the page. Whereas the artist exposed the belle’s shoulders, the vamp wears a high-necked blouse that merges with her equally highly structured hair. She exists as a floating head in the middle of the page, cut off at the crest of the shoulder and casting a shadow behind her. Without any heavy-handed signaling, the inexplicable redness of the shadow cast by the vamp’s profile recalls blood, the vampire’s primary attribute. The vamp’s hair is drawn as a chignon.

¹³⁴ *Merriam Webster*, s.v. “vamp.” See Dale Hudson, “Vampires of Color and the Performance of Multicultural Whiteness,” in *The Persistence of Whiteness: Race and Contemporary Hollywood Cinema*, ed. Daniel Bernardi (New York: Routledge, 2008), 150-51n9 for an exploration of the etymology of “vamp,” which moved in the English language from intransitive verb in 1904 to noun in 1911, and then passed back into the French as an “Anglo-American word” for femme fatale in 1918.

¹³⁵ This moniker was only coined in 1951. Elaine Marks, *Marrano as Metaphor: The Jewish Presence in French Writing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 44.

¹³⁶ “Tu es la vampire des âmes.” Barney 1900, 9. Romaine Brooks was called “thief of souls.”

¹³⁷ “Vivant tableau du nouvel art . . . Des demi-teintes de hazard,” Barney 1900, 9.

¹³⁸ “Ton teint vert méprise le fard,” Barney 1900, 9.

Barney incorporated purple and blue shades into the woman's dark hair to suggest the depth of its blackness (which has been damaged by white spots, perhaps of mold, that have developed in certain areas). While the vamp's skin-tone is not quite the pallor of the undead, Alice emphasized its lightness through the tonal contrast she orchestrated with the darkness of the hair and outfit. The fiberboard has a raw, unfinished appearance, as if the vamp materialized on the page but did not fully resolve. The start of a half-erased line suggests the curve of the shoulder. White highlights hover around the darkest shadow and pick up light on the woman's chin and nose, and the highlight of her staring eyes.

The vampiric woman was a highly potent symbol at the turn of the century and an important manifestation of the femme fatale type. While the principle fin-de-siècle vampire was male, the title character in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), in Stoker's book, female victims-turned-vampires well outnumber the novel's sole male vampire. Scholars have read *Dracula* as a morality tale about the need to restrict, legislate, and institutionalize "dangerous" female sexuality.¹³⁹ Dijkstra—who sees Stoker's *Dracula* as a poor piece of literature but a largely impactful "antifeminine text"—also describes novelist and playwright Rachilde's "emphatically symbolist story 'The Blood Drinker'" (1900) as a tale of "unreasoning, murderous havoc" enacted by a woman.¹⁴⁰ Edvard Munch created the emblematic vampire in Symbolist visual art (Fig. 33), and, again, the vampire is a woman. With long, red hair, she bends over a man tucked in her bosom. She leans and descends upon him. The

¹³⁹ Rebecca Stott, *The Fabrication of the Late Victorian Femme Fatale: The Kiss of Death* (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1996), 88.

¹⁴⁰ Dijkstra, 338.

tendrils of her caustically colored locks fall upon the back of his head. The image is disarming as it moves between a gentle embrace and a fateful attack of the male lover/victim.

Arthur Symons, whose *Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899) is credited with bringing the movement to the attention of English-speaking audiences, wrote a poem entitled “Vampire” in 1894:

Intolerable woman, where's the name
For your insane complexity of shame?
Vampire! white bloodless creature of the night,
Whose lust of blood has blanched her chill veins white,
Veins fed with moonlight over dead men's tombs;
Whose eyes remember many martyrdoms,
So that their depths, whose depth cannot be found,
Are shadowed pools in which a soul lies drowned;
Who would fain have pity, but she may not rest
Till she have sucked a man's heart from his breast,
And drained his life-blood from him, vein by vein,
And seen his eyes grow brighter for the pain,
And his lips sigh her name with his last breath,
As the man swoons ecstatically on death.¹⁴¹

Symons's poem embroils a vampire woman in a fatal eroticism. Quivering lines and bright white highlights give the eyes of Alice's vamp, and the eyes of figures in her other works, a watery quality that resonates with the shallow, sinister pools of Symons's poem. In other ways however, Barney's pastel is restrained and ordered, a far cry from the lustful, primal vampire creatures described by Symons and others.

Female vampires did not solely prey on male victims, but also on fellow women. An example of this is Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872), a text which predates *Dracula*. The title character of the novella is mistaken for a man at

¹⁴¹ *The Collected Works of Arthur Symons* vol. 3 (London: Martin Secker, 1924), 173.

least once in the book, and she preys on other women.¹⁴² Such gender-bending, “lesbian” vampires may have possessed a notable place in Natalie’s imagination.¹⁴³ Whereas the pervasiveness of the female vampire in 1970s horror film has been understood as a reaction to the perceived threat of the women’s liberation movement,¹⁴⁴ the female vampire at the turn of the century reacted to the perceived threat of the New Woman. In taking up the motif of the female vampire, without exploiting its more sensationalized, eroticized components, Barney’s *Vamp of 1900* shows her both embracing a Symbolist motif and adjusting it to better align with her lived experience as a New Woman.¹⁴⁵

Barney likely took cues in this image from Philip Burne-Jones’s *The Vampire* (1897) (Fig. 34). Burne-Jones depicted his vampire as a human woman. She is not a supernatural creature, even though her toothy snarl may call fangs to mind.¹⁴⁶ His image solidified the identification of woman as vampire, and the collapsing of the two in the popular imagination.¹⁴⁷ His depiction shows a woman half-mounted atop a man whose figure is strewn out as if in deep, helpless sleep or death. It is an inversion, of sorts, of Henri Fuseli’s *The Nightmare* (1781). Burne-Jones’s image was very well-

¹⁴² Djikstra, 341.

¹⁴³ By the 1970s, the woman vampire as lesbian trope was cemented, and a number of films adopted the tale of *Carmilla* (Creed, 226-227).

¹⁴⁴ Creed, 224. See also Bonnie Zimmerman, *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media* no. 24-25 (March 1981): 23-24, <https://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC24-25folder/LesbianVampires.html>.

¹⁴⁵ For Barney as New Woman, see Laura A. Prieto, *At Home in the Studio: The Professionalization of Women Artists in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 112.

¹⁴⁶ She is called “a vampire with the face of a woman” in “The Vampire,” *The Fra: Exponent of American Philosophy* 7, no. 141 (August 1911): 141.

¹⁴⁷ Gary D. Rhodes, “The First Vampire Films in America,” *Palgrave Communications* 3, no. 41 (2017): 3. “The New Gallery,” *The Builder* 72, no. 2830 (May 1, 1897): 396 notes “the opened lips and teeth.”

known. It inspired his cousin, Rudyard Kipling, to write a poem of the same name. Kipling's poem once again meditates not on the blood-sucking creature of the night, but on the unfeeling and careless woman of the contemporary moment.¹⁴⁸ The image and the poem were major sensations, and several American publishers disbursed them together in pamphlet form.¹⁴⁹

Burne-Jones modeled the woman in *Vampire* off his lover, the actress Mrs. Patrick Campbell.¹⁵⁰ Barney also portrayed Mrs. Campbell, at around the same time (ca. 1898) (Fig. 35). A side-by-side of the two images reveal that the same model posed for both.¹⁵¹ They both depict in profile the dark-haired woman with deep-set eyes, though the sinister, mischievous expression of Burne-Jones's image gives way in Barney's to a more ponderous, nearly glazed-over look. The coincidence of the models' professions—both Mrs. Campbell and Lottie Stein (model for *Vamp of 1900*) were actresses—aligns Barney's *Vamp of 1900* with *The Vampire*, as does the profile view, the dark hair, and the spooky shadows in each. Moreover, the reproduction of Burne-Jones's work in pamphlet publications as photogravures alongside Kipling's poem aligns the image, on a material level, with the reproduction and replication of Barney's images for her daughter's text.

¹⁴⁸ Rudyard Kipling, *The Vampire: A Poem* (Washington, DC: Woodward & Lothrop, 1898).

¹⁴⁹ It was put out as a pamphlet by at least three different American publishers in 1898. The popularity of the poem makes it perhaps Kipling's second best known. Anne Morey and Claudia Nelson, "Phallus and Void in Kipling's 'The Vampire,' and Its Progeny," *Frame* 24, no. 2 (November 2011): 45. The original work by Burne-Jones, now lost, was exhibited in the United States in 1897 and 1902. *The Vampire* had a big impact, culminating in the first on-screen "vamp" of early cinema, portrayed by Theda Bara in Porter Emerson Browne's *The Fool There Was* (1915), which Browne based on Kipling's poem.

¹⁵⁰ Morey and Nelson, 40.

¹⁵¹ By 1898, it was no secret that the woman portrayed in Burne-Jones's *The Vampire* was Mrs. Patrick Campbell. "Among the Players," *The Peterson Magazine* 8, no. 1 (January 1898): 81.

Missing though, in Barney's *Mrs. Patrick Campbell* as in the *Vamp of 1900*, is the depiction of the male victim who appears in Burne-Jones's. This absence reorients the work and brings Barney's depictions closer the poem by Mary C. Low, "The Vampire: From a Woman's Point of View" (1899), in which Low spoke back to Burne-Jones/Kipling's vampire with a woman's voice.¹⁵²

Ophelia

The predatory, vampiric woman fed the now familiar dichotomy between *femme fatale* and *femme fragile* present in Symbolist thematics. On the other end of the spectrum lies Shakespeare's Ophelia, so devoted to and tortured by love for Hamlet that she goes mad and meets her demise in a watery, flower-strewn grave.

On the page facing Natalie's Sonnet XIII, indexed as "Nothing can touch you, etc. (E. G.)" ("Rien ne te peut toucher, etc. [E. G.]"), Barney's pastel of *Ophelia* (Figs. 36-37) is reproduced. The title of Barney's pastel does not derive directly from *Some Portrait-Sonnets*, as Natalie's text does not refer to the character from *Hamlet* by name. The poem is, instead, identified in the appendix with the initials E. G., referencing Ellen Goin—Natalie's cousin and friend, and Alice's niece and frequent model. Tellingly, though, the poem that precedes Sonnet XIII is entitled "À Mme. Sarah Bernhardt" (To Mme. Sarah Bernhardt). Natalie's poem to Bernhardt references the actress' portrayal of Hamlet. Bernhardt was the first woman to play the part, debuting the role in 1899 in Paris. Natalie calls Bernhardt both "a woman" and

¹⁵² Mary C. Low, "The Vampire: From a Woman's Point of View," *The Bookman* 9, no. 1 (March 1899): 61. See also Morey and Nelson, 44.

“the Dane,”¹⁵³ playing with Bernhardt’s at times polymorphic gender expression and her dramatic interpretation of the Danish prince.

The reference to Bernhardt’s portrayal of Hamlet underscores the identification of Alice’s portrait, on the following page, with Ophelia—Hamlet’s ill-fated wooer. Indeed, Bernhardt earlier acted in the role of Ophelia, and her favorite painter, Georges Clairin, painted one of the manifold Ophelias of the second half of the nineteenth century with Bernhardt’s features.¹⁵⁴ Even without the specific reference to Bernhardt, Alice’s depiction is still immediately identifiable with the era’s effusion of portrayals of Ophelia. In this case, though, the depiction challenges a constrained understanding of the character as “the later nineteenth-century’s all-time favorite example of the love-crazed self-sacrificial woman who most perfectly demonstrated her devotion to her man,” as Dijkstra describes her.¹⁵⁵

The most famous example of an Ophelia in the visual arts is Sir John Everett Millais’s masterpiece *Ophelia* (1851-52), a work that does fit more comfortably with Dijkstra’s characterization (Fig. 38). Millais magnificently captured a closely observed and teeming scene of nature and the stream in which the beautiful, tragic heroine floats. His Ophelia, weighed down by her soaking gown, looks up with vacant, dead eyes and a gaping, breathless mouth. Alice’s portrayal is comparatively “zoomed in.” In ridding itself of excessive detail and narrative information, it adheres more closely to a Symbolist aesthetic. Alice’s Ophelia does not possess the altogether absent, corpselike manner of Millais’s rendition. Rather, Alice’s Ophelia turns to the

¹⁵³ Barney 1900, 17.

¹⁵⁴ Dijkstra, 44.

¹⁵⁵ Dijkstra, 42.

viewer, whom she glances at from the corner of her heavily lidded eyes. She seems to beckon to the observer or challenge a response. This more direct, confrontational, and immediate depiction of Ophelia along with the larger context of *Some Portrait-Sonnets* challenges the ideological preconditions of Dijkstra's assessment. For one, the only Prince Hamlet to whom Ophelia could direct her devotion in *Some Portrait-Sonnets* is a woman, Bernhardt.¹⁵⁶ Moreover, this sonnet, like all the others in the volume, is ultimately positioned as one woman observing another woman. One might also note the lack, mentioned above, of any strict identification of Alice's work as Ophelia per se. The subject of the work hovers between the tragic Shakespearean character and specific, modern women present in the Barneys' lives.

Like the other illustrations in *Some Portrait-Sonnets*, Alice's work corresponds in ways with Natalie's text. Here, the flowers floating on either side of the figure's torso depict not the "fantastic garlands" of "crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples" with which Shakespeare's script places Ophelia at her demise.¹⁵⁷ Rather, they are lotuses and thus respond to the specific imagery Natalie conjures in her poem: "Your breasts are two big blooming flowers / Cradling the poison of their milky desire / Like lotus on a stagnant pond."¹⁵⁸ Renée Vivien used essentially the same image in her book, *Une femme m'apparu (A Woman Appeared to Me)* (1904), a novelized account of her tumultuous affair with Natalie. She offers a haunting description of Natalie, whom she nicknames "Vally," or "Lorelei": "Then I found

¹⁵⁶ Barney 1900, 17. Furthermore, Natalie asks, "Et qu'importe ton prince? à toi le diadème" ("Of what import is your prince? To you goes the crown").

¹⁵⁷ William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Hamlet Prince of Denmark* (1603), MIT Open Source Shakespeare, <http://shakespeare.mit.edu/hamlet/full.html>.

¹⁵⁸ "Tes seins sont deux fleurs grandes épanouies, / Berçant le poison de leur laiteuse envie / Comme des lotus sur un étang stagnant," Barney 1900, 19.

myself beside the corpse of Vally . . . floating in a stagnant pool. Her bruised breasts were two blue water lilies. Her eyes, filled with revulsion, were looking at me. I understood that I had drowned her long ago in the stagnant pool. She floated, her blonde hair mingled with weed and iris, like a perverse Ophelia.”¹⁵⁹ Was Vivien referencing a specific memory of *Some Portrait-Sonnets* and its illustration? She names the breasts as aquatic flowering plants and even engages the quite particular attribute of Alice’s image when she writes of Vally’s “revolted eyes.”

Ophelia and other water-ladies were laden with meaning for Vivien, whose name itself (she renamed herself Renée Vivien from Pauline M. Tarn) recalls the Arthurian Lady of the Lake, the enchantress Vivien.¹⁶⁰ Once again, in a 1905 “Sonnet to the androgyne,” also presumed to be addressed to Natalie, Vivien describes her paramour as “Grave as Hamlet, pale as Ophelia”¹⁶¹—a rehearsal of the Ophelia trope, a reminder of Natalie’s description of Bernhardt, and a commentary, as well, on Natalie’s gender nonconformism. Natalie played with androgyny, and the only illustration not by Alice in *Some Portrait-Sonnets* is the frontispiece by Carolus-Duran, which portrays Natalie costumed as Oscar Wilde’s Happy Prince.

Tama Lea Engelking has assessed the potency of water-associated women in Vivien’s work and concludes that her continual revisiting of the theme “records the woman poet’s struggle to negotiate with a masculine literary tradition that reveals

¹⁵⁹ Renée Vivien, *A Woman Appeared to Me*, trans. Jeannette H. Foster (1904; Tallahassee, FL: The Naiad Press, 1976), 40.

¹⁶⁰ Tama Lea Engelking, “Renée Vivien and The Ladies of the Lake,” *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 30, no. 3/4 (Spring-Summer 2002): 365. She still has the initials “P.M.T.” in Barney 1900, 60.

¹⁶¹ Quoted in Natalie Clifford Barney, *A Perilous Advantage: The Best of Natalie Clifford Barney*, ed. and trans. Anna Livia (Norwich, VT: New Victoria Publishers, 1992), 23.

both the restrictions suffered by creative women, and the disruptive possibilities of feminist poetic revisions.”¹⁶² I think a similar argument can be put forth in the case of Alice’s *Ophelia*, and her artwork more widely. It is not a blind reiteration of masculine thematics in an ethos of antifeminism, though it does engage Symbolist tropes. The image avoids the utterly helpless Ophelia, devoted to one man, and serving as an open receptacle, in death, for a masculine gaze. Alice’s Ophelia, with Natalie’s gender queering text, looks back.

Redon would take up Ophelia as subject matter for pastels in the following years (Fig. 39). In his beautiful cacophony of exotic blooms, Ophelia’s eyes barely register, much less does she actively gaze out of the picture. Her profile, with undefined features, fades into the surroundings, subsumed by mists and the tides that draw her down in the corner of the composition in which Redon has situated her. While Redon’s taking up of the theme reiterates its potency for Symbolist artists, a closer comparison, chronologically and formally, to Alice’s image can be made with Lévy-Dhurmer’s work of the same year as her own, *Ophelia (Portrait of Suzanne Reichenberg)* (1900) (Fig. 40). These works are attuned technically, through the use of pastel, and have similar compositions. Lévy-Dhurmer had a profound impact on Barney, but Barney also arguably served as a mentor of sorts for him, and it is not known which of these Ophelias appeared first. In providing illustrations for Natalie’s book, Alice may have set the stage for Lévy-Dhurmer’s collaborations with Vivien. He made portraits of both Natalie and Vivien, and provided illustrations for a number

¹⁶² Engelking, 374.

of Vivien's later publications, starting with his blue-hued cover for Vivien's *Sapho* (1903), which appeared three years after the publication of *Some Portrait-Sonnets*.

Blues and greens predominate in Lévy-Dhurmer's rendition of *Ophelia*. He orchestrates a moonlit setting, with a trail of moonlight reflected in the water over Ophelia/Reichenberg's hand, which is positioned, as if in a casket, with a bunch of flowers over her heart. His blue palette is soft, and calm. Alice's work is harsher and more modernist. She too uses navy and blue hues, but the inclusion of black in foreground and background creates a higher degree of contrast and patterning. She may have had in mind the translation of this work to the sepia printing of the book when she created this added visual contrast. As Lévy-Dhurmer's is a portrait of the actress Reichenberg, both works are portraits of individuals and, simultaneously, Ophelias. Lévy-Dhurmer emphasized softness and curves—note the waves in Reichenberg's hair, a gaze that (like Millais's Ophelia) looks dreamily upward in a resigned fashion, and the limpness of her fingers around the bunch of flowers. The vertical reeds in the foreground create a repoussoir device, and also serve as a separation from the viewer, which he takes to extremes in a striking illustration for Vivien's *Les Kitharèdes* several years later (Fig. 41). Barney's image forbids such division between the viewer. Goin's/Ophelia's straw-like yellow hair and juttred chin communicate a different, more confrontational bearing. Lévy-Dhurmer's use of line, showing the gentle ripples in the water, are short and blended together. His approach takes greater advantage of the "sweetening" quality of pastel. Alice's application of pastel is comparatively more intense and expressive. Her lines, and the patches they create in the water, are immediate. One can trace the movement of her pastel stick

through the wavy back-and-forth streaks in navy, that transition to a robin's egg blue, in the reflection beneath the waterlilies.

The light, in Barney's *Ophelia*, does not come from an obvious source like the moon. It falls in from the right and illuminates Goin's face with an eerie pallor, tinged with yellowish-green in the highlights and a bruised, gray-blue in the shadows. This chartreuse, absinthe-like hue on her forehead and cheeks creates a feeling of acid sickness as it spills over, around the crown of her head, into the reflections beneath. Repetitive, extended, horizontal lines with a slight bend—you can see where Barney set down the pastel stick and where she picked it up again—in several tints of blue and green move across the surface of the water under Goin, and patches of blue and green invade an expanse of black filtering back into an unlocated horizon. The two lotus flowers feature petals curving inwards. Their forms led Alice's biographer to read them as the folds of Goin's clothing,¹⁶³ but it becomes clear—especially when one can see in the colored version the flowers' yellow stamens—that they are flora. Perhaps, though, Alice was playing with this ambiguity.

Both works have areas where, upon initial examination, the pastel seems to have abraded and revealed the support. A comparison with the version reproduced in *Some Portrait-Sonnets* suggests that, at least in Barney's case, this textural component of the work was purposeful and original. Indeed, the early reproduction of Barney's work in Natalie's book is valuable for the insight that it provides on this matter. One might look, for example, to the area around Ophelia's shoulder in the *Some Portrait-Sonnets* version versus original pastel. Both original and reproduction

¹⁶³ Kling, 137.

show the same effect. The pigments only partially adhere to the support. They cling, through Barney's mechanical application, only to what are the most raised areas of the textured paper. She did not completely embed the pigments into the recesses of the paper. This quality of application, particularly achievable in the pastel medium, makes the viewer cognizant of the relationship between surface and support, and suggests the artifice of representational artwork as it points to the art-object-as-such. This there-but-not quality of pastel, its suggestion of fleeting dreams or temporary visions, is even more pronounced in a work such as Barney's *Ceres* (ca. 1910), where the bottom of the portrait, below the goddess' shoulder, disintegrates, as a more and more fractured application of the medium catches the wharf and weft of the canvas textile support (Fig. 42). Barney exhibited *Ceres* among her finished works despite this *non-finito* quality.

Pastel is aligned with the concealing effects of makeup of the era, enmeshed in discourses of feminine truthfulness versus deception, class, race, and beauty. It is particularly notable here that a "powder of Ophelia" was being marketed in the 1890s, allowing women to reproduce, for and on themselves, the supposedly enticing pallor of the Shakespearean maiden.¹⁶⁴ Marni Reva Kessler has analyzed the "sprinklings" of rice powders and "speckl[ings]" of rouge on the late nineteenth-century female

¹⁶⁴ Dijkstra, 46. I have located advertisements and sales notices for "Poudre Ophélie" spanning from 1888—*La Vie Parisienne*, November 17, 1888—to 1913 on the "General Price List," 460, for a Whiteley William Ltd. department store in London. Conspicuous makeup would be considered improper in the nineteenth century, and a "natural" look was valued until the 1920s. See "Make-up," Smithsonian National Museum of American History, <https://www.si.edu/spotlight/health-hygiene-and-beauty/make-up>. In the United States, as in European nations, the cosmetics industry in the early twentieth century promoted whiteness as the criteria of female beauty. See Helen Sheumaker, *Artifacts from Modern America* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2018), 121.

face.¹⁶⁵ She compares this to the application of paint on canvas: “A finger smoothes on whitening agents and dips into a jar of rouge, a brush drags across the palette and into a pot of velvety rice powder, suffusing a canvas with color, writing across a face. The skin is the canvas, the makeup is the facture, and the female face is set up as an object on which can be inscribed the text of supreme beauty.”¹⁶⁶ While she is speaking of oil paint, the powdery consistency of pastel could be even more persuasively described by Kessler’s analogical prose in the proceeding passage. Makeup and art pigments are particularly analogous in *Ophelia*, wherein the color of the paper serves as the base color for Barney’s figure’s skin tone.

It is striking to think of a female artist using the medium of pastel in a work of art analogously to how she might have used the “medium” of makeup to craft her own facial image. For Barney, a woman of society, the application of tasteful and restrained makeup was an inevitably conscientious routine of self-presentation and identity construction.¹⁶⁷ In a subtle fashion, this lived experience is relevant to Patricia Mathews’s assertion that women who were Symbolists “grounded their work, even if at times unconsciously, in their own experiences, so that their female

¹⁶⁵ Marni Reva Kessler, *Sheer Presence: The Veil in Manet’s Paris* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 36.

¹⁶⁶ Kessler, 37.

¹⁶⁷ Emmanuelle Héran, “Art for the Sake of the Soul: Polychrome Sculpture and Literary Symbolism,” in *The Colour of Sculpture: 1840-1910*, ed. Andreas Blühm (Zwolle, Netherlands: Waanders Uitgevers, 1996, in conjunction with exhibition at the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam and Henry Moore Institute, Leeds), 91-98 discusses cosmetics in a Symbolist frame. On the one hand, there is Théophile Gautier’s 1858 prescription for a “light veil of white dust,” bringing “the figure [a woman] closer to statuary, becoming more spiritual, purified.” On the other hand, Symbolist author Jean Lorrain honed in on “painted women,” an exploration pursued in the sculptural practice of such artists as Fernand Khnopff. Héran finds that “polychromy does not strengthen the mimetic quality of the work or bring it closer to reality, but, on the contrary, establishes a distance, endowing it with ‘a little more soul,’ a mysterious and undefinable interiority” (98).

characters enacted their difference with dignity and authority.”¹⁶⁸ Make-up is a secondary concern to Kessler though, whose book is primarily about a complementary issue, veiling, which is also of great relevance here.

Veiling

Veiling is an important and recurrent Symbolist motif. It appears several times in Natalie’s *Some Portrait-Sonnets*. The book’s dedication, for example, refers to “still-born dreams” that are “veiled like nuns.”¹⁶⁹ Kessler describes veiling in late nineteenth-century France as a negotiation between propriety and sexuality. Bourgeois women wore veils to filter out dust, protect them from the natural elements, and enhance their beauty. A veil drew attention to that which was concealed. “It could enable a proper woman to vacillate between a straightforward adherence to propriety and a staging of falsity, mystery, and sexuality.”¹⁷⁰

The literary image that Natalie employs in “Beauty of Dormant Desires” plays with the artifice of the veil, comparing it to the lightness, flimsiness, or superficiality of the woman to whom the poem is dedicated, someone whom Natalie calls both “innocent” and “callous.”¹⁷¹ The veil “reinscribes that which it seeks to suspend: sexuality.”¹⁷² Natalie deploys the image in just this way. She writes of “chastely

¹⁶⁸ Mathews, 160.

¹⁶⁹ “Songes mort-nés / Voilés comme des nonnes.” Barney 1900, xv. The comparison to a nun recalls George Rodenbach’s play, “Le Voile” (1896), and Lévy-Dhurmer’s image of actress Marguerite Moreno from the play. This play highlights some of the Symbolist investment in the veil as it relates to the preservation of mystery. The story revolves around a nun and her suitor’s desire to see her head, especially her hair, uncovered. Once visible though, he loses his desire for her as the mystery is gone.

¹⁷⁰ Kessler, 51.

¹⁷¹ “Naïve cruel.” Barney 1900, 5.

¹⁷² Kessler, 55.

covering words with veils,”¹⁷³ but in a lightly concealed poem about sensual passion that goes on to speak of “carnal rhymes.”¹⁷⁴ One might think of the photograph of Vivien, posed in a studio portrait with a semi-transparent white veil over her mouth (Fig. 43).¹⁷⁵

The veil appears as a motif in multiple images by Alice from around this time. They include *Ceres* (1901), *The Dream Book* (1901), *Morning Glories* (1911), and her *Self-Portrait with Hat and Veil* (ca. 1900) (Figs. 44-46). Even though other images may not feature a veil explicitly, many of Alice’s pastels appear as if seen through a semitransparent veil. They frequently possess a haziness, indefiniteness, and filmy quality that has to do with the medium’s aforementioned bloom, the scattering of light across the pigment particles, the texture of the support, and the blurred and smeared qualities that pastel readily achieves, not to mention the tendency to place pastels under a mediating glass pane. Redon, for one, was known to have embraced framing under glass not only for delicate pastel works, but to give a range of his pieces “an ‘intérieur’ or spiritual effect,”¹⁷⁶ an impression quite in line with Symbolist aesthetics.

¹⁷³ “Couvrir les mots chastement de voiles.” Barney 1900, 5.

¹⁷⁴ “Rimes charnelles.” Barney 1900, 5

¹⁷⁵ Vivien also wrote a short story entitled the “Veil of Vashti” (1904), a feminist retelling of the Book of Esther (the Purim story).

¹⁷⁶ Harriet K. Stratis, “Beneath the Surface: Redon’s Methods and Materials,” in Douglas W. Druick et al., *Odilon Redon: Prince of Dreams* (New York: Henry N. Abrams, in conjunction with exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, and Royal Academy of Arts, London), 362. Reinhold Heller, “Concerning Symbolism and the Structure of Surface,” *Art Journal* 45, no. 2 (Summer 1985):151 also reflects on glazing as a choice, for Khnopff, that was intellectual and aesthetic: “The reflective glass had the function of generating a second surface for the painting, one whose translucence again accents the surface as surface, and thereby also proclaims the artificiality of the image.”

The veiled effect in Barney's pastels offers the viewer an optical experience embodying that of a woman of the era, her own vision of the world patterned, distorted, and limited by veiling practices. The circa 1900 self-portrait and later photographic portrait of Alice (Figs. 46-47) suggest the reality of this experience for Barney herself and adds greater meaning to the veiled effects that her works possess, making them a marker of the artist's own gendered and classed position.

Kessler does not consider Symbolism specifically, but Symbolist ideology and aesthetics formed in reaction to the ways in which the more illusory, magical aspects of existence seemed threatened by scientific and industrial progress at the end of the century.¹⁷⁷ Symbolists derived an idea of female beauty, and its potential for deceitfulness, from Baudelaire, who wrote of an archetypal woman swirling with "the muslins, the gauzes, the vast, iridescent clouds of stuff in which she envelops herself."¹⁷⁸

Kessler focuses on oil paint, whereas pastel's effects are arguably far more veil-like. While pastel uses the same range of pigments as watercolor and oil painting, unlike the other two media, the pigment and its binder do not sink into and are not absorbed by the support. The liquid binder that holds the pastel sticks together is not intended to bind the pigment onto or into the support. The pastel adheres only mechanically, with the artist scraping the stick across the surface. The particulates

¹⁷⁷ It appears that Barney was later involved with the Freemasonic group, the "Mystic Order of Veiled Prophets of the Enchanted Realm," underscoring again the mysterious, mystic, and occult associations with veiling. See the program for Mrs. Christian Hemmick [Barney] and Mrs. R. D. Shepherd present, *Ingomar*, June 13, 1917, auspices of Kallipolis Grotto, No. 15, 28th Annual Session, Supreme Council, Mystic Order of Veiled prophets, National Sylvan Theater, Washington, DC.

¹⁷⁸ Quoted in Kessler, 50.

catch the texture of the surface of the support or underlying materials, perhaps another layer of pastel. Existing in this delicate, almost floating-on-top state, the pastel medium has more in common with veiling (a veiling of the support) than traditional painting does.

Kessler explicates important historical associations with veiling, including its Orientalizing valences. According to Kessler, the veil subtly reminded French citizens, as they passed veiled ladies on their streets, of their country's colonial possessions overseas, thus furthering a set of associations between the Near East and North Africa ("the Orient"), mystery, femininity, sexuality, and the exotic.¹⁷⁹ American Orientalism had some parallel and some differentiated implications.¹⁸⁰ For Barney personally, veiling's associations may have been imbricated with her interest in Bahá'í and her own Jewish heritage, both potentially exoticized identities.

Later in life, Barney employed the exoticizing valences of veiling in her play, *The Veil*, a "Mime-Drama-Ballet of Indo-China."¹⁸¹ The performance enacts a female revenge fantasy, set in an Eastern milieu "one century before A.D." A beautiful dancing girl, Soki, with a "thin veil" swears to the Goddess to never remove it. An evil, lust-filled "Khan" character forces her to do so, and when she resists, he strangles her with her veil, seemingly to death. The veil then takes on a life of its own. It lifts off Soki's body, and then wraps itself around the neck of the Khan,

¹⁷⁹ Kessler, 126.

¹⁸⁰ Holly Edwards, *Noble Pleasures, Wicked Dreams: Orientalism in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Art Museum, 2000, in conjunction with exhibition at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA), 11-58.

¹⁸¹ Alice Pike Barney, *The Veil*, 1925, typescript in Folder 7, Box 13, Alice Pike Barney Papers and Related Material, circa 1889-1995, Record Unit 7473, Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, DC.

killing him: “Like a snake it [Soki’s veil] follows where he flees, and finally attaches itself to his throat. With a look of horror he groans and rolls upon the floor, slowly strangling to death.” Soki reawakens. Barney’s play shows her wielding veiling towards more radical ends, at least in a cultural forum. *The Veil* reminds one as well of the violence and frustration embedded in W. E. B. Du Bois’s discussion of the Veil.¹⁸² Barney’s veil’s “killer instincts” in this play suggests a resistance and female anger ingrained throughout her work—whether forthrightly, as in *Medusa*, or more subtly, within the pastel oeuvre.

Babylon and Woman Clothed with the Sun

Soon after work on *Some Portrait-Sonnets* was finished, Barney returned to the United States, following her husband, who had suffered a heart attack and had been enraged by the press around his daughter’s chapbook. Now working out of a New York apartment, Barney set her mind to organizing a solo exhibition to be held in the Hemicycle Gallery of DC’s Corcoran Gallery of Art in 1901.¹⁸³ Two major, life-size pieces that would be featured in the show depicted subject matter from the biblical Book of Revelation: *Woman Clothed with the Sun* and *Babylon* (Figs. 48 and 52). They stand apart for their sheer scale and ambition.

The Book of Revelation (ca. 95 CE) was a promising source for Symbolist artists because of the mysterious nature of the text. This is its dominant characteristic. Saint Jerome remarked, in 400 CE, as he worked on the book’s translation into Latin

¹⁸² W. E. B. Du Bois, *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Howe, 1920), 126: “And then—the Veil. It drops as drops the night. . . . There is Hate behind it, and Cruelty and Tears.”

¹⁸³ Kling, 151.

(the Vulgate): “The Apocalypse of St John has as many mysteries as words.”¹⁸⁴

Mystery is consistently cited as a key characteristic of Symbolist art.¹⁸⁵ Revelation unfolds in a dreamlike and illogical manner: “The images of Revelation have the vividness and potency of dreams—but also, at times, the elusiveness of dreams.”¹⁸⁶

In taking up the text as a source for two major works, Barney engaged a topic that beckoned a Symbolist response. Unsurprisingly, she was not the only artist with Symbolist inclinations to be attracted to the mysterious, dreamlike Book of Revelation. Redon created a portfolio of lithographs on the *Apocalypse of Saint John*, published in a limited edition in 1899.

While her niece Ellen Goin modeled *Woman Clothed with the Sun* and *Babylon*,¹⁸⁷ perhaps Barney had in mind her own daughter Natalie. Around the time she was preparing the pastels, at the end of January 1901, she wrote a harsh letter reprimanding her daughter for the contents of *Some Portrait-Sonnets* post-publication: “you must in every way, to every person, make yourself a horror and a danger.”¹⁸⁸ Even if she was primarily channeling her husband’s disgust, she used vocabulary such as “evil” and “sin against law and mankind” in the letter, and one can only imagine that Barney thought of her own daughter when creating the dangerously seductive *Babylon*, placing a woman—rather than a man, the lascivious woman’s standard victim—strewn at the Whore’s feet.

¹⁸⁴ Quoted in Natasha O’Hear and Anthony O’Hear, *Picturing the Apocalypse: The Book of Revelation in the Arts over Two Millennia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 1.

¹⁸⁵ See, for example, Magdalena Dabrowski, *The Symbolist Aesthetic* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1980, exh. cat.), 8: “Suggestion, mystery, dream were the key concepts of the Symbolist aesthetic.”

¹⁸⁶ O’Hear and O’Hear, 15.

¹⁸⁷ Kling, 151.

¹⁸⁸ Quoted in Rodriguez, 124.

The work vaguely restages a photograph found in the Alice Pike Barney papers.¹⁸⁹ It pictures Natalie with an early lover, Eva Palmer, in the nude, with Natalie seated on a throne and Palmer kneeling at her feet, wearing only Grecian sandals (Fig. 49). In another photograph from the papers, Palmer's long hair is unfurled and more resembles the tumbling, dark strands of the collapsed woman of Alice's *Babylon* (Fig. 50). In Revelation, the Whore of Babylon is understood to represent the antagonism of non-Christian Rome. Here, Alice has pictured her with a miniature columned temple in her hand, which evokes the ancient pagan world, if also something of the neoclassical United States Capitol dome. By this time, Natalie had involved herself to the study of Ancient Greek and particularly the works of Sappho. Natalie directed Greco-Roman spectacles, with her friends and lovers draped in togas, and she would go on to stage such performances in a Doric "Temple of Friendship" in her Salon garden (Fig. 51). *Babylon's* classical temple imagery thus concurs with Natalie's burgeoning iconographical repertoire.

While it may be the case that Alice was referring to one perceived side of Natalie in *Babylon*, Alice might also have had Natalie in mind for *Woman Clothed with the Sun* (Fig. 52). Undated correspondence reflects the mother and daughter's reconciliation, probably only months after the condemning letter from January 1901, and their relationship grew closer and more loving over the years. Society knew Natalie for her long, blonde hair.¹⁹⁰ The yellow tonalities and lustrous golden crown

¹⁸⁹ The original photograph has gone missing between the time of Kling's publication and Artemis Leontis, *Eva Palmer Sikelianos: A Life in Ruins* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019), 15.

¹⁹⁰ See Jean Chalon, *Portrait of a Seductress: The World of Natalie Barney*, trans. Carol Barko (New York: Crown Publishers, 1979), 53. He quotes a letter from Liane de Pougy, celebrating Natalie: "Your hair, oh, your lovely hair, Natty . . . an enigma of parallel lines

of hair in *Woman Clothed with the Sun* align with Natalie's most well-known physical attribute. Natalie herself wrote poetically of her crowning glory: "I will make of my hair an all-gold dress."¹⁹¹ Lévy-Dhurmer portrays her with an unruly, sparkling mane, and an archival photograph of Natalie is posed similarly to Barney's figure in *Woman Clothed with the Sun* (Fig. 53). While Barney's pastel does not replicate the photograph directly, certain elements connect the two images across media, specifically the leftward pivot of the subjects' bodies, the outstretched position of the arms, the fall of the drapery, and the disposition of the feet. Barney struggled to capture the foreshortened right foot, which appears more naturalistic in the photograph.

Natalie encapsulated a doubleness. Her latest biographer opens with the concept of the writer as "double-being. Dyad. Janus. Natalie Clifford Barney was the essence of duality."¹⁹² This doubleness aligns with *dédoublement*, the Baudelairean term adopted by Henri Dorra to explicate Symbolist creativity. Such doubleness also characterizes the theoretical assessment of the late Victorian-era femme fatale made by Rebecca Stott. Drawing on the theories of Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva, Stott explains "Woman's" position as "a double position. . . . The idealized woman (the woman seen as a representative of higher and purer nature, as Virgin or Mother of God) is conceived as an inherent part of the *inside* of the frontier (protecting or shielding the symbolic order [Stott draws on Lacan] from chaos)," whereas "the second type, the woman vilified as Lilith or the Whore of Babylon, is to

united by disorder. . . . The brightness of your hair . . . my blond sweetness, my little flaxen flower, Moonbeam."

¹⁹¹ "Je ferai de mes cheveux une robe tout en or." Barney 1900, 38

¹⁹² Rodriguez, 1.

be found on the *outside* edge of the frontier, part of the chaotic wilderness outside, representing the darkness and chaos.”¹⁹³ Barney’s pastels navigate both within and beyond such frontiers.

Woman Clothed with the Sun and *Babylon* depict apocalyptic figures that conform, at least on a surface level, to the polarized expressions typical of Symbolist art of the righteous versus sinful woman. The Woman Clothed in the Sun, or the Woman of the Apocalypse, is described in the Book of Revelation, Chapter 12: “A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth. Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on its heads.”

As the narrative unfolds, the dragon tries to eat up the Woman’s child (sometimes interpreted as the Christ child), but God takes up the child, and the mother ventures into the wilderness. A war breaks out in heaven that results in the dragon’s ejection from that celestial realm. Hurlled towards earth, the dragon, as Satan or the Devil, directs its fury towards the mother, and when she evades his wrath, he reups his anger and expands it to encompass the totality of her offspring as well, i.e. all Christian faithful. Laura Barney, translating from Bahá’í leader ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, would recount his retelling of this story in her important text, *Some Answered Questions*, a volume that was, for many English speakers, their primary access to the religion’s teachings.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³ Stott, 38.

¹⁹⁴ Mottahedeh, 4; Laura Clifford Barney, *Some Answered Questions: Collected and Translated from the Persian of ‘Abdu’l-Baha* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1908),

Revelation has been subject to numerous interpretations. Pope Pius X reiterated the interpretation, alive since at least the Gothic period, of the Woman as Mary: “No one of us does not know that the woman signifies the Virgin Mary.”¹⁹⁵ Barney was not Roman Catholic—she was a member of an Episcopalian church at the time (something she did not perceive to be in conflict with her involvement in Bahá’í)¹⁹⁶—but by the turn of the century, the Book of Revelation was “on the cusp of becoming a secularized text, a compendium of images for uses quite different from the original intentions,” according to Natasha and Anthony O’Hear.¹⁹⁷ This is emblemized by Redon’s *Apocalypse*, which includes *A Woman Clothed with the Sun* (Fig. 54). Perhaps Barney was familiar with his classically Symbolist interpretation of the subject. Hers, in one sense, retreats from the Symbolist ambiguity which characterizes Redon’s vision of the same subject. She takes up the identifiable iconography of Mary as Woman of the Apocalypse, an iconography from which Redon retreats.¹⁹⁸

The figure is recognizable thanks to a selection of attributes: the crescent moon upon which she stands, the twelve-star crown, the dragon, and an enrobing light or rays. Barney incorporates all these telltale elements into her depiction. The moon

77-82. In *Some Answered Questions*, this story becomes prophetic for the coming of the Báb, the founder of the faith.

¹⁹⁵ St. Pius X, *Ad diem illum*. ASS 36. 458-59. He identified the child not as Jesus but as all defenders of the Christian faith.

¹⁹⁶ Laura Barney explains in “New Religious Cult,” *Washington Post*, March 23, 1902, that “while disciples do not give up their respective creeds . . . each rises above all creed through the spirit of love.”

¹⁹⁷ O’Hear and O’Hear, 127.

¹⁹⁸ While the iconography is more mysterious, Redon’s *Woman Clothed in Sun* is nevertheless forthrightly identifiable because of its situatedness as part of a series, and the title that is part of the lithographic page.

in her depiction is atypical. While traditional depictions place the woman's feet directly and often symmetrically upon the moon, Barney's woman's feet seem planted on earth, a gesture to a greater naturalism. The crescent in the foreground takes on an appearance more akin to a reflection in water. This is due to the deep blue color palette Barney applied in horizontal movements and tinged with the addition of yellow pigmentation, representing the reflection of the luminescent, glowing robes above. Barney has created stars through twelve points of light hovering around the figure's head. She applied these "stars" by a hard and direct pressing and perhaps twisting of friable pastel crayon in light colors. Such numerical exactitude persists throughout the work. The seven-headed Dragon is depicted with all its seven heads, writhing, Medusa-tendrill-like, and descending on the woman from the top left of the composition. Barney's *Woman Clothed with the Sun* possesses level of anecdotal detail between Albrecht Dürer's print from his *Apocalypse* series (1498) (Fig. 55)—replete with the whole cast of characters and storytelling elements—and Redon's *noir*, minimalistic interpretation. Redon's *Woman* has been compared to the modern dancer Loïe Fuller,¹⁹⁹ but Barney's full-length portrayal, with its dynamics of color, light, luminosity, and transparency of fabric, is even more resonant with the innovative stage productions of her American contemporary.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ O'Hear and O'Hear, 127.

²⁰⁰ See Rhonda K. Garelick, *Electric Salome: Loie Fuller's Performance of Modernism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.

Suffragists of the Future

Early feminism can also help unpack Barney's Revelation works. American suffragist and women's movement activist Elizabeth Cady Stanton published *The Woman's Bible* between 1895 and 1898. In it, she praises Revelation Chapter 12 for its nearly singular, positive portrayal of women in a Christian tradition that had long degraded their place. Her radical theology argued against the subservient positioning of women to men, and the perpetuation of this system through religion. Though popular in sales, *The Woman's Bible* was controversial and largely disavowed by the broader American women's movement.²⁰¹ Nevertheless, I propose that Cady and her writing committee's study of Revelation 12 can be used to assist a feminist reading of Barney's work: "Clothed with the sun, woman here represents the Divinity of the feminine, its spirituality as opposed to the materiality of the masculine. . . . With her feet upon the moon, woman, corresponding to and representing the soul, portrays the ultimate triumph of spiritual things over material things—over the body, which man, or the male principle, corresponds and represents."²⁰² The analysis continues with a reflection on the chapter's description of a heavenly battle: "The wonderful progress and freedom of woman, as woman, within the last half century, despite the false interpretation of the Bible by the Church and by masculine power, is the result of this great battle; and all attempts to destroy her will be futile."²⁰³ The subsuming of Revelation's Woman Clothed with the Sun into a nineteenth-century narrative of the

²⁰¹ Ilana Pardes, *Countertraditions in the Bible: A Feminist Approach* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 13-14.

²⁰² M. J. G. in *The Women's Bible*, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the Revising Committee (1895-1898, Seattle, WA: Coalition Task Force on Women and Religion, 1974), 158-159.

²⁰³ Stanton et al., 159.

struggle for women's rights is fascinating on its own, but it also casts new light on Barney's pastel. A 1909 reviewer would remark on the potential of Barney's art and women's suffrage: "It is only right that the suffragists of the future shall have their own bards and painters. In Mrs. Barney they will have an artist of singular merit, who shows very plainly her preference for women as sitters and as the subjects of ideal creations."²⁰⁴

However, Barney also took up *Babylon*, a part of Revelation that Cady would rather see "expurgated" from the Bible altogether as it perpetuates how "woman [was made] the standard for all kinds of abominations."²⁰⁵ Barney was not equally invested in disavowing polarizing representations of women. She may be the artist of the future suffragists, according to the review quoted above, "but," the same reviewer goes on to note, "to Mrs. Barney, even the devil is a woman."²⁰⁶ This commentator is referring specifically to her *Lucifer* (Natalie Clifford Barney) (Fig. 56). She has morphed her daughter's lustrous blonde hair here to a straw-like yellow, streaked with orange, that streams out to either side of her head. Barney's tense, expressive markings on *Lucifer*'s face recall the linework of *Circe*. Here, Barney has split her subject's face using color. An allover yellow tonality to the flesh is invaded, at the right, with pink and red scratch-like markings, and modeled, on the right side, with streaks of blue-green and white. Much like in *Medusa*, Barney used a contrast of dark and light to set the subject's head afloat on its background. Barney suggested a black cape of sorts around *Lucifer*'s shoulders. The garment takes on the appearance of

²⁰⁴ "Grace in Pastels by Mrs. Barney Shown," May 11, 1909, New York City, clipping, APB Papers.

²⁰⁵ Stanton et. al., 360.

²⁰⁶ "Grace in Pastels by Mrs. Barney Shown."

stretched, bat-like wings, and it recalls the deployment of the fabric in Käsebier's *The Bat*. *Lucifer*'s wings have what appears to be a bony armature, reaching up and out to either side. The structure resembles passages from a nude photograph of Natalie found in the Barney papers (Fig. 57). The folds of Natalie's sheer robe in the photograph have the same thin, skeletal appearance as the forms in Barney's *Lucifer* (*Natalie Clifford Barney*).

Barney's perpetuation of the femme fatale type showcases her continual devotion to Symbolists' thematics, even as her work pushed back against oversimplified representations of women. Barney ultimately advocated for a utopic vision of America, in which women's right to vote would catalyze broader social change: "Women have higher ideals," she said, "when women get the vote then we shall have higher ideals of government. Then will the monopolies stop, for the women will go to the root of the matter."²⁰⁷

Reception

The reception of Barney's Corcoran exhibition and other exhibitions during the first decade of the twentieth century reveal mixed attitudes in the United States towards art that might be considered Symbolist. Barney's ability to move between a more Symbolist aesthetic and other types of more naturalistic expression (Figs. 58-60), and exhibit a range of her work altogether, displays the degree to which Symbolism was not an overly restrictive or prescribed movement to which any individual artist had to declare loyalty at the exclusion of other interests. This may be

²⁰⁷ "A Great Railroad Man and a Charming Society Woman," unidentified clipping, APB Papers.

particularly the case in the American context, versus, for example, the rigid demands for entry into the Rose+Croix Salons.²⁰⁸

The reference points that the reviewers evoked help situate Barney's work art historically. One reviewer of the 1901 Corcoran show, while noting her training with Carolus-Duran and Whistler, found in her work "a glint of [Elihu] Vedder, or of [Thomas] Dewing, or a suggestion of some of the late English painters."²⁰⁹ Vedder is one of the Americans most commonly associated with the Symbolist movement.²¹⁰ The reviewer mentions him twice in the review, the second time to situate a "weird creation" by Barney, "one such as we would look for in the east or from the hand of Vedder." Vedder too had "eastern" associations, as he had illustrated a translation of the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, a collection of poems supposedly authored by the twelfth-century Persian writer. Thomas Dewing, the other named reference, has been characterized as a Tonalist, a movement defined by is soulful, moody, personal, and atmospheric landscapes in American painting from 1880-1920.²¹¹ Sarah Burns analyzed Dewing as a painter in the "poetic mode," "which might justifiably be defined as the American approach to symbolist painting."²¹² The last reference, to the "late English Painters," is a nod to the Rossettian strain of English Pre-Raphaelitism.

²⁰⁸ See Joséphin Péladan, "Rules of the Salon de la Rose+Croix" (1891), trans. by Robert Pincus-Witten in "Joséphin Péladan and the Salons de la Rose+Croix" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1968), 211-212.

²⁰⁹ "Art Notes," unidentified clipping, APB Papers.

²¹⁰ Edward Lucie-Smith, *Symbolist Art* (New York: Praeger, 1972), 143; Michael Gibson, *Symbolism* (London: Taschen, 1995), 84; and Pierre-Louis Mathieu, *The Symbolist Generation: 1870-1910* (New York: Skira, 1990), 181-182. Sylvia Yount, "Paired Perspectives: Elihu Vedder's *Rubáiyát*, Art and Enterprise," *American Art* 29, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 112 calls him "art academic naturalist, part progressive symbolist."

²¹¹ David Adams Cleveland, "A History of American Tonalism: The Tonalist Movement, Lost and Found," in *A History of American Tonalism: 1880-1920*, xiii.

²¹² Sarah Burns, "The Poetic Mode in American Painting: George Fuller and Thomas Dewing," (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1979), 65.

Aline Gorren had observed in French Symbolist literature a revisiting of English Pre-Raphaelitism, familiarity with which protected English-speaking readership “from entering into the angry surprise of the Parisian middle-class man, who sees in all this Decadence and Symbolism nothing but an attempt on the part of a few impertinent Bohemians to mystify the public.”²¹³ Late Pre-Raphaelitism helps situate art, such as Barney’s, evincing a Symbolist impulse. Rossetti and Edward Burne-Jones are both touchstones, mentioned by name in reviews of Barney’s work.²¹⁴

Another article compared Barney’s work to that of the American painter Cecilia Beaux (1855-1942). Beaux’s *Sita and Serita* hung nearby *Medusa* in the exhibition of the Society of Washington Artists (Fig. 61). Describing first Beaux’s work, then Barney’s, the author reflected: “There is about it that haunting quality and lingering charm which is the immortal part of Edgar Allen Poe’s poetry. This picture might, indeed, be called uncanny if it did not hang near that creepy vision of Mrs. Barney’s called ‘Medusa,’ a picture done with power and originality, cold and weird. The pallor of the face and blue, gray tone that pervades it is entrancing. I was cautioned not to call it beautiful. It is [so] real that one stand before it and, hearing no sound, is horror-struck.”²¹⁵ Even work by someone such as Beaux, considered a realist, a society portraitist in the model of John Singer Sargent, could draw on Symbolist associations: a haunting quality and the writings of Poe. In the case of *Medusa*, Barney may have overdone those qualities, which are comparatively subtle

²¹³ Gorren, 338.

²¹⁴ Moser, November 3, 1901; “Études et portraits au pastel par Mme Clifford Barney de Washington (Galleries Bernheim jeune),” *L’art et les artistes* 4, no. 35 (December 1908): 131, APB Papers.

²¹⁵ Unidentified clipping, ca. 1902, APB Papers.

in Beaux's portrayal of a woman in white and her black cat. However, the proximity of *Sita and Sarita* in the gallery to Barney's work may, interestingly, have inflected the reading of Beaux's work. Thus Barney's Symbolist impulse might have had a spiraling out effect on the reading of works around it in American exhibition spaces.

Other works in Barney's exhibitions were less challenging than *Medusa* or *Lucifer*. She interspersed her "weird creations" with contemporary portraits, head studies, occasional landscapes, and gentler Symbolist works such as *Reverie*. The 1901 reviewer was drawn to Barney's "quieter subjects," which he found "mysterious enough to suggest the very 'stuff that dreams are made of.'" He generally concluded that Barney was a unique artist, and her work showed "genuine merit . . . originality and variety."²¹⁶ Others repeated this sort of praise, though they also noted that Barney's training was evident: "we need not be told for one can not reach the skill she has attained without digging in Paris."²¹⁷ This emphasizes the overarching presence of Paris at the late-nineteenth-century capital for Americans wishing to study art, and as fertile ground for Barney's exposure to an idealist Symbolism.

A level of critical ambivalence adhered to Barney's Symbolist works. A 1909 reviewer cemented Barney's fears of her work being "too imaginative and personal," citing the pervasiveness in Barney's show of "the outré, the unusual and the bizarre."²¹⁸ This reviewer "deplor[ed] the choice of the mythological subjects of representation in a somewhat lurid fashion," but, they continued, "one cannot but recognize the intent of the work and perceive the symbolism which carries its own

²¹⁶ "Art Notes," clipping, APB Papers.

²¹⁷ "The Pessimist," November 17, 1901, clipping, APB Papers.

²¹⁸ Quoted in Kling, 209; unidentified clipping, referencing 1909 exhibition at Galleries of Walter Kimball & Co., Boston, APB Papers.

lessons.”²¹⁹ As did this reviewer, others also used vocabulary relating to “Symbolism”: referring to “symbolical compositions” or “symbolic sketches.”²²⁰ Moser, the reviewer from the *Washington Post* found in the Corcoran show’s Revelation works “some symbolism here that mystifies me,” even as he wholeheartedly proclaimed Barney’s leadership in the Washington, DC art scene.²²¹

Conclusion: Barney’s Legacy

Moser wrote gratefully of Barney’s return to the United States from Europe, reflecting that she had “wisely decided to remain here in Washington, her home, and work out her art on personal lines.” He predicted, “she will at once become a force in our art atmosphere . . . her strong personality and unquestioned ability will make her leadership at once authoritative and welcome, while her reputation will spread abroad till it becomes second, let us believe, to no woman painter living.”²²²

In retrospect, while his predictions were hyperbolic, most scholarship has underplayed Barney’s import, especially as her work is representative of an elusive American Symbolism. Through a lending collection that the Smithsonian Institution developed from her daughters’ donations, Barney’s oeuvre had a reach and visibility that has been underestimated.²²³ In a 1965 catalog of the collection, Delight Hall

²¹⁹ Boston clipping.

²²⁰ “Art Notes”; “Des esquisses symboliques.” “Études et portraits au pastel par Mme Clifford Barney de Washington (Galeries Bernheim jeune),” *L’art et les artistes* 4 no. 35 (December 1908): 131.

²²¹ James Henry Moser, “Art Topics,” *Washington Post*, November 3, 1901, 28.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ In 1950, Barney’s daughters gifted the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian a collection of Barney’s and others’ works for the National Collection of Fine Art. At the time of a 1957 publication of a booklet of her work, these pieces functioned as a lending collection, distributed between 28 institutions—museums and college art galleries across the United States. 224 of the loaned works were by Barney. Thomas M. Beggs, *Alice Pike Barney*:

identified Barney with what she called the “late American romantic movement,”²²⁴ a phrase that can substitute for American Symbolism but does less to place Barney’s works within a transatlantic and burgeoning modernist context.

While American reviewers had reservations about certain of her works, Barney undeniably brought attention in the United States to a Symbolist impulse, one refined in France, in relation to her training, her daughter’s work, and the friendships she formed with artists such as Lévy-Dhurmer. Barney’s friend Lévy-Dhurmer is central to some accounts of the Symbolist movement, while secondary to others. Philippe Jullian numbered Lévy-Dhurmer among “the most gifted of all the French Symbolist painters,” or at least “among the most representative.”²²⁵ Robert Goldwater, on the other hand, used Lévy-Dhurmer’s *Silence* (1895) to contrast with Redon’s work of the same name (1911), as he felt Lévy-Dhurmer’s, in its comparatively more apparent signification, falls somewhat short of “that suggestion

Portraits in Oil and Pastel (Washington, DC: National Collection of Fine Arts, Smithsonian Institution, 1957, exh. cat.), n.p. The Lending Collection was dissolved, but the bulk of Barney’s oeuvre still resides within the Smithsonian system in DC, her artwork at the Smithsonian American Art Museum and her papers split between three sets at the Smithsonian Institution Archives.

²²⁴ Delight Hall, *Catalogue of the Alice Pike Barney Memorial Lending Collection* (Washington, DC: National Collection of Fine Arts, Smithsonian Institution, 1965, exh. cat.), 25.

²²⁵ Philippe Jullian, *Dreamers of Decadence: Symbolist Painters of the 1890s*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Praeger, 1971), 38, 168. For Robert L. Delevoy, *Symbolists and Symbolism*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: Rizzoli, 1982), 19, Lévy Dhurmer epitomizes the movement. Delevoy highlights the artist’s use of pastel as particularly revealing: “He used pastels a great deal, this medium with its suggestive blurred effects lending itself to the magic of symbolism” (201). “Symbolism’s Return to Grace,” *Le Monde*, May 8, 2018, https://www.lemonde.fr/argent/article/2018/05/05/le-retour-en-grace-du-symbolisme_5294691_1657007.html, was illustrated by a recently auctioned *Ophelia* by Lévy-Dhurmer.

of the mysterious reality beyond appearance that is proper to symbolism” that Redon achieves (Figs. 62 and 4.22).²²⁶

However, as it is evident that Lévy-Dhurmer was a key example in Barney’s pursuit of a Symbolist aesthetic, it is useful to recognize his model as a Symbolist one.²²⁷ The ways in which Lévy-Dhurmer’s art falls short in Goldwater’s estimation clarifies the ways in the which certain works by Barney also succeed or fail as exemplary of Symbolism in some ways. However, Barney fits comfortably within a more expansive, inclusive definition of Symbolism that fully embraces the idealist strain of the movement, considers the ways in which women could be strategic Symbolist producers, and underscores the psychological and emotional impact of the pastel medium.

Barney used subject matter proper to Symbolist art to provide Americans with her version of cultural enrichment. Her vision of women could be angrier, and perhaps thereby more powerful, than that of others considered in this dissertation. But work in the femme fatale vein should not be oversimplified as a confession of self-hatred in step with a wider vilification of women at the turn of the century. Wielding a Symbolist mode enabled her to communicate frustration with or resistance to patriarchal structures. Her works respond to the opportunities and limitations of Symbolist expression and its traction with American audiences. Her use of pastel, an

²²⁶ Robert Goldwater, *Symbolism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), 26. Note, though, that Goldwater does not clearly categorize *Silence* (1895) in one of his alternative categories to Symbolism, either *Gedankenmalerei* or Art Nouveau. Also, the Redon example is relatively late, chronologically, for a strict definition of Symbolism.

²²⁷ For a thorough examination of *Silence*, see Liesbeth Grotenhuis, “Isis’ Fingertips: A Symbolist Reading of Lévy-Dhurmer’s *Silence*,” in *Light and Obscurity in Symbolism*, ed. Rosina Neginsky and Deborah Cibelli, (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 175-208.

eminently flexible and beautiful medium fraught with multiple meanings,
demonstrates the medium's excellent fit with producing artwork in a Symbolist vein.
The medium's very evanescent quality is analogous with the hard-to-pin-down but
nevertheless quite real existence of an American Symbolism.

Chapter 3: Mystical and Theist: Henry Ossawa Tanner's Symbolist Impulse

The era to come will be mystical. Mystical and theist. – Paul Adam, 1889¹

He is a mystic, but a mystic who has read Renan and studied with Benjamin Constant. – Vance Thompson, 1900²

In the oeuvre of Pittsburgh-born American artist Henry Ossawa Tanner (1859-1937), there exists a Symbolist impulse that emerged variously and progressively. Tanner's *Salome* (ca. 1900) is a striking example of his participation in Symbolism's obsession with femme fatale imagery, but the painting is also part of a broader arc that reaches from the artist's first years in France to his late career. This chapter considers technical information and formal characteristics alongside transatlantic social-historical concerns around Tanner's development and reception, attending particularly to the ways in which religious faith and spirituality influenced his art.

Debora Silverman's *Van Gogh and Gauguin: The Search for Sacred Art* informs the chapter. She has argued that we consider religion as intertwined with Symbolist projects. Her focus on religious and spiritual commitments is essential to understanding Tanner's oeuvre. Silverman also provides a model for attending to the variable material manifestations of artistic attempts at sacredness in her comparative analyses of specific works of arts. She identifies in Vincent Van Gogh's and Paul Gauguin's Symbolist outputs what I also identify as Symbolism's animating paradox: "new syntheses of form and content into the service of a sacred, eternal, and invisible

¹ "L'Epoque à venir sera mystique. Mystique et théiste." Paul Adam, preface to Georges Vanor, *L'Art symboliste* (Paris: Vanier, 1889), 10.

² Vance Thompson, "American Artists in Paris," *Cosmopolitan* 29, no. 1 (May 1900): 19.

world beyond the self and the senses, attempting, paradoxically, to achieve spiritual ends through the plastic means of pigment, canvas, and primer.”³ This paradox is at the core of Tanner’s work.⁴

Vance Thompson described Tanner as a “mystic” in 1900, a point Robert Cozzolino has identified as transitional in Tanner’s career.⁵ By the turn of the century, Tanner was no longer a painter of genre scenes in a naturalistic mode, and he was deeply immersed in biblical subject matter. His development is parallel to many artists’ exploration of Symbolism even though Tanner’s engagement pivots around 1900 instead of around 1890. Generalizing for artists as different as Van Gogh, Edward Munch, James Ensor, and Ferdinand Hodler, Robert Goldwater observed a distinctive, and definitive trend:

Their subjects are realistic . . . the scenes they pick are characteristically interior scenes, although landscapes also occur. . . . They may be compared to the Impressionists of the late seventies and early eighties. But they themselves are at most only momentarily and never fully Impressionist painters, who, developing at the period of Impressionism’s growing dominance, do not continue it but almost immediately react against it. . . . [their subject matter] goes from the individual scene, anecdotal in character, to subjects that are

³ Debora Silverman, *Van Gogh and Gauguin: The Search for Sacred Art* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000), 50. Whereas Gauguin’s thinned media reveal his attempt at “dematerializing nature,” Van Gogh’s built-up surfaces show him “naturalizing divinity” (50). On the idea of spiritual ends through plastic means, Silverman cites Jean-Paul Bouillon, “Le Moment symboliste,” *Revue de l’Art* 96 (1992): 7. Bouillon explains the “paradoxe suprême entre une matérialité des moyens et une spiritualité des buts qui ne seraient compatibles qu’à la condition de s’affirmer l’une et l’autre dans leur pleine spécificité.”

⁴ A perceptive critic wrote that, “Mr. Tanner’s art . . . is essentially a religious art. . . . This, of course, constitutes no reason for treating it differently from other art, but it accounts for the touch of intense emotion . . . the obvious effort to embody an idea just beyond the power of the medium to render.” “Religious Works in Tanner Exhibit,” *New York Times*, December 19, 1908, 7, <https://nyti.ms/2pXG2fH>.

⁵ Robert Cozzolino, “‘I Invited the Christ Spirit to Manifest in Me’: Tanner and Symbolism,” in *Henry Ossawa Tanner: Modern Spirit*, ed. Anna O. Marley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012, published in conjunction with exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia), 117. Cozzolino’s catalog essay has been the most direct and insightful analysis of Tanner’s Symbolist impulse thus far.

broad, more generalized, less realistic, and so, presumably, more meaningful.⁶

Indeed, Tanner's compositions became vaguer and more evocative, with less anecdotal detail and narrative incident. He applied pigment in thicker impasto, scumbling and scraping colors over one another with less emphasis on naturalistic exactitude and more on feeling and accumulation. An 1890s description of the Symbolist movement in literature anticipated the direction in which Tanner's work moved: "The symbolists believe that the vague and imprecise, that the floating and fugitive, that the aerial and imponderable are a part of poetry, perhaps even the part that gives it all its charms."⁷ Tanner's new direction caused concern for at least one of patrons, Robert C. Ogden.⁸ Ogden worried about the appeal of works he described as

⁶ Robert Goldwater, "Symbolic Form: Symbolic Content," in *Problems of the 19th & 20th Centuries: Studies in Western Art, Acts of the Twentieth International Congress of the History of Art*, vol. IV (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 117-118. There are two points to be addressed in relation to Goldwater's quotation. One is the belatedness of Impressionism (and hence Post-Impressionism and Symbolism) in America. On this history, see Barbara H. Weinberg, "American Impressionism," *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/aimp/hd_aimp.htm, October 2004. She discusses Impressionism's securing its place in American painting a decade or so after its highpoint in France. It is also necessary to address that, in the case of Tanner, the "presumably, more meaningful" (as Goldwater writes) works are also those that no longer explicitly present African American figures. Naurice Frank Woods Jr. explains the situation as a question of finding a market: "Tanner's eagerness to advance African Americans pictorially ended [with *The Thankful Poor* (1894)], therefore, by the fact that from a purely financial standpoint, the French did not want such paintings, [and] the Black masses in the United States could not sustain him." In a footnote, Woods reminds his reader that "Tanner's portrayal of African Americans should never be the full measure of his affirmation of blackness," which Woods contends is altogether inalienable from Tanner's identity. Naurice Frank Woods Jr., "Henry Ossawa Tanner's Negotiation of Race and Art: Challenging 'The Unknown Tanner,'" *Journal of Black Studies* 42, no. 6 (September 2011): 895, 904n9. Here, I would also emphasize the "presumably" in Goldwater's phrase as particularly crucial to an overview of the shift in Tanner's oeuvre.

⁷ Ferdinand Brunetière, "Le symbolisme contemporain," 1891, trans. in Michael Paul Driskel, *Representing Belief: Religion, Art, and Society in Nineteenth-Century France* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 230. Also quoted in Cozzolino, 123.

⁸ This is crucial evidence for Cozzolino, 117.

“very mysterious in spirit, very abstruse in art, full of delicate sensitivity, and altogether too transcendental for popular appreciation.”⁹

Tanner’s development in this more abstruse and transcendental vein was accompanied by experimentation with media recipes, a shift in color palette, and an attention to the surfaces of his paintings that align him with the dialectic between the immaterial and the material at the core of Symbolist art. Developments in his spiritual life came along with his stylistic and technical evolutions. Tanner reported that his “conception of Christ” changed across the turn of the century.¹⁰ The artist said that it became “much less materialistic.”¹¹

Much Less Materialistic

Several factors underpinned Tanner’s turn away from materialism, as he expressed the shift in his spirituality. Taken together, they help explain Tanner’s thinking and show how Symbolist frameworks are supported, enriched, and complicated by other historical and biographical phenomena.

Tanner’s father, African Method Episcopal (A.M.E.) Bishop Benjamin Tucker Tanner, published a collection of lectures in 1894. The introduction of the book previews the contents: “Biblical poetry and symbolism receive what is possibly the

⁹ Robert C. Ogden to Booker T. Washington, February 23, 1904, quoted in Cozzolino, 117.

¹⁰ Charles B. Mitchell, “An American Religious Painter,” *Westminster* 34, no. 5 (January 30, 1909): 10.

¹¹ *Ibid.* Mitchell is quoting Tanner from a conversation he had with the artist, though he admits that “he [Tanner] made no further explanations, and I did not feel sufficiently acquainted with him to pursue the subject further than he seemed inclined to do.”

most extended treatment by the hands of any man of the Afro-American race.”¹² The second section of the collection, headed by a page with the title “Symbolism” (Fig. 1), includes a lecture in which Bishop Tanner defined symbolism for religious purposes as “an abstract or compendium, a sign or representation of something moral, by the figures or properties of natural things.”¹³ He explains that, “subtler or more spiritual truths can best be learned by a reference to or comparison with truths more superficial—truths that at once attract the attention of the senses, that may be seen, or felt, or heard, or tasted, or smelled.”¹⁴

Bishop Tanner’s lecture suggests how orthodox Christian belief in the late nineteenth century could overlap in fascinating ways with Symbolist art theories, especially as they addressed the interaction of the immaterial (Bishop Tanner’s “subtler or more spiritual truths”) and the material (things “seen,” or otherwise perceptible to human senses). As a component of his father’s theology, the notion of “symbolism” may have had a special inflection for Tanner’s approach to art.¹⁵ Bishop Tanner’s explanation offers a striking parallel with Jean Moréas’s core notion in his definitive “Le symbolisme” (A Literary Manifesto—Symbolism), that “symbolist poetry endeavors to clothe the Idea in a form perceptible to the senses.”¹⁶

¹² James A. Handy, introduction to Benjamin Tucker Tanner, “Lecture IV: Symbolism in General,” *Theological Lectures* (Nashville, TN: Publishing House, A.M.E. Church Sunday School Union, 1894), v.

¹³ Benjamin Tucker Tanner, 49.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁵ Silverman has presented a model for my suggestion here in her exploration of the importance of Gauguin’s religious background. Regarding *The Vision after the Sermon (Jacob Wrestling the Angel)* (1888), she proposes that Gauguin’s “Catholic heritage . . . formed a bridge between his cultivation of a ‘symbolist’ realm of meaning beyond phenomenal reality and the mystical supernaturalism of Breton religiosity” (104).

¹⁶ Jean Moréas, 1886, trans. and excerpted in Henri Dorra, *Symbolist Art Theories: A Critical Anthology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 151.

Tanner's turn away from materialism could also stem from his knowledge of Christian Science, a metaphysical, new religious movement of the late nineteenth century, developed in New England, to which Tanner's son reported his father briefly adhered.¹⁷ Christian Science sets forth a fundamental opposition between the soul (aligned with the spiritual, truth, ideal, and life) and the material (aligned with error, deceit, and suffering). Its founder, Mary Baker Eddy's treatise, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, is replete with condemnations of materialism, matter, and what she calls materialistic logic, material theory, materialistic codes, and the like.¹⁸ She preached a rejection of the tangible, a renunciation that could have influenced Tanner's philosophical outlook. In the Tanner papers appears a one-page, unsigned typescript entitled "Testimony of God's Child."¹⁹ The first two paragraphs of this text were published in a 1902 issue of the *Washington News Letter*, a journal with Christian Science ties.²⁰ The document begins: "Inasmuch as I am God's child, entirely spiritual and not material, I must be perfect . . ." It continues: "I live in spirit, not matter . . ." Tanner may have had this opposition between spirit and matter in mind when he reported that his faith was becoming less materialistic. Addressing fine

¹⁷ Marcia M. Mathews, *Henry Ossawa Tanner: American Artist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 73.

¹⁸ Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (1875; Boston: Alison V. Stewart, 1912). As of 2001, there were nine million copies of the text circulated. See Paul C. Gutjahr, "Sacred Texts in the United States," *Book History* 4 (2001): 348. The book was first published in 1875. Eddy added *Key to the Scriptures* in 1883.

¹⁹ "Testimony of God's Child," Box 2, Folder 2, Frame 12, Henry Ossawa Tanner Papers, 1860s-1978, bulk 1890-1937, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC [hereafter Tanner Papers]. On the other side of the document, which was once folded in eighths, appear hard-to-read notes in Tanner's handwriting: "291 Ojden[sp?] Ave" and "Schameheit[?] S[?] Salla[?] Nocht[?]."

²⁰ "A Short Prayer Which Will Heal You," *Washington News Letter* 8, no. 3 (December 1902): 176. I do not know precisely why this text appears in the Tanner Papers, but his son's nod to Christian Science imbues it with the potential meaning discussed here.

art, Eddy argued in *Science and Health* that a painting is not a delineation of “matter,” as she supposed many of her readers believed, but “is the artist’s thought objectified.”²¹ This argument again shows a notable parallelism to Symbolist theory. It also evidences a larger, cultural desire of this historical moment for deeper meaning and a concomitant ideological suspicion of materiality in multiple senses—evident form, perceivable reality, consumerism, commercialism, and scientific rationalism.²² While Tanner at most only passingly identified as a Christian Scientist, the religion and its broader cultural reflections might nevertheless have inflected his work and personal philosophy.

Antipathies between the spiritual and the material were also resonant in contemporaneous debates about African American progress. An editorial entitled “Shall We Materialize the Negro,” appearing in the journal *The Voice of the Negro* in 1905, accused Booker T. Washington of “downright soulless materialism” for his emphasis on the acquisition and expenditure of wealth as the path to advancement and civil rights.²³ Cynthia D. Schrager has described a “contest . . . between the so-called ‘soulless materialism’ espoused by Washington and what we might call, following Du Bois, the ‘spiritual strivings’ of the ‘souls of black folk,’ reproduc[ing] the terms of the border dispute being waged in late-nineteenth-century western culture between science and religion, between the material and the spiritual—a split that William James characterized in terms of an antipathy between the ‘scientific-

²¹ Eddy, 310.

²² Christian Science is best known for its rejection of medicinal intervention and the belief in non-physical, spiritual healing. “Three Forms of Thought,” *New York Times*, November 29, 1897, 10, <https://nyti.ms/30pPxlvm>, links Christian Science with Theosophy and Spiritualism.

²³ “Shall We Materialize the Negro,” *Voice of the Negro* 2, no. 3 (March 1905): 194.

academic' and the 'feminine-mystical' minds."²⁴ Booker T. Washington's approach was thus set in opposition to the more spiritual, mystical, and imaginative approach of W. E. B. Du Bois, as encapsulated in his *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), the text that famously defined "the color-line" as "the problem of the Twentieth Century."²⁵ Tanner had relationships with both Washington and Du Bois, but it is in an aesthetic emphasis on veiling, to be explored in relationship to the painting *Salome*, that Tanner engaged deeply with Du Bois's key image of the Veil.²⁶ The two men had met at least by 1900, and Du Bois drew his theory of the Veil in *The Souls of Black Folk* at least in part from biblical passages with which Tanner would also have been familiar.²⁷

Christianity, Christian Science, and Du Boisian frames interact and overlap with Symbolist theory and the dialectic of materiality and immateriality central to Symbolist art. American religious, political, and cultural factors thus inform

²⁴ Cynthia D. Schrager, "Both Sides of the Veil: Race, Science, and Mysticism in W. E. B. Du Bois," *American Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (December 1996): 552.

²⁵ W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1903), vii. Du Bois's was also, arguably, a more elitist approach than Washington's.

²⁶ For the relationship with Washington, see Albert Boime, "Henry Ossawa Tanner's Subversion of Genre," *Art Bulletin* 75, no. 3 (September 1993): 427-433. For the relationship with Du Bois, see Margaret Crumpton Winter and Rhonda Reymond, "Henry Ossawa Tanner and W. E. B. Du Bois: African American Art and 'High Culture' at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," in *Post-Bellum, Pre-Harlem*, ed. Barbara McCaskill and Caroline Gebhard (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 231-259. Washington visited Tanner in Paris in 1899, and Tanner painted his portrait. Du Bois and Tanner's correspondence is extant in the W. E. B. Du Bois Papers at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. They discuss the second Pan-African Conference as well as the procurement of art instruction for Du Bois's daughter.

²⁷ Du Bois, vii-viii, first introduces the Veil, a multivalent motif that carries through the text. Du Bois and Tanner both attended a dinner for African Americans sojourning in Paris during the World's Fair. "General Notes of Colored People," *Indianapolis News*, September 15, 1900, 2. Jerold J. Savory, "The Rend of the Veil in W. E. B. Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk*," *CLA Journal* 15, no. 3 (March 1972): 335-336 cites Exodus (the veil over the "holy of holies") and Corinthians (on women's attire) as the relevant biblical passages.

understandings of the relationship between the immaterial and the material at the heart of Tanner's Symbolist impulse.

Impressionistic Genre Painter to Biblical Symbolist

A comparison of Tanner's *The Banjo Lesson* (1893) and *The Three Marys* (1910) illustrates the changes in style and genre that Tanner's painting underwent across the turn of the century and provides a visualization of his progression into Symbolism (Figs. 2-3).

The Banjo Lesson has become a classic scene of intergenerational, African American learning.²⁸ A boy positions himself in the lap of an older bearded gentleman, perhaps his grandfather. They both gaze down at the head of the banjo, intent on the boy's strumming hand. Tanner orchestrated two light sources to illuminate their exchange. A yellow glow from the bottom right of the canvas suggests a fireplace, and a blue light from the top left gently streams in from an unseen window. Tanner's impressionistic brushstrokes intermingle blue and yellow hues on the back wall. He communicated familial affection and the humbleness of the pair's surroundings. The linear agitation of the brushwork and the tilt of the

²⁸ Kymberly N. Pinder has critiqued Western art history textbooks' coverage of Tanner and other black artists. Insinuating "authenticity," these surveys include one of Tanner's two extant black genre scenes, *The Banjo Lesson* or *The Thankful Poor*, while downplaying, or even altogether omitting, the religious work on which he built his career and reputation. Kymberly N. Pinder, "Review of Black Representation and Western Survey Textbooks," *Art Bulletin* 81, no. 3 (September 1999): 533. This textbook treatment has shifted in at least certain cases since Pinder wrote her article. Ten years later, Penelope J. E. Davies et al., *Janson's Short History of Western Art* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2009), 536 frames Tanner as an American artist exemplifying "dreamlike, visionary, and spiritual qualities found in Symbolist art." *Janson's* might even be said to overinflate Tanner's Symbolism by claiming that the artist made "several Salome paintings," (536) whereas Tanner only created one.

floorboards animate the canvas, but Tanner stabilized the composition with the application of shadow in the foreground and around the edges, spotlighting the central exchange. Tanner grounded his painting in a palette of warm, brown and gray earth tones and in the stability of the grandfather's seated position. Tanner placed the man's feet solidly on the floor, his knees and the crown of his head creating a triangle that protectively encapsulates the younger member of the pair. Around them are signs of domesticity—pots and pans, an overcoat that has been removed and placed on a wicker chair, a hat on the floor, a white tablecloth and pitcher, a crusty half-eaten loaf of bread, and pictures on the wall.

The Three Marys, by comparison, shows a transition away from the impressionistic genre painting and into the more “mystic” tendency. Tanner derived the subject matter for this later painting from the Bible. He depicted the three Marys—according to the Gospel of Mark, they are Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Mary Salome—around the time they approach Christ's tomb. They will find that it is empty, and an angel will inform them of Jesus's resurrection: “And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulcher; for they trembled and were amazed” (Mark 16:8).²⁹ Though the painting's title is indicative of its subject matter, Tanner kept the narrative to a minimum in the work itself. On the one hand, this assumes the viewer's familiarity with the New Testament, but it also celebrates the mysterious, unknown, and open-ended. The subject matter is one of the oldest in

²⁹ *The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments, Translated Out of the Original Tongues, and with The Former Translations Diligently Compared and Revised, in which all the Proper Names are Divided and Accented as they Should Be Pronounced together with Copious Reference Marginal Readings, Introductions to Each Book, and Numerous Tables* (Cincinnati: Jennings & Pye, ca. 1899), 993, Box 4, Family Bible, Biographical Material, Tanner Papers.

Christian art; a wall painting in Dura Europos is said to depict the episode, with women approaching a sarcophagus (Fig. 4).³⁰ Traditional portrayals, from Jan and/or Hubert Van Eyck's of ca. 1420-20 (Fig. 5) to Peter von Cornelius's of 1815-1822 (Fig. 6), include an image of the empty, open tomb and an angelic figure delivering the miraculous news. At the turn of the century, Louis Comfort Tiffany designed a version of the scene for stained glass windows, with three women on the left and the angel on the right (Fig. 7). Tanner's version essentially subtracts the right panel of Tiffany's design. While preserving the jars of salve with which the three Marys are traditionally shown, Tanner approached the simplicity of English photographer Julia Margaret Cameron's iterations of the episode, wherein only the three cloaked women remain, shown against an indefinite background (Fig. 8).

Besides the change in genre, the stability of *The Banjo Lesson* has also dissipated in *The Three Marys*. Tanner pulled his figures to the front of the picture plane—a modernist compositional device that draws attention to the surface of the work as it shallows out the illusionistic space. Tanner gathered the women to the right of the canvas and cropped their bodies above the knees. This lends a sense of their floating or gliding into the unseen, an impression bolstered by the curvilinear brushstrokes with which Tanner described their garments, implying movement across the canvas. Tanner shared little of the setting. A moon and a tree at the bottom left show that it is nighttime and that they are outdoors, but the background is predominantly a variegated blue, a darker navy at top lightening towards the bottom

³⁰ P. V. C. Baur and M. I. Rostovtzeff, eds., *The Excavations at Dura-Europos: Preliminary Report of the Work* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1931), 270. As archeologists did not uncover this wall painting until the 1930s, Tanner would not yet have been familiar with this particular image.

and speckled with stars. Describing a now-lost monumental work by Tanner, *The Wise and Foolish Virgins* (1908), French critics made comparisons, also applicable here, between Tanner's female figures and atmospheric settings and those of Belgian Symbolist poet and playwright Maurice Maeterlinck (Fig. 9). One critic wrote, "Mr. Henry Tanner . . . passionate dreamer, makes float a mysterious, dramatic atmosphere similar to Maeterlinck."³¹ Another wrote of the women's "somnambulist dispositions, similar to Maeterlinck's heroines."³²

Coloristically, there has also been a marked shift between *The Banjo Lesson* and *The Three Marys*. Tanner amplified the blue light that was present in *The Banjo Lesson* to an extreme degree. There is still a play between warm yellow and cool blue, but Tanner has lessened the earth tones, propelling *The Three Marys* into a plane of otherworldliness. Indeed, Tanner's son would later describe his father's works as "extra terrestrial in sentiment."³³

Tanner Blues

An important component of this extra-terrestrial sentiment is color. "Tanner Blues" became the artist's signature color palette.³⁴ Poignantly, Édouard Vuillard, soon-to-be member of the Nabis group, observed in 1890: "A remarkable thing in the

³¹ "M. Henri Tanner . . . rêveur passionné, fait flotter une mystérieuse atmosphère dramatique qui l'apparente à Maeterlinck." Jean Thomsen, *Petit Journal*, April 30, 1908, clipping, Box 2, Folder 10, Frame 45, Tanner Papers.

³² "Attitudes de somnambules, semblables à des héroïnes de Maeterlinck." Clipping, Le Jeune, *Menethel*[illeg.], May 30, 1907[?], clipping, Box 2, Folder 10, Frame 29, Tanner Papers.

³³ Jesse Tanner to Marcia M. Mathews, undated letter, Marcia M. Mathews Papers relating to Henry Ossawa Tanner, 1937-1969, bulk, 1963-1969, Reel 64, Frame 763, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC [hereafter Mathews Papers].

³⁴ James A. Porter, *Modern Negro Art* (1943; New York: Arno Press, 1969), 74. This is the first reference to the phrase "Tanner Blues" that I have found.

museums and history of painting, the more painters are mystical, the more their colors are vivid (reds, blues, yellows), the more painters are materialists, the more they employ somber colors (earths, ochres, blacks, and bitumens).”³⁵ Vuillard thereby aligned bright colors with mystical paintings, and somber colors with “materialist” ones. Technical analysis shows that Tanner’s mature works involve surprisingly few iron oxide earth pigments.³⁶ His signature blue palette stems predominantly from his use of cobalt and cerulean.³⁷

Writer Eunice Tietjens espoused a distorted, racialized view related to Vuillard’s understanding of color when it came to Tanner. She imagined that “the cold end of the spectrum, the violets, blues and cold greens, belong naturally to the Anglo-Saxon and correspond with a certain hardness of disposition and outlook.” She thought Tanner was “temperamentally . . . more at home in the warmer tonalities,” which were suited to “more warm-blooded peoples, beginning with the Latins.”³⁸ She fretted about Tanner’s choice of palette. But the overall thrust of her article was that Tanner was “almost mystical”—another quality she associated with his being non-Anglo-Saxon.³⁹ Importantly, Tanner did not turn away from the blue palette

³⁵ “Chose remarquable dans les musées et histoire de la peinture, plus les peintres sont mystiques et plus leurs couleurs sont vives (rouges bleus jaunes) plus les peintres sont matérialistes plus ils emploient des couleurs sombres (terres ocrés noirs bitume).” Vuillard, notes, 1890, quoted in Bouillon, 7.

³⁶ Brian Baade, Amber Kerr-Allison, and Jennifer Giaccai, “Pursuit of the Ideal Effect: The Materials and Techniques of Henry Ossawa Tanner,” in *Modern Spirit*, 163.

³⁷ Cobalt blue, especially, was ubiquitous in nineteenth-century French painting. Ashok Roy, “Cobalt Blue,” in *Artists’ Pigments: A Handbook of their History and Characteristics* vol. 4 (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 2007), 153.

³⁸ Eunice Tietjens, “H. O. Tanner,” 1914, Tanner Papers, Box 2, Folder 7, Frame 6.

³⁹ “Among a little group of American painters who live in Paris . . . one name stands out with a strong psychological difference. . . . Henry O. Tanner. The others . . . are all Anglo-Saxons. Their work has the clean, athletic objectivity of their race. But H. O. Tanner is not an Anglo-Saxon. His work is in essence oriental, it is subjective, almost mystical” (Frame 1).

following Tietjens's article, which she sent to him in draft form, but he continued on in the same vein. This suggests that his own understandings of color and race did not align with hers.⁴⁰ Perhaps he was even defying her challenge to see whether he really would be better off with a warmer palette, which, she wrote, "the future alone can judge."⁴¹ The mysticism of Tanner's work, the "wonderful quality of mystery and poetic insight" that Tietjens observed and attributed to race is better and more logically understood as a part of Tanner's Symbolist impulse.⁴²

Scholars have recognized the impact of Theosophy, a mystical and occultist movement founded in New York, on Symbolism internationally.⁴³ According to Theosophical color theories, blues evoked spiritual and religious feelings (Fig. 10).⁴⁴ While Tanner is unlikely to have ascribed directly to the color ideas of Theosophical writers, I believe the associations charted in Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater's

⁴⁰ Tanner's response to her racist assertions after viewing the draft (he famously wrote "Now am I a Negro? ...") has been the source of debate. See Will South, "A Missing Question Mark: The Unknown Henry Ossawa Tanner," *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 8, no. 2 (Autumn 2009), <https://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/autumn09/a-missing-question-mark> and Woods 2011, op. cit., for a response.

⁴¹ Tietjens, Frame 6.

⁴² Tietjens, Frame 6.

⁴³ See Michelle Facos, *Symbolist Art in Context* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 101-05 and Sébastien Clerbois, "In Search of the *Forme-Pensée*: The Influence of Theosophy on Belgian Artists, Between Symbolism and the Avant-Garde (1890–1910)," *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 4, no. 1 (Spring 2005), <http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/spring05/82-autumn02/autumn02article/259-in-search-of-the-forme-pensee-the-influence-of-theosophy-on-belgian-artists-between-symbolism-and-the-avant-garde-1890-1910>.

⁴⁴ Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, "Key to the Meanings of Colors," *Thought Forms* (1901; London: Theosophical Publishing House, 1925), <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/16269/16269-h/16269-h.htm>. Debora Silverman, *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France: Politics, Psychology, and Style* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 85 has also tracked Symbolists' interest in colors corresponding to emotional states to the activities of *psychologie nouvelle*. Doctors assigned colors the ability to trigger certain moods: "blue triggered a sad, dejected look" in hypnotized patients.

1901 Theosophical publication *Thought Forms* present one avenue, complementary to Symbolist trends, through which to assess Tanner's change in palette.⁴⁵

But one must also look further, as the factors behind "Tanner Blues" were more multifaceted. Indeed, Symbolists were generally less likely to adhere strictly to the allegorical equivalencies proffered in texts such as *Thought Forms* than to be more holistically receptive to nineteenth-century color theories that emphasized the subjectivity of vision and the power of color for non-narrative communication.⁴⁶

While a 2017 exhibition of Munch's prints at the National Gallery of Art convincingly illustrated the impact of Theosophical thought on the Norwegian artist's color choices, Munch scholar Reinhold Heller has presented a more nuanced picture.⁴⁷ Looking specifically at Munch's blue palette in *Night* (1890) (Fig. 11), Heller points to the impact of James Abbott McNeill Whistler's Nocturnes, other contemporary artists' restricted color usages, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's color theories.⁴⁸

"Tanner Blues" are equivalently variously informed. As had Munch, Tanner must have drawn from Whistler's palette. Tanner had forthrightly engaged with his

⁴⁵ Their English branch of Theosophy attracted artists because of its visual component. See Kenneth E. Silver, "Afterlife: The Important and Sometimes Embarrassing Links between Occultism and the Developments of Abstract Art, ca. 1909-1912," in *Mystical Symbolism: The Salon de la Rose+Croix in Paris, 1892-1897* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 2017, exh. cat.), 47. Religion and occultism were not necessarily mutually exclusive. While they may seem incongruent, according to Facos, 102, "sometimes occultism replaced religion and politics, but more often it coexisted with them as a strategy for accessing a universal, permanent, yet unseen reality." The same is true of Spiritualism and religion.

⁴⁶ Georges Roque, "Les symbolistes et la couleur," *Revue de l'Art* 96 (1992): 72

⁴⁷ *Edward Munch: Color in Context*, 2017, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, <https://www.nga.gov/exhibitions/2017/edvard-munch-color-in-context.html>.

⁴⁸ Reinhold Heller, "Edvard Munch's 'Night,' the Aesthetics of Decadence, and the Content of Biography," *Arts Magazine* 53, no. 2 (October 1978): 80, 87-89.

famous compatriot's work in his interpretation of Whistler's *Arrangement of Grey and Black No. 1 (Whistler's Mother)* (1871) with his own *Portrait of the Artist's Mother* (1897).⁴⁹ They were two of the few outstanding Americans whose paintings the French government purchased for the Musée du Luxembourg, its collection of works by living artists. Closely related to Whistler's Nocturnes are Tanner's *The Disciples See Christ Walk on the Water* (ca. 1907), and, even more so, Tanner's *Moses in the Bulrushes* (1921) (Figs. 12-14). Additionally, Hermann Dudley Murphy, his studio-mate, painted Tanner's portrait in the Whistlerian style (ca. 1896) (Fig. 15).⁵⁰ Dudley's portrait suggests Tanner's artistic identification with Whistler and familiarity with the formal qualities of Whistler's work.

Whistler was known for his "sauce," an excessively liquid medium that compelled him to lay his supports horizontally while working in order to prevent the aqueous color from running off the edges.⁵¹ In 1891, Tanner too used a "blueish or greenish sauce."⁵² Whistler has been one of the few Americans admitted to the Symbolist canon, and the long shadow of his influence is readily identifiable in all two-dimensional artist case studies in this dissertation. Whistler's color usage and

⁴⁹ Lacey Taylor Jordan, catalog entry, *After Whistler: The Artist and His Influence on American Painting*, Linda Merrill et al. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), in conjunction with exhibition organized by the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA), 226.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 210.

⁵¹ Stephen Hackney, Rica Jones, and Joyce Townsend, *Paint and Purpose: A Study of Technique in British Art* (London: Tate Gallery Pub., 1999), 152.

⁵² "Sauce verdâtre ou bleuâtre." Armand Seguin [A. S.], "Exposition picturale à Pont-Aven: Second article," *L'Union agricole et maritime: Organe républicain de la région du Nord-Ouest*, October 11, 1891.

frequently asymmetrical compositional arrangements influenced Tanner and establish a link between Tanner and the Symbolist movement.⁵³

There are more points of comparison for understanding Tanner Blues. Tanner's palette in *The Three Marys* also evokes Rose+Croix Salon exhibitor Alphonse Osbert's in *The Solitude of Christ* (1897), or his better-known *The Vision* (1892) (Figs. 16-17).⁵⁴ *The Vision*, as it thematizes sight and revelation, resonates particularly with *The Three Marys*. In both cases, the viewer is made witness to the reception of a divine or miraculous sight. Osbert's revelation is more highly internalized within the mind of the central figure, her head surrounded in an unfocused, gold-yellow halo. Still, the function of light and color in Osbert's painting parallels that in *The Three Marys*, where, in a field of blue, Tanner illuminated the figures' gestures and expressions of profound realization with a gold-yellow light.

William E. Barton, a critic for *The Advance*, reiterated some of Robert C. Ogden's concern about the abstruseness of Tanner's art, writing, "those who are seeking merely pretty pictures will not instantly enjoy Tanner's work."⁵⁵ Barton captured what had become the distinguishing notes of Tanner's palette and style in the first decade of the twentieth century: "He tunes his art to a low key; greens and blues and purples predominate. . . . He uses thick paint and it flows freely from his brush . . . figures stand modeled against backgrounds that are usually not very

⁵³ Swedish Symbolist Eugène Jansson, known as "blue-painter" for his use of the color, and the Blue Period of Pablo Picasso present more comparative examples.

⁵⁴ The silhouette of Christ in *Solitude* is especially reminiscent of the figure in *The Disciples See Christ Walking on the Water* (1907). I have not found direct evidence that Tanner attended these Salons or saw these paintings by Osbert.

⁵⁵ William E. Barton, "An American Painter of the Resurrection," *The Advance* (March 20, 1913): 2012.

pronounced.”⁵⁶ Barton makes a perceptive observation about the evocative quality of Tanner’s work: “There is a haunting sense of mystery, a feeling of something not fully told but strikingly hinted.”⁵⁷ As a half-told story recounted in shades of blue, *The Three Marys* exemplifies Tanner’s Symbolist impulse.

A mystic who has read Renan and studied with Benjamin Constant

When Vance Thompson called Tanner a “mystic” (see epigraph), he conditioned the designation with references to Renan and Jean-Joseph Benjamin-Constant. Joseph Ernest Renan was arguably the most well-known French writer in the second half of the nineteenth century. His immensely popular *The Life of Jesus* (1863) narrated the biography of Jesus as historical personage and crowned his scholarly career as philologist and historian of early Christianity. In explaining his understanding of symbolism, Bishop Tanner pointed to Renan’s contention that “Seeing Palestine is the fifth Gospel.”⁵⁸ This reference hints at Renan’s widespread popularity and suggests the younger Tanner’s familiarity with his writing.

Tanner’s artistic outlook reflects Renan’s pseudo-anthropological and racialized ideas, and the author’s fusion of textual inquiry with a fiction-like readability of tone.⁵⁹ Tanner wrote, for example, of finding a “type” to portray Jesus:

⁵⁶ Barton, 2012.

⁵⁷ Barton, 2012.

⁵⁸ Benjamin Tucker Tanner, 51.

⁵⁹ Sally M. Promey, *Painting Religion in Public: John Singer Sargent’s Triumph of Religion at the Boston Public Library* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 37 has assessed the impact of Renan on Sargent’s Boston Public Library *Triumph of Religion* murals (1890-1910), and she underscores a point beyond the supposed factuality of Renan’s narrative and its geographical grounding. She emphasizes the weight Renan placed on a subjective, personal spirituality as the pinnacle of religious experience. Marcus Bruce, *Henry Ossawa Tanner: A Spiritual Biography* (New York: Crossroads, 2002), 15 has emphasized the personalness of Tanner’s belief system. While raised with the teachings of the A.M.E.

“It was my chance in Jerusalem to run across a little Yemenite Jew. Where could a better type be found than this swarthy child of Arabia, of purest Jewish blood—nurtured in the same land, under the same sun?”⁶⁰ Tanner’s paintings themselves function like the “lives of Jesus” literary genre, in their intermingling of Holy Land topography, Biblical sourcing, spiritual inflection, and modern relatability.⁶¹ Readers cherished the lyricism of Renan’s descriptions.⁶² His written, topographical vignettes of the landscape are evocative of Tanner’s visual ones, as in *A View of Palestine* (1898-1899): “The water, of a celestial azure, deeply encased between frowning

Church, his father being one of the church’s leading intellectuals, Tanner himself reported that he was “not ruled or bound by its tradition.” Henry Ossawa Tanner, “The Story of An Artist’s Life, Part I,” *World’s Work* 18, no. 2 (June 1909): 11664. Sargent’s murals number among the few examples of American Symbolism that Edward Lucie-Smith recognizes. See Edward Lucie-Smith, *Symbolist Art* (New York: Praeger, 1972), 143.

⁶⁰ Henry Ossawa Tanner, “The Mothers of the Bible—By H. O. Tanner,” *Ladies’ Home Journal* 20, no. 2 (January 1903): 13. As this passage suggests, Tanner’s attitude towards the contemporary inhabitants of Palestine was one of differentiation or racialization. The Jewish and Arab inhabitants of Palestine appeared to him as stuck in a more ancient time. See Kristen Schwain, *Signs of Grace: Religion and American Art in the Gilded Age* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 63.

⁶¹ Jennifer Stevens, *The Historical Jesus and the Literary Imagination, 1860-1920* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), 34. To nineteenth-century readers, the most important component of Renan’s text was its author’s first-hand knowledge of Palestine (Stevens, 44). The sponsor of Tanner’s first trip to Palestine, Rodman Wanamaker, thought the same would be necessary for an artist of Biblical imagery such as Tanner. He remarked, while “there is orientalism in the ‘Lazarus’ [Tanner’s award-winning *Resurrection of Lazarus* (1896)] . . . it was a fortunate accident” and that he needed to actually “go there [to the ‘Orient’] every two or three years, at least, to get in touch with the true Oriental spirit.” Quoted in Naurice Frank Woods, Jr., *Henry Ossawa Tanner: Art, Faith, Race, and Legacy* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 108. For more on Tanner’s Holy Land work, see John Davis, epilogue, *The Landscape of Belief: Encountering the Holy Land in Nineteenth-Century American Art and Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 208-13. Davis, 209 finds that Tanner’s work fundamentally differs from the transcriptive travelogues of the mid-nineteenth century artists discussed in the bulk of Davis’s text. Tanner worked in the context of a moment when “genius loci was thought to rest in the head of the creator rather than any particular regional terrain.”

⁶² Stevens, 45.

rocks, seems, when viewed from the summit of the mountain of Safed, to be in the bottom of a cup of gold” (Fig. 18).⁶³

John Davis has examined American fascination and association with the Middle East. In the epilogue of his *Landscape of Belief: Encountering the Holy Land in Nineteenth-Century American Art and Culture*, he finds that Tanner’s work fundamentally differs from the transcriptive travelogues or imitative naturalistic panoramas of the 1800s that he considers at length through the rest of his book. As Davis writes, “unlike his predecessors, Tanner did not dwell on the materiality of the existing landscape but instead used it to conjure images of the scriptural events he hoped to illustrate,” and he also discusses the artist’s “retreat to an inner landscape only vaguely suggestive of topographic actualities.”⁶⁴ While Davis uses the word “illustrate,” it is important to remember that Tanner filtered his scriptural subject matter through obscuring veils of suggestion and mystery and emphasized the paintings’ surface construction. This is an approach, like the “inner landscape,” characteristic of Symbolism, and one that might be said to displace the materiality of the land, the “Holy Land,” onto the materiality of the art object.

Vance Thompson reported not only that Tanner read Renan, but also that the artist-mystic was taught by Benjamin-Constant. The link to Benjamin-Constant is even more unequivocal than the link to Renan. Jean-Joseph Benjamin-Constant was one of Tanner’s principal instructors at the Académie Julian, the private art school Tanner attended in Paris starting in 1891, after studying in the United States with

⁶³ Ernest Renan, *The Life of Jesus*, trans. Charles E. Wilbour (1863; New York: Carleton, 1864), 151.

⁶⁴ Davis, 209.

Thomas Eakins at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Benjamin-Constant served as a respected mentor and friend for the younger artist.⁶⁵ He specialized in “Orientalist” scenes, set in exotic extra-European locales, in a detailed and realistic academic style. Although Tanner departed from his mentor stylistically, he followed Benjamin-Constant and other Western artists to the Middle East and North Africa. Tanner journeyed through Egypt, Palestine, Algeria, and Morocco between 1897 and 1912, participating in the long-established European practice of visiting and imaging the “Orient.”⁶⁶

Paris and Pont-Aven

Tanner arrived in Paris in early 1891. He would mostly remain abroad from then on, avoiding the worst of American anti-black racism and embracing the art

⁶⁵ Marcia M. Mathews, 60.

⁶⁶ The primary theorist of Orientalism is Edward Said, who examined the problematic power relations inherent in Orientalist discourse and the unreality of the Orient as perceived by Europeans. He explains that “the Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experience.” Orientalism is “a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient’s special place in European and Western experience.” Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1978; New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 1. Tanner’s description of finding a “pure”-blooded Jewish boy to portray Jesus shows one of the symptoms of Orientalism—the idea of an unchanged, ancient timelessness unmoved by contemporary geopolitical events. See Linda Nochlin, “The Imaginary Orient,” in *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Art and Society* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989), 35-36. Ironically, while Tanner subjected others to the Orientalist gaze, he himself was subjected to it. Tietjens, Frame 1, wrote that Tanner “is not an Anglo-Saxon. His work is in its essence oriental.” Later in the essay, Frame 3, she explains that despite the fact that his technique is fully modern, “he is not of to-day. . . . Like all mystics he has taken his stand on a hill top where beauty dwells and a primal simplicity and the wind of the day flaps about him unavailingly.” Her comment pictures Tanner himself as an ahistorical, unmoving eternal. Adrienne L. Childs has complicated Tanner’s Orientalism, as it was refracted through his African American identity and burgeoning modernist New Negro movement of the 1920s. Adrienne L. Childs, “Tanner and ‘Oriental’ Africa,” in *Modern Spirit*, 98-105. Childs explains that “an exoticized Africa that was associated with the Islamic Mediterranean cultures rather than sub-Saharan or ‘black’ Africa was the subject of much Orientalist imagery; however, the blackness or Africanness of the Orient was also integral to its construction by Western artists” (99).

educational and art market capital of the nineteenth century. The year of Tanner's arrival was a pivotal one for the Symbolist movement. In 1891, journalist Jules Huret's interview with poet Stéphane Mallarmé appeared in *L'Echo de Paris*. It was part of a series assessing Symbolism's impact according to leading writers, artists, and intellectuals. In this interview, Mallarmé famously declared, "To *name* an object is to suppress three-quarters of the enjoyment of the poem, which derives from the pleasure of step-by-step discovery; to *suggest*, that is the dream."⁶⁷ Histories of the movement often turn to this sentence as the essential expression of a Symbolist approach, one that discouraged the direct, didactic, and declarative. Mallarmé continued, "It is the perfect use of this mystery that constitutes the symbol: to evoke an object little by little, so as to bring to light a state of the soul or, inversely, to choose an object and bring out of it a state of the soul through a series of unravelings."⁶⁸ This passage emphasizes mystery, suggestion, and soulfulness as key ingredients to the Symbolist approach. Though Mallarmé's focus is poetry, formal choices in visual art can bring about a similar effect. Another 1891 article took Mallarmé's foundations in this direction and addressed Symbolism in the fine arts, and in painting, directly. Albert Aurier's "Le Symbolisme en peinture: Paul Gauguin" ("Symbolism in Painting: Paul Gauguin") appeared in the March edition of the *Mercure de France*. It was the first significant theoretical articulation of the Symbolist movement in the visual arts.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Stéphane Mallarmé interview with Jules Huret, 1891, trans. and excerpted in Dorra, 141.

⁶⁸ Dorra, 141.

⁶⁹ Reinhold Heller, "Concerning Symbolism and the Structure of Surface," *Art Journal* 45, no. 2 (June 1985): 146. Heller (146) acknowledges that Émile Verhaeren technically called Fernand Khnopff *un peintre symboliste* before Aurier applied the term to Gauguin. Aurier also called Van Gogh, "almost always a Symbolist" (*presque toujours un symboliste*) in a

Aurier's article lays out his aesthetic principles and identifies Gauguin as the head of the Symbolist movement. Aurier describes Gauguin's *Vision after the Sermon* (1888) as a biblical struggle unfolding on a brilliant vermillion ground (Fig. 19).⁷⁰ Gauguin painted the Genesis episode as it is being conjured in the minds of a group of late nineteenth-century onlookers. They are a group mostly made up of women from the Brittany region of France, and they line the left and bottom edges of the canvas. Aurier explains that one might situate these pious women in a church, and Gauguin intended for his painting to be placed in a church.⁷¹ Importantly though, the church itself does not appear in the painting. As Aurier explains, "all the ambient material realities have gone up in smoke" due to the intensity of the onlookers' visionary experience.⁷² That this foundational text on Symbolist art immediately hones in on what is, at an essential level, a religious painting (Gauguin himself called it "a religious painting"⁷³ and Aurier named the subject matter as "biblical"⁷⁴) is significant when considering Tanner, one of the foremost religious painters of his generation, in the context of the Symbolist movement. As we have seen, Tanner's religiosity, even as it was shaped by his father's formalized Christianity or inflected

January 1890 *Mercure de France* article. See G.-Albert Aurier, *Œuvres posthumes de G.-Albert Aurier* (Paris: Edition du Mercure de France, 1893), 262. This is also discussed in Remy de Gourmont's "Notice" for the *Œuvres posthumes*, xix.

⁷⁰ G.-Albert Aurier, "Le Symbolisme en peinture—Paul Gauguin," 1891, trans. and excerpted in Dorra, 195.

⁷¹ Aurier in Dorra, 195.

⁷² Aurier in Dorra, 196.

⁷³ Gauguin to Van Gogh, on or about September 26, 1888, <http://vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/let688/letter.html>. This letter is quoted in Claire Frèches-Thory, catalog entry for *The Vision after the Sermon (Jacob Wrestling the Angel)*, in *The Art of Paul Gauguin*, Richard Brettell, Françoise Cachin, Claire Frèches-Thory, and Charles F. Stuckey, with assistance from Pete Zegers (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1988, exh. cat.), 103. Gauguin intended it for placement in a church (103).

⁷⁴ Aurier in Dorra, 195.

by Christian Science, does not inherently conflict with, and in fact complements, a Symbolist worldview.

However keen to improve his French language skills,⁷⁵ Tanner is unlikely to have read Mallarmé's interview or Aurier's article so soon after moving to France. Yet Symbolism was most definitely in the air and Gauguin's presence was pervasive in the seaside village of Pont-Aven. It was there, on the coast of Brittany in northwest France, that Tanner summered his first and second years abroad, upon the recommendation of fellow students at the Académie Julian.⁷⁶

American artists from Philadelphia and elsewhere had congregated in Pont-Aven starting in the 1860s, well before Gauguin's arrival.⁷⁷ However, Gauguin

⁷⁵ He chose Brittany "as a rather isolated district" to improve his French over the summer but was disappointed by the large English-speaking contingent in Pont-Aven. See Henry Ossawa Tanner, "The Story of An Artist's Life, Part II," *World's Work* 18, no. 3 (July 1909): 11771.

⁷⁶ Woods 2018, 63.

⁷⁷ David Sellin, *Americans in Brittany and Normandy, 1860-1910* (Phoenix, AZ: Phoenix Art Museum, 1982, exh. cat.), 1. This longer history of the American artist colony is significant to Dewey F. Mosby et al., *Henry Ossawa Tanner*, (New York: Rizzoli, 1991, in conjunction with exhibition at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, PA), 89. Mosby maintains that even in the environment of 1890s Pont-Aven, Tanner was "unswayed by the Symbolist experiments taking place" and continued to paint with "an American-informed vision." Mosby questions Judy Le Paul's characterization of Tanner at this moment. Le Paul calls Tanner "a transatlantic continuation of the Nabis group," who was "clearly influenced by the religious and mystic element of French Symbolism." Judy Le Paul, *Gauguin and the Impressionists at Pont-Aven* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1987), 98-99. Mosby's doubt is understandable, as Le Paul's cited source for her assertion that Tanner was a "transatlantic continuation" of this group is artist Gustave Loiseau's memoirs as recapitulated in a 1930 exhibition catalog of his work. The description of Tanner found in that catalog, while mentioning Tanner's affiliation with the Académie Julian and recognizing his presence at Pont-Aven, focuses on the artist's teeth. It paints an odd, distracting, and demeaning picture of the "mulatto" [Tanner] with "horrific and superb" gold dental work credited to the superiority of American dentists. "Mûlatra. . . . Sa mâchoire était une vivante réclame pour les dentistes d'outre-Atlantique. Des feuilles d'or en recouvraient toutes les dents. C'était horifique et superbe." François Thiébault-Sisson, *Gustave Loiseau* (Paris: Imprimerie George Petit, 1930), 24. Thus it is not to Loiseau that one can turn for substantive evidence of Tanner's response to French Symbolism, though one does find evidence in his account of the only incomplete possibility for Tanner to escape racism overseas.

worked in Pont-Aven in 1886 and again in 1888-89.⁷⁸ He forged a new style that culminated in *Vision after the Sermon*, and he inspired a group of artists known as the Nabis. Though he had moved on for the time being in pursuit of what he understood as more primitive locales in French Polynesia (he would return once more to the seaside artists' colony in France in 1894), he was nevertheless "a cult figure among artists who summered in Pont-Aven" by the 1890s.⁷⁹

Tanner befriended Armand Seguin as well as, perhaps, the Nabi Paul Sérusier, both in Gauguin's orbit.⁸⁰ They were Synthetists, practitioners of a style that had taken shape in the summer 1888 at Pont-Aven.⁸¹ Synthetism is a facet of Symbolism characterized by non-naturalistic and unmodulated color, flat forms, and thick outlines.⁸² In "Symbolism in Painting," Aurier effectively subsumed Synthetism into Symbolism, listing synthetic (*synthétique*) as among the five characteristics of the new art.⁸³ Both Seguin and Sérusier were in Pont-Aven in the summer of 1891.⁸⁴ Seguin was fluent in English, his mother's native tongue, which facilitated his

⁷⁸ Caroline Shields, chronology in June Hargrove, *Gauguin* (Paris: Citadelles & Mazenod, 2017), 402-03.

⁷⁹ Mosby 1991, 89.

⁸⁰ Dewey F. Mosby, *Across Continents and Cultures: The Art and Life of Henry Ossawa Tanner* (Kansas City, MO: Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, 1995, exh. cat.), 34. Despite his affinities with the Nabis, Seguin, also an Académie Julian student, never officially joined the group. See Russell T. Clement, Annick Houzé, and Christiane Erbolato-Ramsey, *A Sourcebook of Gauguin's Symbolist Followers: Les Nabis, Pont-Aven, Rose + Croix* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), 222.

⁸¹ Caroline Boyle-Turner, *The Prints of the Pont-Aven School: Gauguin and his Circle in Brittany* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, exh. cat.), 19.

⁸² Clement et al., xviii.

⁸³ Aurier, *Œuvres postumes*, 215. The critic is also happy with "synthétistes" as a descriptor for this new movement, equal in value to the designations "idéistes, symbolistes." He instructs the reader to use them as they please ("comme il plaira") (209).

⁸⁴ Dario Gamboni, *Potential Images: Ambiguity and Indeterminacy in Modern Art*, trans. Mark Treharne (London: Reaktion, 2002), 97; Clement et al, 234.

friendships with Tanner and other Anglo-Americans in the artists' colony.⁸⁵ Most telling of their interaction is that Seguin etched and exhibited a portrait of Tanner.⁸⁶ His *Port. De M. Tanner* (Portrait of Mr. Tanner), now unlocated, was shown in February to March 1895 at the art gallery Le Barc de Boutteville in Paris. Gauguin himself wrote the preface for the accompanying catalog, and Maurice Denis penned a review of Seguin's show that dealt with the School of Pont-Aven and Symbolism more broadly.⁸⁷

Tanner was not only the subject of Seguin's portrait. He also exhibited alongside the artist in two 1891 exhibitions. The first show was in August, held at the town hall of Pont-Aven, and it included works by Per Ewert, Eric Forbes-Robertson, Axel Hou, Gustave Loiseau, Seguin, and Tanner.⁸⁸ The local newspaper advertised the show as "an exhibition of serious works, looking to imitate, with a point of mocking, the modern symbolic school."⁸⁹ This "mocking" is explained somewhat in a review of the exhibition that appears in the same newspaper: "The touch of mockery . . . is not a too nasty sting, sharpened and dipped into some poisons from India or elsewhere; rather, it is a brush soaked in humor that seeks to entertain for the benefit

⁸⁵ André Cariou, *Gauguin et l'école de Pont-Aven* (Paris: Hazan, 2015), 148.

⁸⁶ Paul Gauguin, preface to *Armand Seguin: Exposition d'œuvres nouvelles* (Paris: Le Barc de Bouville, 1895, exh. cat.), 20. Cozzolino writes that Seguin "painted" Tanner's portrait (122), but the 1895 catalog indicates the work was an *eau-forte* (etching). This is supported by Richard S. Field, Cynthia L. Strauss, and Samuel J. Wagstaff Jr., *The Prints of Armand Seguin: 1869-1903* (Middletown, CT: Davison Art Center, Wesleyan University, 1980, exh. cat.), 26. They were not able to locate the print, but Seguin's *Port. de Maurice Froment*, known as *Man with a Hat* (1891), shown in the same "Portraits" category, has been located and may offer some idea of the style of the unknown work. See Field et al., 31.

⁸⁷ Maurice Denis, "A propos de l'exposition d'A Séguin," *La Plume* (March 1, 1895), in *Théories 1890-1910: Du Symbolisme et de Gauguin vers un nouvel ordre classique* (Paris: L. Rouart et J. Watelin, 1920), 20-24.

⁸⁸ Bertrand Quéinec, *Pont Aven: 1800-1914* (Pont Aven: Quéinec, 1983), 170.

⁸⁹ "Une exposition d'œuvres sérieuses, cherchant à imiter avec une pointe de raillerie l'école symbolique moderne." *L'Union agricole et maritime*, August 11, 1891.

of people, not for their detriment.”⁹⁰ The reviewer describes Tanner’s contribution to this exhibition as *Coup de vent* (Gust of Wind).⁹¹

The second show, advertised as eclectic,⁹² opened in late September and encompassed works by a larger crowd, but one that again included Forbes-Watson, Loiseau, Tanner, and Seguin.⁹³ Two articles reviewing the exhibition appeared in *L’Union agricole et maritime* and were signed by A. S., presumably Seguin himself.⁹⁴ The second article is wide-ranging. Seguin discusses Monet and Gauguin, and how: “Romanticism made naturalism. The naturalist created the symbolist. We were tired of reality.”⁹⁵ The range of exhibitors in this set of shows highlights the diversity of styles alive and coexisting in Pont-Aven in 1891. The critical responses reveal a movement, Symbolism, whose boundaries are never rigidly defined, taking some shape. Most importantly here, though, is how very immediate the presence of Symbolism was for Tanner during his first year abroad.

⁹⁰ “La pointe de raillerie, je vous loue d’abord pour cela, n’est point un dard trop méchamment aiguisé et trempé dans quelque vénéficé[sic] d’Inde ou d’ailleurs ; c’est un pinceau plein d’humour qui cherche à s’amuser au profit et non aux dépens du prochain.” Habert, “Exposition Picturale A Pont-Aven,” *L’Union agricole et maritime*, August 16-19, 1891. Translated with assistance from Charline Founier Petite, PhD Student, University of Maryland, Department of Art History & Archaeology.

⁹¹ Ibid. Seguin’s contributions had the quite Whistlerian titles of *Symphonie en jaune* and *Symphonie en violet*, and the religious overtones of *Jaune vierge en prière*.

⁹² “Eclectique.” E. Habert, “Exposition artistique à Pont-Aven,” *L’Union agricole et maritime*, September 16, 1891. This show coordinated with the agricultural fair of September 28, 1891. See V., *L’Union agricole et maritime*, September 20, 1891.

⁹³ Quéinec, 176. Other artists showing were Jules Bouvier, L. Brion, Albert Charrier, Georges Chaudet, A. David, Deyrolles, Ewert, Granchi, Eugène Habert, Harwold, Hou, Hunt, Rober Maddoch Wright, and Sérenne.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ “Le romantisme a fait le naturaliste, le naturaliste a créé le symboliste. On était las de la réalité.” Armand Seguin [A. S.], “Exposition picturale à Pont-Aven: Second,” *L’Union agricole et maritime*, October 11, 1891.

This immediacy has not been fully acknowledged in literature around Tanner, nor have the paintings from these shows been identified.⁹⁶ Dewey F. Mosby has found that Tanner did begin to adopt, however subtly and haltingly, certain compositional devices of Brittany's Symbolists—shallower space and a lower vantage point resulting in a tilted perspective inspired by Japanese art.⁹⁷ Tanner may have returned to Pont-Aven in 1894, and Mosby has proposed that Tanner's painting, the wrongly titled *Aix-en-Provence* (ca. 1894) shows greater “flirtation” with Symbolism (Fig. 20).⁹⁸ The shadows in *Aix-en-Provence* take on a non-worldly red hue that is consonant with Symbolist color approaches.⁹⁹

One might follow this observation further through a comparison. Tanner's *Aix-en-Provence* shows similarities to Seguin's *Two Thatched Cottages* (ca. 1893–1894) (Fig. 21). Seguin used patchy red shadows and bold, rust-red outlines for his hillside landscape. The outlines delineate the bulbous masses of trees and shrubs, as well as the structured geometry of several cottages. Though the title assigned to Seguin's work only refers to two buildings, a third and maybe fourth are present in the immediate foreground. They are cut off by the bottom edge of the canvas. Though not as radically, Tanner used similar cropped effect in later works. Like Tanner's,

⁹⁶ The painting from the second exhibition seems to have been raffled off to a M. Guéguénat[illeg.?] *L'Union agricole et maritime*, October 4, 1891.

⁹⁷ Hesitant on this point, Mosby rationalizes, “the artist [Tanner] became a Symbolist in spirit without wholly embracing their technique” (Mosby 1995, 35). As Symbolism encompasses such a broad range of formal techniques, perhaps “in spirit” is the only way to truly “be” a Symbolist in any case.

⁹⁸ Mosby 1991, 83. He suggests the assigned title is misleading and that the painting more likely depicts Brittany.

⁹⁹ Mosby 1991, 83. This painting was in the private collection of Merton Simpson and remains inaccessible outside of Mosby's description. Two works by Tanner from the Simpson collection were recently auctioned, but neither are *Aix-en-Provence*. See “African-American Fine Art,” *Swann Auction Galleries*, October 5, 2017, <https://www.swanngalleries.com/3dcat/2456/>.

Seguin's vantage point is low, and the landscape seems built up nearly vertically. Paths that break through the trees in both compositions further emphasize the tilted effect. While Tanner's angle is so extreme that no sky appears in the distance, only the slightest band of blue-green clouded sky shows itself at the top edge of Seguin's. Tanner gave the bushes at the top of his composition some of the rhythm and bulbous quality of Seguin's rounded forms. The similarity may not be altogether overwhelming. However, I would argue that Tanner's summers in Brittany planted a seed that matured later and prompted receptivity to the variable Symbolist currents in his adopted country. These currents were diverse, far reaching, and lasted well into the 1890s and beyond.

Visions of Angels

Another comparison suggests the long-term salience of Pont-Aven Symbolism. Bringing Tanner's *Angels Appearing Before the Shepherds* (ca. 1910-1911) into conversation with Gauguin's *The Vision after the Sermon (Jacob Wrestling the Angel)* (1888) highlights the originality of Tanner's artistic vision as well as Tanner's affinities with a canonical work of European Symbolism (Figs. 19 and 22).

In Tanner's *Angels Appearing Before the Shepherds*, the cropped image of the angel in the bottom left corner harkens back to the figure in the same position in Gauguin's *The Vision after the Sermon* (Figs. 23-24). Both are in profile, visually flattened, and brought to the front of the picture plane. Both hold their hands in prayer position, with head slightly bowed. Gauguin closed the eyes of the Breton woman he pictured, and Tanner's abstract mark of light blue paint in the area of his figure's eye

socket suggests the same closed-eye quality of reflection and interiority. Some have interpreted the priest in the opposite corner, the bottom right, of Gauguin's composition as a coded Gauguin self-portrait.¹⁰⁰ An adventurous assessment of Tanner's work might posit that the angel at the bottom left of *Angels Appearing Before the Shepherds* is Tanner's own, abstracted self-portrait. This figure stands apart from the clustered line of angels in the midground and the cropping removes its wings from sight, rendering this angel separate and more human. The darker hair and streak of lighter paint by the figure's jaw recalls Tanner's own dark brown hair and, by around 1910, graying beard and mustache. Tanner had drawn a self-portrait study for *Christ in the Home of Lazarus*, the same approximate year as *Angels Appearing*, and the self-portrait depiction has similarities with the shape of his angel's profile and in the spread of its fingers (Fig. 25). Especially when interpreted thusly, Tanner, like Gauguin, can be said to use variations of what Michelle Facos has dubbed the "thought-bubble" composition typical of Symbolist art.¹⁰¹ This composition type delineates two registers, the real—inhabited by the thinking, reflective, and seeing artist—and the imaginary.

Both Gauguin's and Tanner's paintings are thematically concerned with the mystery and miracle of religious vision. Yet the paintings are also fundamentally different on a multitude of levels and in some conspicuous ways.¹⁰² Gauguin

¹⁰⁰ See Hargrove, 116 and Dario Gamboni, "The Vision of a Vision: Perception, Hallucination, and Potential Images in Gauguin's *Vision of the Sermon*," in *Visions: Gauguin and his Time*, Van Gogh Studies 3, ed. Chris Stolwijk (Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum/Waanders Publishers, 2010), 14.

¹⁰¹ Facos, 27.

¹⁰² They are particularly differentiated by the treatment of landscape. Tanner's is based on his Holy Land landscapes. Gauguin's, while seemingly altogether non-naturalistic, does reference the color of seaweed drying on the fields of Pont-Aven. See Dorra, 192.

exhibited his, pivotal work the year after it was completed, but Tanner's work, of around two decades later, may never have been exhibited during Tanner's lifetime.¹⁰³ *Vision after the Sermon's* crowd consists of contemporary figures envisioning a Biblical episode, whereas Tanner's composition is a more self-contained biblical scene. The human and angelic roles are also reversed. While Tanner's composition emphasizes the angels and minimizes the scale of the shepherd onlookers, Gauguin's distorted perspective magnifies the Breton onlookers in comparison to the reduced scale of Jacob and the angel. Interestingly, Gauguin painted his angel in ultramarine blue.¹⁰⁴ While ultramarine pigment is not common in the works by Tanner that have been technically analyzed,¹⁰⁵ blue is the pervasive hue in this and so many of Tanner's paintings. The paint on both works has been described as thin,¹⁰⁶ but while Gauguin's angel has a solidity thanks to the opacity of the medium and his hard- and clear-edged application of it, Tanner's angels appear to dissipate into the background through his textural, dry paint scumbles and translucent coverage. This differentiated effect may relate to the preparation of their respective canvases. Gauguin used a thin, white ground that was chalky and encouraged the colors to "melt," fresco-like, into the support.¹⁰⁷ The texture of Tanner's canvas, likely prepared with a standard white ground, shows itself in various thinly painted landscape passages, but he took advantage of it especially in his description of the dissipating angels.¹⁰⁸ Despite

¹⁰³ Mosby 1991, 225.

¹⁰⁴ Gauguin to Van Gogh, on or about September 26, 1888, <http://vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/let688/letter.html>.

¹⁰⁵ Baade et al., 163.

¹⁰⁶ Mosby 1991, 225; Silverman, 112.

¹⁰⁷ Heller 1985, 148.

¹⁰⁸ "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God . . . And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven." (Luke 2:8-16).

similarities, the distinct differences between these two works affirm the varied formal manifestations and highly personal nature of Symbolism, directed to individual interiority rather than shared external reality, and thereby also affirm Tanner's Symbolist inclinations.

1897 Salon: A Certain Painting of the Immaterial, Symbolist Elements in Painting

A review of the 1897 Salon des artistes français captures mainstream, critical opinion of a matured Symbolist aesthetic in France, different from yet related to the Synthetism of 1891 Pont-Aven. Reviewer M. L. de Fourcaud bemoans the overabundance of Symbolism on the Salon's walls. Critiquing the ubiquity of "a certain painting of the immaterial," Fourcaud complains that uninspired artists, unsure how to proceed, fall into evoking spirits, mysteries, shadows, and mists.¹⁰⁹ He is chagrined at the blackish, blueish, and greenish vapors overtaking so many Salon works, as well as their foggy and lugubrious atmosphere.¹¹⁰ He finds some basis for the strangest manifestations of this trend in English Pre-Raphaelitism.¹¹¹ Tanner's work, however, is exceptional. It is among the highlights of the Salon for Fourcaud.

¹⁰⁹ "Une certain peinture de l'immatériel." M. L. de Fourcaud, "1897 Salons des Champs-Élysées," *Le Gaulois*, Supplément, April 19, 1897, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k529863n>. He associates Symbolism and mysticism, explaining that neither suits the French temperament: "Ni le mysticisme, ni le symbolisme."

¹¹⁰ "Atmosphères embrumées et lugubres. . . . Malheureusement, même sur des sujets réels, des peintres nombreux font descendre les ombres. Des vapeurs noirâtres, bleuâtres, verdâtres, noient de tout côté."

¹¹¹ "L'influence du préraphaélisme anglais aboutit à la plus étrange, à la plus imprévue débauche d'idées en dissolution en des formes que s'évanouissent. . . . Des Anglais ont mis à la mode ce fantomatisme artificiel, et voilà que la mode s'étend. "

According to the writer, *The Resurrection of Lazarus* (1896) is a rarity in its sincere and human expression of religious sentiment (Fig. 26).¹¹²

Tanner established his reputation with this picture, as it was his first major success in France.¹¹³ Later, an American reporter would quote the Rose+Croix Salon exhibitor Edmond Aman-Jean's assessment of *Resurrection* as "sombre and rich, a little obscure and at the same time luminous."¹¹⁴ As Aman-Jean noticed, there is a mysterious quality to Tanner's picture. It is complemented by the artist's eloquent use of light and shade. Deep shadows fill the background of *Resurrection*'s wooded yet grotto-like space, with just the slightest opening, at the top left, to a moonlit sky beyond. Golden light flickers across the faces, hands, and garments of onlookers who exhibit a variety of emotions. They are stunned, praiseful, and disbelieving, as Jesus calmly gestures downwards, towards Lazarus. Lazarus awakens, though his body is stiff and still submerged from the waist down in a cloth-covered grave. The color palette is warm, mainly yellow and brown. While Fourcaud was unambiguously praiseful of *Resurrection*, the work could nevertheless be characterized by a statement Fourcaud used to condemn other paintings at the Salon: "Numerous painters descend shadows even on real subject matter."¹¹⁵ Yet Tanner's shadows are not of the blueish, misty variety the *Gaulois* critic truly laments. An 1893 reviewer had in fact praised Tanner specifically for not "succumbing to the 'blue bug' craze."¹¹⁶

¹¹² "La scène est d'une grandeur véritable en sa grande simplicité humaine. "

¹¹³ The Salon jury awarded *The Resurrection of Lazarus* a third-class medal and the French government purchased it for the Musée du Luxembourg.

¹¹⁴ "An Afro-American Painter Who Has Become Famous in Paris," *Current Literature* 45, no. 4 (October 1908): 406.

¹¹⁵ "Même sur des sujets réels, des peintres nombreux font descendre les ombres." Fourcaud.

¹¹⁶ *Philadelphia Daily Evening Telegraph*, 1893, newspaper clipping quoted in Marcia M. Mathews, 70.

It is perhaps surprising then that in the years to follow Tanner's palette changed so dramatically from warmer to cooler tonalities, to such an extent that in a 1924 review, the *New York Times* criticized how "the artist repeats the same color scheme and veils his pictures with a blue haze too difficult to penetrate."¹¹⁷ The *Times's* comment is a reflection on Tanner's exhibition at Grand Central Galleries, which appears to be the first public showing of his *Salome*, the work to which this chapter turns next (Fig. 27).¹¹⁸

Salome: Femme Fatale as Symbolist Icon

Salome is a shocking picture for Tanner, who was once known to discreetly hide away the nude studies he drew as a student at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.¹¹⁹ In *Salome*, Tanner painted a mostly nude female figure whose body extends almost the entire length of the vertically oriented, nearly four-foot-tall canvas. She is cropped at the knees and wears a gauzy, translucent garment that skims her form. Tanner outlined the cloth in thick, white paint strokes, which also define her

¹¹⁷ "Art Exhibitions of the Week," *New York Times*, January 27, 1924, 12, <https://nyti.ms/2pp9pqJ>. Robert Pincus-Witten, "Washington," *Artforum* 8, no. 2 (October 1969): 73 questions if *Salome* was indeed a fully "finished" work. However, considering its lifetime exhibition and signature, it appears to be.

¹¹⁸ Mosby 1991, 235; Kathleen James and Sylvia Yount, chronology in *Modern Spirit*, 288. There is disagreement surrounding *Salome's* inclusion in this exhibition. Whereas it is listed in the *Modern Spirit* chronology (288), Marley writes in the same catalog that "the painting first appeared in Tanner literature in 1924—and it may never have been exhibited in Tanner's lifetime" (36). The most compelling evidence affirming the work's inclusion in the exhibition is a reference to it in a clipping, *New York Tribune*, January 27, Tanner Papers, Box 2, Folder 14, Frame 5.

¹¹⁹ Woods, 31.

neck and shoulders. Tanner probably made these in zinc white, a pigment that he favored for his upper paint layers.¹²⁰

Salome's proper left arm is upraised and in shadow. Her proper left elbow is not visible, as Tanner positioned it tucked behind her torso, indicating a slight twist in her body, away from the picture plane into the background at top right. The pattern of shadows, which fall more deeply on the proper left side of her body, emphasizes this positioning. While some have read her pose as a reaching down to cover the bloodied mass at bottom left, the decapitated head of John the Baptist, the subtle torsion of her figure suggests, instead, a slight recoil. One finds a representation of the prophet's head in Tanner's rather abstract arrangement of yellow, brown, red, and white—one of the few places where conservators found iron oxide pigments in Tanner's work.¹²¹ A jutting chin emerges from the artist's compilation of curvilinear brick-red strokes of paint, and there are graphic indications of trickling, scarlet blood.

While the dismembered head may be gruesome, color and shadow are the most striking elements of the picture. Blue predominates. Tanner applied various tints and shades of the hue, from the near-black navy of the figure's hair to the pastel streaks in her spotlighted body. Tanner bathed Salome's head in deep, green-blue shadows. They encroach most drastically from the crown of her head to her sternum—metaphorically decapitating her, and thus mirroring the Baptist's fate.

¹²⁰ Zinc white in an oil binder is more translucent than other whites, can be brushed on more thinly, and is less likely to darken, yellow, or become transparent with age. Baade et al., 163; Frederick W. Weber, *Artists' Pigments: Their Chemical and Physical Properties* (New York: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1923), 131-132; Herman Kühn, "Zinc White," in *Artists' Pigments: A Handbook of their History and Characteristics* vol. 1, ed. Robert L. Feller (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1986), 172.

¹²¹ Baade et al., 63.

Tanner used lighter tints to define Salome's eerie grimace and the whites of her eyes, but her face is largely obscured, veiled in shadow. The background moves from a midrange blue, in the negative space between Salome's thigh and the Baptist's head, to a dark blue at the top right. Conservators found cobalt, cerulean, and traces of ultramarine, as well as viridian.¹²² The shadows on Salome's breasts and hips have a particularly green cast, likely attributable to the last of these pigments, a green chromium oxide.

Tanner used long, vertical strokes and more patchy, textural passages to describe a mysterious interior space. He placed the rectangular shape of a thin, horizontal window or other opening just behind Salome's shoulders. This singular source of exterior light recalls his composition for *Resurrection*. At bottom right, Tanner included three, abstract columnar forms. They are tilted slightly towards Salome's body, and they are uneven.¹²³ The highest reaches to a level just below Salome's waist. These pillars exist on the same, rather flat plane as Salome herself. In reinforcing the shallowness of the depicted space and contributing to the work's non-naturalism, Tanner underscored *Salome's* artificial presence as art object.

The subject of Salome must have appealed to Tanner in part because of its biblical source. The fullest Salome narrative in the New Testament comes from the Gospel of Mark (6:21-29). The text describes a young woman asked to perform a

¹²² Baade et al., 163.

¹²³ Monique L. Brown, "An Examination of the Symbiotic Relationship: Iconography and Hermeneutics as Exhibited in Henry Ossawa Tanner's 1900 Painting, *Salome*, and Analyzed Through Visual Religious Exegesis," MA thesis, Howard University, 2014, 43, explores the multivalent potential meanings of these columns—as exegetical references to Christ's Passion, Samson, and Saint Sebastian, as well as indicative of the unwieldy, triangular relationship in the story between Herodias, Herod Antipas, and Salome.

dance by her stepfather, the king Herod Antipas. He promises that, in return, she may request whatever she pleases. She turns to her mother, Herodias, who tells her to request the head of John the Baptist on a silver platter. Revenge motivates Herodias, as John the Baptist had denounced her marriage to the king. In Oscar Wilde's play *Salome*, first published in French in 1893 and then in English the following year with illustrations by Aubrey Beardsley, the younger woman's own lustful motivations are also at work. Though resistant to the request, the king, true to his word, has John the Baptist beheaded and his head delivered. The seductress daughter goes unnamed in the Gospel accounts, but Titus Flavius Josephus's first-century history, *Antiquities of the Jews*, attached the name of Salome to her. The Church Fathers elaborated her legend, underscoring carnality and sin. Church Father Saint Augustine's fourth-century sermon resonates especially with Tanner's visual depiction: "Under the light tunic the young girl appears naked, because in order to execute the dance she became inspired by diabolic thought."¹²⁴ Tanner's figure seems more the mature woman, however, than youthful girl.

Images of Salome appeared throughout the centuries. Tanner undoubtedly saw numerous representations of her on the walls of museums or in reproduction. In Paris, he visited the Louvre¹²⁵ and might have seen Bernardino Luini's Renaissance *Salome Receiving the Head of St. John the Baptist* (ca. 1500) (Fig. 28). Some of the nuance of Tanner's version can be assessed through a comparison with Luini's. Starting in the fifteenth century, certain artists depicted Salome turning away from the head of the

¹²⁴ Quoted in Rosina Neginsky, *Salome: The Image of a Woman Who Never Was; Salome: Nymph, Seducer, Destroyer* (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars, 2013), 41 n2.

¹²⁵ Henry Ossawa Tanner, "Story of An Artist's Life, Part II," 11771.

Baptist either due to her unworthiness or her incomprehensibility and shame.¹²⁶

Luini's Salome exhibits this convention. While holding out a silver platter, his Salome looks away impassively as a disembodied executioner's arm delivers the Baptist's head. Tanner's Salome's gaze and body language are more difficult to interpret; there is a marked ambiguity. She looks hesitantly towards the top left of the frame into the distance, and her position suggests wariness. If she were reaching for the head moments before, she seems to have been startled or disrupted in the act.

Tanner painted *Salome* around the time of his "Mothers of the Bible" series for *Ladies' Home Journal* (1902-1903).¹²⁷ *Salome* is the immoral counter to Tanner's images of Sarah, Hagar, Rachel, and Mary in the "Mothers" series.¹²⁸ For one, Salome acts in the role of daughter rather than mother. She fulfills the spiteful, political wishes of her own mother to have the Baptist beheaded. Though Josephus records Salome's children, Wilde's play concludes with Herod's sentencing Salome—virgin and childless—to death.¹²⁹ Wilde's play defined fin-de-siècle interest in the Salome tale. It is notable that the use of color and light in Tanner's painting echoes that in Wilde's script, as the playwright's characters repeatedly remark upon Salome's paleness and the strange glow of moonlight as the plot unfolds.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Neginsky, 61.

¹²⁷ Tanner, "Story of an Artist's Life, Part II," 11774 reflected that the images he created for the periodical "marked the commencement of my painting pictures containing all or nearly all female figures. Before this time they had been all or nearly all male figures."

¹²⁸ This is true even though the Biblical experience of motherhood was replete with instances of infertility, surrogacy, polygamy, and exile, and ill-aligned with turn-of-the-century standards of female propriety. See Michael Leja, "Reproduction Troubles: Tanner's 'Mothers of the Bible' for the *Ladies' Home Journal*," in *Modern Spirit*, 149.

¹²⁹ Oscar Wilde, *Salomé* (1894 1st English ed.; New York: John Lane Company, 1907), www.gutenberg.org/files/42704/42704-h/42704-h.htm.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

Representations of Salome date at least as far back as the sixth century.¹³¹ Hence Salome was not exclusively a Symbolist subject, but she is deeply associated with Symbolism and its obsession with the femme fatale, a constructed idea of woman that also includes such biblical temptresses as Eve and Judith. She underwent a widespread revival of interest in the nineteenth century.¹³² Patricia Mathews classes the femme fatale among three types of “gendered bodies” that typified Symbolist visual culture, along with the innocent and pure woman, sometimes called *femme fragile*, and the androgyne.¹³³ Bram Dijkstra includes Salome in what amounted to a “veritable iconography of misogyny.”¹³⁴ Robert Pincus-Witten has explained that Salome, “for the Symbolists, had come to represent overweening vanity, death, and sterility.”¹³⁵ Tanner need not have been personally or consciously misogynistic to participate in a broader trend, and the subject matter of Salome does fit into his oeuvre due to its biblical origin and Orientalist valences. Considering the powerful and talented women in his life—his sister, for example, was Alabama’s first licensed African American female doctor—it is unlikely that his depiction is intended to demonize women broadly. Still, it is unwise to remove this or any work from the ideological environment of its time and place. I suggest that Tanner used the

¹³¹ Nanette B. Rodney, “Salome,” *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 11, no. 7 (March 1953): 190.

¹³² Neginsky, 74 has counted 2,789 works from this period in which Salome figures as the central character.

¹³³ Patricia Mathews, *Passionate Discontent: Creativity, Gender, and French Symbolist Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 90.

¹³⁴ Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), viii.

¹³⁵ Pincus-Witten, 73.

Symbolist trope of the evil woman, the femme fatale, to reflect upon or process different discontents.

Dijkstra's oft-referenced book derives its title from French Symbolist Jean Delville's *The Idol of Perversity* (1891) (Fig. 29). Exhibited in the first Rose+Croix Salon (1892), Delville's drawing is icon-like, depicting a confrontational, hybridized Eve/Medusa, with hair emanating in snaking tendrils and a serpent twisting down, between her breasts. Paralleling the sheer outfit Tanner depicts in *Salome*, Delville used a veil to simultaneously cover and reveal. Though the work differs substantially from Tanner's *Salome*, both artists shaded their figures' faces and highlighted their figures' womanly stomach and breasts. This convention is also alive in Franz von Stuck's *The Sin* (1893) (Fig. 1.41). Stuck's painting epitomizes the femme fatale as beautiful and dangerous woman, here embodied by Eve. Stuck painted her pale torso emerging as a field of white and pale-pink pigment, framed and silhouetted by her long, dark hair and an enormous, gleaming snake that wraps around her shoulders and stares menacingly at the viewer. Shadows darken most of the canvas. Eve's head is also shaded, though her penetrating eyes and red lips remain legible in the gray shadows. Tanner's *Salome* also plays with the contrast between light and dark, emphasizing the body while shading the face. Both Stuck's and Tanner's works deal with ostensibly biblical subject matter, and depict one female protagonist, perhaps better described as antagonist, accompanied by one, defining attribute—the snake or the head of John the Baptist. A strand of hair temptingly runs down Eve's hip in *The Sin*. A greater amount of Salome's body is visible, as her flesh glows a pallid, almost sickly white streaked with blue, pale acidic green, and light yellow. Both artists

oriented their canvases vertically and orchestrated a claustrophobic sensation. Outside this comparison, Pincus-Witten has theorized that Tanner's composition was partially based on Odilon Redon's *La Mort* (1889) (Fig. 1.43).¹³⁶ Again, a pale female silhouette emerges from darkened surroundings, here produced by Redon's dense, black lithographic ink. Underscoring the threat—women's sexuality was blamed for the perpetuation of syphilis and other dire ills,¹³⁷ Redon's woman's head has mutated into a skull. Tanner's *Salome* taps into the compositional devices and reiterates the unsettling atmospheres of all these Symbolist femme fatales.

While Tanner's work invites such Symbolist comparisons, there are also academic precedents. In addition to its appeal as biblical subject matter, Tanner was probably aware of Salome's potential to please Salon juries. The French government purchased Juana Romani's *Salome* (1898) from the Paris Salon in 1898, the year after they had bought Tanner's *Resurrection of Lazarus* (Fig. 26).¹³⁸ Ella Ferris Pell's submitted a *Salome* to the Salon in 1890 (Fig. 31). Tanner and Pell, both Americans who went to study in France, shared an instructor in Académie Julian teacher Jean-Paul Laurens.¹³⁹ However, Pell's painting adheres far more closely to their teacher's principles and is removed from the "'bestial degeneration' favored by the symbolists."¹⁴⁰ There are similarities between the two. Tanner's and Pell's figures fill

¹³⁶ Pincus-Witten, 73.

¹³⁷ Sharon L. Hirsh, *Symbolism and Modern Urban Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 131.

¹³⁸ Dijkstra, 390. Moreover, Tanner's academic-style teacher, Benjamin-Constant, had painted a grisaille *Salome with the Head of John the Baptist* and many renditions of Judith, the biblical heroine responsible for the beheading of Holofernes and often conflated with Salome. Nadine Sine, "Cases of Mistaken Identity: Salome and Judith at the Turn of the Century," *German Studies Review* 11, no. 1 (February 1988): 9.

¹³⁹ Sine, 390.

¹⁴⁰ Dijkstra, 392.

equivalent amounts of canvas area. The paintings are also lit similarly, from the bottom left.¹⁴¹ However, Pell used the light to model a realistic, bodily three-dimensionality, whereas Tanner's work resists such normalcy, inhabiting an imaginative, ghostly plane instead. Pell's tamer, more naturalistic and academic representation puts into relief Tanner's Symbolist treatment of the theme, which Tanner notably did not put on display at the Salon.

The literature dates Tanner's *Salome* between circa 1900 and 1903. The dating is complicated, in part because there is no record of the painting's public exhibition before 1924. It was unsold at the time of Tanner's death and only resurfaced in the 1960s. The holding institution, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, and 2012 retrospective date the work to circa 1900. Dating the work to circa 1902-1903, Naurice Frank Woods has offered a social-historical and biographical interpretation. For a portion of both of those years, the Tanners, Henry and his wife Jessie, resided in Mount Kisco, New York, with Atherton and Louise Curtis, their friends and Henry's patrons. "If he finished [*Salome*] in Mt. Kisco," Woods considers, "it may be a reflection of his growing dissatisfaction with life in America, perhaps an allegory to the lynching and escalating racial violence in the country—evil deeds gone unpunished."¹⁴² Certainly, Woods's connection to lynching and racial violence could be made whether or not Tanner finished *Salome* in the United States. Despite his years abroad, Tanner considered himself an American. As the artist's grandniece Rae Alexander-Minter explained of her granduncle, "he believed he did not have the

¹⁴¹ Pell said that the light in her painting emanates from the decapitated head outside of the frame. Edgar Mayhew Bacon, "The Making of Masterpieces," *The Quarterly Illustrator* 1, no. 4 (October-December 1893): 310.

¹⁴² Woods 2018, 155.

luxury of being an expatriate, a privilege, as James Baldwin would suggest years later, only accorded to white Americans.”¹⁴³ A one-to-one allegory to any specific “evil deed,” any act of race-motivated terror or aggression, is too straightforward. One might keep in mind, contrary to Woods’s assertion, that certain iterations of the Salome tale, such as Wilde’s, did end with her fatal punishment.¹⁴⁴ Indeed, Tanner’s use of shadow in his *Salome* metaphorically decapitates the woman he painted, and thus Salome is symbolically punished within his iteration as well. But Woods’s theorization that the painting could manifest Tanner’s generally pessimistic reflection on racism in the United States is eminently appropriate and suggests a particularly American, and African American, valence to Tanner’s Symbolist impulse. Indeed, the Symbolist topos of the femme fatale provided an avenue through which the artist could comment on the complicated and uncomfortable reality of being a black American, even if he was not emboldened to exhibit the work until the 1920s.

Daphne A. Brooks’s assessment of Tanner supports this idea. She has linked Tanner’s *Salome* with the “ambiguity of veiled consciousness” expressed most importantly in Du Bois’s *The Souls of Black Folk*.¹⁴⁵ Du Bois used the veil, often capitalized as the Veil, as his central metaphor. It is a poignant and enduring image of the color line dividing black and white populations in postbellum America. He famously wrote, “the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with

¹⁴³ Rae Alexander-Minter, “The Tanner Family: A Grandniece’s Chronicle,” in Mosby et al. 1991, 23.

¹⁴⁴ In another iteration of the story, she is beheaded by falling through ice. See Lawrence Gilman, *Strauss’ ‘Salome’: A Guide to the Opera with Musical Illustrations* (New York: John Lane Company, 1907), 18.

¹⁴⁵ Daphne A. Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850-1910* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 329.

second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world.”¹⁴⁶ Brooks has argued that “Tanner’s *Salome* unabashedly dances to the choreography of Du Bois’s soul.”¹⁴⁷ Her reading is compelling, even though she overstates the public exposure of Tanner’s *Salome* (calling it one “of the period’s most visible images of diasporic veiled ladies”) and presumes the blackness of the body that Tanner, at least ambiguously, raced white.¹⁴⁸

Du Bois’s *The Souls of Black Folk* captured an unjust and violent American society that would have been difficult for Tanner to navigate, and maybe even survive, had he remained in the United States. In France, Tanner married Jessie Olson, a white American woman from San Francisco of Swedish descent. They were wed in 1899, a time when interracial marriage was illegal in over two dozen states. In *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois mentions the arrest of a black man and white woman in Atlanta, Georgia, simply for “talking together.”¹⁴⁹ This is one among the litany of facts and narratives about many miscarriages of justice and the both judicial and extrajudicial efforts, including lynching, to maintain racial divides—the maintenance of the veil. Du Bois also discussed the power of the A.M.E. church and black religious life.¹⁵⁰ Though Du Bois wrote for a presumed white audience, for

¹⁴⁶ Du Bois 1903, 3.

¹⁴⁷ Brooks, 329.

¹⁴⁸ Brooks, 329. Perhaps it was modeled by his wife.

¹⁴⁹ Du Bois, 183.

¹⁵⁰ Du Bois, 197.

whom he is “raising” the Veil,¹⁵¹ there are many passages would have spoken to Tanner’s lived experiences and social-cultural knowledge.¹⁵²

Du Bois’s sociological text is infused with a mysticism that, as Cynthia Schrager argues, positions his metaphor of the veil within the discourses of the spiritual, occult, and psychical that circulated at the time.¹⁵³ Specifically, Schrager suggests that “in representing his text as intermixing truth and faith, Du Bois places his own project alongside other late-nineteenth-century occult texts—notably Madame Blavatsky’s *Isis Unveiled*, the central text of the Theosophical movement.”¹⁵⁴

Tanner’s painting dialogues with Du Bois’s text and Symbolist understandings of the veil. The significance of the veil is most evident in Tanner’s visual emphasis on the motif in *Salome*. Of the period’s many depictions of the figure, Tanner’s is among the most insistent on the veil itself. Some Salomes were simply depicted in the nude. Proto-Symbolist Gustave Moreau’s canonical Salomes wear heavily bejeweled garments or tattoos tracing intricate patterns (Fig. 32). Pell’s Salome wears an Orientalizing “historical” garment that exposes one breast. Other renditions hew more closely to Tanner’s. Perhaps Emile Bernard’s 1914 *The Dancer or Salome* (Fig. 33) is closest. Yet still, Bernard scattered coins, pearls, and jewels at her feet and bedecked her with a multi-stranded anklet, headpiece, and shimmery embroidered hem to the veil, which is itself situated only over half the body.

¹⁵¹ Du Bois, viii.

¹⁵² Tanner personally experienced racism several times over. The most horrendous incident may have been when his white schoolmates at PAFA “crucified” him on his easel in the streets of Philadelphia.

¹⁵³ Schrager, 576 n7.

¹⁵⁴ Schrager, 568.

Bernard's depiction thus has more detail to distract the viewer from the veil itself. Tanner's Salome is more completely enveloped in a semi-transparent garment, which Tanner's composition foregrounds and which he worked up in multiple layers of paint. The chalky paint that Tanner used to articulate draping and edges resonates with the "dull gauze of caste" Du Bois uses to describe the veil, or the "muslin veils" that the character Salome sports in Wilde's script. In *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois associated the veil with violence, darkness, and death. "The shadow of Death" appears alongside "the shadow of the Veil" in an essay on his infant son's passing.¹⁵⁵ Consciousness of the veil could inculcate anger and resentment, as the veil itself threw a shadow on African Americans' everyday existence. Du Bois describes the anger of sharecroppers as "veiled but hot," talks of seeing one's self as "darkly as through a veil," and asks his own reader to "blame me not if I see the world thus darkly through the Veil."¹⁵⁶ With Wilde's text and other renditions of the Salome story, Salome had evolved into a more morally and psychologically complex character than her biblical origins. The depth of darkness, ambivalence, and thematic of violence in Tanner's painting attunes with the revitalized Salome story, with Du Bois's text, and with the artist's knowledge of Jim Crow America.

Tanner used a Symbolist treatment of an Orientalist subject matter to communicate, however veiled or half-hidden, a sense of unsettlement. The contemporary identification of Salome as a Jewish woman suggests yet another dimension of Tanner's expression of discontent in a Symbolist language.¹⁵⁷ Milly

¹⁵⁵ Du Bois, 210-211; Schrager, 574.

¹⁵⁶ Du Bois, 129, 3, 213.

¹⁵⁷ See Neginsky, 80-82; Sander L. Gilman, "Salome, Syphilis, Sarah Bernhardt, and the 'Modern Jewess,'" *The German Quarterly* 66, no. 2 (Spring 1993): 197. It is possible that

Heyd has argued that Tanner's "choice of Jewish characters expresses his own sense of 'otherness'" and "went beyond a mere attraction to orientalism."¹⁵⁸ This otherness may have been particularly pronounced for Tanner during the Dreyfus Affair (1894-1906), a scandal revolving around a Jewish artillery captain in the French army unjustly found guilty of treason.¹⁵⁹ *Salome* may speak to disturbing parallels Tanner observed between his home country and his adopted country. Leaders of the A.M.E. Church were deeply concerned with French discrimination and anti-Semitism, which reached its nadir with the Affair.¹⁶⁰ Church representatives sympathized with the persecution of Jews and expounded upon its parallels with the persecution of African Americans; they "overwhelmingly supported and identified with Dreyfus."¹⁶¹ *Salome* could thus reflect Tanner's frustration with discrimination and persecution abroad as well as at home.

The year of Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk* publication, 1903, the Tanners traveled to Grenada.¹⁶² In traveling there, Tanner was following in the footsteps of Benjamin-Constant, who had visited the Southern Spanish city around 1871 and 1880.¹⁶³ Granada appealed to Orientalist artists as a combination of Western comfort

Tanner's color palette harkens to racialized notions about Jews, recalling the "blue black hair" a critic understood as authentically Jewish. Critic quoted in Mosby 1991, 150.

¹⁵⁸ Milly Heyd, *Mutual Reflections: Jews and Blacks in American Art* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999), 18.

¹⁵⁹ Mosby 1991, 85, has also suggested this.

¹⁶⁰ Lawrence S. Little, *Disciples of Liberty: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the Age of Imperialism: 1884-1916* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 167.

¹⁶¹ Little, 168.

¹⁶² Marley, 282; Woods 2018, 154.

¹⁶³ Francesc M. Quílez i Corella, "Granada, A Stage in Benjamin-Constant's Orientalist Journey—The Cultural Context of the Visit To Spain And The Influence Of Mariano Fortuny," in *Benjamin-Constant: Marvels and Mirages of Orientalism*, ed. Nathalie Bondil (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014, in conjunction with exhibition at Musée des Augustins, Toulouse, and Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.), 118.

and Eastern exoticism.¹⁶⁴ A specific draw was the Alhambra, an Islamic, Nasrid Dynasty palace and fortress. Tanner's son Jesse wrote to his father's biographer that during this trip, Tanner "rescue[d]" a number of tiles from the Alhambra while the complex was undergoing renovation.¹⁶⁵ Joris-Karl Huysman's 1884 novel, *À Rebours* (*Against the Grain*), connected Moreau's famous renditions of the Salome story to the Alhambra, describing Moreau's *The Apparition*: "Here the palace of Herod springs up like an Alhambra on slender columns, iridescent with Moorish tiles."¹⁶⁶ *À Rebours*, with the fictional aesthete and reclusive Jean des Esseintes as antihero protagonist, is considered the epitome of Decadent literature and a forerunner of Symbolism. While the setting of Tanner's *Salome* is minimalistic and indefinite, altogether lacking Moreau's elaborate architecture and bejeweled costumes, the trip to Spain may have encouraged Tanner to pursue his own take on the figure of Salome. While less ornamented, Tanner's *Salome* shares the moribund atmosphere conjured by Huysmans and Moreau.

Adrienne Childs has examined Tanner's Orientalism and proposes that the street passageways and archways in so many of his Orientalist paintings "seem to be the gateways the mark the transition between the sunlit public spectacle of the Orient,

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 118.

¹⁶⁵ Jesse Tanner to Marcia M. Mathews, ca. 1966-1968, Reel 64, Frame 783, Mathews Papers.

¹⁶⁶ J.-K. Huysmans, *Against Nature*, trans. Brendan King (1884; Sawtry, UK: Dedalus, 2011), n.p. (Ebook). Moreau's archive includes photographs of the Alhambra, which, along with images of the Hagia Sophia and Cordoba, inspired the imaginative backgrounds of his Salome works. Cynthia Burlingham, "From the Studio: The Creation of Gustave Moreau's Salome," in *A Strange Magic: Gustave Moreau's Salome* (New York: DelMonico Books/Prestel, 2012, in conjunction with exhibition at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles), 49.

readily accessible to artists, and mysterious darkened interiors” (Fig 34).¹⁶⁷ *Salome*’s atypical, odd, dungeon-like interior space suggests a moment of completed passage from exterior and public into interior and private. This tracks onto the Symbolist penchant for moving away from external reality and to an internal realm of the soul and of fantasy.

Tanner’s *Salome* is also in dialogue with dance through its emphasis on the stomach. Dance itself had been linked to Orientalism, Salome, and visualizations of her character. A 1903 observer claimed that an eleventh-century relief sculpture depicting Salome “obviously” performs “an oriental dance of veils or a *dance du ventre* [belly dance].”¹⁶⁸ This commentator was describing the Salome on the Bernward column of St. Mary’s Cathedral in Hildesheim, Germany (Fig. 35). The Cathedral’s Salome is arched dramatically in a curved backbend, one arm lifted and one tilted downward, head back, and stomach thrust forward. While the Gospels do not describe the type of dance Salome performed, by the turn of the century, her performance was solidly associated with belly dance and with the so-called Orient.¹⁶⁹ The belly dance, or “hoochie-coochie,” was becoming a widespread phenomenon in popular and cultural venues.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ Childs, 101.

¹⁶⁸ Quoted in Udo Kultermann, “The ‘Dance of the Seven Veils’: Salome and Erotic Culture around 1900,” *Artibus et Historiae* 27, no. 53 (2006): 188.

¹⁶⁹ This is certainly the case in Gustave Flaubert’s 1877 rendition of the tale, his short story *Herodias* (1877). He describes the dance in vivid detail, and his words emphasize the stomach: “her belly ripple[d] like the swell of the sea.” Gustave Flaubert, “Herodias,” 1877, in *Three Tales*, trans. A. J. Krailsheimer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 101. Flaubert also compares the dancing Salome to “a wandering spirit . . . the priestesses of India, like the Nubian women” (101-102).

¹⁷⁰ See Larry Hamberlin, “Visions of Salome: The Femme Fatale in American Popular Songs before 1920,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 59, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 645-650. The Salome fad reached its peak in 1908 with the *New York Times* naming it “Salomania” after the New York performance of Richard Strauss’s opera based on Wilde’s play.

While Tanner depicted a moment chronologically after the dance that prompted the beheading, one that seems to take place in the atypical setting of the Baptist's underground jail cell, *Salome* is inflected with a sense of stagecraft, and hence the dance itself, due to the use of light and the prominence it places on Salome's stomach. The stomach's prominence recollects Orientalist Jean-Léon Gérôme's *Dance of the Almeh* or *Belly-Dancer* (1864) or, more immediately, Beardsley's *The Stomach Dance*, an illustration for the English-language version of Wilde's *Salome* (1894) (Figs. 36-37). The upward-casting lights in *Salome* calls to mind stage floodlights.¹⁷¹ Hélène Valence has introduced as possible inspiration the American dancer Loïe Fuller, who performed a Salome dance at the Exposition Universelle in 1900.¹⁷² Fuller "would become famous as a '*Salome moderne*' for her veil-like costumes."¹⁷³ Rhonda K. Garelick has examined Fuller's inventiveness and asserted that through her costumes, lighting, and stage design, Fuller "made a career of her own immateriality, dissolving into light projection on fabric."¹⁷⁴ Fuller even invented an underlighting device in 1893 that illuminated her in a darkened theater exclusively from below, which would have shown her in a light quite like that of *Salome*.¹⁷⁵ Whereas Fuller's career may have capitalized on the dematerialized body in particular, Tanner's *Salome* is pulled between immateriality and materiality.

¹⁷¹ Theresa Leininger-Miller, review of *Henry Ossawa Tanner: Modern Spirit, Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 12 no. 1 (Spring 2013): <http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/spring13/leininger-miller-reviews-henry-ossawa-tanner-modern-spirit-exhibition>.

¹⁷² Marley, 36; Hélène Valence, "'The Dynamo and the Virgin': Henry Ossawa Tanner's Religious Nocturnes," in *Modern Spirit*, 27.

¹⁷³ Rhonda K. Garelick, *Electric Salome: Loie Fuller's Performance of Modernism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 5.

¹⁷⁴ Garelick, 8.

¹⁷⁵ Garelick, 53.

Shadows obscure and distort—veil—the figure, as do surface cracks in the oil paint media. Yet *Salome* is also heavily materialized on the level of construction, with cleavages in the paint emerging from its thick, layered application and calling attention to the constructed nature of its surface.

Technical information substantiates these observations. *Salome* was among the paintings that conservators technically analyzed for the 2012 retrospective and catalog. They did not detect underdrawings and theorized that Tanner continually adjusted the composition over time, not relying on determinative outlines.¹⁷⁶ Tanner released and reattached *Salome*'s upper tacking margin—the area on the object's perimeter where tacks or nails secure the canvas fabric to the wooden stretcher bar—to extend the height of the composition.¹⁷⁷ Even with the release and reattachment of the upper tacking margin, Tanner's image retains its tight, cramped, interior feeling. His intervention on the support layer is evident even to the naked eye (Fig 38). One can locate a shelf of paint running horizontally through the crown of Salome's head, above which the media layer is thinner. This discontinuity highlights the intense thickness of the paint below.

A cross-section of paint sampled from *Salome* reveals the presence of nine media layers. Visible under microscope, the fourth media layer from the bottom shows a swirling blend of color indicative of wet-into-wet, or direct, painting (Fig. 39).¹⁷⁸ However, subsequent layers of media are more homogenous and thinner, indicative of an indirect painting technique and glazing. Conservators note that all the

¹⁷⁶ However, he perhaps referenced preliminary studies. Baade et al., 158.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.,158.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.,159.

Tanner paintings they analyzed, with the exception of a preparatory sketch, exhibit more colored layers than necessary to achieve the final color effect.¹⁷⁹ They caution that this may be attributable to the fact that the works they conserved had been in Tanner's studio, unsold at the time of his death.¹⁸⁰ This means that the artist could have returned to the paintings repeatedly over time, in some cases, over the course of decades. Still, the buildup is compelling when looked at from a Symbolist perspective, because it reveals a high degree of attention to surface.¹⁸¹

Salome is very tactile. Today, the surface, particularly in the darkest shaded areas, is heavily cracked. One can see how Tanner repositioned and reworked passages. This is apparent in Salome's outstretched hand, with its silhouetted, sinuous fingers (Fig. 40). There are pentimenti and a surrounding halo of lighter tint, not unlike that which surrounds the moon in Tanner's *Flight into Egypt* (ca. 1916-1922) (Fig. 41). Tanner outlined the final form of the hand with a blue contour. Across the canvas, some brushstrokes appear clearly, mostly running vertically down the figure. There are areas, notably in the figure's thighs, that Tanner described in more liquid, flowing paint before over-layering with dryer brushstrokes dragged across the surface in scumbles that pick up the texture of the layers beneath. A sense of decay, swampiness, and murkiness inheres in the medium itself.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ It is also perhaps evidence of Tanner's remembrance of advice he received and maybe internalized from Eakins. As a student, Tanner hesitated to return to a picture that had already received moderate praise, but Eakins strongly advised his pupil that he: "Get it—get it better or get it worse. No middle ground or compromise." Tanner, "The Story of An Artist's Life, Part I," 11665.

The inventiveness of Tanner's approach to paint application is underscored by the fact that conservators at times find themselves unable to identify the tools Tanner employed. *Salome* shows "sections of underpaint [that] were applied with an unknown tool that left thick concave ribbons."¹⁸² Another surprising characteristic that conservators uncovered is Tanner's use of a painted outline around the periphery of some works, including *Salome*, where, in the present frame, it is visible particularly along the bottom edge. Tanner's motives for making this painted outline are unclear.¹⁸³ Through a Symbolist lens, such otherwise inexplicable perimeter outlines might be said to function as designators of a fictional, imaginary, or otherworldly realm. Symbolist paintings no longer acted as windows onto believable realities. Rather, they existed as objects in the world, and artists used various material strategies to accentuate their artificiality.¹⁸⁴ Perhaps this painted outline counts among such strategies.

Importantly imbricated in the dialectic of material and immaterial of Tanner's work is a conception of the femme fatale that associates woman, as sinner or temptress, with the material. Patricia Mathews has studied gender in French Symbolism. In the polarity between femme fatale and *femme fragile*, she delineates a contradiction between being "bound so closely to the material world that she was not able to transcend it [femme fatale] . . . or positioned as purist symbol of the spiritual realm yet actually having no agency within it [*femme fragile*]."¹⁸⁵ *Salome*, an

¹⁸² Baade et al., 160.

¹⁸³ Artists might use rectangular markings such as these to delineate the edge of a drawing on a larger piece of paper, or to guide the stretching of a canvas, but it does not appear to be the case here. Baade et al., 163.

¹⁸⁴ Heller 1985, 149.

¹⁸⁵ Patricia Mathews, 95.

embodiment of the femme fatale, enters into Mathews's theory, posed in Freudian and Kristevan terms and those of Barbara Creed's "monstrous-feminine": "Material nature and the body were thus repressed through the ideal of transcendence; the femme fatale represented the return of the repressed."¹⁸⁶ Salome's physical proximity to the abject form of John the Baptist's severed head fulfills the formula of the horror genre in which viewers are confronted with the "fascinating, seductive aspect of abjection."¹⁸⁷ This is not something new in modern horror film, but it is entrenched in centuries-old religious discourses,¹⁸⁸ of which the Salome story partakes. The abject is always ambiguous—attractive and horrific at once.¹⁸⁹ This is a paradox that helps illuminate the simultaneous appeal and revulsion of Tanner's work. Mathews and other scholars point to Moreau's writings on the topic of women and materiality to elaborate upon the connection between Salome and abjection. In reference to his *Oedipus and the Sphinx* (1864) (Fig. 42), wherein a winged lion-woman hybrid perches herself on Oedipus's torso, Moreau wrote, "It is the earthly chimera, as vile as matter and as attractive as it."¹⁹⁰ As Elizabeth Grosz has observed across Western cultures, women have been pictured as "*more* biological, *more* corporeal, and *more*

¹⁸⁶ Patricia Mathews, 95. Mathews attributes the monstrous-feminine to Julia Kristeva. It is actually Barbara Creed's theory, which draws heavily from Kristeva on abjection. See Creed, "Horror and the Monstrous-Feminine: An Imaginary Abjection," *Screen* 27, no. 1 (January-February 1986): 44-70.

¹⁸⁷ The corpse being the ultimate form of abjection. Creed, 47-48.

¹⁸⁸ Creed, 46.

¹⁸⁹ Creed, 48.

¹⁹⁰ "C'est la chimère terrestre, vile comme la matière et attractive comme elle." In Julius Kaplan, *Gustave Moreau* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1974, exh. cat.), 142. Moreau elaborates on his conception of the material in other passages from his notebooks. In one instance, he pictures a struggle between man and matter: "rendre l'homme de sacrifice et de pensée aux prises, dans la vie, avec les tortures et les attaques de la brutalité et de la matière vile." Kaplan, 141. In contrast, he associates the ideal and the immaterial: "L'idée divine, immatérielle." Kaplan, 143.

natural than men.”¹⁹¹ As a link between the femme fatale and the material, the heavy layering of paint in Tanner’s *Salome* is meaningful as a gendered signifier that registers in the Symbolist context.

Conclusion: Tanner, Tempera, and American Symbolism

As expressed in the catalog for a 1908 exhibition at the American Art Galleries on Madison Square South in New York City, Tanner was understood as “an American artist long resident in France, but none the less a loyal American.”¹⁹² In Europe, Tanner found some relief from American racism. When he departed the United States in 1891, lynching was on the rise and *Plessy v. Ferguson* would soon uphold racial segregation as constitutionally legal. Though he periodically returned to the United States, in France, Tanner and his wife were, to a great degree, able to exist and socialize freely.¹⁹³ While the French praised and recognized Tanner, awarding him the Legion of Honor in 1923,¹⁹⁴ Tanner was consistently identified as an American painter, and almost as often as a “Negro” artist, per the period terminology.

Tanner’s ties to the United States were many. He spent the first thirty-one years of his life in the country, where he was inspired to become an artist and received his initial education. On an intrinsic level, Tanner’s middle name bore the mark of American geography and racial consciousness. “Ossawa” refers to

¹⁹¹ Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 14.

¹⁹² Harrison S. Morris, “A Word of Introduction,” in *Illustrated Catalogue of Religious Paintings by the Distinguished American Artist: Mr. Henry O. Tanner* (New York: American Art Galleries, 1908, exh. cat.).

¹⁹³ Barton, 2011.

¹⁹⁴ Tietjens, Frame 4, attributes the French appreciation of Tanner to the French people’s own “queer streak of mysticism.”

Osawatomie, Kansas, where abolitionists clashed with proponents of slavery in 1856 and John Brown launched his anti-slavery campaign. That Tanner passed the name on to his only child, Jesse Ossawa Tanner, speaks to the power and persistence of his American and African American identities. Additionally, he served in the American Red Cross during World War I and received artists from his home country in his French studios.

Thus, while Tanner's career was undeniably transatlantic, his work incontrovertibly contributes to the story of the Symbolist impulse in American art. Indeed, transatlanticism is characteristic of the American Symbolist impulse circa 1900. Moreover, the transatlanticism of Tanner's career shows the insufficiency of readings of Tanner's work that do not take heed of the Symbolist movement. Arriving in France in 1891, Tanner was exposed to Symbolism at a formative moment, both in his own career and in the history of the movement. Symbolism's theoretical underpinnings interacted with aspects of Tanner's religious upbringing and complex faith. This led to the production of works of art that engaged fully in the dialectical play between the immaterial (spiritual concepts, ideas, visions) and the material (the means of his artmaking) that is definitive of Symbolist art.

As the case of assigning a specific date to *Salome* demonstrates, Tanner's long career is not neatly divisible into chronological stages. Nevertheless, James A. Porter organized Tanner's oeuvre in this way and explained Tanner's last work, *Return from the Crucifixion* (1936), as characteristic of what he dubs the fourth and final stage, during which Tanner "attempt[ed] to reconcile the transparent depth of the

‘atmospheric’ picture with a reticent but picturesque plastic form” (Fig. 43).¹⁹⁵ Porter found, in this combination of transparency and plasticity, “the pictorial equivalent” of Tanner’s faith.¹⁹⁶

In Porter’s equation, faith itself is poised between the immaterial and the material—between the evocation of atmosphere and the physicality of form. 1936 is, admittedly, quite late for a work to be thought of as Symbolist.¹⁹⁷ Still, the assertiveness of *Return from the Crucifixion*’s surface evokes Maurice Denis’s Symbolist dictum: “Believe that in order to perpetuate your emotions it is not necessary to dissimulate the material used and pervert it into the appearances of trompe l’oeil; believe that the material of art has the ability to emit suggestions as powerful as the appearance of nature itself.”¹⁹⁸ The medium in *Return from the Crucifixion* declares its presence, and Tanner showed no inclination to trompe l’oeil realism.

Porter arranged with the artist for the Howard University Gallery of Art to acquire *Return from the Crucifixion*, a tempera (pigments dispersed in an emulsion) and oil painting on board.¹⁹⁹ The paint is encrusted and peeling in places. The colors

¹⁹⁵ Quoted in Coni Porter Uzelac, “James Amos Porter Meets Henry Ossawa Tanner,” *International Review of African American Art* 20, no. 3 (2005): 10.

¹⁹⁶ Uzelac, 10. Porter described Tanner’s faith as “dogmatic,” but it seems to have been more flexible than that.

¹⁹⁷ However, the 1930s did mark retrospective renewal of interest in the Symbolist movement from the point of view of then-contemporary Surrealist tendencies. Heller, 147. See Edmond Jaloux, *Cinquantenaire du Symbolisme: Exposition de manuscrits autographes, estampes, peintures, sculptures, éditions rares, portraits, objets d’art* (Paris: Editions des Bibliothèques nationales, 1936).

¹⁹⁸ Maurice Denis, “Le Salon du Champ-de-Mars [et] L’Exposition de Renoir,” June 25, 1892, in *Théories 1890-1910: Du Symbolisme et de Gauguin vers un nouvel ordre classique* (Paris: L. Rouart et J. Watelin, 1920), quoted and trans. Heller, 148. Heller appears to have mistaken the source of his quotation, citing Denis’s *Théories nouvelles* (1922).

¹⁹⁹ Uzelac, 5.

are largely muted browns, grays, and blues, though they retain a luminosity. Streaks of violet and green punctuate the blue sky. There is a variation of texture, with the upper portion, the sky, seemingly applied with the broad, even pressure of a palette knife, while the landscape below the horizon appears rubbed, scumbled, and flaking. Tanner outlined the figures with stringy media, and the overall effect is richly tactile. Howard University first exhibited *Return from the Crucifixion* in October 1937, just months after Tanner's death on May 25 of that year.²⁰⁰

Tanner used direct and indirect methods, and he showed a trend over the course of his career towards a heavier reliance on the indirect. Whereas the direct, i.e. wet-into-wet or "alla prima," method typically happens in one sitting, with pigments blended together relatively freely on the canvas, the indirect method starts with an underpainting that is subsequently built up upon with additional layers of paint and glaze. Indirect painting is a process that happens over time. Tanner could spend years with works and continuously return to them.²⁰¹

Tanner also gravitated towards the use of tempera, known for its stability.²⁰²

Though Tanner may well have appreciated the notion of paintings "ripening" with

²⁰⁰ Uzelac, 9.

²⁰¹ He reportedly completed canvases at a rate of three per year maximum. See Jessie Fauset, "Henry Ossawa Tanner," *The Crisis* 27, no. 6 (April 1924): 257. Baade et al., 160, notes a note on the back of *Fisherman's Return* (1917-1919) that records Tanner coming back to the work two years after its initial execution. Clara T. MacChesney, "A Poet-Painter of Palestine," *International Studio* 50, no. 197 (July 1913): xii wrote that "his work is never direct, but obtained by a series of glazes" and that "he usually has 15 or 20 canvases at once, in different stages of completion."

²⁰² Emil Carlsen, "On Tempera—Concluded," *Palette and Bench* 1, no. 10 (July 1909): 224 calls tempera underpainting "the true secret of all well preserved oil paintings." See also Hilton Brown, "On the Technical Side," in *Milk and Eggs: The American Revival of Tempera Painting, 1930-1950* (Seattle: Washington University Press, 2002, in conjunction with exhibition at Brandywine River Museum, Chadds Ford, PA), 116 and Hiler Hilaire, *The Painter's Pocket Book of Methods and Materials* (Los Angeles: Research Publishing Company, 1945), 44. The conservation problems of Tanner's temperas are ironic, as it was

age, the deterioration of his images over time probably did not accord with his artistic vision. There is evidence of this in a letter, probably the last Tanner ever wrote, sent to Porter after *Return from the Crucifixion* had arrived at Howard: “I was sorry to hear that a piece of tempera had been knocked off. I was indeed fortunate to have a friend who could at once repair the damage.”²⁰³ Tempera appealed to artists because the emulsion becomes, by definition, water-insoluble when dry.²⁰⁴ This property allows for more tempera, varnish, or oil paints or glazes to be layered on top without disturbing the colors beneath,²⁰⁵ and it complemented Tanner’s indirect technique.²⁰⁶ Tanner’s recorded recipes for tempera date from the 1930s,²⁰⁷ but he may have used variations starting in the 1910s.²⁰⁸ Though not published until 1936, art historian and translator Daniel V. Thompson’s important manual, *The Practice of Tempera Painting: Materials and Methods*, describes the benefits of tempera in a way that aligns with Tanner’s Symbolist goals:

Tempera requires either the rejection of the naturalistic ideal or a critical approach to naturalism . . . for the sake of subjective emphasis. It is in every way unsuitable for the use of a painter whose aim is the reproduction of the superficial appearance of natural objects.²⁰⁹

likely the reputed, historic stability of tempera paints that drew him to use them.

MacChesney, xii reported in 1913 that Tanner’s formulas had “proven more permanent.”

²⁰³ Tanner to Porter, May 17, 1937, quoted in Uzelac, 9. Tanner’s son also acknowledged the difficulties with Tanner’s temperas, writing to Marcia M. Mathews that “they are inclined to peel, but I have always been able to repair this damage if taken in time.” Jesse Tanner to Marcia M. Mathews, undated letter, Mathews Papers.

²⁰⁴ In Carlsen, 724; Brown, 98.

²⁰⁵ Brown, 98.

²⁰⁶ While we may associate tempera with the flat, matte surfaces created by other early twentieth-century artists, the literature also praised tempera for producing “jewel-like [color] . . . similar to that of stained glass.” Quoted in Brown, 107. Denis had written vis-à-vis Gauguin that “his art contains more of tapestries and stained glass than it does of oil painting.” Quoted and trans. in Heller, 148.

²⁰⁷ Box 2, Folder 2, Frames 27, 31-32, Tanner Papers.

²⁰⁸ Baade et al., 160.

²⁰⁹ Daniel V. Thompson Jr., *The Practice of Tempera Painting* (1936; New York: Dover, 1962), 7. Left out of discussions of the later tempera revival in the United States is the

In the introduction to *The Practice of Tempera Painting*, Thompson thanks “his good friend and teacher, Louise Waterman Wise” for first introducing him, eighteen years before, to Cennino Cennini’s *Libro dell’Arte*.²¹⁰ Wise was an activist and a portraitist;²¹¹ she was also the wife of Rabbi Stephen Samuel Wise, of whom Tanner painted a now-unlocated portrait around 1909.²¹² One might imagine Louise Wise and Tanner conversing about the subject of tempera paint, the centerpiece of Cennini’s book, around the time of the commission. While perhaps merely coincidence, this interconnection points to a growing discourse and interest in tempera in the opening decades of the twentieth century, one that, unexpectedly perhaps, fed into Tanner’s Symbolist impulse.

While Tanner’s paint recipes correspond in some respects to published advice, there are components that appear to be unique to him alone.²¹³ Visiting Tanner’s studio, Hale Woodruff observed “a shelf upon which there was a number of jars or containers, the contents of which were obviously pigments, oils, and painting media.”²¹⁴ Tanner explained, “These are the results of my efforts to develop a painting medium which will enable me to achieve the qualities I want in my work. They are still in the process of development. . . . Right now, I am not revealing my

growing German interest in tempera around the turn of the century. See Iris Winkelmeyer, “Never Use Water! Franz Von Stuck and the Tempera Renaissance in Munich around 1900,” in *Franz von Stuck, Salome*, ed. Matthias Mühling (Munich: Lenbachhaus, 2014), 139-152.

²¹⁰ Thompson went on to produce a translation of Cennini’s book, though another English translation already existed from 1899, by Christiana J. Herringham.

²¹¹ Richard J. Boyle, “The American Tempera Revival in Context,” in *Milk and Eggs*, 32.

²¹² MacChesney 1913, xii; Mosby 1991, 153.

²¹³ Baade et al., 161.

²¹⁴ Hale Woodruff, “My Meeting with Henry Ossawa Tanner,” *The Crisis* 77, no. 1 (January 1970): 11.

findings to anyone.”²¹⁵ Tanner’s mysterious attitude and strange surfaces align with what Heller described as a Symbolist strategy to underscore the material existence of their works: the “accentuation of unorthodox or orthodox mediums perceptibly used in an unorthodox fashion.”²¹⁶ This, in turn, fed the dialectic between materiality and signification of the spiritual.²¹⁷

In Tanner’s original tempera formulations, he found a medium that reinforced the non-naturalistic presence of Symbolist surface. In *Salome*, he arrived at a painting akin to Symbolist imaginings of the femme fatale. In this painting, his use of veiling as motif and method (the latter he achieved through shadowing, layering of paint, and other obscuring devices) points both to the Du Boisian concept of the veil and its Symbolist resonances with the mysterious and suggested. These paired readings suggest a painting that is imbricated in American concerns and points of reference but expressed through an international idiom. Moreover, the complementarity of the Du Boisian and Symbolist frames offers an example of the rich dynamic that can come about when Symbolism is not understood restrictively as a purely European phenomenon.

A consideration of Tanner’s work through the Symbolist lens is doubly valuable. It encourages an opening-up and diversification of histories of Symbolist art as it also presents a fresh context for studying the artist’s oeuvre. Within his Symbolist impulse, one finds compelling interactions that enrich the study of Symbolist art more widely, especially at the nexus of religion, (im)materiality, and

²¹⁵ Woodruff, 11.

²¹⁶ Heller 1985, 151.

²¹⁷ Heller 1985, 152.

spirituality. Tracing Tanner's Symbolist impulse opens a window not only onto underappreciated aspects of Tanner's body of work but, by looking at the work of a major American artist, it also provides entry into a broader recognition of Symbolism in the United States.

Chapter 4: Something Beyond and (In)tangible: George Grey Barnard's Sculpture

Mr. Barnard said that the artist must also be a seer—he puts down his material but as a medium for something that is beyond and intangible, and his art consists in making a living quality out of this. – Regina Armstrong Hilliard, 1898¹

George Grey Barnard's (1863-1938) philosophical stance, as penned by writer Regina Armstrong Hilliard, outlines the relationship between the physical, tactile media of artmaking and the intangible idea beyond, which was the sculptor's duty to animate. Barnard worked with numerous three-dimensional materials, including clay, plaster, wood, wax, bronze, terra cotta, and marble, as finished products and inter-medial steps along the way to completed work. The transatlantic nature of his career is typical of American Symbolism, and his work can be linked to an international Symbolist movement even while his trajectory took on nationalistic valences. This chapter culminates in analyses of Barnard's *Norwegian Clock* and *Urn of Life*, the multi-figure compositions in which Barnard coalesced his Symbolist interests around 1900. This chapter also considers *Brotherly Love*, *The Struggle of the Two Natures in Man*, and *Pan*, and the meanings of Barnard's use of materials in those works.

Hilliard's phrase, "he puts down his material but as a medium for something that is beyond and intangible," underscores the way in which Symbolism's central tenants circulate in Barnard's sculpture. According to Michelle Facos, "Symbolists were united in their belief in a reality beyond the limits of sense perception and in a

¹ Regina Armstrong Hilliard, "George Grey Barnard," *Munsey's Magazine* 20 (December 1898): 459.

commitment to drawing attention to it in their art.”² This belief and commitment propelled an interaction between immateriality and materiality, a dynamic elucidated in Barnard’s three-dimensional forms. Indeed, the tension between immateriality and materiality is at its height in sculpture, wherein the media itself has substance, weight, and volume beyond that of paint, the photographic emulsion, or pastel chalk.³

Barnard’s chosen media sets him apart. The “living quality” that Hilliard described, and that Barnard used to tell of the ineffable and otherworldly, is attributable both to the figural three-dimensionality of his sculpture—his creations are embodied, mostly human forms that have substantive volume in space—and also to the lively quality that was seen to inhere in the materials of sculpture. Poet and scholar of Symbolism Arthur Symons reflected on these properties in the work of Auguste Rodin (1840-1917)—the senior but still contemporary sculptor to whom, for better or worse, Barnard was most frequently compared:⁴

² Michelle Facos, *Symbolist Art in Context* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 5.

³ In trying to define Symbolist sculpture, Emmanuelle Héran, “Art for the Sake of the Soul: Polychrome Sculpture and Literary Symbolism,” in *The Colour of Sculpture: 1840-1910*, ed. Andreas Blühm (Zwolle, Netherlands: Waanders Uitgevers in conjunction with exhibition at the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam and Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, 1996), 91 notes the difficult position of sculpture as “the most physical of arts,” questioning, “how indeed could sculpture be expected to lend itself to the expression of mystery, to the suggestion of soul?”

⁴ Arthur Symons, “Rodin,” *Fortnightly Review* 71 (June 1902): 967. The Rodin comparison has its origins as early as the 1894 reviews of Barnard’s debut at the Champ-de-Mars Salon, even though Barnard denied Rodin’s influence. Examples of the comparison are ubiquitous, as are examples in the American criticism of commentators trying to contrast the two and distinguish Barnard from the older, French sculptor. See, for example, A. Pallier, *La Liberté*, April 23, 1894, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k4789946k>, who wrote “Mr. Barnard oscillates between imitation of Michelangelo and Rodin” (M. Barnard oscille entre l’imitation de Michel-Ange et celle de M. Rodin); Camille Le Senne, “La musique et le théâtre au Salon du Champ-de-Mars (troisième article),” *Le Ménestrel*, May 13, 1894, 148, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k56151545/f3.item>, who writes “Mr. Barnard, in works that are sometimes too naively inspired by Michelangelo and Rodin, sometimes symbolizes the mysterious dualism of all creatures” (M. Banard, en des œuvres qui s’inspirent parfois trop naïvement de Michel-Ange et de Rodin, symbolise tantôt le mystérieux dualisme de

Something new has come into sculpture; there is a troubling upheaval of some restless inner life in the clay; even sculpture has gone the way of all the other arts, and has learned to suggest more than it says, to embody dreams in its flesh, to become at once a living thing and a symbol.⁵

Symons grants clay a life force of its own and the ability to transform, through the sculptor's intervention, into something that is both flesh and dream, both alive and symbol. To understand what Symons might have meant by "symbol" here, we can turn to his scholarly work, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899), in which he explains the meaning of Symbolism by drawing from Thomas Carlyle, whose philosophy influenced Barnard as well.⁶ Barnard read Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, the

toute créature); and Alfred Paulet, "Salon du Champ de Mars," *La Patrie*, April 24, 1894, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k20644368>, quoted and translated (with the author's name as "Ponlet") in "Opinions of the Sculpture of George Grey Barnard," Box 4, Folder 14, Frame 18, George Grey Barnard Papers, circa 1860-1969, bulk 1880-1938, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC [hereafter Barnard Papers] as "His group for a tomb 'Two souls trying to approach each other through hard rock,' would be taken for many as ideal Rodin." This translation, found in a booklet that Barnard presented visitors at his 1897 exhibition at Logerot Gardens in New York, is slightly differentiated, in tone and content, from the original French, which reads "Son groupe: Je sens deux hommes en moi où [ou?] deux êtres en crise d'énergie cherchant à se rapprocher en pénétrant la dure matière, serait pris par beaucoup pour du pur Rodin," wherein there actually seems to be some confusion as to which work by Barnard is being assessed: either the work known as *Brotherly Love* or the work now known as *The Struggle of Two Natures in Man* (then called "Je sens deux hommes en moi"). Differentiating the two artists, George Henry Payne, "A Great Sculptor," *New York Commercial Advertiser*, April 14, 1897, Box 7, Folder 14, Frame 6, Barnard Papers, wrote that "if Rodin has greater power, Barnard has greater poetic power." The critic for *The Sun*, New York, November 15, 1908, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030272/1908-11-15/ed-1/seq-9/>, explained that "certainly the great Frenchman has had a strong influence on the American, but if the young man's methods are carefully studied this influence will prove a superficial one; literally superficial. The underlying ideas of the two men are totally different."

⁵ Symons, 967.

⁶ Barnard read *Sartor Resartus* in 1893. Barnard to Edna Monroe, February 8[?], 1893, Box 7, Harold E. Dickson/George Grey Barnard Collection, Centre County Historical Society, State College, PA [hereafter Dickson/Barnard Papers]. Regina Armstrong, "The Sculptor of 'Pan': Mr. George Grey Barnard and His Work," *Critic* 33, no. 857 (November 1898): 357 reported that "authors who deal in the problems of humanity attract him, such as Hugo, Marcus Aurelius and Carlyle. 'Sartor Resartus' he consider[sic] one of the greatest of books. 'What I state I was in when I read it!' he exclaimed, with frank enthusiasm." As late as 1918, Barnard told a friend "Since reading *Sartor Resartus*, I am certain that I would rather have realized this vision of Carlyle than anything Shakespeare has written." Barnard to Gerald

textual source that Symons used to explicate the meaning of “symbol.” Symons quotes Carlyle about the nature of “what we can call a Symbol,” wherein “there is ever, more or less distinctly, some embodiment and revelation of the Infinite; the Infinite is made to blend itself with the Finite, to stand visible, and as it were, attainable there.”⁷ This relationship between the infinite and finite, the intangible and tangible, or the immaterial and material weaves throughout this dissertation, and helps center our understanding of Barnard’s sculpture.

Critic J. Nilsen Laurvik sounded a similar note to Symons, writing explicitly about Barnard and “the spirit” in his work:

Every manifestation of life, however fleeting, is to him [Barnard] fraught with a hidden meaning; the spirit that has its being in and behind things, that is the very soul and impelling force of what, in the pride of our unconscious ignorance, we are pleased to call inert matter, is at once the goal and the point of departure of all his art.⁸

Laurvik’s assessment is compelling because it foregrounds matter in a cyclical fashion: both at the beginning point of Barnard’s inspiration (the spirit behind matter, which the artist is gifted with the special ability to perceive) and the end point, the goal of Barnard’s work to communicate hidden meaning (again inevitably enrobed in

Stanley Lee, February 13, 1919, George Grey Barnard Papers, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives, quoted in Brian Edward Hack, “American Acropolis: George Grey Barnard’s *Monument to Democracy*, 1918-1938,” PhD diss., City University of New York, 2008, 57n94.

⁷ Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, ed. James Wood (1833-1834; London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1902), 396 quoted in Arthur Symons, *Symbolist Movement in Literature* (rev. ed. 1899; New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1919), 3. When Symons reflects on the infinite, he indicates something more abstract than a traditional idea of the divine as God. He references an “unseen world” (4), “eternal beauty” (7), and “mystery” (8). For him, Symbolist literature itself acts as “a kind of religion” (9). For Carlyle, the infinite is much more definitively aligned with the divine as God: “Highest of all in this class [symbols with intrinsic meaning] are our religious symbols, those wherein the poet or artist has risen into prophet, revealing to us a present God” (383).

⁸ J. Nilsen Laurvik, “George Grey Barnard,” *International Studio* 36, no. 142 (December 1908): 39.

material form). By interrogating these material manifestations of hidden meaning, we can better understand Barnard's oeuvre and the position of the Symbolist movement in American art.

Biography: Out West and Abroad

Barnard's biography provides an overview of his childhood introduction to materials, his spirituality, the transatlantic nature of his career, and nationalistic readings of him as an American artist. Barnard was born in Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, in 1863.⁹ His father was a Presbyterian minister, who took the family on a pastoral itinerary that included the midwestern states of Wisconsin, Illinois, and Iowa. Commentators consistently romanticized Barnard's boyhood years "out West." According to the *Literary Digest* writer who called Barnard a "Symbolist in Stone," the young Barnard lived "a free, untrammelled life . . . wandering through woods and swamps and becoming intimately acquainted with all phases of geology and animal life."¹⁰ Another commentator, Katherine Metcalf Roof, pictured Barnard "on the edge of the vast spaces of the plains, close to the primitive."¹¹ Charles H. Caffin linked

⁹ Basic biographical information from Wayne Craven, *Sculpture in America* (1968; Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1984), 442-450; Harold E. Dickson, *George Grey Barnard: Centenary Exhibition* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press in association with Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Harrisburg, 1964, in conjunction with 1963 exhibition), 6-9; J. Walker McSpadden, *Famous Sculptors of America* (New York: Dodd, Mead, & Co., 1927), 179-211; Calvin Tomkins, "'The Cloisters . . . The Cloisters . . . The Cloisters . . .,'" *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* New Series 28, no. 7 (March 1970): 308; and Dan Williams, "George Grey Barnard," *North American Review* 243, no. 2 (Summer 1937): 276-286.

¹⁰ "A Symbolist in Stone," *Literary Digest* 1, no. 2 (January 10, 1903): 43.

¹¹ Katharine Metcalf Roof, "George Gray Barnard: The Spirit of the New World in Sculpture," *Craftsman* 15, no. 3 (December 1908): 277.

Barnard's geographical origins to the very materials and processes of Barnard's artform:

He is from the West, that huge quarry out of which a new order of ideas is being gradually dug and shaped. The echoes of the clang of tool upon inchoate material, of sharp wits and keen purpose carving anew at the problems of existence, reach us from time to time in this more conventional East.¹²

Unlike other American sculptors of his generation, such as Solon Borglum (1868-1922), Barnard did not employ Western subject matter explicitly.¹³ Caffin's phrasing suggests instead a more elemental, basic reading, reaching deeper than subject matter. Caffin tracked the American mythos of manifest destiny onto the sculptural media of marble itself—material to be quarried and carved. He also connected Barnard's originality and the greatness of Barnard's vision, oriented to the very "problems of existence," to the Western United States. This concern with such large, abstract, and ineffable ideas had at least as much to do with the Symbolist currents that emerged in Barnard's work during his first sojourn in Europe. Still, Symbolist schema and the ideology of manifest destiny coalesce around the work of Barnard.

Growing up, Barnard gained experience as a taxidermist and collector of natural specimens. He was then a watch repairer for a jeweler and an apprentice metal engraver in Chicago. He attended the Art Institute of Chicago, then called the

¹² Charles H. Caffin, *American Masters of Sculpture* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Page, & Company, 1913), 21.

¹³ He did not however totally neglect subject matter that might be understood as "Western." A Native American figure appeared in Barnard's architectural sculpture for the 1901 Pan-American Exhibition. These works, *Primeval Niagara* and *Niagara Today*, and the attitudes toward race and indigeneity they imply, require critical study. They flanked a fountain at the base of the fair's Electric Tower. See Charles H. Caffin, "American Studio Talk: Sculpture at the Pan-American Exposition," *International Studio* 14 (1901): viii.

Chicago Art Institute, where he encountered Michelangelo's work in the form of plaster casts. These casts likely included copies of Michelangelo's *Moses* and the sculptural program from the Medici Chapel, New Sacristy in the Basilica of San Lorenzo.¹⁴ The Renaissance master's sculptures for the tombs of Lorenzo and his brother Giuliano stand out as reference points throughout Barnard's career, and a cast of *Night* (from Giuliano's tomb) appears in a photograph of Barnard's studio space (Figs. 1-2).¹⁵

With money he earned from selling marble busts, Barnard went to Paris in 1883. He gained acceptance to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, working in the studio of Pierre Jules Cavalier.¹⁶ Barnard's student years in France have been mythologized as a period of near starvation-level existence. He worked from the early morning to the late night and subsisted on little in the way of food, clothing, and shelter.¹⁷ An encounter with Alfred Corning Clark, the heir of the Singer Sewing Company, changed Barnard's fortunes drastically. Barnard's major achievements of the 1880s and 1890s were commissioned or bought by Clark. These include *Brotherly Love*

¹⁴ Even though this report dates from later in the century, after Barnard left Chicago, see "The Collections of Sculpture at the Art Institute, Chicago," in *Monumental News* 10, no. 10 (October 1898): 570. See also Art Institute of Chicago, *General Catalogue of Objects in the Museum* (Chicago: The Institute, 1904), 45. Here, Giuliano's tomb is specifically cataloged with *Night* and *Day*, along with *Dusk* and *Dawn* from Lorenzo's tomb as companion pieces.

¹⁵ Charles Baudelaire, "The Ideal," in *Flowers of Evil*, trans. Cyril Scott (1857; London: Elkin Mathews, 1909) wrote of *Night*: "Oh thee, oh great 'Night' of Michael-Angelo born, / Who so calmly thy limbs in strange posture hath drawn, / Whose allurements are framed for a Titan's mouth."

¹⁶ Though Cavalier was an academic sculptor, his students also included Alfred Gilbert (1854-1934) who, according to Robert Upstone, counted among the sculptors producing "among the purest manifestations of Symbolist art in Britain." Robert Upstone, "Symbolism in Three Dimensions," in *The Age of Rossetti, Burne-Jones & Watts: Symbolism in Britain, 1860-1910*, ed. Andrew Wilton and Robert Upstone (New York, Flammarion for the Tate Gallery, 1997), 83. Gilbert's style is very different from Barnard's, but it is important to note that academic training did not deter the creation of a more modern, Symbolist art.

¹⁷ This mythologization is in large part of the artist's own making.

(1886-1887), *The Struggle of the Two Natures in Man* (1888-1894), and *Pan* (1894-1898). Clark's untimely death, in 1896, put on a damper on Barnard's trajectory, but Clark's patronage provided the artist with a solid start in the art world.

Though his father was a Christian minister, Barnard's faith system was heterodox, described in 1931 as a "curious medley of Unitarianism, Pantheism, and Shavianism."¹⁸ While abroad as a student, he wrote to his family back in Wisconsin more than once about the eclectic reading he did: Buddhist philosophy, Talmud, Koran, and Norse mythology. He wrote of his "intense love" of such texts.¹⁹ According to Caffin, Barnard, as a young art student in Chicago, was "already a student of philosophy and occultism, fervently religious, but with a religion that felt after the mysteries of life."²⁰ Barnard reportedly had association with mystical Rosicrucianism (Rose+Croix Salons),²¹ and by the first decade of the twentieth century, he had built a personal, idiosyncratic philosophy based on the lifegiving power and universality of light.²²

¹⁸ Babette Deutsch, "Profiles: Sculpture, Not Machinery," *The New Yorker* (January 17, 1931): 28.

¹⁹ Barnard to family, December 28, 1890, Box 7. Dickon/Barnard Papers. Barnard specifies that he was reading Hardy's (R. Spence Hardy) *A Manual of Buddhism* (1853).

²⁰ Charles 1913, 24.

²¹ Henry Meltzer, "Petrified Emotion," *Cosmopolitan* 49, no. 6 (November 1910): 668 wrote, "From his childhood, as he assured me, he has been awed by the Eternal in the world, and by the feeling that a mighty hand of some sort has been over him. Yet, in the usual sense, he is not religious. He has been a Rosicrucian." Hack, 58-60 has analyzed Barnard's interest in *Zanoni* (1842), a Rosicrucian novel by Edward Bulwar-Lytton; the possibility of Barnard's having attended the Rose+Croix Salons; the complementarity of Sâr Péladan's philosophy's with Barnard's; and Joséphin Péladan's later, unfriendly assessment of Barnard as "another Roosevelt" (134).

²² See Sara Dodge Kimbrough, *Drawn from Life: The Story of Four American Artists whose Friendship & Work began in Paris during the 1880s* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1976), 144; McSpadden, 203-205; and Ernest Knaufft, "George Grey Barnard: A Virile American Sculptor," *American Review of Reviews* 38, no. 6 (December 1908): 691: "Light has always interested Mr. Barnard. Most knowledge, most cognition he feels, comes

Barnard made a triumphant debut with six sculptures accepted at the 1894 Salon of the Champ de Mars, leading to his election to the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts as an Associate. He would go on to win gold medals at World's Fairs in Paris (1900), Buffalo (1901), and St. Louis (1904).²³ Around 1892, Barnard met Edna Monroe, and they were married in 1894 or 1895. His marriage to Edna changed his perspective on staying abroad. After a decade in Paris, he and his young family returned to the United States, with Barnard setting up a household and studio in New York City. This move ingratiated him with the American public, who saw it as a patriotic choice. Barnard reflected, "Americans are needed in America if ever the art of this big country is to be national."²⁴ The press, accordingly, saw him as a "staunch American" who "chose to return himself to his native land to identify himself with his own people and to aid in the upbuilding of American art."²⁵

In 1900-1903, Barnard taught at the Art Students League and the Veltin School in New York.²⁶ He wished that his students could attain an appreciation of

through light and makes all his art to be read though light, so that sharp edges are absent in his groups."

²³ See Levy, Florence Nightingale, ed., *American Art Annual*, vol. 7 (New York: American Art Annual, 1910), 90.

²⁴ Barnard is quoted by George Henry Payne, "A Philosopher in Marble: George Barnard," *The Criterion*, April 3, 1898, Box 7, Folder 14, Frame 76, Barnard Papers.

²⁵ Laura Carroll Dennis, "A Great American Sculptor," *American Monthly Review of Reviews* 19, no. 1 (January 1899): 50. For more examples, see Alfred W. Lee, "Is a Great Genius: George Grey Barnard and His Magnificent Accomplishments," *Muscatine Gazette*, November 27, 18[?], clipping, Box 7, Folder 15, Frame 23, Barnard Papers, who calls Barnard a "splendid specimen of noble, Christian American manhood and patriotic citizenship" In a section of the article headed "A True American," Lee quoted Barnard: "I returned to America purely though a spirit of patriotism. I am confident the financial results would have been greater in Europe, but I love my country, and whatever I possessed of genius I desired to contribute to American art, and yet there have been great discouragements."

²⁶ Roberta K. Tarbell and Ilene Susan Fort, "American Sculpture and Rodin," in *Rodin and America: Influence and Adaptation, 1876-1936*, ed. Bernard Barryte and Roberta K. Tarbell (Stanford, CA: Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts, Stanford University in

“the technique of direct carving” of Gothic and Romanesque carvers, with whose work he had become enthralled when studying in France.²⁷ Though Barnard rejected commissions he found too restrictive, he was thrilled to receive in 1902 a large order for the sculpture of the Pennsylvania State Capitol in Harrisburg. The commission prompted him to return to France for the duration of the project (1903-1911) and set up operations in a town called Moret-sur-Loing, where he could have easier access to the necessary materials and craftspeople. He justified the move to his parents: “I felt with a pressure of heart I had been separated too long from ‘fellow laborers.’”²⁸

When he fell on hard times and the Capitol project faced financial scandal due to graft, he began collecting medieval French art and selling it.²⁹ He organized a large part of the collection he amassed into the Cloisters, which he sold to John D.

association with Silvana Editorale, Milan, Italy, exh. cat.), 109. Barnard’s students included Malvina Hoffman.

²⁷ Martin Weinberger, *The George Grey Barnard Collection* (New York: Robinson Galleries, [1941]), vii-viii. The late nineteenth century French admiration for the medieval past is part of French Symbolist theory that is often tied to Catholic revivalism and French nationalism. It sometimes verged on or was fully implicated in the period’s anti-Semitism. See Laura Morowitz, “Anti-Semitism, Medievalism and the Art of the Fin-de-Siècle,” *Oxford Art Journal* 20, no. 1 (1997): 35-49 for a discussion of these overlapping discourses in the art of the Nabis, School of Pont-Aven (Synthetists), and Rose+Croix Salons. The historical record does not so far reveal that Barnard’s admiration for medieval art has the anti-Semitic motivations of examples by other Symbolists, and he produced a sculpture for a Jewish center (see McSpadden 206). Barnard said that his “supreme object in making this collection was to give documents to the American sculptors and students that might teach them to use the chisel.” N.d. list of Cloisters objects by Barnard, Barnard Archives, Cloisters, Metropolitan Museum of Art, quoted in Elizabeth Bradford Smith, “George Grey Barnard: Artist/Collector/Dealer/Curator,” in *Medieval Art in America: Patterns of Collecting, 1800-1914*, ed. Elizabeth Bradford Smith (University Park: Palmer Museum of Art, Pennsylvania State University, exh. cat.), 134.

²⁸ Barnard’s self-presentation as a laborer, to be explored later in this chapter, is evident in this letter explaining his plan to return to France, January 1[?], 1903, Box 11, Dickson/Barnard Papers. He was also compelled to return to Europe by the “wonderful works of the Middle Ages” that he saw during a visit to the Louvre, and ultimately the availability of models: “what is most important is the models there I can’t get in my own country.”

²⁹ Barnard to parents, October 1 19[06?], Box 10, Dickson/Barnard Papers: “We stay there until some new money comes. My only hopes now seem to be antiquities.”

Rockefeller, for the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in 1925.³⁰ Barnard sold a second medieval collection group, called the Abbaye, to the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 1937.

In 1911, the Pennsylvania Capitol sculptures, a total of 30 figures divided into two groups, entitled *Burden of Life: The Broken Law* and *Love and Labor: The Unbroken Law*, were unveiled in Harrisburg. Before their permanent installation, they first debuted at the Paris Salon in 1910. Barnard's two large groups of monumental nude figures spill out in front of a pair bas reliefs. The figures enact a range of human experience, despair countered by hope, through dramatic postures and arrangements. Barnard went on to create a major single-figure work; his *Lincoln* statues (1912-1922) challenged conventional depictions of the Civil War president and elicited as much praise as they did critique for the intensely human and un-regal character Barnard lent to the heroized American leader.³¹

Barnard spent much of the rest of his life, based in New York, at work on a never-completed project called the *Monument to Democracy*, centered around a *Rainbow Arch*. This project started as a World War I memorial and evolved into an immense plan for a multi-part New York City installation devoted to peace. Brian Hack's dissertation, a vital source for scholarly analysis of Barnard, is ultimately an exploration of this last project, which took up the final two decades of Barnard's life. Hack has argued that the *Monument to Democracy* was "the culmination of

³⁰ Smith, 136.

³¹ Frederick C. Moffat, *Errant Bronzes: George Grey Barnard's Statues of Abraham Lincoln* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998) explores the Lincoln portrayals in depth. Moffat calls them "anti-Lincolns," like "counter monuments" (8).

Symbolist-inspired ideas he [Barnard] had envisioned since the 1890s.”³² These “Symbolist-inspired ideas” are the basis for my analysis in this chapter.

Situating Barnard’s Symbolism

Like Gertrude Käsebier, Alice Pike Barney, and Henry Ossawa Tanner, George Grey Barnard was described as a “mystic” in his time.³³ Commentators frequently called him a seer, dreamer, poet, or visionary. Critics also forthrightly declared Barnard a “symbolist in marble” or “symbolist in stone.”³⁴ Furthermore, they elaborated on the particularities of his Symbolist impulse in illuminating ways:

Mr. Barnard is certainly a ‘symbolist,’ but not of the character which produces the nightmares so frequently associated with that much-abused term, for even if the full meaning of his subjects cannot be fully understood at first glance, by the average man, one cannot fail to admire his strength of modelling and the apparent ease with which he accomplishes his ends, and above all, the truthfulness and beauty of his subjects—a rare quality among the men usually referred to as ‘symbolists.’³⁵

³² Hack, iv. Hack, 147 further articulates that *Monument to Democracy* “echoed Barnard’s leitmotif of the eternal human struggle between the material and the spiritual.”

³³ Laurvik, 39: “Barnard is a great visionary who sees with the eyes of a mystic”; Payne 1897, Frame 6: “There [in his *The Struggle of the Two Natures in Man*] he developed his mysticism, his feeling for the absolute. For he is a mystic and a poet.”; “[illeg.] in Charge,” *Sunday Herald*, Boston, July 20, 1902, Box 7, Folder 15, Frame 26, Barnard Papers: “Even as a small boy he was wont to have strange and mystical views of life and the universe.”; Lorado Taft, *The History of American Sculpture* (New York: Macmillan, 1903), 372: “The constant presence of this larger, almost mystical quality in the work of Mr. Barnard . . .”; McSpadden, 188-189: “Always of philosophical trend, he became introspective, even mystic, and this has colored all his succeeding work”; Payne 1898, Frame 76: “He became a mystic, a visionary with this unvisionary like quality, he put his mysticism into marble. Unconsciously he became a skilled metaphysician—he has a ‘system’ that is not unlike Hartley’s theory of vibrations.”

³⁴ Olive Sanxay, “Parentage of Genius,” *Indianapolis News*, October 4, 1898, Box 7, Folder 15, Frame 22, Barnard Papers,: “He has been called a symbolist in marble.”; “A Symbolist in Stone,” *Literary Digest* 1, no. 2 (January 10, 1903): 43-44.

³⁵ Charles H. Israels, “With the Artists,” *Home and Country* 14, no. 4 (May 1897): 315.

This quote, from the New York publication *Home and Country*, is revealing of a negative reputation attached to Symbolist art in America. The nightmarish quality that the critic identifies as typical of Symbolist work aligns with Michelle Facos's categorization of certain Symbolist artists as temperamentally "pessimists."³⁶ It also alludes to the related concept of Decadence, which also made its way into American cultural production.³⁷ So far as Symbolism was seen as a predominantly European trend, this "nightmarish" Symbolism crystallized the opposition of supposedly "Puritan" American morality versus ostentatious, over-refined, and beleaguered Old World taste. The "Puritan" versus "Parisian" is a dichotomy about which Emily C. Burns has written in her study of American art education in the French capital.³⁸ It is a tension that Barnard himself picked up on when he warned that "there are tendencies and influences in Paris that had best be avoided. The decadent note is rampant."³⁹

³⁶ Facos, 6, 65-66.

³⁷ See David Weir, *Decadent Culture in the United States: Art and Literature Against the Grain, 1890-1926* (Albany: State University of New York, 2008), particularly xiii-xv.

³⁸ Emily C. Burns, "Puritan Parisians: American Art Students in Late Nineteenth-Century Paris," in *A Seamless Web: Transatlantic Art in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Cheryll L. May and Marian Wardle (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars, 2014), 123-146. Perhaps Burns originated her terminology in the critiques around Barnard's *Pan*. *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, June 10, 1897, clipping, Box 7, Folder 14, Frame 31, Barnard Papers: "The ideas of New York on art and morals seem to fluctuate oddly between Parisianism and Puritanism." This is reiterated in other commentary around *Pan*: "The decision of the park board caused much comment in art circles and sculptors are wondering if they must confine their work to depicting . . . the gods of mythology in sugar loaf hats and buckled shoes." "Art in America," *Inter-Ocean*, Chicago, June 13, 1897, clipping, Box 7, Folder 14, Frame 43, Barnard Papers.

³⁹ Barnard quoted in Payne 1898, Frame 76. A similar sentiment appears in newspaper reviews as well. "An American Sculptor," *Indianapolis Journal*, December 13, 1896, reprint of article from *New York Evening Sun*: "That Barnard's work is unconventional is true, but any one going to his exhibition in the expectation of finding something eccentric or fin de siecle will be disappointed, for there is nothing whatever in his work decadent or extravagant."

However, Barnard's own, controversial public sculpture *Pan* is arguably part of this more "pessimistic" Symbolism or Decadent strain (Fig. 3).⁴⁰ Not just a *fin-de-siècle* ideology about cultural decline, excess, and inward retreat, Decadence refers historically more broadly to periods of late empire, with Rome as the exemplar.⁴¹ Barnard's classical subject matter relates *Pan* to Decadence in this longer historical view.

Barnard depicted the Greek deity massively, at over eight feet long, stretched horizontally and resting on the left side of his body. Barnard draped *Pan*'s left leg over the side of the composition's craggy base. Like a satyr or faun, the mythological Pan is a physically hybrid creature: part human, part goat. Barnard accordingly resolved the legs of his largely humanoid *Pan* into cloven animal hoofs. *Pan*'s legs were critiqued by one journalist for lacking appropriate anatomical construction and for thus "giv[ing] the appearance of a monstrous deformity."⁴² *Pan* is highly muscled and nude, covered minimally by a fig leaf. Barnard's use of pose and modeling draws from Michelangelo's in the Medici Chapel sculptures, especially *Dusk*. Barnard emulated Michelangelo's *Moses* as well (Figs. 4-5). This is apparent in *Pan*'s lush, wavy hair and the positioning of *Pan*'s right-hand fingers. Reminiscent of the horns of Michelangelo's *Moses*, Barnard gave *Pan* two animal ears which pop up on either

⁴⁰ Controversy swirled around *Pan*'s placement. Clark's Estate presented *Pan* to the city of New York in 1896. While approved by the National Sculpture Society, *Pan*'s installation was held up by the Board of Parks, which claimed no suitable spot could be found for the work in Central Park. An explosion of media coverage ensued, and the matter was at a stand-still for many years. *Pan* was finally accepted by Columbia University, and is on view on campus.

⁴¹ Weir, xiii.

⁴² "George Grey Barnard: Chicago's Most Promising Sculptor," unidentified clipping, ca. 1897-98, Box 7, Folder 14, Frame 28, Barnard Papers: "In their construction the carpal and metacarpal bones which are found in all vertebrate animals are wanting."

side of his head of thick hair. One is raised upright and one is flopped downward. *Pan*'s moustache buoyantly sprouts under his nose and continues into a beard around his head that falls into thick tendrils which curl at their ends across his chest. Barnard placed a flute loosely held in *Pan*'s right hand. The god's long fingers are situated over the holes upon the length of the flute's single reed. Erected over spouting fountains and a pool with reeds, there were additional sensorial component to the outdoor installation of Barnard's *Pan* (Fig. 6).⁴³ *Pan* exhales in the flute's direction, just touching the instrument to his bottom lip. His eyes are squinted and angled downwards towards the bridge of his nose. Critics described *Pan*'s smile as "wicked."⁴⁴ *The Boston Journal* noted the "double nature" of *Pan*, both shepherd's helper and instigator of frights (another instance of *dédoublement*). However, this critic concluded that Barnard's stylization of the character looked back to the "Pan Terribilis" side of the figure, as illustrated by Joseph Spence in his study of classical art (Fig. 7). Overall, Barnard sculpted *Pan*'s body as solid but sinuous, and the effect is languorous and sensual.

The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* called *Pan* "dangerous," with "the utter heartlessness of the women imagined by Aubrey Beardsley."⁴⁵ This critic interestingly attached female "heartlessness" to the male god, suggesting the femme fatale types I have analyzed in other chapters. Indeed, Barnard made his pipe-playing

⁴³ See description in William H. Carpenter, "The Great God Pan," *Columbia University Quarterly* (September 1908): 485-488.

⁴⁴ "The Rejection of Pan," *Plain Dealer*, Cleveland, June 14, 1897, clipping, Box 7, Folder 14, Frame 52, Barnard Papers: "It is doubtful, indeed, whether the sculpture is of a proper kind for exhibition in a public park. . . . A wicked smile plays about the mouth, the ears hang in a rakish manner, the beard is a tangled and heavy mat, the legs end in cloven hoofs, and the whole effect is fearfully demoniac."

⁴⁵ *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 22, 1896, 25.

figure androgynous in its odalisque-style pose.⁴⁶ The woodland character of Pan had long-held associations with sexuality and hedonism, which had been bolstered by Stéphane Mallarmé's "L'Après-midi d'un faun" ("The Afternoon of a Faun"), the arch-Symbolist poem, in which he described the sensuous romp of a faun in the woods. The connection of Barnard's *Pan* to "The Afternoon of a Faun" is underscored by a critic from the *New York Sun*: "There is also a suspicion of Mallarmé's faun in that never to be forgotten afternoon when he saw the gleam of white flesh through the green leaves."⁴⁷ Other contemporary reviewers, sometimes playfully but nevertheless incisively, associated *Pan* with dark and even satanic currents presented as inimical to "Christian" American character.⁴⁸ The *New York Press* called *Pan* an "awful oracle" presiding from within a "mystic cave."⁴⁹ The *Boston Journal* referenced Arthur Machen's *The Great God Pan* (1890), an occultic horror story about an experiment-gone-wrong and the resultant carnage leveled by the murderous female offspring of the pagan god.⁵⁰ The 1894 edition of Machen's book

⁴⁶ Nicholas Fox Weber, *The Clarks of Cooperstown* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 66-80, and especially 70, 139, has argued that Barnard's art was a sublimation of Barnard's homosexual desires. The internal struggle that Weber describes—between male and female attraction, and more specifically between Barnard's patron Alfred Corning Clark and his fiancée Edna Monroe—may manifest itself in the androgynous presentation of *Pan*.

⁴⁷ Clipping, "The Boston Museum: George Grey Barnard," *The Sun*, New York, November 15, 1908, Box 15, Carnegie Institute, Museum of Art records, 1883-1962, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC [hereafter Carnegie Museum Papers]. Also located in *Chronicling America, Historic American Newspapers*, Library of Congress, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030272/1908-11-15/ed-1/seq-9/>.

⁴⁸ See Harold E. Dickson, "The Other Orphan," *American Art Journal* 1, no. 2 (Autumn 1969): 108-10 for the moral and religious objections the public made to *Pan* and the licentiousness he was seen to represent, and 113 for a journalist's opinion on the misfit of *Pan* for a "Christian country."

⁴⁹ "From Headquarters," *New York Press*, July 20, 1897, clipping, Box 7, Folder 14, Frame 40, Barnard Papers.

⁵⁰ "Poor Pan," *Journal*, Boston, June 12, 1897, clipping, Box 7, Folder 14, Frame 56, Barnard Papers. Barnard's *Pan* is referred to as "the Great God Pan" at least as early as 1897. See

had a cover illustration by Beardsley himself. But this darker, more twisted, or pessimistic avenue (affiliated with sexuality, connected to bestiality and Decadence) that Barnard explored in *Pan* was not the only Symbolist option—as illustrated, for one, by Barnard’s own, often divergent path.

Another assessment of Barnard’s Symbolism, by William Howe Downes, designates something different, and new about Barnard’s approach:

He has originated what I must call the New Symbolism, a symbolism which goes to the very heart of the life of men and women of to-day, which has to do with everlasting varieties of life; and I think this was vaguely felt even by the least cultivated of his public in Boston.⁵¹

This and the other quotes highlight that a certain opaqueness of meaning accompanies Symbolist art. For both commentators, the deeper implications of Barnard’s sculpted forms are not always immediately apparent. Barnard’s works suggest, rather than illustrate.

This is a through line in the critical understanding of Barnard, stemming from his earliest reviews, upon his debut at the Champ-de-Mars Salon. One critic wrote, “I

“Reject a Statue of the God Pan,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 9, 1897, clipping, Box 7, Folder 14, Frame 35, Barnard Papers.

⁵¹ William Howe Downes, “Mr. Barnard’s Exhibit in Boston, Which Appealed to the Connoisseurs and the Crowd Alike,” *World’s Work* 17 (February 1909): 11268. Ilene Susan Fort, “The New Symbolism,” in *American Masters: Sculpture from Brookgreen Gardens*, ed. Robyn R. Solmon (Murrells Inlet, SC: Brookgreen Gardens, 1996, exh. cat.), 7 has applied Downes’s terminology to a number of American sculptors who “explored the human condition.” She has Barnard’s and others work as a response to their era: a loss of religious certainty as well as industrialization, urbanization, and immigration. This important idea is developed more fully in Fort and Tarbell, 103: “As universal and abstract as their metaphysical themes might be, they also revealed cultural, scientific, and political issues of the day . . . Judeo-Christian scriptures more frequently came into conflict with new scientific, technical, and philosophical writings. Increasing mechanization, the growth of cities, and soaring immigration to the United States further encouraged Americans to question established values. Symbolism, as evinced in American sculpture, at times offered answer or at least expressed these concerns.”

am not versed in the symbolical sufficiently to unveil the mystery in the large group called, 'I feel two natures within me' [now known as *The Struggle of the Two Natures in Man*]. It is not difficult to see it is a work full of thought" (Fig. 8).⁵² Another wrote that "many find them [Barnard's compositions] symbolical—others are mystified by them."⁵³ Critic for *Le Temps*, Thiebault-Sisson, wrote that Barnard's monumental *Struggle* "may lack a little of that precision and clearness that conventional allegory requires."⁵⁴ Barnard's prioritization of insinuation over definition, and the distance he maintained from conventional allegory underscore that his work should be understood within a Symbolist framework.

Such notions of semi-inscrutability have adhered to Barnard's work through the decades. The current curator of American sculpture at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Thayer Tolles, has reflected on the Museum's trouble finding the appropriate place for *The Struggle of the Two Natures in Man* in the institution's galleries and courtyards since the work became part of the collection in 1896.⁵⁵ This difficulty is

⁵² Saborien, *Le Populaire*, Nantes, April 30, 1894, clipping, trans. Henry Haveloque, Box 7, Folder 14, Frame 84, Barnard Papers.

⁵³ *Monde Illustré*, July 21, 1894, clipping, trans. Haveloque, Box 7, Folder 14, Frame 84, Barnard Papers.

⁵⁴ "... but in spite of that the group has movement and life." (Peut-être la composition manque-t-elle de cette netteté absolue, de cette clarté dont l'allégorie réclame impérieusement la présence, mais la groupe, en dépit de tout, a de l'allure, l'exécution est aussi solide que nuancée.) Thiebault-Sisson, "Le Salon du Champ-de-Mars, la sculpture," *Le Temps*, May 7, 1894, trans. Payne 1897. Thiebault-Sisson's review was translated multiple times by the American press, including by the *New York Times*, June 24, 1894, as "Perhaps the composition lacks absolute precision in that lucidity which the allegory imperiously demands, but the group, in spite of all, makes its effect." The sentiment is echoed in the comment by Alexander Blair Thaw, "George Grey Barnard, Sculptor," *World's Work* 5, no. 2 (December 1902): 2851, that Barnard's is "the simple symbolism of humanity itself, with none of the adventitious aids of convention or traditional allegory."

⁵⁵ Alfred Corning Clark's estate gifted *The Struggle of the Two Nature in Man* to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1896. Thayer Tolles, "The Elephant in the Room: George Grey Barnard's *Struggle of the Two Natures in Man* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New

due not only to the work's large size, at over eight feet tall and wide, but also to its difficult categorization. For Tolles and her predecessors, it has proven “unconventional and inconvenient,” and Barnard, as an artist, has been “too modern and symbolist to be a Beaux-Arts sculptor and too retardataire to be modernist.”⁵⁶ This sort of contested art historical ground—neither one thing nor the other—is the liminal space in which Barnard's sculpture resides along with much of American Symbolist art.

The idea of a New Symbolism, put forth by the Downes in the early twentieth century, opens another dimension to understanding the Symbolist impulse in American art. For one, it suggests a longevity to the movement, its ability to transform, and a long-term impact in the United States that has gone under-recognized. Susan Martis, for example, has rightly suggested how the unfinished, or *non-finito* quality of works by Barnard and other turn-of-the-century American sculptors challenged United States audiences to rethink their expectations for sculpture.⁵⁷ The unfinished surfaces changed how people related to work that was now being produced in the mode of what Dario Gamboni has called “potential images,” art which relied more heavily on the role of the viewer in its emphasis on suggestion and indeterminacy.⁵⁸ Even though they were alongside the more avant-garde expressions of Constantin Brâncuși and other European sculptors, the

York,” in *Sculpture and the Museum*, ed. Christopher R. Marshall (2011; New York: Routledge, 2016), 119.

⁵⁶ Tolles, 129.

⁵⁷ Susan Martis, “Light, Obscurity and Symbolist Themes in American Sculpture, 1890-1920,” in *Light and Obscurity in Symbolism*, ed. Rosina Neginsky and Deborah Cibelli (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 337.

⁵⁸ Dario Gamboni considers sculpture and Symbolism in *Potential Images: Ambiguity and Indeterminacy in Modern Art*, trans. Mark Treharne (London: Reaktion, 2002), 116-19.

appearance of Barnard's work at the Armory Show in 1913—a major moment for America's exposure to modernism—underscores some of the longer impact of Barnard's "New Symbolism."

Roberta K. Tarbell and Ilene Susan Fort have examined the omnipresence of "Rodinisme" among the American sculptors at the Armory Show, and they have linked Barnard's and other American sculptors' inclinations towards Symbolism to Rodin's profound impact as a model and conditioner of critical response—his aesthetic of *non-finito* and engaged relief, his emphasis on the personal and imaginative, his emphatic modeling of musculature, and his exploration of psychological struggles. Rodin's own sculptures were not on view at the Armory Show, but his drawings were, on loan from Gertrude Käsebier.⁵⁹ Such interconnections help fill in the networks between the individuals treated in this dissertation, American art, European art, Symbolism, and modernism.⁶⁰

Clay Means Life

Barnard's oft-discussed *The Struggle of the Two Natures in Man* is a monumentally sized marble two-figure group, picturing a pair of men engaged in conflict.⁶¹ Barnard made a roughly triangular composition. The base is defined by a

⁵⁹ Tarbell and Fort, 129, 152n73.

⁶⁰ [Jeanne Robert Foster,] "Art Revolutionists on Exhibition in America," *American Review of Reviews* 47 (April 1913): 447, highlighted the misfit of Barnard in what would become standard histories of American sculpture: "Barnard is a Modernist in that he interprets emotions through the medium of his material, but the spirit and the form of his art are essentially classic." Here, in this transitional place, wherein emotion, medium, material, and spirit are paramount, the Symbolist framework fits well.

⁶¹ Discussing *The Struggle of the Two Natures in Man*, Hack has given a great deal of credence to a Symbolist reading. He emphasizes the influence of the Spritualization of Thought Movement and occult writing by Marie Corelli. He applies the notion of *dédoublement* to *The Struggle of the Two Natures in Man* and considers the double

prostrate figure situated atop a textural slab of marble, and the apex is marked by the head of an upright figure whose leg extensions frame the triangular shape. Barnard entangled and fused the two nude male figures' bodies at places. The lying figure props himself up on his right forearm and looks behind him. Barnard created tension in the turning of this figure's feet and the torsion of his body. This figure's left arm bends at the elbow along his ribs, and his left hand is clutched around material by his hip. The leg of the upright figure emerges from between the fallen man's thighs, his foot planted between them on the ground. This upright figure's other foot steps just below the crux of the lying man's elbow, and his toes fuse into the other man's forearm. A small, furry, bat-like creature peeps out near this intersection. The upright man has a slack mouth and a somewhat dazed expression—half-closed eyes that Barnard had him share with the man on the ground. They both have thick, wavy hair, and, though they are not identical, they firmly resemble one another. The upright man's arms swing to his left. The upper part of his body is oriented in the opposite direction. Barnard marked his abdomen with lines that communicate his hunch forward and inward in the torso. Barnard emphatically sculpted veins running along his forearms. The composition's light gray-white marble is itself veined in a darker grey.

personality in general as a cultural touchstone at the turn of the century, with texts such as Oscar Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891). I discuss *dédoublement* in the other chapters of this dissertation. Hack also unpacks the question of the original title for the work, *Je sens deux hommes en moi*. Typically credited to a Victor Hugo poem, the source is not actually clear. In addition to the suggestions Hack provides, I would also add Dante's image from the *Inferno* (Canto XXV): "Two natures thus transmuted did he sing, / Wherein both shapes were ready to assume / The other's substance." Dante, *The Vision; or Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise*, trans. Henry Francis Cary (London: Henry R. Bohn, 1850), 128.

While this sculpture's distance from "traditional allegory"⁶² has enabled a wide gamut of interpretation, when Barnard himself explained the meaning, he said that "it represents the *awakening* nature throwing off the *material* nature that stands apparently master over it."⁶³ This explanation reads as an expression of the anti-material, pro-immaterial philosophy undergirding so much of Symbolist thought. Barnard continued, "It is the possibilities in the Under-Dog—just opposite to 'The Conquering Hero Stands Triumphant.'"⁶⁴ It is important that in its championing of the underdog, *The Struggle of the Two Natures in Man* is not a sculpture of or about victory. In fact, Barnard placed the potential winner, if one can be identified, underfoot. This figure is still prostrate, just beginning to rise up against his combatant, "material nature." This confrontation is the unresolved but central tension of the work. This lack of resolution is key, because Symbolism itself is ultimately animated by a never-resolved struggle between materiality and immateriality, something like what Barnard visualized in this work.

While following the traditional academic procedure of moving from clay to plaster to marble, Barnard insisted on carving *The Struggle of the Two Natures in Man* himself rather than handing it over to skilled craftsmen, a particularity that distinguishes him from his peers.⁶⁵ Even though he employed a team of assistants for

⁶² Thaw, 2851.

⁶³ Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Catalogue of Sculpture, 1731-1907* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1908), 12, <https://libmma.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15324coll10/id/14736>.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

⁶⁵ Barnard's hands-on approach to marble makes for an important distinction with Rodin, who—like many other sculptors of the era—"never touched it," and rather handed his models over to various carvers to carry out in marble under his supervision. Antoinette le Normand-Romain, *Rodin* (2013; New York: Abbeville Press, 2014), 195.

the large Capitol project, the idea of a commitment to craftsmanship adhered to Barnard throughout his career. Babette Deutsch wrote that “unlike most of his confrères, he is reluctant to leave any part of the job in hand to stonecutters for ‘pointing up,’ and insists on doing most of the chiseling himself.”⁶⁶ Pointing up refers to the method of enlarging and/or transferring sculptural forms from one medium to another. To do this, devices called pointing machines, along with compasses for enlargements, were used to guide the process and calculation of moving points in space from, for example, the surface of plaster cast, to the equivalent points in space (or the relatively equivalent points in space) inside, for example, a block of marble.⁶⁷ Barnard noted knocking off the knobs, the evidence of the pointing procedure, from the marble of *The Struggle of the Two Natures in Man* in February 1894, two months before its exhibition. The knobs appear in a photograph of Barnard at work (Fig. 9).⁶⁸

Barnard’s do-it-himself attitude offered a particularly “autographic” sense of finish: “As a result of this autographic process, the details in his work usually tell with exceptional force.”⁶⁹ Photographs of him at work on his sculpture, wielding hammer and chisel, reinforce the idea of the workman-artist that he cultivated, even if

⁶⁶ Deutsch, 26.

⁶⁷ See Arthur Beale, “A Technical View of Nineteenth-Century Sculpture,” in *Metamorphoses in Nineteenth-Century Sculpture*, ed. Jeanne L. Wasserman (Cambridge, MA: Fogg Art Museum, distributed by Harvard University Press, 1975, exh. cat.), 47-49; and François Blanchetière, “Breathing Life Into Stone: Rodin and his Marble Sculptures,” in *Metamorphoses in Rodin’s Studio*, ed. Nathalie Bondil and Sophie Biass-Fabiani (Milan, Italy: 5 Continents Editions, 2015 in conjunction with exhibition produced by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and Musée Rodin, Paris), 155.

⁶⁸ Barnard to Mother, February 11, 1894, Box 9, Dickson/Barnard Papers.

⁶⁹ Knaufft 1908, 690 further explains that “a feature of Mr. Barnard’s work which differs from that of other sculptors, especially very successful sculptors, is that it is often more autographic than theirs. He frequently makes his enlarged clay figures from his small sketches, and always finishes them part by part with his own hand.”

this is somewhat exaggerated from the reality of his working procedures deeper into his professional life.

The idea of workman-artist is further reinforced by the juxtaposition of photographs that create a visual analogy between his own *The Hewer* (carved 1902)—its arm upraised and with built-up force about to descend—and Barnard as the hewer of his own works (Fig. 10). In telling of *The Struggle of the Two Natures in Man*, Barnard scholar Harold E. Dickson narrated a romanticized vision of Barnard's Parisian studio life, the artist's trips to Carrara to select marble, and the long stretches of carving work interrupted by the artist's illness and the tragic death of a model.⁷⁰ Popular descriptions of Barnard as "a man of great strength and worker who, full of torrential violence, throws himself onto clay or marble, like a man torn by voracious hunger" dramatize the process of making, the interaction between artist and material, the special "genius" of the sculptor, and the gendering of the "virile" and "American" male artist wrapped up in the laborer mentality.⁷¹

Most images of him in the studio suggest, however, a calmer temperament and gentler touch if also an intimacy with his materials (Fig. 11). Anna Bilinska painted a young Barnard with rolled up shirt sleeves and gray, clay-covered forearms and

⁷⁰ Harold E. Dickson, "Log of a Masterpiece: Barnard's 'The Struggle of the Two Natures of Man,'" *Art Journal* 20, no. 3 (Spring 1961): 139-143. There is a similar sentiment expressed in Ernest Knaufft, "Saint Gaudens and American Sculpture," *American Review of Reviews* 36, no. 3 (September 1907): 296: "Nothing perfunctory will come from his chisel. This expression, 'his chisel' is truer in Mr. Barnard's case than in the case of most sculptors, who, rather, usually model in clay and have their work cast in bronze, or cut in marble by assistants. Mr. Barnard has done much of his cutting himself. . . . we should not be surprised if in the future he did create some very virile and vivid monuments."

⁷¹ Paul Clemen, *George Grey Barnard* (Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1911), 2, quoted in Hack, 1. Barnard later attributed an attack of illness to working with clay his whole life: "I am in bed with rheumatic fever, a penalty I suppose sculptors must pay for working in clay." Barnard to John W. Beatty, Director of Fine Arts, Carnegie Institute, May 6, 1918, Box 15, Carnegie Museum Papers.

hands, with the material caked under into his knuckles as he clutches a rag or sponge (Fig. 12). In a cyanotype print, Barnard's daughter gazes up at the sculpture as Barnard amiably takes a chisel to his *Maidenhood*'s hair (Fig. 13). In a press photograph, Barnard touches the shin of the *Hewer* in clay, nonchalantly leaning his elbow beside or onto a pile of debris built up around the base of the work (Fig. 14). In another, he balances on the balls of his feet to touch the *Hewer*'s chin (Fig. 15). He almost seems to dance with the figure in yet another shot from this series (Fig. 16).

In these images, the damp rag clinging to the *Hewer*'s face, covering his eyes, would have protected the clay from drying too quickly and cracking. The cloth also recalls the artist's own metaphorical blindfolding, which was part of his working process. Barnard reputedly awoke in the morning, closed his eyes tightly, and blindly made his way to his place in the studio with the help of his models guiding him along. He only opened his eyes little by little to see through the dark: "Slowly I would only then half open my lids, so that I could see points of light between the lashes, and it was with these points of light that I modeled the group [*The Struggle of the Two Natures in Man*]." ⁷² This working technique informed his spirituality: "I close my eyes partly and I seem to see the oneness of things and the eternal completeness of that oneness." ⁷³ His half-open eyelids recall Paul Gauguin's dictum to look upon

⁷² S. J. Woolf, "The Stormy Petrel of the Sea of Art: George Grey Barnard, Embattled Sculptor, Talks of His Life of Strife," *New York Times Magazine*, December 7, 1930, <https://nyti.ms/2rpfy8s>. Woolf reports that he did not quite understand this method as Barnard explained it and that "about much of his conversation there was a haziness and mysticism which made it difficult for me to follow." Another version of the story around the process of *The Struggle of Two Natures in Man*, told by Laurvik, 40, has Barnard "walk[ing] back and forth with eyes half shut, putting on a dab of clay here, taking away a portion there."

⁷³ Barnard quoted in Payne 1898, Frame 76.

nature with “eyes half-closed” so that art could be “nature through the veil of the soul.”⁷⁴

Barnard was anything but a mechanical practitioner of his craft. He maintained a spiritual, even Christological conception of sculpture’s material transformation:

Clay means life; plaster death; and marble resurrection. Artists . . . always have a shock when they see their work in plaster. It seems fixed and dead, their thought imprisoned. As long as it is in clay, it is fluid and gives way to the mind as it changes; but after it is cast [in plaster], the mind loses sway. When it is released in marble, later, the spirit is transfigured.⁷⁵

Barnard explained the practice of sculpting as a spiritual lifecycle. His youthful experience with taxidermy gives another valence to the cycle of life and death captured in this quote. He in fact made the analogy between the metal armature—sometimes called the skeleton—necessary for holding up weighty clay models, and the structural framework embedded in taxidermic specimens of the type he produced as a youth.⁷⁶ This analogy underscores the parallels between the processes of sculpture and the cycles of creation; the dead animal is in a sense revived, in uncanny form, as taxidermic specimen.

⁷⁴ “Si j’étais appelé à définir très brièvement le mot (art) je l’appellerai la reproduction de ce que les sens perçoivent dans la nature à travers le voile de l’âme. . . . J’ai parlé du voile de l’âme; quelque chose de pareil nous paraît indispensable en art. Nous pouvons toujours doubler la beauté d’un paysage en le regardant les yeux à demi-clos.” Paul Gauguin, *Cahier pour Aline*, 1893, Institut national d’histoire de l’art, Paris, Bibliothèque de l’INHA, <https://bibliotheque-numerique.inha.fr/idurl/1/8348>. Translated, quoted, and discussed in June Hargrove, “Gauguin’s Maverick Sage: Meijer de Haan,” in *Visions: Gauguin and his Time*, Van Gogh Studies 3, ed. Chris Stolwijk (Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum/Waanders Publishers, 2010), 98. For further discussion of half-closed eyes, see Dario Gamboni, *Paul Gauguin: The Mysterious Centre of Thought*, trans. Chris Miller (London: Reaktion, 2013), 29-33, who discusses its roots in Carlylean principles, German idealist philosophy, Romanticism, and Charles Blanc’s understanding of Japanese art.

⁷⁵ From an unidentified interview with Barnard, quoted in Dickson 1961, 139.

⁷⁶ Dickson 1961, 141.

Certain commentators looked even further back into Barnard's childhood to highlight the spiritual potential of marble material itself. Katherine Roof opined:

So remote was his life from the atmosphere of art and aesthetics that he describes himself as feeling as a boy a certain sense of reverence for marble in itself and recalls keeping broken pieces of it as a thing beautiful and worth treasuring. Not that, like Michael Angelo, he felt in the stone the imprisoned angel waiting to be set free, but just the spell of the white delicate thing itself, with its suggestion of things removed from the world of the immediate and the commonplace.⁷⁷

In emphasizing the remoteness from the art world in Barnard's upbringing, Roof fostered the conception of Barnard as a "Western boy"⁷⁸ and contributed to what Emily C. Burns has defined as the "discourse of the innocent eye" attributed to American artists trained in Paris.⁷⁹ This discourse offered a nationalistic interpretation of American art by assigning a naivete and freshness to American artists seen as freed from European convention and tradition, whether or not—and to what extent—this was actually the case.

Importantly, Roof underscored a mystical component to Barnard's ability to see something otherworldly and esoteric in a piece of inert, terrestrial rock. In her

⁷⁷ Roof, 277. On one level, there seems to be a contradiction between Barnard's quote and Roof's, the former proffering that there was indeed something to be released in the marble. However, one might distinguish between released *in* and released *from*. The former (in Barnard's quote) implies that the material, the marble, actually enables the freeing and enlivenment of the figure. The latter, released *from*, would have suggested the sense of something being trapped within. Moreover, there is a temporal distinction between the first and second quotes. For Roof, preceding the "idea," before the "thought" even of subject matter, the material itself is seen as something precious in itself for its mystery and its possession of an unnamed and undefined potential. This potential is not of a concrete possibility like Michelangelo's "angel" but of something more obscure—to evoke Mallarmé—something suggested, not named. Roof's text still rings true as it implies a mystical enchantment with materials themselves.

⁷⁸ Lorado Taft, *Arts for America* 7, no. 1 (September 1897), Box 7, Folder 14, Frame 64, Barnard Papers.

⁷⁹ Emily C. Burns, "'A baby's unconscious' in sculpture: modernism, nationalism, Frederick MacMonnies and George Grey Barnard in *fin-de-siècle* Paris," *Sculpture Journal* 27, no. 1 (2018): 89-103.

essay for the *Craftsman*, she proposed that Barnard was enraptured by the marble, the material, before the idea of any work took shape, even before his ambitions to be a sculptor solidified.

Casting of Pan

Whereas Barnard took pride in the autographic quality of his carving and was enchanted by the pale geologic material of marble itself, the casting of *Pan* illustrates a very different approach. At the time of its casting in 1898, *Pan* was the largest single-piece bronze casting in the United States, and it involved an entire team of more than 70 people at the Henry-Bonnard Bronze Company in Manhattan.⁸⁰

After refining the idea, Barnard sculpted *Pan* in clay at three-quarters size, then enlarged it to a full-size clay model with the assistance of a craftsman named Buat.⁸¹ Barnard then had *Pan* cast in plaster, which is less vulnerable and lighter, thus more transportable, than clay. In this inter-medial form, a “ghost in white plaster,” Barnard first exhibited the work publicly in 1896.⁸² The plaster went to the foundry, where a complex, nearly 2,000-piece mold was created in packed sand.⁸³ A core for the mold was also necessary, so that the finished work could have a hollow interior.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ “The Casting of George Gray Barnard’s Colossal Figure of Pan,” *Monumental News* 10, no. 10 (October 1898): 568-569.

⁸¹ Dickson 1969, 111.

⁸² Dickson 1969, 117. Artists would often exhibit plaster casts in order to secure a commission for the work in a more valuable, lasting material. See Jacques de Caso, “Serial Sculpture in Nineteenth-Century France,” in *Metamorphoses in Nineteenth-Century Sculpture*, 3.

⁸³ For a concise description of sand molding and casting in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Arthur Beale, “A Technical View of Nineteenth-Century Sculpture,” in *Metamorphoses in Nineteenth-Century Sculpture*, 33-35.

⁸⁴ This hollowness is important for the economic use of materials as well as structural reasons. See Beale, 40.

Reports named the lead mold-maker, Jean Leroy, and the foundry foreman, Eugene Vuillard. There are published photographs picturing four men working on the mold, as well as a drawing of eleven men pouring the reported four tons of liquified bronze alloy into it (Figs. 17-18). Their bodies offer a scale that emphasizes the magnitude of the endeavor.

The contemporary accounts of the casting lean towards the spectacular. Barnard wanted *Pan* to be cast in one piece, rather than the standard multiple sections. Perhaps this was to avoid the appearance of unnecessary seams or other imperfections, but it was as likely for the realization of a “*tour de force*” which would actually be “no different in strength or appearance from one that has been cast in parts.”⁸⁵ The reports emphasized the riskiness of the operation, both in terms of artistic effort (an error could mean starting from scratch) and human health. Surgeons were on-call, and one man passed out from fumes and burns having “leaped on top of the bank of earth about the mould and waved an American flag.”⁸⁶ This story is reported again, but without the injury: “Flames burst out from all sides of it for a moment, and the foreman waved the American flag over this great triumph of metallurgic art in America.”⁸⁷

⁸⁵ “Important Art Industries—No. 1. The Genesis of the Bronze Statue,” *The Artist* 24 (January-April 1899): x. Barnard may have desired such a *tour de force* showcase to support the merits and import of the sculpture. The indecision of public officials as to the propriety of *Pan*’s permanent display in New York’s Central Park made for quite active press coverage in 1897. Barnard wrote to his wife, [1897?], Box 10, Dickson/Barnard Papers, “I judge the ‘Pan’ fever has subsided you could not expect or wish it to on very long . . . this morning only 2 articles.”

⁸⁶ “The Casting of George Gray Barnard’s Colossal Figure of Pan,” 568.

⁸⁷ “A Phenomenal Piece of Bronze Casting,” *Scientific American* 79, no. 11 (September 10, 1898): 166.

Despite the fact that Henry-Bonnard was founded by two Frenchmen, accounts of *Pan*'s casting celebrated American ingenuity and daring: "by all odds [*Pan* is] the most difficult piece of work ever attempted in this country, and it is doubtful if there is a bronze foundry in Europe which would care to risk the casting of such an artistic piece of work in one piece."⁸⁸ *Scientific American* happily proclaimed that the bronze casting "industry has become thoroughly naturalized in the United States," referencing, it seems, the number of foreign-born artisans at work in the field, and a notable sea-change in the history of American sculpture; American sculptors were finally able to have bronzes cast domestically, a relatively new development.⁸⁹

Reports of the casting process also echoed the idea of lifecycles implied in Barnard's description of working in clay, plaster, and marble. This description references deathly tombs and a rebirth at the brilliant moment of casting:

To actually visit the foundry and watch the process from the period when the portions of the statue are lying in their tombs of sand, shapeless and inert, on to the critical moment when the grim atelier is lighted with the weird, fantastic flash of the molten bronze, and then through all the slow, laborious stages of finishing, until the statues emerges a noble, imperishable work of art, is to have one's imagination and one's wonder stimulated.⁹⁰

Bronze casting was in one sense new (especially in one large piece, especially in the United States), but in another quite old. The ancientness of bronze casting likely appealed to Barnard. The journal, *The Artist*, described it as such: "In the grey dawn of earliest records, when history and legend were still inextricably mingled, we

⁸⁸ Ibid., 165.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 165. For a succinct history, see Thayer Tolles, "American Bronze Casting," October 2004, Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, Metropolitan Museum of Art, http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/abrc/hd_abrc.htm.

⁹⁰ "Important Art Industries," x.

find mention of bronze working as a fine art.”⁹¹ Bronze’s associations with history and legend, the apparent mystery of its origins—“its beginnings antedate all records”⁹²—imbued this material, like marble, with meaning, here attached to shadowy origins, a facet of mystery that appealed to the Symbolist outlook.

Norwegian Clock

Like bronze, wood was also a meaningful material with primordial implications.⁹³ Barnard was motivated by a different set of considerations and required to venture into a new technical arena for the *Norwegian Clock*, his singular but impressive foray into the wood medium.

For Barnard, the *Norwegian Clock* (Fig. 19) was a many years long endeavor with multiple versions, parts, fragments, and outgrowths. There is an underlying literary inspiration to the *Norwegian Clock* in the Scandinavian sagas. Barnard told a journalist that that he was working on this project “under the veil of the Scandinavian myths.”⁹⁴ This veil has visual resonance. What can be understood as the background of the *Norwegian Clock* implies flow and morphing. It reveals and connects figures in a veil-like fashion by swirling around limbs, twisting into tendrils, bunching, expanding, and wavering at edges (Figs. 20-21). Lorado Taft articulated the aesthetic of the clock’s surface, describing how “parts are so fanciful that they might have been

⁹¹ “Important Art Industries,” vii.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Nicholas Penny, *The Materials of Sculpture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 123 notes that “wood has been the material most universally and commonly favoured for sculpture.”

⁹⁴ George Grey Barnard, quoted in “George Grey Barnard: Chicago’s Most Promising Sculptor,” unidentified clipping, ca. 1897-98, Box 7, Folder 14, Frame 28, Barnard Papers.

suggested by the accidental combination of clay and wet cloths, half seen at twilight.”⁹⁵ Barnard’s style recalls Auguste Rodin’s in compositions that emphasize water and sweeps of hair such as *Danaïd*, as well as *Oceanides* and *The Sirens*—compositions which originated in the *Gates of Hell* (Figs. 22-23).

Indeed, the *Norwegian Clock* and its various iterations cannot help but call to mind Rodin’s *Gates of Hell*, which also had roots in literature, Dante’s *Inferno*, but that mushroomed far beyond textual origins (Fig. 24).⁹⁶ A reviewer of Barnard’s indicated the parallels: Barnard’s “characters grimace, twist, suffer like those of the gate of *Hell*.”⁹⁷ Even though Rodin’s magnum opus was not on public view until 1900, in the 1880s and 1890s, he showed elements of the *Gates* at galleries and to visitors, including the American Truman Howe Bartlett, who saw and reported, with illustrations, on the progress in Rodin’s workspace.⁹⁸

Barnard made his own way to Rodin’s studio in 1894,⁹⁹ and the visual evidence indicates the profound impression Rodin’s art made. Barnard’s *Norwegian Clock* echoes the *Gates of Hell* in overall formal qualities, the tumultuous integration of figures onto a seething surface, and multiple specific passages. These include

⁹⁵ Taft 1897, 12.

⁹⁶ Barnard also read Dante. He writes to his father about buying Dante (as well as Virgil, Homer, and the availability of cheap texts in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew). N.d. letter, ca. 1884-1886, Daniel M. Williams Biographical Collection of George Grey Barnard, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA [hereafter Williams Papers].

⁹⁷ “Les personnages grimacent, se tordent, souffrent comme ceux de la port de l’*Enfer*.” Alfred Paulet, *La Patrie*, April 24, 1894, 2, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k20644368>.

⁹⁸ Truman Howe Bartlett, “The Door: VII,” *American Architect and Building News* 25, no. 698 (May 11, 1889), reprinted in *Metamorphoses in Rodin’s Studio*, 239.

⁹⁹ Clarisse Fava-Piz, “Spoiled for Choice: George Grey Barnard and the Paris Salons,” SAAM Fellows’ Lectures, May 23, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ma0lm8h83ho>. Fava-Piz discovered a crucial letter in the Musée Rodin archives. There is a letter from Barnard to Rodin dated March 31, 1894, stating that Barnard came by Rodin’s studio, did not find the sculptor, but kindly requested that his (Barnard’s) works be placed more prominently at the Salon, for which Rodin presided over the sculpture section.

crouching female figures,¹⁰⁰ sorrowful heads, and men shuddering in turmoil (Figs. 25-30). As they did with Rodin, critics assessed Barnard's work as psychological—for example, "his work shows a decided psychological bent," "his choice of unusual psychological subjects," "his passionate psychology," or "Barnard is at times so subtly psychologic."¹⁰¹ This rhetoric signals Barnard's Symbolist turn towards interiority even while the human body—its exterior form—made up his visual vocabulary.

However, Rodin did not carve in wood. The Symbolist to do that was Gauguin, drawn to a material that, as June Hargrove has remarked, was "unfettered by tradition," as "it had rarely been used outside of the crafts in France since the Middle Ages."¹⁰² Rodin's and Gauguin's sculptures were juxtaposed in Stéphane Mallarmé's apartment, where Camille Mauclair observed two pieces on the dresser.¹⁰³ One, by Rodin, treated a nymph seized by a faun, probably *The Minotaur* (modeled ca. 1885), the sexual dynamic of which reminds one of the lechery attached to characters such as fauns, nymphs, and satyrs (Fig. 31).¹⁰⁴ Barnard's *Pan*, who shares with Rodin's character the full beard and animal ears, is also a part of this trope. The other sculpture on Mallarmé's dresser was *L'Après-midi d'un faun* (*The Afternoon of*

¹⁰⁰ Rodin showed his piece, later removed from the *Gates of Hell*, independently as *Woman and Love*.

¹⁰¹ William A. Coffin, "A New American Sculptor: George Grey Barnard," *Century Magazine* 53, no. 6 (April 1897): 882; *Post*, Chicago, April 3, 1897, clipping, Box 7, Folder 14, Frame 5, Barnard Papers; Charles de Kay, "Barnard Pan for Central Park," *Art Interchange* 41 (July 1898), clipping, Box 7, Folder 14, Frame 15, Barnard Papers; and *Sun*, New York, November 15, 1908.

¹⁰² June Hargrove, "Against the Grain: The Sculpture of Paul Gauguin in the Context of his Contemporaries," *Current Issues in 19th-Century Art*, Van Gogh Studies 1, ed. Chris Stolwijk (Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum/Waanders Publishers, 2007), 75.

¹⁰³ Gamboni 2013, 193.

¹⁰⁴ See Ruth Butler, *Rodin: The Shape of Genius* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 531n29.

a Faun) (ca. 1892) by Gauguin, again underscoring this thematic (Fig. 32).¹⁰⁵

Gauguin's work takes the basic shape of a log, or branch segment, around which he carved in low relief, responding to the variations of the natural material. The cylindrical shape is derived from the lingam of Hindu tradition.¹⁰⁶ Wood was associated for Gauguin with seafaring, Marquesan carving, and—for their bas-reliefs—ancient Peruvian art.¹⁰⁷ Dario Gamboni has also pointed out the very character of wood as living thing.¹⁰⁸ In a sense, Barnard's *Norwegian Clock* collapses two very different Symbolist expressions—Rodin's forms with one of Gauguin's signature materials.¹⁰⁹ While Gauguin fantasized of “liv[ing] in the woods sculpting imaginary beings on trees,”¹¹⁰ Barnard restaged the form of a tree itself in his construction of the *Norwegian Clock*. He completed a basic structure of a lengthy trunk with a hint of roots in the expansion of the form at the bottom, presumably, in part, for stability. Though now displayed horizontally, the clock was intended to be shown upright (Fig. 33). Barnard imitated tree hollows, which naturally evolve in aged trees and serve to shelter animal life (see Fig. 21). Barnard detailed the clock's upper regions with foliage. Additionally, the grain of the wood Barnard used shows

¹⁰⁵ Whether or not Barnard saw them, Durand-Ruel Gallery had shown wood sculptures by Gauguin in 1893, while Barnard was still in Paris. See Gloria Groom, “Chronology: August 1893-June 1895,” in *The Art of Paul Gauguin*, Richard Brettell et al. (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1988, exh. cat.), 291-292. Given the timing of his association with Mallarmé, American critic Sadakichi Hartmann may have seen the Rodin and Gauguin works side by side as Maclair had.

¹⁰⁶ Hargrove, 93.

¹⁰⁷ Gamboni, 189.

¹⁰⁸ Gamboni, 190. He notes the anthropomorphism of the term vein, as it refers to wood's grain pattern (or leaf structures) as it does the tubular conduits of human blood.

¹⁰⁹ It may also not have escaped Barnard's attention that the man often understood as America's “first” sculptor, William Rush, carved in wood, specializing in figureheads for ships.

¹¹⁰ Gauguin to Émile Schuffenecker from Pont-Aven, quoted in Gamboni, 193.

through, the topographic effect of its patterning reinforcing the muscular curvature of Barnard's figures (see Fig. 20).

Sadakichi Hartmann, a visitor to Mallarmé apartment, later saw Barnard at work on the *Norwegian Clock*, then identified as a stove. Writing in January 1898, he underscored Rodin's influence and the Symbolist impulse Barnard displayed:

His New York exhibition, some twelve months ago, at the Logerot, showed that he is a man of ideas—strongly influenced by Rodin—who tries himself in delicate symbolism as well as grotesque brutality. I saw him in his studio modelling on a stove what was the most remarkable piece of condensed symbolism that I have as yet seen. He endeavored to depict the entire Scandinavian mythology on this one stove; in particular I remember a witch who had no face at all, as it was represented simply by a deep hole in a headgear of drapery.¹¹¹

Hartmann's assessment underscores Barnard's Symbolist impulse as it coalesced in what is now known as the *Norwegian Clock*, "the most remarkable piece of condensed symbolism." In calling Barnard a "man of ideas," Hartmann engaged Jean Moréas, Albert Aurier, and other French Symbolist theorists' notion of art's highest purpose. Though the passage ("a witch") Hartmann describes may not have come to fruition in the final form of the clock, the faceless woman ensconced in drapery is a vivid, haunting image, a variation of which appears in Barnard's later *Urn of Life*.

There was a suggestion in the press that the *Norwegian Clock* originated as a commission for the stove of a Norwegian clubhouse.¹¹² That commission apparently evaporated, because Barnard shifted the design from a stove to a clock and sought for

¹¹¹ Sadakichi Hartmann, "Art Talk," *The Criterion* (January 15, 1898): 14 in Jane Calhoun Weaver, *Sadakichi Hartmann: Critical Modernist* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 289.

¹¹² "Un grand club de Norvege," according to Thiebault-Sisson.

decades to find an independent buyer.¹¹³ By May 1898, Barnard called it “the stove (decorative) I am doing as a large clock.”¹¹⁴ In 1900, the journal *Brush and Pencil* declared that the more than twelve-foot high by four-foot wide *Norwegian Clock* was recently finished, carved in American oak.¹¹⁵

The clock reaches a substantial height, as we can see in photographs with Barnard’s own body for comparison (see Fig. 10). Its size is especially impressive, because Barnard carved it himself. The clock’s shadowy form (Taft called the silhouette of the clock “almost Japanese in its capricious outline”¹¹⁶) looms in the back left corner of one of Barnard’s model studies photographs (Fig. 34).¹¹⁷ There are at least a dozen human figures included in the *Norwegian Clock* composition. Barnard made them at disjointed scales, some large, some small, some merely heads, and some, such as the family group at center, arranged in semi-contained vignettes (see Fig. 35).

The body of a serpent binds the composition together. Its twisted coils are punctuated at moments with ribbed, flared-out fins. The serpent’s gaping, coy-like mouth appears one-third of the way up (Fig. 36). The base of the clock reflects its origins as a stove. Two trunk-like legs frame an opening (Fig. 37). Barnard’s carving takes on a streaming quality as it ascends upwards in undulating paths. Scaly fish or

¹¹³ In his correspondence, Barnard suggests various possible buyers with histories of Gilded Age patronage—the Clarks, Carnegie, Carnegie’s architect, and Vanderbilt. The price he wants fluctuates from \$13,000-20,000.

¹¹⁴ Barnard to parents, May 5, 1898, Williams Papers.

¹¹⁵ “Art Notes,” *Brush and Pencil* 6, no. 3 (July 1900): 3. In the archived correspondence in the Williams Papers and Dickson/Barnard Papers, Barnard makes references to the clock being in porcelain and colored, but this version does not seem to have materialized.

¹¹⁶ Taft 1903, 365.

¹¹⁷ This image also shows the role of photography in Barnard’s practice.

snakeskin flashes onto the surface at points. The overall effect is swirling, writhing, and active. About halfway up the *Norwegian Clock*, two figures pop out at a ninety-degree angle from the surface (Fig. 38). One face lifts its chin to the viewer, an expression of alarm in its eyes. Barnard sandwiched it against another human form whose arms enwrap it—a detail recalling *Ugolino* from the *Gates of Hell* (Fig. 39).

At top, there is a circular opening for a clock face (Fig. 40). One was inserted at least for exhibition in the 1960s (see Fig. 33). This opening is flanked to the left by a female nude, which Barnard also exhibited and sold independently in marble as *Maiden with Lily* (Figs. 41-42). Her torso twists out and to the left. In the marble, she grabs a twisted strand of her hair and bashfully gazes downward. The impression of this gaze changes when she is perched at the very top left of the composition, above orderly leafy garlands and amidst budding vines or branches, looking downward on the tumultuous buildup of forms below.

Earlier iterations of Barnard's work show a more exuberant intention for the upper regions of the clock (Fig. 43). Early photographs of the work-in-process—one showing it in a reduced plaster and full-scale clay model—show the ensemble sprouting wings (Fig. 44).¹¹⁸ A photograph in his papers has added black media, which smooths the edges in the image (Fig. 45). Ultimately Barnard cropped the *Clock's* top at a straight right angle.

Barnard used wood despite admitting to struggling with it. In the 1890s, Barnard felt comfortable carving marble. He expressed his confidence: "I handle my

¹¹⁸ The small version may capture the *Norwegian Clock* in wax rather than plaster. Barnard to Edna Barnard, [?] 28, 1894, Dickson/Barnard Papers, wrote that he had received wax for the (then) stove from Paris.

marble as easily as clay now.”¹¹⁹ Wood carving, by contrast, he found much more challenging: “Hard work the wood splits half inch wide in many places from end to end.”¹²⁰ Cracks are visible today running vertically across the piece. Barnard placed a relatively high price on the clock, taking into consideration his time and effort: “It has cost me 2 years of trial and tribulation, carving and modeling together. . . . I want 15 or \$20,000 and I think I will get it.”¹²¹ Even though he developed elements of *Norwegian Clock* separately in marble, he admitted that in this case, marble was less authentic to his purpose: “They were after the two North Gods with midgard serpent that were modelled for [the] stove. And never intended for marble but here they are in it.”¹²²

Barnard was eager to draw from various, deep traditions, reinterpreting them in personal ways with a language of human forms creatively pieced together. Barnard could have accessed many publications outlining Norse mythology and cosmology or heard stories retold by his patron Clark, who visited Norway regularly and had a deep connection to the region.¹²³ Barnard likely received from Clark a copy of Thomas Carlyle’s *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (1841).¹²⁴ This publication consists of a series of lectures, transposed into book form, supporting

¹¹⁹ Barnard to parents, December 1, [1892], Williams Papers.

¹²⁰ Barnard to parents, May 5, 1898, Williams Papers. He assures them that the splits can be patched.

¹²¹ Barnard to [?], [1898?], Williams Papers.

¹²² Barnard to parents, October 8, 1892, Williams Papers.

¹²³ English-language publications include George Webbe Dasent, trans., *The Prose or Younger Edda Commonly Ascribed to Snorri Sturluson* (Stockholm: Norstedt and Sons, 1842) and Rasmus Björn Anderson, *The Younger Edda: also called Snorre’s Edda, or the Prose Edda* (Chicago: S. C. Griggs, 1880).

¹²⁴ Harold E. Dickson, “Barnard and Norway,” *Art Bulletin* 44, no. 1 (March 1962): 56.

Carlyle's Great Man theory of historical development.¹²⁵ A central theme of Carlyle's work, the mythological tree Igdrasil (more commonly spelled Yggdrasil), helps explain Barnard's deliberate use of material in *Norwegian Clock*. Carlyle valorized Norse mythology.¹²⁶ Carlyle opined, "I think Scandinavian Paganism, to us here, is more interesting than any other. It is, for one thing, the latest; it continued in these regions of Europe till the eleventh century: eight-hundred years ago Norwegians were still worshippers of Odin."¹²⁷ In this assessment, Carlyle places Norway as the stronghold of the Scandinavian mythic tradition, which could have further legitimized this geographical and cultural area for Barnard. Barnard was already familiar with and admiring of Norway thanks to his patron's attachment to the region, and because of the trip he made to Langesund, south of Oslo, for the installation of his *Brotherly Love* in 1886.

Carlyle described the great tree, which he calls "Igdrasil, the Ash-tree of Existence."¹²⁸ "It has its roots deep-down in the kingdoms of Hela or Death; its trunk reaches up heaven high, spreads its boughs over the whole Universe: it is the Tree of Existence."¹²⁹ Later in the lecture, Carlyle discussed the development of Norse religion as an ever growing "Banyan-tree; the first *seed* is the essential thing."¹³⁰

¹²⁵ There are parallels in this historical understanding, focused around the "great" individuals who transform the course of history, and the special power attributed by Carlyle and those influenced by him to the artist, gifted with the ability to see into the Idea behind or beyond material form.

¹²⁶ There is a question of terminology that is considered in Andrew Wawn, *The Vikings and the Victorians: Inventing the Old North in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2002), 3-5. Barnard himself referred to "Norseman" and "Norwegian," perhaps giving pride of place to the Norwegian manifestation of Viking culture.

¹²⁷ Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*, ed. Archibald MacMechan (1841; Boston: Ginn, 1901), 18.

¹²⁸ Carlyle, 23.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 38.

Barnard also envisioned a seed, a “great seed of human strength comes as well from the flower of all ages.”¹³¹ Barnard read widely and syncretically. He wrote home enthusiastically about his growing library—these diverse books, his letter says, are the flowers providing seed—“You should glance over my library now . . . Indian poetry by Arnold¹³²—Japanese classic poetry by Chamberlain¹³³—History of Religion—History of Egypt—‘Sharpe’¹³⁴ . . . ‘History of Savonarola and his Times’ by Villari.”¹³⁵ In another letter, he recounts at length a Scandinavian legend of the afterlife.¹³⁶ Barnard’s reflection on the working process underscores the meaningfulness of wood in its parallels with the Norse tree of life and his own, personal growth: “My mythological stove is [maturing?] slowly—like the tree—and like I.”¹³⁷

In the sermons of his father, the Reverend Joseph H. Barnard, we find a religious philosophy sympathetic to Barnard’s wide-ranging interests. Joseph Barnard reflected upon the appearance of tree of life imagery cross-culturally: “Arabic, Indian, Persian, Assyrian, Babylonian, and Grecian tradition all have some reference to, and preserve some remembrance of the trees of life.”¹³⁸ The same sermon considers the role of the serpent in the biblical tree of life story: “along with this [the tree], the

¹³¹ Barnard to parents (“Dear Ones”) from Paris, August 6, [1891?], Williams Papers.

¹³² In reference to Sir Edwin Arnold, *Indian Poetry: containing ‘The Indian song of songs,’ from the Sanskrit of the Gīta Govinda of Jayadeva; Two books from ‘The Iliad of India’ (Mahābhārata), ‘Proverbial wisdom’ from The Shlokas of the Hitopadeśa, and other oriental poems* (London: Trübner, 1884).

¹³³ In reference to Basil Hall Chamberlain, *The Classical Poetry of the Japanese* (London, Trübner, 1880).

¹³⁴ In reference to one of Samuel Sharpe’s volumes on the history of Egypt.

¹³⁵ In reference to Pasquale Villari. Barnard to parents from Paris, August 6, [1891?], Williams Papers.

¹³⁶ Barnard to family from Paris, January 20, 1890, Williams Papers.

¹³⁷ Barnard to parents, August 6, [1891], Williams Papers.

¹³⁸ Joseph H. Barnard sermon no. 2103, Madison, October 26, 1907, Box 2, Barnard Papers.

promised crushing of the serpent and future deliverance of the race are perpetuated in the traditions of mankind, in ancient Roman bas-relief, in Phoenician vase, in the Scandinavian legend of Thor, in the Hindoo figure of Krishna, in the tree on the Babylonian cylinder.”¹³⁹ Trees, and wood (especially when carved into a tree-like form), thus had resonance both within and beyond the Scandinavian tradition, and the material would have had a clear draw to Barnard, whose religious and cultural curiosities were wide-ranging and intense.¹⁴⁰ That the announcement of the *Norwegian Clock*’s completion in *Brush and Pencil* specified that Barnard employed American oak introduces the national resonances of the material alongside the international and transhistorical ones.

Carlyle’s poeticizing of light and dark in *On Heroes* must also have been compelling to Barnard, who saw the promise and value of darkness. Before his artistic debut, Barnard wrote to his family, “You all probably look forward to prize trials, etc. . . . I leave that for those who look at daylight – while I wander in such deep darkness yet always growing sight as I do – and where those used to daylight (i.e. that that kills imagination and poetry) would blind at first step.”¹⁴¹ Barnard thus associated darkness with the potential for deep creativity and development as an artist. Carlyle described a “light, kindled in the great dark vortex of the Norse mind, dark but living, waiting only for light; this is to me the centre of the whole.”¹⁴² He

¹³⁹ No. 2103, Madison, October 26, 1907, Barnard Papers. Despite this inclusivity, he valorizes the Judeo-Christian, biblical story as the “parent story.”

¹⁴⁰ As part of the *Monument to Democracy*, Barnard would go on to design a gigantic element of the work called *The Tree of Life*. See Hack, 195, 297-301 for a description of Barnard’s vision. Barnard’s later plans for the *Monument to Democracy* would also include a component called the *Tree of Life*.

¹⁴¹ Barnard to parents, April 9, 1884, Williams Papers, Box 2.

¹⁴² Carlyle, 30.

returned to this idea, “I called it [Odin’s message] a small light shining and shaping in the huge vortex of Norse darkness. Yet the darkness itself was *alive*; consider that.”¹⁴³ For Barnard, and for Carlyle, life—creation, spiritual mission, light itself—inhered in darkness.

For Barnard, the forms he sculpted emerged from the dark. This was part of his working process when modeling *The Struggle of the Two Natures in Man*. Carving in the richly colored oak wood of *Norwegian Clock* must have furthered this sense of bringing light out of darkness. In carving contours and polishing the wood, Barnard created opportunity for light to dance around and bounce off the material’s increasingly multifaceted and reflective surface. The surface patterning of Barnard’s *Norwegian Clock* suggests a Carlylean “vortex” with its swirling textures and projections.

The fullest description of the *Clock*’s iconography comes from a 1902 review in the *Boston Sunday Herald*:

In this clock life is represented by the giant tree of Norse mythology, with roots running down into primal matter and signifying the origin of life there. Then the huge Mitgard serpent, shown struggling in the ocean of chaos, winding in and out, represents force and resistance developing from inert matter. Man, struggling with the serpent represents human nature in its conflict with natural forces.

One of the groups that tell the story of the work represents ‘Life Overcome by Death,’ an old woman, with spreading garment, overpowering a strong man, lying prostrate [Fig. 38?]. Another group shows the three gods of creation: one reaches aimlessly out toward a bit of drift carried by the tide; the second has taken it and breathes life into it; the third speaks to it, and endows it with soul [Fig. 46]. The two sources of nature in the sexes are represented by the male and female figures merging from the sea, each holding up an urn from which the water of life flows back into the ocean of existence whence it came [Figs. 25 and 29].

¹⁴³ Carlyle, 38.

Various other figures poetically express with remarkable beauty and power a rich significance. The central feature of the whole scheme is a group typical of human love—a man and woman joined in tender regard of a baby held in the woman’s arms [Fig. 35].¹⁴⁴

Despite the commentator’s relatively specific reading of the various elements in the *Norwegian Clock*, they ultimately find that “this work stands in a remarkable degree for the universality of artistic conceptions that characterize the sculptor’s activities.”¹⁴⁵ This universality stems from the breadth of major themes that *Norwegian Clock* addresses—creation, struggle, love, procreation, family bonds, and death. This universality does indeed define Barnard’s ambitions. But his relying on culturally specific content (here the Scandinavian sagas, at least elements of them), reveals a contradiction that exists at the core of Symbolist art. Symbolist art’s frequently universal ambitions are inevitably imbricated in historical and cultural specificities, even when those ambitions are less obviously connected to a particular source than they are in the *Norwegian Clock*.

A curious aspect in *Norwegian Clock* is the naming of a central element of Barnard’s composition as “Hidhoegur”—the mythical serpent usually known as Jörmungandr, the Midgard serpent, or the World serpent, as Carlyle called him.¹⁴⁶ Barnard himself called it the “midgard serpent” in an 1892 letter.¹⁴⁷ The earliest use of the name Hidhoegur seems to be by Thiebault-Sisson, who wrote of “the watery

¹⁴⁴ “[Illeg.] in Charge,” *Sunday Herald*, Boston, July 20, 1902, clipping, Box 7, Folder 15, Frame 25, Barnard Papers.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ See John Lindow, *Norse Mythology: A Guide to Gods, Rituals, and Beliefs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 229-230 and Carlyle, *On Heroes*, 44-45.

¹⁴⁷ Barnard to family, October 8, 1892, Williams Papers.

element, typified by the formidable serpent Hidhœgur.”¹⁴⁸ This appellation is picked up in much, but not all, of the following literature, including Barnard’s own entries to the 1896 Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and solo exhibition at New York’s Logerot Garden.¹⁴⁹ However this process unfolded, the unique naming emphasizes the subjectivity and individuality of Barnard’s vision even if applied to a topic with its own conventions and terminology.

The *Sunday Herald*’s commentary on the *Norwegian Clock* also underscored the matter of matter in the work. What can be called background of the clock is at once the giant tree of Norse mythology, ocean, chaos, inert matter, natural forces, or “the spirit of life itself.”¹⁵⁰ In other passages of the wood, the background flows into and out of hair, cloth, or gnarled root. The three gods of creation, and their process of breathing life into driftwood, echoes the tripartite structure of Barnard’s description of the movement between clay, plaster, and marble. It also highlights the creative,

¹⁴⁸ “L’élément humide figuré par le redoutable serpent Hidhœgur.” Thiebault-Sisson, “Le Salon du Champ-de-Mars, la sculpture,” *Le Temps*, May 7, 1894, trans. Henry Hovelaque, Box 7, Folder 14, Frame 82, Barnard Papers. Thiebault-Sisson was translated in “Current News of the Fine Arts,” *New York Times*, June 24, 1894, 19, <https://nyti.ms/2MXlmNE>: “The pieces in which he expresses this struggle belong to a chimney piece destined for a large club in Norway. It is an order; but it is not yet entirely finished. On each piece of the solid rock which in its ultimate arrangement will make a homogenous ensemble, is marked one of the episodes of the war that man, in the old Scandinavian sagas, sustains against the forces of the heavens and earth. He struggles in the two morceaux that we see, against the humid element represented by the redoubtable serpent Hidhœgur, and the struggle at its paroxysm is tragic, for the man is only half cut out from the marble, and is bound up in the coils of the serpent.”

¹⁴⁹ At the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, *Catalogue of the Sixty-Sixth Annual Exhibition* (Philadelphia: 1896), they are called “Fragment of Unfinished Norwegian Stove: Primitive man struggling with the serpent Hidhœgur: a Scandinavian myth,” and “Another Fragment from Stove.” At Logerot Garden it was exhibited with the same title, *Catalogue of the Sculpture of George Grey Barnard Exhibited at the Salon, Camp de Mars, Paris, 1894* (New York City: Logerot Garden, [1896]), Box 7, Folder 26, Frame 14, Barnard Papers.

¹⁵⁰ Laurvik, xlii.

nearly divine potential he projected onto the sculptor as the one who takes the materials of nature and fashions them into something meaningful.

In the mid-1890s, years before the clock as a whole was completed, Barnard was already exhibiting the “fragments” of the work in marble. He also showed photographs of the unfinished whole at his 1896 solo exhibition in New York City.¹⁵¹ By exhibiting photographs alongside three-dimensional works, Barnard enabled a dialogue between media that allowed viewers to conceptualize the interrelationship of parts to whole, or at least to grasp at the overall scheme. With photographs of the unfinished object, he also forthrightly acknowledged the working process of sculpture. In the 1894 Camps-de-Mars Salons, he exhibited two objects that he identified as fragments.¹⁵² Casually, in correspondence, he referred to these as his “two Thors” in marble.¹⁵³ They were also known as *Man Struggling with Chaos*.¹⁵⁴

Barnard integrated these two Thor fragments into the clock, one on the bottom left side and one on the bottom right side, across from each other and just above the clock’s base. Both figures are powerfully muscled. The overall impression of the figure that appears on the right in the clock is of immense bodily strain (Fig. 47). Barnard articulated tension in the figure’s extended neck with sinewy stretched

¹⁵¹ As “views of unfinished Norwegian stove (Scandinavian myths)” at Logerot Gardens, see catalog, Box 7, Folder 26, Frame 15, Barnard Papers.

¹⁵² At the Champs-de-Mars Salon, Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, *Catalogue illustré des ouvrages de peinture, sculpture et gravure* (Paris: A. Lemerancier et Cie, 1894), 43, the two *Norwegian Clock*-derived fragments are each listed as “Fragment of stove, statue in marble” (Fragment de cheminée; statue en marbre).

¹⁵³ Barnard to parents, December 1, 1892, Williams Papers: “my two Thors finished in marble, will send you casts if possible and photos immediately.”

¹⁵⁴ Shown as “Two Groups—Man Struggling with Chaos. Details from clock design. (1886-1887.) Lent by Dr. Emory Holman” in 1908 at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. See pamphlet, *Museum of Fine Arts Boston: Exhibition of Sculpture by George Grey Barnard* (Boston: October 1908), Box 7, Folder 26, Frame 2, Barnard Papers. He appears to have dated these works earlier than he physically actualized them.

tendons beneath the chin. An unruly lock of waved hair on this figure's head gives the impression of a faunlike ear. Barnard wrapped the figure's body up, into the horned tendrils of the serpent. They twist around the man's body in an X-like format, phallically unleashed, it seems, from a bubbling wave that Barnard positioned between the man's thighs. In this marble fragment, the figure's body descends into the stone itself. His left arm seems bound by the stone, a clenched fist just managing to unpin and free itself from the weighty mass. This fragment is an example of Barnard's *non-finito* technique. The figure is well-defined, but he emerges only partly from a roughly triangular block that features the irregular, raw outlines and edges of a stone just quarried and various chisel or pick-mark patterns, some thin and regular, some thicker and more widely disbursed, that together suggest a state of unfinish (Fig. 48).

The Thor figure on the left of Barnard's overall clock composition is modeled differently, more overtaken by the marble mass, its limbs more fully contained (Fig. 49). Its face is obscured, as Barnard turned his entire torso into the block. The Michelangesque muscular emphasis is on the figure's expansive back. Barnard carved a root, or part of the snake, wrapping around this Thor's ankle.

In its torsion and submersion, this figure calls to mind the left figure in Barnard's *Brotherly Love* (Fig. 50). Commissioned by Alfred Corning Clark, Barnard designed *Brotherly Love* as a grave memorial for the singer Lorenz Severin Skougard, and it still stands as such in Langesund cemetery, in Norway. The *Norwegian Clock* fragment is even more reminiscent of later, bronze castings of *Brotherly Love* where the relationship of matter and body has changed, abstract mass

further overtaking the figures and filling in the crevices of what had been in the Langesund version, negative space (Fig. 51).

Barnard carved two nude male figures flanking a tombstone, their concave bodies facing inward. One leans slightly towards the front and the other towards the back, but both of their spines hunch over the sides of the tombstone with their faces averted. On each, the foot closer to the back is firmly planted, and the other counterbalances the figure's weight onto its toes. Their bent front legs face each other's in nearly symmetrical fashion. Their knees do not touch. Their hands, though, engage, in a highly posed and dramatic fashion. The left figure bends his right wrist and cups that hand, back towards his head, into a C shape. The length of his thumb is met by the length of thumb of the man to the right, whose forearm emerges, or seems to have passed through, the stone tomb. This man's pointer figure extends downward, creating an L-shape. Atop, the left arm of the figure on the left is uplifted and his thumb descends upon the elbow of his companion, whose left arm rests against the top of the tomb.

Barnard's "Norwegian" work, inclusive of *Brotherly Love* and the *Norwegian Clock*,¹⁵⁵ has a relationship with medieval Scandinavian art. One can see in Barnard's interweaving of *Brotherly Love*'s arms and hands something of the complex interlacing of medieval Scandinavian carving, which was also experiencing a revival in this moment in the form of Dragestil, or Dragon-style, architecture of the late nineteenth-century in Norway.¹⁵⁶ An 1897 article, "Early Scandinavian Carving"

¹⁵⁵ Dickson 1962, 55 suggests that one could call this "a Scandinavian 'period'" for Barnard.

¹⁵⁶ Dragestil drew from the carved portals and architectural elements of medieval, wooden stave churches, renowned for their interlaced carving style. It came out of the preservation of such churches and the discovery and excavation of Viking ships. Barnard himself pursued the

notes “the looped hands which characterize the art of this period.”¹⁵⁷ *Brotherly Love* simplifies the looped hands convention dramatically, but an introduction of Scandinavian sources here can help situate part of the meaning of *Brotherly Love* and the later *Norwegian Clock*. The same article discussing “looped hands” also discussed the geographical and practical reasons that made “the inhabitants of Norway expert wood carvers.”¹⁵⁸

American sculptor John Rogers’s contemporaneous *Landing of the Norseman* (1893) illustrates the appeal of Norse subject matter in the United States (Fig. 52).¹⁵⁹ The traditionally heroic presentation and balance of Rogers’s historically clad, upright figures—Viking discoverers of North America—literally and clearly described, puts the inventiveness of Barnard’s composition into relief. Barnard was not concerned with the nineteenth-century style of American genre sculpture exemplified by Rogers. His concerns resonated instead with the style of medieval Scandinavian art, an expression of masterly carving showcasing tight patterning

acquisition, probably for his own reference, of a plaster cast of the golden-painted wooden altar from the Danish Lisbjerg church. This is discussed in a letter from A. B. Skinner [likely Arthur Banks Skinner of the Victoria and Albert Museum] to Barnard, May 22, 1894, Box 9, Dickson/Barnard Papers: “I send you a list of most of the reproduction detailed by you, in which you will find both their prices and the address from which each of them can be obtained. . . . The Altar from the Church of Lisbjerg, Jutland was bought from the Museum of Antiquities, Copenhagen, but I cannot give you the price.” That Barnard would have admired such work is unsurprising. From his earliest days abroad, he was impressed by medieval sculpture and architecture, and the craftsmanship involved in its production. This altar was carved in oak, covered with gilded copper.

¹⁵⁷ J. Romilly Allen, “Early Scandinavian Wood-Carvings,” *The International Studio* 1, no. 1 (March 1897): 13-14. Allen, a British archeologist, also puts forth a troubling, racialized proposition in this article, suggesting that British artists seek inspiration in Scandinavian sources rather than Indian and Japanese ones, because they are more likely to be descended—and thus somehow racially attuned—to the north (11-12).

¹⁵⁸ Allen, 12.

¹⁵⁹ Such subject matter’s may well have participated in the formulation of a national, American identity story privileging whiteness, as one might surmise from Allen (see n157).

without precise symmetry, and he was interested in the material—wood—of such historical and mysterious (in their anonymous mastery) artistic expressions.

Barnard's foray into this relatively unconventional media¹⁶⁰ shows a purposeful engagement with the dynamics and challenges of material, which—especially combined with the subject matter—is a choice that makes clear an interest in the dynamism between the material and immaterial at the heart of Symbolism.

Urn of Life

While working on the *Norwegian Clock*, Barnard began another multi-figure composition, the *Urn of Life* (Fig. 53). Like the *Norwegian Clock*, the *Urn of Life* exists in different iterations and became the source from which Barnard developed independent works as well. In the *Urn*, Barnard revisited the family grouping from the *Norwegian Clock* (Fig. 54). It is not a precise duplication, but a refiguring of the earlier composition. Of the *Urn*'s twenty figures, organized into seven scenes, it is those vignettes that Barnard developed separately that my descriptions and analysis dwell upon most heavily. Barnard was sensitive to the financial necessity of producing work at desirable sizes for private patrons. By the works' exhibition in 1908 at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, two of the four "details" from the *Urn of Life* were already in private collections.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ Only later would a movement of American direct carvers really embrace wood for avant-garde purposes. See Karen Lemmey, "The Soul of Things—Direct Carving in American Art," lecture at the Art Institute of Chicago, February 19, 2015, <https://www.terraamericanart.org/what-we-offer/american-art-resources/the-soul-of-things-direct-carving-in-american-art-by-karen-lemmey/>.

¹⁶¹ These were *Solitude* (lent by J. Randolph Coolidge, Jr., Esq.) and *The Dying Poet* (lent by A.M. Barnhart, Esq.) See the catalog facsimile in Dickson 1964, 24. The other "details" on view were *The Visitation* and *Family Group*.

Barnard sold the *Urn of Life* to the Carnegie Museum of Art in 1919. An archival photograph shows the *Urn of Life* placed prominently in the museum's Grand Staircase (Fig. 55).¹⁶² By 2012, the *Urn of Life* had dulled and grayed with years of dust and sooty buildup (Fig. 56).¹⁶³ A team of the museum's conservators cleaned the *Urn of Life*, restoring its original white, Carrara marble surface.¹⁶⁴ It is a rather pristine (tight grained with small crystals), luminescent material, with some gray coloring.

The *Urn of Life* has a composition that is more regimented and organized than the *Norwegian Clock*, compared to which it is also stouter and more condensed. Idealized figures appear around the circumference of the *Urn*. The figures range in age from newborn baby to elderly, and their scale is consistent, relative to age, across the vignettes. Barnard communicated maturity through various signifiers: size; tautness of skin and musculature; and, for the male figures, facial hair. Barnard paired male and female figures in most groupings, reiterating standard ideas about heterosexual unions and normative family structures. Barnard defined clusters of figures by using their gestures, pose, and touch, connecting and demarcating these

¹⁶² They are under soaring passages of the mural *The Apotheosis of Labor* (1905-1908) by John White Alexander. His murals have some of the same angelic content as Barnard's *Urn*, but flying upwards, the angelic forms put into relief the heaviness, denseness, and solidity of the *Urn*'s overall shape. An echo of Barnard's *Urn* is manifested in the Grecian urn silhouetted in a gallery to the top right corner of the photograph.

¹⁶³ Michael Belman, "Restoring the Urn of Life," CMOA Blog, November 26, 2012, <http://oldblog.cmoa.org/2012/11/restoring-the-urn-of-life-2/>.

¹⁶⁴ Their process for restoration included vacuuming and a cleaning solution. The museum had inquired about recommended cleaning procedures for the *Urn* soon after they acquired it. Responding to the Carnegie Museum's inquiry, Barnard's secretary (by then he was an established professional) explains that Barnard referred her to his "workman" Aristide Jardella, who advised that "it is never wise to use soap of any kind, as it leaves grease and streaks. He uses only marble powder, rubbed on the statues with a damp sponge. He says this marble powder can be purchased at marble works or where cement work is done." Anna R. Palmer to John W. Beatty, January 5, 1920, Box 15, Carnegie Museum Papers.

smaller ensembles within the overall composition.¹⁶⁵ Barnard employed space and roughly textured marble passages to mark boundaries between and the transition from one scene to another across the *Urn*'s surface. The figures themselves are smoothly modeled, completed with a high degree of finish. There is a sense of chronological procession as one circles around the *Urn*, moving from a scene about birth (known, separately, as *The Visitation*) to a scene about death, but there is also an infinite cyclicity inherent to the overall spherical loop.

The *Urn of Life* is also many times smaller than the monumentally sized Pennsylvania Capitol sculpture, which Barnard started to work on during the extended period of time he was also working on the *Urn of Life*, but he found that the urn showed some of his early ideas about the larger program for Harrisburg at a more intimate and museum scale.¹⁶⁶ The *Urn of Life* is of great interest here because it “epitomized the sculptor’s commitment to exploring elusive themes and couching them in mysterious visual terms.”¹⁶⁷ In other words, it confirms Barnard’s Symbolist impulse and elaborates on the defining moments of human life and psychic concerns with which he was enthralled.

¹⁶⁵ In the family group, for example, the man and woman stand closely side by side. The father’s arm wraps around the far side of the mother’s head. Their heads are brought together, and their bodies merge at the shoulders. The man also scoops his arm under the baby that she grasps in her hands. Her hair wraps around the baby’s squirming arm.

¹⁶⁶ Barnard to John Beatty of the Carnegie Museum, March 26, 1919, Box 15, Carnegie Museum Papers: “In making the composition . . . I found the seed which, when planted, grew into the compositions known as ‘Labor’ and ‘Love’ on either side of the Capitol at Harrisburg. These little figures on your ‘Urn’ I believe will be studied in future years by students of sculpture, and found to be related closely to those figures in the Capitol group.” Again, this quote shows the resonance of tree of life imagery in how Barnard speaks of seeds and growth.

¹⁶⁷ H. Nichols B. Clark, *A Marble Quarry: The James H. Ricau Collection of Sculpture at the Chrysler Museum of Art* (New York: Hudson Hills, 1997), 254.

Critics of the era saw the *Urn of Life* as embodying and summarizing Barnard's aesthetic goals and Symbolist strivings: "He has evolved in his professional work a lofty symbolism which has reached its highest embodiment, up to this time, in the *Urn of Life* created as a memorial to the late Anton Seidl."¹⁶⁸ Its relative compactness of scale—compared to large, public sculpture for the Capitol—was not seen as a diminishing factor in the museum context. Rather, the size intensified the impact, making the *Urn of Life*'s various vignettes "not miniature medallions" but "heroic groups in miniature."¹⁶⁹ Despite not being entirely finished (a matter to be discussed below), *Urn of Life* was at the "centre of the First Picture Gallery" in Barnard's Boston show.¹⁷⁰

The *Urn of Life* was intended to hold the ashes of Anton Seidl.¹⁷¹ Much loved American-Hungarian conductor of the New York Philharmonic, Seidl was particularly celebrated for his renditions of Richard Wagner's compositions. Seidl

¹⁶⁸ Frederick W. Coburn, "The Sculpture of George Grey Barnard," *World Today* 16 (March 1909): 280.

¹⁶⁹ Knauff 1908, 691: "Though small is size, perhaps some two feet high, they [the groups of figures around the *Urn of Life*] are not miniature medallions, but they seem to be heroic groups in miniature."

¹⁷⁰ *Boston Evening Transcript*, November 4, 1908, clipping Box 15, Carnegie Museum Papers. The reviewer added that "Mr. Barnard's symbolism is sufficiently profound and touching to make it worth one's while to get into close contact with the tendency of this thought. We know of nothing more stupid and tiresome than conventional allegory in sculpture, but on the other hand there is no form more impressive than the kind of symbolism that Barnard gives us in his sculpture."

¹⁷¹ It appears that Robert Ingersoll and his daughter, Eva Brown, were involved in the commission. Barnard to parents, [1899?], Box 1, Williams Papers: "They both care to come over and see the design at the studio. Only yesterday did I find out who they were. We will see if angels please him for I have one in the sketch." This letter also discusses the potential that Robert Ogden would be able to help Barnard's father find work on the East coast. Ogden was one of Henry Ossawa Tanner's American patrons. Barnard may have been at work on the *Urn*, or its components, earlier than Seidl's death, as the 1908 exhibition dated them to 1895-1897. Certain institutions, such as the Smithsonian American Art Museum, support this dating. They date the modeling of *Mystery of Life* to 1895-1897. A more defensible dating would be the Chrysler Museum's. They date the modeling of *Solitude* to ca. 1898-1900.

also orchestrated a Norwegian Suite from a selection of Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg's "Lyric Pieces." This perhaps offered some common ground with Barnard that made the artist an attractive choice for the commission. Seidl was credited for the "domestication [in the United States] of modern music."¹⁷² According to writer Robert G. Ingersoll, whose words were read at Seidl's funeral service, the composer "spoke a language deeper, more poetic than words," and his face, while conducting, was "sculptured . . . as serene as perfect art."¹⁷³

Ingersoll pictured the composer's death, and death in general, as an oceanic transition, with Seidl having "passed from the shores of sound to the realms of silence, borne by the mysterious tide that ever ebbs but never flows."¹⁷⁴ The mysteriousness and poeticizing of death made it an attractive Symbolist theme. It also suited the period trend for "high-style funerary sculpture" that Cynthia Mills has studied.¹⁷⁵ These high-style funerary sculptures were artistic, figural grave memorials that were also exhibited, in varying forms, in museums and galleries. They softened the more frightful, traumatic, or disturbing elements of death, and, no longer relying on standard religious motifs and inscriptions, they revered the sheer mystery of the afterlife. They invited viewers to contemplate big, unanswerable questions.¹⁷⁶

Critics understood the *Urn of Life* in relation to Barnard's earlier high-style funerary work, *Brotherly Love*. Whereas "*Brotherly Love* shows that young spirit's divination of the riddle of life, the *Urn of Life* is the man's vision of the whole

¹⁷² "Anton Seidl's Funeral," *New York Times*, April 1, 1898, 7.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ From a telegram read at Seidl's funeral, quoted in "Anton Seidl's Funeral."

¹⁷⁵ Cynthia Mills, *Beyond Grief: Sculpture and Wonder in the Gilded Age Cemetery* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press, 2014), 3.

¹⁷⁶ Mills, 2.

pageant of the mystery.”¹⁷⁷ This assessment attributes to the *Urn of Life* a greater degree of maturity on the sculptor’s part. It makes the life in the urn’s title not only reference to the subject matter of the work, but to its creator’s own personal journey from youthfulness to adulthood. The same critic expressed the technical magnificence of the work: “Considered from an aesthetic standpoint, these figures have exquisite ethereal effects of light and shade—luminosities, transparencies, reliefs of dark against light—that strike one as something new in the technical use of marble.”¹⁷⁸ This praise highlights Barnard’s skill and inventiveness when it came to the material component of his work and his attention to surface effects.

In its range of themes, Barnard’s *Urn of Life* has something of the emotional magnitude and universal scope of Edvard Munch’s *Frieze of Life*.¹⁷⁹ Munch’s compilation of images, which he mostly conceived of and created in the 1890s, was exhibited in frieze-like fashion at the Berlin Secession in 1902.¹⁸⁰ In a series of paintings and prints that expanded and contracted over their exhibited iterations, Munch treated male and female relationships, the formation and dissolution of love, human solitude, illness, and death. The frieze-like Secession presentation suggested a procession. Barnard’s *Urn* is certainly different in major respects. It is three-dimensional and more concise, it grew from a commission with a practical purpose (to hold the deceased ash’s), and it is less autobiographical than Munch’s project. But its comprehensive, universal, and deeply human ambitions resonate with Munch’s

¹⁷⁷ “An American Sculptor,” *Outlook* 90 (November 28, 1908): 656.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 655-656.

¹⁷⁹ I have not yet found evidence that Barnard knew or met Munch.

¹⁸⁰ See Reinhold Heller, “Form and Formation of Edvard Munch’s *Frieze of Life*,” in *Edvard Munch: The Frieze of Life*, ed. Mara-Helen Wood (London: National Gallery Publications, distributed in North American by Harry N. Abrams Inc., New York, 1992, exh. cat.), 25-37.

great work. As the *Boston Evening Transcript* noted, “Barnard gives us in his sculpture . . . a symbolism which really deals with high and universal ideas relating to birth, life, death, and their mysteries and wonders. . . . In these qualities of feeling and thought the ‘Urn of Life’ is a particular notable and characteristic work, which embodies all that the sculptor stands for in art.”¹⁸¹

The friends of Seidl, who commissioned the urn by subscription, ultimately decided to pursue a simplified version of the work, which Barnard finished in 1905 (Fig. 57).¹⁸² This version, the one actually used as the cinerary urn and placed at the Fresh Pond Crematory and Columbarium in Queens, New York, has a sparser and more traditional formulation than the work ultimately known as the *Urn of Life*. It is a more basic, symmetrical marble urn, placed upon a granite pedestal inscribed with the names of the deceased Seidls. The urn itself is smoothly finished, and bulbous towards the top. Crests formed like abstracted, feathered angel wings spread across the base of the urn and beyond, where, on either side, they support figural groupings that Barnard developed, as well, in the fuller *Urn of Life: The Mystery of Life* and *The Dying Poet* (a.k.a. *Musician Dying*) (Figs. 58-59).¹⁸³ The attached figural groups are not as integrated into the urn shape as they are in the complete work.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ *Boston Evening Transcript*, November 4, 1908, clipping, Box 15, Carnegie Museum Papers.

¹⁸² “Urn for Seidl’s Ashes,” *New York Times*, December 29, 1905, 9. The urn was on view at the Steinway Building in New York for subscribers, friends, and former associates of the composer.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Purchased by the Carnegie Institute in 1919. It weighs over an impressive 1,650 pounds and was restored in 2012. See Belman 2012.

Mystery

One of the details, or fragments, from the *Urn of Life*—which also appears on the Seidl cinerary urn, and independently—is called *The Mystery of Life* (Fig. 60).¹⁸⁵ In it, an eerie triad is centered around a shrouded figure, with a male figure to the left and a female figure to the right. The material shimmers slightly in the smoothed areas of white marble out of which Barnard carved the independent work. Barnard clearly articulated the figures in very high relief, but they are nevertheless a piece with the stele-like slab of stone that backs them. While the figures are finely modeled with delicate features, the overall work, by contrast, has an uneven rectangular form that is roughly shaped. As with the fragments of the *Norwegian Clock*, Barnard developed his excerpts from larger works as independent pieces in this *non-finito* state and was likely looking to Rodin as the model for this working method.

In the middle of the composition, the shrouded figure faces forward, supporting an urn in the palms of its upturned hands, which emerge out of voluminous, undulating sleeves. Barnard sculpted fabric draping over the body of the figure. It ripples gently at the sleeves and then flows vertically, in two panels, below the urn and into the marble surface underfoot, just bulging out slightly before being softly subsumed into the marble mass. Delicate, linear, scratch-like markings define the direction of the flow, but Barnard sculpted the fabric smoothly at the top, just showing the subtlest wrinkles and revealing little to nothing of the human features that might reside underneath. The resultant, general blankness of the figure's face is

¹⁸⁵ It was also exhibited with the shorter title, *The Mystery* in 1913. It was not independently exhibited in the Boston, MFA show, but photographs of it at early stages had been printed in the press as early as 1902.

unsettling. It is a blankness spookily echoed by the oval shape of the urn that the figure holds out below. Even as this group exists independently, the urn references its origins—first as a cinerary urn for Seidl and then, when those commissioning the *Urn* decided on the more limited composition, as Barnard's *Urn of Life*, no longer with functional purpose.¹⁸⁶

Even though the composition winds around the *Urn of Life* circularly, *The Mystery of Life* is the center point. The overall composition of *Urn of Life* reads most symmetrically when one is oriented directly towards this group. Press described it as the “central group” as early as 1902,¹⁸⁷ but we can be even more certain of its centrality because Barnard provided a key to the *Urn of Life* and its multipart iconography. The key commences with an explanation: “The starting point is the veiled figure holding a small urn in her hands. The figure represents the Mystery of Life—a veiled Mystery.”¹⁸⁸ As with the art of Käsebier, Tanner, and Barney, veiling and mystery are interlocked and telling of a Symbolist impulse. There is an unknowability of that which is beneath the veil that makes it a highly suggestive motif.

Barnard's work dialogues with a longer tradition of veiled figures in marble, an expression of artistic virtuosity since the eighteenth century, especially in Italy. Examples are *Veiled Woman* by Antonio Corradini and *Veiled Bust* (“*Veiled Nun*”)

¹⁸⁶ Barnard to parents, December 12, 1904, Box 11, Dickson/Barnard Papers: “They would not accept entire composition on account of my great expense. I will finish the others in marble anyway to sell it ‘Urn of Life’ Barnard’s (not Seidl’s).” *New York Times*, December 29, 1905, called this small urn the figure holds a “small urn of Life.”

¹⁸⁷ Thaw 1902, 2842.

¹⁸⁸ “The Urn of Life by George Grey Barnard,” Box 7, Folder 26, Frame 23, Barnard Papers.

(Figs. 61-62). However, the tightly fitted and revealing veil characteristic of this type, with its folding and clinging, does not characterize Barnard's *The Mystery of Life*.

Louis-Ernest Barrias's *Nature Unveiling Herself Before Science* (1899) offers another, contemporaneous point of reference for Barnard's sculpted, veiled figure (Fig. 63).¹⁸⁹ Barrias drew on the trope of the veil of Isis. He depicted nature in the allegorical form of a beautiful woman. The title makes the allegory clear, and the work enacts a fantasy of woman as nature, making herself available to the viewer's gaze and hence to the advances of scientific progress.¹⁹⁰ While Barnard also used a veiled figure in *The Mystery of Life*, and she is gendered female in his written description, she is not revealing of herself. She, and hence the implied mystery, stay concealed.

The shape of Barnard's veiled figure also recalls draped works in the sculptor's studio. Thus, it reflects the material process and studio practice around sculpture itself. An example can be seen in the background of a study photograph from the Barnard papers (see Fig. 34). In the photograph, a cloth covered statue looks like a fully cloaked human body, and quite like the central form of *The Mystery of Life*. Such draping was for practical purposes: to keep moist a piece still in clay; or simply to protect models from the dust and debris that could be kicked up in a working space.¹⁹¹ This was certainly a conscientious part of Barnard's process.

¹⁸⁹ Hack, 99 writes that Barnard may have seen the earlier, nude (still with veil) version of Barrias's sculpture at the 1893 Salon.

¹⁹⁰ Helena Blavatsky also pulled on this trope for her Theosophical treatise, *Isis Unveiled* (1877). However, rather than science as the great render of the veil, it was her spiritual system that was the key.

¹⁹¹ Barnard to parents, September 29, [1885], Dickson/Barnard Papers, Box 7: "Mother, nightshirts have gradually gone what's left cover my large figure."

Desperate to protect his work during his lean student years, Barnard covered his clay sculpture in his own ragged sleepwear, leaving him cold in the night.¹⁹² Later, in a letter to his wife, he referenced the plaster model of *Pan* waiting “quietly under the sheet in the studio, philosopher that he is, oblivious to the good or ill said of him.”¹⁹³

Barnard continued his description of the *Urn* by naming the flowers that grow up, intertwined between the two panels of the figure’s robe and under its sleeves: “a lily which symbolizes life, and beneath it is a poppy which symbolizes death.”¹⁹⁴ Lilies are associated with the Annunciation and the Virgin Mary. Poppies, as the basis for the opium narcotic, are associated with sleep and death.¹⁹⁵ The duality created by their coexistence announces the scope of Barnard’s grand vision for the urn, one that echoes Edward Munch’s pronouncement, “Death is the birth of life.”¹⁹⁶

In his key to the iconography, Barnard then described the woman at the right of the veiled figure, who “represents woman as understanding the mystery of life better than man and through motherhood in a way that man cannot. Her attitude with her fingers to her lips, suggests inquiry with reference to this mystery. In her right hand she holds the flowers that symbolize beauty and eternity—they are falling at the feet of Death.”¹⁹⁷ This theme of woman’s sensitivity and closeness to natural cycles, life and death, is also expounded upon in the Käsebier chapter of this dissertation, in

¹⁹² “Symbolist in Stone,” 43.

¹⁹³ Barnard to Edna Barnard, n.d., [1897], Dickson/Barnard Papers, Box 10.

¹⁹⁴ “The Urn of Life by George Grey Barnard,” Box 7, Folder 26, Frame 23, Barnard Papers.

¹⁹⁵ Mills, 106-107.

¹⁹⁶ Edward Munch, *The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil*, sketchbook, MM T 2547, fol. 004-A20, Munch Museum Archives, https://www.emunch.no/TRANS_HYBRIDMM_T2547.xhtml, quoted in (epigraph) Heller, 25.

¹⁹⁷ “The Urn of Life by George Grey Barnard,” Box 7, Frames 23-24, Barnard Papers.

which I considered the photographer's work in relation to mediumship. Barnard's description registers the veiled figure not just as a representative of mystery, but of death itself. This is even clearer in images of the clay version (Fig. 64), wherein Barnard articulated the fingers of the veiled figure as bony and skeletal. This is particularly apparent when compared with the healthy, more fleshed out fingers of the woman to the right. In the carved marble, mystery/death's fingers are not so precisely defined. They are softened, smoothed out, even mitten-like. A cloaked woman as a representative of death is not unfamiliar. Daniel Chester French's *Milmore Monument*, or *The Angel of Death and the Sculptor* (1889-1893) (Fig. 65), is an important example. In this high-style funerary monument, a robed female angel of death approaches the working sculptor, gently pausing his labor.¹⁹⁸ The role of Barnard's "veiled mystery" is not quite as straightforwardly allegorical.

The nude woman in *The Mystery of Life* composition stands to the side of the veiled figure, her arm brushed up against mystery/death. Her chin is lifted, tilted slightly away from the veiled figure. The fingers she draws to her lips recall the gestures in images of *Silence* by Lucien Lévy-Dhurmer and Odilon Redon (Fig. 66).¹⁹⁹ The length of the woman's arm, with a flower loosely held in in her hand, abuts gently against the cloaked form. Her body is positioned relatively upright, if

¹⁹⁸ Mills, 104-105, relates French's depiction to a longer tradition of sometimes mass-produced cemetery angels. Another important work, sophisticated but in this vein, is Thomas Ball's Jonas Chickering Memorial (*Angel of Death Lifting a Veil from the Eyes of Faith*) (1872).

¹⁹⁹ Silence itself is a crucial Symbolist theme. See Magdalena Dabrowski, *The Symbolist Aesthetic* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1980, exh. cat.), 10: "An alternate means of reaching the spiritual was by way of silence or meditation, conveyed through representations of veiled figures or faces with eyes closed."

relaxed and in slight contrapposto. There is a gentleness to her curvaceous forms that contrasts with the man's more muscular physique.

While he would be the tallest of the group if positioned upright, the man to the left is bent over and hunched so that the crown of his head faces forward. There is torsion in his upper body and shoulders, and his pose resembles those taken by Rodin's *Shades* (Fig. 67).²⁰⁰ Barnard crossed the man's arms in front of his chest. His leading hand, palm down, seems to push into or against the form of mystery/death, perhaps in rejection of it. Barnard explained the gesture as a groping for knowledge: "The man to the left, in the midst of his labor, reaches forth in an effort to understand or touch the Mystery of Life."²⁰¹ He holds what may be a piston in his hand.²⁰² Both this man and woman, and all the figures encircling the *Urn of Life*, appear somnambulant, with closed or shaded eyes, more unconscious sleepwalkers than actively present in their poses.

Visitation

Barnard's written description of the *Urn of Life* then leads the viewer around the urn, moving leftwards through the various groupings. The next grouping, which also exists independently with the title, *The Visitation*, symbolically depicts the birth

²⁰⁰ They were depicted in Bartlett's coverage of Rodin. Truman Howe Bartlett, "The Door: VII," *American Architect and Building News* 25, no. 698 (May 11, 1889): 224.

²⁰¹ "The Urn of Life," Frame 24.

²⁰² It was identified to me as such by Joseph P. Di Troia, President of the U.S. Columbarium Co. and Fresh Pond Cemetery, e-mail, November 21, 2019. Barnard did incorporate the related, mechanical image of a gear into his sculpture for the Pan-American exhibition's Electric Tower.

of a child (Fig. 68).²⁰³ The title registers the Christian episode and its associations with fecundity and spirituality—the visitation of Mary, pregnant with Jesus, with Elizabeth, pregnant with John the Baptist. Its placement amongst the progressive vignettes in Barnard’s urn is in the spirit of a Life of Mary cycle. Barnard collected a Gothic Retable of the Virgin that takes this Life of Mary format.²⁰⁴

The mother in Barnard’s scene lies on her back, her head and shoulders propped up. A crouching man tends to her. Barnard sculpted her hands in prayer position over her chest, tilted towards her face. Barnard’s depiction of this woman recollects the thirteenth-century tomb effigy of a knight of the d’Aluye Family, which was part of Barnard’s Cloisters collection and physically central to his curation of the Cloisters sanctuary space (Fig. 69).²⁰⁵ Kneeling atop the mother, Barnard placed a winged angel carrying a bundled infant. Behind the mother, a man carves out the feathering wing of angel.

This carver is submerged, cocooned up to his torso into the marble’s mass. An envelope of stone wraps around his waist. His action—he wields a hammer and chisel—recollects Barnard’s *Hewer* and, again, the Milmore monument by French, which also captures a sculptor mid-action. In Barnard’s *The Visitation*, the sculptor carves his own angel. The carver’s presence nods to the generative roll of the artist,

²⁰³ “The Urn of Life,” Frame 24: “The Winged Angel of Life holds in her arms the bambino or child. The father kneels by the head of the mother expressing his love and sympathy by the touch of a kiss. The figure above the kneeling father represents man carving the wing of the Angel of Life.”

²⁰⁴ He sold to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. See collections page for *Retable of the Virgin* by unidentified artist, Spanish, ca. 1320, Museum of Fine Art, Boston, <https://collections.mfa.org/objects/64983>, accessed January 18, 2020.

²⁰⁵ See Harold E. Dickson, “The Origin of ‘The Cloisters,’” *Art Quarterly* 28, no. 4 (1965): 253, 255.

suggests parallels between artistic creation and life-giving birth, and reiterates traditional ideas about the generative roles of men (cultural) versus women (natural). This depiction of the sculptor also concretizes the artist's place as one who makes visible the invisible, who makes tangible (e.g. sculptures) the intangible (e.g. angel).

Critics affirmed the technical achievement represented in the *Urn*, and in this passage of the work specifically:

In these groups Mr. Barnard has utilized the technique of marble-cutting to its utmost. Michelangelo, himself, never employed the effect of reflected light more knowingly. In 'The Visitation' the man who is hewing out the angel's wing looks intently towards the marble, and at times, as the light in the room changes, his face becomes beautiful, clear-cut silhouette; at other times it is illuminated by the reflection from the white marble around it, so that it seems fairly bathed in some supernatural aureole.²⁰⁶

The ability to conjure aureoles around the figure suggests a master-level knowledge of marble's subtle reflective, textural, and even translucent properties. Even as Barnard was concerned with lofty ideas about birth and death, and about the nature of creativity, he was nevertheless attuned to the material matters of his craft.

Solitude

Continuing in the circle, Barnard's *Solitude* shows a woman and man, side-by-side, facing into the marble mass (Figs. 70-72).²⁰⁷ Their arms are upraised, held over their heads. The length of the woman's back faces out. The man is more at a profile, turned away from his partner. Barnard described the dilemma he depicted as a psychic loneliness that was inevitably basic to the human condition.: "a man and a

²⁰⁶ Knaufft 1908, 691.

²⁰⁷ Several versions of *Solitude* are known to be extant. One each is held by the Chrysler Museum of Art, the Taft Museum of Art, and the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center at Vassar College.

woman expressing the thought that while they are one in love and spirit, nevertheless they are separated souls.”²⁰⁸ According to Barnard, this passage expresses a “thought,” which is particularly significant when considering its Symbolist merits. The thought, or the idea—as profound human emotion, workings of the soul, musings of the mind, dream states, or visions—is the immateriality with which Symbolism was absorbed.

Solitude dialogues with *Brotherly Love*. In the reduction of *Brotherly Love*, matter overtakes the bodies, filling up the space between the figures’ limbs and the space between them. René Ghil, Symbolist poet and one of Mallarmé’s disciples, observed of *Brotherly Love*: “Is not this a splendid interpretation of Death—‘The life reclaimed by relentless matter—Earth.’”²⁰⁹ Again, there is the idea of an animated medium, whether it is the embodied, human forms in *Brotherly Love* or in the deathly, but nevertheless active—in its very relentless reclamation—substance of the earth as embodied in the material.²¹⁰ Other interpretations also located meaning in the materiality of the surface: “The unsculptured marble is said to typify the separation of human souls.”²¹¹ Of course, the “unsculptured” material was not untouched, but modeled to a differentiated, rougher level. Fellow sculptor Lorado Taft floated a defense of Barnard’s *non-finito* by analogy to music:

A master does not play his composition straight through, with the relentlessness of a music-box. Whether upon the organ or the block of white stone, he accentuates and shades, using on the one hand chisels and rasps and ‘points,’ as on the other stops and pedals. Furthermore, in sculpture at least,

²⁰⁸ “The Urn of Life,” Frame 24.

²⁰⁹ René Ghil, *Républicain de l’Oeust*, May 12, 1894, trans. Box 7, Folder 14, Frame 82, Barnard Papers.

²¹⁰ Ghil was responding to the marble version at view at the Salon. *Catalogue illustré* 1894, 43 lists Réduction tombeau norvégien—groupe, marbre.

²¹¹ Coburn, 280.

there is created a singular psychological impression of force and mastery where the steps of the work are boldly recorded.²¹²

Symbolist criticism constantly made parallels to music. Not only was there the potential for synesthesia (sound perceived as color), but there was an inclination away from specific subject matter and into a heavier reliance on formal, even abstract qualities. The “unsculptured” components of Barnard’s composition are aligned with Symbolist thought, and—in Taft’s explanation—a proto-expressionist one. To leave parts unrefined was to acknowledge the process of making and the work of art as a work of art. This affirms Reinhold Heller’s definition of Symbolism on which this dissertation relies.²¹³

Barnard returned to this role of matter standing for the separation of human souls in *Solitude*. The figures’ bodies touch at places, but their arms around their head frame the internal space of human loneliness and speak again to the psychological component of Barnard’s work. The female figure in *Solitude* anticipates Barnard’s later *Refugee* (1930), which is one of the few finished components of the *Monument to Democracy* (Fig. 74). He intended *Refugee* to be “walking into a wall of marble.”²¹⁴ In *Refugee*, the title, along with the hunch of the body and the strain of the position of the raised arms, communicates a greater degree of anguish than *Solitude*,

²¹² Taft 1903, 360. Taft was also a major proponent of Rodin in the United States. See Tarbell and Fort, 96.

²¹³ Reinhold Heller, “Concerning Symbolism and the Structure of Surface,” *Art Journal* 45, no. 2 (June 1985): 148, writes “the object itself and the technique of its manufacture deserve to be accented as a means of pointing to unifying concerns of painters who might be identified as Symbolists.” His article is focused only of painting, but it applies readily to sculpture. Barnard’s *Solitude* and *Brotherly Love* are cases in point. Turning again to Heller’s framework, their “very material . . . was perceived as functioning in the signification generated.”

²¹⁴ Donna J. Hassler, catalog entry, *American Sculpture in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, vol. 1, ed. Thayer Tolles (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1999), 426.

which remains in the realm of the inevitable melancholy of human existence rather than particular tragedy. While the borders of the *Solitude* fragments show raw pick marks, as the background moves into the space of the figures it becomes smoother, more planar. Only in the detached aspects of the figures themselves is Barnard's modeling truly resolved.

The Dying Poet

Barnard followed the family group with *The Dying Poet* or *Musician Dying* (Fig. 74). To the left, the grouping is made up of a youthful man with a harp, resting beneath his right arm and on his torso, and a female figure who bends over him. The woman's chiseled hair flows into the marble expanse. The musical instrument reflects Seidl's career and also Barnard's admiration for creative generation. Barnard explained that this group "represents the silent, inward voice which inspires us to nobler efforts."²¹⁵ Barnard situated the woman's elbow on the man's shoulder, as her face draws close to his head. The harpist exists between wake or sleep, or between life and death, perhaps reference to the mythical harpist, Orpheus. His eyes are closed, and his face is in peaceful repose. He lies on his side but holds himself upright with a straightened left arm, which features the hint of a vein still pulsing through his marble skin. He steadies himself with a left hand clutched on a ledge beneath, and his right hand, while not playing the harp, has outstretched fingers that reach out to the left. The harp itself is part musical instrument and part feathered, angelic wing, which, Barnard wrote, "symbolizes the music of the soul."²¹⁶ The next vignettes

²¹⁵ "The Urn of Life by George Grey Barnard," Box 7, Folder 26, Frame 24, Barnard Papers.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

depicts an elderly couple and the end of life. In this last scene, the angel from *The Visitation* scene appears again to mark the departure of the soul (Fig. 75).²¹⁷

Transformation of the Urn of Life

Barnard transformed the overall form of the *Urn of Life* over time. An image published in 1902 shows the work partially draped in white fabric (Fig. 76). A dark ceramic pot on the sculptor's platform below holds a tool for working. This is a preliminary iteration, likely in clay. The figures stand along a ledge or platform of material that empties out below. The overall shape resembles that of a column capital, with a frieze-like procession ringing around the top. The plaster model for the *Urn of Life* was shipped from the United States to the studio in Moret-sur-Loing. Barnard received it intact in 1903 and started on the marble.²¹⁸

In the Boston exhibition, the marble's bottom half was roughly chiseled (Fig. 77). The base, shaped with the highly textural patterning of a rounded chisel-head, angles downward and then flares outward into four, chunky lobular legs. Nodules at regular intervals under the figures' feet represent a proposal by Barnard to sell the urn as a fountain.²¹⁹ The top is round and smoothly finished. When it was sold to the Carnegie Museum, Barnard returned to the work for finishing touches. He reduced some excess material arching over the heads of the figure. He intended "to leave the

²¹⁷ "The Angel of Death closes with his right hand the lips of the aged man, while, as a benediction, he kisses the clasped hands of those who have been faithful unto death." Ibid.

²¹⁸ Barnard to parents, May 7, 1903, HD Papers, quoted in Hack 89n31.

²¹⁹ Barnard to Beatty, May 2, 1918, Box 15, Carnegie Museum Papers: "I shall cut off the superfluous bottom part that you noticed, which was left on for fountain uses when I thought to sell it a client of mine."

bottom of the ‘Urn’ perfectly simple, just as Columbus left his egg.”²²⁰ The reference to Columbus’s egg makes clear the vision he had for the shape and finish: an egg standing up with its bottom flattened out.

Barnard wanted to ship the *Urn of Life* to the museum right after giving it a few more “touches” himself.²²¹ The shape of the base was determined in consultation with a trusted carver named Aristide Jaedella, whom Barnard sent to the museum after the urn arrived in Pittsburgh. A back-and-forth with the museum’s Director of Fine Arts concluded with Jaedella finishing the base as it is at present, with a slight turnout for stability. The museum suggested this could be temporary, if Barnard wished to finish it differently later,²²² but it has remained as it was, with this slight flare. In the end, the overall shape of the *Urn of Life*, with its polished, rounded top and the smoothly conical incline of its base, refers back to the urn in the hands of its central figure.

Urns themselves have significance in Barnard’s iconographical vocabulary. The egglike form also alludes to birth. Urns hold the potential for both life and death, and they hint at the unknowability and essential mystery of both. In the never completed *Monument to Democracy*, two *Urns of Life* were to flank a component called the *Rainbow Arch*, and Barnard explained that these urns held the “ashes of war.”²²³ In *Norwegian Clock*, figures emerged, holding urns from which the “water of life flow[ed] back into the ocean of existence whence it came.”²²⁴ The inherent

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Beatty to Barnard, May 6, 1918, Box 15, Carnegie Museum Papers.

²²² Beatty to Barnard, April 26, 1919, Box 15, Carnegie Museum Papers.

²²³ Barnard, notes for 1936 exhibition, quoted in Hack, 301.

²²⁴ *Sunday Herald*, Boston, July 20, 1902.

cyclical, even immortality, of such elemental materials—water, stone, and wood, as well as their links to birth and rebirth, are resonant ideas throughout Barnard's oeuvre and reveal his deep interest in Symbolist meaning.

Conclusion: Soul into Marble

Writer Jeanne Robert Foster recorded the extraordinary powers Barnard attributed to the artist. He said that “only the artist, the God-endowed genius may create a work of art, may so pour himself, the greatness of his soul, into marble or pigment that it has a life of its own.”²²⁵ As in the epigraph, the sculptor's enlivening of his materials is paramount.

In Barnard's body of work, material means and does different things at different times. It is shaped by the artist, overtakes the soul, separates beings, functions narratively, visualizes human loneliness or the abyss of death, indicates deep and mythological history, and embodies life itself. It is restless, but it can be pacified and smoothed, transformed under the sculptor's chisel, or wrestled into shape. Barnard's technical prowess in carving may have been partially overshadowed by the monumental bronze casting of his *Pan*, but he ultimately presented himself and was seen as an autographic worker whose touch signaled his process and his act of creation. His touch was recorded in the *non-finito* aspects of his work and affirmed by his willingness to present sculptures as “morceaux,” or in photographs, in states of unfinish.

²²⁵ [Jeanne Robert Foster], “Romain Rolland's Life of Michael Angelo,” *American Review of Reviews* 47 (February 1913): 232.

In order to differentiate and valorize Barnard, American critics accused the artist to whom he was most often compared—Rodin—of “decadence.”²²⁶ Yet Barnard was also positively bestowed with the title “our American Rodin.”²²⁷ This contradiction—evoking and disavowing the sculptor identified with the characteristics of Symbolism in France—indicates a will to what might be called “domesticate” Symbolism in the United States and for American audiences. There are echoes of this desire in the rhetoric around the “naturalization” of the American bronze industry and in Anton Seidl’s achievement in “domesticating” modern music.

The article entitled “Symbolist in Stone” proclaimed that “Barnard seeks to make his appeal, through the simple symbolism of humanity itself, with none of the adventitious aids of convention or traditional allegory, and free also from their limitations.”²²⁸ Perhaps this symbolism was not so simple. Barnard’s Symbolism could be framed as straightforward and honest, despite the contradiction that Barnard’s meanings could often be opaque or at least challenging to interpret. As Katharine Metcalf Roof wrote, “the idea [in Barnard’s work] may not be perceptible to the unthinking.”²²⁹

²²⁶ Payne 1897, Frame 6, wrote that “Rodin, who went back to Michaelangelo[sic], came back to the nineteenth century, and is to-day the sculptor of decadence. . . . Barnard, too, has gone back to Michaelangelo. Yes, and even further.” See also Butler, 402 for a discussion of Henry Adam’s understanding of Rodin’s “utter and decadent” works, and “A War to the Knife is on Among Sculptors of Whistler’s Americanism and Rodin’s Art,” *New York Times*, November 1, 1908, for reference to Rodin’s works as “lewd, decadent things.” This article is accompanied by a sketch of one of Käsebier’s photographs of Rodin. Roof, 279, sounded a similar note, explaining that “even Rodin, genius of our day, has in a sense not risen above the plane of the physical. . . . His work is a degradation of his genius, the creation of a diseased imagination.”

²²⁷ Foster, February 1913, 232.

²²⁸ Thaw, 2851.

²²⁹ Roof, 277.

Barnard's achievements could nevertheless assure Americans of their material, technological, and moral progress, or at least the promise of an upwards trajectory. Such is the example of *Pan*'s casting. This is also messaged in the Pennsylvania Capitol Sculpture Group, which indicated hope for consolation (in the *Broken Law* group) and progress with the rewards of labor (in the *Unbroken Law* group).²³⁰ But Barnard could also express Symbolist strivings for the interior and the intangible, as in his epochal depiction of mythological, primordial origins in the *Norwegian Clock*, his embodiment of the push-and-pull between immateriality and materiality in *The Struggle of the Two Nature in Man*, and his probing into the greatest unknowns of human existence and passage beyond with *Brotherly Love* and the *Urn of Life*.

²³⁰ Hack, 78-146 understands the Harrisburg sculptures as being about the betterment or spiritual regeneration of humanity. Ingrid Steffensen, "Toward an Iconography of a State Capitol: The Art and Architecture of the Pennsylvania State Capitol in Harrisburg," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 126, no. 2 (April 2002): 195-198.

Conclusion and Continuation

Käsebier, Barney, Tanner, and Barnard each exhibited a Symbolist impulse conditioned by the possibilities and limitations of their respective media. Working in the relatively new, to the nineteenth century, medium of photography, Käsebier incorporated aesthetic devices and techniques to obscure and veil, thereby defying photography's mimetic, indexical quality—its essential relationship to reality—to explore the unseen. Charlotte Foucher Zarmanian's examination of women working in French Symbolist milieus enables us to understand Käsebier's work in the United States as a type of mediumistic expression.¹ This is encapsulated by Käsebier's *Crystal Gazer* (1904) and portraits of Auguste Rodin (ca. 1905). The Rodin images touch on conventions of spirit photography, an inherent part of the history of the "medium," in both senses of the word (photography and spiritualistic gatekeeper), which managed to make visible that which would otherwise be invisible. This relationship between the material and immaterial animates Symbolist art. With *The Bat* (1902), Käsebier ventured into the realm of the femme fatale, but the femme fatale figure is more central to Barney's oeuvre.

Barney, representative of a first generation of what Wanda Corn has dubbed American "art matronage,"² cultivated a Symbolist milieu in the United States capital and shared works that innovated on the trope of the femme fatale for personally and,

¹ Charlotte Foucher Zarmanian, *Créatrices en 1900: Femmes artistes en France dans les milieux symbolistes* (Paris: Mare & Martin, 2015).

² Wanda M. Corn, "Art Matronage in Post Victorian America," *Fenway Court* 27 (1997): 9-24, especially 14-22.

in some sense, politically expressive ends. Pastel, as a medium, served Barney well in her Symbolist mode. The powdery sticks uniquely invite the conjuration of atmospheric layers and soulful impressions. A sustained analysis of her work prompts a revisiting and modification of Bram Dijkstra's assertions around the demonizing purpose of the femme fatale's appearance in art of this period.³ Pastel's long-held associations with femininity had in part to do with the ability to start and stop work, with little advanced notice, to tend to other tasks, traditionally mothering and household duties. Barney's socioeconomic position enabled her to be a multifaceted producer and fosterer of cultural content (soirées, theatrical events, pageants, collections, and various philanthropic pursuits). Pastel, for this reason, may have been the most flexible and accessible, as well as most evocative medium in which she could create. Her overseas associations with James Abbott McNeill Whistler and Lucien Lévy-Dhurmer influenced her artistic approach. Barney's *Woman Clothed with the Sun* and *Babylon* (ca. 1901) show her skills working relatively large-scale while still taking advantage of pastel's soft and intimate textures, vivid colors, and expressive mark-making possibilities.

Aspects of Tanner's painting methods in oil and tempera still beguile conservators. As the subject matter of his work became increasingly spiritually oriented across the turn of the nineteenth into the twentieth centuries, the surface of his paintings became more complexly constructed. With unique recipes and extensive

³ Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture*, (New York: University of Oxford Press, 1986). The purpose was unabashedly misogynistic, to assuage male anxiety about feminism and justify inequalities being bolstered by supposedly scientific information. Dijkstra ultimately traces this biological determinism to Nazi ideologies (vii).

layering, he pushed up against the bounds of painterly possibility. Debora Silverman has allowed us to understand Symbolism not as antagonistic to religious commitments such as Tanner's, but rather inflected and ultimately premised on the same push-and-pull between immaterial reaches and material substance.⁴ Works such as *The Three Marys* (1910) show how Tanner used blue tones to express the mystical and otherworldly. *Salome* (ca. 1900), like Käsebier's *The Bat* (1902), stands out in the artist's oeuvre for the boldness of its femme fatale subject matter. However, it fits into a broader consideration of Tanner's work reaching from summers in Brittany to his late, experimental tempera paintings. Drawing from Whistler, Oscar Wilde's *Salome*, and mystical notions of the veil that resonated with the major image of twentieth-century African American experience, Du Bois's veil of race, *Salome* reflects the Symbolist impulse's complex and enlightening intersections.

Barnard, though the youngest of the artists considered, exhibited a stronger Symbolist impulse at an earlier point than the others, with 1880s-90s works such as *Brotherly Love*, *The Struggle of the Two Natures in Man*, and the *Norwegian Clock*, the latter of which Sadakichi Hartmann dubbed the "the most remarkable piece of condensed symbolism."⁵ Barnard endowed his materials with a life force, and he used Rodinesque *non-finito* surfaces and textures to underscore the object status of works that pointed to deep and universal themes. Pieces of his *Urn of Life* were shown at the International Exhibition of Modern Art in 1913 (i.e. the Armory Show), and a critic

⁴ Debora Silverman, *Van Gogh and Gauguin: The Search for Sacred Art* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000).

⁵ Sadakichi Hartmann, "Art Talk," *The Criterion* (January 15, 1898): 14 in Jane Calhoun Weaver, *Sadakichi Hartmann: Critical Modernist* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 289.

reflected on the “groups suggesting the mysteries of life and death, the joys of maternal and family love, [and] the passing of bright spirits.”⁶

The Armory Show

In 1913, the International Exhibition of Modern Art, first held at the 69th Street Armory in New York City before traveling to other venues in Chicago and Boston, shocked audiences with European avant-garde work from artists including Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, and Marcel Duchamp. The significant Symbolist presence at the Armory Show has received too little recognition.⁷ Odilon Redon was in fact the most well-represented artist in the entire show. His 74 pastels, prints, and paintings met with considerable commercial and critical success.⁸ Albert Pinkham Ryder also had a significant presence, with ten paintings on view. Arthur B. Davies, a major organizer of the show and an artist personally inclined to Symbolism as well,

⁶ “Sculpture by George Grey Barnard,” clipping, Box 7, Folder 15, Frames 59/61, Barnard Papers.

⁷ Diane Chalmers Johnson, *American Symbolist Art: Nineteenth-Century ‘Poets in Paint’: Washington Allston, John La Farge, William Rimmer, George Inness, and Albert Pinkham Ryder* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004), 1. Also notable is the *Exhibition of Contemporary Scandinavian Art*, which opened in New York in 1912 before traveling throughout the United States. It included Symbolist and Post-Impressionist examples from the Nordic countries. See Patricia G. Berman, *Luminous Modernism: Scandinavian Comes to America, A Centennial Retrospective* (New York: American-Scandinavian Foundation, 2012, exh. cat.).

⁸ Roberta J. M. Olson, “Drawings at the Armory: The Currency of Change and Modernism,” in *The Armory Show at 100: Modernism and Revolution*, ed. Marilyn Satin Kushner and Kimberly Orcutt (New York: New York Historical Society, 2013, exh. cat.), 302. Megan Fort, “The Overwhelming Appeal of Odilon Redon,” *The Armory Show at 100* blog, New York Historical Society, September 10, 2013, <http://armory.nyhistory.org/the-overwhelming-appeal-of-odilon-redon/>. G.-Albert Aurier “Les Peintres symbolistes,” 1892, in *Oeuvres posthumes de G.-Albert Aurier* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1893), 306 identified Redon (and Gustave Moreau) as, essentially, Symbolist precursors.

promoted both Redon and Ryder, and showed his own work at the Armory to a limited extent.⁹

Art critic Frank Jewett Mather Jr. grouped the three artists, Redon, Ryder, and Davies, in his review of the Armory Show for *The Nation*. “Redon is a purposeful dreamer” whose “territory is that of the older gods and recent symbol,” while “Ryder and Davies represent a similar mood.”¹⁰ While Mather praises artists associated with Symbolism, he goes on to critique Matisse and others of the “anti-realistic movement” and “newest art” as showing “the tardy coming into art of a tendency that has long since spent its literary force, namely, neurotic symbolism.”¹¹ He elaborates that “all painters are symbolists; some dull, some sublime, more mediocre. . . . The fundamental division of artists is into capable symbolists, incapable symbolists, or mere pretenders.”¹² Whereas he capitalized Post-Impressionism, Cubism, and Futurism, Symbolism appears in lowercase and without the implications of a distinct movement. Rather, all artists are symbolists, with various degrees of success. His assessment shows a lack of recognition around Symbolism as a distinctive movement in the visual arts,¹³ while at the same time pointing to the fact that the criteria of Symbolism (the degree of an artist’s capability as a “symbolist”) were broadly applicable to assessing modern art.

⁹ Kimberly B. Orcutt, “Arthur B. Davies—Hero or Villain?,” in *The Armory Show at 100*, 37. On Davies’s Symbolism, see Emily Willard Gephart, “A Dreamer and A Painter: Visualizing the Unconscious in the Work of Arthur B. Davies” (PhD diss., MIT, 2013), 55-118.

¹⁰ Frank Jewett Mather, Jr., “Old and New Art,” *The Nation* 96, no. 2488 (March 6, 1913): 241.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 241-242.

¹² *Ibid.*, 242.

¹³ Mather is dismissive of Symbolist literature, writing “the present revolutionaries are no more going to make art over than Mallarmé and [Henri de] Regnier made all things new in letters” (241).

The *New York Times* interviewed artist Kenyon Cox regarding “the new art” on view at the Armory Show. Cox reacted vociferously, likening Cubism and Futurism to “gibberish.”¹⁴ He anticipated the new modernist movements’ imminent demise by evoking Symbolism as a precedent, opining that, “I don’t think these Cubists and Futurists will last much longer than did the Symbolists.”¹⁵ He presents Symbolism as a primarily literary movement, saying, “these Cubists and Futurists are doing in painting what the Symbolists did in literature ten years ago.”¹⁶ He continues by explaining, “that school of writers said that it didn’t make any difference what words were used; that the vowels had color and that the desired impression could be conveyed by these.”¹⁷ Though Cox presents this as a negative, the downplaying of recognizable subject matter for the sake of form, and the opening into synesthetic experience are reasons Symbolism can be credited with paving the way for artistic innovations deeper into the twentieth century and for nonreferential abstraction.

Davies’s personal style evolved; he modified his Symbolist subjects with a loosely Cubist breakdown of form and a Fauvist color expression.¹⁸ Early works by a number of other American modernists, including Joseph Stella and Max Weber, reveal a Symbolist impulse (Fig. 1).¹⁹ Charles C. Eldredge has made a highly

¹⁴ “‘Cubists and Futurists are Making Insanity Pay’: Kenyon Cox, Member of the National Academy, and Recognized Here and Abroad as One of America’s Foremost Painters Gives a Straight-from-the Shoulder Opinion of the New Movements in Art,” *New York Times*, March 16, 1913, 65, <https://nyti.ms/2pkI6y7>.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Orcutt, 37.

¹⁹ See Dario Gamboni, *Potential Images: Ambiguity and Indeterminacy in Modern Art*, trans. Mark Treharne (London: Reaktion, 2002), 273n90; Edouard Roditi, “The Spread and Evolution of Symbolist Ideals in Art,” in *The Symbolist Movement in the Literature of European Languages*, ed. Anna Balakian (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company: 1984), 505.

convincing argument for the “Abstract Symbolism” of Georgia O’Keeffe, Marsden Hartley, and Arthur Dove.²⁰ Indeed, a through line exists between Alfred Stieglitz’s “first circle” artists, inclusive of Käsebier and the Photo-Secessionists, and these artists (O’Keeffe, Hartley, Dove) associated with the “second circle.”²¹ The Symbolist impulse is undeniable in works such as O’Keeffe’s *No. 2—Special* (1915) (Fig. 2). While boldly and lyrically abstract, O’Keeffe forms evoke elements of Ryder’s *Temple of the Mind* (after 1885, wood engraving by Elbridge Kingsley, 1890) (Fig. 3), as if she abstracted, centered, and overlapped the evocative darkened portal and wispy, dripping fountain from the older artist’s composition. There is also something of Käsebier’s “occult line movement”²² in O’Keeffe’s curvilinear bends, and there is a pastel-like veiling of surface through the cloudy quality of O’Keeffe’s charcoal application.

Imaginative Painters

In 1917, Davies and Barnard, among others, sponsored an exhibition of *Imaginative Paintings by Thirty Young Artists of New York City* at Knoedler Galleries.²³ Agnes Pelton was among the exhibited artists. She had shown Symbolist

²⁰ Charles C. Eldredge, *American Imagination and Symbolist Painting* (New York: Grey Art Gallery and Study Center, New York University, 1979, exh. cat.), 116-121.

²¹ Wanda Corn, *The Great American Thing: Modern Art and National Identity, 1915-1935* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). Rosalind Krauss, “Steiglitz/Equivalents” *October* 11 (Winter 1979): 140, makes the argument that Stieglitz himself was “obviously invoking the language of symbolism” in his *Equivalents* series (1925-1934).

²² Elisa Anne Sargent, “Tone Composition: The Adjustment of Value and Value Masses in Space,” *American Photography* 4, no. 4 (April 1910): 198.

²³ *Imaginative Paintings by Thirty Young Artists of New York City* (New York: M. Knoedler & Co., 1917, exh. cat.), 2, Metropolitan Museum of Art Digital Collections, <http://library.metmuseum.org/record=b1252971>. See also Edith W. Powell, “The Introspectives,” *International Studio* 61, no. 243 (May 1917): xc-xciv.

works at the 1913 Armory Show, including *Vine Wood* (1913), a painting Michael Zakian has connected to the first stanza of Charles Baudelaire's "Correspondences" (Fig. 4).²⁴ Pelton's *Room Decoration in Purple and Gray* (1917) featured in *Imaginative Paintings* (Fig. 5). The graceful female figure and overall compositional structure of *Decoration* recall the earlier work, recollective as well of Davies's mystical landscapes with dreamy inhabitants (Fig. 6). In the background of *Decoration*, Pelton's rhythmic, overlapping celestial or landscape-like shapes in pastel shades, which gently transition from yellow to purple and navy, and her sweeping lines throughout, point towards her future investment in spiritually inflected abstraction.²⁵ Pelton has been called a "Transcendental Symbolist,"²⁶ and her trajectory demonstrates the Symbolist roots of at least some American modernism.

The artists statements contained in the *Imaginative Paintings* exhibition catalog espoused various components of lingering Symbolist thought. Mary Bayne Bugbird reiterated a familiar critique of materialism: "We, Americans, are such materialists that we have little time or the beauty and truth of the imaginative. If we

²⁴ Michael Zakian, "Agnes Pelton: Transcendental Symbolist," in *Agnes Pelton: Desert Transcendentalist*, ed. Gilbert Vicario (Munich, Germany: Hirmer Verlag, 2019, in conjunction with exhibition at the Phoenix Art Museum, AZ), 44. Zakian also discusses veils: "Pelton shared Baudelaire's belief that nature is alive and communicates with us in veiled symbols, as well as the symbolist tenet that reality is a false veil obscuring a richer plane of existence beyond what the eye sees."

²⁵ See Roberta Smith, "'Agnes of the Desert' Joins Modernism's Pantheon," *New York Times*, March 12, 2020, <https://nyti.ms/38QuvA4>.

²⁶ Zakian, op. cit. See also Phyllis Braff, "Another Look at A Symbolist," *New York Times*, December 31, 1995, 10, <https://nyti.ms/33fjoiM>, a review of Pelton's first retrospective exhibition. Pelton studied Theosophy, Eastern religions, astrology, and cosmology, sources which merged and informed the mental images that were the bases for her paintings. She was elected first honorary president of the Taos, New Mexico-based Transcendentalist Painting Group, founded in 1936. Between the "Imaginative Paintings" of the 1910s and her transcendental abstractions of the 1920s and beyond, Pelton also made a series of pastel portraits of Native Americans in the American West.

would turn to Art we could find imagination . . . that would lift us away from material things to things spiritual and eternal.”²⁷ A group called “The Introspectives” contributed that art “shall suggest more than relate, for suggestion is the depth beyond the depth—the gauntlet to the imagination of the observer.”²⁸ Once again we hear the echoes of Mallarmé’s “to *suggest*, that is the dream.”

In the *Imaginative Paintings* show, the art exhibited responded to a perceived social need during World War I: “In the face of the present world calamities we have felt that the note of idealism which the exhibition strikes is the most important contribution the American artist can make to the public.”²⁹ There is an escapism to this proposition, but the World War I connection more clearly links contextual realities to Symbolism than is often the case. While this dissertation has examined questions of form and materiality, I have also tried to share that ground with biographical and contextual matters. The individuality of Käsebier, Barney, Tanner, and Barnard suggest an American inflection to Symbolism, largely because their work is the product of people conditioned not only by a transnational flow of ideas, but by cultural issues around American identity and nationalism, as well as gendered and racialized expectations circulating in the United States.

World War I can serve as an outer limit to American art considered Symbolist. Tanner’s elegiac *The Arch* (1919) is a suitable sendoff (Fig. 7). Distinct in Tanner’s

²⁷ Ibid., 15.

²⁸ *Imaginative Paintings*, 27. For more on the Introspectives, see Charles C. Eldredge, “Claude Buck and the Introspectives,” in *The Shape of the Past: Studies in Honor of Franklin D. Murphy*, eds. Giorgio Buccellati and Charles Speroni (Los Angeles: Institute of Archaeology and Office of the Chancellor, University of California, 1981), 305-322 and Eldredge 1979, 112-115.

²⁹ Friends of Young Artists, foreword to *Imaginative Paintings*, 3.

oeuvre for its highly identifiable landmark, *The Arch* portrays the Arc de Triomphe in Paris on the eve of a World War I victory parade. A scrapbook shows the multitude of nations represented in the parade, celebrating victory in a war whose global scale speaks to the international interconnections binding people at every level (politically, economically, and culturally) in the early twentieth century (Fig. 8).³⁰ This work showcases Tanner's distinctive blue palette. The texture of the canvas shows through at places due to his alternately watery and chalky application of paint. At the center of the arch stands the specter-like form a temporary cenotaph, erected in the honor of fallen soldiers. Tanner's picture is glowing, bathed in artificial light. Precise detail has evaporated in Tanner's representation. A procession of figures appears as a navy, horizontal band across the composition. Tanner orchestrated an ode to the fallen, to unknown passages, and to transition.

Reviewing a 1981 Symbolist exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, Hilton Kramer argued that Symbolism was “a movement postulated on a death wish.”³¹ This assessment seems especially apropos given Symbolism's sometimes morbid fascinations and ghostly content. Looking at the spread of artwork categorized as Symbolist in the museum's show, he picked up on the Hellerian (à la Reinhold Heller) dialectic upon which this dissertation's exploration of (im)materiality is premised. Symbolists strove for “a release from the material world, a deliverance to

³⁰ Souvenir photo album of the Victory Day Parade. 14 July 1919, Clarke Family Manuscript Collection, 1540-1926, DOC MSS 30, Saint Louis University Library and Special Collections, St. Louis, Missouri, <https://missourioverthere.org/index.php?symphony-page=explore/collections/clarke-family-manuscript-collection/souvenir-photo-album-of-the-victory-day-parade-july-14-1919/>.

³¹ Hilton Kramer, “Art View: Symbolism—In Search of a Style,” *New York Times*, January 4, 1981, 23, <https://nyti.ms/2HN0KVv>.

the world of pure spirit.”³² However, according to Kramer, such an immaterial ends could not be achieved without a commitment to pure abstraction, whereas Symbolism stayed anchored in content, however spiritual, mystical, or otherworldly said content was.³³ Even more so though, the Symbolist emphasis on the materials of artmaking exists paradoxically with an equal emphasis on the immateriality of their idea-oriented strivings. The “death wish” Kramer articulated did not lead to a movement that could be considered dead and buried. Rather, the impulse that strings together the artists considered in this dissertation continued to inspire an orientation in art away from the reproduction of external realities to a more interior, reflective, abstractly spiritual, and imaginative communication across media.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

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