JOHN SINGER SARGENT'S BRITISH AND AMERICAN SITTERS, 1890-1910: INTERPRETING CULTURAL IDENTITY WITHIN SOCIETY PORTRAITS

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ABSTRACT

Began as a compositional analysis of the oil-on-canvas portraits painted by John Singer Sargent, this thesis uses a selection of those images to relate national identity, cultural and social history within cosmopolitan British and American high society between 1890 and 1910. Close readings of a small selection of Sargent's portraits are used in order to undertake an in-depth analysis on the particular figural details and decorative elements found within these images, and how they can relate to nation-specific ideologies and issues present at the turn of the century.

Thorough research was undertaken to understand the prevailing social types and concerns of the period, and biographical data of individual sitters was gathered to draw larger inferences about the prevailing ideologies present in America and Britain during this tumultuous era. Issues present within class and family structures, the institution of marriage, the performance of female identity, and the formulation of masculinity serve as the topics for each of the four chapters. These subjects are interrogated and placed in dialogue with Sargent's visual representations of his sitters' identities. Popular images of the era, both contemporary and historic paintings, as well as photographic prints are incorporated within this analysis to fit Sargent's portraits into a larger art historical context.

The Appendices include tables and charts to substantiate claims made in the text about trends and anomalies found within Sargent's portrait compositions. This close statistical reading of Sargent's portrait oeuvre, while at times a subjective exercise, had not before been undertaken on this scale in art historical literature. The resulting data has been compiled to see if there is a correlation between compositional elements and nationality of sitter.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

Except where stated, all of the work contained within this thesis represents the original contribution of the author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, university and no part of it has been published. All sources are acknowledged as references in accordance with University of York standards.

INTRODUCTION

Making Sense of Sargent and his Age

The research for this thesis began with what was thought to be a simple line of inquiry: can a viewer detect the national identity, either American or British, of John Singer Sargent's portrait sitters by reading the canvas? When related to the biography of the artist these two countries are of great importance; born in Florence to American expatriates, Sargent was a proud American citizen who spent the majority of his career in London. Art historian Elizabeth Cayzer writes that Sargent is able to 'pinpoint his sitter's nationality and background so that they would immediately be recognisable' though she does not extrapolate on that claim with specific examples or references.[1] It is accepted in Sargent scholarship that the artist was a painter of 'types', those cultural subgroups whose physiognomic characteristics could be used as shorthand within a wider social context to represent certain values.[2] Sargent, it has been said, had a unique ability to capture the true nature and identity of his subjects, and it is possible to read these national affiliations as another identifier that can be similarly inferred, perhaps categorizing nationality as another of the subtypes he was known to paint. But throughout my research it became apparent that no one had yet undertaken an analysis of the compositional elements presented in the portraits to formulate an explanation as to why nationality can be pinpointed, to use Cayzer's term, but that this claim had been reiterated without the sort of corroborating evidence such an exploration could give.

In an attempt to arrive at an answer to the proposed question, I used a previously untried compositional and statistical approach to examine Sargent's portrait oeuvre critically while focusing on elements found in the canvases themselves. This was done through a thorough analysis of the six hundred and nineteen portraits authenticated in Richard Ormond and Elaine Kilmurray's *John Singer Sargent: Complete Paintings Catalogue Raisonné*. Then, the four hundred and ninety eight portraits containing known sitters who had British and/or American affiliation were meticulously scrutinised with the hypothesis that country specific information could be gleaned from the simple orientation of a hand, cropping of the body, or the number of different textural elements in a composition. In total over fifty

[1] Elizabeth Cayzer, *Changing Perceptions: Milestones in Twentieth Century British Portraiture* (Brighton, Portland: The Alpha Press, 1999), 3.
[2] Richard Ormond, 'Introduction,' in James Lomax and Richard Ormond *John Singer Sargent and the Edwardian Age*, exh. cat. (London: Leeds Art Gallery and National Portrait Gallery, 1979), 8 and 12.

different compositional factors relating to pose, costuming, colour scheme, background and orientation were analysed, noted, and placed on a table to find trends or anomalies.[3] As often happens in looking for the answer to one direct question, factions and tangents formed leading to a more complex examination of the relationship between fine arts, the popular press, cultural identity, and social history at the turn of the twentieth century.

For an example of the kind of comparative examination undertaken, let us look at *The Wyndham Sisters* (fig. 1) and *Mrs Edward Davis and her Son, Livingston* (fig. 2). When viewing these two images one notices a few similarities. Both are darkly lit interior scenes with more than one figure present and both utilise black and white as the prominent colours of the composition. Having to select which are Britons and which are Americans, then, the viewer will need to interrogate physiognomic traits, pose, costuming, and background details. Notifying the viewer that one will be a portrait of Britons and the other of Americans will also influence the reading of the image; with the knowledge that the odds of correct identification are at fifty per cent one might begin to scrutinize each element a bit more thoroughly. What of the elongated fingers of the Wyndham sisters? It has been argued that Sargent placed particular emphasis on hands and faces, so those should be carefully studied.[4] Which nation is represented with the plain black backdrop surrounding mother and son? Standing or sitting, touching or not, jewellery adorned or plain, all of this will be taken into account to make the final inference. Most will be able to judge correctly that *The Wyndham Sisters* are British and place *Mrs Edward Davis and her Son, Livingston* as the Americans. The question becomes not only *can* viewers identify these nationalities, but how and why Sargent would choose to represent address each nation differently.

Collecting data on the trends found in Sargent's portrait oeuvre assists in answering the question 'how'. This is where those detailed charts and lists become extremely helpful. In regard to our example, Sargent undertook group portraits at nearly the same frequency for

[3] I have included the information gathered through the reading and cataloguing of Sargent's portraits in Tables 1-6 of Appendix 1. The intent was to present these separate tables in the order that portraits are generally read, with basic information about the painted figure's orientation leading to more detailed readings of background and space. So to not overwhelm with data, only portraits that were painted between 1890 and 1910, the scope of this thesis, are included in these tables.

[4] Angela Miller et al, *American Encounters: Art History, and Cultural Identity*, Sarah Touborg, ed. (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education and Prentice Hall, 2009), 70.

British and American sitters, though the Britons did win out marginally.[5] Sargent exclusively used the grouping of three women, an allusion to the Three Graces of antiquity, in portraits of British women.[6] Standing figures are at nearly the same rate in portraits of British and American women, though female sitters with British identities are painted this way more often by a slim margin.[7] The more informal costume of Maria Louise's son Livingston is indicative of Sargent's treatment of Americans of both genders.[8] Additionally, once given the alternate name for *The Wyndham Sisters* as *Lady Elcho, Mrs Adeane and Mrs Tennant* the British origin of the sitters is reinforced; the title 'Lady' is not found in the United States. With these traits logged and studied, patterns formed but they were not clearly nationally delineated as I had hoped. A conglomeration of factors become conspirators in producing a subtle allusion to national identity, no single element could be found to point to this categorization.

Due to the intricate web of factors used to draw conclusions from each individual portrait, it became evident that it would not be possible to include in this thesis such a measured reading of all four hundred and ninety eight sitters with American and British affiliations painted by Sargent. The time consuming nature of such analysis coupled with the scope of the text meant including each portrait was not feasible. Trends will be discussed, statistics used, but a carefully selected group of portraits from Sargent's oeuvre will serve as the interpretive crux for each chapter. Additionally, the data has its own limitations and cannot be said to be the definitive elemental categorisation of Sargent's portraits because it is not possible to have such declaratives. Individuals might see or read compositional elements such as expressions or textures differently and such interpretive bias can be found in some of these statistics. While compositional categories were created to cater to my personal manner of reading an image and the resulting conclusions could be argued to be subjective, the careful looking undertaken within this research is elementally imperative to gaining a better understanding of these canvases even if those compositional interpretations are disputed.

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[5] For the purpose of this thesis, a group portrait will be defined as any painting with two or more sitters depicted. See Appendix 2, Chart 1. British and American Group Portraits By Nationality 1875-1925.

[6] The three-figure portrait group was also only ever used by Sargent in his groups of British sitters, regardless of gender. See Graph 1. Gender in Portraits with Three Sitters, 1875-1925.

[7] See Graph 2. Nationality of Standing and Sitting Women, 1875-1925.

[8] See Graph 3. Nationality of Informal Costume, 1875-1925.

'Why' became the most puzzling question in regard to portrait composition and national identifiers when the globalism of 1875-1925, the time period for Sargent's career, is considered. In my initial analysis of Sargent's portrait oeuvre after reviewing all of the portraits and cataloguing the compositional characteristics, the biographical search began and the cosmopolitan nature of turn-of-the-century high society became explicitly apparent. For many sitters, there was no easy national box to tick, so to speak. Some had extraordinarily complicated patriotic allegiances, parents of two different nationalities and a spouse of a third, splitting their time evenly throughout several different countries. Quite a few, like Sargent, spent very little time on their 'home soil'.[9] Within the States, particularly on the eastern seaboard and in the south, white Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) identity was rejuvenated in the years following the American Civil War and before the War of 1898. Anglophiles were becoming prevalent within high society and cultural, religious and racial connections to Great Britain were celebrated.[10] Based on a shared cultural starting point, the economic and cultural supremacy long enjoyed by upper-class Britons was appropriated by these upper-class white Americans. For those who could go on to marry into British upper-class or aristocratic families there was the possibility for a greater legitimization of this shared culture.

However, the religious element of this WASP identity was not always held to the same standard in the Untied States and Great Britain. Perhaps because of the religious freedom written into the Constitution or based on the spirit of meritocracy found in American society, those who worshipped differently, particularly Jewish men and women were not disparaged in the same manner as their British counterpoints.[11] This inclusion is presented through the rise of Jewish citizens and immigrant businessmen into the upper class of American society, facing less discrimination than those with the same background did in Great Britain. It is also manifested visually in portraits of the era, and perhaps more

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[9] Sargent painted ninety-eight portraits containing sitters with British and American affiliation who also had cosmopolitan identities (had been in or held a residence in more than one country), for a list containing images of such figures see Table 7. Sargent's Portraits of Expatriates and Cosmopolitan Figures, 1875-1925. Some would obtain such international connections after Sargent painted their portraits, but only those with such identities when they sat to Sargent are included in this table.

[10] Eric P Kaufmann, *The Rise and Fall of Anglo-America* (Cambridge Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2004), 9-36, 50 and 60.

[11] Gerald Sorin, *Tradition Transformed: The Jewish Experience in America* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 160-168 and 259. That is not to state that total equality was present. The social mobility offered within the ideology of the American experience for Jews was hard earned, but possible.

interestingly through the reception such images received.[12] Though WASP identity was becoming prized in the United States, there was still the opportunity for those without this affiliation to be welcomed into the elite.

Even for those residing solely within either the United States or Great Britain at the turn of the century such nation specific identifiers were often subjugated by regional affiliations. Elements of Sargent's portraits of sitters from Boston and New York, for example, are often read based on the intended audience in each unique state and the burgeoning regionalism of the era lends itself to this interpretation. Both nations are made up of a confederacy of smaller entities: quasi-autonomous states in the United States and countries under crown rule in Great Britain. As such, allegiances could be more readily given in regard to the smaller and more immediate geographic surroundings. Yet, close ties to regional identities could be divisive for wider national interests. In turn-of-the-century Great Britain, Ireland and Scotland particularly lead the fight against the primacy of English culture within British identity back to ones of more localised loyalties, celebrating each country's unique cultural heritage as evidenced through the call for Home Rule.[13] In the early decades of the twentieth century the Irish quest for independence would turn violent. During the 1860s regionalism had partially caused the American Civil War with the different interests of the north and south leading to the bloodiest war fought on American soil. Visually addressing regional differences that could be used to infer such tension might not have been of interest for the portraitist or his sitters.

Through researching Sargent's portraits it has become rather evident that, though regional differences and loyalties were prevalent during the period, based on the sometimes antagonistic tinge of such attributes they tend not to be as deliberately manifested on the canvas as wider national identifiers are. While there is evidence and contextual support to address Sargent's portraits in a more regional manner, the purpose of this thesis is to draw broader national conclusions within the context of these fragmented identifiers. For that reason more localised cultural identifiers are recorded but not given the same weight as national ones.

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12 This will be visually evidenced in Chapter 1 Restless Families: Social Status and Familial Interpretation.

13 Eugenio F. Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism 1876-1906* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 59-101. Within this selection of his text, Biagini outlines the legal methods Irish and Scottish politicians utilized in their quest for autonomy. .

It seemed that, perhaps, Sargent would not have been seeking to emphasise nationality as highly as other identifiers based upon the cosmopolitan status of so many of his sitters, the interconnected nature of white upper-class British and American society and the regionalism of the period. When cataloguing characteristics for this project to best account for those who had ties to both America and Britain the nation that the sitter resided in and/or where the image was intended to hang was listed first in the chart, giving it priority but allowing the full story of national connections to be told. By weighting the intended country specific reception more heavily, I was able to best compensate for this multiplicity of national identities and shared WASP characteristics. Comparing portraits of British and American affiliation in this manner put to rest the fears that the cosmopolitanism of Sargent's subjects would have negated any national identifiers, but it did not address why this would be the case.

Beginning in the late Victorian era and ending after the First World War, 1875-1925 was a time of great development and global change. This fifty-year period was massively influential on virtually every element of contemporary life but it proved too large and unruly a timeframe for this thesis. Using the raw compositional data from the portraits, further biographical research and contextual resources, the period of focus was narrowed to 1890-1910. This date range reflects the most prolific years of Sargent's career and the highest concentration of British and American sitters as opposed to other nationalities. [14] For most of this period Sargent split his time between Tite Street in London and various hotels in Boston, and his clientele reflected this fact. He was not only painting friends and family as he had in his early years. The critical success garnered from *Mrs Henry Marquand* (1887, Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton, New Jersey) and *Lady Agnew of Lochnaw* (1892, Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh) propelled his portrait career to astronomic heights in America and Britain respectively.[15] Choosing the dates at the height of Sargent's popularity, in addition to offering the most portraits to choose from, contains the largest scope of works of differing calibres. By this I mean that because

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[14] Three hundred and eight of the four hundred and ninety eight portraits of sitters with American or British affiliation reviewed came from this twenty-year period. Of the portraits painted from 1890-1910 only nineteen contain subjects that have no British or American affiliation, see Table 8. Portraits Containing Sitters without American or British Affiliation 1890-1910.

[15] For *Mrs Henry Marquand* see Richard Ormond, 'Introduction,' in Marc Simpson with Richard Ormond and H. Barbara Weinberg, *Uncanny Spectacle: The Public Career of the Young John Singer Sargent*, exh. cat. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), 3. For *Lady Agnew* see, Kenneth McConkey, *Edwardian Portraits: Images in an Age of Opulence* (Woodbridge: Antique Collector's Club, 1987), 30.

Sargent was the most popular portrait painter in the Anglo-American art market he was able to utilise either a strict formula, creating paintings containing similar if not identical elements, or he could experiment greatly, creating images out of his usual mode.

This is a compositional duality that can be referred to as Sargent's portrait dichotomy. While for the most part he traded in his usual recognisable and socially accepted tropes, what about the moments in which he broke free of them? Balancing meeting expectations with the desire for experimentation is another characteristic of the 1890-1910 period. Sargent needed to find a middle ground between painting portraits by rote, and straying too far from his established convention and risk alienating his client base. Between 1890 and 1900 Sargent's portraits were already assigned an element of prestige by virtue of his name regardless of the actual contents of the image, a claim that can be extended in particular into the era after he formally gave up portrait painting, 1907-1925.[16] His formal artistic response to this fact further offers rich insight into his rendering of society during the period. This was also a time of great social unrest and, as such, many of Sargent's portraits implicitly referenced social changes that were occurring. Sargent, so it seems, was perceptive of the larger elements presented during this time span and wished to incorporate those, including nationality and the connotation it presented, into his portraits of upper-class society. It was as if Sargent was using his society sitters as a conduit directly speaking to broader topics within their respective nations.

I am not the first to suggest that Sargent was unique in his interpretation of the time in which he lived. This honour goes to Max Beerbohm who, quite famously, wrote that the fin de siècle was 'above all, a restless, nervous age—an age on edge' that found Sargent to be its 'supreme interpreter'.[17] This oft quoted assertion of Sargent's exceptionalism serves as a point of departure for this thesis as reflected in the allusions found in its chapter titles. The context it provided was also important in forming a clear understanding of the larger international and cultural issues Sargent might have been addressing in his individual portraits. Beerbohm's insistence that Sargent's work was particularly indicative of the culture beyond the portraits' purpose as an artistic representation of individuals grounds this thesis in an established early twentieth-century manner for which to read Sargent**.**

[16] Elaine Kilmurray, 'Portraits 1894-9,' in Richard Ormond and Elaine Kilmurray, *John Singer Sargent: Portraits of the 1890s* Complete Portraits Volume II. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 79-80.
[17] Max Beerbohm, 'A Gallery of Significant Pictures.' *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature Science and Art* vol. 95, issue 2477 (18 Apr 1903), 484.

However, the great care in collecting and charting formal data and the interdisciplinary research are innovative additions to this approach. When referencing other art historical and historical texts, it becomes clear that these broader social elements serve a critical purpose when interpreting Sargent's compositions.

Through the course of researching this thesis many primary accounts like Beerbohm's, contemporary exhibition reviews, letters, and newspaper articles were examined to give the images context. The literature on Sargent, both from his era and found within secondary resources, is plentiful. The circumstances surrounding the creation of these portraits and the artist's relationship with their sitters are often referenced in Sargent biographies. As most of Sargent's personal letters and diaries were destroyed after his death, these biographies fill in gaps and round out one's understanding of wider practical elements and offer context to the life of the portraitist. The first of these texts was written by Sargent's good friend Evan Charteris. In his biography, Charteris traces Sargent's use of portrait conventions, commenting on trends in the portraitist's oeuvre, and contemporary receptions of these portraits.[18] Decades later**,** David McKibbin and Charles Merrill Mount followed this structural example, adding more in-depth lists of portraits painted by the artist, and all three reproduced surviving letters in these texts that would go on to greatly influence later understandings of Sargent as man, and colour the viewer's reading of the portraits he created.[19] McKibbin and Mount had personal and chronological distance from Sargent, however, relying on art reviews more than art historical critiques when referencing particular portraits.

Stanley Olson added further interpretive insight to the images Sargent produced, which was particularly relevant to this thesis. Going back to our earlier example of the *Wyndham Sisters* (fig.1), Olson begins his analysis by placing this image in the context of the Boston Public Library murals Sargent was working on concurrently. He then goes on to recount the family's lineage, why the commission could pull him away from those murals deeming

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[18] Charteris does this especially well in his writing on the 'Three Graces' female group portrait configuration. Later, when discussing *The Wyndham Sisters* portrait individually, his analysis is referential to the dominant art reviewers of the period, though they are not cited as such. Evan Charteris, *John Sargent* (New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1972), 68-69 and 174-175, respectively.

[19] Mount in particular weaves these letters and general anecdotes through his text, though not always with clear attributions. An example can be found in reply letter from Sargent to William Rothenstein regarding an invitation to a dinner honouring Philip Wilson Steer and his later aversion to public speaking at this function. Charles Merrill Mount, *John Singer Sargent: A Biography* (London: Cresset Press, 1957), 195.

the task as 'as much physical labour as art,' and before stating the canvas 'owed nothing to the geometric exercises of his other group portraits; it relied on the elaboration of silhouette, white on a dark service.' [20] The start of a compositional analysis is present, but Olson does not engage with the portrait as deeply as this thesis will and that is because of the text's function as a biography. My examination is first and foremost a compositional reading of the canvas with contextual information added as needed, while the biography Olson presents inverts those considerations. In Olson's text the portraits colour the reader's understanding of the man, explaining who and what he was engaged with throughout his artistic career. Additionally, all of these biographical texts pointed in directions for further primary source exploration and offer a better understanding of how Sargent fit into cosmopolitan Anglo-American society**.**

With regard to Sargent's portrait work, in particular, there is a multitude of resources closely reading these paintings using a variety of methodologies**.** Over the past forty years there has been a rich development of the field of portrait studies in Sargent scholarship with the largest contribution coming from Richard Ormond. His research is nuanced and compositionally based, and shaped the field in relation to these commonly held interpretations of art historical allusions and references. The catalogue raisonné, written with Elaine Kilmurray, was instrumental in the shaping of this thesis as a compositional study. Often in the catalogue raisonné the nationality of a sitter will be mentioned as being explicitly made apparent by Sargent, sometimes referencing reviews of the period that point to this interest in country affiliation, but then this line of inquiry is explored no further.[21] Taking up this truncated explanation became one of the main purposes of the thesis and methodology developed to interpret Sargent's portrait oeuvre.

Trevor Fairbrother's work on Sargent in Boston was an engaging exploration of that geographic area and its trends and social figures, helping immensely to understand turn-of-the-century Boston and Sargent's place in it, but does not go further to put that microcosm within the context of the United States as a whole. Andrew Stephenson's '"Wonderful pieces of stage management": Reviewing Masculine Fashioning, Race and Imperialism in John Singer Sargent's British Portraits, c. 1897-1914' in *Transculturation in British Art,*

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[20] Stanley Olson, *John Singer Sargent: His Portrait* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1986), 218.

[21] For example, Ormond writes of an 'elasticity and freedom of spirit' which informs the portraits of young American women and *Daisy Leiter* (fig. 45) is proclaimed to be 'unmistakably American', while not given a depth or explanation of just how and why this is the case. Ormond and Kilmurray, *Paintings of the 1890s*, 7.

1770-1930, edited Julie F. Codell, offers an excellent and detailed reading for the imperial and gendered identity constraints Sargent would be working within and rendering on the canvas. The reliance on portraiture as art form instead of portrait as mimetic device finds particular resonance in this thesis and the ideas put forth in this piece will be expanded upon using direct compositional resources.[22] Elizabeth Prettejohn's *Interpreting Sargent* was essential to review how the portraitist has a duality of composition that can be reflected in a myriad of manners, not just traditional and modern as explored in this text. The nation specific visual elements are often alluded to, in a similar manner as the example given by Crayzer in the first paragraph, but not concretely compositionally explored in these works. These texts did, however, offer excellent models for how to engage intensely with a single portrait or series of images.

When reading beyond Sargent studies towards a broader interpretation of nineteenth-century portraiture art historian Susan Sidlauskas's evocative *Body, Place, and Self in Nineteenth-Century Painting* proved particularly helpful. In this text Sidlauskas seeks an answer to a question at the heart of this thesis: how was the self and its relation to the world pictured in nineteenth-century painting? In the Prologue she succinctly outlines just how these changing notions of self formulated before the rise of Freudian psychoanalysis can, and she argues should, influence one's interpretation of portraits produced during this era. In Sidlauskas's view these 'conceptual and historical shifts were not simply reflected in painting; they were *enacted* within its very structures' and the art historian, therefore, has no option but to account for these factors when examining such compositions.[23] While Sidlauskas admits that no portraitist painted a direct answer to her question, it was the struggle of the quest to produce such nuanced and engaging portraits that serve to 'compel the spectator to imagine vividly, and to respond deeply to, historically distant constructions of self.'[24] Portraits are, therefore, an interpretive tool relating to individuality in the same category as diaries, biographies or other written expressions and this thesis will use them as such. Sidlauskas then uses this approach over five chapters, each focusing on an individual portrait by a range of nineteenth century artists. The third chapter 'John Singer Sargent's Interior Abysses: *The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit*' brings this approach in

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[22] Andrew Stephenson, '"Wonderful pieces of stage management": Reviewing Masculine Fashioning, Race and Imperialism in John Singer Sargent's British Portraits, c. 1897-1914' in Julie F Codell, ed., *Transculturation in British Art, 1770-1930*, (Surrey and Burlington Vermont: Ashgate, 2012), 234.
[23] Susan Sidlauskas, *Body, Place and Self in Nineteenth-Century Painting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), xi.
[24] Ibid, xi-xii.

direct contact to Sargent's portraits. Though nationality was not discussed in this chapter, broader concerns were referenced within the context of this portrait of young girls that can be expanded upon using national considerations.

National identity in painting was a topic explored in mid-twentieth century Britain. The seminal text on this topic is Nikolas Pevsner's *The Englishness of English Art* in which Pevsner expands upon German nationalist theories that art could be national in character and sought to class art, as one would language, to find national traits or a formula through which they are demonstrated. It could be argued that this thesis is directly related to this earlier work. Pevsner cites climate and race as permanent national traits found within all artistic media from painting to architecture. He then claims Englishness within the field of portraiture contains only two types: tall with long head and features, little facial display or gesticulation; or round face, agile and active who was Englishmen of ruddy complexion and indomitable health.[25] Pevsner's work was undertaken with contextual research and care much like this thesis. However, due to the interdisciplinary complexities of national identity and social constructions analysed in this thesis it is not possible for the following text to draw similarly straightforward conclusions.

This nationalist portrait field was not nearly as prominent in the United States for overarching national themes. Robert Hughes's *American Visions: The Epic History of Art in America* takes a trans-historical approach to reading works of art, but does not enact the deep portrait interpretation this thesis aims for. *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America* by Sarah Burns is one of the many art historical texts that focus on nineteenth-century painting more generally and in this context do not view Sargent in a positive manner. Burns, for instance, writes much more favourably about the psychological portraits of Eakins than the society painter Sargent, categorizing the latter artist as a 'shallow profiteer and an egregious poseur who lived off the cult of luxury and pretense pervasive among the rich.'[26] This approach cast aside the possibility of a more interpretive exploration of Sargent's work.

Two of David Lubin's books, *Picturing a Nation: Art and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century America* and *Act of Portrayal: Eakins, Sargent, James* proved to be of particular

[25] Nikolas Pevsner, *The Englishness of English Art*, (London: The Architectural Press, 1956), 184.
[26] Sarah Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), 63.

interest for the general methodology of the thesis, though Lubin's work relied more heavily on biographical inferences than compositional and social history focus intended in this text.[27] In *Act of Portrayal* he does, however, engage with individual portraits to explore potential interpretive possibilities in Sargent's work at the same depth as those more 'psychological' images by Eakins. In this text *The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit* (1882, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) is the image of Sargent's chosen for inspection, demonstrating that a close reading of society portraits painted in this manner was possible if not completely viable interpretive methodology. Though at times his lines of inquiry relates to claims impossible to substantiate, making Lubin's text not adhere ardently to the usual art historical dialogue surrounding, it provides a portal through which to understand alternative modes of interacting with portraiture.[28]

Literature professor Martha Banta's *Imaging the American Woman: Idea and Ideals in Cultural History* puts forth a country specific reading of turn-of-the-century American women. Using an interpretation of the work of philosopher Charles Saunders Peirce, Banta demonstrates how it becomes possible to connect a visual type or trope to a broader value system and uses this foundation to connect the American woman to various concerns relating to a broader less individualistic identity. Her argument is based on the premise that the over forty different types of American women, which she has thoroughly researched and compiled, make up American female identity of 1876-1918; these visual and literary representations were favoured above the individuality of the women themselves. In relying on specific types and signifiers, Banta provides a method for reading individual portrayals as broader social critique, augmenting the audience's viewing of a singular representation

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[27] In *Picturing a Nation*, Lubin engages in what he calls a speculative exercise the hypothesis of which 'is that all artists, indeed, all individuals, similarly represent a mélange of social groups situated at varying distances from the fulcrums of power in their culture'. David Lubin, *Picturing a Nation: Art and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century America* (Yale Publications in the History of Art ed. Walter Cahn, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), x-xi.
As outlined in the Introduction of *Act of Portrayal*, Lubin's approach tracks three separate causations: craft tradition of the artist, dominant social forces of the era, and artist's personal history. David Lubin, *Act of Portrayal: Eakins, Sargent, James* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), 5.

[28] Lubin's detailed inference of personal and psychological factors extends to a reading of the square shape of the canvas as an reference to the family's surname as *boîte* is the French term for box, though this diversion is tangential in regards to the overall work being done in the text. *Act of Portrayal*, 96.

to include more wide ranging inferences.[29] The definition of visual type put forth by Banta became elemental for progressing forward with a nationalised portrait reading.

While Banta's text interprets both verbal and visual representation of types, this thesis is concerned with visual considerations. The types portrayed in Sargent's portraiture do not number over forty, yet there certainly are some common figures that reappear including the emaciated aristocrat, the strong American woman, the exotic Jewess. When related to Ormond's early work with James Lomax another dimension is added to the types found in Sargent's work. Ormond writes that 'formal portraits record the social type no less than the individual, the values of an opulent and self confident age.'[30] The addition of the term 'values' in Ormond's argument is of critical importance in reorienting the perception of these society portraits from that of purely individual decorative displays of self to works of art with broader interpretive appeal. Through this framework Sargent's portraits can be read as direct representations of social concerns, making these images illustrative of the cultural changes and serving as fundamental to the social history of the period.

Further reading on the social and cultural history during this period in the United States and Great Britain offered supporting evidence and a nuanced understanding of what contemporary social elements Sargent was visually referring to. For that reason texts without direct visual aims became imperative in the shaping of this research and resulting thesis. *The Gilded Age: Perspectives on the Origins of Modern America* edited by Charles W Calhoun serves an essential text for understanding the evolution of American identity and thought.[31] With the War of 1898 the nation ended its isolationist stance and launched its 'new' imperialism, topics which greatly influenced how American citizens perceived themselves and the rest of the world. Paul T McCartney's *Power and Progress: American National Identity, the War of 1898 and the Rise of American Imperialism* provides critical interpretive evidence to support a review America's turn to Empire.[32] Concurrently, the decline of British imperialist strength placed it in a similarly precarious position. As historian David Cannadine chronicles in *The Decline and Fall of the Aristocracy*, lasting

[29] For a more thorough examination of Banta's methodology and her definition of the term 'type' see Martha Banta, *Imaging American Women: Ideas and Ideals in Cultural History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), xxxii-xxxiv and 5-15 respectively.
[30] Richard Ormond, 'Introduction,' in *John Singer Sargent and the Edwardian Age,* 8.
[31] Charles W. Calhoun, ed., *The Gilded Age: Perspectives on the Origins of Modern America*, 2nd edit. (Lanham, et al: Rowman and Littlefield Publishes, Inc., 2007).
[32] Paul T. McCartney, *Power and Progress: American National Identity, the War of 1898 and the Rise of American Imperialism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006).

effect of the Industrial Revolution was reflected in the changing socio-economic status of many citizens within the Empire; as new money ascended, many old titled families were on the decline.[33] *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920* edited by Robert Colls and Philip Dodd explores the changing nature of British identity and global status at the turn of the twentieth century.[34] Furthermore, the increasingly cosmopolitan nature of international affairs, culture and commerce in the period directly before the First World War means that many of the same social concerns were shared globally. The different national reactions to these globalised impetuses provide a suitable start for various interpretive modes as well as augmenting one's understanding of the time period these portraits were made to reflect.

The late nineteenth century was particularly rife for new interpretations in portraiture as developing artistic methods and practices allowed for abstract concepts to become more tangibly representable. Sargent has long been considered a more superficial purveyor of such personal identities, regarded as lacking the psychological considerations of his American contemporary Thomas Eakins or those found within the British counterpoint of Sir William Orpen, for example. Sargent's gilded yet engaging portraits have been regarded as decorative frivolity as opposed to the narrative substance found in other portraitists of the age.[35] However, upon closer compositional examination, it is undeniable that Sargent's portraits act to compel the viewer to react to and question the construction of self as Sidlauskas describes. Yet, Sargent's renderings are not always wholly individualised. Other factors, broader national socio-economic and historical considerations, influence Sargent's resulting compositions. This thesis will attempt to bridge the gap between the individual representation of self and these larger concerns.

With this vast array of scholarship, it became apparent that to relate fully what these compositional elements were conveying the scope of the thesis needed to be narrowed greatly from the four hundred and ninety eight portraits of American and British subjects charted and researched. In order to best identify the most relevant images to analyse at great depth, the previously mentioned compositional charts were consulted. Once trends were gathered, and the multifaceted social concerns of the era were researched, nineteen portraits were chosen that best visually reference and expand upon these issues. Some

[33] David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, 3rd edit. (London: Papermac, 1996).
[34] Robert Colls and Philip Dodd ed., *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920* (London, et al: Croom Helm, 1986).
[35] Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist*, 62-63.

elements belying a notable trend can be found in all of the portraits, but they also have unique compositional qualities that enable them to stand apart from the over four hundred that were discarded from such detailed consideration.

From the original questions of can, how and why, and with an understanding of the art historical writings around the subject, a methodology was developed to formulate nuanced answers to these lines of inquiry. As an image based interpretive exploration, the methodology throughout this thesis will be Hegelian in approach, referencing the assertion that portraits reveal not just the physiognomic traits of the sitters captured within, but that a deeper 'identity' is revealed through a subtle representation of personality traits not tangibly visibly manifested. However, in this text those nineteenth century German ideals will be expanded upon. Instead of focusing solely on individual identity of the portrait's sitter, it will be argued that it is possible to apply Hegel's argument to larger social, cultural and perhaps even political elements within the cultures being represented. 'It takes a man a long time to look like his portrait as Whistler used to say,' Sargent wrote to art collector, philanthropist and friend Isabella Stewart Gardner.[36] In Sargent's own hand the argument that a portrait is a rendering of factors other than the subject's physical traits is corroborated, validating this line of interpretation.

The rather short Edwardian Age has been denoted as a period of great significance for ushering in monumental social changes. But this thesis does not address just that time period; instead it begins as the Victorian era is about to end, taking place during transition from one monarch to another. With social, political and economic changes coming to a head before the eruption of the First World War, this was a kinetic time offering a multitude of avenues for exploration in the field of cultural history. Placing portraits of powerful and influential Britons and Americans in direct dialogue with these prevalent topics seems to be a logical line of inquiry. Examining how Sargent delineates his sitters as harbingers of their age through an informed compositional analysis, formal readings, and critical reception study are necessary to achieve the aims of connecting society portraits and social history. This complex methodology is designed to allow for a more comprehensive reading of Sargent's portraits resulting in a better understanding of these images by placing them in a broader context as emblems of their time period directly reflective of dominant social issues and values.

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[36] The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum Archives Folder #3 1916-1919 Letter #88 Sunday 28 (October) 1917 (The New Willard Washington).

Other textual source material for this analysis will come from sources pertaining to cultural and social influences. Biographical accounts referencing sitters, contemporary writings regarding specific social topics and value systems as well as secondary source material written by social historians, some of which have been previously outlined, will all be used to better relate Sargent's use of compositional elements to prevailing notions about the multifaceted societal concerns these figures stand in for.[37] Autobiographies or memoirs by portrait sitters like President Theodore Roosevelt, Sir Frank Swettenham, Consuelo Vanderbilt Spencer-Churchill Balsan, and I.N. Phelps Stokes are given particularly thorough reading, as their portraits are included in the chapters of this text. These historical accounts coupled with the work of contemporary art critics like Roger Fry, Robert Ross as well as from unnamed authors of texts in publications like *Art Journal* and *Athenaeum,* and later art historians will be referenced in order to decipher visual elements of the portraits. The art reviews will also work in conjunction with newspaper or magazine articles of the period to garner the implications of representing a sitter with such attributes and the public reception of the resulting visual type Sargent presented.

As Beerbohm wrote, Sargent was not only painting the faces of his sitters, he was capturing the period in which they were created. Therefore, the central point of inquiry then evolved to include an exploration of the reasons *why* Sargent painted American and British sitters in a particular manner related directly to the nation and time in which they lived. Perhaps what is most remarkable about Sargent's portraiture is the manner in which he is able to incorporate allusions to a specific 'type' represented by the individual, while still strongly adhering to the unique identity of the sitter. Tactfully combining these differing concerns, much like mixing traditional portrait modes with modern conventions, was a skill that set Sargent apart from his contemporary portraitists.

Though social history is a critical component, the portraits themselves take precedence in this methodology. In order to achieve a clear understanding of the other visual material present within this era both contemporary fine art and popular images will be placed in dialogue with Sargent's portraiture. To demonstrate best how Sargent's portraits are

[37] Because many of Sargent's portrait sitters knew one another the biographies are of particular interest, as many different images will often be discussed in a single text. Acquaintances or family members tend to write about one another offering insight into the differing personal and public receptions of one individual.

representative of this tumultuous era one must look to work pertaining to Anglo-American subjects by Sargent's contemporaries such as Eakins, John Sloane, Giovanni Boldini, Sir William Orpen, and Sir John Everett Millais. The rationale behind examining fine art such as other painted portraits and genre paintings pertaining to these societal interests is twofold. First, these works serve as a source for referencing other conventions used in the period, facilitating a comparison and contrast that will be helpful in reading Sargent's portraits. Secondly, Sargent's sitters represented the high society set that helped to shape the art market and a better understanding of their interests can be gleaned from a close reading of relevant painted images.[38] A juxtaposition of two portraits of the same sitter by different artists is the most direct method to achieve this evaluation. When this is not possible, images pertaining to the same type or figures with similar backgrounds will be employed for comparison.

Popular art images such as photographs, and illustrations found in newspapers, magazines and other popular publications will further emphasise the overarching cultural relevance such topics had on a wider range of the populace. By placing Sargent's portraits in dialogue with art forms created for a wider audience it becomes possible to find commonality in visual elements, creating an inference of cultural standards and aspirations. The examination of both 'high' and 'low' art will include compositional comparisons and contrasts pertaining to specific modes of representation and common elements in images of the same or socially similar subjects. This can most obviously be achieved through a review of other painted portraits of the sitter, but photographs and illustrations serve to realise better the full scale of Sargent's broader cultural resonance and are of critical importance for assessing Sargent's work as 'supreme interpreter'. Illustrations by artists such as Charles Dana Gibson and George Du Maurier, and photographs either published in the popular press, or those found in personal collections will be placed in reference to Sargent's portraits. In all of these comparisons, the analysis is image-led, so the primary focus is the formal qualities of the images and what a careful reading of these elements insinuates.

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[38] The commodification of identity through portraiture also became of great interest throughout the researching of this thesis, particularly in American art history. For more information see Robert Hughes, *American Visions: The Epic History of Art in America*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 220 and Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist*, 62-63. And for British history see Michelle Lapine, 'Mixing Business with Pleasure: Asher Wertheimer as Art Dealer and Patron,' in Norman Kleeblatt, ed., *John Singer Sargent: Portraits of the Wertheimer Family*, exh.cat. (New York: Jewish Museum, 1999), 45-46.

Sargent often referenced or alluded to works of earlier artists such as Sir Anthony Van Dyck, Diego Velázquez, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and John Singleton Copley. Costume, pose, and the inclusion of various decorative elements or motifs are the most common ways that Sargent references art of the past. Such allusions will be examined on a formal basis and in order to serve as evidence for nationalistic visual representation of values pertaining to a particular topic. How did artists visually manifest particular social construction or perception of a longstanding cultural ideal in earlier images? The manner in which upper class sitters fit into the same type or within a similar social construct are presented trans-historically creating the possibility of obtaining a better understanding of what made the value system of the period of 1890-1910 so remarkable. In some cases within this thesis, portraits of the sitter's ancestors will be used to delineate differences and demonstrate some form of continuity. Though Sargent's allusions to past works are of interest to all of the portraits in his oeuvre, those meant to directly respond to a previous familial piece provide the opportunity for deeper scrutiny. In both cases, as Prettejohn argues, the duplication of certain visual elements are just as important as those that were changed or what modern conventions were employed.[39] This careful choice of visual continuity is reflective of the generational adherence to broader ideals and value systems within specific nationalistic contexts.

When using Banta's definition of type along with this methodology it becomes apparent that the different depictions of Sargent's portrait sitters are not based only on the sitter's nationality. Instead the specific 'type' of the sitter is chosen for what it *represented* to the audiences within the sitter's country of residence. The type assigned to each sitter is based on specific nationalistic connotations of these figures and symbols of these types are apparent in their representations. If anything, Sargent had to treat his sitters differently based on nationalistic lines due to these differing value based receptions. This perception and reaction to specific areas of social upheaval will be explored in the individual chapters of this text.

The structure of each chapter, with the exception of the first whose deviation from this format will be explained later, is designed to discuss two portraits in depth. A similar methodology is utilised in Sidlauskas's *Body, Place and Self* and just as she contends that while this 'approach might seem quixotic or, at best, idiosyncratic…it is necessary to bring

[39] Elizabeth Prettejohn, *Interpreting Sargent*, (New York: Stewart Tabori and Chang, 1999), 7.

out most fully what I thought the paintings could reveal,' so do I believe that depth of compositional analysis coupled with a breadth of primary and secondary interpretive sources will bring about the most comprehensive understanding of notions of national and personal identities.[40] As previously mentioned, it would not be possible to include in this thesis thorough reading of every portrait in Sargent's oeuvre that fits the date and nationality criteria. Instead, using the data generated early on in the research for this thesis, a selection was made to ensure that each portrait contains more statistically common elements as well as remarkably unique permutations.

Throughout the text tables, charts, and graphs will be employed in order to better explain these trends and give the reader a clear understanding as to why these specific portraits were chosen. As a result the selected images are in line with Sargent's portraits of the same sitter 'type' referencing a societal concern, while reacting to the time and place they were intended to hang. Each chapter is centred on two case studies, usually with each case study focusing on a single portrait—one American and one British—to address a social topic that caused concern in both nations. In a separate section at the end of each chapter the two primary portraits will be placed in dialogue with one another and unique nation specific attributes between the selected portraits will be synthesised.

Four chapters make up this text, the first two chapters of which will focus on family structures and the institution of marriage. Beginning with these two categories starts the thesis at the most basic reasons for human relationships: a genealogical bond and the perpetuation of that line. This is the root of later formed societies and because of this crucial role the protection of such entities is at the forefront of social concern in both Britain and the United States at the turn of the century.[41] In starting with these known interpersonal relationships, the scope is drawn out from the individuals represented on the canvas, thereby garnering broader interpretive possibilities in relation to societal considerations.[42] In particular, group portraits provide direct compositional references to

[40] Sidlauskas, *Body, Place and Self*, xi.
[41] For Victorian British male individualism, see Susie L Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians: Politics, Culture, and Society in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London and New York: Routledge: 2012), 133. For the emerging female British individualism of the period see, Deborah Cherry, *Beyond the Frame: Feminism and Visual Culture, Britain 1850-1900* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 153. David Lubin writes extensively of this individualism in American popular conscious and literature, respectively in *Picturing a Nation*, 87-88 and *Act of Portrayal*, 2.
[42] David Lubin, and Andrew Stephenson take similar approaches in their work for personal, and gendered national expressions respectively while this thesis will synthesize those two elements.

such interpersonal connections and are included in the first two chapters. Class structures will be referenced, as it is an important factor delineating the upper class in Britain where the aristocracy was present and in the United States where no such titles existed. All of this is undertaken to fit the individuals represented in the portraits and their families, whether through blood or matrimony, into a wider ideological national dialogue.

The aim of the latter two chapters is to analyse individual portraits pertaining to gender identity. These chapters will offer a more individualistic expression of self within the confines of gender, but without fitting into those larger social institutions and corresponding visual considerations. These chapters, therefore, emphasise the individual's gendered relationship with wider national society without directly addressing specific interpersonal relationships. This was a time period of more pronounced individualism, particularly in the United States, and as such the representing those individualised characteristics is of great importance. This individualism and personal freedom, it was feared, would blur gender lines and gendered responsibilities.[43] Concentrating on gender considerations last builds on the relationships established in the first two chapters and fits it all into a wider picture of the concerns and ideals of turn-of-the-century cosmopolitan high society as well as nation specific popular perception.

Chapter 1 'Restless Families: Social Status and Familial Presentation' assesses how changing socio-economic conditions influenced the upper-class family structures in Britain and the United States. How the portraits and the family members were received by contemporary society in light of this evolution of social status, where money begins to outweigh family lineage as a means of prestige, is demonstrated visually through portraits of British Wertheimer and American Vanderbilt family with particular attention given to the nature of Sargent's commission for each family. This chapter is the only one that varies from the two-portrait structure seen throughout the thesis. The entirety of these portrait commissions, the largest single portrait commissions Sargent received in Britain and America, are valuable interpretive tools to read social expectations on upper-class families as great compositional variety can be found in the commissions due to their size.[44]

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[43] For gender concerns in America see Sylvia D Hoffert, 'Chapter Nine: The New Woman and the New Man at the Turn of the Century (1890-1920),' in *A History of Gender in America: Essays, Documents and Articles* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2003), 283-319. For gender concerns in Britain see Steinbach, 132-141.

[44] With twelve portraits painted, the Wertheimer commission was the largest granted to Sargent. The Vanderbilt family portraits referenced in this thesis consists of the six portraits of the

The first section of Chapter 1, 'The Commissioners: *Asher Wertheimer* and *George Washington Vanderbilt*' will focus on the portraits of the two men who called upon Sargent to paint their families and the lasting legacy the large collection of images afforded them. The subsequent section 'New British and Old American: Reconfiguring the Wertheimer and Vanderbilt Portrait Commissions Within the Context of Cultural Systems' places the rest of the family portraits created in these commissions into dialogue with perceived class restrictions and familial expectations at the turn of the century. It can be argued that in the Wertheimer and Vanderbilt commissions that the families were re-appropriating elements traditionally reserved for the aristocracy though neither families held such positions. This chapter will explore the different methods Sargent uses to infuse these noble elements into nouveau-riche portraits and how the resulting images were received in their respective nations.

In the second chapter, 'Nervous Matrimony: Challenges to the Doctrine of Separate Spheres,' the changing nature of the institution of marriage in Britain and America is discussed. Beginning with contemporary accounts regarding the prevailing doctrine of separate spheres in relation to marriage, this section will address challenges to this system and the resulting tension within marriages of the period. Why was there a crisis of marriage at this time and how can that be inferred from Sargent's portraits? Illustrations and other widely disseminated printed material will be referenced in order to interpret these issues and relate two very different responses. The first section titled 'The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocratic Marriage' will examine *The Marlborough Family* (fig. 25) as a reflection of the clinging to the status quo in face of shifting tides, which was a popular response of British aristocratic families in crisis during this period. The contrasting American visual response is found in *Mr and Mrs I.N. Phelps Stokes* (fig. 26), the central portrait in 'The New Woman, the New Man and the New Marriage in America.' This reaction was a near complete overhaul of intra-marital relationships. The reasons for the differing reactions will be addressed on based on nationalistic terms as well as socio-economic factors.

Vanderbilt family and employees that hang at the Biltmore Estate in Asheville, North Carolina owned by George Washington Vanderbilt. One of those portraits, *Mrs Benjamin Kissam* (fig. 24) was not originally meant to be included with the others at Biltmore and does not seem to have been commissioned by George as the others were, but is included due to its subsequent placement.

Chapter 3 'Femininity on Edge: Reformulating the Cult of True Womanhood' expands on the gender issues brought up in the Chapter 2. This section will serve as an analysis of prevailing notions of the feminine and their representations in visual media. An assessment of the nineteenth century notion of the 'Cult of True Womanhood' will serve as its starting point, and each section will trace the rejection and/or adherence to these tenets in the ascribed portrait. For clarity's sake, this chapter will focus rather heavily on other images in Sargent's oeuvre to come to a consensus on trends for the portrayal of women in this period. In the first section 'Constructing the Natural American Woman: *Daisy Leiter*' the concept of innate American qualities found in a nation of immigrants will be heavily interrogated.[45] As later art historical texts largely leave nationality out of American portraiture, primary sources will be referenced to sort out why this was an interpretive point of interest in the 1890s. *Daisy Leiter* (fig. 45) this assertive self-assured American woman will be contrasted with the more traditionally passive and reverential British lady found in chapter's second section 'Ideal Domesticity and the British Woman: *The Duchess of Portland*'. In this case study, the domestic sphere and the upper classes will be examined to better understand Sargent's portrayal of British femininity and how the widening of the domestic sphere within upper-class society influenced early Victorian feminine expressions.

Barbara Cain's assertion in 'When did the Victorian Period End?' that at this time empire and masculinity were tethered together creates the starting point for the fourth and final chapter, 'The Age of Imperialistic Masculinity: Military Might, Capitalist Power and Manliness.'[46] Just how is the 'manliness' of empire depicted in portraits of individual imperialists? This chapter confront this question while addressing issues of individualised representations and perceptions of masculinity at the decline of one world power and the ascension of another. 'The Regalia of Masculinity and the Militarism of Empire' places *Sir Frank Swettenham* (fig. 66) in conversation with other images of British imperialists to relate compositional commonalities to the role empire played in British masculine identity. *President Theodore Roosevelt* (fig. 67) serves as the starting point for the final case study 'Masculine Simplicity and the Business of Imperialism.' This section will focus on American masculine ideals of self-determination and isolation in the face of the young nation's first real foray into imperialism. This chapter will most heavily look to personal

[45] Hughes, *American Visions*, 4-5.
[46] Barbara Cain, 'When Did the Victorian Period End? Questions of Gender and Generation.' *Journal of Victorian Culture* vol. 11, no. 2 (Autumn 2006), 321.

notions of the gendered self, relying on writings of each portrait sitter to best express his masculine identity that Sargent would translate in oil.

Though each chapter interrogates a differing social or cultural factor and a range of interdisciplinary texts will be utilised, the portraits chosen for each case study are the crux of my interpretation. It has been written as an art historical text with, as Sidlauskas writes, 'the rewards of deep, even obsessive, looking' at the forefront.[47] The meticulous reading of images and words will bring these portraits to a new interpretive space, away from the standard and rather rote accepted interpretations. Sargent's British and American portraits will be re-examined based on individualistic criteria in dialogue with the cultural and art historical past, just as the sitters portrayed in these compositions grappled with unique attributes to formulate their own notion of self within a larger codified social space. From the initial question that served as the kernel for this project, it has become apparent that the cyclical dialogue between sitter, artist and viewer is of critical import throughout this whole interpretation. As Beerbohm asserts, when venturing to understand British and American cultural identity during the turn of the century, Sargent's role in this cycle cannot be discounted.

[47] Sidlauskas, *Body, Place and Self*, xiv.

CHAPTER 1

Restless Families: Social Status and Familial Presentation

Social status and the portraits of John Singer Sargent had become intertwined during the fin de siècle. Sargent's friend and noted caricaturist Max Beerbohm captured this fervour for Sargent's portraits in the drawing *31 Tite Street* (fig. 3). In this illustration a queue of fashionably dressed women waits outside of Sargent's Tite Street studio, while Sargent can be seen inside surveying the action from a window. The women wear furs, hats and even a crown, as they await for the master painter to call them in so he can create a likeness that may be placed among other treasured works of art. A portrait by Sargent was among the ultimate status symbols of the period for the cosmopolitan elite. These images, argues Sarah Burns, had 'unconcealed commodity status' and were, therefore, prized more for who painted them than what the portrait actually looked like.[1] Such 'Sargent-mania' was not localised to the area surrounding his studio, but was present all over the United States and Great Britain. Though Sargent's Tite Street studio was in London, many of his sitters travelled from the States to sit to him in this location and Sargent painted others while abroad. The two families that offered Sargent his largest British and American portrait commissions, the London-based Wertheimer and the New Yorker Vanderbilt, had Sargent come to them in their respective homes. No matter where Sargent captured the likeness of his sitters, the cultural and social structures of the sitters' homeland dictated certain elements of the resulting compositions.

When seeking to understand cultural identity, social and familial structures become important components of the discussion. The broadest element within a national social structure, the one that most fundamentally impacts the interpersonal relationships amongst biologically unrelated peoples, is class structure. The topic of class was chosen as part of the first chapter because of its relevance as a building block for this thesis. When discussing Sargent's work in regard to social history, one needs to have an understanding of the hierarchy of status within Britain and America during this period in order to interpret the visual references he makes to such issues. However, as the portraits discussed are society paintings and Sargent's patrons were, with few exceptions, from the highest echelons of British and American society, the focus of this investigation on social

[1] Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist*, 62.

structures will be augmented with a discussion of family relationships in the upper classes. During the period of 1890 to 1910 the upper classes, in addition to being rich and powerful, were also tastemakers; they ruled high society and their influence trickled into the general population. Yet restlessness regarding the class structures was pervasive throughout this period, even for these privileged few.[2] Amongst the highest ranks of Anglo-American society were social divides, unique within their respective home nations and cultural values.

Within America and Britain the class implications were quite different. During the late Victorian and Edwardian eras in Britain the historically rigid class structures were lessening. It has been described as 'a time when big business was seeking social ambitions, when the Jewish community was being recognised, and when the aristocracy was having their final fling.'[3] The Wertheimer family, with its patriarch the London art dealer Asher (fig. 4), was such an Anglo-Jewish family on the rise. Described as both a plutocracy and meritocracy, this era was spearheaded by the efforts of the future King Edward VII to bring new ideas and people into court, based on the influence of money instead of titles.[4] Americans, harkening back to the principles laid out during the nation's founding, were much more resistant to the idea of a powerful privileged upper class akin to the aristocracy of Europe. However, that does not mean that such a group of people were absent from the American class system. Formed by men who used industry to advance the financial and social position of both them and their families, this group was known colloquially as 'robber barons,' indicating the public distaste for method and accumulation of this vast wealth. The patriarchs of these families formed kinds of 'new American dynasties' making their family names synonymous with grand wealth and a particular capitalist enterprise.[5] The Vanderbilt family possessed such a high status. This American dynasty was found by Cornelius 'the Commodore' Vanderbilt upon making his fortune in shipping and railroads in the 1850s. A descendent of the Commodore, George Washington Vanderbilt (fig. 5), would commission Sargent to paint members of the family as well as the men responsible for building his country estate Biltmore. The restlessness of these upper class families in

[2] Stephen F Eisenman eta al, *Nineteenth Century Art: A Critical History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 7.
[3] Cayzer, *Changing Perceptions*, 4-5.
[4] Jamie Camplin, *The Rise of the Plutocrats: Wealth and Power in Edwardian England* (London: Constable and Robinson Limited, 1978), 101-110.
[5] Neil Harris, ed. *The Land of Contrasts 1880-1901* (New York: George Braziller, 1970), 17-19.

regard to the perception of their precariously unique and monetarily based social status is another influential factor in the compositional structures of Sargent's portraits.

Much has been written about social status during this time, most notably in Great Britain. Thorstein Veblen wrote a scathing and entertaining review of high society, both old and new, in *Theory of the Leisure Class*. David Cannadine also traces the status of the aristocracy and the changing nature of the upper classes in Britain in *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, while Joseph Mordaunt Crook writes about homes of the newly moneyed in his text *The Rise of the Nouveaux Riches*. Within the States, Neil Harris compiled a selection of contemporary texts in *The Land of Contrasts, 1880-1901* and outlines the uncertainty of the time in relation to reformulating an American identity. These texts provide key terms and define prevailing concepts in Britain and the States that will be used throughout this chapter.

The Wertheimer and Vanderbilt families were chosen for this first chapter because of their unique positions in larger class issues as well as their relationships to Sargent. The Wertheimer family, that of German-Jewish extraction and British nouveau-riche status, gave Sargent his largest ever portrait commission. He painted the twelve family members in as many unique portraits, some groupings, others individually. He developed a rapport with family members, painted many family friends, and was thoroughly entrenched in their social circle.[6] However, the Vanderbilt family, while being among the most influential and important in the States, were not similar intimates of Sargent. He did not develop a warm social relationship with the family nor, it seems, did he move in the same circles. The types of commissions are also vastly different. Asher Wertheimer, in a move indicative of his close relationship with Sargent, gave him a rather open commission. The artist was allowed to paint the family with great artistic freedom. George Washington Vanderbilt was much more formal in his mandates to the artist. Sargent painted a total of twelve images containing members of the extended Vanderbilt family but only five of those twelve were commissioned by George, and six of Sargent's portraits with Vanderbilt connections hang in George's home at Biltmore. Though this was Sargent's largest single American portrait commission, it was half the size that Asher received. Who was painted where and how all relate directly back to the interpersonal dealings between Sargent and the men commissioning these images.

[6] See Norman L. Kleeblatt, 'Sargent's Wertheimers/Wertheimer's Sargents' in Kleeblatt, *John Singer Sargent: Portraits of the Wertheimer Family*, 12-20.

In addition to being the largest portrait commissions Sargent received from their respective nations, the resulting portraits of the Wertheimer and Vanderbilt families can be placed in dialogue with one another because of the common thread of their circumstances. Neither family's social status adheres to the expected class structures so commonly found and expected in their respective home countries. In the States, where dynastic families ideologically should not have flourished, there still was the push of old money modesty against new money vulgarity in terms of art.[7] The respectability of established families, such as the Vanderbilt family, against the nouveaux riches is a fascinating comparison. Concurrently in Britain, the bastion of tradition and inheritance, a new system of financial meritocracy was being brought to the forefront.[8] Families such as the Wertheimers were becoming more and more accepted into the high society fold, some even earning a peerage. By choosing these families, each unique in regard to what was expected based on the established ideological class considerations of their countries of origin, a rich comparison can be made based both on these terms and on the portrait compositions themselves. The patriarchs who granted the commissions, the resulting images and how they were eventually displayed are intertwined with such considerations of social status. If having one portrait by Sargent was a symbol of wealth and social standing, the implications of commissioning a series of portraits from the artist are even greater assertions of a prestigious position.

The resulting compositions from these commissions vary greatly while still possessing cohesion of presentation. Sargent was able to create a unity in the commissions by relying on specific artistic styles and traditions in each. For the Vanderbilt family, Americans attempting to cast themselves as a sort of quasi-aristocratic family, Sargent was more reliant on allusions to grand manner portraiture. For the more urban and modern social status found in the Wertheimer family, Sargent used compositional elements that were more modern and avant-garde. Additionally, as Asher was an art dealer himself, more subtle allusions could be made and greater stylistic risks were taken. Though the individual portraits composed should and will be discussed individually, looking at the commissions as a whole narrative set needs also to be undertaken in order to categorize these

[7] Maria Elena Beszek, *Pin-up Grrrls: Feminism, Sexuality, Popular Culture* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 10.
[8] Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, 91.

commissions and collections of Sargent's work as larger entities, with their own commentaries on social status, family and class structures.

This chapter is structured differently from the three that will succeed it. Instead of using two nation specific case studies, the format will first place portraits of differing origins, the British *Asher Wertheimer* and the American *George Washington Vanderbilt*, in dialogue as the commissioners of these portrait groups. Part 2 then analyses the locations these images hung and a selection of other paintings also commissioned by the namesakes of these portraits. Most, but not all, of the portraits created within the commissions will be examined individually and within the context of the entire commission of which they are a part. Systems of representation, class and the family will be evaluated within these perimeters with the aim of understanding the visual elements that Sargent incorporated into each portrait commission.

Part 1

The Commissioners: *Asher Wertheimer* and *George Washington Vanderbilt*

Asher Wertheimer and George Washington Vanderbilt have little in common aside from granting John Singer Sargent his largest commission of British and American portraits, respectively. Asher was the British-born son of a German Jewish immigrant and spent his adult life hard at work as an art dealer to support a lavish lifestyle for his large family. He and his wife had twelve children ten, of whom survived into adulthood. His portrait (fig. 4) is the first of Sargent's visual depictions of his large nuclear family. By contrast, George was an American man of leisure who had inherited a fortune upon the death of his father, William Henry Vanderbilt, five years earlier. William had himself inherited the money from George's grandfather Cornelius who secured the family fortune with shrewd business deals about forty years before Sargent painted George (fig. 5). Unwed at the time he was painted, George and his wife would be married in 1898 and have one daughter. The American Vanderbilt family history was more aligned to cultural structures of hereditary dynasties and supremacy of lineage commonly associated with European aristocracy than typical within the States. Interestingly, the British Asher's journey from the son of an immigrant to a wealthy businessman harkens to the idealised 'American dream,' a term that has long been imbedded within the cultural consciousness within the United States, that a person can through self-motivation and hard work become a financial success no

matter what their socio-economic origins.[9] The reversal of the expected is also referenced compositionally in Sargent's portraits. The resulting portraits *Asher Wertheimer* and *George Washington Vanderbilt* are visually comparable paintings despite these biographical and cultural discrepancies, and the allusions in the pieces further subvert expectations.

Asher Wertheimer presents the viewer with a composition that remains open for interpretation. The portrait, painted between 1897 and 1898, shows the art dealer in dark interior space. Blacks and browns dominate the scene, as Asher's dark suit recedes into the shadows of the darkly lit space. At his right knee one is able to make out a black poodle, his beloved Noble, whose pink tongue aids in locating the canine. Light emanating from the top right of the canvas shines diagonally across the figure of Asher, illuminating his forehead, nose and his extended left hand. Holding a cigar, Asher uses this appendage to gesture towards the viewer, a motion that favours his left side while causing the right to be pushed back into the shadow. His right hand is placed on the back of his hip, just below the pocket where a gold watch chain is visible. Reading his gesture adds to the complications of the piece. Is it aggressive movement to an outsider or a familiar motion to a friend? His eyes look out of the canvas but do not directly engage with the viewer. Instead they focus at some point up and to the figure's right. Sargent paints an expression that is at once is engaged and serene. The figure of Asher appears to interact with whomever has entered the room. Chin down, eyes up and mouth pursed as if waiting for a turn to speak, Asher Wertheimer is presented as a direct man and complicit partner in the making of this portrait.

Painted in 1890, *George Washington Vanderbilt* shares tonal similarity with *Asher Wertheimer* but very little of the gestural ambiguity of the later image. Sargent again employs mostly blacks and browns to create the costume and background in which the sitter is placed. Much like Asher's cigar, George's right hand is engaged with an object,

[9] It is thought that the term 'American dream' was first written in 1931 by the American writer and historian James Truslow Adams; he defined it as 'that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. It is a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, and too many of us ourselves have grown weary and mistrustful of it. It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position' and it is this definition that will be used within the rest of this text. James Truslow Adams, *The Epic of America* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1931), 214-215.

this time a book. The ends of pages of the book are dyed red, a colour which adds a bit of contrast and vibrancy unlike the more monochromatic composition of *Asher Wertheimer*. Unlike Asher's gesture towards the viewer, George recoils with book in hand, text resting on his right shoulder and left arm crossed. The result is the placement of his open left hand just below the right elbow. This stance, combined with the placement of the body on an angle resting on the stone detail, causes a closed off and isolating pose. George does not appear to be complicit entirely in his interaction with the audience. Instead of being actively engaged as *Asher Wertheimer* presents its portrait sitter to be, George Vanderbilt appears caught off guard just after a moment of personal repose. A noted bibliophile, George's relationship with books was widely known, as was his reserved demeanour.[10] Perhaps it was his strident admiration for books and his distaste that his attention was drawn away from the text in his hand that causes this pose and the disengaged expression Sargent captured.

Visually the portraits are alike as they are two standing men dressed in dark suits portrayed in similarly dark spaces. This dark costuming can be read as referential to the modernity of the period, emerging consumerism that marked the nineteenth century, or mobility of social classes.[11] These two men, as will be discussed later in this section, were part of this cultural and social 'newness'. However, Asher Wertheimer and George Washington Vanderbilt were at very different stages of life when they sat to Sargent, a fact at which the painter shrewdly yet subtly alludes. Fifty-three year old Asher was celebrating his twenty-fifth wedding anniversary when he commissioned Sargent to paint him and his wife Flora in two companion portraits. George was a twenty-seven year old bachelor who had first commissioned Sargent to paint his mother two years before he sat for his portrait. The posture of the two men, Asher upright and direct and George slouched and retreating, are referential to the decades and life experiences that separate the two sitters.

The actual painting of *Asher Wertheimer* and *George Washington Vanderbilt* commenced at chronologically close, but quite different periods of Sargent's career. George's portrait was painted eight years before Asher's, catching Sargent as he was still ascending into the heights of fame in his work as a portraitist. Asher, on the other hand, made a clearly clever

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[10] Trevor Fairbrother, *John Singer Sargent and America*, A Garland Series: Outstanding Dissertations in the Fine Arts, Dissertation 1981 Boston University, (New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc, 1986), 159.
[11] John Harvey, *Men in Black* (London: Reaktion Books, 1995), 119 and 177.

business decision in choosing the extremely popular Sargent for his twelve family portraits.[12] The men's act of commissioning Sargent for these and other portraits demonstrates George and Asher's shared interest in collecting. Art dealer Asher knew the market well and purchased many works of art both fine and decorative for his family homes.[13] In addition to collecting art, George collected books and his vast library was his most prized possession.[14] Because of each of these men's documented interest in creating a legacy of objects, it is possible to read their portrait commissions as creating a sort of 'sub-collection' based around creating personal and family legacies.

While George is given a visual reference to this impetus for collecting, no such item appears in Asher's portrait. *Asher Wertheimer* is not, compositionally, an image of a man who is seeking to convey his status as an art dealer. There are no Grand Master paintings on the walls, no sculptures or any kind of detailed decorative art objects in the room that Asher is painted. Rather, the portrait itself by the esteemed Sargent becomes enough of a statement on the dealer's merits as an art connoisseur. Though both George and Asher's wealth is rooted in capitalist enterprise, only Asher is designed as a business or professional man. Wearing a suit and holding the cigar he could be as easily placed among the popular images of American tycoons of the period.[15] Cigar smoking in particular served as an important link between artist and sitter. The men were said to have bonded over their shared method of nicotine consumption, a passion also shared by King Edward VII amongst other wealthy British men of the period.[16] There are many photographs from the era that show the then Prince of Wales with cigar in hand or mouth, elevating the status of the object. Sargent is often, again in informal images, portrayed with a cigar. Rather surprisingly, there is a dearth of research on images containing cigars, meaning the interpretive possibilities of including the object have yet to be explored. Cigar smoking was a habit of the wealthy, those could afford the large cigar as opposed the more diminutive cigarette. It was also almost always a masculine pursuit, with smoking rooms as

[12] Lapine, 'Mixing Business with Pleasure,' 49.
[13] Ibid, 49-50.
[14] Peter Applebome, 'Arts in America: Dusting off the Pages of a Bookish Vanderbilt's Passion,' *New York Times*, (11 March 1999), 2.
[15] This is true within general conventions of the period, but no cigar is found elsewhere in Sargent's portrait oeuvre. Cigar holding or smoking business men are seen in images like For American men clothed in business attire within Table 9. American Men in Dark Business Suits, 1890-1910.
[16] Edmund Swinglehurst. *John Singer Sargent*. (San Diego: Thunderbay Press, 2001), 73.

a masculine space.[17] By creating the composition in an interior homosocial space, Sargent is able to reference an intimacy and informality of portrait presentation.

George Vanderbilt did not share a love for the cigar with or without its nineteenth-century modernist masculine connotations. Instead Sargent presents the railroad heir as an intellectual without such a vice. Posture slouched, arms bent and text in hand, a pose harkening to the British master Sir Joshua Reynolds and styled in the grand manner tradition of Diego Velázquez, Sargent has positioned George as a sort of man of letters, a writer, philosopher or even an artist.[18] Perhaps the primary function of this evocation of the intellectual is to distance George that from the origin of his wealth. He was a man of leisure, a man who could indulge in wholly intellectual pursuits because of the work done by previous generations. One who did not need to dirty his hands with unsavoury or tactical business dealings. He need not keep his hands busy at all, according to Veblen, George is of the particular group that is able to practice the highest status symbol, conspicuous leisure. Veblen writes that all men who undertake manual labour show weakness and subjugation to a master making the act of working itself debasing.[19] Wealth and power is not enough, one must also be able to avoid all work to demonstrate the highest social status.

To add to his collection of paintings, George commissioned another American expatriate artist, James McNeil Whistler, to paint his portrait in 1897. Finished in 1903, the resulting *George W. Vanderbilt* (fig. 6) presents a more predictable depiction of American upper-class men at the turn of the century than Sargent's interpretation of the sitter.[20] Whistler paints George as a full-length standing figure in a sparsely decorated room. The only real point of interest is a white baseboard on the wall at the left of the canvas. The black on black ambiguity of Sargent's portrait has been replaced with a clearly legible scene of greys, black and white. George is shown as very long and lean, a depiction typical in Whistler's portraits, and takes up the majority of the canvas. He is dressed in a dark formal

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[17] Randall Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), 314.
[18] For reference to similar works see Sir Joshua Reynolds *Sir Laurence Stern* (1760, National Portrait Gallery, London) and *Thomas Tomkins* (1789, City of London, London) and Diego Velázquez *Portrait of Juan Martínez Montañés* (1635-1636, Museu del Prado, Madrid).
[19] Thorenstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (London: George Allen & Unwin LTD, 1957), 36-37.
[20] This topic will be addressed more fully in Chapter 4 of this text. For more information see Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist*, particularly 31-65 and 175-179.

suit, white shirt and bow tie. He slightly leans back in this space, just to the left of where two walls meet. Whistler positions George's body at an angle, his right side back and left pushed forward, mimicking this corner. His left foot juts towards the viewer. A cane or baton is held across his thighs, creating a clear horizontal line for the eye to follow and breaking up the vertical linearity of the figure. George is shown with a placid expression and is styled as a mannequin, human in form but without many discernible traits. Veblen comments that the conspicuous consumption of commodities such as 'food, drink, narcotics, shelter, services, ornaments, apparel, weapons and accoutrements, amusements, amulets, and idols of divinities' perfectly complement conspicuous leisure.[21] Whistler's presentation of George casts him as the embodiment of this commoditised endeavour.

As with Sargent's depiction of George, Whistler does not style the sitter as a man of action or business. However, by replacing the book with a cane and changing the posture from recoiling to directly and openly facing the viewer, Whistler is able to make George a more empowered figure. Whistler's portrait has disregarded the introverted intellectualism of Sargent's depiction and replaced it with an aesthetic portrait of an assertive upper class American man, while retaining a symbol of the leisurely pursuits his status afforded him.

No other paintings of Asher Wertheimer are known to have survived, but two images of his brother Charles can be used for interpretive purposes in their stead. Charles and Asher were both sons of an art dealer and, though early on they worked together, the men later became competitors in the same lucrative London art market.[22] Due to these nearly identical biographies it becomes possible to analyse visually these three portraits within the same perimeters and methodology and come to a clear conclusion. Much like Asher, Charles made a shrewd business decision when choosing the artist to paint his own and his wife's portraits in 1888. His choice of Sir John Everett Millais resulted in a staid portrait that was also an artistic status symbol (fig. 7). Millais's portrait of Charles differs tonally and compositionally from Sargent's later portrait of Asher. Charles is presented as a three-quarter-length figure in contemporary navy blue business attire. He occupies a rather anonymous space with a brown marbled backdrop. While Asher gestures and leans forward as if in an attempt to interact with the viewer, Charles is more reserved, posture straight and arms folded behind his back. With his eyes gazing out of the canvas at the

[21] Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class*, 73.
[22] John Culme, *The Directory of Gold &Silversmiths, Jewellers & Allied Traders, 1838-1914 from the London Assay Office registers* vol. 2 (Woodbridge: Antique Collectors' Club, 2000), 477.

viewer, he engages directly with the audience. Millais's rendering of the relationship between subject and viewer lacks the forcefulness that Sargent evokes in his portrait of Asher while retaining the directness.

The second portrait of Charles is by a young William Orpen in 1904 (fig. 8) and further dilutes the interaction between audience and sitter. Though the subject's gaze does meet directly with that of the viewer, as a head and shoulders portrait Orpen's rendering is much more cropped than the previously discussed portraits. Like Millais, Orpen creates the image almost in a vacuum; the background with its various shades of brown offers no explanation of place. The facial positioning of this portrait is also similar to the earlier work by Millais, a two-thirds profile, while *Asher Wertheimer* is a near full face depiction. Orpen and Sargent choose the same positioning of the light source, at the top left of the canvas. However, Orpen's composition is much brighter; that coupled with the differing facial placement leads to a heavily shadowed rendering of Asher and nearly no shadows on the face of Charles. This placement can be explained as an attempt to present the best the sitters' status as Jewish men. Sargent depicts Asher head on, a position that draws less attention to 'Semitic' features of his nose and heavy eyelids and the shadows created from the light source additionally aids in this goal. Millais and Open do not use such orientation of head or shadows to detract from these features. Sargent, Millais and Orpen are all able to disguise the figures' lips, another 'Semitic' feature, with the facial hair of each of the men.[23] Sargent, Open and Millais do nothing to change the physiognomic characteristics themselves, yet Sargent is able to create the best pose to represent Asher for the man he is while being sensitive to these Semitic concerns.

In the contemporary press Asher's portrait received generally positive reviews with one critic writing it was 'surely one of the greatest portraits of the world' and another commenting that the portrait is a 'veritable triumph: the character so subtly caught, the lighting throughout so masterly, the handling so firm, clear and free, the whole so well imagined'.[24] Anti-Semitic language, however, was never far from discussion of the piece. A caricature in *Punch* magazine sums up these writings quite well. The illustration from which this detail of Asher comes (fig. 9) is a caricature of the many notable works from the

[23] For more information on Semitic features and Sargent's work see Prettejohn, *Interpreting Sargent*, 40.
[24] Robert Ross, 'The Wertheimer Sargents,' *Art Journal*, (January 1911), 7 and 'The Royal Academy Exhibition-I,' *Magazine of Art* (January 1898), 422.

Royal Academy exhibition of 1898. This illustration replaces the cigar in Asher's left hand with coins, and adds a caption 'What only *this* monish for that shplendid dog, Ma tear, it is ridic'lush!' mocking both Asher's portrait and his family's immigrant Jewish status by relying on stereotypes to convey his manner of speaking.[25] Those who argued against the merits of Sargent's portrait largely did not employ artistic terms but instead chose to focus on anti-immigrant and anti-Semitic language that was prevalent within England at this time.[26] Because of these views Sargent would not have wanted to show too many symbols of wealth in this portrait as such elements could create a stereotypical image of a wealthy Jewish businessman. Many of the anti-Semitic references made by contemporary writers relate to the previously mentioned vagueness of Asher's gesture. One viewer commented that the placement of Asher's left hand made it look as if he were counting shekels.[27] This anti-Semitism, coupled with the sitter's status as a nouveau-riche member of Victorian high society, meant that such portraits could be quite unnerving for the conservative established upper classes.

George Vanderbilt's portrait also engaged with notions of international identity. George's niece Consuelo Vanderbilt, the future Duchess of Marlborough, writes that with 'his dark hair and eyes, he might have been a Spaniard' and contemporary reviews of George's portrait also commented on a Spanish exoticism.[28] The painting was only exhibited once during George's lifetime, in 1890 at the Society of American Artists in New York City. It was shown along with the portrait *La Carmencita* (1890, Musée d'Orsay, Paris). Sargent's painting of the famous Spanish dancer and this portrait image could have had some influence on the reviewers' Spanish inferences. The reviewer for the *New York Times* likened Sargent's characterisation of George to portraits by Velázquez, but the structure was deemed wearisome. The book, however, 'is almost ready to be thrown in the observer's face, so prominent it is and so alert and vigorous is the gentleman's expression. One more word of criticism—and he explodes!'[29] The critic for *Art Amateur* gave a similarly mixed review. After asserting it 'falls little short of a caricature,' the critic states that the portrait achieves its high point with the red edge of the book matching his lips.[30]

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[25] 'Unconscious Humour at the Royal Academy,' *Punch* (7 May 1898), 205.
[26] Increased anti-Semitism in popular public surrounding the Boer War in particular see Stephenson, "Wonderful pieces of stage management," 235.
[27] I. N. P. Stokes, *Random Recollections of Happy Life* (New York: Privately Published, 1941), 118.
[28] Consuelo Vanderbilt Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold* (London: Hodder, 2012), 3.
[29] 'Society of American Artists,' *New York Times*, (28 April 1890), 4.
[30] 'The Society of American Artists Exhibition,' *Art Amateur*, 23 (June 1890), 3.

The reference to lips, an inferred temper and the allusions to Velázquez present a sensual, temperamental and exotic figure; not at all the sort of man George was known to be. Perhaps that is why it was exhibited only once.

George might have avoided presenting this image to public scrutiny due to the connotations of his name and public perceptions about his family. A caricature of his father in *Puck* (fig. 10) uses a play-on-words to describe him as a modern Colossus of (Rail) Roads, evoking the imposing wonder of the ancient world. This cartoon was an attack against the railroad trust formed between William, Cyrus W Field, the figure toward the bottom left, and Jay Gould, shown on the bottom right. The three hold the reigns over the entirety of the railway system, tracks, trains and even stations. A sign in the foreground and a flag over the station outline just how much control these men and their corporations had over the rail industry. The sign reads 'All freight seeking the seaboard MUST pass here and pay any tolls we demand.' And the tracks beneath this Colossus do extend to a seascape in the background. These 'giants of industry' use their money to control whether or not the trains operate, prices for transit and could very easily cripple the national infrastructure with this control.

Illustrations such as this convey the increasing distrust the American public had for the nation's wealthiest citizens. The large socio-economic disparity created by the formation of an extraordinarily wealthy upper class created a system of social barriers that many did not know how to reconcile with the mythology of the egalitarian America.[31] This uncertainty and restlessness in regards to social structures was at times directed back to the most 'aristocratic' of American families, such as the Vanderbilt family, who used their surname and fiscal means to impose their will regarding American policy. Comparing the pose of the Colossus with Sargent's rendering of George, one finds virtually no similarities. This contrast between the robust assertive William Henry and his thin withdrawn son is a compositional attempt to distance the younger Vanderbilt from this unfavourable view. George possesses no visual links to his family's lineage; instead he is presented as an individualised figure with a book to stand in for his own personal interests. This likely has to do with public perception of members of the Vanderbilt family as demonstrated in such images. However, not all financially successful Americans were

[31] Harris, *The Land of Contrasts 1800-1901*, 14-15.

similarly scrutinised. The public treated other figures who made their fortunes without resorting to trusts or by flaunting their wealth more favourably.

Joseph Pulitzer (fig. 11) is a portrait painted by Sargent of another wealthy American man that serves as an excellent comparative image for both *George Washington Vanderbilt* and *Asher Wertheimer*. The sitter, publishing magnate and Hungarian immigrant Joseph Pulitzer, is shown in a seated position. At fifty-seven years old he is close in age to Asher and shares a similar Jewish background. The two men are dressed in a dark suits and even share in the detail of the chain of a pocket watch placed across their waists. Both men are painted in dark interior spaces but Joseph's portrait lacks the heavy shadows of Asher's composition. Sargent may not have employed such heavy shadows because he felt no need to disguise or draw attention away from Semitic features in Pulitzer's portrait likely due to differing receptions of Jewish immigrants in the States and Britain.[32] Though both men were Jewish and 'self-made' members of cosmopolitan high society, the cultural bias on their nation of residence impacted the manner in which Sargent created their likenesses.

Like George, Joseph is placed in retracting pose. Though presented in a more upright position than the leaning Vanderbilt, Sargent uses a pose that has Joseph's left hand lightly resting on his face and positions his body as if the sitter is turning away from the viewer. The sitter does not meet the viewer's gaze but instead looks down and to the right of the audience. His expression is quite placid and restrained. No reviewer could comment on any lingering aggression as they had done with the painting of George. Instead, Sargent presents an older world-weary man who built up a publishing empire on his own. Joseph's right hand holdings a riding crop, an allusion to how years of work allowed him to earn the status as a man of leisure. Unlike George, however, the toil required to gain this lifestyle came with personal consequences to the man's mental and physical health. Pulitzer suffered a breakdown from overwork that had left him blind. Joseph wanted to be painted in an unflinchingly honest way saying, 'I want to be remembered just as I really am with all my strain and suffering there.'[33] Strenuous labour and hard work of the individual toward bettering oneself are founding principles of the American dream, and Pulitzer

[32] For an aristocratic British interpretation of Jewish new money see Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the Aristocracy*, 28 and for Jewish immigrant issues see Juliet Steyn, 'The Complexities of Assimilation in the 1906 Whitechapel Art Gallery Exhibition "Jewish Art and Antiquities,"' *Oxford Art Journal* vol. 13, no. 2 (1990), 44-50. For American opinion see Oscar Handlin, 'American Views of the Jew at the Opening of the Twentieth Century,' *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, vol. 40 no. 4 (June 1951), 323-344.

[33] Don C. Seitz, *Joseph Pulitzer: His Life and Letters* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1924), 11.

maintained it to be a noble enterprise. When captured by Sargent, however, it becomes a method demonstrating the toll such work can have on those who are not fortunate to be born into a family with a favourable surname.

Though his ascension to high society came at a devastating physical price, Joseph was a person who had a more traditionally stable social position in his adopted homeland than the Vanderbilt or Wertheimer families had in theirs. As outlined above, Sargent uses compositional elements in Joseph's portrait to emphasise difference of national allegiance between him and Asher and discrepancies in his family's and the Vanderbilt's socio-economic histories. George came from an 'old moneyed' American family, and this distinction set them apart as a sort of 'new class'. They had been an American dynasty for less than fifty years when George first commissioned Sargent, a timeframe that would have still given them the 'nouveau riche' signifier had they been living in Europe. However, the immediate recognition of their surname with a specific industry and the inheritance of vast wealth over multiple generations gave them a distinction only a few other American families had. Those who possessed such family lines and seemingly endless riches, such as the Vanderbilt, Rockefeller, Guggenheim and DuPont families, it can be argued, served the function of a kind of surrogate nobility within the States.[34] These families had enough wealth that their descendants need not work, had great tracts of land and palatial homes, access to the best educational institutions as well as having great influence over matters of government. The Wertheimer family were Jewish immigrant new money, achieving a level of success and prosperity as many aristocratic families in Britain were financially failing. Yet, the desire for a lasting legacy becomes one area where all three men can be viewed equally. Joseph created a legacy with his endowment of the Pulitzer prizes, one of the most prestigious awards in journalism. George built Biltmore, a rural estate styled after European manors, in Asheville, North Carolina to serve as his lasting achievement. Asher bequeathed his twelve portraits commission from Sargent to the nation in order to place his family in a museum amongst the historic British dynasties. All of these men turned outside of themselves and their circumstances to leave something larger for posterity.

The notions of legacy and history relate directly to the impetuses for both portrait commissions. Asher and George would have understood the traditional prestige associated with large portrait commissions and entered into contracts with Sargent in order to situate

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[34] Matthew Josephson, *The Robber Barons: The Great American Capitalists, 1861-1901*, A Harvest Book (San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Inc., 1962), 32 and 315.

themselves within the elite aristocratic context surrounding such images. If they had wanted to become actual members of the nobility, it would have been difficult, but possible for both men to gain a title. The Astor family, wealthy Americans who renounced their citizenship, did just that. Many Jewish men were obtaining titles for work in the arts, diplomacy and industry. However, as art critic John Russell wrote, 'quicker than the Home Office, [Sargent] naturalised those who would otherwise have lingered in the between-world where class, nationality, money and money's provenance, were matters to be raised without a qualm. For the reassurance-collector there was no other painter in the country.' [35] This opinion, shared by a quite a few contemporaries, meant that Sargent's portraits served as a way to integrate the Wertheimer and Vanderbilt families with that aristocratic history without going through the formal procedures to gain a title, arguably the same result without the added difficulties.

While Sargent used traditional tropes of masters such as Velázquez and Reynolds to style George as an aristocratic man, he relied more heavily on contemporary practices similar to those utilised by Orpen and Millais in his painting of Asher. This was likely due to the national contexts in which the images were displayed. George's portrait was only exhibited in the States, meaning the cultural connotations of such allusions were quite different. The location of Asher's portrait coupled with his status as a marginalised nouveau-riche figure means more direct allusions to grand manner portraiture or British portrait traditions could have been met with hostility from the critics and general public. The more conservative form of integration for both men was to trust Sargent, a noted arbiter of cosmopolitan tastes, to mediate between such compositional and cultural elements and create lasting portraits of themselves and their families' histories.

Part 2

New British and Old American: Reconfiguring the Wertheimer and Vanderbilt Portrait Commissions Within the Context of Cultural Systems

The Vanderbilt and Wertheimer commissions extend well beyond the portraits of their patriarchs. The large number of portraits created at the men's behest includes images that

[35] John Russell, 'Art' in ed. Simon Nowell-Smith, *Edwardian England* (London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 333.

belong to the international consciousness. They were displayed publically, some only shown for a price, either during the men's lifetimes or after. These Sargent-specific collections were referenced in the previous section and will be explored more in depth through the compositional unity found throughout the resulting portraits. Asher Wertheimer and George Vanderbilt as well-regarded patrons of the arts and collectors used their shrewd knowledge of the art market to select Sargent as the painter of these canvases. Asher, in particular, was regarded as 'one of the first to recognize Sargent's ability and future,' a statement which implied the art dealer was a barometer of critical reception if not a tastemaker himself.[36] Asher carefully thought through this process and the exhibition of the resulting images in his home was also a clear curatorial choice. George, however, allowed those portraits from his commission to be scattered because their final place of display, his grand home Biltmore, was not completed for years after their commissions. Display and unity within these commissions, in addition to the size of the collections, set them apart from other works created during Sargent's career, but together serve to reference these individual family units in Britain and America.

The locations in which these families lived and houses in which the portraits hung and where the men who commissioned them lived are strikingly different. The Wertheimer family's home at 8 Connaught Place in London, a formerly aristocratic area that had been transformed during the 1880s into an area of new money dwelling, with an emerging Jewish community present on the street. Sir Fitzroy Kelly, a nobleman descended of a generations-old titled family, was the previous owner of number eight who used the house while in London to serve in Parliament. After Kelly's death in 1880 the house was sold by his heirs to the Wertheimer family, and it was in this space Sargent's portraits hung[37]. The house itself was not a freestanding structure. Built as a mansion in the style of an upscale terrace house, it shared walls with neighbours, and lacked any grand outdoor space (fig. 12). It was, however, in a desirable location for the urban life lead by the Wertheimer family members.

The Wertheimer portraits were made for and at times in the space of 8 Connaught Place. Instead of relying wholly on the setting of the studio for the Wertheimer sittings, Sargent

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36 'Asher Wertheimer, '*American Art News* vol. 16 no. 37 (14 September 1918), 4.

37 According to birth records for the Wertheimer children, the family would have moved to 8 Connaught Place after the birth of Conway in 1881 and before Almina was born in 1886. No sale records for the house have been recovered.

could go to the family home to experience the family in the comfort of their normal surroundings and either paint them in this comfort or take those memories back into the studio setting.[38] Domesticity and comfort, the home as an oasis and sanctuary from the perils of modern city life, was a prevailing ideology within the Victorian era. Susan Sidlauskas argues that such domestic interiors are a metaphor for nineteenth-century bourgeois identity.[39] Bringing the home into this discussion, the interior space occupied by the urban dweller or a certain social class is of critical importance when addressing this commission as a whole. What grouped together, these spaces inform the viewer of a dynamic, personal view of self within the larger urban social sphere their sitters were navigating.

Contrastingly, George Washington Vanderbilt built the rural Biltmore (fig. 13) in the style of European country estates. Not relying on pre-existing structure, he was creating a reimagining of these homes to his own specifications. Biltmore was built in Asheville, North Carolina far from his family's established homes in New York City and Rhode Island. Putting a geographic distance between this new building and the established properties demonstrates how far of an aesthetic departure the southern estate was to be. It would serve as part working farm, part grand country estate in the style of continental European manor homes, particularly the 'chateaus of the French Renaissance.'[40] The grounds, therefore, served as an important distinction between it and the other homes the family owned which lacked the purpose or allusions of this structure. The work on the house commenced in 1889 and took six years to complete, with the finished structure decorated using fine Renaissance artworks, more recent commissioned works, hundreds of volumes of texts and expansive decorative pieces. Sargent's portraits were scattered throughout the house, with only one or two hanging in a given space.[41] No singular 'Sargent gallery' could be found in Biltmore, his works were instead placed throughout the building amongst other works of George's expansive collection.

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[38] It is known that at least *Ena and Betty* (fig. 20), *Essie, Ruby and Ferdinand* (fig. 21), and, most likely, *Hylda* (1901, Tate Gallery, London) and *Almina* (fig. 23) were painted at Connaught Place; *Hylda, Almina and Conway* (fig. 22) was produced in a family member's summer house; *Asher Wertheimer* (fig.4), both *Mrs Asher Wertheimer* (1898, New Orleans Art Museum, New Orleans and fig. 18)*, A Vele Gonfie* or *Portrait of Ena Wertheimer* (1904, Tate Gallery, London) and most, likely *Betty Wertheimer* (1908, National Museum of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.) were painted in Sargent's London studio while *Alfred* (fig. 19) and *Edward* (1902, Tate Gallery, London) were painted in Paris.

[39] Sidlauskas, *Body, Place, and Self*, 1.

[40] *Biltmore House*, (Ashville? North Carolina: Unknown, 1920s) Cornel University Library, 1.

[41] Ibid, 2-3.

All of the portraits in the Vanderbilt commission were completed before the Biltmore itself was finished. Can it be said that these portraits shaped the construction of the home? There is no evidence to support or deny this theory in George's hand or in the papers of Biltmore's architect Richard Morris Hunt. It is, therefore, too bold of a statement to suggest direct causation. Yet, the commissioning of these portraits added to the gravitas George intended for this estate and portraits' role in shaping the overall outcome cannot be understated. Having a single Sargent hanging in a home was a status symbol, having half a dozen was a statement of cultural power and importance.

Both men owned other properties, with the young Vanderbilt's real estate portfolio surpassing that of the elder Wertheimer. George owned multiple urban homes in New York City, including a townhouse specially designed for him by Biltmore's architect Hunt on 9 West 53rd Street, as well as a pair of residences called the 'Marble Twins' at 645 and 647 5th Avenue. In addition to his home in London, Asher had a country retreat called Temple where his family could go for a bit of respite. Nearly all of the Vanderbilt portraits hung in New York before Biltmore was completed; by all accounts none of the Wertheimer images were ever hung in or painted at the Wertheimer's country house.[42] This urban and rural distinction of portrait commissions becomes another diversion in the commissions and a point of analysis for the resulting images.

The Vanderbilt commission and its placement in the estate of Biltmore were emblematic of the aristocratic tradition of country manor just as George was setting himself to be a European country gentleman. The landed gentry did not at any time exist within George's country of birth was advantageous for someone relying so closely on tropes associated with a very specific subset of people, a group to which he did not belong. Living in the States he did not have a cultural history of such class systems and hierarchy within and, therefore, did not need to fit in the specific niche indicated by the cultural allusions made in the portraits. The Wertheimer family, alternatively, appealed to their urban new money identity in their commission. Asher was not looking to align himself with the aristocracy, the backlash of which could have been particularly harsh.[43] Instead he was setting himself

[42] Robert Ross and David McKibbin offer detailed accounts of where these images were hung and when yet within their accounts neither include any reference to Temple.
[43] For more information see Lapine, 'Mixing Business with Pleasure,' 45, and Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the Aristocracy*, 28.

and his family as modern members of the meritocracy, urban harbingers of taste. Most definitively, the commissions served as status symbols conveying certain identities the commissioners wished to portray. The Wertheimers were positioning themselves as a cutting edge, modern family and perhaps tastemakers, as opposed to stuffy out-of-touch aristocrats or the pushy gauche nouveau riche posturing in a feeble attempt to emulate the traditional gentry style. The Vanderbilt family, however, did seek that sort of emulation the Wertheimers were hesitant to engage with. They welcomed the comparisons and allusions, likely, because they were geographically and culturally separated by the connotations of this class system.

When George commissioned these portraits he was a young unmarried man. In addition to his own portrait, only two other men were painted in this commission, neither of who were family members. In 1895 Sargent painted the architect of Biltmore, Hunt (fig. 14) and the estate's landscape designer Fredrick Law Olmsted (fig. 15). In his portraits of these men, Sargent surrounds them with items indicating their roles in creating the estate. Hunt is shown in a grand stone courtyard, with architectural elements surrounding him. A staircase is visible behind him as he stands on a platform and holds on to a large basin. He has a large swath of fabric draped over his shoulder. Instead of being some sort of fine brocade or silk it instead appears to be a builders tarp, perhaps of hessian, in a staid brown colour. This adds texture and interest while providing another link to the materiality of his work as architect, and a hands-on one at that. The 'questioning of the difference in "status" of artists and craftsmen, and the artist's wish to go beyond the traditional boundaries of art' prevalent in late nineteenth-century art theory can be interpreted in reference to the fabric on Hunt's shoulder.[44] It reinforces his critical role in the creation of the building though it is unlikely he ever actually picked up a tool or any building materials.

In his portrait of Olmsted, painted at the same time as Hunt, Sargent portrays the landscape designer in the guise of a naturalist, surrounded by the flora and fauna. His right knee juts forward, as Hunt's does, but in the case of Olmsted it is because he is portrayed as if caught in the act of walking through a wooded area. He holds a cane in his right hand, and his left arm is draped at his side. To emulate the brown fabric in the image of Hunt, Sargent has Olmsted wear a brown overcoat on top of his grey suit. He does not look directly at the viewer as the architect does; instead he looks off to the left, a contemplative

[44] Radu Stern, *Against Fashion: Clothing as Art, 1850-1930* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: MIT, 2005), 3.

creator on an evening stroll, again evoking his position as creator orchestrating the careful placement of flowers and plants. Olmsted's position, much like Hunt's, saw him assist with the founding of the farm and forest, practical and ecological considerations rather than purely aesthetic.[45] They were charged with melding utility and beauty in order to create the most functional and pleasing estate.

Hunt was one of the most sought after and prolific architects of his age, favoured by the millionaires throughout America and Olmsted was the most popular designer of parks and gardens of the era, his work peppered across the United States. Including their portraits in Biltmore provides further visual evidence and connection to those celebrated men whose affiliation with the project would have added prestige. Additionally, commissioning these portraits was way to thank or memorialise these men and their work. It adheres to the same tradition of including such portraits in civic or government buildings likely used by George to act as a congratulatory memorialisation. Placing both of these images together, hanging in the First Hall on the first floor of the home, away from the other portrait areas, gives them a further prominence and place of honour in the finished structure.

Having Sargent paint these figures along with the images of familial relations expands upon this point of home making. All of the Vanderbilt commission portraits were already finished before the house was completed and very few were exhibited publically in George's lifetime. Hunt's portrait, for example, has never been exhibited outside of Biltmore, while Olmsted's likeness was only displayed in 1998. They were images just for the home, for personal display and to regale guests in the space. This could be a George's interpretation of an isolationist aristocratic lifestyle. Andrew Stephenson argues that European tropes were not fully comprehended by the American art press at this period and it is likely that George himself did not fully comprehend them either.[46] Reserved and private, George was known to be a shy and quiet man, meaning he would likely have wanted to remove himself from any possible controversy. At this period, there was also a fear that too much interference philanthropically or otherwise from those wealthy elite might corrupt the masses or create an oligarchy, neither of which was desired.[47] Furthermore, this lack of display might also find roots in the mixed reception of George's

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[45] Anne Whinston Spirn, 'Constructing Nature: The Legacy of Frederick Law Olmsted,' in William Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1995), 99-100.
[46] Stephenson, "Wonderful pieces of stage management," 230-231.
[47] Harris, *The Land of Contrasts*, 19.

portrait, one of those rare few that were exhibited outside of the home. By keeping Sargent's portraits of the builders of Biltmore private, George is protecting the paintings, and himself as their commissioner from criticism.

Though Hunt and Olmsted are posed in the great estate, none of the Vanderbilt family members were painted within the confines of Biltmore, and most from this commission have no connection to the house at all. These sitters were painted mostly in their lavish mansions in New York City. *Mrs William Henry Vanderbilt* (fig. 16) and *Mrs Walter Bacon* (fig. 17) are the first and the last of the portraits in this commission, respectively. The former was never exhibited, and the latter was only publicly displayed once. One of the triumphs of Sargent's portraits of the 1880s, *Mrs William Henry Vanderbilt* is a portrait of the commissioner's mother painted in a style similar to Diego Velázquez. A full-length seated figure, Maria Louisa, is seated in a richly appointed but dark interior space. Her black dress and dark hair adds to the vibrancy of the jewel-tones that surrounds her. She wears a lace shawl around her neck and holds white gloves in her hands, evoking Velázquez's interiors while being out-dated for the period. Though painted two years before the time confines presented for this thesis, it is included as it provides the starting point from which the others will follow. It was also the one of Sargent's portraits to greet the guests upon their arrival to Biltmore, so it would have had a particular place of honour amongst his portrait commissions.[48]

Mrs William Henry Vanderbilt is highly detailed, as are the majority of Sargent's portraits, and it alludes to Spanish court portraits, as does the entirety of the commission. As Stephenson suggests, the American art press and the Vanderbilt family likely would not have been too familiar with European aristocratic tropes, but Sargent would have been. By alluding to Velázquez, Sargent would have put this larger family commission in direct reference to the painter of the Spanish court, a man who created images of unrelated or distantly related people to hang harmoniously together. He was also using a more realistic style that had made his early career in America so successful.[49] Relying on a proven style was particularly important during this period and with this commission because *Mrs William Henry Vanderbilt* was the first portrait that Sargent painted for George. It was critical that it be well received so the working relationship could continue.

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[48] *Biltmore House*, 3.

[49] Richard Ormond, *John Singer Sargent: Paintings, Drawings and Watercolours*, (London: Phaidon, 1970), 41.

Mrs Walter Bacon also evokes Spain as the sitter is dressed in a version of the *maja* costume and fan. Its sitter, Virginia, was a cousin of George and the image was painted around the same time as Sargent completed Hunt and Olmsted's portraits. Another full-figure portrait, this time standing, the colour scheme lacks the vividness of *Mrs William Henry Vanderbilt*, using black and pink for costuming and a pastel green for the background. Though these two images retain some similarities in style and theme, they demonstrate the varied nature and somewhat lack of cohesion within the Vanderbilt commission. The references to Spain are present in these two and, arguably, *George Washington Vanderbilt*, but these allusions compositionally can be quite jarring when placed next to one another. Distant relations, builders of the estate, English and Spanish portrait traditions, bring an interesting, but not often wholly harmonious variance in portrait presentation. They are wildly different visually. What they all share, however, is a sharp reliance on portrait traditions, the aristocratic European tradition of a group of individual family portraits being the great unifying factor.[50] Furthermore, as all of the portraits were never placed in direct dialogue with one another in the home by being hung in the same room or gallery, a bit more freedom of expression could be offered amongst the canvases.

Asher and Flora Wertheimer had ten living children when Sargent began painting the family in 1897. Because Asher had such a large nuclear family and each member painted at least once partly explains why the Wertheimer commission is so large. Flora herself was painted twice, once as part of the original commission with her husband *Mrs Asher Wertheimer* (1898, New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans) and again on her own in 1904 (fig. 18). While the first portrait attempt was light and rococo in style it was not well received by the family and largely ignored by art critics.[51] The second image was tonally dark, highly shadowed and, by all accounts a much better companion to Asher's portrait. In it Flora is shown seated, bejewelled, besides a small circular table. Her face with its subdued expression and shadowed lighting is more restrained than that of her husband, but equally engaging.

Sargent costumes Flora in modernist black clothing, a choice that aligns her with the urban bourgeoisie while also relating to images by Rembrandt of Dutch Jewish sitters in fine

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[50] John Hayes, *The Portrait in British Art* (London: The National Portrait Gallery, 1991), 17.
[51] Ormond and Kilmurray, *Portraits of the 1890s*, 134.

dark but not ostentatious clothes.[52] This intersection of modernism and art historical allusion is critically important when referencing the family's Jewish identity in the commissions. There was a similar intersectionality of Judaism and cosmopolitanism during this period. The world citizenship suggested by adopting a cosmopolitan identity was considered to be a contemporary political problem as cosmopolitan people were, 'somewhere between homeless and foreign, bohemian and suspicious… an undesirable form of modernity: hybrid and urban'.[53] Asher's family, from German immigrant Jewish stock, had the urbanity and otherness of outsiders within Victorian London. Judaism as a primarily nomadic religious and ethnic identity therefore shares some traits of this cosmopolitan identity.

Many critics of the time agreed that Flora's portrait was captivating. One wrote it was 'beyond compare the finest of the artist's contributions [of the year]—dexterous, it is true, but sympathetic in its brilliancy and as full of reality and melting humanity as of skill of artistry,' and another commented that it was, 'surely one of the finest things in all of modern portraiture.'[54] Unlike the reviews of Asher's portrait, there is no anti-Semitic terms or language to be found in contemporary writings on the image. Even the usually difficult Roger Fry could find no faults in this portrait.[55] These positive reviews could be the product of Sargent getting to know the Wertheimer family over years and finally learning just how to best capture a likeness. It also could be because the timing of this portrait coincided with his positioning as the most sought after portrait painter in the world and the established art press began to review him as such. To gain perspective on the compositional elements in Sargent's commission of the Wertheimer family, one must review those images that were not as popular or widely exhibited.

Alfred, Son of Asher Werthimer (fig. 19) is another of the family's portrait commissions, but one that does not have breadth or depth of literature surrounding it. The portrait is of

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[52] For a discussion on black clothing's intersection with modernism and Rembrandt see Anna Gruetzner Robins, *A Fragile Modernism: Whistler and his Impressionist Followers* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2007), 67-92. For more information on Rembrandt and Dutch Jews in particular see Stephen M. Nadler, *Rembrandt's Jews* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

[53] Petra Rau, 'The Trouble with Cosmopolitans: Ford and Forster between Nationalism and Internationalism,' in Grace Brockington, ed., *Internationalism and the Arts in Britain and Europe at the Fin de Siècle,* Cultural Interactions: Studies in the Relationship between the Arts Volume 4. J. B. Bullen, ed. (Bern, Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009), 189.

[54] First quote 'The Royal Academy-I,' *Graphic* (30 April 1904), 591; second quote, 'Art Notes,' *The Academy and Literature*, issue 1670, (7 May 1904), 530.

[55] Roger Fry, 'Fine Art at the Royal Academy First Notice,' *Althenaeum* (7 May 1904), 598.

the second eldest son, who was a chemist. To reference Alfred's profession, Sargent places glass retorts at the top left of the canvas and books at the bottom right. In this way it is very different to that of his father's in which no evidence of Asher's occupation is demonstrated. With book in right hand and unengaged expression, Alfred's portrait finds more superficial similarities with that of *George Washington Vanderbilt*. The placement of his left hand on the table pushed back and awkwardly turned can be found in three other portraits of Wertheimer family members.[56] The resulting turning and even squaredness of shoulders is a related factor in nearly all of the images of the Wertheimer family. As the second eldest son of a wealthy man, Alfred was able to choose his own profession and did not have the expectation to take over the family business. The 'quiet dignity' referenced in the image can be related to this.[57] Sargent likely finished this portrait after Alfred's death, adding to the poignancy of the image. The artist was tasked with finishing an image for a family in grief, and one whom he knew well. It is not surprising that this image, out of all of Sargent's of the Wertheimer family, was incredibly sympathetic to the sitter, displaying him surrounded by elements of his prematurely shortened life.

Three of the portraits of the Wertheimer family have more than one sitter, while all of the Vanderbilt portraits are single figure portraits.[58] The logistics of the Vanderbilt commission, spread out over eight years with sitters painted in their respective homes could account for the lack of group portraiture configurations. With twelve members in total, Sargent might have utilised a group portrait structure as a practical way to insure that all could be included in at least one image. However, art historian Norbert Schneider writes that in the European portrait tradition the group portrait was status symbol and display of hierarchy within institutions; when applied to the familial setting it became possible to project an image of self consistent with mores and conventions of age.[59] Asher and Sargent would have both been aware of this tradition of status and stature among group portraiture and it is likely that such images were created as a way to reflect on that tradition. Painted during the span of just over a decade within very wide perimeters, Sargent was afforded time to experiment with different poses and groupings throughout his time working with the Wertheimer family. In these three group portraits Sargent created

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[56] Look for similar hand position in *Hylda* (1901, Tate, London), Ferdinand's pose in *Essie, Ruby and Ferdinand* (fig. 21), and, to a lesser extent, Ena's hand in *Ena and Betty* (fig. 20).
[57] 'Art,'*The Academy and Literature*, issue 1566 (10 May 1902), 487-488.
[58] See Chart 2. Number of Sitters in Wertheimer and Vanderbilt Portrait Commissions.
[59] Norbert Schneider, *The Art of the Portrait: Masterpieces of European Portrait-Painting 1420-1670*, translated by Iain Galbraith (Köln: Benedict Taschen, 1994), 6.

vastly different images that still had cohesion of composition. *Ena and Betty, Daughters of Asher and Mrs Wertheimer* (fig. 20) places the two eldest daughters in an interior setting. Formally and elegantly dressed and surrounded by fine art and decorative objects they stand nearly full-figures gazing directly at the audience with Ena's arm wrapped around Betty's waist in a comfortable affectionate embrace. In *Essie, Ruby and Ferdinand, Children of Asher Wertheimer* (fig. 21) Sargent paints three of the youngest in the schoolroom of 8 Connaught Place. The two youngest, Ruby and Ferdinand, lean on a footstool while Essie, the fifth youngest reclines on a sofa. Three dogs are also present in the canvas, one for each child. An outdoor scene is portrayed in *Hylda, Almina and Conway, Children of Asher Wertheimer* (fig. 22). Hylda sits, dog on lap, while Conway and Almina stand behind her, dog and riding crop in their hands, respectively.

Aside from having dogs present in the two images of the younger children, no compositional element is shared by the three images. When referencing Western portrait traditions, dogs serve as an interpretive element. The inclusion of dogs in an image of children signals the intended informality of the image as well as traditionally acting as a symbol of love, fidelity and loyalty. Sargent may have included the dogs in so many of the portraits of the children to make a statement on the close and fond relationship between members of the family. In the Victorian period the rise of the pet was a notable fad. Dogs in particular were written about and depicted often in this period. Even designated canine cemeteries were created.[60] The dog has been a traditional symbol of fidelity and domesticity, traits that were highly prized during this period. Families, even those living in cities, welcomed such pets into their homes because of the virtues these pets represented by their very presence and the rising prosperity of the middle class made it possible for those urban inhabitants to afford such pets.

In these group images, one traditional configuration is not found, three women meant to evoke the Three Graces of classical antiquity. Millais, who painted Asher's brother Charles, used this common positioning in his work, and Sargent utilised this reference in other portraits.[61] Why would Sargent not want to evoke such pose in his portraits of the Wertheimer family? Certainly they had enough family members to make this composition possible. Sargent may have discarded this configuration because of the eighteenth-century

[60]For such pet related texts see, 'A Cemetery for Dogs', *The Strand Magazine*, 6 (July to December 1893), 621-633.
[61] See Chart 3. Three Person Portrait Configuration by Year.

connotation that linked it to paintings of aristocratic women by artists such as Reynolds. Having such a direct visual reference to the common aristocratic pose could have implicated the family members as social climbers. In his Wertheimer portraits, Sargent tends to rely more on modern poses and expressions than allusions to the past.

The family shared close relationships, also adding another reason for group images. Ena and Betty, in particular, were said to be nearly inseparable and this bond is likely why they shared a portrait. On the canvas, the two sisters touch in a familiar and comfortable embrace. With shoulders back and chins up, they appear at ease in one another's company. Though dressed in exceptionally formal gowns, they appear to be in an informal, ordinary moment. *Essie, Ruby and Ferdinand* appears as a highly staged portrait, with no overlap between the portrait figures. The other three-person portrait configuration in the Wertheimer family commission placed its sitters in a formal pose, though they are informally attired. *Hylda, Almina and Conway* was painted outdoors at the home of Essie's husband Eustace Wilding, but the structure of the terrace itself was likely an invention of Sargent's.[62] This references a movement away from cosmopolitan urbanity as an interpretive mode and strengthens the commission's direct referencing to family lineage. Ideologically, Judaism places an emphasis on such on familial bonds, serving as catalyst for closeness. The precarious, outsider socio-economic status the Wertheimers had because of their Jewish heritage and new money status could also have resulted, in part, to these family bonds. Though London saw a rise in meritocracy, British society was still divided by class. The mix of formality with informal elements throughout these two portraits points to this uncertain social position of the younger Wertheimer children.

Though no correspondence survives between the art dealer and painter, it is thought the relationship between Asher and Sargent was quite close. Asher once stated that he 'only wished he had more Wertheimers for Sargent to paint,' and Sargent is reported to have jovially stated he was in 'a chronic state of Wertheimerism,' during this period; assertions suggesting a happy personal and working relationship between artist and subject.[63] The artist's friendly relationships with members of the family surely contributed to the volume of works produced as well as their quality. Of the ten Wertheimer children, Sargent was

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[62] Richard Ormond and Elaine Kilmurray, *John Singer Sargent: The Later Portraits The Complete Portraits Volume III*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 139.
[63] Kathleen Adler 'John Singer Sargent's Portraits of the Wertheimer Family,' in Linda Nochlin and Tamar Garb *The Jew in the Text: Modernity and the Construction of Identity*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995), 83.

especially close with two of the daughters, Ena and Betty, whom he painted outside of the general commission and was known to spend time with socially. The Wertheimers appealed to Sargent as both friends and sitters because they were 'uninhibited and disarmingly sure of themselves.'[64] At Asher's urging, Sargent wrote a letter of introduction for Edward, the Wertheimer's eldest son, to Isabella Stewart Gardner. Using 'judicious language,' Sargent complied stating that Edward would be 'taking over to America a good collection of Dutch pictures that his father bought last year, the Hope collection, and some English last century things, among which you may find some new toys.'[65] In this instance, Sargent was appealing as a reference for the younger Wertheimer's business prospects, directing the well-known and wealthy collector to take notice of the commercial opportunity. The family and artist interactions surpassed those designated by the commission.

By contrast, there is no record of any social calls or interactions between the artist and members of the Vanderbilt family painted in this commission.[66] Their relationship seems to have been strictly professional. The Vanderbilt family was by all accounts popular on the society scene, but George was a shy and quiet bibliophile lacking the vigour of life Sargent seems to have preferred in his social acquaintances.[67]Yet, this lack of social interactions between Sargent and the Vanderbilt family could be due to diminished opportunities caused by geographic distance. While the Wertheimer family was based in London not too far from his Tite Street studio, Sargent spent little time in New York or Newport, Rhode Island where the Vanderbilt family had their homes. That is not to state that they might have not had a cordial professional relationship; if Sargent's later work with George's niece Consuelo, a topic addressed in the next chapter, is any indication they likely did. Simply, lacking any evidence on either side it is unknown how closely acquainted the family and the artist were.

The more experimental elements in *Ena and Betty* and the portrait of *Almina, Daughter of Asher Wertheimer* (fig. 23) support the claim for Wertheimer's commission and modernity.

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[64]Trevor Fairbrother, 'The Complications of Being Sargent,' in Kleeblatt, *John Singer Sargent: Portraits of the Wertheimer Family*, 40.

[65] Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum Papers, Folder #2, 1895-1916, Letter #40.

[66] As the majority of Sargent's correspondence were destroyed upon his death it is unsurprising that no such letters or references exist in his hand, and nothing exists within the Vanderbilt archive at the New York Public Library. Reviews of both Charteris and Mount also contained no evidence of any relationship.

[67] Fairbrother, *John Singer Sargent and America*. 159.

In the former portrait the informal pose of the two girls and their casual connected positioning make it a less traditional composition. In Almina's portrait Sargent is able to enter some new and, for him, yet unexplored compositional territory both in costuming and in a general freedom of expression. No attempt is made to have this be an authentic rendering. Almina holds her instrument improperly and her coat is inside out, yet she is styled as some sort of authentic orientalised figure.[68] The otherness she presents, the distance between audience and figure, is only aesthetic. In some ways this portrait is just as familiar as that of *Ena and Betty*. The paint on this canvas is thicker and more sporadically placed than on any of the other canvases in the commission. The brushwork appears quick and spontaneous, lending itself to be read as a rather quickly captured, resulting in a spontaneous and perhaps informal image. Effectually, there is camaraderie present in this portrait that is not conveyed as profoundly in the other images of this or the Vanderbilt commission. The playful exuberance of thickly drawn lines, finessing of different textures, the pose and facial expression of the sitter, it, not Flora's 1904 portrait (fig. 18) is the culmination of Sargent's close working with this family. This is this image that demonstrates most clearly that even with the 'otherness,' the exotic elements, Sargent is able to create a personal and exceptional likeness of these Wertheimer family members based on his close relationship with them.

At a time when the Wertheimer family was more often than not derided as Jewish new money in their own country, this group was gaining power internationally. Art historian Norman Kleeblatt writes that it was not 'uncommon for prominent, successful Jews to sit for major artists,' during this period, before listing Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Pablo Picasso as examples of others who were working on such portraits internationally.[69] Asher, as a dealer aware of the market would have known this and was consciously emulating what was being done in continental Europe. By not turning to abstract or foreign artists Asher chose a more conservative route, as Sargent was a conservative choice in Britain. Monetarily Sargent's portraits were a status symbol once the commodification of art beyond its visual merits is explored. By selecting Sargent to paint their portraits Asher was turning to a foreign artist, but one who was more readily accepted as part of the British portrait tradition than painters like Renoir and Picasso. This removed not only the artist's national affiliation but thereby aligned the sitter within that British national dialogue. The

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[68] Ormond and Kilmuray, *The Later Portraits*, 202.
[69] Norman L. Kleeblatt, 'Introduction,' in Kleeblatt, *John Singer Sargent: Portraits of the Wertheimer Family*, 16.

Wertheimer family's placement within a sort of cosmopolitan urbanity was stereotypical of Jewish families during this era, but not factors they were necessarily attempting to hide, and identifying traits that give some clarity to the images painted. Yet Asher's choice of Sargent to paint his family's portraits hints to a desire to be placed in a larger dialogue of British portrait tradition.

In his Vanderbilt family images Sargent relied more on existing tropes and *Mrs Benjamin Kissam* (fig. 24) is an excellent example of this referencing. This image was roundly criticised for its colour and her pose. The sitter is Lucy Kissam, the aunt of George Vanderbilt and was painted in the same year the artist painted his mother. Its sitter is a standing two-thirds figure in a dark backdrop. Her costuming is ostentatious with flowers, lots of fine jewellery and an ornate, traditional and quite unfashionable gown being worn. She holds the layers and layers of the rich lavender skirt in her hands, her golden lace sleeves and bib cascading down. The pose, reliance on cascading fabrics and the pastel colours combined with a dark backdrop and floral accents evoke images by eighteenth-century British portraitists such as Sir Thomas Lawrence or Reynolds. It does not fit win with the more Spanish references of some of the other Vanderbilt portraits, instead finding commonality with Flora Wertheimer's 1898 portrait, yet the realist attributes similar to those found in *Mrs William Henry Vanderbilt* make it a striking American portrait.[70] The resulting image is lacks the cohesion of the other portraits of the Vanderbilt commission and it is likely because it was not part of George's original commission to Sargent. Instead it was a later addition, given to him by Lucy's daughter to hang in Biltmore amongst the others.

The portrait was slated by *Art Amateur*, and lacks the general tactile considerations of the Wertheimer portraits.[71] Combined with this showy presentation is an expression that is difficult to read. Chin down and shoulders back she meets the audience's gaze, but with what could be read as a slight smirk. The result is rather off-putting in a way no other portraits in this chapter are. It does reference the wealth and privileged excess of the Vanderbilt family and those associated with them. This established family in a nation

[70] Realist attributes are not as straightforward to chart as many of the other elements in this thesis are. The dark colour scheme and monochromatic costuming in a majority of the portraits of the Vanderbilt family do find commonality with some French Realist images. These items are compiled in Table 5. Attire in the Portraits of American and British Sitters, 1890-1910 and Table 6. Background and Setting Details of American and British Portraits, 1890-1910.
[71] Montezuma, 'My Note Book,' *Art Amateur*, 23 (August, 1890), 42.

where that sort of name-based recognition was not 'supposed' to be favoured. *Mrs Benjamin Kissam* synthesizes the fears this class represented: a reliance on older European standards, helplessly out of date and disliked within American public opinion. And Biltmore, the location the images were to be hung, supports this interpretation of a rural reimagining of a gentry country estate. Sargent's misstep in this portrait, painted at the same time as *Mrs William Henry Vanderbilt*, gives the viewer the opportunity to appreciate how Sargent's painterly style and approach changed in the coming years and decades in order to account for these societal concerns.

The entireties of these portrait commissions were, at times, reviewed in relation to contextual as opposed to compositional considerations. Some critics accused Asher of using these portraits by Sargent to engineer a social ascent, thereby viewing the resulting images unfavourably due to elements not found on the canvas.[72] Alternatively, the Vanderbilt family was already at the top of that ascent in a country where such wealth and leisurely life should not have been highly prized. How can one justify visually celebrating such a group that went against the ideological underpinnings of the American experience? With both of these commissions, as he did frequently elsewhere in his oeuvre, Sargent was painting the 'coalescence of a new and coherent upper class based exclusively on wealth'.[73] These commissions therefore aligned the preoccupation of consumption and commodity within the cosmopolitan 'leisure class' as Veblen called them, with portraits by the American expatriate artist.

Conclusion

The Legacy of the Vanderbilt and Wertheimer Commissions

In addition to representing two differing family structures, the portraits of the Vanderbilt and Wertheimer commissions now hang in quite diverse locations. Biltmore, the largest privately owned home in the States, houses the six portraits of Vanderbilt family members or business associates discussed in this chapter. They are housed among the books, decorative art objects and other works of art still on display in the house, and can be seen

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[72] Erica E. Hirshler, '"A Prince in a Royal Line of Painters": Sargent's Portraits and Posterity,' in Barbara Dayer Gallati, *Great Expectations: John Singer Sargent Painting Children*, exh. cat. (New York: Brooklyn Museum in association with Bulfinch Press, 2004), 161.
[73] Prettejohn, *Interpreting Sargent*, 37.

after paying the $50 ticket fee. Though Biltmore estate had been created for personal use, the house became as capitalist tourist attraction. Upon George Vanderbilt's sudden death in 1914 at the age of fifty-one, the house passed to his wife and then daughter who decided to open it up for public tours during the Great Depression to generate the revenue required to run the large estate and bring tourists to the area. The house is no longer occupied by the family and is now solely used as a museum.[74] This proved rather an apt circumstance, as during this period the same fate befell many of the kind of aristocratic country homes George was attempting to emulate when establishing Biltmore.

The public consumption of his house and Sargent's work seems to go against George's personal wishes as his introverted nature and the fact few of these portraits were exhibited during his lifetime. Based on this insulated behaviour, it is not likely George would have welcomed such intrusion into his domestic space.[75] In building Biltmore, George created a decadent and expansive space for the portraits to hang that was his own statement. Because of this it does not seem as if his intention was to fit the compositions within the existing art dialogue of the period, as the Wertheimer commission did. This isolation of the estate, separate from cities or other large country homes demonstrates this desire for solitude.[76] Instead it was a personal, insular impetus for collecting and creating a family lineage through Sargent's work that resulted in this grouping of portraits being hung in Biltmore. In order to keep this collection together and the estate running consumerist enterprise needed to win out, basically commoditising the whole experience of the leisure class.

Tate Gallery in London holds ten of the twelve Wertheimer family portraits, most of them securely kept in the gallery's store, while a select few hang or are lent out for exhibitions at other galleries. All of portraits were exhibited individually during Asher's lifetime, yet the first 'reviews' of the commission as a whole were undertaken after his death and by those both within and outside the art community. In 1922 upon Flora's death, the family donated nine of the twelve paintings to the nation, meaning that the nouveau-riche Wertheimer

[74] The Biltmore Company, 'Biltmore History' Accessed 20 June 2013, http://www.biltmore.com/visit/biltmore-house-gardens/estate-history.
[75] George's own portrait was displayed once in 1890 at the Society for American Artists in New York, as previously mentioned. The only other portrait exhibited was *Mrs Benjamin Kissam* at the Exposition Universelle, Paris in 1889 and the Royal Academy, London in 1890. Though hung at Biltmore later, it is important to note that the later portrait was not actually a commission from George to Sargent and was not in George's possession when the portrait was exhibited.
[76] Clive Aslet, *The American Country House* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 20.

family had more portraits in British museums than many of British aristocratic families.[77] Art critic and painter Roger Fry wrote that the commission was:

> a social transaction quite analogous to the transactions between a man and his lawyer. A rich man had need of a lawyer's professional skill to enable him to secure the transmission of his wealth to posterity, and a rich man, if he have the intelligence of Sir Asher Wertheimer, and the luck to meet Sargent, can buy the latter's professional skill, transmit his fame to posterity.[78]

Whether this judgement of Asher's motives as being entirely self-serving is valid or not, as Fry writes Sargent created images of the family that now belong to Britain establishing a link between Sargent's portraiture, the Wertheimer family and British portrait tradition.

Not long after the portraits were bequeathed to the National Gallery, the aesthetic and social merits of the images were debated in Parliament. Many did not want this nouveau riche Jewish family, perceived as social and institutional outsiders, to infiltrate and saturate the gallery with this high number of portraits.[79] Ultimately the images were accepted, but the dialogue surrounding whether or not they were appropriate demonstrates the uncertainty surrounding incorporating such a marginal group into established institutions. The Wertheimer portraits addition to the national collection benefited Sargent greatly as well. This bequest positioned him 'within Britain's national heritage, his paintings given the same status as the old masters he most admired.' [80] By taking on the Wertheimer commission Sargent was creating a cultural lineage for himself, connecting his work with the tradition of British portraiture.

George Vanderbilt was himself painted by two portraitists: Sargent and James McNeil Whistler. These men had similar expatriate biographies and could claim both an America and European connections; they had the sort of cosmopolitan biographies befitting the

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[77] In 1922 other members of the Wertheimer family owned the three portraits not donated to the nation. *Betty Wertheimer* (c. 1908, the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C) was owned by the sitter, *Ena Wertheimer* or *A Vele Gonfie* (1904, Tate, London) was the property of the sitter's husband, and *Mrs Asher Wertheimer* (1898, New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans) was owned by the sitter's daughter Hylda.
[78] Roger Fry, 'J.S. Sargent' in *Transformations* (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1968), 131.
[79] For more information see Kleeblatt, 'Introduction,' 17.
[80] Hirshler, '"A Prince in a Royal Line of Painters,"' 168.

social elite of this time period.[81] The duality of Sargent's national identity meant he could easily fill each role, bringing European motifs and American identity required within the Vanderbilt commission while being 'English' enough for the Wertheimer commission. Yes, both men demonstrated shrewd judgement of art market when selecting Sargent as painter of these commissions, but more than that they selected a portraitist whose personal biography substantiated claims of identity and affiliation of the figures represented on the canvas.

Compositionally in these portraits the Wertheimer family does not appear to be flagrantly attempting to push into an aristocratic role while the Vanderbilt family, through allusions to grand-manner portraiture and court painting, is. However, when the act of commissioning is taken into consideration both families are equally culpable in this form of social engineering. George's building of Biltmore to house these images, commissioning Sargent to paint the designers of the estate, and filling the home with other portraits certainly is relatable to aristocratic traditions of engaging in that exact activity.[82] Asher was unable to act as brazenly as George did with his home and commissions due to concerns about the reception such actions could have based on his status as a marginal figure of the period and because of his country of residence.

George and Asher commissioned these portraits for domestic spaces, but the images would go on to be visible to a wider international audience. The Wertheimer commission left 8 Connaught place to become part of the national collection. Several of the Wertheimer portraits that were originally part of this collection were sent off to other museums in the States and no longer together as they had been in 'Sargent's mess'.[83] The Vanderbilt portraits remained in Biltmore which itself became open for public consumption. Those portraits by Sargent that were not originally hung in the house during the lives of their sitters were brought to North Carolina to hang amongst the others.

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81 Whistler was a self invented man who did not like low status of American artists and pretended to be an 'American Aristocrat' while studying in Europe, in an attempt to fit into both European and American society. Hughes *American Visions*, 237.

82 Harris, *The Land of Contrasts*, 14-28.

83 As previously mentioned the 1898 portrait of Flora Wertheimer is at the New Orleans Museum of Art in Louisiana and *Betty Wertheimer* now hangs at the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. The last image to join the original nine given to the nation in 1922 is *Portrait of Ena Wertheimer* or *A Vele Gonfie*, bequeathed to the Tate in 1996 by the estate of Ena Wertheimer's husband Robert Mathias.

Both men won out in having their images saved for posterity, though only the Vanderbilt family remains in the public consciousness. The Wertheimer sons changed their surnames during the height of anti-German sentiment surrounding the First World War and the surviving daughters married and took their husband's names.[84] It can be said this is reflected in the portraits from the commissions as well. The Wertheimer family portraits entered an established institution and their identities became part of the many located within. After a brief period in which Sargent was given his own gallery in the Tate, the Wertheimer commissions were placed amongst the general collection and not shown together again until 1999.[85] Conversely, George's creation of the Biltmore Estate, including the portraits commissioned from Sargent, built on the wealth of his family dynasty and established an institution with his surname further serving as a symbol of this status.

[84] Adler, 'John Singer Sargent's Portraits of the Wertheimer Family,' 94.
[85] Ibid., 95-96. All twelve of the portraits were displayed together in the exhibition *John Singer Sargent: Portraits of the Wertheimer Family* held at the Jewish Museum in New York City from 17 October 1999- 6 February 2000.

CHAPTER 2

Nervous Matrimony: Challenges to the Doctrine of Separate Spheres

The state of the institution of marriage was in flux during the fin de siècle. In 1888 the question 'Is Marriage a Failure?' was posited in both British and American magazines and a high volume of replies argued both sides of the issue.[1] On the topic of marriage, writers such as Britain's Eliza Lynn Linton and American Charlotte Perkins Gilman advocated for conservation and reform respectively. What was in question was the doctrine of separate spheres, an ideology that set strict gender roles and expectations. Men, in marriage and in general society, were public creatures while women were relegated to the private domestic sphere. Early in the Victorian era this doctrine became central to gender ideology, primarily regarding the institution of marriage.[2] Therefore, the newspaper inquiry of 1888 was in fact questioning the doctrine of separate spheres manifested within the institution of marriage. The upper classes within Great Britain and the United States were not spared from the debate. This issue had wide ranging implications, and people had equally varied opinions and approaches to an institution whose effects were felt in all strata of Anglo-American society. Through an exploration of visual and textual responses to the tumultuous nature of turn-of-the-century marriage one is better able to understand any nationalistic patterns or trends that emerge within the debate and find cultural tropes that lead to these divergences of opinion.

This chapter will explore two very different portraits that are indicative of the ideological dichotomy present in methods of handling marital issues and the doctrine of separate spheres as interpreted by the upper classes of Britain and America respectively. Part 1 uses *The Marlborough Family* (fig. 25) in order to address the decline of the British aristocratic marriage through a rejection of the evolution of gendered relationships, a strict adherence to marital customs established during the Victorian period and an allegiance to other traditional customs of the nobility out of line with an increasingly capitalist global economy. Part 2 addresses issues of the 'New Marriage,' a more progressive take on the intra-marital relationship and the crisis of masculinity as found in the 1897 portrait *Mr and Mrs I.N. Phelps Stokes* (fig. 26). These two images contain standing figures placed in

[1] Patricia Marks, *Bicycles, Bangs and Bloomers: The New Woman in the Popular Press* (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 1990), 50.
[2] Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians*, 133.

interior scenes, but convey their subjects by using entirely different visual allusions and methods. In some ways these two portraits represent opposite ends of the spectrum for upper-class marriage at the turn of the century; the first portrait portrays the strict adherence to the status quo more often found in Britain, while the second image demonstrates that Americans were more ready to embrace experimental aspects of modernity. John Singer Sargent visually presents such prevailing attitudes of the period using his distinctive style, combining traditional elements with modern techniques in varying ratios to express best the nervous questioning surrounding the institution of marriage.

Part 1

The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocratic Marriage: *The Marlborough Family*

Historian David Cannadine begins his seminal text *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* with a discussion of Sargent's *The Marlborough Family* (fig. 25). The portrait was commissioned in 1904 to hang in the family's ancestral home of Blenheim Palace. It shows the ninth Duke, Charles Spencer-Churchill, his wife, the former Consuelo Vanderbilt, and their two children, John Albert Edward the Marquis of Blandford in white and Lord Ivor Charles holding a Blenheim spaniel, surrounded in the trappings of aristocratic privilege. The background contains complex marble architectural details, the family stand on stone checkerboard-patterned steps, and raised above their heads are flags signifying the family's past accomplishments. The group is attired in fine clothes—the duke in full Garter Robes, the duchess in a dress styled after a painting in the family's collection by Sir Anthony Van Dyck, *Lady Killigrew and the Countess of Morton* (c. 1638, Blenheim Palace, Woodstock), complete with fur trim and the children in similarly fine Van Dyck costume. The duke and his heir both touch the diamond hilted sword that belonged to John Churchill, the first Duke of Marlborough whose portrait bust is centrally located in a niche above the heads of this family grouping.[3] A large, textually rich and compositionally unique portrait, Sargent's grouping of Marlborough family members is an ideal candidate for a closer reading.

[3] Jeri Bapasola, *Faces of Fame and Fortune: The Marlborough Family Portraits at Blenheim Palace* (Woodstock: Blenheim Palace, 2006), 74.

Though Cannadine mentions this portrait in the opening pages, he does not begin with an exploration of the painting due to its artistic merits. Instead he finds the image and the family it depicts to be 'emblematic of the decay of the British aristocracy as a whole.'[4] The portrait tells the story of an American heiress who married into the financially crumbling Spencer-Churchill family. While a broader economic and political historical interpretation of the portrait suggested by Cannadine is a crucial component to the narrative of the painting, it does not address the issues present in the daily life and interpersonal familial relationships the portrait seeks to represent. What of the marriage it portrays? Or more broadly, what can it tell one about the institution of marriage in aristocratic Victorian and Edwardian Britain? What does it tell the viewer about family dynamics within this uncertain environment? It is possible to use Cannadine's work as a starting point to begin an investigation on the issues present in upper-class lives, the pressure that economic decline put on these families unequipped to handle new factors such as emerging industrialising cities, the rise of nouveau-riche millionaires, and the burgeoning middle-class. This section will reference other aristocratic portraits including the earlier portraits at Blenheim and Consuelo's autobiography *The Glitter and the Gold*, in an attempt to make the portrait comprehensible as a symbol for the decline of the other institution at its centre: marriage. In the case of Charles and Consuelo, the implications of this international marriage of convenience between the Old World aristocracy and New World nouveau riche is vividly captured by Sargent using artistic language, methods and allusions rooted in British portraiture tradition.

In accepting the commission to paint *The Marlborough Family* Sargent was agreeing to add his work to a portrait collection containing images that inspired great British national pride. The Marlborough baronetcy was acquired for the Spencer-Churchill family by the courageous military actions of the first Duke for Queen and country. Blenheim Palace itself was a gift from Queen Anne to John for his service in the 1704 Battle of Blenheim resulting in the British victory over the French forces.[5] The Blenheim Standard, a French flag seized at the eponymous battle and found in Sargent's *The Marlborough Family*, still hangs in the Great Hall and was regarded by many to be a nationalistic symbol of British

[4] Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, xiv.
[5] Mark Hallett, 'A Monument to Intimacy: Joshua Reynolds's *The Marlborough Family*,' *Art History* vol. 31, no. 5 (November 2008): 694.

military supremacy.[6] In addition to Blenheim containing family specific emblems of patriotism, by the time Sargent painted the ninth Duke a sizeable collection of portraits of nonfamily members painted by Van Dyck, considered by some to be the founder of the British portrait tradition, had been acquired.

By 1905, the year that Sargent completed his *The Marlborough Family*, most of the portraits hanging at the Blenheim containing members of the Spencer-Churchill family were portraits of individual sitters, yet there were also three portraits of dukes surrounded by their families that are particularly important to one's understanding of Sargent's composition. Painted by John Closterman, Thomas Hudson and Sir Joshua Reynolds these images dominated the palace in terms of their size and in relation to the lineage they represent. This practice of adding a new portrait to an existing sequential structure 'continued to affect the way in which contemporary portraits were planned,' and such considerations are seen when relating all of the family portraits to one another.[7] When taken as a group of four, though painted at very different time periods, these family portraits demonstrate the importance of intergenerational continuity in the aristocratic family. In order to have a pleasing aesthetic effect, none should seem out of place. However, while a given commission could have rather rigid restrictions, just what elements to include and what to amend in subsequent images were decisions left largely to the discretion of the portraitist.

In the case of Sargent's addition to the Marlborough family lineage, Charles the ninth Duke wished to have his family's portrait act as a pendant piece to the portrait *The Family of George Spencer, 4th Duke of Marlborough* by Reynolds (fig. 27). Charles went so far as to have the earlier portrait moved to the Red Drawing Room so the two could hang opposite one another, returning it to the space where Reynolds intended for it to hang.[8] The presence of these two large pieces on opposite ends of this rather narrow room means that no matter where the viewer stands, he or she is directly confronted with these familial units. In the Reynolds image, one finds a crowded composition despite the canvas's large size. The duke, duchess and six of their children are represented surrounded by grand

[6] Kate Retford, *The Art of Domestic Life: Family Portraiture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven and London: The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art by Yale University Press, 2006), 225.
[7] John Martin Robinson, 'Ancestral Piety,' in Donald Garstang, ed. *The British Face: A View of Portraiture 1625-1850* (London: P&D Colnaghi & Co. LTD, 1986), 13.
[8] Bapasola, *Faces of Fame and Fortune*, 61.

classical architectural elements. One very interesting detail at the right of the canvas is a stone sculpture of the first Duke in Roman military dress. This sculpture actually stood atop the Column of Victory, a one hundred and thirty feet high monument to the military accomplishments of John Churchill erected by his wife Sarah.[9] By moving this grand sculpture indoors pictorially, Reynolds is alluding to the great importance ascribed to the first Duke by the fourth Duke; the smaller bust that was actually located in the Grand Hall and later used by Sargent was simply not significant enough a memorial for this earlier portrait.

Using this framework, Reynolds essentially splits the family into two mostly self-contained groups. At the left of the canvas stands the heir to Blenheim next to a seated duke, and the placement of the current and future dukes causes them to appear to be the same height. While the fourth Duke places his hand on his son's shoulder and looks at him intently, the boy looks at the rest of his family, who make up the second grouping. The standing duchess with her high piled hair serves to delineate these two assemblages. The rest of the children placed to the right of the duchess appear to be reacting to the painting's other prominent figure, Lady Charlotte, holding a mask. The youngest, Lady Anne shrinks back into her sister Lady Caroline, who places a consoling hand on her chest. The duchess, Lady Elizabeth, and Lord Henry look at Caroline, but she and Charlotte look out of the canvas as if to bring the viewer into the scene. Through the composition the sporadic inclusion of dogs legally restricted to the aristocracy, a greyhound and the famous Blenheim spaniels, a variation of the King Charles spaniel bred at the Palace, uses art-historical language to connote ideas of fidelity and companionship associated with the family's members.[10] All of the family members are dressed in Van Dyck costumes of complementary colour reflecting the similarly balanced nature of the familial unit.

The composition of this earlier piece caused some issues for Sargent. Reynolds's canvas is understandably large; in addition to the expansive dimensions adding gravitas to the sitters, the portrait needed to contain all eight members of George's family and several dogs. Sargent, perhaps worried about visually matching the fullness of the Reynolds image, is said to have exclaimed 'how can I fill a canvas of this size with only four people?'[11] He

[9] Hallett, 'A Monument to Intimacy,' 694.
[10] For more information on the significance of dogs in portraiture, see Chapter 1 'Restless Families: Social Status And Familial Presentation,' 58-59.
[11] Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 156.

had painted a similarly sized canvas with only four figures over two decades before in his *The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit* (1882, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) and in doing so left large areas of empty space presented. The result is atmospheric, but one could argue about how fully the space of the canvas is 'filled.' In *The Marlborough Family* he managed to rectify this perceived dimensional problem, in the process creating his largest and most expensive family portrait. Sargent retained many aspects of the Reynolds's Marlborough portrait, including allusions to the first Duke of Marlborough, casting the duchess as the tallest figure, the inclusion of a spacious room with great architectural details, Blenheim spaniels and the timelessness found in Van Dyck costumes.

Though Sargent protested against referencing the Reynolds portrait, Charles chose this piece as a pendant for specific reasons. It is likely that Charles selected the Reynolds portrait to serve as his companion piece because of the fourth Duke's earlier redevelopment and modernisation of Blenheim.[12] Unfortunately, most of George's work had been undone by later generations. Charles's father, the eighth Duke, was complicit in this dismantling through an 1886 sale of paintings from Blenheim's collection. The auction netted the family nearly £300,000 of much needed revenue while costing them a large portion of their art collection.[13] The gem collection alluded to in Reynolds's portrait was also sold at auction and soon after his marriage Charles started accumulating such jewels again in an attempt to salvage the family's reputation as connoisseurs of art and other exquisite objects.[14] In choosing to have his family portrait serve as the companion of a portrait of the fourth Duke, Charles was aligning himself to the 'collector Duke' and the 'extravagant embellisher of Blenheim': an assertion of how he wished to be remembered by future generations.[15] As will be demonstrated, he followed through with this ambitious undertaking during his tenure as keeper of Blenheim.

The Marlborough Family was not Sargent's first foray into painting a contemporary family portrait as a companion piece for an eighteenth-century painting. Nearly five years earlier he completed *Sir George Sitwell, Lady Ida Sitwell and Family* (fig. 28). This commission, biographer Stanley Olson argues, was one of great discomfort for Sargent but allowed for

[12] For more information on these developments see Bapasola, *Faces of Fame and Fortune*, 44-45.
[13] Ibid., 7.
[14] Ibid., 67.
[15] Ibid., 50.

the undaunted ease of his later Marlborough portrait. [16] Whether or not one agrees with Olson's description of the ease of the later work, this timeline coupled with formal similarities creates the opportunity for a point of comparison in Sargent's oeuvre.

Sargent's Sitwell family portrait contains many of the same elements found in both Marlborough portraits. Again, the mother is placed in the centre and is the tallest figure, though in the case of Lady Ida Sitwell it is her hat that gives her vertical prominence. Lord George Sitwell, the father, is set off to the left of the image, but in this portrait Sargent places his daughter, Edith, as his companion. Again the patriarch is placed next to his eldest child. However, in this case she was not eligible to serve as heir due to her gender. To the right of the canvas one finds the heir, Osbert, and youngest brother, Sacheverell, sitting on the floor playing with the family's dog, a pug. Unlike the Marlborough portraits, this group is placed in an intimate setting. Though painted in Sargent's studio the portrait includes items from their home indicative of a sitting room, such as a sideboard commemorating the marriage of Francis Sitwell and a silver racing cup won by a family ancestor.[17] Once again the family is surrounded by objects recounting its past success. Adding to the informality in the space, toys or a game including what appear to be two toy soldiers can be seen next to the pug at the bottom right of the canvas. The scene indicates that the boys had been playing with these items before the dog arrived. In his right hand Sacheverell grips what might be a treat for the dog, (or perhaps is a small toy), Ida appears to have been caught mid-way through her flower arranging and George attired in riding cloths seems to have just returned home from a day on horseback; actions and attire not typically found in British formal portrait commissions of the time.[18] Furthermore, family members look off in various directions—Edith and Ida directly out, George out and to the right, Osbert gazes at his brother who looks out and to the left of the canvas. These varied elements lead to a disjointed and compartmentalised representation of a family unit.

George Sitwell commissioned this portrait with the intention of it serving as a family heirloom, and with the stipulation that it be composed to act as a pendant to John Singleton Copley's 1787 portrait *The Sitwell Family* (fig. 29) already hung at the family's estate of

[16] Stanley Olson, 'Defined in Amber,' Christopher Newall, *Society Portraits* exhibition catalogue (London: Colnaghi & the Clarendon Gallery, 1985), 11.
[17] Ormond and Kilmurray, *The Later Portraits*, 46.
[18] Ida is the only of Sargent's sitters to be shown flower arranging. For George's costume see Graph 4. Costuming in Portraits of British Sitters, 1890-1910.

Renishaw Hall.[19] This earlier image, sometimes referred to as *The Sitwell Children*, is exclusively of Sir Sitwell Sitwell, the standing figure to the right, his brothers Hurt and Francis and sister Mary. As such, some may argue, it is not a 'true' family portrait as no parental figures are present. Yet this was how the seventeen-year-old heir to the baronetcy chose to have his family represented. This intention should not be discounted when viewing the piece. Sitwell's father was Francis Sitwell, formerly Francis Hurt, whose marriage into the Sitwell family is celebrated in the sideboard found in Sargent's painting.[20] As is found in the Reynolds portrait of the Marlborough family, Copley creates a scene containing much action and familial interaction.

The interior scene of Copley's image can be described as an informal study of sibling bonding. On the floor, playing cards have been used to create a tower whose architect is likely Francis, the figure lounging on the carpeted ground, holding more cards in his left hand. With his right he tugs his sister Mary's white skirt, but she ignores both him and her open book as she watches the two other boys, Hurt in the scarlet suit and Sitwell play fighting next to the fireplace. Sitwell reaches around his brother with what appears to be a riding crop in an effort to knock over the card tower. It is a scene of rambunctious young boys playing with childish implements. As with the other portraits in this chapter discussed thus far, the central and tallest figure is a standing female and, though she is not a mother, it is possible to also read Mary's role as a calming maternal one. Perhaps this is a portrait meant to demonstrate what happens when children are left to their own devices without parental input. Unlike the other images, none of the figures look out of the canvas; this is a wholly insulated encounter amongst siblings.

Sargent chose to duplicate tonality and colour in his Sitwell portrait in a way he did not use in the Marlborough image. In addition to having similar informal interiors and positioning, he uses the same red, white, black and gold colour palette. He addressed costuming in a very similar manner. Ida's dress corresponds directly to Mary's white gown, George's riding costume to Sitwell's and he places Edith in a red dress that mirrors Hurt's suit. Both spaces have similar patches of dark shadow, though they do contain very different light sources. Perhaps Sargent chose to use such direct references in the Sitwell portrait because of the very different familial relationships found in Copley's image and what he was commissioned to present. Having a few more elements of compositional continuity could

[19]Ormond and Kilmurray, *The Later Portraits*, 44-45.
[20] Ibid., 46.

lead to a more cohesive reading of the images when they are hung next to one another, as the subject matter has shifted from the interaction between siblings to the presentation of a nuclear family.

In addition to resulting in more kinetic portraits, through the action found in the earlier images of the Sitwell and Marlborough families one can infer a much more intimate familial dynamic. Rooted in Enlightenment ideals of family togetherness and intimacy, these portraits provide a rather stark contrast to the Victorian notions of restraint and aloofness found in Sargent's corresponding portraits. Art historian Mark Hallett argues that Reynolds used this positioning of the Marlborough family to show that they are more interested in one another than in looking out and presenting a united front to the world; they are a much more insular group than a worldly one.[21] The action shown in the painting hints at a familiarity of interaction brought about by time spent together, something that the forced poses of Sargent's two images do not convey at all. The fourth Duke was absorbed in family life with a devotion to his wife and constant worries about the health and education of his children, thus 'embodying the contemporary ideal of the man of feeling.'[22] The father became a figure of great feeling and sentimentality, sharing traits generally given to the maternal figure, rather than the hyper-masculine and disinterested figure in earlier portraiture and repeated in the ninth Duke's image.[23]

Within the constructs of aristocratic marriage, children act as symbols of the role that lineage plays to legitimise both the union and the family's claim to its given title in perpetuity. Marriage can be regarded as an institution affording a family self-preservation and continuity due to its role in socially sanctioning the birth of a child. Because biological children were required to continue such legacy, the status of parental relationships is also an important component of these marriages. Regarding their children, writes Consuelo, the ninth Duke, 'claiming that he had been bullied by his father…refused to exert any control, and punishment became for me a doubly painful duty in view of his critical approval.'[24] This fear or anxiety in paternal aristocratic relationships was common for Victorian upper-class fathers. Many like the eighth Duke had 'established himself firmly in the children's

[21] Hallett, 'A Monument to Intimacy,' 714-15.
[22] Ibid., 703.
[23] Retford, *The Art of Domestic Life*, 115.
[24] Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 128.

psyche, employing his exalted position and infallible opinions in the fashioning of their systems of values.'[25]

George Sitwell is painted physically close to his daughter, though in her estimation this proximity did not mirror their actual relationship. In her autobiography Edith writes of her father's menacing presence in the house and his general distaste for his children, much more aligned to the behaviour of the eighth Duke of Marlborough.[26] Both Charles and George Sitwell chose to have relationships with their children that were in line with the prevailing notions of masculine responsibility at the time, notably the relegation of men to the public sphere. For Charles this decision was directly related to the sort of treatment he and many Victorian men had received from their fathers. While Sargent chose to ignore these real life considerations in the case of the Sitwell commission, he reflects the notions of the distant father in the Marlborough portrait.

In the Marlborough portraits, both maternal figures are shown to be attentive to their children. However, Consuelo is only attentive to the heir. There is no negative space between her and John as there is between Charles and the boy.[27] She touches his arm and head, rather protectively holding him close to her, while the single interaction between the father and heir is through the conduit of the sword, symbolic of their link back to the first Duke and invoking notions of family legitimacy. Though Consuelo does not interact with Ivor as directly, his body does overlap hers, resulting in intentional pictorial closeness. Yet, the youngest child could not be further separated from his father. In fact the duke would be completely isolated from the other three figures if not for the connection of the sword.

Alternatively, in the Sitwell portrait Sargent casts Ida as the distant figure. She is centrally placed, yet is not shown interacting with any of her children, appearing to be more focused on the domestic art of flower arranging. She is surrounded by her family, but it is almost as if she is indifferent to their presence in the room. It is possible that Ida's aloofness could be due to the formality of the commission. While it is unknown if this is the case for the

[25] David Roberts, 'The Paterfamilias of the Victorian Governing Classes,' in Anthony S. Wohl ed., *The Victorian Family: Structure and Stresses* (London: Croom Helm, 1978), 71.
[26] Edith Sitwell, *Taken Care of: The Autobiography of Edith Sitwell* (New York: Atheneum, 1965), 50.
[27] Bapasola, *Faces of Fame and Fortune*, 75.

Sitwell portrait, such formality was a consideration in Sargent's depiction of Consuelo.[28] He wanted to paint her with a similar smile to the one Giovanni Boldini portrayed in his 1906 portrait *Consuelo Vanderbilt, the Duchess of Marlborough and her Son Lord Ivor Spencer-Churchill* (fig. 30) but this was deemed an unsatisfactory expression.[29] Though only one year separates Boldini and Sargent's portraits, the later image portrays a much closer, informal and friendly relationship between duchess, child and viewer.

While the role of the heir was serious and self-sacrificial, the other children of aristocratic families had relatively fewer responsibilities or expectations placed upon them, as seen in Boldini's portrait of Consuelo and Ivor. While John's image was so carefully cultivated that his mother could not smile in a portrait with him, Boldini paints Ivor draped over Consuelo, his torso on her lap, his right leg lazily resting on a chair. Her hand is barely visible on his side, as if the two have been interrupted in the midst of a familiar embrace. Ivor's relaxed presence in this informal image is in direct contrast to the more serious and highly staged portraits painted by Sargent and Reynolds in which the heir is shown as an attentive and at times inquisitive figure. In both Marlborough family portraits, the heir is physically separated from his siblings, completely isolated from them by one or both parents. Additionally, in these portraits the children of aristocratic families who are not the heir are generally shown in a much more relaxed childlike pose, a direct contrast with the rigidly presented heirs.

As demonstrated with the inclusion of the sword in Sargent's *The Marlborough Family*, children and their connection to the family lineage are of critical importance when reading these portraits. Perhaps the most consistent representational style can be found in the depictions of the two families' children, particularly the heirs to the familial dynasty. Consuelo writes in her autobiography that 'it was custom in the family to name the heir by his title' meaning that though her son was given the name John he was called Blandford.[30] Calling a person by a title as opposed to a personal name places his or her institutional role above individuality, seemingly instructing them to subordinate his or her desires for the

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[28] One compositional way to relate closeness within a formal portrait containing multiple figures is to have the sitters touch in some way. Sargent painted six portraits of British families or mothers with their children between 1890 and 1910. In each of these images the at least one parent is portrayed touching or holding their child, and in every instance but *Sir George Sitwell, and Lady Ida Sitwell* this figure is the mother. See Table 10. Portraits of British Families or Mother and Child, 1890-1910.

[29] Ormond and Kilmurray, *The Later Portraits*, 146.

[30] Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 105.

greater good. As will be expanded upon later, Charles took such obligations quite seriously in many facets of his life, including when choosing a bride.

Copley's *Sitwell Family* is not an image of a nobleman and his progeny and as such provides an interesting counterpoint to the other portraits. In this portrait the heir is surrounded by his siblings, those lucky aristocrats who do not need to face the pressure of having to manage and continue the family's dynasty. Named Sitwell Hurt at birth, the future Sir Sitwell Sitwell inherited Renishaw Hall through his mother, formerly a Sitwell, at which time his, and the rest of his family's, surname was changed. Patriarchal societies such as Britain place great emphasis on the maintaining of a common family bond through the male line and the changing of the family surname can be seen as legitimising the family's claim to the title and properties. The passing of the title through maternal lines also occurred in the first generation of Marlborough family; the duke's heir died young and his eldest daughter's child took over the title. The fifth Duke obtained a royal decree to change the family's surname from Spencer to Spencer-Churchill to honour the first Duke and rectify the fact that his heirs did not possess his name.[31] By the Edwardian era, large aristocratic families like those in Reynolds's Marlborough portrait had given way to the notion of the 'heir and the spare' and smaller households were more common amongst people of a range of social classes. Advances in medical science meant infant mortality rates had decreased and fewer children were required to assure the continuation of the family line, an important consideration for aristocrats.[32] In this era once a son was born it was thought that the family would be secure, therefore avoiding potential crises of succession faced by earlier generations.

On their honeymoon, Charles told Consuelo that she was 'a link in a chain' and only later did she realise that with these words:

> he meant that there were certain standards that must be maintained, whatever the cost, for what was a generation but such a link?—and to him it was inconceivable that he, given the greatness of his position, should fail to uphold the tradition of his class.[33]

Though his family had a long tradition of greatness, it and the rest of the aristocracy's status during this period was not as secure as Marlborough's words would lead one to

[31] Bapasola, *Faces of Fame and Fortune*, 63.
[32] Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians*, 134.
[33] Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 56 and 74.

believe. The uncertainty concerning the state of the aristocracy during this period created many tumultuous aristocratic marriages. Just one year after Sargent completed his image of the Marlborough family the duke and duchess separated.[34] Even before they wed the relationship was unstable, as it also was for George and Ida Sitwell and many other aristocratic marriages of convenience.

Both the Sitwell and Marlborough marriages were social or economic arrangements, not unions rooted in Victorian ideals of romantic love. Both were also by very unhappy. Prior to the nineteenth-century standard set by Victoria and Albert, the Enlightenment period contained another marital ideal: the companionate marriage. The fourth Duke of Marlborough, George, and his wife Caroline had such a union. The marriage was based on love, with the duke selecting Caroline among all the other ladies because of the innate qualities of her person.[35] Reynolds displays this closeness through the placement of her hand on his arm, just above the cameo he is showing to their son. The two are physically close while also dominating completely separate spheres, he with the heir and she with the other children; these separate but equal spheres being an important component of companionate marriage within the Enlightenment period and continued in another permutation in the Victorian doctrine of separate spheres.[36] When this distance is juxtaposed with the biography of the Marlborough and Sitwell couples, it becomes apparent that Sargent's use of distance translates into more than just a compositional choice and rather is used as an indicator of the marital relationships presented.

Sir George Sitwell and Lady Ida Sitwell wed because of his desire to enhance his family's wealth, and more importantly, his obsession with maintaining a clean aristocratic pedigree.[37] He had no interest in marrying outside of a landed family as Charles Spencer-Churchill chose to do. Ida had been born to Lord and Lady Londesborough, both of whom came from families with substantial aristocratic lineages.[38] While the marriage was essentially a forced affair, the match served to continue the family's claim to a peerage that was reliant on the legitimacy of bloodlines. George's strict adherence to noble marriage practices are connected to his decision to commission a portrait from Sargent that relates to

[34] Ormond and Kilmurray, *The Later Portraits*, 144.
[35] See Bapasola, *Faces of Fame and Fortune*, 43 and Hallett, 'A Monument to Intimacy,' 703.
[36] Marilyn Yalom, *A History of the Wife* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 176.
[37] Ormond and Kilmurray, *The Later Portraits*, 44.
[38] For more information on this pedigree see Charles Mosley, ed., *Burke's Peerage and Baronetage*, 106th edition (Crans, Switzerland: Burke's Peerage Genealogical Books, Ltd., 1999), 1744-5.

the Copley image containing what was effectively the beginning of the 'new' Sitwell family line with Sir Sitwell Sitwell. A cautionary tale of what can happen when an heir is not produced, Copley's *Sitwell Family* serves to reinforce the importance of genealogical understanding for saving an aristocratic family from going 'extinct.' Perhaps it is these considerations that cause Ida to look so indifferent towards her family. In undertaking an unhappy marriage and producing these children she completed her duty; beyond that she felt no obligation to them.

Sargent's Marlborough portrait does not display convenience through an aristocratic lineage, but instead portrays a marriage based on monetary convenience without adherence to genetic considerations. The ninth Duke's fear of extinction was based on losing family assets and a lack of financial stability. He made his decision to wed Consuelo without great regard for what the implications of marrying outside of the aristocracy might have on future generations. This could be because of his father's own successful second marriage to an American heiress, or simply because Charles felt that his family's monetary situation was so dire that it needed to take priority.[39] In her text on the Marlborough family portraits of Blenheim Palace, art historian Jeri Bapasola writes that Consuelo's closeness to the heir in Sargent's portrait served as an 'undistinguished proclamation that it was her marriage and her money that salvaged the future dynasty.'[40] This reading subverts the commission's intended adherence to the traditional idea of paternal lineage, and contributes the family's return to prominence and continuation of the line into the twentieth century solely on the foreign, previously untitled Consuelo. Charles had another woman in mind that he would like to have married before choosing Consuelo, a fact that he told his new wife on their honeymoon.[41] This admission makes it apparent that the duke was also fully aware of the important role his wife needed to play in stabilising the family's economic situation and the low priority and expectations he had for happiness in their union. All of this considered it becomes clear why Sargent would have chosen to use John as the only connecting factor between Consuelo and Charles.

Unsurprisingly, by placing considerations of lineage and financial stability above interpersonal relationships, the Marlborough and Sitwell couples and many other aristocrats had unfulfilling and at times contentious marriages. Consuelo tells the tale of

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[39] Bapasola, *Faces of Fame and Fortune*, 65.
[40] Ibid., 75.
[41] Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 38.

what those respectable Edwardians did when marital discord over took a household, writing, 'husbands and wives who could not get on together went their separate ways and in the great houses in which they lives practised a polite observance of the deference each owed the other.'[42] Legal divorce was often an inconceivable outcome for these upper-class Victorian and Edwardian social circles.

Divorce was a legally and socially complex endeavour and this is likely why it took Charles and Consuelo nearly fifteen years after their legal separation to become divorced. The British divorce courts contained many sexual double standards, making it especially difficult for a wife like Consuelo to find cause for the dissolution of her marriage. With the passing of what was called the Divorce Act, formally titled the Matrimonial Cause Act of 1857, a husband could divorce his wife on the grounds of adultery while she needed to prove cruelty or adultery—though the cause of adultery it needed to additionally be aggravated by desertion, cruelty, rape, buggery or bestiality.[43] This law, legally enforced until 1929, placed the sexual purity of a woman at a higher standard than her husband. Additionally, it required the presentation of what could have been perceived to be scandalous evidence in order for the motion to be successful.

However, the married Women's Property Bill of 1882 gave British women the right to 'not only hold on to whatever she owned at the time of marriage or acquired after marriage, but she could also enter into contracts and sue and be sued, and dispose of her property by sale, gift or will.'[44] This meant that, unlike with earlier statutes, a woman could remain in an unhappy marriage and still have the property rights of an unmarried person, giving spouses the opportunity to live separate lives without divorcing. So, why go through with the public spectacle of a divorce? Consuelo recalls that public interest in the legal separation between her and Charles 'now seems excessive, but can be more readily understood by those who remember that in Edwardian social circles divorce or separation was not recognised as a solution for marital discord.'[45] With this statement, Consuelo seems to suggest that while it was difficult to procure a divorce under the Divorce Act, social considerations were the primary hindrance for aristocratic Edwardian divorce.

[42] Ibid., 158.
[43] Yalom, *A History of the Wife*, 186-9.
[44] Ibid., 189.
[45] Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 158.

These social considerations regarding marriage were synthesised in many newspaper and magazine articles published at the end of the nineteenth century. Eliza Lynn Linton was one of the most prolific British writers of such articles protecting what she considered to be the sanctified institution of marriage from the horrors of divorce. Many of her articles, some unsigned, were attempts to rally public outrage towards divorce. In 'The Marriage Tie: Its Sanctity and Its Abuse' she links marriage to religious rhetoric and writes that divorce would have an overwhelming negative impact on larger society. Engaging in such actions was reduced to a selfish action between two incapable spouses.[46] By structuring her argument around the greater good and commenting on duty and honour, she was using language that would have been particularly meaningful to an aristocratic heir like Charles. Additionally, Linton advocates a marriage in which romantic love might be replaced with friendship or simple cohabitation for the sake of the children.[47] In another of her writings she criticises many women for not attempting to find this balance or for refusing to embrace this process as a sort of evolution within the marital relationship.[48] Placing the pressure on the wife as keeper of the domestic sphere to keep the union intact, again for the sake of those outside of the union and the couple's children, was likely what caused wives like Consuelo to remain in either poorly matched or tumultuous unions. Legal divorce publically insinuated a failure to fulfil socially sanctioned gendered responsibilities within a marriage. Neither spouse wanted to be determined as the root of such unpleasantness.

The marital discord within the Marlborough family, Consuelo writes, was 'the problem created by the marriage of two irreconcilable characters.'[49] In Sargent's portrait one finds such distance, but due to the formality of the composition he visually does not elaborate directly on what might have caused this rift. While Sargent takes great pains in his portrait to visually reconcile the fundamental differences of the couple, their biographies and other portraits can assist in clarifying the vagueness in the portrait that hangs at Blenheim.

Charles was the second child born to George and Albertha Spencer-Churchill. His parents had a similarly acrimonious marriage and divorced when Charles was twelve, shortly before George inherited the duchy. The eighth Duke was a known rascal who had many

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[46] Eliza Lynn Linton, 'The Marriage Tie: Its Sanctity and Its Abuse,' *The New Review*, vol. 6 issue 33 (Feb. 1892): 218.
[47] Eliza Lynn Linton, 'The Philosophy of Marriage,' *The Universal Review* 2, no. 5 (09, 1888), 24, 26 and 33-37,
[48] Eliza Lynn Linton, 'The Revolt against Matrimony,' *The Forum* (Jan. 1891): 589.
[49] Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 49.

affairs producing at least one illegitimate child and was also regarded as a bully to his legitimate family. Both attributes left a lasting impression on his son. Known as a 'refined scholarly man with a melancholy temperament,' Charles's behaviour was opposite to his father's in nearly every way. He was a sober and serious person, particularly regarding his personal attributes and advancement. Charles decided to take his academic aptitude to the University of Cambridge and this is where he was when he learned of his father's death in 1892. [50] Upon inheriting the ducal title, Charles began his mission to return Blenheim and the family's prestige to their former glory. While some found Charles to be dour, upon his death in 1934 his cousin Sir Winston Churchill wrote a eulogy in which the duke is portrayed as a less serious and more multifaceted person.[51] In Charles's lifetime, however, he was known to be generally, and was artistically depicted as, the sort of singularly aristocratic and stern figure presented in Sargent's *Marlborough Portrait*.

Another visual representation of Charles can be found in a caricature published in *Vanity Fair* a few years after his marriage to Consuelo (fig. 31). In this image he is styled as a statesman in a grey morning suit. It is a full-length image, like most images of the ninth Duke were, and his face is shown in full profile against a plain cream backdrop. At the top right corner there is a crown, which was often utilised in this series to denote members of the nobility. Other than that his characteristics are fairly subdued, atypically to the treatment found in a caricature. Perhaps this was a comment on Charles's rather conventional and mostly obligatory service as a statesman and duke. Below this drawing is his title and 'Blenheim Palace'. In *Vanity Fair* caricatures of the time, the subject's biggest accomplishment was listed after his or her name, meaning it was the remodelling of his home, achievable only through his marriage to Consuelo, that he was praised for.

In the years after this caricature was published, the duke rose within the circle of the future Edward VII and he became known for more than just his home. In 1899 he was appointed Paymaster General and a year later was Lord High Steward at Edward's coronation. Finally, in 1902 he received the Order of the Garter and was given the robes worn in Sargent's portrait.[52] When Charles was presented with the final honour, Consuelo recalled

[50] Bapasola, *Faces of Fame and Fortune*, 65.
[51] Winston Churchill, *Charles, IXth Duke of Marlborough, K.G.: Tributes* (London: Burns, Oats, &Washbourne, 1934), 5-11.
[52] Bapasola, *Faces of Fame and Fortune*, 68.

that she had to stop herself from quipping, 'We know there is no damned merit to it.'[53] By her own admission, Consuelo did not comprehend fully what Charles, whom she considered to be a rather ordinary nobleman, had done to deserve such accolades.

Perhaps this lack of understanding on Consuelo's part is due to a difference in upbringing rather than the inaction of Charles. Born to William Kissam Vanderbilt and his first wife Alva, the future Duchess of Marlborough was brought up in New York society. William was the grandson of Cornelius 'Commodore' Vanderbilt, founder of the vast shipping and railroad empire that generated wealth for the family that has lasted into the twenty-first century. Consuelo was given the best possible education for an American girl at the time and travelled extensively to add to her well-rounded upbringing.[54] During one such international trip, Consuelo discussed literature with a nobleman's daughter and found that 'little time or trouble was spend on the education of English girls' compared to the comprehensive education she was receiving, and she wondered 'what chance a girl so brought up had against a boy with a public school and college background.'[55] Here it becomes evident that Consuelo had similar educational interests to Charles, but in her estimation they were raised in societies with very different expectations concerning the educational progress of women.

These different standards for women can also be noticed within the causes championed by each. Charles was adamant about bettering Blenheim, the family's collections and local interests, and gave is wife two duties: maintaining the daily operations of the house and visiting the local poor. These domestic tasks placed his expectations of her directly in the framework of the doctrine of separate spheres.[56] Consuelo, however, had different ideas and turned her interests to the public sphere advocating for suffrage and advancements in pre- and post-natal care at the Medical School for Women.[57] Interestingly, none of the images of Consuelo portray these progressive interests. A photo of the Duchess of Marlborough taken around the time of her wedding portrays a typical society woman at the time (fig. 32), dressed in a heavily decorated white gown and matching hat, looking directly at the camera with a soft gaze. Sargent and Boldini portray her in similarly conventional attire and poses. Sargent might have overcorrected in showing her as the long

[53] Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 143.
[54] Ibid., 16-17.
[55] Ibid., 27.
[56] Ibid., 65 and 72.
[57] Ibid., 182-90.

and lean aristocratic 'type' so she pictorially was a better match for her husband and her surroundings. In all of these instances, compositional attributes indicative of Consuelo's identity are compromised for pictorial harmony and conventionality.

There are quite a few ways that Consuelo and Charles had fundamental differences of opinion regarding family life and tradition. In her autobiography Consuelo writes that 'breeding gives a distinction perhaps beyond its value' expressing a difference of opinion to her husband's emphasis on links in the genealogical chain.[58] While her family money had been inherited by Consuelo just as Charles's title had been, she did not assign worth to a future propagating such rigid constructions. These ideas went beyond singular familial considerations. Upon viewing the coronation of Edward VII she commented that because she was not English she 'could not feel the same pride in the tradition of unbroken lineage the act of crowning symbolised' further emphasising her detachment from grander hereditary institutions.[59] Such indifference with regard to the British monarchy is directly related to one of the most basic differences between Consuelo and Charles: their nationalities.

It can be argued that the marriage of Charles and Consuelo was founded on instability because of her status as an American. The British press at the end of the nineteenth century generally branded American women as 'fast', regardless of their social standing.[60] These women were to be feared by polite and proper British Victorian women, for their immorality could be a corrupting factor. Conversely, the very notion of the aristocratic family in which 'no family member carried on productive work, wealth being generated by income from land and the family's 'work' being done by tenants servants and perhaps family managers,' was a completely 'un-American' ideal.[61] The resulting life of leisure ascribed to aristocratic family members had only in the last decade of the nineteenth century become marginally accepted by wealthy industrial families in the States, such as the Vanderbilts.[62] It was by no means a widely disseminated lifestyle aspiration. When mutually beneficial marriages between these emerging American multimillionaires and

[58] Ibid., 154.
[59] Ibid., 142.
[60] Maureen Waller, *The English Marriage* (London: John Murray, 2010), 310.
[61] Neil Smelser, 'The Victorian Family,' in British Family Research Committee, et al. *Families in Britain* (London: Routeledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), 61.
[62] For more information on this leisure class status see Chapter 1 of this thesis, 42-43.

European nobility began to occur, more conservative aristocrats, like George Sitwell, claimed it 'diluted (or as some claimed polluted)' British high society.[63]

Furthermore, many British conservative voices bemoaned the 'Americanization' of the very institution of marriage, citing the lessening of divorce statues and creation of secular divorce courts as a symptom of this internationalist agenda.[64] For example, the author of the 1883 article 'Marriage in America' bemoans the ease by which a marriage can be legally procured in the States and how this leads to the institution being 'treated so lightly' by Americans.[65] On both sides of the Atlantic there was great tension surrounding the reception of these marital unions and in the case of Charles and Consuelo this conflict was carried into the complications and issues of their marriage.

While some Edwardian aristocrats refused to accept divorce as an option, Consuelo found the notion of losing her American characteristics equally inconceivable. She writes in her autobiography, 'Looking back on the little circle I knew of American women married to Englishmen, there are, I realise, very few who remained definitely American,' a seemingly innocuous attack on her compatriots.[66] She does qualify just what these 'definitely American' traits might be when writing on one of those exemplary few, Nancy Astor, describing how her 'high spirits, her sense of humour, her self-assurance, her courage, her independence are all of the American variety; and also her beauty.'[67] In Sargent's representation of Consuelo, one is able to infer some of these 'American' characteristics. She is shown as a tall, confident woman whose spirited nature is demonstrated with a subtle smile. Her fixed gaze combined with her straight posture and sure hold on her son portrays an assurance of self and her role as mother. Consuelo thought Lady Curzon, the former Mary Leiter, 'shed her American characteristics more completely than I was to find myself able to do…she had subordinated her personality to his to a degree I would have considered beyond an American woman's power of self-abnegation.'[68] It must have been especially difficult for Consuelo to try to reconcile her American national pride with her husband's similar esteem towards the British aristocracy. Sargent equally had the task of melding these conflicting components of the marriage in their portrait.

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[63] Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, 28.
[64] Yalom, *The History of the Wife*, 189.
[65] 'Marriage in America,' *All the year round* vol. 33, issue 785 (Dec 15, 1883), 90-93.
[66] Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 172.
[67] Ibid., 172-3.
[68] Ibid., 147-8.

Charles told Consuelo before they wed that he would never return to America because of his strong distaste for the country, and his many sarcastically arrogant comments 'made about all things American' caused her to accept his proclamation.[69] While Charles had no interest in Consuelo's homeland, she made every attempt to dutifully serve in her position as duchess and find a love for her new country of residence. In her domestic role at Blenheim she tried to maintain the 'continuity established by past generations of English women' regarding her duties as hostess, concerning the physical presentation of the house and within the rearing of her children.[70] This attempt at continuity is represented excellently in Sargent's portrait, especially when the image is discussed in terms of its allusions to the work of Van Dyck and Reynolds. The dress she wears was made to be a near replica of the one worn by Lady Killigrew in Van Dyck's portrait of her and Lady Morton that also hangs in the Red Stateroom at Blenheim.[71] The placement of Consuelo as the tallest figure of the canvas, in addition to acting as a link to Reynolds's earlier Marlborough portrait, casts her as the anchor of the family, and a strong figure resolutely herself. With this confluence of allusions and new modes of representation, Sargent makes an attempt to reconcile Consuelo's current position of British duchess with her American heritage.

A decade before Sargent painted Consuelo and Charles their engagement was an international event, raising questions about these sorts of marriages of convenience. Likely because the wedding was the first such international affair in some time, it was heavily publicised and scrutinised. All aspects of the wedding were of great interest to the press in America and Britain. 'Reporters,' Consuelo recollects, 'called incessantly, anxious to secure every particle of news' and fabricating information when the families provided none.[72] *The Aberdeen Weekly Journal* published a series on the wedding, writing in detail about the negotiations concerning her dowry, the rehearsal, the ceremony itself, and finally the well wishes the couple had received from the British nobility and American millionaires.[73] Most of the reactions written in the press were positive, proclaiming the beauty of the couple and the ceremony, yet stressing the differences in their upbringing and

[69] Ibid., 43.
[70] Ibid., 86.
[71] Bapasola, *Faces of Fame and Fortune*, 74.
[72] Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 45.
[73] 'The Marlborough Vanderbilt Wedding,' *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* (Aberdeen, Scotland) issue 2721 (Wednesday, November 6, 1895). And 'The Marlborough Vanderbilt Wedding,' *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* (Aberdeen, Scotland) issue 12722 (Thursday, November 7, 1895).

social class. Illustrations in newspapers and magazines went even further to comment on the differences between the Marlborough and Vanderbilt families and just what this marriage meant for each.

Perhaps the most startling depiction of the difference in upbringing and status between Charles and Consuelo can be found in an untitled illustration from 1896 (fig. 33) in *Life Magazine*, an American humour and lifestyle publication. Drawn by F.T. Richards, the scene casts Charles as a conquistador, and the Vanderbilt family as a tribe of wealthy Native American Indians. Charles is shown holding a banner claiming 'in hock signo vinces', an allusion to the Roman emperor Constantine and the Christian cross. Richards has replaced this religious imagery of the cross with a crown signifying the Duke of Marlborough's aristocratic intentions in his dealing with the Vanderbilt family. Arriving on the shore he doffs his hat to the beautiful and bemused Native American princess meant to represent Consuelo. Next to her stands another female figure, likely her mother, who pushes her toward the group of 'Old World' explorers. These 'New World' figures are surrounded by bags of money, sprouting from the ground like vegetables in a garden and hanging from trees like fruit. Much like the sixteenth and seventeenth-century explorers he is styled after, the duke is set to take these 'natural resources' back to Britain with him. The Vanderbilt men appear amused by the appearance of this stranger, smiling and pointing in the duke's direction, but still keeping their distance.

All of the Vanderbilt family members are exquisitely attired in highly ornamented clothing and adorned with jewels, while the Duke of Marlborough, an allusion to his family's financial situation, is shown in tattered clothing. In the grouping of men behind Charles, one can see a Blenheim spaniel, a symbol of the Marlborough's aristocratic genealogy. The presence of this animal in this new land was completely unnecessary as all practical applications for dogs as hunters and retrievers were bred out of it.[74] Similarly, this duke had nothing considered valuable in the context of this New World system. His title, a sign of status in his homeland, had no equivalent value to these native Americans. In America, the main source of prestige—money—is shown in the bags surrounding the family, earned by an individual through capitalist enterprise. Their intrigued expressions, however, can be a commentary on the fact that this foreigner had charmed the Vanderbilt family, and they in turn were open to some sort of agreement with him.

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[74] Bapasola, *Faces of Fame and Fortune*, 44-46.

The caption below the illustration reads, 'Discovery of the Vanderbilt Family by the Duke of Marlborough, 1894.' However, the scene presented is more a discovery of the family's fortune and less about the duke's interaction with the family's members. Perhaps the boat of men coming to shore behind the duke are fellow aristocrats who are also interested in saving their family estates through similar marital contracts. This illustration points to what some Americans, as will be discussed later, perceived to be the exploitive and opportunistic actions of the British aristocracy through their intermarriage to American heiresses. In portraying the Vanderbilt family in literal Native American Indian attire, Richards is alluding to stories of Native American Indians being 'swindled' out of valuable property such as the isle of Manhattan, because their traditional communal way of living did not contain European notions of personal possession or land rights.[75] This fear of pillaging an American family may seem extreme when one considers the sheer wealth possessed by the Vanderbilt family. Still, many in the press and in the general public were protective of a young woman that they felt was being traded back to an aristocratic life that was built on a foundation of convenience and monetary opportunism.

An opponent of these international marriages of convenience was the famous illustrator Charles Dana Gibson. Employed for the majority of his career by *Life Magazine*, Gibson created thousands of images containing satirical depictions of American life, many of which focused on the strength of the American character—particularly in contrast to what he considered to be inferior European high society. Throughout his work, Gibson 'was resolved to defend his country women to the last drop of ink against all comers from Burke's Peerage or the Almanack de Gotha, and the satiric eloquence of the scores of drawings he produced reveal the strength of his feelings.'[76] Gibson's sister-in-law was the same Lady Astor who Consuelo praised for keeping her American spirit, and she served as one of the many women who helped him create the ideal American woman of this period, the Gibson Girl. Gibson's work was particularly referential to the status of the American woman at home and abroad, a topic that will be revisited and discussed in greater detail in

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[75] It is part of American folklore that Dutch colonist Peter Minuit orchestrated the sale of Manhattan from the Lenape Indians for 60 guilders worth of goods due to either their lack of understanding of the island's strategic location for trade and/or because they did not have the same value for land rights or ownership. However, this myth has been given a more nuanced interpretation in insightful texts such as Peter Francis, Jr., 'The Beads that Did "Not" Buy Manhattan,' *New York History*, vol. 78 no. 4 (October 1997), 411-428.

[76] Fairfax Downey, *Portrait of an Era as Drawn by CD Gibson* (New York and London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), 117.

the following section of this chapter. Throughout many of his illustrations, Gibson advocated the ideal of a marriage based on love, no matter the nationality of those depicted in his drawings.[77] He would have found faults in Consuelo's marriage to Charles on ideological grounds.

Though it was a topic of great conversation addressed by many other illustrators and newspaper commentators, Gibson did not create an illustration specifically regarding the Marlborough-Vanderbilt marriage. However, his satirical illustration, *The Ambitious Mother and the Obliging Clergyman* (fig. 34), completed in 1902, while not explicitly about this union or even one regarding international marriage, is a take on similar scenes before and during Consuelo and Charles's nuptials. The image shows a wedding ceremony officiated by a blindfolded minister. Kneeling before him on what appears to be a hope chest, indicative of the trousseau a bride brings into a marriage, are the groom and bride in clothing typical of the period's wedding customs: man in a dark suit and woman in a long white dress with veil. The bride is given the position of prominence in the foreground of the image and her train takes up a majority of the illustration. While the groom clasps his hands in front of him as if in prayer, the bride's are placed behind her back and secured with a rope held by a woman the viewer can assume is her ambitious mother. The mother has effectively enslaved or imprisoned her daughter within this marriage, with the rope acting as a visual confirmation of this fact.

While no such ropes were present at the wedding between Charles and Consuelo, the bride's mother played a critical role in the metaphorical shackling of her daughter. Alva Vanderbilt famously feigned a heart attack and other maladies until her daughter agreed to marry the Duke of Marlborough.[78] In her autobiography, Consuelo remembers that it was the arrival of her wedding dress from Paris that caused her to realise how certain Alva had been that she could force the match. Her mother had ordered the dress months before her engagement while the two were on holiday in the French capital. The bride then spent the day leading up to the wedding in tears, not wanting to go through with the ceremony, feeling helpless to the desires of her mother.[79] Consuelo was in this instance the helpless woman portrayed by Gibson. Yet, in Sargent's portrait a decade later she is a capable and powerful figure in her marriage, despite its less than desirable origins.

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[77] Ibid., 116.
[78] Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 40.
[79] Ibid., 44-45.

The national identities of the bride and groom in Gibson's image are not given, yet when looking at his oeuvre it becomes possible to infer it is a scene of international marriage. First, the Gibson's girls are always American, settling that question.[80] Second, Gibson created many images of the tall, strong American woman in contrast to the small effeminate European man, similar to the styling of the couple in *The Ambitious Mother*. This size discrepancy is given a real-life example in the Marlborough couple found in Sargent's portrait. Consuelo was taller than Charles, and it was partially due to this fact, combined with Sargent's careful consideration of pose, that she is placed on a step above her husband alongside the dynastic heir.[81] Though preparatory sketches showed the duke in a seated pose referencing the Reynolds piece, Sargent chose to portray both standing, thus creating the need for the step. Perhaps this compositional change was made to call attention, discreetly, to Consuelo's height as a signifier of her American vitality contrasted with his physical inferiority stemming from his British aristocratic lineage.

On the topic of marriages of convenience, Consuelo writes that 'in my day they were still in vogue in Europe, where the interests of the two contracting parties were considered to outweigh the wishes of the bride.'[82] By the turn of the century, a revolutionary figure, the New Woman, served as a symbol for the rejection of marriages of convenience, Victorian marriage standards and the doctrine of separate spheres as depicted in *The Marlborough Family*.[83] This New Woman, rather unsurprisingly, contained many of the same characteristics that Consuelo ascribed to the American woman: self-assurance, independence and insubordination to masculine authority. While in the upper class of British society such a woman was reviled, she received a much warmer welcome into American society. The institution of marriage had yet to find a way to cope with this evolving nature of femininity, and the aristocracy, as protectors of the old guard, took a more conservative stance in not wanting to change the customs set by previous generations. Because they were slower to adapt to new factors economically or socially, it is not surprising that many aristocratic marriages such as that between the ninth Duke and Duchess of Marlborough were in jeopardy.

[80] Downey, *Portrait of an Era*, 101.
[81] Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 157.
[82] Ibid., 41.
[83] Cain, 'When Did the Victorian Period End?,' 320.

Part 2

The New Woman, the New Man and the New Marriage in America: *Mr and Mrs I.N. Phelps Stokes*

Upon receiving the commission for the *Mr and Mrs I.N. Phelps Stokes* (fig. 26), John Singer Sargent's intention was to create an image of a traditional high society woman, not a portrait of a married couple. It was to be a painting of a solitary Edith Stokes dressed in a ball gown gazing out at the audience with a Great Dane beside her. The original specification for this portrait was typical of his treatment of women in the 1890s. As evident by the resulting portrait, quite a few factors conspired to sabotage this outcome. First, Sargent was unhappy with the preliminary work for the portrait and the early stages of its composition. According to Mr Stokes, who went by his middle name of Newton, when Edith entered Sargent's Tite Street studio in her tennis outfit, cheeks flushed from her brisk walk to the building, Sargent immediately decided to paint her as she was, without the formality of a gown.[84] Second, because of unspecified factors, the dog was no longer attainable. Third, the original plan for a companion portrait of Newton by James McNeil Whistler was abandoned. To remedy all of these problems the man replaced the dog in the composition and what was to be a solitary portrait became a double portrait of the newlyweds.[85] The resulting marriage portrait, although visually harmonious, treats husband and wife very differently.

Compositionally the evolution of the portrait's purpose is readily obvious. As her husband Newton stands behind her, Edith takes up the foreground and most of the picture plane. Sargent did not adjust his original design to emphasise Newton's presence. Even with the changing nature of the commission, she remains just as prominent as if she was in the solo image. Edith wears clothing that is uncharacteristically casual for Sargent's portraiture, where gowns are the norm for the female cosmopolitan high-society type represented.[86] The full skirt, sharp jacket and starched buttoned shirt worn by Edith are indicative of another type prevalent during the fin de siècle: the publicly independent and confident

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[84] Stokes, *Random Recollections of a Happy Life*, 115-18.
[85] Stephanie L Herdrich and H. Barbara Weinberg, *American Drawings and Watercolors in the Metropolitan Museum of Art: John S Sargent* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 211.
[86] Though Sargent did paint his American sitters in informal attire more frequently than their British counterpoints, the tennis costume Edith wears is unparalleled for its casual nature among the portraitist's images of adult women.

American New Woman.[87] Newton's masculinity and their marriage are secondary to the colossal femininity present in the painting. The resulting image is rather out of the ordinary for a society portrait, but can be quite easily aligned with contemporary mass produced images of the feminine that reflected the public discourse on the evolution of gender identity at the turn of the century. Using *Mr and Mrs Stokes* as a starting point, this section will examine the American New Woman, the corresponding creation of the New Man, and their joining in the companionate enterprise of the New Marriage.

The term New Woman was used first in 1894 by the British writer Sarah Grand to describe the evolving nature of female identity in the 1890s. The term was soon adopted 'as a catchall to describe every type of vaguely rebellious womanhood—from the suffragists to anarchists to flappers—that emerged in industrialized nations between the fin de siècle and the Great Depression.'[88] Before the term was added to the English lexicon, a yet unnamed subversive female type was first found in the capacity of a 'comic icon' in British humour magazines of the 1870s and quickly spread to the rest of the Western World reaching American magazines in the 1880s.[89] Generally identified as young, university educated and middle or upper class, these women were very different from their Victorian mothers. New Women had the desire and ability to enter the public sphere in ways not afforded to that this earlier generation. The Industrial Revolution increased the number of urban employment opportunities for women in various professional careers, thus more directly confronting the notion that women were fundamentally domestic creatures. To become better integrated in the public sphere, New Women adopted rational dress: the co-opting of less restrictive and more masculine fashions such as the tennis outfit Edith is shown wearing.[90] When compared to the costuming of a figure like Consuelo Spencer-Churchill (fig. 25), one finds Edith's dress to be more wrinkled and 'lived in' as opposed to the pristinely rigid formal attire in the Duchess of Marlborough's representation.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of *Mr and Mrs I.N. Phelps Stokes* is the pose of Edith. She is shown as a full-length figure, right hand holding a flat-brimmed straw hat horizontally at her hip, left hand resting in a fist on her other hip causing what has been referred to as the

[87] For more information on Sargent's and the New Woman see Holly Pyne Connor ed., *Off the Pedestal: New Women in the Art of Homer, Chase and Sargent* exh. cat. (Newark, New Jersey: The Newark Museum and New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2006) especially Holly Pyne Connor, 'Not at Home: The Nineteenth-Century New Woman,' 1-51.
[88] Buszek, *Pin-up Grrls*, 78.
[89] Marks, *Bicycles, Bangs and Bloomers*, 10.
[90] Ibid., ix.

'Renaissance elbow': a jutting angular configuration of the arm. During the period after which the pose is named, it was generally used in portraits of men, usually military figures, to show an assertive and self-possessed nature.[91] Sargent, in using the Renaissance elbow, harkens back to the tradition of Hans Holbein, van Dyck and Diego Velázquez who all created powerful and assertive figures in their work.[92] However, Sargent appropriated it for women in a number of his paintings including *Lady with the Rose* (1882, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) and *Mrs Edward Davis and her Son, Livingston* (fig. 2), and in the pose of Edith Sitwell in *Sir George Sitwell, Lady Ida Sitwell and Family* (fig. 28.).[93] Art historian Holly Pyne Connor has argued that this hands on the hip pose is the 'quintessential New Woman gesture' but does not link this positioning to the Renaissance elbow which is, arguably, its precursor.[94] Edith Stokes in this quintessential New Woman pose has been described as self-assured, with a healthy and modern confidence.[95] Though her confidence is thought of as based in modernity, these attributes can be directly related to the historic reading and application of the Renaissance elbow, a symbol of success or defiance previously ascribed to masculine sitters. In terms of a strictly visual analysis, it is the appropriation of this gesture that allows one to read Edith's representation in terms of shifting gender roles during the late nineteenth century.

Though Edith's pose finds roots in the Renaissance, there is an of-the-moment feeling in this portrait that can also be found in many others by Sargent, especially those of women.[96] This fashionableness relates to the proliferation of consumerism in the late nineteenth century. In many areas of life, from art to clothing to home furnishings, people longed for contemporary trends instead of lasting pieces. Consumer culture was in part brought on by mass production during the Industrial Revolution, which allowed cheap, replaceable, trendy goods to reach a broader market.[97] Clothing was a major component of this consumerism, a fact that is portrayed in the costuming of the Stokes couple. As a reaction to the portrait, the artist James Montgomery Flagg created a caricature of Sargent's

[91] For a detailed analysis of the Renaissance elbow see Joaneath Spicer, 'The Renaissance elbow,' in Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg, eds., *A Cultural History of Gesture: From Antiquity to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 84-128.
[92] Ormond and Kilmurray, *Portraits of the 1890s*, 37.
[93] Additionally, Sargent used this pose in numerous portraits of male subjects including his portrait of the 9th Duke of Marlborough in *The Marlborough Family* figure 1.
[94] Connor, 'Not at Home,' in *Off the Pedestal*, 46.
[95] Trevor Fairbrother, *John Singer Sargent* in 'The Library of American Art' series (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., in association with the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1994), 94.
[96] Prettejohn, *Interpreting Sargent*, 45.
[97] Buszek, *Pin-up Grrls*, 58.

composition in relation to consumer culture. The resulting image *These Stylish Suits $49.98* (fig. 35), a small watercolour 'depicting the couple as a pair of clothes-horses,' reduces Edith and Newton to anonymous types based on attire.[98] This watercolour was reproduced in the popular press and as the title suggests, insinuates that anyone could gain the status associated with the figures by simply paying to acquire similar clothing. In this view it was the superficial components that could be obtained for the right price that lent itself to the creation of identity. The act of commissioning the portrait and possession of a Sargent likeness was another status symbol of the time, purchased for a much higher price than the suits but equally used to cultivate a certain social identity. Furthermore, Sargent's unique portrait style appealed to contemporary consumer culture because he was able to represent modernity through the depictions of current trends like the New Woman in his art while also relying on more traditional art-historical allusions.

Some New Women were even more radical, taking up social or political causes and openly eschewing conventional gender roles. By the turn of the century the New Woman type was generally a university-educated suffragist working for progressive reform and remaining unmarried.[99] As the New Woman figure of Edith is present in the context of a marriage portrait, it is obvious that all of these descriptors are open for interpretation. But why then choose to portray her with the trappings of an unconventional and at times controversial figure? While the wider social implications surrounding the New Woman's life choices will be discussed in depth later on in this section, in order to gain a better understanding of the type Sargent was referencing it becomes necessary to look at the contemporary reception and depiction of these women found in newspapers and magazines.

Though a British writer invented the term, the New Woman's reception in the British popular press of the late nineteenth century was not a positive one. In her text *Bicycles, Bangs and Bloomers: The New Woman in the Popular Press*, Patricia Marks charts the very different receptions the New Woman garnered in Britain and the United States. She explains that the American press was much more accepting of this new form of femininity than their British counterparts. While many writers and illustrators of British magazines pined with nostalgia over the loss of the old female standard, those in the States interpreted

[98] Ormond and Kilmurray, *Portraits of the 1890s*, 124.
[99] Ellen Wiley Todd, *The "New Woman" Revised: Painting and Gender Politics on Fourteenth Street* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press, 1993), xxvii.

the actions and implications of the New Woman far more sympathetically.[100] These representations were less crude, more optimistic and lacked the underlying negativity found in the British press. Marks argues that American magazines were more likely to treat 'the new styles and manners as provocative or humorous than as threatening, perhaps because of their democratic bias.'[101] Using the press as a barometer of public opinion, it becomes possible to trace the different receptions of the general populace in each of the two nations.

One of the reasons for the mean-spirited nature of the British press was that it generally regarded the New Woman as being a sexual deviant devoid of morals. The ability to travel freely and their less confining fashions were thought to contribute to the increased likelihood of promiscuity. The American press, however, did not give much weight to such claims. Instead they held that the New Woman was not immoral but gentle, open and passionate.[102] She was an inquisitive and active form of femininity, which, while unorthodox, was not despicable. It is through this reading that it becomes more understandable as to why Sargent would deem it appropriate to dress Edith as a New Woman. In the States there was a cache of innate qualities ascribed to this figure that were culturally acceptable and in some cases highly desirable.

Though her reception varied internationally, what was consistent throughout both American and British visual representations of the New Woman was the incorporation of traits derived from an Anglo standard of beauty.[103] This likely stemmed from the United States' origin as a British colony and a shared artistic lineage. Since obtaining its independence, however, the States had evolved due to an influx of immigrants from various parts of the world, and its Anglo-centric heritage no longer represented the demographics of its nineteenth- and twentieth-century populace. The dominant Anglo traits of the American New Woman were created from a reliance on its Anglo cultural past and in reference to the contemporary power of the British Empire, instead of being referential to the high numbers of southern and eastern European immigrants entering the States at this time.[104] This Anglo-American artistic exchange is a critical element present in Sargent's career and allusions to this lineage can be found in many portraits in his oeuvre.

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[100] See Marks, *Bicycles, Bangs and Bloomers*, x and 2-22.
[101] Ibid., 19.
[102] Buszek, *Pin-up Grrls*, 89.
[103] Ibid., 22.
[104] Todd, *The "New Woman" Revisited*, 26.

Due to the nationality of Edith, this section will focus on nineteenth-century images of the New Woman that are American in origin in order to address the country-specific implications of these representations of women.

Even though many artists were creating images of the New Woman in the press, the resounding type in the United States was the Gibson Girl as created by Charles Dana Gibson. Gibson's illustrations became the first popularly disseminated standard for American female beauty and remained the dominant type from the 1890s until World War I. The Gibson Girl had many subtypes, including the beauty, the athletic girl, the sentimental girl, the girl with a mind of her own, the ambitious girl, and the charmer.[105] Each of these subtypes was used in unique situations and offered an insight into the well-rounded nature of the New Woman in America. Though the Gibson Girl could have variances in her visual portrayal, she did have certain markers. A chignon was her preferred hairstyle, her skirt was always full and conducive to movement, while either her button-up blouse or the bodice of her gown kept her modestly covered. She dressed in the latest of fashions, cinched to show her slim waist. Never overly 'made-up,' her face remained natural and soft. In other words, she is portrayed as Edith is.

Unlike Edith's purposeful gaze, the idealised Gibson Girl was not completely engaged nor was she too aloof.[106] Gibson's 1900 illustration *One Difficulty of the Game: Keeping Your Eye on the Ball* (fig. 36) demonstrates the remoteness of the athletic girl type while also showcasing the beauty and poise often associated with the Gibson Girl. The female golfer stands in an outdoor scene, eyes closed and hand on hip. She is not actively engaging with her golfing partner, the Gibson Man to her left, but he appears to be very interested in her statuesque pose. This is the proper level of aloofness, authority and fashionablity for a New Woman.

Perhaps most importantly the Gibson Girl was not a 'scary New Woman' suffragette, a completely public figure or the type that eschewed previous notions of soft and nurturing femininity. Instead the New Woman found in the Gibson Girl was an authoritative, independent woman working in conjunction with previous more domestic tropes of the

[105] Ibid., 5.
[106] Henry C Pitz, 'Charles Dana Gibson: Delineator of an Age,' in Charles Dana Gibson, *The Gibson Girls: The Best Drawings of Charles Dana Gibson* Edmund Vincent Gillon and Henry C. Pitz contribs. (New York: Dover Publications, 1968), xi.

feminine.[107] Unlike his contemporaries, Gibson depicted the New Woman as a Romantic ideal. She was the 'embodiment of *Life Magazine's* progressive American spirit and [an icon] of the lifestyles to which its readers aspired.'[108] The romanticism can be found in *One Difficulty* in the Gibson Man's look of longing. Though the Gibson Girl shown is remote and self-assured, she is still desirable. It is perhaps this aspirational model aimed at the burgeoning middle class that propelled the Gibson Girl into such great success. The Gibson Girls 'wore their fashionable clothes with unselfconsciousness distinction; their gestures were patrician.'[109] As was the case with Flagg's critique of modern consumer culture, Gibson's vision of the New Woman was one that could be acquired through making the proper purchases and wearing these items in the correct way. The Gibson Girl herself was for sale on a variety of different platforms, from the illustrated form in *Life Magazine* to leather embossed wallpaper, further adding to the consumerist nature of the figure.[110] The Gibson Girl was desirable to the illustrated Gibson Man and was equally attractive to a wide spectrum of the American public.

One group that found the Gibson Girl appealing were female reformers. More radical turn-of-the-century New Women co-opted the illustrations and 'made the Gibson Girl a symbol of their campaigns for equality, two of the principal quests being exercise and dress reform.'[111] However, it is important to note that Charles Gibson's intention with the Gibson Girl was not one of reformation or advocacy for women's rights. In fact, he feared that organised feminism would 'make women too masculine', which went against Gibson's desire to maintain the status quo.[112] With his 'Girls', Gibson reiterated that he simply wanted to create images indicative of the beautiful, active women he saw in his daily life. Similarly, in the figure of Edith, Sargent is representing a moderate New Woman 'more like the aristocratic Gibson Girl, as girl athlete and charmer, than like the demanding suffragist.'[113] Gibson and Sargent were both were reacting to similar cultural forces and with similar intentions in their representations of the New Woman. In the United States there was a market for both the loose and free flowing fashions that marked the New Woman and the artistic rendering of this likeness, but many preferred these figures without radical political connotations. Sargent and Gibson were not directing attention to the

[107] Banta, *Imaging American Women*, 139.
[108] Buszek, *Pin-up Grrls*, 86.
[109] Pitz, 'Charles Dana Gibson,' xi.
[110] Todd, *The "New Woman" Revisited*, 5.
[111] Ibid., 8.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Ibid., 11.

revolutionary intent sometimes associated with this type, but were instead chronicling in a conservative manner the pervasive inclusion of the moderate attributes of the New Woman throughout turn-of-the-century American visual culture.

As previously mentioned, in texts concerning the Gibson Girl her 'Americanness' is often credited as a distinguishing factor. Homer Fort wrote that Gibson 'has done more to typify the American woman and give her graceful pose and supple charms to the public' than any other American artist.[114] Such an assertion by a contemporary writer demonstrates just how dearly patriotic the Gibson Girl was through to be, and also how important such a representation was. One is able to find a corresponding American-ness in Sargent's portrait of Edith Stokes. In an 1898 review of *Mr and Mrs Stokes* it was commented that the image 'is more than an individual portrait—it is the "American Girl" herself'.[115] The self-assured nature often ascribed to the Gibson Girl and Edith based on the type of the New Woman was instead given nationalistic attribution in a way not done in any other country. This was likely due to the changing nature of American identity between the Civil War and the War of 1898 (sometimes called the Spanish-American War). The new ideal American nature was a balanced combination of the conflicting notions of rugged individualism and strong communal leadership. On an international scale this is what caused an increase of foreign trade, travel and the imperialist War of 1898.[116] Art historian Trevor Fairbrother argues that Sargent's own ascendancy in the genre of portraiture was owed to 'America's new mentality, symbolized by the expansionist agenda of the Spanish American War of 1898', thus directly correlating the change in American identity and political policy with the international art market.[117] The same mentality of expansion and power created a new ideal of self-reliant, proactive and authoritative Americans of both genders. Radical reformers and more moderate New Women 'adhered to the values of community service rooted in small-town America' and the agency found in their acts of public service were considered a patriotic and nationalistic duty.[118] Because the more moderate aspects of the New Woman such as self-possession, strength of character and an independent nature were perceived to be equally fundamental to depictions of true American femininity, it becomes evident why this type was so widely embraced in American turn-of-the-century visual culture.

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[114] Quoted in Downey, *Portrait of an Era*, 196.
[115] 'American Studio Talk,' *International Studio*, vol. 4, (March-June 1898), x.
[116] McCartney, *Power and Progress*, 2-7.
[117] Fairbrother, *John Singer Sargent*, 6.
[118] Todd, *The "New Woman" Revisited*, 2.

In addition to authoritative poses, both Edith and the Gibson Girl in *One Difficulty* present American women as colossal in size, and it is through these dimensional considerations that an inference of nationalism has been claimed. Though the Gibson Girl contained Anglo traits, art historian Maria Elena Buszek writes that these upper-class American women 'were often presented as something of a mutt, cobbled together as the chimerical production of a young country reinventing traditional notions of race, class, nationality—and in turn, femininity.'[119] The Anglo-American traits found in the Gibson Girl are indicative of the best and most sought-after attributes of the time, while 'her stature and self-possession took on a larger meaning as emblems of America's international accomplishments and conquests.'[120] While Gibson Girls were individual characters with unique traits, these characteristics, including an Anglo genealogy, were ascribed to America as a whole. It has also been argued that Edith's 'beauty derives more from her clear complexion and animated demeanour than from the expensive clothing and accessories that frequently appear in Sargent's society portraits.'[121] One need only to look at *The Marlborough Family* (fig. 25) from earlier in this chapter to draw a swift comparison between such lavishly adorned images and the minimalism of the Stokes portrait. Sargent created a New Woman not reliant on the trappings of wealth and status to show her beauty and good breading.

Though her tennis outfit suggests a better alignment with the Gibson Girl than Sargent's other high-society sitters, Edith's representation is not unique in Sargent's portrayal of American women. Sargent painted American women in everyday attire more often than their European counterparts, though never before as casually as Edith is shown.[122] Costuming aside, Sargent used a similar grand scale size and full-length or three-quarter-length portrait pose often in American images of the period.[123] Such portraits demonstrate the 'independence and resourcefulness of the modern American woman, the 'Gibson Girl' of contemporary illustrations'.[124] The largess of the female figures in these portraits is indicative of a vitality and self-possession not often found in Sargent's British portraiture. In his many portraits of the British aristocracy Sargent referenced another type of the era:

[119] Buszek, *Pin-up Grrls*, 97.
[120] Todd, *The "New Woman" Revisited*, 5.
[121] Connor, 'Not at Home,' 46.
[122] Prettejohn, *Interpreting Sargent*, 56.
[123] See Graph 5. Length of Figures in Portraits Containing American Sitters, 1890-1910.
[124] Ormond and Kilmurray, *Portraits of the 1890s*, 80.

the overly refined and emaciated aristocrat in decline.[125] In creating robust and colossal female figures such as Edith Stokes and Consuelo Vanderbilt Churchill-Spencer, Sargent set the American woman apart from the highly contrived and overly civilized aesthetes found in European high society.

While the dominant representation of the American New Woman was found in the pages of magazines, some artists represented this type in paintings that similarly referred to the social implications of her status. Edward Lamson Henry's *The New Woman* (fig. 37) is an early example of a painting depicting the independence garnered by the New Woman. Completed in 1892, the image shows cycling, a popular outdoor pursuit of the New Woman. Though a large number of women were cycling at the time, female cyclists rarely appear in paintings of the period while still being included in many contemporary prints, posters and photographs.[126] Instead of being embraced by the fine arts, this type was relegated to mass-produced images, demonstrating that there was an interest in the mobile New Woman, perhaps just not among the art collecting upper classes. Cycling was an activity associated with female power and feminism, with women riders 'advertising their progressivism' through the independent travelling this mode of transit offered them.[127] The adoption of rational dress was imperative for cycling, as the activity would have been nearly impossible, or at least much more difficult, with restrictive traditional female costuming.

The fashions New Women wore in order to be more mobile included bloomers, the trouser-like garment worn either under a skirt or on its own, found on the New Woman in Henry's painting. She wears just the bloomers with a matching black jacket, hat, gloves and shoes. A brown belt at her waist matches her stockings and the ribbon on her hat. Black costuming, especially in women, is a hallmark of modernity and can be related to the 'unknowable aspects of modern identity,' adding to this New Woman's allure.[128] She stands next to her bicycle as she has taken a break from her ride to have a drink at a farm. To her left are three traditionally dressed figures, two women and a man, who are inhabitants of the rural surroundings. Henry uses a tree to bisect the composition and

[125] Prettejohn, *Interpreting Sargent*, 37-40.
[126] Connor, 'Not at Home,' 37
[127] Buszek, *Pin-up Grrls*, 103.
[128] Robins, *A Fragile Modernism*, 67.

separate the grouping of farm and farmers from the road and the New Woman.[129] In comparing the clothing of the three women one finds that the New Woman, though completely covered, seems to convey more overtly her sexuality because of the body conscious fit of her trousers and belted jacket. Her attire and self-possession are out of sorts in the more traditional environment. The body language of two farmwomen, one with hands on hips and the other with folded arms, combined with their frowning faces, demonstrates a dislike or distrust of the mobility and revealing fashions of the New Woman. The man has removed his hat and placed his hand on his head, a perplexed gesture toward the woman standing before him. Henry mostly painted rural scenes of traditional Americana, and including the New Woman in such a setting reflects the pervasiveness of this type in all areas of American life.

The posing of Henry's New Woman when related to the rest of the scene is quite peculiar. She stands with her back to the audience and uses her left hand to drink while holding her bicycle upright with her right, creating angularity of the arms consistent with the hand-on-hip quintessential New Woman pose. Positioning the New Woman away from the viewer in the same direction as the bike suggests moving forward down this country road, away from the past and toward the future. In the distance, coming down the road toward the viewer is a horse drawn wagon, a machine propelled by animal not human agency and lacking the mechanical sophistication of her bicycle. Placing the woman on an open road surrounded with these traditional figures can be an allusion to the philosophical stance on rational dress that sought to place women in worldly affairs through her direct action.[130] Bicycles made it easier for an individual woman to travel increasing distances from her home, and the agency referenced in the philosophical principles of rational dress was literal in the operation of this vehicle, thereby casting it as a critical symbol in the iconography of the New Woman. Self-actualisation and individual motivation was required to manoeuver the bicycle, and rational dress, with all of its philosophical connotations, was required of its riders.

As demonstrated through Henry's forward looking cyclist, the New Woman at the end of the nineteenth century 'stood for the middle-to upper-middle-class woman's evolutionary progress towards modernity and, in particular her movement from the home to the public

[129] Connor, 'Not at Home,' 37.
[130] Marks, *Bicycles, Bangs and Bloomers*, 160 and 172.

sphere.'[131] American artist John Sloan painted these women, as well as young working-class women publically engaging in leisure activities. His cheerful depictions linked to the genteel tradition in American subject paintings by distancing women from commerce and politics, while still expressing 'the open sensuousness of working-class new women's leisure pastimes' in a time when class distinctions in the public sphere began to break down as well.[132] In this way he showed similar moderation to Sargent and Gibson in his portrayal of the New Woman. One of Sloan's paintings, *South Beach Bathers* (fig. 38), addresses a popular summertime leisure activity: a day at the seashore. Made possible by the introduction of more rational and exposed beach attire, a beach holiday or day at the ocean was a popular retreat for all classes of the American public.

In his crowded painting, Sloan portrays different sorts of people, some in beach attire and some not, spending a summer's day at the seaside. Men, women and a child are present in the image. Some engage in exercise, others eat at picnics and some just lounge in the sand. The woman standing at the left of the canvas, arms posed above her head angularly in the New Woman style as she fixes her white hat, draws in the viewer. She wears a short-sleeved white trimmed black bathing costume, including tights, cinched in at her waist with a white belt. As is the case with *Mr and Mrs Stokes*, the New Woman is placed in the forefront and commands the attention of the audience, and, as in Henry's *The New Woman*, her mostly black costume reflects modernity. With her open stance she is confidently showing her costume and herself to the viewer and the rest of the bathers, including the group at the lower right and the men who dot the beach behind her. However, her focus is directed at the only man not in beach attire, the figure seated on the sand to her right. They appear to be engaging in a conversation, and he gestures at her with a lobster from the feast that lies on a blanket between him and the grouping of young bathers. The female members of this group lounge confidently and mingle freely with their male companions, literally letting their hair down. Socialising un-chaperoned with both men and women was a universal part of the independent life of the New Woman.[133] The young, likely working-class New Women of this painting are relaxed and self-assured, having no apprehensions about their appearance in the public sphere.

[131] Todd, *The "New Woman" Revisited*, 2.
[132] Ibid., 19.
[133] Cherry, *Beyond the Frame*, 153.

Gibson also explored the topic of seaside bathing in his illustration He*r First Appearance in this New Costume* (fig. 39), though with slightly different results. His image is equally crowded with highly individualised figures, but the central Gibson Girl, the woman in the foreground just to right of centre, does not display the confidence of Sloan's standing New Woman. Wearing a similar all black bathing costume, the Gibson Girl stands in a closed off pose, uncomfortably holding on to her skirt with her left hand and placing the right on her face as she looks down at the blank patch of sand to her right. It is as if she is not sure about this new fashion, and she is trying to hide herself amongst the spectators. Aside from the man in a three-piece black suit to her left no one else on the beach is paying her any attention. Another Gibson Girl on the left side of the illustration bends over, tugging at the skirt of her costume with both hands, also unsure about this new fashion. However, she looks out at the viewer with a meek smile as if she is trying to cover her discomfort in a display of poise synonymous with the Gibson Girl. In the middle of the composition there is a woman in a reversed but near-identical pose to that of Sloan's New Woman. This background Gibson Girl adjusts her hair mid-walk as her companion fixes her belt, both catching the attention of a man in a swimming costume behind them. Though these two are fidgeting with their costumes, they appear more at ease on the beach than the two women in the foreground of the illustration.

The different levels of comfort associated with the Gibson Girls placed in the foreground and the central New Woman of Sloan's painting can be attributed to several factors. First, Sloan's image was completed roughly fourteen years after Gibson's, and in the intervening time women gained more social prominence. This period began the second generation of New Womanhood, when New Women became more radicalised and flamboyant in their presentation of femininity.[134] The 'New Costume' worn in Gibson's illustration no longer had any novelty in Sloan's painting; within the fourteen intervening years women and men became accustom to these bathing costumes. Secondly, there is a class difference between the New Women of each image. Sloan largely painted working-class women while the Gibson Girl was a representation of middle- and upper-class New Womanhood. Sloan's working-class women, entering the public sphere as part of their daily routine and more often interacting with members of the opposite sex, had more experience in these sorts of scenes and were, therefore, more comfortable.[135] As a moderate representation of the first

[134] Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 177.
[135] Todd, *The "New Woman" Revisited*, 19.

generation of New Womanhood the central Gibson Girl of *Her First Appearance* was, in this instance, slightly hesitant about her presence in a place where men and women freely interacted un-chaperoned while wearing such revealing attire.

In addition to his leisure scenes, Sloan painted portraits of women that contained attributes that were demonstrative of the New Woman. Sargent himself only painted two other portraits of American women who completely fit the New Women categorization: *Mrs Charles Thursby* (c. 1898, Newark Museum, New Jersey), a cosmopolitan socialite, and *M. Carey Thomas* (1899, Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania), the second president of Bryn Mawr College and an advocate for the advancement of women in higher education.[136] Painted portraits that included elements of the New Woman such as rational dress were more often than not images of progressive or reformative figures like the latter sitter. These women were so invested in their identity as a New Woman and the philosophical principles of New Womanhood that they chose to have their portraits painted as this of-the-moment reformative figure. Sloane's *Dolly with a Bow* (fig. 40) is another image pertaining to this contemporary figure. Dolly Sloan, the artist's wife, was a political activist campaigning for socialism and women's suffrage in the United States, aligning her biography to the intellectual pursuits of the New Woman.[137] Yet, Dolly lacks the assertive pose and expression found in New Woman portraits and Sloan's other work, such as *South Beach Bathers*. Unlike the expansive American woman of Edith, Dolly, in a three-quarter-length portrait, is a small, seated figure enveloped by a black background. Her brown hair blends into the backdrop while only her skin and white button-up blouse, indicative of an adoption of rational dress, breaks-up this darkness. Her face is set and calm, expressing no emotion while she looks out at the viewer. Despite her proportionally smaller size, Dolly commands just as much attention as colossal images of the New Woman through her strong gaze and settled demeanour. Completed in 1909, this portrait demonstrates the evolution of the representation of this type from young and idealistic to older and serious. She becomes a different sort of New Woman, one who is stern, and introspective.

The social implications represented in the type of the New Woman were far-reaching and, for some, dangerous. In Sargent's portrait of Edith it is possible to locate references to these implications rendered in a much more benign manner. Her rational dress represents

[136] Connor, 'Not at Home,' 46-49.
[137] John Loughery, *John Sloan: Painter and Rebel* (New York: Henry Holt, 1995), 144-147 and 164-5.

the main reason the original portrait composition was changed. She had briskly walked to the studio by herself, and Sargent deemed the vitality shown through this independent movement through the public sphere attractive enough for documentation. Though Edith was not university educated as many New Women were, she was an educational reformer. She was a pivotal force in bringing the kindergarten programme to the United States, and served as President of the New York Kindergarten Association from 1912-1933.[138] Edith Stokes was a woman of her time, a professional New Woman, and her portrait celebrates these modern social considerations.

The appropriation of male fashions, increased female mobility, an expansion of educational opportunities and the inclusion of women in the urban workforce created what has been called a crisis of gender at the turn of the twentieth century. By largely refusing to express her femininity through conforming to the 'cult of true womanhood' as was handed down by previous generations, the New Woman was an anomaly that many men of the era found to be strange.[139] Since her inception in the 1870s, the New Woman inspired a level of uncertainty in gender politics, and through her existence, not because of male agency, served as a tool for the re-evaluation of the male population. The New Woman was a catalyst for the New Man, though just what the attributes of this new masculine figure were to be was still in question.[140] Generally the American press was not concerned with possible gender transference within the New Woman/New Man relationship, a stance that is demonstrative of the American public's acceptance of an evolution of gender roles.[141] This did not mean that the increase of women in formerly male dominated spheres was any less cause of alarm. Men were, at times, competing with women for employment, and the gender politics of such interactions had not been explored before in America. All of this came to a head during the 1893 Depression, when the economic downturn combined with the increase of the female workforce 'exacerbated anxieties about the ability of men to fulfil their gendered roles of breadwinners.'[142] Threatening this traditional masculine role by competing with men for the same livelihood, the New Woman was economically challenging the New Man.

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[138] Stephanie L. Herdrich '*Mr and Mrs I.N. Phelps Stokes*,' in in H. Barbara Weinberg et al, *American Impressionism and Realism: A Landmark Exhibition from the Met*, exh. cat. (South Brisbane: Queensland Art Gallery and New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2009), 214.
[139] Hoffert, *A History of Gender in America*, 283.
[140] Ibid., 290.
[141] Marks, *Bicycles, Bangs and Bloomers*, 39.
[142] Hoffert, *A History of Gender in America*, 284.

In the twentieth century, Theodore Roosevelt emerged as the quintessential example of American masculinity because of his military service, reputation as an outdoorsman and reformative attitude.[143] However, at the time *Mr and Mrs Stokes* was painted this model was not yet widely disseminated. Even after this model's rise to prominence, based on the sensationalised tales promulgated by Roosevelt, many of which are compiled in his autobiography, these identifiers were out of reach aspirations for most American men.[144] Not all could become the wealthy self-made American man and this caused anxiety in many. The Gibson Man, a companion to the New Woman Gibson Girl, is perhaps the best visual manifestation of New Man masculinity in the pre-Roosevelt 1890s. Holding on to the traditional Anglo standard of beauty and relying on a relationship with the Gibson Girl for purpose or action, Gibson's illustrations of masculinity are predicated by the implications of New Women femininity. The inclusion of New Women in images by artists such as Gibson and Sargent without the balance of equally strong masculine figures formulates a power dynamic through which it becomes possible to understand why American men at the end of the nineteenth century were so fearful that the expanded role of females in the public sphere would infringe upon their masculinity. It is also through these same images that one can begin to make sense of the changing perception of American masculine identity.

The image of Newton is a visual confirmation of this anxiety of masculinity through its conflicting components. As previously mentioned, he was not originally intended to be in the portrait, but stands where the Great Dane was to be placed next to Edith. He is in the background; face half in shadow, while his wife takes up the majority of the picture plane and the entirety of the foreground. Placed at the far left of the canvas, he is partially cropped out of the image, perhaps a reference to photographic conventions, but nevertheless diminishing the potency of his inclusion in the portrait.[145] Newton's replacement of the dog, a symbol of fidelity and companionship, can be read as an allusion to his devotion to his wife. The couple is dressed similarly in light shirt and black bow tie, a complementary couple even in wardrobe. The brown leather shoe peeking out from under Edith's skirt could just as easily be attributed to his wardrobe as to hers, though the placement and size makes it clearly hers. The similarity of rendering the sitters is

[143] Ibid., 289. This is discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 4 Part 2 'Masculine Simplicity and the Business of American Imperialism: *President Theodore Roosevelt,*' 174-182.
[144] Theodore Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt: An Autobiography* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929).
[145] Shearer West, *Portraiture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 191-2.

continued in their hairstyles. Edith's hair is pulled back in such a manner that mimics the cut of Newton's, and, though a contemporary audience would likely infer that a bun or chignon is done up on the back of her head, there is no evidence of this from a strictly compositional analysis. Though Edith is the focal point, the composition and the couple are visually balanced.

While Edith's New Woman attire is out of place for Sargent's usual approach, Newton, wearing a three-piece suit typical of Sargent's American male sitters, is placed squarely within the perimeters of his preferred costuming. However, the colour of the suit is unusual in Sargent's oeuvre, finding commonality of style and colour with only one other portrait, *The Earl of Dalhousie* (1900, Private Collection).[146] A simple explanation for this white suit is that it is less formal and made of linen both of which serve as a better accompaniment than a traditional black suit to his wife's equally informal and seasonally appropriate summer attire. The white suit can also be read in relation to the white gowns worn by many of Sargent's colossal standing American women.[147] Newton's own 'Americanness' is not referenced with any writings on his portrait, but when reading the image with these colour considerations and size taking precedence over gender, it becomes possible to place Newton in the nationalistic dialogue surrounding these female portraits.

Another image containing colossal figures and addressing nineteenth century gender politics is Gibson's *The Weaker Sex* (fig. 41). A scene of thoughtful examination, it shows four seated, cropped, but still quite large Gibson Girls around a table examining what appears to be a tiny kneeling man. The educated Gibson Girls are studying this man like a science project, with expressionless faces and a sense of concentration. One of them looks at the man through a magnifying glass and points a large pin at his chest. Perhaps the women will use the pin to attach him to a board along with others they have collected. In this way they are shown to be scientists or collectors, seeking their newest specimen to examine. The small size of the man means he would have been probably voiceless, unable

[146] Additionally, there are three notable portraits that contain similar costuming with slight variations. *Coventry Patmore* (1894, National Portrait Gallery, London) has the sitter attired in a three-piece suit with black bowtie very similar to that of Newton, though Patmore's jacket is black. The white uniform worn by Sir Frank Swettenham in his two portraits (1904, Singapore History Museum. And Fig. 65) are a more closely related to the tropical suit worn by the Earl of Dalhousie than Newton, but is nonetheless an all white dress suit. However, as Sir Swettenham's attire is a uniform from his time in Malay Peninsula this suit understandably requires its own distinction.
[147] See Chart 4. Colour of Attire Worn by Female American Portrait Sitters.

to call for help or communicate with these women.[148] The fact that the man is kneeling suggests he is in some sort of distress, likely trying to convince them not to poke him with the giant pin. The title could be an allusion to the 1888 play *The Weaker Sex* by Sir Arthur Wing Pinero, a comedy concerning gender relations and courtship that was a sensation in the States after being poorly received in England. [149] In the illustration this title serves as a conceit; the weaker sex turns out to be the solitary man, not the women who surround him. He is at their mercy, for they have the power of size and number.

Gibson's *The Weaker Sex* could also be a commentary about the uncertainty of courting rituals brought about by the ascension of the New Woman. Previous methods for courtship were deemed too 'old fashioned' and new social constructs were still being formed, but there was a fear that these new courtship rules could lead to a gender role reversal.[150] A combination of the voiceless nature and magnification of the man is significant in understanding male anxieties over this courtship process. The man was scrutinized over his behaviour, yet his opinion did not seem to matter in the formation of this new courtship structure; it was the woman who had the agency and control. The increased education of the women likely did nothing to dissuade his anxiety. As this illustration shows, such educational pursuits were making the women more rational, cold and defeminising their interactions with the opposite sex. From the confluence of these elements and the centralisation of women in images containing both genders, one is able to perceive the masculine apprehension about securing a place of prominence in an increasingly feminised society.

The changing nature of gender interactions within the public sphere is present in the seaside scenes of Sloan's *South Beach Bathers* (fig. 38) and Gibson's *Her First Appearance* (fig. 39). Both images contain almost voyeuristic masculine gazes directed at New Women in beach costumes. Each offers the possibility of an unbalanced power dynamic favouring the masculine by having its central female figure in her swimming costume receiving attention from a man more fully dressed. While the demure Gibson Girl looks with worry away from this masculine gaze, Sloan's New Woman directly confronts

[148] Joyce K. Schiller, 'The Weaker Sex,' catalogue entry. Norman Rockwell Museum (19 November 2009) (http://www.rockwell-center.org/exploring-illustration/the-weaker-sex/) [Accessed 14 June 2013]
[149] Malcolm C. Salaman, 'Introductory Note,' in Arthur Wing Pinero, *The Weaker Sex: A Comedy in Three Acts* (Boston: Walter H. Baker & Co., 1894), 9.
[150] Marks, *Bicycles, Bangs and Bloomers*, 38.

it, not allowing her change of dress to affect her confidence. When the men are similarly attired in beach clothing, as with the figure behind the pair of standing Gibson Girls and the majority of men of *South Beach Bathers*, giving exception to the heterosocial grouping to the right of the canvas, the New Women receiving this attention have their backs to these men. They could not know the men are there and the gaze is present, or they could be aware and are actively choosing not to engage. A question of whether or not these men would gaze at the women in the same way if the women were facing toward them also arises. Most of these New Men are admiring at a distance the femininity of the New Woman, but do not dare actually interact with her, a reflection of the masculine anxiety over gender relations.

The relationships between individuals in *South Beach Bathers* and *Her First Appearance* are not explicitly addressed. The New Woman's entry into the public sphere un-chaperoned, and the lack of detailed symbols of courtship and marriage like engagement and wedding rings, leaves vague scenes of interpersonal interactions. Gibson gives all of his figures a bit of personal space, not showing any instances of touching. Alternatively, Sloan includes the interconnected grouping of two New Men and two New Women, embracing the more fluid gender interactions manifested through the New Women's independence.[151] To the left of both *South Beach Bathers* and *Her First Appearance* are the only interactions between an individual man and woman. For Sloan it is the central New Woman and the seated man, and in Gibson's image it is the couple seated on a blanket behind the bent over Gibson Girl. In these busy scenes, only these two masculine gazes are met. Even though many permutations of gendered interactions are shown, there is not one instance of a female gaze directed at a man where the man does not reciprocate. The New Man is literally looking to the New Woman for guidance.

Though quite a bit has been written on the figure of Edith, Newton is not often addressed in art historical literature, and when he is it is only as a counterpoint to the image of his wife.[152] As in the case of the tiny man in *The Weaker Sex*, this could be due to his lack of visibility. As Prettejohn points out, Edith is a 'powerful image of the American New

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[151] Todd, *The "New Woman" Revisited*, 3.

[152] The literature surrounding this portrait is plentiful as are the instances where Newton is ignored or disregarded when referencing the portrait. In addition to those examples cited elsewhere in this chapter, see Francis J. Ziegler, 'Sixty-Eighth Annual Exhibition of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts,' *Brush and Pencil*, vol.3 no. 5 (February 1899), 292-293; William Howe Downes, *John S. Sargent: His Life and Work* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1925), 180-181; Banta, *Imaging American Women*, 507; Fairbrother, *John Singer Sargent and America*, 160.

Woman', moving forward from the male authority of her husband who is placed in shadow.[153] Newton does stand literally in the shadow of his wife. This shadow, in conjunction with his beard, causes most of his face to be hidden from the viewer. It is very difficult to make out his expression, and upon close inspection it appears rather unremarkable. Scholar John Harvey writes in *Men in Black* that, unlike previously rendered Victorian couples the 'vigorous confidence is especially hers' perhaps because Edith's black jacket can be read as a sign of strength while Newton's white suit lacks this implication.[154] This colour analysis combined with their respective poses pulls agency and assertion away from Newton and gives it more resoundingly to Edith. In addition to being placed in his wife's shadow, the colour of Newton's suit blends into the backdrop furthering the uncertainty surrounding his identity. What the viewer sees in the image of Newton is only a rough sketch of a man, unlike the vivid representation of his wife.

Newton's later addition in the canvas is addressed by Olson in regards to the influence this has on interpretations of the placement of Edith's hat. He writes, 'Mrs Stokes held the straw hat where the Great Dane ought to have been, at the very point in her husband's anatomy where spirited critics have been moved to assert she is desexing him.'[155] Though Olson's reaction is to dismiss this placement as a holdover from the original commission, there is another element that suggests a reversal of gender roles: the strong shoulders created by the tailoring of Edith's jacket juxtaposed with Newton's sloping shoulders caused by his cross-armed stance. Notions of turn-of-the-century masculine idealism, sturdy shoulders and barrel chest as seen in the Gibson Man of *One Difficulty* (fig. 36) and *Her First Appearance* (fig. 39) are not present in Newton's portrait. While the Gibson Man and Gibson Girl were regarded as a 'handsome, youthful pair, incredibly competent and assured', Newton and Edith's relationship does not appear to be of equally confident individuals.[156] Edith's open angular stance when contrasted with his closed linear pose can be interpreted as being indicative of their relationship; she 'dominates the relationship taking centre stage and demanding herself the larger share of the viewer's attention.'[157] It would be too far to state that Newton was desexualised or emasculated by the inclusion of these elements, or because of the feminist dialogue that surrounds the portrait. However, when reading this image in relation to the Gibson Man it becomes evident that Newton's

[153] Prettejohn, *Interpreting Sargent*, 58.
[154] Harvey, *Men in Black*, 225.
[155] Olson, *John Singer Sargent: His Portrait*, 206.
[156] Pitz, 'Charles Dana Gibson,' xi.
[157] Todd, *The "New Woman" Revisited*, 11.

representation is not one of self-assured masculinity. Instead, his portrait is a demonstration of the perceived disenfranchisement of the New Man in relation to the ascension of the New Woman.

The institution of marriage was, unsurprisingly, impacted by these gender issues of turn-of-the-century America. Marriage with its Victorian implications of separate spheres, female subordination and romantic frivolity was not generally appealing to the sensibilities of the independent and rational New Woman. Many New Women equated marriage with a surrendering of individual identity, something in which these educated and independent women were not interested. [158] They had worked hard for their careers and in their areas of individual interest, and did not want all of that work to be for nothing if they were forced back into solely the domestic sphere in their marriages. Large numbers of university-educated women postponed marriage indefinitely and even those who did marry 'questioned marital norms and prevailing notions of gender difference and sought different social and sexual relations with men.'[159] Some women simply did not want to move forward with attempting courtships due to the demographic difficulty still being felt in the decades after the end of the Civil War. With the odds not in their favour and as they were already leading productive and fulfilling lives they chose to remain single, forging other sorts of relationships and focusing on the work either in a professional setting or by volunteering in reform movements.[160]

All of this led to an increase of 'redundant women' who either out of an active disregard for the institution of marriage or because of circumstance were unmarried, childless and welcomed into the public sphere with sometimes lucrative employment opportunities. The emergence of these redundant women in the public sphere was considered to be an attack on masculinity through the increasing feminization of modern society.[161] Whether or not modern society was becoming feminised is debatable, but what is certain is that married or not the New Woman was defined by her accomplishments and not her husband as those in her mother's generation had been.

[158] Marks, *Bicycles, Bangs and Bloomers*, 50.
[159] Todd, *The "New Woman" Revisited*, 2.
[160] Ibid., 2-3.
[161] Marks, *Bicycles, Bangs and Bloomers*, 24.

Nevertheless, marriage remained a good option for women in both social and economic terms even if not desirable ideologically. The decision to engage in traditional marriage and have children offered the turn-of-the-century women financial security both immediately and in her elder years.[162] Marriage, with or without romantic love, was an extremely rational choice for these women. As previously mentioned, there was debate surrounding how a New Woman should be courted, concerning the implications this had on gender politics. Uncertainty continued in the protocols of the modern marriage. Whereas previous generations had developed gendered courtship rituals and marital expectations, this one was effectively dismantling most of them. [163] Should a New Woman bring into her marriage the take-charge attitude that dominated other areas of her life? As evident by a preference for companionate marriage in which the 'role of husband as patriarch began to decline and more egalitarian model for married couples emerged', the answer to this question was a tentative yes.[164] Modern companionate marriage, having been modified from its Enlightenment period precursor discussed earlier in this chapter, relied on open communication and shared interests to foster a sense of camaraderie and create an equal relationship. It can be argued that the new ideal companionate marriage grew out of both these calls for changing gender roles, as well as from the idea of romantic love made popular by the marriage of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in 1840 and their subsequent devoted partnership. A 'New Marriage' was being formulated to better fit the taste of the New Woman and, transitively, the New Man.

One element that most directly relates to the ideals of companionate marriage in *Mr and Mrs Stokes* is Newton's suit. One can correlate his white costuming to the white dresses worn by women in the modern Anglo-American marriage ceremony. Having gained popularity with the wedding of Queen Victoria, by the 1890s the custom of a white wedding, a bride in a virginal white gown with her black tuxedo adorned husband, was imbedded in American culture.[165] In the Stokes portrait, the gendered implication of the colour reversal between the attire of the bride and groom is a point of interest. By altering the colour scheme of his costuming, Newton's purity and fidelity enters the conversation in a way that was previously relegated to only the bride. For a companionate marriage, a partnership of equals, this sort of dialogue was more likely to occur than in unions based

[162] Ibid., 32
[163] Ibid., 38.
[164] Hoffert, *A History of Gender in America*, 285.
[165] Cele C. Otnes and Elizabeth H. Pleck, *Cinderella Dreams: The Allure of the Lavish Wedding* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2003), 30-35.

on Victorian ideals of marriage with separate gendered spheres. His face is partially covered in her shadow, but part of the shadow also falls on the wall next to him. Though her agency as a New Woman does at times block out her husband, it is also what causes their companionship, and through these shared interests and partnership they are linked to one another.

In order to understand what makes the representation of marriage in Sargent's *Mr and Mrs Stokes* so revolutionary, one must go back and look at earlier marriage portraits to see just what elements have been adjusted. Sargent did not paint many portraits of married couples. Of the four portraits exclusively of spouses painted by Sargent only the two containing American sitters, *Mr and Mrs I.N. Phelps Stokes* and *Mr and Mrs John W Field* (1882, Philadelphia Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia), follow the traditional motifs found in grand manner portraits such as *William Hallett with his wife Elizabeth (The Morning Walk)* by Thomas Gainsborough (fig. 42).[166] Using this work by Gainsborough, an artist often alluded to in Sargent's oeuvre, as a point of comparison, it becomes possible to pinpoint visually various ways in which the representation of marriage and gender roles in the institution itself evolved between the late-eighteenth and late-nineteenth centuries.

Gainsborough paints the Hallett couple in an eighteenth-century promenade portrait where the husband and wife travel together throughout a nature scene. *The Morning Walk*, as it has become known, is not set in a real outdoor setting as other images of the time were. Rather Gainsborough paints a fanciful scene without any topographic links to the couple's actual estate or the place where they were wed.[167] The inclusion of a dog serves to draw the audience's gaze to the couple in addition to being a traditional element in images pertaining to marriage. The couple's recent union can be interpreted in details of the portrait including similarities in 'the wigs and hat feathers, the ribbons, the dog's tail, the trees, bushes, sky, and even physiognomies. Husband and wife look alike, their dog resembles them, and all three are seen walking, right foot forward, through a landscape of which they form an essential part.'[168] Everything relates to one another and this unity of

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[166] For a list of all of Sargent's oil portraits of married sitters with British and American affiliation see Table 11. Portraits of Married Couples with British or American Affiliation, 1875-1925.
[167] For a more detailed analysis of promenade portraiture see, Hugh Belsey, '"Each fond couple treads the flow'ry lawn": the development of the promenade portrait,' in Hugh, *Love's Prospect: Gainsborough's* Byam Family *and the eighteenth century marriage portrait* exh. cat. (Bath: Holburne Museum of Art, 2001), 9-15.
[168] Amal Asfour and Paul Williamson, *Gainsborough's Vision* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 220 and 222.

representation suggests the union of marriage. Gainsborough creates an environment for his figures to walk through that is as critical to the composition as the portrait sitters are. Alternatively. Sargent does not include such a setting in *Mr and Mrs Stokes* and only concerns himself with the individual portraits of his sitters. This provides isolated alienated distance while Gainsborough presents contextual unity. Both couples contain visual elements in their figural representations to link husband and wife; in extending this harmony into a nature scene Gainsborough elevates the matrimonial bond of his sitters in the outside world.

The titular walk of the scene takes place the morning after their wedding night, at the beginning of their first full day as man and wife. The shadows and changes of light in the portrait are not referential to the time of day, but are indicative of the couple's walk through married life.[169] As demonstrated in their physical connection, Mr and Mrs Hallett are moving through this life *together*, with William one slight step ahead of his wife as if protectively leading the way. The positioning of the Stokes couple as independent from one another and placing Edith in front creates a sense of individualism within this union, a lack of gendered expectations of marital roles. Shown as isolated figures, Edith and Newton celebrate the individual interest of the companionate marriage while Elizabeth and William physically connect for a gendered symbiotic marriage referential to the doctrine of separate spheres. Elizabeth is shown walking with her husband and was likely always similarly chaperoned in the public sphere, while Edith ventured out into this sphere on her own, without the safeguard of her husband's presence. Furthermore, Newton as a New Man of the 1890s may have been uncertain about whether or not he should offer his New Woman wife such accompaniment.

Edith is the only one out of the four with a discernable facial expression. Elizabeth and William share the same emotionless, but content look. Unlike the easily visible faces of the other sitters, Newton's shadowed face is mostly illegible, but what can be seen does not match Edith's smiling presentation. The Hallett couple's expressions are as in sync as their stride, a newly formed unit. A lack of individual character in *The Morning Walk*, and a reliance on the European figural tradition combined with the couple's uniformity goes against the individual identity desired by the New Couple of the 1890s as presented in the

[169] Ibid., 222.

distinct renderings of Newton and Edith.[170] The Hallett couple gaze to their right, genteelly surveying the contemporary scene. The Stokes pair confidently looks straight ahead to the viewer and the future.

Mr and Mrs Stokes contains an angularity of pose that, when combined with its lack of textual softness of costuming, creates a hard, urban and modern representation of marriage. While *The Morning Walk* is a countryside image in which its sitters are clothed in attire that reflect the diverse and ornate natural surroundings, Edith and Newton wear simple utilitarian clothing mostly lacking adornment. The best examination of this discrepancy of dress can be found in the costuming of the women. Elizabeth's cumbersome dress, made of yards of fabric adorned with ruffles, lace and bows, is a far less sensible and much more restrictive choice than Edith's tennis outfit. Additionally, Edith's straw hat contains only a simple black band while Elizabeth's has feathers, ribbons and a bow; it is an oversized statement piece, while Edith's is a fashionable but practical accessory. Beneath Elizabeth's large white skirt peeks a delicate gold shoe, unmistakably feminine unlike Edith's sturdy unisex footwear. Elizabeth's fashions likely dictate her reliance on her husband, as walking with dainty footwear on uneven terrain with such a large skirt would have made this activity very difficult without support. She is not able to do such things on her own because of the eighteenth-century symbols of femininity she wears. Such self-inflicted dependence was unacceptable for the radical New Woman.[171]

When relating the two portraits it becomes possible to read a tonal similarity of costuming in between the paintings based on corresponding locations of figures, but with differing genders. The colour schemes in the costuming of the four figures is nearly identical, but with a transference of colour between the genders. Elizabeth's attire in *The Morning Walk* has elements, such as her white shawl and dark hat that allows for her to blend into the natural background just as Newton's white suit blends into the cream backdrop of *Mr and Mrs Stokes*. Furthermore, these 'blending' figures are placed behind their spouses who wear dark colours and are given more individual agency. Sargent uses black to set off his sitter's features, meaning those attired in such dark clothing are purposely given a place of prominence.[172] William and Edith both stand out with the help of their black jackets, white

[170] Ellis Waterhouse, *Gainsborough* (London: Spring Books, 1958), 28-9.
[171] Todd, *The "New Woman" Revisited*, 4-5.
[172] Deborah Davis, 'The Man Who Loved Women,' in *Sargent's Women,* exh. cat. (New York: Adelston Galleries, Inc., 2003), 15.

collars and white attire on their lower body: Edith through her skirt and William in his stockings. Additionally, William's pose with hat in one hand and 'Renaissance elbow' is the same as Edith's. The colour coding and positions have been switched on gendered lines. However, it would be too extreme to infer that this is indicative of a complete gender reversal in traditional roles. Instead these changes demonstrate the fluidity of gender roles for New Man and New Woman in companionate marriage.

Gainsborough represents British portrait tradition, and therefore his work is indicative of the social implications of images in Great Britain. The portraits of Gainsborough's contemporary John Singleton Copley can address the American lineage shared by the Stokes couple. Copley is considered to be the forefather of American portraiture and, it has been argued, his work ran parallel to *The Morning Walk* and other compositions painted by Gainsborough during the 1780s.[173] One of Copley's earlier portraits, *Mr and Mrs Thomas Mifflin* (fig. 43), demonstrates another shift of traditional gender roles in America predating the New Woman. Helping to establish an American precedence of more fluid gender roles, this portrait can be read as a precursory image of companionate marriage in an Enlightenment-era Quaker family a century before the emergence of the New Woman.

Completed on the eve of the American Revolution and containing nearly as many early compositional hurdles as *Mr and Mrs Stoke*s, Copley's *Mr and Mrs Mifflin* is a unique and unconventional marriage portrait, with many elements insinuating gender equality. Thomas and Sarah Mifflin are shown in an interior scene, seated at a wooden table. Sarah, placed just in front of her husband and closer to the edge of the picture plane, is working on a loom. The placement of a woman in the foreground was unusual for American marriage portraits of the period, as they were usually not placed in such areas of prominence.[174] From this position and looking out at the viewer with a direct and intense gaze, Sarah demands attention in a way outside of the genteel portrait tradition found in Elizabeth of *The Morning Walk*. Furthermore, the interaction between husband and wife was not common for British marriage portraits of the eighteenth century. Usually the wife would be the one looking at her husband, a reference to her reliance on him in other matters.[175] Thomas, having momentarily paused reading the book in his right hand, looks at Sarah

[173] Waterhouse, *Gainsborough,* 28.
[174] Hughes, *American Visions*, 87.
[175] For a comparison see Sir Joshua Reynolds, *The Family of George Spencer, 4th Duke of Marlborough* (fig. 27).

'with a manifest pride and love that are, however, very far from proprietary complacency.'[176] The power dynamic is nearly identical to that of Edith and Newton; the man is behind the woman, lovingly supporting his wife while she engages in her interests. For a couple in Revolutionary Era America such a relationship was rare, but to the New Woman it was the only suitable state of marriage.

The costuming in *Mr and Mrs Mifflin*, while still more ornate than Newton and Edith's, was more casual for the era and Thomas's attire was especially plain.[177] He wears a simple olive working suit while Sarah is in a slightly more decorated white dress. This lack of ornamentation was likely due to the couple's Quakerism that restricted such ostentatious clothing and the embargo by Revolutionaries on imported lace and other fine fabrics from Britain.[178] Colour scheme when combined with this attire portrays no inference of gender transference in the later image because no rigid gender roles appear in the earlier one. Both Thomas and Sarah are strong and resolute figures, comfortable in themselves and their contributions to their marriage. In particular, Thomas is portrayed as closely gazing at his wife. Though behind her, he does not allow her centrality and attention to overtake his sense of masculine identity. He continues his intellectual pursuits at her side with none of the anxieties present in the receding figure of Newton. Thomas looks lovingly at his wife amidst her work, happy that she is engaging in the home-based activity. Thomas and Sarah are, however, separated by an 'awkward heap of hands, and a book which the husband heedlessly points at his wife's throat.' [179] The agents of the interests that grant them some individuality are also used as a tool of isolation. When these interests are placed outside of the domestic and in the public sphere, as with Edith and Newton, it becomes possible to understand how this alienation could be exacerbated. The Mifflin portrait acts as an early example of cautious support for companionate marriage.

Both Thomas and Sarah Mifflin were revolutionaries assisting in the formation of the United States. Though pacifism is a critical element of Quakerism, Thomas served as Quartermaster General of the Revolutionary Army, as well as organising passive boycotts

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[176] Hughes *American Visions*, 89.
[177] Aileen Ribero, '"The Whole Art of Dress": Costume in the Work of John Singleton Copley,' in in Carrie Rebora, et al, *John Singleton Copley in America*, exhibition catalogue (New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1995), 110 and 112.
[178] Paul Staiti, '*Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Mifflin (Sarah Morri*s)' catalogue entry, in Ibid., 320.
[179] John McCoubrey, *American Tradition in Painting* New Edition (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2000), 11-12.

and becoming a statesman later in life.[180] In the figural representation of Thomas, Copley makes no reference to his sitter's prominent reputation among the Revolutionary faction in the Colonies, but does include reference to rebel activities in the activity of Sarah. Her loom is politically charged because the act of using such an implement in making fringe or embroidering in one's home was perceived as an economic attack against Britain. Many radicals began a boycott of English duties and goods while encouraging American manufacturing beginning in small home shops. Though Colonial women were not yet present in the public sphere as the New Woman of the 1890s was, they could still take a political stand and enact change from in their homes. The resulting homemade fringe and lack of lace in costuming was a political sign of rebellious beliefs, as seen in the attire of both Sarah and Thomas. Through his wife's activity Thomas is adorned in the clothing of revolution. Additionally, Copley places Thomas in such a position that he 'seems to rise bodily out of the loom', reinforcing the loom as a component of his radical political beliefs.[181] Sarah and Edith both serve as the conduits of reform in their respective portraits.

The time periods in which these portraits were created were also periods of tumultuous change**.** The Mifflin couple saw the formation of the United States from Enlightenment principles, the Stokes witnessed the emergence of American imperialism and globalised modernity. New ideas and methods were being experimented with, even within long held beliefs or lasting institutions such as marriage. While such questioning is not a strictly American trait, Sargent and Copley created portraits of married couples of each era that were vastly different from what had been produced before, showing such fluidity of gender politics within the institution of marriage as part of American cultural heritage.

Gibson, in both his personal life and his illustrations, was an advocate of a strong American marriage as depicted in the Mifflin portrait. He was a vocal campaigner against 'the marriage of beautiful wealthy women to aging European aristocrats' writing on the topic as well as producing illustrations such as *Warning to Noblemen: Treat Your American Wife with Kindness* (fig. 44).[182] The title suggests a call to action for the protection of American feminine interests abroad, but the scene portrayed is a cautionary tale about what can happen if you do not treat a Gibson Girl well. The illustration presents

[180] Jules David Prown, 'John Singleton Copley,' in *John Singleton Copley 1738-1815*, exh. cat. (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery, 1965), 74.
[181] Staiti, '*Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Mifflin*,' 320.
[182] Todd, *The "New Woman" Revisited*, 8.

a ball gown attired woman in a boxing stance addressing her tuxedo-clad husband. A chair in the background has been knocked over and lies on its side between the two figures. The husband stands, crouched behind another, holding it with his left hand as if it were a shield and further protecting his face with his right arm. What provoked such a scene of disorder and marital discord is not evident, and does not really matter. The purpose of the image is to demonstrate that the twentieth-century American woman was a forceful presence perfectly capable of taking care of herself and her interests, especially when confronted with foreign adversaries.

To portray this feminine strength in what can be inferred is an international marriage, Gibson again uses the type of the oversized American woman. The woman is a towering presence; she takes up a majority of the space in the composition and her size is further reinforced when proportionally relating her to other elements in the illustration. In this representation, and in most of Gibson's work, one can also find a level of 'unaristocratic scrappiness' in the portrayal of the American woman.[183] By adopting the positioning of a boxer, a masculine sport highly unappealing for women in upper-class circles, in this instance she is literally cast in the role of a scrapper. From the state of the room and stance of her husband the audience becomes aware that this gesturing is not only for show. The Gibson Girl is a forceful figure both at home and abroad; no matter her location, the strength of her American characteristics cannot be assimilated.

When comparing Gibson's image of international marriage to Sargent's American marriage portrait *Mr and Mrs Stokes*, the height differentiation between the male and female figures stands out as a major difference. The Gibson Girl would still be taller than her European husband even if he were standing completely upright instead of the bended knee defensive position in which he is shown. Juxtaposing the height and agency of the fighting Gibson Girl with what can be interpreted as the 'excessive femininity' of European society demonstrated in the cowering of her husband, one is able surmise a shift in the perception of gendered dynamics in international marriages of the period.[184] Though Sargent places the woman in a position of prominence, her husband still looms behind her with an imposing presence due to his height in a manner not found in Gibson's portrayal.

[183] Buszek, *Pin-up Grrls*, 97.
[184] Ibid.

Though neither man is as individualised or prominent as his spouse, Gibson emasculates the European nobleman through his physical slightness in a way that Sargent does not. Newton, standing behind his wife, can still be perceived as a protector, and though Edith has the independence to face the world alone he still acts as a supportive and defensive presence. In Gibson's rendering, however, it is the nobleman who is the one in need of protection. This differentiation can be read on nationalistic lines, the hearty American man versus the European effete. When examining the rest of Sargent's oeuvre that contain portraits of international clientele and taking into account his personal biography, it becomes apparent that he would not have painted such an emasculated figure no matter his origins.[185] Even though Newton is placed in a dialogue of the evolving portrayal of gender roles, he is not desexualised because of his wife's strength.

When researching the different receptions of the New Woman in Britain and the United States, it becomes apparent that Sargent chose wisely in selecting an American couple to surround with allusions to New Womanhood and its implications. In the years leading up to the completion of *Mr and Mrs Stokes*, American acceptance of this type increased as seen in the positive reception of the Gibson Girl. The nation's unique convergence of cultural signifiers made the New Woman appear to be quintessentially American; even when shown as a 'scary suffragette' her enthusiasm and initiative was still deemed to be admirable.[186] The illustrated Gibson Girl and her companion in the Gibson Man were emblematic of a moderate New Woman in the States, a trait shared with Sargent's portrait of Edith and Newton. While both Sargent and Gibson were rather conservative in their depictions of the New Woman, Sargent was even more restrained in his presentation of these new American gender roles, perhaps in reference to international uncertainty pertaining to changes in traditional gender politics.

The identity of the New Man as portrayed in Sargent's rendering of in Newton, the illustrated Gibson Man and later in John Sloan's bathers is nervous and hesitant, but not necessarily insulted by or closed-off to an evolution of gender politics. Particularly during the 1890s, the American New Man lacked the initiative for agency as seen in previous images such as William Hallett in *The Morning Walk*, but this does not unequivocally mean they would have been unsupportive of the evolution of New Womanhood through such constructs as a change of the courtship rituals or companionate marriage. Newton and

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185 See *The Marlborough Family* (fig. 25) for such an example.
186 Buszek, *Pin-up Grrls*, 130-134.

Edith, as posed by Sargent, do not demonstrate the casting aside or emasculation of the New Man by the American New Woman as some have suggested. Instead it shows a couple trying to work together to form a 'New Marriage' in America during the awkward and revolutionary period of the 1890s.

Conclusion

Sargent's Symbols of Marital Unions

It has been said that in Britain during the late Victorian and Edwardian periods Sargent was the 'unrivalled topographer of male power and female beauty,' expertly demonstrated in the power of Charles's pose and in the graceful rendering of Consuelo's statuesque figure in *The Marlborough Family*.[187] Sargent's American works of the 1890s, it has been argued, 'were among the most important artistic developments in the nation,' a claim exemplified in the unique positioning and virtuosic representation of Edith and Newton in *Mr and Mrs I.N. Phelps Stokes*.[188] In these portraits Sargent, quite cleverly, calibrated just how much of each of these modern and traditional elements to use in order to paint portraits of married couples that represent the Anglo-American ideological dichotomy surrounding the institution of marriage during this period.

The marriages Sargent portrays on canvas are as different as the compositional allusions in each painting. Consuelo is painted wearing a costume referencing her husband's family lineage and in the domestic confines of his vast ancestral home. Conversely, the modern, independent and informally attired Edith has few direct allusions to art or traditions of the past, and those present do little to compromise her individual identity or interests. When Newton's shadowed face and illegible expression is compared with Charles's assertive Renaissance elbow swathed in the regalia befitting his role in the public sphere, it becomes evident that the ideological considerations surrounding gender roles in the two relationships are quite different. *The Marlborough Family*, set and hung in Blenheim

[187] Hughes, *American Visions*, 254.
[188] Fairbrother, *John Singer Sargent and America*, 197.

Palace, is a much more traditional scene, where the sitters are surrounded by symbols of the family's history. The inclusion of children, the ultimate signifier of a traditionally functional marriage, in *The Marlborough Family* further underscores the more practical reproductive reason for marriage. *Mr and Mrs I.N. Phelps Stokes* exists in a single moment in time; its minimal background and consumerist fashion make it modern for the period while also dating the image for present-day viewers. The lack of allusions to family or genealogy offers a more modern rationale for engaging in a marriage contract: companionship not tied to reproductive considerations.

Aside from both portraits featuring sitters in a full-length standing configuration and containing women as the central figure, the only other commonality between the images is the inclusion of rings on both of the women's ring fingers; a modern diamond engagement ring for Edith and simple gold wedding band for Consuelo.[189] This solitary consistency among a multitude of disparities acts as a symbol to underscore the pertinence of reading these two portraits in reference to the changing nature of the institution of marriage. The placement of Consuelo's left hand on her oldest son's arm makes her wedding ring visible, serving to reinforce the fact that she had married into her position as duchess and that she had completed her most important task in this role: giving birth to an heir. Consuelo's ring is an ancient symbol of marital ownership and one can infer that Sargent included this item of jewellery in his portrait of the Marlborough family to emphasise her legal but not cultural ties to the British aristocratic tradition.[190] She was a complete outsider to the position into which she had married; as an American no such aristocratic connection would have been possible in her native land. Instead it is only through her union, entered into for dynastic and economic reasons instead of sentimental concerns, that she was given this revered position among the British aristocracy.

The gift of a ring or rings during a marriage ceremony is an ancient custom, but the diamond engagement ring, as worn by Edith, was a new development in the courting ritual, finding roots in past offerings of promise rings but reimagined in the age of consumer

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[189] Within the portraits of British or American married couples painted by Sargent, only three have wedding rings readily visible and all three are on the hands of American sitters. For this information see Table 11. Portraits of Married Couples with British or American Affiliation, 1875-1925.

[190] Diana Scairsbrick, *Rings: Jewelry of Power, Love and Loyalty* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007), 61 and 113.

culture.[191] These rings served as a vow of future marital devotion as well as being a status symbol. Materialism marked Sargent's own interest in Edith's ring. He was most pleased with his glimmering representation of the engagement ring over all of the other elements in the portrait, offering tips to maintain its splendour and spending extra time to get the brushwork just right.[192] Edith's ring represents maintenance of the status quo within the legal and economic constructs of marriage even among the ideological changes taking place in America during this period. Wedding and engagement rings were signs of the husband's 'proprietary rights and financial power over his wife'.[193] Placing this ring on the same fisted hand that creates the Renaissance elbow quintessential New Woman pose lessens the rugged feminine individualism of the stance. As a moderate, married New Woman, Edith must balance these independent leanings with the legally gendered institution of marriage. Turn-of-the-century New Man still held legal and economic authority over his New Wife even if they were following the companionate marriage model.

The contracts signed when entering a marriage were nearly identical on both sides of the Atlantic. Yet, conflicting ideas of how to form a desirable marital union are reflected within contemporary ideological writings about marriage and the doctrine of separate spheres in both Great Britain and the United States. The British press were more likely to rely on marital expectations as formulated by their Victorian precursors, with many writers seeking clear delineation between gendered roles within domestic and public spheres. Americans were more likely to embrace new and untested paradigms and question the status quo. During this uneasy period, Sargent deftly interpreted these factors and receptions. As a result in *The Marlborough Family* and *Mr and Mrs I.N. Phelps Stokes* he masterfully captured the nervousness present in turn-of-the-century Anglo-American marital unions and contemporary questioning of the standards for the institution of marriage.

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[191] For a detailed analysis of the history of the diamond engagement ring in the United States see Vicki Howard, 'Chapter Two: Rings and the Birth of Tradition,' in *Brides Inc.: American Weddings and the Business of Tradition* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 33-70.
[192] Carter Ratcliff, *John Singer Sargent* (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1983), 167.
[193] Todd, *The "New Woman" Revisited*, 11.

CHAPTER 3

Femininity on Edge: Reformulating the Cult of True Womanhood

The Cult of True Womanhood, also called the Cult of Domesticity, was rapidly becoming out of date in Britain and America at the turn of the twentieth century[1]. Formulated within the doctrine of separate spheres, this ideal was based on the notion that women were weighted down by reproductive system and were biologically predetermined to be passive entities.[2] Middle and upper-class women were then destined to be submissive beings, ones that should display piety and purity within their domestic environment. As such middle and upper-class women began entering the public sphere in larger numbers at the turn of the century, the question of how to reformulate these gendered expectations came to the foreground. As mentioned in the previous chapter, some radical new figures like the New Woman or the Suffragette became ubiquitous with a questioning of gender roles. What about the visual representations of those who did not ideologically align themselves with these more radical figures? This chapter will use two of Sargent's portraits of society women in America and Britain, *Daisy Leiter* (fig. 45) and *The Duchess of Portland* (fig. 46), as case studies to relate how each nation was reformulating these feminine attributes and expectations.

The majority of Sargent's portraits from 1890-1910 are of women and, due to the high number of options present, selecting the images for this chapter was quite difficult.[3] The two images presented in the case studies were chosen because of their adherence and deviation to compositional conventions in Sargent's portrait oeuvre and how such attributes can be read to fit into larger ideals of True Womanhood as perceived at the fin de siècle. Additionally, the sitters' biographies were examined to select those who would likely have aligned themselves with a more moderate femininity, reformers potentially but not radicals. Finally, it was critical that the images selected be able to relate visually to one another to produce a dialogue surrounding British and American feminine ideals.

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[1] The definition for the term and attributes found within this ideal are taken from Barbara Welter's seminal text, 'The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860,' *American Quarterly*, vol. 18, no. 2, part 1 (Summer, 1966), 151-174.

[2] Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians*, 135.

[3] Of the three hundred and eight portraits reviewed for this thesis one hundred and fifty-one are of individual female portraits. That number increases to one hundred and fifty-eight portraits when group portraits containing exclusively female sitters are added.

While a carefully relegated ideal feminine role within the domestic sphere had been the standard during the Victorian era in both Britain and America, by the end of the nineteenth century domestic considerations were creeping into the public sphere meaning such a separation could not be so carefully preserved.[4] The majority of Sargent's portraits of women are interior scenes, though from 1890 onward the ratio of exterior female scenes increases with Americans situated outdoors in single portrait configuration more than their British counterpoints.[5] *Daisy Leiter* (fig. 45) is one such woman who is moved out of the female interior and placed in a natural exterior setting. Though moved out of doors, the portrait figure is not painted in informal attire as Edith Stokes was in *Mr and Mrs I.N. Phelps Stokes* (fig. 26) and more traditional gendered conventions are present. The vast majority of women of either American or British nationality painted by Sargent wear formal costume.[6] Wearing such formal attire befits the ideals outlined in the Cult of True Womanhood, as it required delicacy in public sphere; no demanding labour or physical exertion should be undertaken.[7]

Even in Sargent's carefully crafted interior scenes, such as *The Duchess of Portland*, elements of the increased public role of the women painted are expressed on the canvas. Historian Susie Steinbach argues that even as the separation between public and private life was being blurred, the home was still the refuge from the harsh world, and women were ultimately regarded as its keeper.[8] Furthermore, the definition of domesticity itself was changing in this period. Scientific thought, management notions, and consumer spending were brought into the home with women placed in charge of such responsibilities.[9] To properly run a home one must allow outside considerations to enter the domestic space. Women were venturing out of the domestic sphere and elements of the public sphere were entering it, as the relationship between the two became more fluid.

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[4] Hoffert outlines the perceived of the feminization of office work and change in male working culture in America particularly during the 1893 economic depression, *A History of Gender in America*, 284.
[5] See Graph 6. Setting of Individual Female Portrait Sitters, 1890-1910.
[6] Graph 7. Formal and Informal Costume in Portraits of Individual Female Sitters, 1890-1910.
[7] Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians*, 140.
[8] Ibid., 134.
[9] Hoffert, *A History of Gender in America*, 292.

Between 1890 and 1910 about forty-six per cent of Sargent's portraits of individual women with American and British affiliation have sitters that are clothed in white.[10] The purity often associated with the colour aligns these images to idealised True Womanhood characteristics. Submissiveness and piety are not as simple to visually portray, and in neither *Daisy Leiter* nor *The Duchess of Portland* is subordinating symbols or explicit religious imagery shown. Stating Sargent would not be taking such elements into consideration based on these direct visual omissions is not accurate; instead one must undertake a more thorough visual analysis to be able to draw such conclusions. Similarly subtle national differences of reception and ideology require a nuanced reading.

Within the States at the turn of the century, cosmopolitan aspirations were spreading amongst the upper class. This was met with the rise of nationalist American womanhood as promulgated in the popular press. The result in Sargent's *Daisy Leiter* is an allusion to European portrait traditions while capturing 'true American' characteristics of the sitter. Within Britain, Sargent painted the domestic purity and grand femininity of the aristocratic woman, adhering to the traditions of the past while including modern conventions, in *The Duchess of Portland.* In the British Isles the Cult of True Womanhood was carefully protected, and those women challenging such tropes were highly contested figures at the end of the nineteenth century.[11] Sargent's visual depictions of such British and American feminine identity needed to be carefully crafted. These images are referential to the evolution of female roles in contemporary society in order to remain relevant, while keeping historical signifiers to befit the scale and prestige associated with traditional portrait painting.

Part 1

Constructing the Natural American Woman: *Daisy Leiter*

John Singer Sargent's *Daisy Leiter* (fig. 45) has a few hallmarks of his American female portraits at the turn of the century. Painted as a tall standing figure dressed in a white ball gown her size is, as Martha Banta writes, a manifestation of America's grand, national

[10] This number was calculated based on sitters who have a full gown or dress that is all or mostly white. The number increases to fifty-two per cent when those simply wearing a majority of white attire are included.
[11] Cherry, *Beyond the Frame*, 153.

aspirations. These large female figures displayed 'American pride, American immensity, American morality, American material success.'[12] Leiter follows this ideal; she is an immense figure in the canvas. In many ways Sargent's portrait and *One Difficulty of the Game: Keeping Your Eye on the Ball* (fig. 36) are quite comparable. The large size, small waist, and white costuming of the central figures, as well as the ease in which they are presented, draw compositional and ideological links about American female identity within this period. Painted decades removed from the Civil War, and when America was becoming a global political and economic power, popular press images and fine art portraits began to proclaim these values in a feminine context.

However, this section is not a reiteration of the previous chapter relating Gibson's drawings to the formation of American gender ideals at the turn of the century. Instead this section will relate images from the eighteenth-century British portrait tradition and contemporary images to *Daisy Leiter*. In doing so it will be demonstrated that these values present within the cultural zeitgeist were be synthesized with other fine art images by Sargent in order to create an image of an American socialite, Daisy Leiter, just before she entered the international society stage. Utilising an exterior scene, and depictions of movement in conjunction with the large 'American' size of this female figure visually conveys the cosmopolitan elements of the experience of an American upper-class woman and the great care used when cultivating an individualised feminine identity during the fin de siècle.

One of the most interesting aspects of this composition is where Sargent chooses to place this young American. Even though *Daisy Leiter* shares characteristics with the modern Gibson Girl, the landscape in which she is placed is referential to the tradition of the British Grand Masters. This portrait is among the earliest works in which Sargent alludes to the landscape setting traditionally seen in eighteenth-century English portraiture found in the works of artists Thomas Gainsborough, Sir Thomas Lawrence and Sir Joshua Reynolds.[13] However, even with this traditional adherence in mind, the backdrop is still quite an abstract outdoor scene without a lot of definition or delineation. It is rather muted, but the intended landscape effect is achieved. The backdrop before which Leiter is posed was a painted cloth that Sargent used in numerous similar images of young women clothed

[12] Banta, *Imaging American Women*, 505.
[13] Ormond and Kilmurray, *Portraits of the 1890s*, 142.

in white.[14] This setting is also similar to one later found in *Hylda, Alimina and Conway, Children of Asher Wertheimer* (fig. 22) with large swatches of unblended paint, seemingly rapid brushstrokes, and a thick impasto in the background at odds with the thin application of paint used to create the carefully rendered figural depictions. Because of the rather heavily painted abstract background Leiter's billowing shawl nearly blends in with the clouds behind her, making the frivolous fabric a connection to and continuation of the artificiality of her surroundings.

While Sargent places architectural details in most of his similarly staged outdoor scenes, the previously mentioned *Hylda, Alimina and Conway* serving as one such example, in this instance Leiter's setting contains no such man-made conventions. Rather, she stands entirely alone in the natural setting. *The Honourable Pauline Astor* (1898-9, Private Collection) contains another example of an early landscape background without architectural details. Again, the full-length subject is standing and clothed in white although in Astor's case she is not alone. Her dog is depicted at her feet, tugging at her skirt, as if the two have been interrupted during their walk through the realistic and detailed background. The absence of man-made elements or natural companionship in *Daisy Leiter* completely isolates the figure in this artificially natural setting. This young woman is the only element allowed to have any real substance, giving the viewer a clear focal point. Coupled with her size, this isolation causes Leiter to overpower the canvas, adding gravitas to her presence.

Thomas Gainsborough is one of the eighteenth-century portraitists Sargent is most likely alluding to in *Daisy Leiter*. Gainsborough at times used the same method of painting his sitters in front of fictitious painted backcloths and, as made evident in the previous chapter's discussion of *The Morning Walk* (fig. 42), these figures were often shown moving through such painted landscapes.[15] An image that particularly matches the spirit and style that Sargent adopted from Gainsborough is *Isabella, Viscountess Molyneux, later Countess of Sefton* (fig. 47). It has been argued that in *Countess of Sefton* the background is 'generalized to an extent rare in Gainsborough, so that the eye is undistracted from the grace of the slightly turned head and the dignity of the figure', an assertion which can also

[14] Kilmurray,' Portraits 1894-9', in Ibid., 80.
[15] Ellis Waterhouse, *Painting in Britain 1530 to 1790* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 248-9.

be applied to Sargent's treatment of *Daisy Leiter*.[16] In both cases the artificiality of the landscape behind the figure gives prominence to the woman herself. However, Sargent has his sitter's gaze meet the viewer's, creating a direct confrontation with the subject as opposed to passive observation of her. The resulting interaction between sitter and audience further emphasises the unique importance of the sitter's role in the painted image. Leiter is not simply a figure included in a beautiful landscape for the viewer to casually observe; instead she is the image's imposing focal point demanding attention.

In addition to the lack of detail in the backdrop, the figure of the Countess of Sefton is handled in a much more inactive manner than Gainsborough usually painted his sitters. When painting sitters in a landscape scene such as the one found in *Daisy Leiter* Gainsborough's sitters often were not shown in a static pose, alternatively they are depicted as actively engaged with their surroundings.[17] While showing brilliance in the handling of the luxurious fabric of her costuming, the sitter's pose is much more reserved and lacks the fluidity found in many of Gainsborough's other portraits and in *Daisy Leiter*. This lack of interaction with surroundings could derive from the desire to remove any obstacles to having the sitter be the clear focus: the same motive for the rather abstract background. Sargent does not restrict movement in the same way as Gainsborough. Though Daisy is not walking through the landscape scene, she does seem to be in the act of turning to greet the viewer, this movement evident through her curved torso, her shawl and her right hand's holding of her skirt**.**

The best method for a comparison of motion between *Countess of Sefton* and *Daisy Leiter* can be found in the treatment of shawls in the two portraits. In both images the shawl is an integral component of the composition, but while the Countess needs to hold her shawl physically placing it in the crucial pose, Leiter's billows away from her figure unrestrained.[18] Both subjects are represented as being responsible for the placement of this fabric, but Leiter's is free flowing and much more dynamic. The Countess of Sefton employs a rather reserved method of displaying the fabric, to hold it out with one hand. Leiter uses the turning motion of her body to suspend the shawl mid-air, though her body has ceased its movement. In neither case are the shawls and their placement subtle. While the method of display is evident in the Gainsborough's image, in Sargent's presentation it

[16] John Hayes, *Gainsborough: Paintings and Drawings* (London, New York: Phaidon Press, 1975) note 72, 215.
[17] Ibid., 38.
[18] Ibid., note 135, 229.

is not as obvious. If not for the artifice of the natural scene coupled with a careful reading of the rest of her figure, one might think that it was a gusty day and not Leiter's own movement that contributed to the billowing effect**.** The adaptations of the shawl's movement and change in the gaze of the sitter cause *Daisy Leiter* to be a more engaging and energetic image than the reserved *Countess of Sefton*.

A portrait containing more movement than both *Countess of Sefton* and *Daisy Leiter* is *Lady Jane Halliday* by Sir Joshua Reynolds (fig. 48). Completed a decade after Gainsborough's portrait, its background expands upon the earlier work's landscape style and is more aligned to the those found throughout the majority of Gainsborough's oeuvre. The backdrop in *Lady Halliday* is more realistic than those found in *Countess of Sefton* as well as *Daisy Leiter*, and this naturalism adds depth, context, and the sitter's interaction with these natural surroundings is fundamental reading to the composition. The image places Lady Halliday in a windy scene, a setting not commonly found in portraits. As she walks through the landscape the whole of the sitter's body is affected by this weather. Her hair, though still partially restrained by pins, and sleeve are swept in one direction while her skirt is pulled in the opposite. Like *Countess of Sefton* and *Daisy Leiter* she has a shawl that hangs in the wind. However, it is lacking the forceful movement of the American heiresses or the purposeful placement of the British countess. She is also turned away from the viewer and unusually off-centre, gazing to the left of the canvas. This casts her as even more passive to both nature and the audience.

Reynolds's decision to envelop his subject in wind was met with poor reviews at the time of its exhibition. Many found the composition too similar to that of a subject painting and not refined enough for the status of its patron.[19] Sargent seems to have kept those remarks in mind when adapting the earlier form for his future use. In this altered format he does not expose the entirety of the figure of Leiter to such unpleasant movement. Alternatively, he chose to localise it only to her shawl, creating an effect similar to but more voluminous than that found in the sleeve and shawl of *Lady Halliday*. By relegating such motion only to her clothing and leaving the rest of her person unscathed, Sargent is thereby casting Daisy as an elegant, kinetic but unshakable figure. [20] Furthermore, as the background of *Daisy Leiter* is an artificial outdoor scene and the catalyst of movement in the scene is

[19] David Mannings, *Sir Joshua Reynolds: A Complete Catalogue of his Paintings* vol. 1 (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 234.
[20] Further exploration on the similarities of *Daisy Leiter* and *Lady Halliday* can be found in Fairbrother, *John Singer Sargent and America*, 373.

Daisy herself and not nature, this might serve as a commentary on the precarious relationship between the self-made nouveau riche and the born-to-power aristocracy. Leiter is pushed forward towards the front of the picture plane, filling it and giving the impression she could come out of it. This placement is unlike the other images discussed in this chapter, and conveys the assertiveness amongst the portrait sitter and presented in the upper class within the United States.

Beyond British grand manner portraits of the eighteenth-century, *Daisy Leiter* finds resonance with works by American artists of this earlier period. The American artist John Singleton Copley painted *Mrs Daniel Denison Rogers* (fig. 49), an American in Britain in a manner reminiscent of *Lady Halliday*. Completed about 1784 when the Rogers family was on holiday in London, the portrait portrays a member of the wealthy Boston mercantile class in her absolute finery. She wears a large hat decorated with feathers, lace and a bow. Her dress, gloves, and shawl are all made of luminous and luxurious looking fabric while her carefully done hair denotes a woman of means who takes great pride in her appearance, a trait which makes her visual portrayal especially suited for Copley's skill.[21] The landscape in which she stands is an apparent fantasy, with the bright sun rising over the mountain directly behind her, and white clouds that match the shape of her billowing shawl. This visual continuity of shawl and cloud formation puts her at ease and in place with her surroundings consistent with the figural presentation Sargent's work. In this image Copley places the wind at her back and it naturalistically blows her skirt, shawl, handkerchief, hat bow, and a small section of her hair in the same direction, toward the left side of the canvas. The wind is a much more imposing factor in this image than in *Daisy Leiter*, but an element that does not overwhelm the sitter as it does in *Lady Halliday*. These American women are part of the natural world they inhabit even though it is clearly an artificially constructed interpretation of nature.

Both Copley and Sargent had inclinations toward painting social types. It has been argued that during his time in England, Copley was 'concerned not only with the individual as individual, but the individual as a social entity', showcasing this through an employment of 'abstract qualities—youth beauty, quick vivacity—that are conveyed by their pictorial

[21] *John Singleton Copley, 1738-1815*, 109.

equivalents in color, texture, light and composition.'[22] These compositions are, therefore, very different from his earlier Boston work. This change is visually reflected in *Mrs Rogers* where the sitter's youth, prosperity, and social status are conveyed by her fine clothing, fluid pose, and the harmonious colour scheme. Copley also turns the sitter's head so her gaze meets that of the audience in a comparable way to *Daisy Leiter*. Both portray the American ideal that the 'well-brought up woman gives nothing away.'[23] This sort of direct and playful interaction is found in many other portraits of Sargent's female sitters and many of Copley's portraits of American women painted both in London and Boston, but are not found in *Lady Halliday* or *Countess Sefton*. A careful interrogation of nationality of sitter, in addition to time period when created, is required to better understand the unique femininity manifested in *Daisy Leiter*. Shifting focus to other turn-of-the-century images of American women, therefore, becomes imperative at this juncture.

Young woman, full-length portrait, wearing lace dress, standing, facing right, waving handkerchief (fig. 50), which will be referenced as *Young woman*, is, in some aspects, very similar to *Daisy Leiter*. Created by an unknown photographer in New York at around the same time as Sargent painted Leiter, this image of a tall, likely American woman in white is presented in front of a painted outdoor scene. Caught in the act of turning, she holds her skirt and waves a handkerchief. The movement of the latter fabric imitates *Daisy Leiter*'s shawl. She does not engage directly with the viewer; neither her gaze nor positioning allows for any interaction. Women in white are ubiquitous in photography of this period, perhaps because the black and white photographs make most light colours appear white.[24] Whether or not the figures presented were in fact wearing white attire is not really of import; instead it is the resulting effect presented in the photograph that needs to be carefully evaluated.

Jessie Tarbox Beals *Portrait of an unidentified woman pretending to walk in the snow* (fig. 51) is not a photograph of a woman clothed in a white gown. The figure presented wears

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[22] Jules David Prown, *John Singleton Copley: In England 1774-1815* vol. 2 The Alisa Mellon Bruce Studies in American Art Series (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1966), 296.

[23] Linda Nochlin, 'Issues of Gender in Cassatt and Eakins,' in Stephen F Eisenman et al, *Nineteenth Century Art: A Critical History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 262.

[24] While the black and white nature of such photographs makes it difficult to decipher whether or not the women in the images are indeed wearing white costuming, evidence from the period suggests that white attire would often have been worn because it was a considered to be a fashionable choice. For a detailed description of such nineteenth-century gendered colour considerations see Harvey, 'Men in Black with Women in White,' in *Men in Black*, 195-223.

dark attire in a fake snow scene. As Sargent implemented in *Daisy Leiter*, both photographs contain a painted backcloth, an artificial convention at odds with the intended depiction of realism or naturalism many considered inherent within photography. Beals's image of an unknown woman 'walking in the snow' does not show her in motion, instead she holds an object meant to represent a snowball, she is ready to throw it at any minute. Though wearing a dark dress and overcoat, she does have a rather odd scarf acting as a head wrap in order to protect the hat she wears underneath. This fabric drapes and appears full around the back of her head, evoking the wind. However, the ends of the fabric do not billow as the other images discussed in this section do. Beals is presenting a static scene that could easily turn active, not a kinetic scene in its entirety. Though the figure does not fill up the composition as in *Young Woman* or *Daisy Leiter*, this woman looks directly at the viewer and because of this interaction and threat of motion she is a demanding focal point.

Considered to be the first American female photojournalist, Beals is a fascinating figure whose work is particularly pertinent in regards to the visual creation of American female identity at the fin-de-siècle. Starting in 1888 Beals offered students of Smith College, women-only institution of higher learning, portraits at four for a dollar.[25] These portraits were relatively inexpensive, especially when compared to the prices for oil paintings, meaning that it became possible for experimentation to take place because of the low cost and relatively short time it took to create such images. Critically, the images created were part of a uniquely collaborative expression of female American identity. As both sitter and photographer were American women, these photographs can be interpreted to be a comprehensive exploration of a female identity in the States during this period. Instead of adjusting composition due to the presence of a male gaze of artists like Sargent, these are images created by a woman for women.

Beals's clientele was predominantly from a woman's college and because of this it is likely that the more radical aspects of American womanhood would be more overtly present in these images than in the more conservative oil paintings by male artists such as Sargent. The New Woman, the radical female figure referenced in the previous chapter, would have been ideologically aligned with the modernity and experimentation presented in the

[25] Beverley W. Brannan, 'Jessie Tarbox Beals: Biographical Essay,' Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, 2011, Accessed 13 May 2014, http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/coll/womphotoj/bealsessay.html.

medium of photography. Comparing these photographic images with the more traditional medium of oil portraiture creates juxtaposition between these new emerging ideals and those more traditional elements surrounding female identity in this period. Images of a wide range of women created by Beals and other photographers are worth exploring in conjunction to these large painted portraits to offer a broader scope for the methods for presenting American female identity in this period and their receptions.

What became surprising when researching turn-of-the-century photographic portraits of American women is the large number of images available. The Library of Congress's holdings in the Print and Photographs division contains thousands of examples, as does Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America at Radcliff College, a formerly female only university now part of Harvard University. It is true that at the turn of the century Americans used photography as a means of making portraits more than the British and perhaps this acceptance in the States is based on ideological considerations.[26] The merits of photography as art form or documentary tool have long been debated, yet photography has been considered more of a documentarian tool than oil paintings regardless of possibility for bias in both mediums. Photography as a medium has often been perceived as being an authentic and at times spontaneous art form and the American woman at this time was also given the qualifier of spontaneous authenticity.[27] Yet, portrait photography and American femininity of the late nineteenth century were highly constructed entities. The laborious task of creating photographs meant that the spontaneity of candid shots were often highly staged in a similar fashion to those made in oil. It is fitting that the highly contrived 'natural' feminine trope permeating the States during this time so often utilised this mechanically artificial method for 'documenting' likeness.

Charles Wellington Furse's *Diana of the Uplands* (fig. 52) is an example of a contemporary oil painting that places a kinetic woman out of doors. Both painter and subject were Britons, yet due to the time period, close relationship between Furse and Sargent and compositional similarities, including *Diana of the Uplands* in a discussion of *Daisy Leiter* is essential. Painted between 1903 and 1904 this scene of a woman in white with dogs in a field was one of the final pieces shown in Furse's lifetime. The landscape

[26] Robin Simon, *The Portrait in Britain and America with a Biographical Dictionary of Portrait Painters 1680-1914* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1987), 49.
[27] Liz Wells, ed., *Photography: A Critical Introduction* (Routledge: London and New York, 1997), 20-26. Banta, *Imaging American Women*, 46.

has realism quite different from *Daisy Leiter* and a naturalism of movement as opposed to Sargent's artificial dynamism. The result may appear natural, but Furse employed a bellows to create the windswept affect, similar to the staging done within the confines of Beals's photography studio.[28] The rest of the sitter's positioning reacts to this artificial wind realistically. She secures the hat on her head with her left hand while her right holds the leashes of two dogs. The inclusion of dogs removes the solitary isolation present within the previously examined contemporary images. She is interacting with her surroundings, her animals and the viewer as opposed to *Daisy Leiter* who only has the audience to engage with.

Diana of the Uplands is not strictly a portrait because the subject, the artist's wife Katherine, has been recast as an Edwardian interpretation of the ancient Roman goddess Diana.[29] Allusions to classicism were often present in seventeenth and eighteenth-century British portraiture and Reynolds is one example of a portraitist who often cast his sitters in mythological roles. *Diana of the Uplands* does bear striking similarities to Reynolds's *Lady Halliday* (fig. 48), albeit with the inclusion of a hat and dogs. The hat ribbon flutters in the same way as the sleeves and shawl move in *Lady Halliday* and the portraits share a similar treatment of the sitters' skirts. In Furse's painting, as in *Daisy Leiter* the gust of wind has been lessened to a stiff breeze. The modern woman is again unflappable in the face of nature**.** Art historian Kenneth McConkey argues that Sargent and Furse both created a mystique around their sitters' identities.[30] With *Daisy Leiter* and *Diana of the Uplands* this mystique is represented in different ways. The Diana in this image is clearly an artifice, attempting through a change in name and mythological recasting to conceal and alter the identity of the Furse's wife. Sargent instead presents Daisy as authoritatively herself, distinct and easily identified, but through pose and expression brings a sense of mystique to just what sort of role this is.

These various representations of women in out of door scenes demonstrate the dichotomy of feminine identity and the female role in the public sphere in the late-nineteenth century.

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[28] McConkey, *Edwardian Portraits***,** 168.

[29] While there are many possible definitions for portraiture, this thesis is based on the notion of naturalistic portraiture outlined by Joanna Woodall as 'a physiognomic likeness which is seen to refer to the identity of a living or once-living person depicted.' Because Furse's *Diana of the Uplands* does not set out to fit that criteria it is cannot be categorized as a portrait. Joanna Woodall, 'Introduction,' *Portraiture: Facing the Subject* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997), I.

[30] McConkey, *Edwardian Portraits*, 17.

Daisy Leiter was herself a wealthy heiress from Chicago whose parents had international society ambitions for their daughter. Her older sister, Mary, had married into the British aristocracy and her parents were looking for a similar match for their younger daughter.[31] A teenage Daisy had other plans for herself that did not involve a title. An article printed in a Washington newspaper a year before her portrait was commenced recounts her relationship with Bob Wallach, the son of Washington's former mayor, which included a near elopement. Because of the Wallach family's less than desirable social status the Leiter family was against the courtship and her father Levi prevented the marriage. [32] Leiter was by all accounts a beautiful, energetic and strong-willed presence in Washington society, an American girl in the style of Gibson who would find herself married to a British aristocrat. Sargent painted Leiter in this transitional period, one year after her scandal and just months before she met her future husband the, Earl of Suffolk.

The composition of *Daisy Leiter* visually expounds its subject's international social relevance and her parents' aspirations in the manner in which her figure overtakes the canvas. She is not enveloped in the traditional grand manner backdrop that surrounds her; instead she overtakes it with her direct and imposing presence. Sargent chooses to have the sitter place her body and head in slightly different orientations, with the torso facing the left side of the canvas, while the head is turned so the face directly meets the viewer. This positioning creates a curvature of the body highlighting the sitter's small waist and movement of her costume, while simultaneously making the figure appear very tall and linear. What seems like an implausible contradictory outcome is achieved. The resulting stance can be read as open and self-assured as Leiter faces the viewer with shoulders back, arms at her side as if she has just turned to meet their gaze. Sargent costumes her similarly to the way he approached most Americans: fine clothing but nothing too ostentatious.[33] Though her dress and shawl are made with a great amount of fine fabric, she wears no

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[31] Laura Houliston, *The Suffolk Collection: A Catalogue of Paintings* (Swindon: English Heritage, 2012), 226-229.

[32] 'Miss Leiter's Romance,' *The Evening Times* (10 April 1897) via The Library of Congress website Accessed 29 April 2013, http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024441/1897-04-10/ed-1/seq-3/.

[33] There are a few methods to use to compile this information. First, looking at jewelry one can see that eighty-two out of the one hundred and thirty five American sitters have such items and for paintings of British sitters the figure is one hundred and three out of the one hundred and seventy three painted by Sargent. Next, when taking into account the number of textures contained in each costume (i.e. differentiation of fabrics and materials) it trends as a low figure particularly when colour is utilised as well. See Graph 8. Costuming and Jewelry in American and British Portraits, 1890-1910.

jewellery or hair ornaments. This gives her an implied sense of ease of self and security in her identity.

Like many American women during this period she was at once supposed to be an intelligent, assertive, confident woman while also obedient and subordinate to the wishes of her parents, and later her husband. Economically Leiter was tied to her parents, unlike the New Woman she had not entered the public sphere as a professional woman and, therefore, needed to stay in their favour. Balancing these notions of femininity was a precarious task, as illustrated by Sargent, Beals and Furse. What Furse does not demonstrate is the figure wholly on her own, a modern woman cast as herself. He chooses to paint a modern reimagining of a classical myth as opposed to conveying a direct portrait presentation of this figure. Instead this direct presentation is found in the renderings of the American woman, a figure of self-realisation who would not be portrayed as a person other than herself. *Daisy Leiter*, *Young woman* and *Unidentified Woman* inhabited a 'natural' world that was artificial. This artificiality extends into what many at the time considered to be innate qualities of the American woman. At once the American women needed to be resolute but flexible, direct but aloof, show motion but not be moved.[34] Such characteristics were nearly impossible to simultaneously possess, consequentially many American women struggled with how to carefully craft a public persona to demonstrate their inherently American femininity.

When referencing the portraits by Gainsborough, Reynolds and Copley it becomes clear that there is an absence of elements conveying agency and self-assuredness in the earlier portraits and a reliance on ostentatious fashions that leads to a very different reading. These sitters in these earlier images are not as visually assertive, but are instead passive models relying on contemporary conventions and their social status to create their identities. This passivity can be inferred in *Countess of Sefton* and *Lady Halliday* to be based on the nationality and aristocratic identity of the sitters, but even in *Mrs Rogers*, a portrait of an upper-class American woman, the lack of self-assurance is present. The absence of agency and assuredness in these visual representations, then, can be read as a chronological discrepancy. However, the later *Diana of the Uplands* proves to be equally problematic discounting a strict time-based rationale for such differences. Therefore, it becomes apparent that *Daisy Leiter* is indicative of a specific era of bold American

[34] Banta, *Imaging American Women*, 135.

femininity, bringing the American woman found within the photographer's studio and illustrations in magazines to portraits in oil.

Though Sargent's cosmopolitan art dealings and Leiter's international social life were indicative of the age in which they lived, the late-nineteenth century was still a time of 'intense cultural nationalism' for most of the Western world.[35] In the States, a nation recovering form the horrors of the Civil War, this manifested itself in a divergence of opinions on just what that identity should be. The wide-ranging differences of these contemporary philosophies are reflected in the very different work of Thomas Eakins, American portraitist living and working in the States, and Sargent. Though both artists had been educated in Paris, Eakins returned to the United States where he built a solid reputation as an artist, taught painting at several art schools, and worked in the field of photography.[36] Eakins's paintings were entrenched in the American experience and need to be interpreted within these terms and restrictions, while Sargent's work represents an internationalism primarily influenced by the social type and status of the sitter.[37] The resulting portraits created from these diametrically different philosophies are important factors in the understanding late nineteenth-century American femininity in both its representation in visual culture and as idealised in popular culture.

A comparison between *Daisy Leiter* and *The Black Fan—Portrait of Mrs Talcott Williams* (fig. 53) demonstrates these divergent strains of American identity through art practices found in the work of international society painter, Sargent, and Eakins, the Philadelphia-based realist portraitist. *Mrs Williams* is painted in the style of a society portrait, with its size and the sitter's pose reflecting those elements. Williams is presented as a full-length, standing figure that wears a gauzy white dress and holds a closed black fan. The sitter is painted in front of an unadorned brown hued wall and the backdrop of the image seems to be the antithesis of the setting of *Daisy Leiter*. Eakins places his sitter in a realistic and unadorned interior setting. He rejects these tropes found in British grand manner landscapes to add artistic lineage to his portrait, choosing to treat the figure as a solitary entity unsupported by such allusions. Eakins takes the isolation found in the solitary figure presented in *Daisy Leiter* to an even further extent by removing the portrait from other

[35] Hughes, *American Visions*, 216.
[36] Ibid., 287-299 and Michael Fried, *Realism, Writing, Disfiguration on Thomas Eakins and Stephen Crane*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 3.
[37] Hughes, *American Visions*, 249.

people, creatures or artefacts and in doing so removing connections to British art historical tradition.

The standing woman in white is a trope found in both expatriate American artist James McNeil Whistler and Sargent's oeuvres, as will be addressed in more detail later in the following section of this chapter, and is taken up by Eakins in *Mrs Williams*.[38] However, Eakins's interpretation is quite different from the aesthetic interpretation at times found in the work of those American expatriates. Though Williams looks out of the image she does so not as directly or, it seems, with the purposeful willingness to engage the viewer demonstrated in *Daisy Leiter*. Eakins places half of her face is in shadow and her shoulders are hunched forward, offering a less self-assured and open pose. Furthermore, her facial expression, sombre looking with flat-lined mouth and half-opened eyes, can be interpreted as a continuation of her feeling ill at ease with this interaction. The image left unfinished with sitter's husband attributing this to Eakins's inability to get the sitter to relax her stomach while he painted her. In an effort to relax her, the painter touched her stomach, Williams took offense and the canvas was left unresolved.[39] Though not finished, Eakins exhibited the portrait to generally positive reviews. The entirety of this composition is reminiscent of Newton Stokes in *Mr and Mrs I.N. Phelps Stokes* (fig. 26) from the previous chapter, containing elements of modernity and uncertainty found in the American man towards the American woman. In Eakins's portrait it is the American woman who is unsure, perhaps even anxious. This unease is the antithesis of Gibson's idealised renderings of American women and Sargent's *Daisy Leiter*, but does convey that while there was an ideal femininity of the era many women did not fit into these confines.

Unlike Copley's London portraits and Sargent's work, in the art historical literature surrounding Eakins it is asserted that he was not interested in his sitters as social entities or types. Instead, it has been said he focused on visually manifesting his sitter's psychological being. [40] It was within these psychological considerations that the facial expression of *Mrs Williams* was found daring and rather conventional compositional structure of the portrait

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38 Sargent often painted both American and British women in white as standing figures. See Chart 5. Individual Female Sitters in White Standing, 1890-1910.

39 Talcott Williams, *Gentleman of the Fourth Estate* (Brooklyn: R.E. Simpson and Son, 1936), 215-16 in Williams Innes Homer, *Thomas Eakins: His Life and Art*, 2nd edition (New York and London: Abbeville Press Publishers, 2002), 177.

40 For one such evaluation see Patricia Hills, *Turn-of-the-Century America: Paintings, Graphics, Photographs 1890-1910* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1977), 38.

was praised.[41] In terms of art historical tradition, Copley's early Boston portraits such as *Mrs Eunice Dennie Burr* (1758-60, Saint Louis Museum of Art, Saint Louis Missouri) which have been described as being psychologically penetrating while also possessing 'empirical realism,' provide the foundation for the style of American art continued by Eakins. [42] David Lubin points to the rise of urban centres and the uncertain climate post-Civil War as the cause for the 'anxious need—of modern Americans to know what was going on beneath the masks of those strange others with whom they were bafflingly and yet intractably bound'. [43] Eakins's compositionally sparse psychological portraits seemed to address these concerns by removing many of the decorative visual elements found in society portraits by artists such as Sargent. It was this style, reflective of the internal issues of the American individual that many art critics found to be the truly American. Isolationist and individual, it removed social constructions and historical allusions from the discussion. Advocating such a nationalistic artistic expression and rejecting those who did not conform to its tenets is a topic ripe for discussion in international artistic contexts in reference to Sargent's work and also in portraiture more broadly. However, to state that Sargent was only a painter of social façade and Eakins worked simply within psychological perimeters is not accurate; the resulting images from each contain much more subtle considerations.

It was believed at the turn of the century that in order to form a true American experience national allegiance and cosmopolitanism need to be fused; an assertion that finds resonance in the contemporary dialogue surrounding both artistic style and national identity.[44] Regarding the fine arts, society portraits were, and still are, harshly reviewed by some American critics, many of whom found an artist who engaged in the practice a 'shallow profiteer and egregious poseur who lived off the cult of luxury and pretense pervasive among the rich' with the 'language of façade, style and veneer' that accompanied society portraits viewed as being deadly to both the life and spirit of American art.[45] This reaction is primarily directed at those artists like Sargent who chose to live outside of the States and paint figures such as Daisy Leiter who would become European aristocrats. Eakins himself painted many wealthy sitters, yet his portraits were

[41] Philadelphia Museum of Art, 'Catalogue Entry: *Mrs Talcott Williams*,' Accessed 9 May 2014, http://www.philamuseum.org/collections/permanent/42511.html.
[42] For information on Copley's psychological style see Philippe de Montebello and Malcolm Rogers 'Director's Forward,' in Carrie Rebora et al, *John Singleton Copley in America*, viii. For more on the stylistic link between Copley and Eakins see Hughes, *American Visions*, 84.
[43] Lubin, *Act of Portrayal*, 9.
[44] Hughes, *American Visions*, 216.
[45] Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist*, 63-4.

never elevated to the status symbol that Sargent's became, one closely tied to the aristocratic system that America was founded as a rebellion against. Though some American critics rejected society portraits as a genre, many wealthy Americans had their portraits painted in this manner to keep up with international high society. Some fashioned themselves in a manner evocative of the Old World aristocrats, using their money in place of a title.[46] Though this was ideologically opposed to many elements of the American identity, it did not keep those with the means of doing so from fusing what they saw in their European travels with certain characteristics from their country of birth.

The question, then, becomes whether or not *Daisy Leiter*, classified as a society portrait, really is devoid of such penetrating psychological elements found in Eakins's oeuvre. Is it simply a superficial, decorative piece? While the portrait does contain decorative elements and was painted for a socialite, calling it simply a 'swagger portrait' seems short sighted. Turning to facial expression, so often referenced in regard to Eakins's skill of psychological penetration, one finds a stern but warm smirk. It is not a smile, nor is her face slacked to a frown. Chin down, she looks directly out of the canvas, arms wide open and shoulders back. While neither sombre nor uneasy, it can be argued, her expression does offer insight into her person. Elizabeth Cayzer writes that Sargent's work was at times of variable quality in terms of psychological penetration but when a certain 'edginess' was present the portraits were particularly insightful. [47] This edginess is certainly manifested in *Daisy Leiter*. In his interpretation of Leiter, she is a strong, independent and direct woman, an undeniably dynamic feminine presence. By all contemporary accounts of Miss Leiter, she was indeed a strong-willed, rebellious, spirited belle of Washington society.[48] Sargent demonstrates her in this manner with the prerequisite decorative elements standard for society portraits, but he does not let these superficial details dissuade the audience from gaining a deeper understanding of her identity. If the only way in which to convey psychological exploration is through a simple backcloth, unadorned clothing, static pose, and compositional realism then Sargent is not a psychological painter. Once one is able to move beyond these preconceived notions of dour and serious psychology it becomes possible to interpret Sargent's work within those terms while integrating the elements of

[46] Such fashioning is found within the Vanderbilt portraits is discussed in Chapter 1 of this portrait and Part 2 'New British And Old American: Reconfiguring The Wertheimer And Vanderbilt Portrait Commissions Within The Context Of Cultural Systems' is particularly relevant, 49-64.
[47] Cayzer, *Changing Perceptions*, 5.
[48] Houliston, *The Suffolk Collection*, 226.

swagger portraiture that made his compositions so popular internationally during his lifetime.

The American identity crisis between a route of self-contained isolationism and cosmopolitan neo-imperialism came to a head in the same year *Daisy Leiter* was completed with the question of whether America should involve itself in revolutions occurring in parts of the Spanish empire. Calling on the belief that Americans were stewards for democracy, some felt it was the duty of the American people to become involved, while others did not want to become involved in matters that extended beyond its national boundaries. The result was the War of 1898, a military conflict in which the United States asserted its desire to be involved in international events on a level comparable with the imperialism found in many Western European nations. Before this, World Exhibitions had set the stage for the United States to become an international force, but by involving the nation in a conflict that had little direct impact on its citizens, the view of what it meant to be an American shifted from a rugged individualist to a strong international leader.[49] *Daisy Leiter*, a colossal figure with shoulders back and open pose, is indicative of this shift, while *Mrs Williams*, a smaller figure with rounded shoulders and a closed presentation, is reflective of the old individualist and isolationist ways. By commandeering elements from the British portrait tradition to lend legitimacy to his claims, Sargent creates a thoroughly international American woman.

Though connections can easily be made between *Daisy Leiter* and British portrait traditions, Richard Ormond and Elaine Kilmurray still maintain that her likeness is 'unmistakably American.'[50] It has been argued that throughout Sargent's career his portraits of Americans generally contain figures with a 'sharper line of jaw, a more assured, self-confidence, a straighter carriage and a greater sense of ease,' elements all found in *Daisy Leiter*.[51] The line of jaw is clearly visible as is the straight posture. The sense of ease, assuredness and self-confidence are, however, interpretive elements that are more complex compositional feats. Straight posture, squared shoulders and the figure's forward positioning in the picture plane can be attributed to a reading of self-confidence. The ease can be read by the expression presented, a small smile that is engaged but not

[49] See McCartney, *Power and Progress*, 2-13.
[50] Ormond and Kilmurray, *Portraits of the 1890s*, 7.
[51] Ibid., 6.

surprised or defensive. The assuredness can refer to Leiter's direct gaze out of the canvas, at once engaging and welcoming the audience.

Taking into account Levi Leiter's desire to marry his daughter to a foreign aristocrat, shown through his refusal to allow her to wed an American below her status only a year prior to his commissioning of this portrait, could Sargent have included British portrait traditions because at the time it seemed likely that she would have an international high-society marriage? Or with a foreign wedding an eventuality, did Sargent use these American identifiers to keep her country of birth a prominent fixture of her identity in the years after she left it for foreign shores? Affirmative arguments can be made for both inquiries depending on how one interprets the motivation of artist and sitter. What seems to be the most critical component of assessing this image is the period in which it was created. As an era of change, late-nineteenth century was a period in which an artist like Sargent could heavily rely on elements found in traditional British portraiture to create images of self-assured, expressive cosmopolitan Americans while an artist like Eakins could eschew such conventions and international considerations to form brooding insular figures and both be praised for their ability to provide truly American likenesses.

As demonstrated in the work of Jessie Tarbox Beals, American women were themselves at the turn of the century creating and capturing their likeness in the photographer's studio. Concurrently those in the upper class of American society sought out portrait painters to create their likeness on canvas, and Sargent was the most sought-after portraitist in Anglo-American society. His portraits, unlike those taken in an American photography studio, had cosmopolitan implications because of who was painting them. *Daisy Leiter*, contrary to many of Sargent's other portraits of American sitters, contains many allusions to British portraiture making this cosmopolitanism more pronounced visually.[52] Movement, exterior settings and large singular female sitters are present in each of the British images presented in this section, both eighteenth-century and Edwardian portraiture. It is the American nature of painting despite of all these British allusions that is mentioned throughout the literature on *Daisy Leiter*, and makes one wonder how both readings are possible.

Perhaps the nature of American identity makes it possible to read singularly American attributes in a portrait referencing a British past. A nation of immigrants, there is a lack of

[52] See *Mr and Mrs I.N. Phelps Stokes* (fig. 26) for an example of one that does not contain such allusions.

unifying American physiognomic traits making ideological connections paramount in forming a national identity. This is of particularly great importance in visual culture. As long as the overall affect of self-assurance, ease and agency were present on the canvas, it can be argued, allusions present do not matter much. The resulting image will still be an American portrait. At the turn of the century, American womanhood was going through an ideological re-evaluation and a more radical femininity was being presented as the Cult of True Womanhood was being reformed. In upper-class American society, small rebellions were forming. Most were, as demonstrated in Daisy Leiter's biography, ultimately put out and this inquisitive nature became incorporated into the newly formulated American female ideal, creating the ideological cohesion crucial within American identity of this period.[53] The carefully cultivated, grandiose feminine ideal presented in images by artists such Sargent adapted the expectations of the past to the desires of the present resulting in the transformation of a feminine ideal within a nation about to enter its imperial age.

Part 2

Ideal Domesticity and the British Woman: *The Duchess of Portland*

The home was of critical importance within the Cult of True Womanhood as this domestic space and all familial responsibilities within were perceived to be feminine. It is therefore fitting that John Singer Sargent painted the majority of his individual British female sitters within the confines of such interior spaces adhering to these domestic ideals.[54] In the British aristocracy, this domestic sphere was generally not just one single home or estate. Aristocratic women managed staffs to run multiple houses, oversaw the biannual move to London and back, and partook in philanthropic causes often in the community surrounding their country homes. [55] Their duties merged into the public sphere and they were known public entities within these roles. Portraits referencing such figures similarly needed to take into consideration both public and personal reception of the images. Proven by Sargent's success amongst critics and within the art market in creating so many varied female likenesses during this period, the portraitist possessed an acute understanding of the

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[53] Hoffert, *A History of Gender in America*, 297. The acceptance of changing feminine ideals in America is also demonstrated in the inclusion of the 'Girl with a Mind of her Own' within the subcategories present in the Gibson Girl type, Todd, *The "New Woman" Revised*, 5.
[54] See Graph 6. Setting of Individual Female Portrait Sitters, 1890-1910.
[55] Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians*, 141.

prevailing social philosophies regarding upper-class British femininity that influenced such receptions.

The compositional elements used in Sargent's portraits impart an understanding of the standards and expectations in visual representation of British women. *The Duchess of Portland* (fig. 46) is uniquely referential to these social issues in regards to aristocratic and upper-class British woman and British femininity more broadly during the fin de-siècle. This portrait of Winifred Cavendish-Bentinck and many other portraits in Sargent's oeuvre contain elements that allow for a reading of such paintings as visual component of a domestic feminine identity particularly in the way that the home, and its man-made components were articulated. As seen in the example of the Duchess of Portland, this did not have to be passive or downtrodden, but instead was indicative of the qualities of the domestic sphere in which they were given rule over. This is directly related to the physical attributes of the sitter in *The Duchess of Portland*, the artistic lineage found in the pose and costume implemented by Sargent and Cavendish-Bentinck's biographical details.

Painted in front of a large neo-classical fireplace in the Red Withdrawing Room, also called the Gobelins Tapestry Room for the tapestries that hang on its walls, at the Portland ancestral home of Welbeck Abbey, *The Duchess of Portland* presents the sitter as a full-length standing figure. She is clothed in a white satin gown with lace collar and matching white shoes, a red robe, and delicate but plentiful jewellery. In her left hand she holds a book while her right clutches her robe. Resting on the fireplace above her one can see the base of a globe, and at the bottom left of the canvas sits a silver fire-iron. Other than these three decorative elements, the background is left spartanly adorned. The long and slender canvas on which this composition is painted emphasises the neo-classical columns on the fireplace as well as the figure's languid body. At about six feet tall, Portland's height gave her a striking physical presence that is mirrored in the composition of Sargent's portrait.[56] After several weeks struggling through his first unsuccessful attempt, Sargent scraped the canvas clean, changed Cavendish-Bentinck's pose and executed this final draft.[57] Those who knew her deemed it a successful representation. Upon seeing the completed work through the window of the house, Lady Helen Vincent believed it to be the Duchess of Portland and called to the painting from outside. It was only later at a party when Vincent

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56 'Tall English Women,' *The Rideau Record* (19 August 1913), 6.

57John Arthur James Cavendish-Bentinck, *Men, Women and Things: Memories of the Duke of Portland KG, GCVO* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1937), 218-219.

asked Cavendish-Bentinck why she had been ignored that the truth of the matter came out.[58] With such an endorsement of the physical similarity between painting and subject, other non-figural elements found in the painting can be explored to create a more multifaceted interpretation of Cavendish-Bentinck's visual identity.

The clothing worn by the Duchess of Portland is notable for its continuity with paintings in the past. Similar robes, for instance, are found in other portraits to be discussed later in this chapter. Therefore, it becomes possible to read this garment as a significant element of Portland's visual identity. The jewellery she wears, including pearls draped around her bodice, the broach at her bust, rings and bracelets are all part of the Portland collection, an assemblage of jewellery and silver noted for its fine quality and diversity. The book she holds is not as easily discernable. While we don't know exactly what text it is, holding such a book could be a reference to Cavendish-Bentinck's status as an educated, well-informed woman and the champion of many philanthropic causes.[59] When placed into a wider context this simple book in the hands of an aristocratic woman becomes a catalyst for debate.

Art historian Susan P. Castras argues the presence of books in Victorian images:

> reflected the struggles and challenges Victorian middle- and upper-class women faced in coping with patriarchal assumptions about their intelligence, learning, knowledge, and independence. The threat posed by women with books and the inherent link with their acquisition of knowledge was expressed, covertly and otherwise.[60]

While *The Duchess of Portland* is painted within the Edwardian Age, it is likely that some of this prejudice or fear regarding the education of women can be inferred in her handling of the book. Furthering this idea, historian Simon Morgan writes that during this period the merit of educating young women was questioned, and if educational endeavours were undertaken just how extensive their schooling should be was scrutinised. Specifically, the middle-class did not want women who 'aped at aristocratic manners' and were taught what were deemed to be the frivolous tasks of drawing, dancing and singing nor those who spent

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[58] Ibid., 219.
[59] Nicholas Hammond, 'Winifred Anna Cavendish-Bentinck,' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Accessed 28 January 2014, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/54569.
[60] Susan P Casteras, 'Reader, Beware: Images of Victorian Women and Books,' *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies* issue 3.1 (Spring 2007) [https://www.ncgsjournal.com/issue31/casteras.htm]

time being educated in topics unrelated to their future roles as wives and mothers.[61] The Duchess of Portland held that aristocratic identity that many feared would seep into the middle-class consciousness. Her manners, education and preoccupations would similarly have been contested within this middle-class ideology.

Winifred Anna Dallas-Yorke was born to Thomas Yorke and Frances Graham Dallas-Yorke at Murthley Castle in the Highlands of Scotland. Like many aristocratic girls of her generation she was not formally educated in a traditional school system, as upper-class boys were. Instead the young Winifred was taken by her mother, a cultured and well-connected woman, to Rome for two winters to study Italian history, making her better educated than many of her contemporaries.[62] Though the future Duchess of Portland had been educated in Italian history, her sort of education was exactly what anti-aristocratic speakers were referencing. The tutoring she received in history was not put to any use, it was an 'education for education's sake' as was the education of most women; by being placed in charge of the domestic sphere their education should be confined to how to navigate only those household matters. The duchess's success in her philanthropic causes, both at Welbeck and nationally, proved that she was not an aping frivolous woman. Even though she coped with patriarchal questioning of her capabilities, as signified by the book, she was able to surpass any hindrances ascribed to her by her gender. In mixing elements of the Duchess of Portland's interests, the book, and characteristics with those referencing the Cavendish-Bentinck genealogy, jewellery and silverwork, it becomes possible to read the duchess as a figure who was capable of bridging the gap between societal expectations and personal fulfilment.

In reference to *The Duchess of Portland*, art historian Ailleen Ribero writes, 'Sargent paints the Duchess of Portland in white satin, lace, pearls and red cloak, with obvious echoes of Van Dyck, the neo-classical revival in dress with high waist and draped cashmere shawl was a theme in Edwardian fashion which the artist found attractive.'[63] This description of the collar is problematic. Though the jewellery and neo-classical dress are important elements for allusion to the art historical past, perhaps this reference to lineage is most acutely seen in the inclusion of what Ribero refers to as a Van Dyck collar.

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61 Simon Morgan, *A Victorian Woman's Place: Public Culture in the Nineteenth Century* (London and New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007), 36.
62 Cavendish-Bentinck, *Men, Women and Things*, 47.
63 Aileen Ribero, 'Costume in the Age of Sargent,' *Burlington Magazine* 121 (August 1979), 536.

Sir Anthony Van Dyck painted many sitters with decorative collars, some with similarities to *The Duchess of Portland*. Two such examples are found in a portrait of another full standing figure, *Princess Henrietta of Lorraine* (1634, National Trust, Kenwood House, London) and in his c. 1637 portrait of Queen Henrietta Maria (fig. 54). *Queen Henrietta Marie* has similar placement of the collar around the neckline of the sitter's bodice, both appear to be made from lace and have a squared shape stretching behind the sitter's back. The inclusion of stings of pearls on the bodices of *The Duchess of Portland* and *Queen Henrietta Marie* adds another element of cohesion, but their placement are vastly different. Van Dyck carefully places the strands of pearls in a neat parallel suspended between the sitter's shoulders while Sargent unevenly drapes them around the sitter's torso. The collars themselves are also structurally dissimilar. Van Dyck's collar lacks the rigidity found in Sargent's interpretation. In examining Van Dyck's portrait oeuvre it becomes difficult to find any garment that contains both the lattice style lace and fan like structure of Sargent's piece.[64] The shape of the collar, its height and the apparent weight of the material from which it is made seems either far too delicate for Van Dyck's treatment of lace as found in *Queen Henrietta Marie* or too restrained for his oversized ruffles.

It can be argued that Sargent's interpretation of the collar as a decorative element of costuming finds resonance in an earlier period. Many images from the Tudor and early Stuart periods hang in Welbeck Abbey and it is through an examination of these earlier works that a better comparison to Sargent's collar can be found. The most convincing examples of similar collars come from paintings of Mary, Queen of Scots and Queen Elizabeth I. Miniatures of such Tudor or early Stuart figures were located in Welbeck at the turn of the century and these images could have provided inspiration for the collar the Duchess of Portland wears. Looking at *Mary, Queen of Scots* (fig. 55) painted after a miniature by Nicholas Hilliard, now in the Royal Collection, one finds similarity of collar and pose.[65] If the intricate lace in the small collar found in the image of Mary were to be extended into the large secondary lace-trimmed collar that surrounds it, one would have created a garment similar to the collar found in Sargent's portrait. The fusion of the two to collars when reading the portrait of the Queen forms a large, standing lace collar in the same manner as the portrait of the Duchess of Portland. The unknown portraitist extends

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[64] Emilie E.S. Gordenker, *Anthony Van Dyck (1599-1641) And the Representation of Dress in Seventeenth-Century Portraiture* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1999) was used extensively to sort through costuming in Van Dyck's oeuvre.
[65] *Great Scots*, (Edinburgh: Trustees of the National Galleries of Scotland: 1985?), 9.

the original miniature configuration to create full standing figure in a narrow configuration similar to Sargent's 1902 canvas and adds a red tablecloth, similar heavy red fabric creates the robe worn by Cavendish-Bentinck.

Some of the Tudor and Stuart portraits found in Welbeck were loaned to the New Gallery for exhibitions between 1888 and 1890, meaning the association of these periods with the Portland family could have been in the public consciousness as well as Sargent's.[66] Evoking the Tudor period, when Welbeck Abbey was dissolved as a religious institution and made into a ducal estate, serves to link this Duchess of Portland to the history of the house in which she is painted and where her portrait hangs. Allusions to an earlier time period could be readily included in the portrait of Cavendish-Bentinck due to the ducal estate's historic connection as well as the Portland Collection of objects from the Tudor era, making a strong case to connect visually this collar to these time periods.

Philip de László, a contemporary portraitist with whom Sargent was acquainted, also painted the Duchess of Portland in Welbeck Abbey. Though de László's prominence occurred towards the end of Sargent's career, the two shared elements of their painterly styles and some of the same clients, including the Duchess of Portland whom de László painted five times. Two of the resulting portraits that are of particular consequence to the study of her visual identity were painted in the Swan Withdrawing room 1912.[67] The first *The Duchess of Portland* (fig. 56) to be discussed contains costuming akin to Sargent's earlier work. A partially white dress is worn under a crimson robe with balloon sleeves, with pearl jewellery and her wedding ring also worn. However, the gown in de László's portrait is mostly pink, the book is replaced by flowers and a similarly natural laurel is placed in her hair. The addition of these natural elements might be in reference to Cavendish-Bentinck's philanthropic work for naturalist causes including her role as the first President of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and election as Vice-President of the Royal Society for the Protection of Animals.[68] In another portrait of the duchess by de László (fig. 57) the red robe is changed for a gold one, and she is shown seated in a mahogany armchair. She holds a pearl necklace and wears bracelets very similar to those found in Sargent's *The Duchess of Portland* (fig. 46).

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[66] C Fairfax Murray, 'To the Reader' in John Arthur James Cavendish-Bentinck *Catalogue of the Pictures Belonging to His Grace the Duke of Portland, at Welbeck Abbey, and London M.D.CCC.LXXXXIIII.* (London: Chiswick Press, 1894), vii.
[67] Cavendish-Bentinck, *Men, Women and Things*, 222.
[68] Hammond, 'Winifred Anna Cavendish-Bentinck.'

Other than the similarity of costuming, there are no other points of commonality in Sargent and de László's renderings of the duchess. Sargent showcases his sitter's full body while de László shows only cropped figures. While Sargent presents a detailed interior scene, de László places the sitter in an undetermined space. This removal of context by de László rids the sitter of the lineage implied by Sargent's inclusion of elements of Welbeck Abbey and her husband's ducal inheritance of this home. By omitting visual references to her home de László also removes the possibility of making a correlation between the Duchess of Portland's identity and such domestic spaces that were regarded as the dominant female sphere during the period.

Unlike *Daisy Leiter* discussed in the previous section in this chapter, *The Duchess of Portland* has no clear counterpoint amongst Sargent's other works. While many images such as *Countess Clary Aldringen* (1896, Hirschl & Adler Galleries, Inc., New York), *Mrs John C Tomlinson* (c. 1904, Duke University Museum of Art, Durham North Carolina), *Lady Helen Vincent*, (1904, Birmingham Museum of art, Alabama), and *Lady Margaret Spicer* (c. 1906, Private Collection) provide close comparisons in terms of very specific elements, the overall compositions are rather problematically too individualistic to be included in this discussion. Two paintings, *Mrs Louis Raphael* (fig. 58) and *Mrs Ralph Curtis* (fig. 59) individually retain the most important elements from *The Duchess of Portland*. When these two are taken as a companion pair, the details of the portraits that are altered in reference to *The Duchess of Portland* are minimal and it becomes possible to read the three as comparable but not wholly corresponding compositions.

Mrs Louis Raphael has a similarity of location to *The Duchess of Portland*, with the sitter placed in front of a fireplace with white neo-classical columns. The fireplace is smaller in scale than the one found at Welbeck and the sitter is able to rest her arm on top of the mantelpiece. The styles of columns are also different. Ionic columns of *The Duchess of Portland* are replaced with Corinthian in *Mrs Louis Raphael***.** The classical writer Vitruvius theorised that the Ionic columns are particularly feminine, their shape directly correlated to the female form, while he states that the Corinthian is a column whose highly decorative state means they are capable of fitting in anywhere.[69] The Vitruvian interpretation means the fireplace at Welbeck had subtle feminine connotations, and the fact that Sargent moved

[69] Indra Kagis McEwen, *Vitruvius: Writing the Body of Architecture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2003), 222.

the Duchess of Portland from her previous position to just in front of the piece links this classical thought with Sargent's portrait and femininity. *Mrs Louis Raphael* was painted in studio, not in her home, so the Corinthian columns and their gender-neutral Vitruvian reading also coincide.

The costuming in *Mrs Louis Raphael* is less striking with a monochromatic blue gown and shawl lacking the contrast of the crisp white dress and vibrant crimson robe found in *The Duchess of Portland*. Furthermore, the cropping of the sitter in *Mrs Louis Raphael* shows less of her body and the canvas itself is quite a lot smaller. It is almost as if all of the elements in *The Duchess of Portland* were made less dramatic and dynamic to somehow soften the composition; a fireplace made on a smaller scale, colour scheme more tonally cohesive, cropping the sitter's body, and adding more decorative elements all produce less stark contrasts. *Mrs Louis Raphael* does not contain the grand manner majesty of *The Duchess of Portland*, and is instead a more relatable domestic interior. When related to social status and prevailing British notions of femininity the motivation for this discrepancy of visual identifiers is clearer. Cavendish-Bentinck's position was quite different from the middle-class audience catered to in manuals by Sarah Stickney Ellis, and the moralising gentile middle-class femininity expounded in these texts was not aligned with her lifestyle.[70] As made apparent earlier in this chapter, de László, and many other portraitists chose not to address such class discrepancies in portraits of aristocratic British women, causing Sargent to stand apart as codifying a representation of this difference of status. While some feminine middle-class visual signifiers are retained, in Sargent's composition Cavendish-Bentinck is presented as an elite type of aristocratic femininity, one specific to the turn of the century.

Mrs Ralph Curtis, a portrait of an American heiress, retains the full-length standing stature and costuming found in Sargent's *The Duchess of Portland* and absent from *Mrs Louis Raphael*. The two images are of comparable dimensions, with *The Duchess of Portland* being larger by only a few centimetres, and these sizes lend similar gravitas. *Mrs Ralph Curtis* places the sitter in a rather unadorned space. A white curtain serves as the backdrop and the subject places her hands on a wooden table behind her. In *The Duchess of Portland*

[70]For a comprehensive text regarding this sort of advice see Sarah Stickney Ellis, *The select works of Mrs. Ellis: comprising the Women of England, Wives of England, Daughters of England, Poetry of life, &c., designed to promote the cultivation of the domestic virtues* (New York: J & HG Langley, 1844).

the white gown of the sitter matches her surroundings yet, alternatively, Sargent uses shadow and backdrop to provide a sharp contrast between the light grey satin gown present in *Mrs Ralph Curtis* and the location in which the subject stands. Additionally, the subject's costume contains very little adornment or decorative elements as found in the previous works. Curtis wears no jewellery, and a small monochromatic sash that falls to the ground behind the sitter. Juxtaposing this lack of visual hereditary lineage with the heavy art historical and ancestral references found in *The Duchess of Portland* raises questions about nationalistic connotations of Sargent's approach to each sitter.

As a portrait of an American sitter in an interior space, this image helps to initiate a dialogue around nationality and the presentation of femininity. Akin to *The Duchess of Portland* (fig. 46) and *Mrs Louis Raphael* it is as if the sitter has been interrupted and is moving to greet the viewer. *Mrs Ralph Curtis* contains a subject that appears to be most uncomfortably engaging in this action. Both hands still rest on the table in the background, while the sitter's legs move forward in an act simultaneously kinetic and static. The resulting pose exposes the sitters chest in a much more forceful manner than the gentle turning of the previously listed British portrait subjects. The lack of social grace visually intimated through the posing of *Mrs Ralph Curtis* was at odds with societal expectations placed on British women, expectations not fully felt within American society. In both the British middle-class and the British aristocracy clearly delineated conduct and proper moral courses of action were essential for women partially because it was expected that they extol these virtues to their children within the confines of the home.[71] While the home was given importance in American visual culture, it was more prominent within Victorian and Edwardian British society. Within *Mrs Ralph Curtis* all of the decorative elements of the interior space are soft; along with the wooden table there is a woven rug, and cloth drapery. This is in contrast with the hard elements of marble and silver found in *The Duchess of Portland*. Unlike the refined and rehearsed femininity present in British portraits, American femininity had an uncultivated spontaneous presence.[72] Though this sort of unrefined woman is not often found in British portraits of the fin de siècle, elements from nature are of great importance to both nations visual representations of femininity.

A non-portrait figural representation of such natural feminine domesticity is found in *Spring* by John Lavery (fig. 60). The subject of this painting, a personification of the

[71] Morgan, *A Victorian Woman's Place*, 38-9.
[72] Banta, *Imaging American Women*, 46.

season, is a full-length standing figure clothed in a white ruffled contemporary dress. She holds a large bouquet of flowers in one arm and lifts the upper layer of her skirt with her left hand, revealing crinoline underneath. Her costuming is reminiscent of the dress found in *Diana of the Uplands* (fig. 52) complete with a flat hat with decorative ribbon. Placed in a room with dark grey walls and white trim, the figure's white dress and matching white flowers stand in contrast to the majority of the interior space. To place the personification of a season in doors seems like an odd choice. Casting the season as feminine, however, is easily relatable. The rebirth associated with spring is a feminine endeavour as it is females who biologically bring forth this new life. Flowers have long served as a pictorial representation of this regeneration, and these plants are given a particularly feminine connotation because of this.[73] In setting the scene in an interior, Lavery is underscoring the inherently feminine attributes of the home, the domestic sphere in which femininity is dominant. Possibly Sargent did not include any elements from nature in *The Duchess of Portland* because the domesticity found in Cavendish-Bentinck standing in front of a hearth in her own home served a similar purpose. As lady of this great estate the Duchess of Portland was displaying a particularly grand aristocratic domesticity. Eschewing flowers in favour for a book, she demonstrates a modern movement away from the temporality of the flora long associated with femininity and towards longer lasting contributions made by her and, it can be argued, her gender.

As previously mentioned, Sargent painted *The Duchess of Portland* in the Gobeles Tapestry room of Welbeck Abbey meaning the portraitist travelled to North Nottinghamshire instead of requiring the sitter to come to his studio in London. It was extremely uncommon for Sargent to make such arrangements in his later career after he had risen to prominence as a portrait painter.[74] This change in venue supports the argument that location in *The Duchess of Portland* as it relates to femininity is of great importance. It is also true that her husband's portrait was painted two years prior in an underground chamber at Welbeck built by the fifth Duke.[75] However, this earlier image by Sargent does not show a detailed backdrop, indeed no reference to the home is hinted at in the composition, and as such the character of Welbeck is not demonstrated in this work. The gendered difference of treatment of this married couple in their home demonstrates the

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[73] For a detailed review of the gendering of flowers see Annette Stott, 'Floral Femininity: A Pictorial Definition,' *American Art* vol. 5, no. 2 (Spring 1992), 60-70.
[74] Ormond and Kilmurray, *The Later Portraits*, 68.
[75] Cavendish-Bentinck, *Men,Women and Things*, 219.

prominence of the feminine within the domestic sphere. Though her husband was the actual heir of Welbeck it is the Duchess of Portland who is painted clearly residing within its walls and presiding over the estate.

Sargent's fellow American expatriate painter James McNeil Whistler took a very different approach to painting and the resulting images provide an excellent point of comparison. Though Whistler's interests and medium of artistic expression were varied, he produced many portraits in the Aesthetic style. The Aesthetic Movement began as a reaction to prevailing social philosophies regarding the arts and literature during the Victorian era. 'Art for art's sake' became the catchphrase of the movement as artists stopped including culturally expected narratives or moral messages in their art works. Rather, they chose to create visually appealing works of art independent from such considerations. While Sargent was not strictly a member of this movement, he does at times conform to the 'pure art' tenet of Aestheticism, notably in *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose* (1885-6, Tate Britain, London).[76] Sargent does not allow visual harmony to usurp completely other considerations of likeness in his portraits. In *The Duchess of Portland* he evokes this movement to address feminine identity, a topic facing reactionary factions to the espoused social philosophies and expectations.

Art critic and theorist John Ruskin did not agree with Aesthetic ideology negating moral considerations from the decorative arts, instead he theorised that decoration of the home was of great moral importance and reliant on women for success. He writes that women are the most integral part of the aesthetic morality regarding the display of decorative arts within the domestic interior. The cultivation of a harmonious home was of importance within Victorian ideology relating to the proper formulation of family life and it was up to women to undertake this task.[77] Women, as protectors of the Victorian domestic realm had to be educated on the right sort of objects to include in their homes endowing it with a moral purpose.[78] Education for women is again reduced to their place in the home. Both those favouring 'art for art's sake' and visual pleasure without reason as well as those like Ruskin who did not follow this credo, did not value the education of women in the same terms, yet still elevated them as morally superior beings. In the final decades of the

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[76] Prettejohn, *Interpreting Sargent*, 50-51.
[77] John Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies: Three Lectures*, (New York: John Wiley & Son, 1873), 90-91 and 108-109.
[78] Lionel Lambourne, *The Aesthetic Movement,* (London Phaidon Press Limited, 1996), *The Aesthetic Movement*, 14.

nineteenth century such considerations were being questioned further as the public and domestic spheres became more intertwined.

Two of the *Symphony in White* series stand out when comparing this portrait of Cavendish-Bentinck to others in Whistler's oeuvre. Selecting only one image will not suffice in encompassing the multifaceted detail in this seemingly straightforward composition found in Sargent's rendering of the Duchess of Portland. The first of these works by Whistler, *Symphony in White Number 1: The White Girl* (fig. 61) retains the element of the full-length female standing figure in white, Whistler's mistress Jo Hiffernan, placed against a white backdrop. Her body is placed in two-thirds profile, as is the figure in *The Duchess of Portland*, and so is her face, unlike Sargent's portrait. She holds a flower in her left hand while the right hangs at her side. The background is a white cloth and she stands on a bearskin rug atop a woven decorative carpet. Her hair is loose and her clothes informal. This is in sharp contrast to the formal attire of *The Duchess of Portland* and her carefully pinned hair. Whistler paints an image devoid of any colour; aside from a few motifs on the carpet and the model's hair and lips; it is a monochromatic scene. The folds in the backcloth of *Symphony in White No. 1* evoke the columns found in *The Duchess of Portland* but are more irregular as they are not marble architectural elements. This informality with emphasis on colour and texture leads to a scene very different from the rather stately *The Duchess of Portland*. The colour of the robe in Sargent's work and the metal and stone in the background add to the formality and remove the Victorian sentimentality of the domestic interior through the inclusion of these hard, cold, and smooth elements. John Harvey discusses the resulting whiteness of the painting in reference to the purity it represents, writing it 'pays its odd oblique tribute to the age's wish for women to be angels'.[79]

Symphony in White Number 2: The Little White Girl (fig. 62) contains decorative architectural elements not found in *Symphony in White Number 1* but lacks the similarity of pose with *The Duchess of Portland*. Whistler's second study in white places the same model, Hiffernan, in a two-thirds profile facing the right of the canvas, the opposite direction of his earlier painting and *The Duchess of Portland*, and also chooses to keep the sitter's head in full profile instead of the nearly full faced presentation of Cavendish-Bentinck and the white girl. He further crops the figure, showing her only from above the

[79] Harvey, *Men in Black*, 205.

knee and losing a portion of her arm. *Symphony in White No. 2* contains a fireplace upon which the figure's left arm rests and Whistler puts an element of interest in the sitter's right hand as she holds a painted fan. Colour is introduced into this painting through the inclusion of Aesthetic elements of the fan, flowers at the bottom right of the canvas, and a decorative vase also resting on the mantle of the fireplace. The sitter's face is reflected in a mirror placed just above the fireplace, an element also found in Sargent's *Mrs Louis Raphael* (fig. 58). This scene is less strictly an exploration of colour and more a tableau showing a domestic interior full of Aesthetic Movement decorative art pieces. *Symphony in White No. 2* retains the specificity of place found in *The Duchess of Portland* and absent in Whistler's first symphony.

Whistler's close friend, illustrator George du Maurier commented that during a social visit Hiffernan 'got up like a duchess, without crinoline' a comment on her grace that puts these *Symphonies* in direct dialogue with the sort of costuming found in *Duchess of Portland*.[80] An absence of crinoline in her dress, as du Maurier observed, leads to a more solely domestic figure than Sargent's gown clad duchess. In the *Symphonies* the dresses painted are meant only for domestic use. Whistler's dresses are made exclusively for the interior of one's own home and would not have been worn in public. The fabric present in these costuming were associated with 'modesty and home life rather than showy public display' direct contrasts to previously discussed works by Sargent, de László and Lavery.[81] Whistler's dresses tethered the wearer to the home in another way, for if she wanted to leave this domestic space and enter the public sphere she needed to change her clothing. This informal attire also makes it possible to read Whistler's paintings as being more intimate. The others portrait sitters discussed in this section, while also inhabiting the feminine domestic realm, are appropriately attired for public view. Whistler's paintings of Hiffernan in white demonstrate a completely interior, informal, domestic feminine identity. She is contained to that space by her gender and her costume and made to fit into the beauty of her surroundings.

Though he was personally acquainted with many leading figures of the Aesthetic Movement, many of du Maurier's illustrations were satirical takes on the Cult of

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[80] Patricia de Montfort, 'White Muslin: Joanna Hiffernan and the 1860s,' in Margaret F. MacDonald et al, *Whistler, Women, and Fashion* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 85.
[81] Ibid., 89.

Aestheticism, casting a critical eye on fanaticism and stylistic expression of its followers. Most illustrations featured decorative arts pieces, such as ceramics, and the Aesthetic obsession with curating the perfect Aesthetic experience. He acted as a satirist of the movement, focusing a critical eye on what many in the public thought to be the pretention of the movement.[82] One of du Maurier's illustrated images 'An Impartial Statement in Black and White' (fig. 63) does not engage with domestic decorative elements, instead choosing to specifically address women's attire, aestheticism and colour. The two-panel illustration contains on the same two full-figure standing female figures placed in a highly decorated interior in both sections. In the first panel the women on the left, a very gaunt and hunched figure, wears a highly decorated aesthetic dress in black. It has partially ballooned sleeves like those of the red robe worn in Sargent's *The Duchess of Portland*, a blouson bodice and train at the back. The figure to the right appears healthier and younger and is attired in a fashionable white gown. It has a fitted bodice, thee quarter sleeves, ruffles on the end of the sleeves, skirt and chest of the garment. In her hand she holds a closed accordion style fan. The second panel has the style of dress on each sitter change while the colour of costume remains the same. What was a haggard looking woman in black becomes a robust figure when placed in attire considered to be more popularly fashionable. Though not a direct copy of the fashionable dress in white it has a similar appeal with corseted bodice, full skirt and both figures wear jewellery, necklace and bracelet respectively. The woman in black's aesthetic transformation changes the fan in her hand to a flat decorative one and her dress is the same blouson style found in the previous panel. However, the woman in white's appearance aside from the costuming does not change. Perhaps this is a commentary on both the Aesthetic Movement and mainstream fashion's embracing of the colour in their works, while the colour black had particular popularity amongst the fashionable modern set.[83] This commentary suggests that the fashion of the Aesthetic Movement, the loose fitting dress was not flattering for every woman, the use of the colours black and white enforcing these contrasts.

In his 1902 critique of *The Duchess of Portland*, Henry P. Culver notes Sargent's portrait is a 'symphony in crimson and white' alluding to the musical references found in Whistler's titles, therefore, linking it to aestheticism.[84] Furthermore, contemporary art

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[82] Lambourne, *The Aesthetic Movement*, 115.
[83] Robins, *A Fragile Modernism*, 67. For more on the questions surrounding Aesthetic dress see Stern, *Against Fashion*, 5-9.
[84] Henry P Culver, 'Art Gossip from London,' *Brush and Pencil*. vol. 10 (2 June 1902), 185.

historians have applied Aesthetic readings to other portraits of Sargent's oeuvre. Lionel Lambourne writes that *Ellen Terry as Lady Macbeth* (1889, Tate Britain, London) is Sargent's great foray into Aestheticism.[85] However, another of Sargent's portraits containing a figure with a similar aristocratic position to Cavendish-Bentinck will be analysed in reference to Aestheticism and femininity. *The Duchess of Sutherland* (fig. 64) retains many of the same Aesthetic elements as *The Duchess of Portland* including the corresponding colours between the subject's dress and the composition's background. There are still elements of theatricality and performativity in the representation of Sutherland, although it is not a theatre portrait.

Painted as an exterior scene, *The Duchess of Sutherland* contains decorative arts elements in the garden setting. Such manmade architectural or artistic elements were nearly always included in Sargent's British female outdoor portraits.[86] The ornamental basin on which the Duchess of Sutherland's right hand rests and a portrait bust on a pedestal located in the background augment the highly artificial depiction of nature. She holds in her left hand what appears to be a leafy branch, serving a similar purpose as the flowers included in one of de László's *The Duchess of Portland* (fig. 56). Due to her hand's placement on the basin, the Duchess of Sutherland's shoulders are rolled back, causing her chest to protrude towards the viewer. However, this is done in a much more subtle manner than *Mrs Ralph Curtis* (fig. 59) and even when combined with her low cut bodice, the Duchess of Sutherland appears refined and demure like the more clothed *The Duchess of Portland*. The scene present in *The Duchess of Sutherland* is a visually appealing with primacy of this visual consideration leading to a 'pure art' correlation between it and the Aesthetic Movement.[87] Costuming serves to legitimise in terms of colour this outdoor setting. The resulting portrait could be considered a symphony in green. The dress chosen for *The Duchess of Sutherland* is a highly ornamented gown, dissimilar to the one worn by the Duchess of Portland and its formality differentiates it from the white domestic dresses worn by Hiffernan in Whistler's symphonies. The setting of *The Duchess of Sutherland* is

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[85] Lambourne, *The Aesthetic Movement*, 209.

[86] Four of the six portraits containing individual British female sitters in an exterior setting include architectural details. For this list see Table 12. British Female Sitters in Exterior Settings Containing Architectural Elements, 1890-1910.

[87] The highly detailed costuming and general orientation of figure found in *The Duchess of Sutherland* can be best related to Whistler's *Rose and Silver: Princess from the Land of Porcelain* (1864, Freer Art Gallery, Washington, DC). The artistic merits of this Aesthetic Movement painting are discussed in Michael Fried, *Manet's Modernism or, The Face of Painting in the 1860s* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 229-230.

not a domestic one with the background being a highly manufactured evocation of naturalism and this unique garment fits this paradox. This gown and the decorative collar in Cavendish-Bentinck's portrait by Sargent are indicative of the portraitist's attention to costume details to portray a specific theme or mode in a painting.

It can be argued that exterior setting of *The Duchess of Sutherland* allows for a reading of the ornamental basin as a substitution for the fireplace found in *The Duchess of Portland*. This interpretation, while interesting, disregards that the fireplace had particular connotations in British Victorian culture. An important component of the domestic interior, the fireplace was widely given primacy over other interior elements as being particularly feminine. This space was symbolic for warmth contained within the home as the warmth provided by the fireplace was mirrored in the moral and emotional warmth provided by the women. In the doctrine of separate spheres the responsibility for this literal and figurative warmth fell to the woman of the house. She was to provide moral guidance and place of comfort away from the pressures of the public sphere and the fireplace was symbolic of these positive signifiers of British femininity and female influence.[88]

While home, hearth and middle-class identity has been written about by such authors as Andrea Kaston Tange, upper class Victorian and Edwardian sentiment about the fireplace is understudied. It is possible to apply cautiously such middle-class values to visual representations of gender within the period to the upper class as well. The size of the fireplace in *The Duchess of Portland*, indicative of the vast expanse of her family's estate, also is symbolic of her reach in the spread of feminine and domestic morality. Her philanthropic work included patronage for naturalist causes of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, building an alms house for the poor near Welbeck, running home for small sick children, and working nationally to help those ill with consumption.[89] In living out this feminine duty on a larger scale, the Duchess of Portland was conforming to the role of domestic caretaker outside of the strict confines of her home. It was a requirement of her position as a duchess, one she had gained through marriage.

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[88] Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians*, 133-4.

[89] For her establishment of an alms house see Cavendish-Bentinck, *Men, Women and Things*, 48-9 and for work with consumption patients see, 'The Prevention of Consumption. Poor-Law Sanatorium for Consumptives.' *The British Medical Journal*, vol. 1, no. 2211 (16 May 1903), 1176.

In undertaking philanthropic work on a national scale and with broad areas of interests, the Duchess of Portland was enacting a form of pious domesticity. Piety, one of the defining female characteristics of the Cult of True Womanhood, can be difficult to visually decipher without religious elements present. In Sargent's *The Duchess of Portland* the red robe could be read to reference one of Diego Velazquez's portraits of a cardinal, or one could interpret the book in her hand as a missal and attach a liturgical component to Sargent's depiction thereby connecting Cavendish-Bentinck to Welbeck Abbey's monastic past. However, I would argue that it is the placement of the portrait figure in front of the fireplace, a symbol of ideal feminine domesticity, and her soft but direct gaze and facial expression demonstrative of this piety. Cavendish-Bentinck's relationship with Welbeck was not just a dynastic one. The estate was the Portland couple's preferred residence as they felt it a better place for entertaining their closest friends than London where larger parties were in fashion.[90] The Duchess of Portland did open Welbeck to others outside the family's inner circle, for example inviting the Nottingham Cripples Guild to bring sick children to the home.[91] She was able to serve as the gatekeeper to this estate and become involved in causes that mattered to her, but she was also needed to be submissive to her duties as Duchess of Portland.

In interior space that ties her to a lineage that is not her own, clothed in attire more akin to a costume, *The Duchess of Portland* depicts a British female figure subordinating herself to the position garnered by marriage. The theatrical elements of costuming and scale of fireplace present in the image link it with the past while also creating an image of wide-reaching feminine implications. Allusions to Whistler's paintings also connect her to the modernity of the Aesthetic Movement, contextualising her as a contemporary figure adorned and surrounded by the purity of white. Kilmurray writes, 'Sargent's women, regardless of their social class or personal connection to him…are presented as individuals who preserve the privacy and integrity of their inner lives.'[92] This private integrity can be extended in the Duchess of Portland to her respect and reverence for her domestic duties as they expanded into the public sphere.

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[90] Cavendish-Bentinck, *Men, Women and Things*, 46 and 50.
[91] Ibid., 49.
[92] Elaine Kilmurray, 'Sargent's Women: Models, Dancers, Exotics,' in *Sargent's Women*, 33.

Conclusion

The Performance of Feminine Identity

Perhaps the element most fundamentally linking *Daisy Leiter* and *The Duchess of Portland*, aside from the fact that both portraits contain standing women wearing white, are the theatrical presentation of self that Sargent presents on the canvas. Portraiture, as a genre, has a sense of theatricality about it. Art historian Michael Fried writes that this is found in the 'call for exhibiting a subject, the sitter, to the public gaze; put another way, the basic action depicted in a portrait is the sitter's presentation of himself or herself to behold.'[93] While this is true, Sargent offers a more acute theatrical presentation in these two portraits of American and British women. The colossal size and orientation of the figure at the front of the picture plane with movement evoked through pose and costume make *Daisy Leiter* a dramatic image. The costuming of *The Duchess of Portland*, notably the collar and large red robe, could be more commonly found on a stage than worn by an Edwardian woman reading before the fireplace at her home. The artificiality of the scenes, again a characteristic of the genre, and the staging of such theatrical elements created synthesised and stylised representations of the women presented.

Theatricality implies an element of performance and this can be read quite easily in Sargent's compositions. Movement is presented in each canvas as if the woman were an actor on a stage. Leiter turns as if to address the viewer and Cavendish-Bentinck seems to have been interrupted in the act of reading as she looks out of the canvas towards the audience. The staged performance elements of the portraits, however, do not mean that other 'authenticity' is removed from this presentation. The simple act of presenting self in daily life is a performance that is socialised or idealised based on unifying communal characteristics, according to sociologist Erving Goffman.[94] Performance, based on this definition, occurred in that basic interaction of Leiter and Cavendish-Bentinck sitting to Sargent. The resulting image is then a 'real' depiction of the performative identity of the sitter within this staged environment. The performance of gender identities in *Daisy Leiter* and *The Duchess of Portland* would be based on how these cultural ideals were enacted by the sitter, then observed and rendered by Sargent.

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[93] Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 109.
[94] Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971), 44-45 and 76-77.

The prevailing Anglo-American social construction of femininity, the Cult of True Womanhood, was being re-evaluated in this period and both images painted by Sargent reflect this fact. It is, for example, difficult to argue that the figure portrayed in *Daisy Leiter* is a submissive one. Leiter attempted to defy the Cult of True Womanhood with her youthful indiscretions, but she did ultimately comply with her parents' wishes, tying her biographically to this questioning of idealised subordination. She and other women who did not enter the public sphere in a working capacity were tied economically to their families forcing this submission. It is also not domestic as she is painted in an out door setting. Yet, it is an artificial rural scene, removing an association with modernity that an exterior urban environment while simultaneously connecting her to past portrait traditions. The resulting composition is tied to the past while remaining an of-the-moment image, just as Leiter herself was a modern American woman grappling with Victorian notions of how to enact her feminine identity.

Cavendish-Bentinck is more visually representative of the traditional True Womanhood characteristics. Placed in a domestic scene, she is a figure who appears pious and reserved as if dutiful to her role as nurturer of the estate as her portrait visually references portraits that relate directly to British aristocratic tradition. The scope of this nurturing role was evolving as early as the 1870s and Ruskin himself, a strong supporter of the doctrine of separate spheres. He advocated for this expansion of the female role into the public sphere in limited ways, suggesting the female influence move to assist in the 'in the ordering, in the comforting, and in the beautiful adornment of the state.'[95] In the Duchess of Portland's philanthropic work she began to move into the public sphere in a manner promulgated in the ideologies of the Cult of True Womanhood. Domesticity, because of her status as an aristocratic woman, was larger than one simple and this is reflected in the scale of the architectural elements in Sargent's depiction.

Relating these personal feminine performances into visually coherent compositions was no easy feat. Sargent engaged in this activity using hundreds of different variations throughout his portrait career to varying critical receptions and stylistic results. What was consistent in Sargent's work was the editing of reality to form pictorial truth. In doing so he 'provided

[95] Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies*, 109.

the viewer with a performance to reflect on, admire, enjoy for its own sake.'[96] Just as the sitter was performing her identity so too was Sargent's rendering of her likeness a performance for the audience to admire. The theatricality present in *Daisy Leiter* and *The Duchess of Portland* make the actions of performing clearer than other images of Sargent's oeuvre, thereby directly allowing the viewer to speculate what feminine role each portrait sitter was enacting.

[96] Hughes, *American Visions*, 250.

CHAPTER 4

The Age of Imperialistic Masculinity: Military Might and Capitalist Power

Though John Singer Sargent's skill as a portrait painter received near universal acclaim during the first decade of the twentieth century, his sitters responded in diverse ways to Sargent's methods and personality. British diplomat and colonial official Sir Frank Swettenham (fig. 65) was one of many who enjoyed sitting to Sargent, commenting he had 'passed many pleasant hours in his studio' because of Sargent's talkative nature while painting.[1] The two forged a friendship based on this and assisted by the fact that they moved in the same London circles. Sargent's time painting American President Theodore Roosevelt's Official White House Portrait (fig. 66) was quite a different experience. Roosevelt and Sargent did not get along, by all accounts, and entered a gruelling quasi-sparring match in order to get the portrait finished. After this row, which caused the president to leave Sargent alone to finish the composition, they never met again.[2] Roosevelt was among those whom entered into the portrait sitting as a business arrangement spurred by Sargent's reputation as a great portrait painter and little more.

Despite Swettenham and Roosevelt having differing views on Sargent as a man, both emphatically approved of the resulting portraits.[3] The two are presented as tall, standing figures in interior spaces who look purposefully out of the canvas. Perhaps this positive response is due to Sargent's approach to the two men, imperialist leaders within their respective nations of birth, the expert yet subtle compositional means by which individual masculinity is linked with the wider and ever changing geo-political world at the turn-of-the-century.

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[1] Sir Frank Swettenham, *Footprints in Malaya* (St. Alban's: Mayflower Press William Brendon and Son LTD, 1942), 141.

[2] For a detailed description of Sargent and Roosevelt's interactions see Charles Merrill Mount in 'The Rabbit and the Boa Constrictor: John Singer Sargent at the White House,' *Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Washington D.C.* vol. 71/72, the Separately Bound Book 1(971/1972), 622-629.

[3] See Swettenham, *Footprints in Malaya*, 141. For Roosevelt see *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Kermit Roosevelt*. February 19, 1903. Theodore Roosevelt Collection. MS Am 1541 (51). Harvard College Library. Compiled at the Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library, Dickinson State University, Accessed 06 July 2015, http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record.aspx?libID=o280363 and *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to John La Farge*. March 10, 1903. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. Compiled at the Theodore Roosevelt Library, Dickenson State University, Accessed 06 July 2015. http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record.aspx?libID=o184422.

The topic of masculinity as a social construct is relatively unexplored in Sargent studies. Andrew Stephenson is perhaps the most notable scholar to address this issue in his work on Sargent and British masculine military images, but such discourse is dwarfed by the breadth of writing on Sargent's portrayals of femininity.[4] The visually compelling images of femininity Sargent created at the turn-of-the-century and the changing roles of the women they represented, as described in the previous chapter, had an effect on the images and identities of their male counterpoints. To characterise male images as primarily a reaction to these powerful female representations, however, is an oversimplification of the issue presented. While portraits conveying this sort of gendered identity certainly had a deep-rooted interplay with one another, art historical tradition and broader geo-political implications equally informed the visual representations of the men among the upper echelons of international society, just the kind of men Sargent was painting at the turn-of-the-century.

Using Stephenson's text as a guide, this chapter addresses Sargent's 'stage management' of British and American masculinities within the context of primarily diplomatic imperialists. Military might and masculine identity are strongly intertwined during the fin-de-siècle in both Britain and the United States. In Britain, this is notably demonstrated in portraiture through an exploration of regalia and empire. This militaristic masculinity has been tied to imperialism since the seventeenth century and, as such, earlier examples of such tropes in British portrait painting will be explored. Sargent's treatment of Swettenham is cited in Stephenson as displaying 'imperial hubris' and this portrait will be given more detailed reading in section one informed by Swettenham's writings on masculinity.[5] Through its colonial past, the United States shared a similar starting point for these images of masculinity and later found language of manliness and warfare coupled with one another in the wake of the Civil War. Yet, one of the nation's founding principles was a complete dismissal of the sort of imperial system found in Britain, and isolationism had reigned as the predominant ideology for over one hundred years. The War of 1898 challenged this insularity, heralding America's entrance on to the imperial stage, and was championed by President Roosevelt. Because of his look to internationalism, as well as other reasons to be examined later, Roosevelt's portrait will be the focus of the second section. A pointed comparison between a colonial governor and a president will place

[4] See Stephenson, '"Wonderful pieces of stage management,"' 221-241.
[5] Ibid., 233.

such formations of masculinity and differing empires at odds with one another and demonstrate just why Sargent was considered among the best painters of his age to address these delicate issues.

Part 1

The Regalia of British Masculinity and the Militarism of Empire: *Sir Frank Swettenham*

When referencing Sir Frank Swettenham's treatment by John Singer Sargent, art historian Andrew Wilton offers the suggestion that, 'Not being British, Sargent may have been happier to take the burdens of Empire lightly.'[6] Stephenson also calls into question how Sargent's identity and personal ideology would have influenced his portrayal of British imperialism.[7] Both are relevant lines of inquiry rich in material for exploration. Though Sargent's personal understanding of imperialism has been used as an interpretive starting point before, Wilton and Stephenson's assertions about Sargent's national identity and Swettenham's portrait are being cast aside in this chapter in favour of using the man's own writings to explore his personal thoughts on masculinity and how this is visually manifested in Sargent's portrait that hangs at the National Portrait Gallery, London (fig. 66). Furthermore, elements of eighteenth and nineteenth-century ideologies on nationalism, masculinity and empire will be pursued in order to evoke a better understanding of the intentions of the portrait's subject primarily, placing these considerations in a prominent position above the intentions of the portrait painter, in the resulting image. Thus, this section strives to demonstrate that the burden was placed on Swettenham to convey his own personal masculinity to the painter, with the resulting image needing to capture both this introspection of sitter and the status that his position as a Resident General of the Federated Malay States afforded him.

Sargent offers a striking view of the regalia of empire in his portrait of Swettenham, one of excess and exoticism. The standing two-thirds figure is shown in full white dress uniform demonstrating Swettentham's status as a colonial leader. Sword readily displayed, medals and awards on show. His left hand is placed on his hip, just above his sword, resulting in a jutting elbow reminiscent of images of rulers such as Henry VIII. As noted in Chapter 2,

[6] Andrew Wilton, *Five Centuries of British Painting: From Holbein to Hodgkin* (London: Thames and Hudson World of Art 2001), 191.
[7] Stephenson, '"Wonderful pieces of stage management,"' 235-6.

this pose took on a new meaning at the turn of the century denoting the strength and power of the figure as well as an evolution of female empowerment in the period.[8] While Swettenham's role in the Malay Straits was diplomatic governance, costuming and pose recall symbols associated with the militaristic aspects of imperial domination. Stephenson writes that the portraitist includes a hint at imperial hubris with the 'unabashed material display' contained on the canvas.[9] Unlike many of Sargent's portraits of male sitters, the background of this portrait is full of objects that serve to convey the spoils of the region of empire under his control. Fine fabrics cascade down to his right and a gilded globe directs the audience to view this man in a more international context. A scroll can be seen at the base of the globe at the upper left of the canvas, another allusion to the order Swettenham was enforcing in the Malaya region. The figure himself looks out of the canvas directly at the viewer, holding a piece of the fabric in his right hand, resolute and determined.

The portrait chosen for this chapter was neither the first Sargent painted of Swettenham, nor the one which Stephenson and Wilton reference. Hung at the National Portrait Gallery since 1971, this portrait was meant to be a copy of the original, initially, to be painted by another artist entirely. The first portrait, also commenced in 1904, was commissioned by the Straits Settlement Association to serve as a commemoration of Swettentham's service as colonial governor. The sitter was able to choose the portrait artist he desired and the Association would pay for the portrait that was to be hung at Victoria Hall in Singapore along side other British Imperial figures. He chose Sargent primarily because of the artist's fine portraits of Swettenham's friends and acquaintances.[10] The first portrait (fig. 67) is a full-length study. It contains those objects of empire listed above as well as more accessories including an ivory baton, helmet and a leopard-skinned rug. The placement of Swettenham's right hand and the orientation of the globe are different as well. In Sargent's first rendering, his hand is relaxed and open while the globe is positioned to show Malaya and the surrounding area, firmly demonstrating the origins of the materials surrounding Swettenham and where the portrait was to hang. The original was the only one exhibited in Sargent's lifetime; the copy was first displayed in this manner in 1925 demonstrating how the aspects of commissioning affected the audience and its reception. The second is a more personal portrayal of the subject, while the first is a creation of a public persona.

[8] Reference is made to this portrait stance and the New Woman in Part 2 'The New Woman, The New Man and the New Marriage,' 94-95.
[9] Stephenson, '"Wonderful pieces of stage management,"' 233.
[10] H.S. Barlow, *Swettenham* (Kuala Lumpur: Southdene SDN BHD, 1995), 651.

The compositional differences between these two portraits have broader geo-political implications. While much has been written about the original portrait, now located in Singapore, the selection of the copy as a central image of this chapter, an artwork that was always intended to remain in London and the 'inner' empire, is more relevant to the aims of this thesis. Much like Theodore Roosevelt's Presidential Portrait (fig. 66) hung in the seat of power for the American Empire so too was this copy of Swettenham placed in the epicentre for British Imperial activities. It was not produced to be sent to the further regions of empire and be viewed by those foreign populations under British rule. Instead, it was designed to be a commemorative piece of empire that stayed both literally and figuratively at home. Kept in the Swettenham's London home until the death of his wife, the intended audience is reshaped in a quite a poignant manner. The portrait was no longer directed at a colonial commemoration of their imperial leader, but instead was this diplomat's reflections on his time in the exotic edges of Britain's empire while in the comfort of his more traditional surroundings. It was a portrait for the man who had come home to London to show what he had acquired for himself as well as of the rest of the empire. Thus the copy and not the original imperial propagandist image is the focus of this interrogation of Sargent's portrayal of individualised British masculinity.

Masculinity and nation building had become inextricably linked during this period due, in part, to the curriculum present at elite schools attended by boys from wealthy or aristocratic families. Writer and academic Philip Dodd cites a correlation between masculinity, nationalism and language in as an historic part of the English educational system, particularly within the early years of the twentieth century.[11] Swettenham was educated at St Peter's School in York, of which he writes fondly in his autobiography *Footprints in Malaya*, in the era prior to the one Dodd references as this turning point for language and education.[12] This institutional linking of militarism, nationalism and masculinity is of great importance when understanding how the inhabitants of this environment, those well-educated wealthy schoolboys, would be affected by these correlations and allow such ideologies to influence their formations and expectations of self. Focusing on visual constructs during and before this period, a similar connection is prevalent in tropes relating to the male portrait in British art history. *Lord Heathfield of Gibraltar* (fig. 68) is one of Sir Joshua Reynolds's eighteenth century portraits that can be

[11]Philip Dodd, 'Englishness and the National Culture,' in Colls and Dodd, *Englishness: Politics and Culture*, 6.
[12] Swettenham, *Footprints*, 11-12.

used as an example to demonstrate this lineage. Painted just after the Siege of Gibraltar, this painting shows a worn but noble commander, key to the Garrison still in hand, looking just to the left of the audience at some unknown entity. Attired in his battle uniform and sword clearly shown, he is not in active fighting but is contemplative and ready in a moment of respite as dark clouds surround him. Here masculinity through imperialism is presented as unwavering yet thoughtful in the face of unknown forces. Visual manifestations of masculinity of years past would have found resonance not only with the artists referencing these images, but also with the commissioners and sitters for such portraits and it is likely that Swettenham would have used well-known portraits such as this to inform his desired portrayal.

Referencing allusions to this sort of idealised masculinity, Sargent was able to make changes to fit better his subject and era. Compositionally differences abound between Reynolds and Sargent's portrayals of their subjects. Lord Heathfield is shown on the site of his siege, while Swettenham is portrayed in an interior studio environment. This can be related to the positions of each man. Swettenham never acted as a military leader, as Lord Heathfield had been, and placing him in an interior space indicates this administrative function. Additionally, this striking difference serves to underscore the changing nature of imperialism itself. It had become more business-like, less militaristic and its maintenance was focused on precision and paperwork. Lord Heathfield's portrait was commissioned by the print publisher John Boydell and widely disseminated in the home region of the empire during what was, arguably, the ascension of Britain as the world's strongest imperial force.[13] As such, Reynolds would have needed to fit this sort of propaganda model, casting the commander of the British forces in Gibraltar in a strong yet relatable manner. Swettenham's portrait, while not originally painted to have such a large audience, also remained in the imperial centre of Great Britain eventually entering the National Portrait Gallery where the Heathfield portrait held a prominent position as well, meaning it too was painted with this specificity of audience in mind. Lacking in Reynolds's portrait are any attempts to show the glamour and exoticism of empire. While *Lord Heathfield* is a highly artificial portrayal of an agent of imperialism, it is one with only the slightest show of the regalia to highlight the cost of empire on a man.

[13] Martin Postle, Mark Hallett, Tim Clayton, and SK Tillyard, *Joshua Reynolds: the Creation of a Celebrity* (London: Tate Publishing, 2005), 110.

Sargent did not often paint colonial leaders, soldiers or statesmen surrounded by such excessive decorative elements. Usually only the regalia of their costume were shown, simple backdrops were employed and the work of their imperial functions was forgotten.[14] It is in this manner that Sargent painted *The Right Honourable Earl of Curzon of Kedleston* (fig. 69) at another important moment of empire. Completed at the dawning of the First World War, this portrait shows a colonial leader of the British Empire, former Viceroy of India and Future Foreign Secretary, George Nathaniel Curzon. In addition to his work as a statesman and diplomat, Curzon was President of the Royal Geographical Society (henceforth referred to as RGS) and this portrait was commissioned by the RGS to honour his three years of presidential service. Costumed in a braided gold jacket, dark blue Garter mantle and star, his attire evokes his aristocratic rank more than his imperial past. Specifically, the lack of items evoking the spoils of empire in Curzon portrait promotes his role as statesmen instead of his former position of Viceroy[15]. Uniforms are often used in images of British sitters painted by Sargent to denote aristocratic rank or personal accomplishments, yet, having such a highly decorated backdrop in conjunction with such costuming is rare particularly for sitters who boast similar biographies to Swettenham. Perhaps it is also due to the bodies who commissioned these portraits and where they were hung that each man was painted so differently.

Alternatively, we can interpret the differing manners of representation for these men within dialogue with an older aristocratic view of masculinity as related to nationalism. Sargent uses the title, not the imperial contributions, of the Earl of Curzon in order to denote both his role in nation shaping as well as assert his masculinity. Nathaniel Curzon, the sitter for this portrait, inherited his title unlike Swettenham and Lord Heathfield who were granted their status based on their colonial contributions. This lineage and rank is demonstrated more overtly in his costuming than his professional accomplishments are and harken back to the idea of dynasty and virility as a sign of masculinity. These 'new' peers with lesser titles, lord and sir instead of an earl, add another dimension to the method of their portrayal and aristocratic identities. Instead of being painted in a white uniform similar to Swettenham's that would demonstrate his imperial contribution in the East, Curzon is clothed in aristocratic robes and complete with emblems issued form the monarchy. Because this portrait is in a bust configuration, less of the man is shown than in

[14] See Table 13. Background Details of British Men in Uniform or Aristocratic Costuming, 1890-1910.
[15] Ormond and Kilmurray, *The Later Portraits*, 231.

Swettenham's image, and similarly the audience's knowledge of the man sitting to the image is truncated. The rich past of his previous work as Viceroy go unmentioned. Visually, it was these biographical elements that Sargent sought to illustrate in creating two distinct images of men whose professional lives were quite similar, but whose personal biographies and genealogies greatly differed. Curzon, because of where the portrait hung and due to his own lineage, may have sought to claim this dynastic legacy visually, which Sargent was obliged to create.

Evelyn Baring, first Earl of Cromer, was like Swettenham, an imperialist new to the nobility who sat to Sargent in the early years of the twentieth-century. Though descended from a prestigious family, the Earl of Cromer was not given a title until the 1901, the year before his portrait was commenced.[16] His resulting portrait *Earl of Cromer* (fig. 70) lacks the regalia commonly found in images of diplomatic or military imperial figures. Dressed in a rather informal grey three-piece suit, Baring is composed in a manner more similar to that of a businessman or some such professional. His right elbow is placed in the 'traditional' Sargent angle, jutting out at ninety degrees. Because Sargent has this appendage recede into the shadow and background, as if to back away from the viewer, it lacks the usual authoritative forcefulness of the many other images of men and women posed in this manner.

Baring is shown seated in contrast to the strong standing imperial figure most men of similar positions would have adopted. While there is a precedent to be found in the works of Reynolds and Sir Thomas Gainsborough for these seated governors or generals, it was not a formula that Sargent often adopted.[17] Instead of painting him in a uniform connoting his status and occupation, Baring is portrayed in an administrative capacity. Seated at his desk, diplomatic correspondence strewn about, the attention is shifted toward this aspect of his position as Consul-General of Egypt and away from the materiality of empire. He is not 'playing soldier' as one could argue Swettenham is, nor is he shown in the clothing befitting his title, as is the Earl of Curzon. Instead of showing the spoils of empire, Cromer's portrait demonstrates the work and maintenance associated with keeping these distant areas of Britain united. This focus on the daily endeavour to keep the empire

[16] Roger Owen, *Lord Cromer: Victorian Imperialist, Edwardian Proconsul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 391.
[17] See Chart 6. Sitting or Standing* in British Military, Diplomatic or Titled Male Sitters, 1875-1925.

together and operational places *Earl of Cromer* as a thematic descendent of *Lord Heathfield of Gibraltar*, though a diplomatic instead of a militaristic one.

In creating the Earl of Cromer's masculinity, Sargent portrays a contemplative imperial agent, much like Reynolds's portrayal of Lord Heathfield but even more subtle. Over the intervening century, the action of empire is moved from the outdoors to a determinative diplomacy inside, reflected in the pose and attire of the Earl of Cromer and the placement of Swettentham. In addition to being newly noble men, there is an inherent similarity of work done by both Swettenham and Baring in terms of lasting legacy. Both were slightly overbearing and forceful in regards to the bureaucracy and daily operations of their respective colonial governances.[18] Sargent chose to demonstrate expressly this legacy in his painting of Baring, but, perhaps because of the manner of commissioning or because of the sitter's own objections, removed this nuance in the image of Swettenham for a more heavy handed visual allusions to act as a reassurance of the strength of the British Empire.

Quite tellingly, though Swettenham lived a relatively small portion of his long life in the Malay region, he decided to title his memoirs *Foot-Prints in Malaya*. This area had profoundly influenced his perception of his legacy and he considered his time and efforts in Malaya to be his most important imperial and personal contribution.[19] The original portrait that now hangs in Singapore, intended to demonstrate his role as the Resident General of the Federated Malay States, gives a glimpse into how he chose to convey this status publicly, but does not quite offer the more introspective view of masculinity that the copy affords. The second image has been slightly cropped and seems more intimate than the first; a logical compositional choice by Sargent when where the images are meant to hang is taken into account. Furthermore, Sargent's decision to reject the copy painted by J. Cooke and compose this portrait himself indicates just how important Swettenham's presentation was to the artist.[20] Though he owned the copy himself, Swettenham chose to include an illustration of Sargent's original portrait in *Foot-Prints in Malaya*.[21] The second portrait, therefore, is a collaborative effort between artist and sitter to formulate and demonstrate a deeply personalised masculine identity.

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[18] For Cromer see Owen, *Lord Cromer*, 147. In relation to Swettenham see Barlow, *Swettenham*, 336.
[19] Of his resignation he writes that though he was offered many enticements to stay, he wanted to leave while still in 'possession of my faculties' and that he regarded his post as the 'most important and attractive of Crown Colony Governorships,' Swettenam, *Footprints*, 142.
[20] Barlow, *Swettenham*, 651.
[21] Swettenham, *Footprints*, illustration facing page 145.

Unlike the other portrait subject of this chapter, Swettenham's views on masculinity are not so clearly and directly articulated in his writings. What is made evident, both in his memoir and the quite peculiar circumstances surrounding his *Unaddressed Letters* is his adherence to the notion that personal integrity, stoic detachment and ideal masculinity are intertwined. *Unaddressed Letters*, he purported, were letters sent to him by a friend who wanted them posthumously published without Swettenham revealing the writer's identity.[22] This publication was simply, therefore, a dutiful friend fulfilling a dying wish, instead of, as was actually the case, a diplomat trying his hand at either writing fiction, or publishing his own intimate reflections.[23] The letters are never addressed to any particular person meaning that though they are supposed to be personal accounts there is still a sense of detachment. This personal distancing in writing and dutiful stoicism in the fabricated story surrounding publication is visually manifested in Sargent's portrait of Swettenham. Though surrounded by items from the region he exercised diplomatic control over, he is clothed in attire that demonstrates he is an agent of a larger force, elevating duty over personal desires or recognition. Aside from the metals that he has earned that are present on his uniform, it is not evident what the scene has to do with his personal accomplishments. The space he inhabits is not his home or an intimate location, another method to remove sentimentality or personal boasting from a narrative interpretation of the portrait.

Such a movement away from sentimentality and towards unemotional service is referenced in the era's prevailing ideologies regarding gender roles. This coupled with Swettenham's educational background likely had the greatest influence over his personal creation of self as manifested visually in Sargent's portrait. The previous chapter explains that the turn of the century was a time of great gendered social change in Britain and abroad. Swettenham came of age before this transitional period of gender ideology and before the kind of nationalistic rhetoric had fully been absorbed within the educational system. For that reason his gendered identity is quite referential to past formulations found in the portraiture of eighteenth-century artists such as Reynolds. Costuming, gilded elements, the inclusion of his ceremonial sword and drapery all harken back to this earlier period. He is a standing

[22] Sir Frank Swettenham, *Unadressed Letters* (London and New York: John Lane, 1898). v.
[23] For more information surrounding Swettenham as the author of the letters, see Barlow, *Swettenham*, 477.

grand manner figure, surrounded by elements of his work and legacy in a referential fashion to Reynolds's creation of imperial masculinity and dynasty over a century earlier.

Swettenham went to Malaya because that was what his family and the Colonial Office deemed appropriate, not because, according to his memoirs, he had any great affinity for the place.[24] In Sargent's second portrait, the gripping action of Swettenham's right hand betrays this unconcerned attitude toward his colonial placement. He clearly has a great affinity for Malaya, his hand filled with great tension as it holds on to the finely woven fabric, conveying emotionality at odds with his intended projection. Swettenham, by his own account, rose through the ranks at the pleasure of the Colonial Office, not because of his own desire. He never wrote of his personal ambitions, but instead of his appointments and what he was able to do with such opportunities.[25] This lack of ambition might be a foil for the sort of prideful boasting thought to be symptomatic of the nouveau riche as it is unlikely he would have gotten so far professionally without actively making any effort. It is the presentation of these opposing forces, at once wanting to appear dutiful and stoic while subtly demonstrating a certain pride at one's accomplishments and affinity for his former colonial post, that makes Sargent's portrait an immensely individualised masculine rendering. To read Swettenham's desire to physically surround himself with so many items from the Federated Malay States as imperial hubris, therefore, is a bit simplistic. Instead, this compositional choice evokes the great personal investment Swettenham had in this region and his desire to bring elements, however small, back to London demonstrate that he was sentimentalising his post, bringing these foreign items quite a long distance into his domestic space. Portraitist, sitter and viewer must conspire to formulate this intricate and nuanced formation of self, based on adherence to and reaction against prevailing notions of British masculinity.

Part 2

Masculine Simplicity and the Business of American Imperialism: *President Theodore Roosevelt*

[24] Swettenham, *Footprints*, 13-14
[25] For an example of such a narrative see Ibid., 80-83 recounting his appointment as British Resident of Selangor.

President Theodore Roosevelt was a reformer and creator. The physical structure of the White House, previously known as the Executive Mansion, was reconstructed during his time in office and this, along with the change in the status of the Chief Executive who resided in it, are thought to be the lasting symbols of his presidency.[26] John Singer Sargent was commissioned to paint Roosevelt's Official Presidential Portrait in 1902 (fig. 66), at the time a newly formed but a subsequently lasting American tradition. During the painting of this image Roosevelt's desire for innovation was brought to the forefront. The resulting portrait, finished the following year, shows Roosevelt standing at the bottom of a staircase, a plain cream wall behind him and unadorned wooden bannister with a simple rounded newel-post to his right, a location that did not exist in the White House. After scouring the mansion for a suitable location and not finding one, this space was fabricated by Sargent to create an effect of simplicity and ascension. [27] The stairs to the right of Roosevelt, portrayed as a two-third standing figure, are a symbol of movement and forward progress. Roosevelt felt unease at being still, wanted to constantly be moving forward and, though shown in a stagnant pose, this desire for movement can be inferred by his placement at the base of these stairs. Just what Roosevelt was moving towards, the changes he would impart affect more than just international diplomacy and American domestic policy. Roosevelt created the expectations and rhetoric surrounding American masculinity that would last well over a hundred years. In this section Sargent's rendering of the visual manifestation of this will be put in dialogue with his views on foreign policy, masculinity and, American identity, Official Presidential Portraits and other images produced by Sargent as well as the legacy of the Official Presidential Portrait.

While military might was stagnating within the British Empire, President Roosevelt ushered in the age of American 'big stick' diplomacy. The United States was an economic and military power in a way that it had never been before.[28] Roosevelt urged for an entry of this influence on the world stage. Trevor Fairbrother argues that Roosevelt himself

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[26] John Allen Gable, 'Theodore Roosevelt's White House,' in William Seale, ed. *The White House: Actors and Observers* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2002), 119 and131.
[27] William Kloss, Doreen Bolger, David Park Curry, John Wilmerding, Betty C Monkman, *Art in the Whitehouse: A Nation's Pride* (New York: Harry N Abrams Inc. for the Whitehouse Historical Association and the National Geographic Society, 1992), 225.
[28] The term 'big stick' is in reference to Roosevelt's quoting of what he said is an African proverb, 'Speak softly, but carry a big stick; you will go far.' It first appears in a letter to Henry Sprague, but Roosevelt used the phrase repeatedly in speeches, within his autobiography and in other letters. *Theodore Roosevelt to Henry Sprague, Albany, New York*, January 26, 1900 Carbon copy letter book. Gift of the heirs of Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., 1958-1965 (52A) Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

stands as a sign of Edwardian male authority, the bold physicality of his presence and self-assurance leading to this conclusion.[29] When combined with the status of the American Empire of the era and his role in shaping it, the visual correlation becomes clear. Roosevelt's interpretation of the highest office in the land is perhaps most aptly portrayed through his attire. Much like the costuming of the Earl of Cromer (fig. 70) the trope of the businessman is used to convey visually the diplomatic role of Roosevelt, thereby giving prominence to that role over other aspects of his multifaceted position as president. Though personally Roosevelt never held such a capitalist position, casting the role of president as a similarly professional role was a shrewd choice. In Sargent's portrait of Roosevelt he is shown as a man dressed in nice but not ostentatious business attire, reflecting the meritocracy that was supposed to define the idealised American society. However, his fashionable watch-chain, the quality of his suiting, and the refined spectacles on his face are references to the corruption prone plutocracy prevalent within American government at the time. In this single image Roosevelt visually portrays elements of the ideal male figure while demonstrating aspects in the perceived decline of turn-of-the-century American society.

To take Fairbrother's assertions even further, historian Sylvia Hoffert has referred to Roosevelt as the quintessential man in America at the turn of the century.[30] A weak and asthmatic child, Roosevelt proclaimed to have made himself into a strong 'bull-moose' through outdoor pursuits, careful study and a later military service. He felt as if all men could do the same sort of reformation, no matter his original status, to become true Americans.[31] Roosevelt's writings on the topic and the influence of his domestic and foreign policies on the formation of ideologies concerning American masculinity and military power cannot be underestimated. Due to the president's influence over manliness in the era, it has been suggested that he also played a role in the creation of a new form of feminism rising at this period, the 'New Woman' of Chapter 2 being one such type. Alice Roosevelt, the eldest daughter of Theodore, has been put forth as one of the inspirations of the Gibson Girl as well as standing as serving, more generally, as an embodiment of New Woman characteristics. [32] It can be interpreted that her fashioning as this revolutionary form of femininity was in an attempt to combat the overt and excessive masculinity of her father. In this interpretation the formation of this stoic, assertive, intellectual masculinity,

[29] Fairbrother, *John Singer Sargent*, 121.
[30] Hoffert, *A History of Gender in America*, 289.
[31] A thorough description of this process is given in Roosevelt, *Autobiography*, 27-53.
[32] Beszek, *Pin-up Grrrls*, 109.

as displayed by Sargent's straight-on shoulder-back presentation of Roosevelt, greatly influenced gender politics for generations in America.

Two other portraits of Roosevelt were painted in 1902, pre-dating Sargent's attempt and offering excellent points of contrast. The first by Theobald Chartran was intended to be his Official White House portrait. Set out-of-doors, perhaps to evoke Roosevelt's national natural conservation efforts, the president is attired in an dark business suit, pocket watch in his right hand, left elbow jutting out just as it does in Sargent's rendering. A standing two-thirds figure, he slightly reclines on a stone ledge as he gazes directly at the viewer. This image, though it contains many of the same attributes as Sargent's later portrait, was thought by Roosevelt to not to be manly enough and he had it destroyed.[33] For this reason, during the course of the research for this thesis it was quite difficult to find an image of Chartran's great masculine blunder. However, the New York Public Library does have a print after the painting in its collection (fig. 71). Because of the lack of colour it is difficult to fully comprehend just why Roosevelt found this to be an effeminate image. Perhaps it was because of the leaning pose, *contraposto* positioning, handling of jewellery or the less than forceful gaze. The exact compositional shortcomings were not recorded, so exactly what it was that displeased him has been lost. What is known is that this presentation of masculinity, this method of portrayal, was thought by Roosevelt to not only be unfit for the White House, but for any kind of display. Perhaps this attempt to expunge the image from cultural memory underscores in the most striking way the value that Roosevelt placed on his persona as this quintessential masculine authority figure.

Alternatively, Fedor Encke's portrait of Roosevelt (1902, Sagamore Hill National Historic Site, New York) clothes the president as a Rough Rider, a role he served during the War of 1898 and one which complemented his ideas about manliness. The Rough Riders were a notoriously rabble rousing regiment well known for their sometimes unusually harsh fighting style.[34] In Encke's composition, Roosevelt stands in a two-thirds direct pose, hands a sword held by both hands at his front. Unlike Sargent and Chartran's images, the figure's arms are brought to his side and as such he appears an insular figure. By placing

[33] *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Kermit Roosevelt*. February 1, 1903. Theodore Roosevelt Collection. MS Am 1541 (48). Harvard College Library. Compiled at the Theodore Roosevelt Library, Dickinson State University, Accessed 06 July 2015, http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record.aspx?libID=o280360.
[34] Sarah Watts, *Rough Rider in the White House: Theodore Roosevelt and the Politics of Desire* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 163-4.

Roosevelt in this attire, years after he served in the capacity of soldier and after he had ascended to the highest office in the land, Encke's portrayal acted as the kind of piece of manly propaganda that Chartran's did not. This portrait is based on the sort of idealised presence that Roosevelt wished to cultivate as described in his own autobiography and other writings. His writings place the corporeal aspects of masculinity, bodies fit for rigorous physical activity, as the crux of male identity.[35] Roosevelt's obsession with masculinity and manliness was manifested in his strong affection for the armed forces, over which he served as Commander-in-chief during his presidency. Roosevelt seemed to delight in the painting and it did hang for a time in the White House.[36] However, this sort of overtly militaristic depiction was not appropriate for his Official Presidential Portrait as well as potentially appearing quite out of date. It was after Chartran's failed Official Portrait attempt and Encke's unofficial but well received portrait that Sargent was given the opportunity to paint the president, using both as a guide for just what sort of portrait would be favourable to the ideology of the sitter as well as befit of his station. For Sargent it was a balancing act he had grown accustomed to.

Another harbinger of the overtly militaristic masculinity promulgated by Roosevelt, General Leonard Wood was also painted by Sargent during the artist's American sojourn of 1903. Sargent met Wood when they both received honorary doctorates from the University of Pennsylvania, after which Sargent asked Wood if he could paint him in Washington. Wood agreed and the two had, by all accounts, a pleasant collaboration.[37] The resulting portrait, *General Leonard Wood* (fig. 72), is a smaller but equally virtuosic piece. Painted as a bust in two-thirds profile, Wood is attired in his Army uniform, costuming quite unusual for Sargent's American sitters.[38] This attire is a nod to Wood's early role as a captain in the Army Medical Corps, his service in fighting the Apache as well as his time

[35] Roosevelt, *Autobiography*, 39.
[36] An account of Roosevelt's thoughts on the image can be found in *Letter from Maria Longworth Storer to Theodore Roosevelt*. November 24, 1902. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. Compiled at the Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library, Dickinson State University, Accessed 06 July 2015, http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record.aspx?libID=o39717. The caption beneath the New York Public Library's print of the image labels it as 'now placed in the dining-room at the White-House,' The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Print Collection, The New York Public Library. 'President Theodore Roosevelt from an unpublished painting of the president by Fedor Encke, which is now placed in the dining-room at the White-House ; The three secretaries to the president, Randolph Forster, William Loeb, Jr., Benjamin F. Barnes.' *The New York Public Library Digital Collections*. Accessed 20 July 2015, http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/9ac31dca-71b9-4d68-e040-e00a18064cc6.
[37] Ormond andKilmurray, *The Later Portraits*, 99.
[38] See Table 14. American Men in Professional Attire, 1875-1925.

with Roosevelt as a Rough Rider. After much persuasion by the future president, Roosevelt was given command of a volunteer regiment that would be come the Rough Riders and named Wood its colonel while Roosevelt, due to his lack of experience as a soldier, served as lieutenant.[39] After the war, Wood was appointed Governor of Santiago, a post held from 1899 to 1902, meaning that he had recently been relieved of this duty when the portrait was painted.

Wood and Roosevelt had a very close friendship partially founded on their time as soldiers and also based on a shared ideology of war. Both men believed in the benefits of war itself for a man and a nation, claiming such excursions were critical in the formation of a true masculinity and national unity.[40] While Wood is wearing the attire of such agents of warfare, Roosevelt's firm and direct stance can be read as a symbol of this no-nonsense approach. Firm, resolute and self-assured with squared shoulders open and pushed back, Roosevelt's portrait transcends the need for the more obvious choice of using clothing to link him to this military aim. His manliness does not need the trappings of the military to elevate it; Roosevelt through self-determination and hard work, as he alleges in his writings, has surpassed this need. His towering size as opposed to Wood's smaller presentation elevates this position even more. Roosevelt becomes a larger-than life, yet natural leader evoking another American ideal, manifest destiny.

While Roosevelt's image stands alone in this physicality, *General Charles Paine* (fig. 73) is another Army general shown in Sargent's more usual American style. Paine served during the American Civil War, but soon after turned his attention to the railroads. It was in this manner that he was attired, a pensive businessman as opposed to a resolute soldier. Much like Roosevelt, a descendant of early Dutch settlers to New York, Paine had a distinguished lineage having been a descendant of a signatory of the Declaration of Independence.[41] An image of similar size, cropping and orientation to that of Wood, Sargent portrays Paine as an introspective and poised businessman. Clearly seated, he is not the strong standing figure. While no writings outlining Paine's interpretation of masculinity survive, the fact that he gave up his military career to attend to business means that we can infer that he lacked the firm correlation between masculinity and war that

[39] Watts, *Rough Rider in the White House*, 161-162.
[40] John S. D. Eisenhower, *Teddy Roosevelt and Leonard Wood: Partners in Command* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2014), 1.
[41] Roosevelt genealogy see Roosevelt, *Autobiography*, 1-2 and 4-5. For Paine see Ormond and Kilmurray, *Later Portraits*, 136.

Wood and Roosevelt shared. However, it is not possible to be certain as masculinity and military were linked in the public consciousness in the decades following the American Civil War. The portraits of Wood and Paine demonstrate that, though these masculinities were intertwined post-Civil War, it tended to be those men who had not fought in the conflict, members of a younger generation, who so closely aligned themselves with this military masculinity.[42] Perhaps because they did not face the horrors of the American Civil War battlefields they felt a need to assert visually their later military service.

Roosevelt was not just another man or soldier; he was the President of the United States and his portrait needed to reflect this particular role. Very little has been written on Official Presidential Portraits as found in the White House, both interpretively and on the basis of the genesis of the commissioning of the genre. The notion of an 'official presidential portrait' was introduced during the late nineteenth century. In the first fifty years of the republic there was only one portrait of the chief executive and it was one of George Washington that First Lady Dolly Madison saved from the White House during the war of 1812. No other portraits were commissioned, collected or hung in the executive mansion.[43] Because of this, the images contained in the collection of Official Presidential Portraits that were created before the late nineteenth century were painted with other objectives in mind, or created in decades after the presidents had served sometimes even posthumously. This act of celebrating an individual, spending government money on a portrait to commemorate the figure, was something that was simply either ignored or ideologically not valued in this previous era. A comprehensive compositional study of Official Presidential Portraits in the White House has not yet been undertaken within art historical literature, and this chapter will serve as a preliminary exploration in this possible new field of study.

As part of the duties of office, all presidents serve as Commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces, but the costuming in Official Presidential Portraits does little to convey this role. Instead they are nearly always presented in formal business attire, befitting their other duty as Chief Diplomat. Zachary Taylor's portrait is the only variation from this standard, a president portrayed in a military uniform. In office from 1849-50, his portrait (fig. 74) was

[42] Lubin, *Act of Portrayal*, 7-17.
[43] Marc Pachter, 'Forward' in Frederick S Voss, *Portraits of the Presidents: The National Portrait Gallery* (Washington, DC and New York, National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institute in association with Rizzoli International Publications Inc, 2000), 8.

painted about a year before Taylor's election to the presidency. A life-long soldier, Taylor had never shown political interests or leanings before 1848 and had not yet voted before this election.[44] Roosevelt and most other commander-in-chiefs, however, held elected government positions before ascending to the highest office in the land, meaning this lack of experience was a likely reason Taylor was painted so differently. It is interesting to note the differences in Taylor and Roosevelt's biography; Roosevelt was a one-off soldier, only serving as a Rough Rider for a few months, otherwise engaging in public service. Taylor was an elected official for a little over a year, but was a career soldier. While many other soldiers served as president, they either were in office longer to be commemorated as such or lived in the period after the Official Presidential Portrait tradition was started and clear precedent had been set.

Another anomaly of the grouping of White House Official Presidential Portraits is William Merritt Chase's portrait of James Buchanan (fig. 75). This painting was completed in 1902 though Buchanan had been out of office for forty-one years and had died in 1868. Unlike Taylor's but similarly to Roosevelt's, Chase painted this portrait with the express purpose of hanging it in the White House. In it, Chase balances masculinity without uniform and acts to impose contemporary ideal American masculinity upon an earlier generation. Buchanan, by some accounts the most ineffective president in American history, is portrayed essentially receding into a black space, the detailing of his suit lost among the black background.[45] His white hair, shirt and tie and the red of the book that he holds in his left hand are the only things keeping from him being completely enveloped by darkness. Here we have a man whose ineffective nature in the years before the Civil War is visually manifested in his portrait. His inability to be a strong force to keep the nation united results in his ghostly appearance, though he still has the upright positioning and strong gaze found in Roosevelt's portrait. Though not as self-assured or direct, Roosevelt's influence on both visual representations of the presidency and on masculinity in the era is present in this later evaluation of an earlier president.

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[44] Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia. "Zachary Taylor: Campaigns and Elections," Accessed 3 February, 2016, http://millercenter.org-/president/biography/taylor-campaigns-and-elections.

[45] While many re-evaluations of Buchanan exist, one of the most informative is "The Disastrous Presidency of James Buchanan" in Fred L Greenstein with Dale Anderson, *Presidents and the Dissolution of the Union: Leadership Style from Polk to Lincoln*, 75–91. Princeton University Press. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt24hrch.8

Roosevelt's personal masculine doctrine had a profound affect on American national and international policy. In his 'The Good Citizen' speech he outlines his great belief in the two qualities of manliness and decency amongst American men. However he also insisted, in reference to a Civil War veteran who lost an arm in the war and was having a Young Men's Christian Association dedicated in his honour, that 'I put the veteran of the great war ahead of everyman in the country.' It is an unsurprising assertion given Roosevelt's documented history of promoting war as important for shaping young men. However, he ends the sentence with 'but I put ahead even of him the good mother who has done her duty and brought up well a family of children' presenting the reader with a surprising dichotomy in his value system.[46] True masculinity was using physical or mental powers to reshape larger institutions and in doing so demonstrating moral fortitude, and sacrifice to act as protector for those unable to do that sort of work themselves i.e. women and children. Conversely women were solely responsible for the future generations, leaders of those who needed to be helped by the work and sacrifice of these men. It can be read as potentially pandering, but his reverence for motherhood followed directly by a Civil War veteran demonstrates the value of biological continuation and physical protection indicative of this post-Civil War period. The great sacrifice of soldiers to preserve the union and the women who were repopulating the nation with 'good citizens' were both causes that a previously starkly divided nation could unite around.

Similarly, Roosevelt sought to be the leader that would unite the country. The crisis of gender during this period, anxiousness found in men regarding the women entering the public sphere and the type of the New Women, were put to ease with his masculine ideal. This masculinity, as seen in Sargent's 1902 Official Presidential portrait and in Roosevelt's writings is physicality assertive. An avid boxer, in his portrait the orientation of Roosevelt's hips and shoulders are just off centre, as if he were setting up to spar.[47] The rest of his positioning is not indicative of this fighting past, his hands are not made into fists nor does he appear crouched in a defensive position. His right hand, placed on the newel, is positioned further forward in the picture plane than the rest of his body and the resulting orientation of his shoulders offers an open, offensive stance. Roosevelt, as presented, is not fearful or anxious. He stands open but prepared and cautious, his brow

[46] Theodore Roosevelt, 'The Good Citizen: Speech at Pueblo 30 August 1910,' in William E. Leuchtenburg and Bernard Wishy, ed., *The New Nationalism* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1961), 143.
[47] Roosevelt, *Autobiography*, 40-41.

just slightly furrowed, prepared physically and mentally for what the role of president entailed, confident in his ability.

The sort of masculine ideal presented in Sargent's portrait of Roosevelt was what the men within the United States, a nation entering a new imperial age in the decades following the Civil War, found resonance. The Civil War was a conflict that defined generations, left a lasting legacy in national institutions and changed the demographics of a nation as thousands of young men were killed in the fighting. Theodore Roosevelt, a sickly child of wealthy parents, created for himself the mythology of being a physically self-made man, placing the trials of his physical transformation above his formal education or elected positions in guaranteeing his success. He sought out war when he didn't need to in order to align himself with the reverence nationally felt for those Civil War veterans. In doing so Roosevelt shaped himself as the ideal masculine figure for that period and tied his own legend to ideal of masculine identity in the States for generations to come.

Conclusion

Sargent's Distilling of Manliness

No perfect parallels can be drawn between President Theodore Roosevelt and Sir Frank Swettenham either in the biographies of the men themselves or their resulting portraits. Nor can these two figures stand in for an analysis of all of Sargent's portraits of men. The differing titles of these men and the discrepancy between the international status of the countries from which they originated lead to differing status in the geo-political realm. The compositional elements Sargent uses to portray them are similarly specific and varied; this chapter is not meant to serve as a comprehensive guide to Sargent's approach to portraying masculinity at the turn of the century. Yet both men chose, in some ways, to represent their manliness on an international stage using Sargent's portrait prowess as a conduit for these individual expressions.

Sargent paints Roosevelt and Swettenham standing with similar body positions, elbows jutting, gazes direct, casting shadows behind them. But perhaps the strongest comparison of pose can be drawn through their right hands. Different texts have used the same term,

'claw-like,' to describe the right hand of each of these men.[48] This term recalls a certain animalistic grasping and digging into their respective objects. Swettenham uses his claw to hold on to the exotic fabrics brought forth by imperial domination while Roosevelt grasps on to a piece of the Executive Mansion itself, as if trying to further entrench his legacy in the White House. The spherical shape of the decorative element at the top of the newel, along with Roosevelt's firm grasp of it, seems to allude to the Sovereign's Orb and the act of coronation, this natural selection of leaders at odds with the American ethos for democratic rule, while strangely aligned with Roosevelt's perceived self-evaluation of his innate manliness. Swettenham, however, does not use his claw to try to stay in this role, but uses it to demonstrate the items and positive elements of empire that he has been able to bring back home with him.

As evident in the backdrops and locations of these portraits, both men spent their careers re-modelling existing structures. Sargent paints them surrounded by elements of these renovations. Roosevelt completely reshaped the American Presidency and the Executive Residence to our contemporary understanding. He is, therefore, painted in a new and highly artificial space allegedly within the White House. Swettenham set up an infrastructure for the Malay Peninsula that continues, in some areas, well into the twenty-first century.[49] Sargent demonstrates this lasting legacy not through the attire befitting his position, but in the accoutrement that surrounds him. The creative process, physical acts of building and resulting legacy fit trans-Atlantic masculine and nationalist dialogue of the period. Roosevelt's portrait remains within this environment of creation, unlike Swettenham's. This distinction, perhaps, is one of the most critical when distinguishing between the two. Sargent needed to work within the confines of the White House, the status of that government building, for his image of Roosevelt in addition to working within the ideological structure of American masculinity formulated by Roosevelt himself. Swettentham's portrait offered the opportunity for more freedom of expression because the man who commissioned it did so for personal use and, as his biography suggests, the sitter was less ridged about his own visual portrayal.

[48] Roosevelt's hand is described in this manner by Mount in 'The Rabbit and the Boa Constrictor: John Singer Sargent at the White House,' 651. And Swettenham's had is given this adjective in Barlow, *Swettenham*, 652.

[49] For more information on how influential Swettenham's actions in the Malay Peninsula were see H.S. Barlow, 'Malaysia—Swettenham's Legacy,' *Asian Affairs*, vol. 28 no. 3 (1997), 325-334.

The depiction of each man suggests a certain valuation of their role as leaders by society as well as their own personal reactions to masculinity. Roosevelt as president is shown in his diplomatic role, while Swettenham as a civil servant is placed in a military style dress uniform. This attire seems to ignore half of the duties each position held. Certainly there are precedents, as elaborated in each of the earlier sections. In British portrait tradition, colonial governors, no matter their background, were most often painted in military uniforms. The President of the United States was a symbol of masculinity at home, isolated and diplomatic in attire and pose. This art historical precedent combined with the new and ever-changing geo-political landscape served as a sort of visual reassurance of the might of the British Empire during the start of its decline, and, alternatively, allowed the office of president to serve as a symbol of a sort of international compass instead of a strictly domestic one at the outset of the American Empire.[50] These renderings, while reliant on the prevailing ideologies of the cultures from which the sitters come, are ultimately shaped by the individual perceptions of self present by Roosevelt and Swettenham in a manner that, I would argue, is uniquely present within these two sitters and portraits. As demonstrated through their writings, their reactions to these and other images, this outward visual component made for private or public consumption greatly informed Sargent's approach to these portrait compositions and the resulting success of each image.

What Sargent is able to do is to articulate quite masterfully in each of these portraits is the interplay between these various elements to produce a realistic portrait of the individual man as well as a nuanced reading of his position in broader society. Perhaps Sargent was uniquely able to perform such a feat because of, as Andrew Wilton concludes, his personal lack of alignment with one specific national credo. Nonetheless, the influence found in these images is not based entirely on the artist's understanding of his subjects, but the subject's understandings of themselves. One a nouveau-titled colonial officer, the other president of what was becoming the most powerful nation in the world both economically and militarily. In re-evaluating the similar 'claw-like' hands in both portraits one begins to notice the tension with in Swettenham's is not present in the rendering of Roosevelt. The president does not as strongly grip the White House bannister, a symbol of his rise to the highest elected office in America, as Swettenham holds on to the symbols of his past work in the Malay Peninsula. This is reflected in their countries' differing views on formulating masculinity: one was firmly holding on to both the British masculine and imperial ideals,

[50] The rise of America as a moral compass within foreign relations is discussed in McCartney, *Power and Progress*, 7-11.

fashioning manliness through the exploration and transformation of these outlying areas of empire; the other was self-assuredly and inwardly reforming these structures for a post-Civil War American audience.

Swettenham writes in his memoir about his time sitting to Sargent, 'to hear the discerning comments of the artist to the frames of mind in which his sitters presented themselves to a man whose brush recorded characters as well as features.'[51] This knowledge of Sargent's own predilection for producing broader sweeping character studies and still selecting him as the painter of one's own portrait creates a covenant between artist and sitter. Swettenham, as this quote demonstrates, entered into this covenant with that full knowledge. Roosevelt, taking into account his past interaction with portraitists and the resulting portraits, likely would have had a similar understanding when selecting Sargent to paint his Official White House Presidential Portrait. Roosevelt's decision was a shrewd one for Sargent was a turn-of-the-century master at adding gravitas of the past to newly formed traditions. In a similar way Sargent was able to visually portray Swettenham and Roosevelt as individualised figures fitting into the contemporary re-formation of masculinity while creating lasting images within the canons of British and American portraiture.

[51] Swettenham, *Footprints*, 142.

CONCLUSION

Reading Sargent's Portraits

Using the framework of Max Beerbohm's assertion that John Singer Sargent was the best visual chronicler of upper-class life at the turn of the century, this project began with close readings to sort out compositionally how this could be the case. The resulting thesis was an exercise in nuanced looking, compiling and categorising those results in order to find types and trends. Through dissecting the formation of types, one needs to relate social roles and ideologies, but it is important not to veer towards treating the portraits themselves as a direct narrative. The social roles presented in each image, according to art historian Richard Brilliant, are similar to 'masks or disguises, carefully assumed by individuals in order to locate themselves in a society conditioned to recognise these forms' and should not be valued as a social artefact above the individual representation of the figure within the portrait.[1] While at times this thesis did veer towards the strict analysis of social types, those accessories were used to try to inform an interpretation of the identity of the sitter presented underneath in relation to the factors surrounding upper class American and British performances of self. To read the portraits as having a direct narrative is not necessarily correct; the images are emblematic of or correlate to the specific issues of the period, but what the portraits portray about the individual identity of the sitters captured is, ultimately, why they were created.

Other qualifiers regarding the portrait sitter's identity, namely nationality, were brought in to the discussion in order to consider the correlation between such visual attributes and popular ideologies of the period. Throughout this thesis, the sitters' personal credos and ideological affiliations were explored through texts written in their own hand or by those close to them, and at times newspaper articles were employed in a similar manner, adding to a better understanding of what notions they could have called upon Sargent to convey. Susan Sidlauskas states that Sargent had a reciprocal relation between himself and his subjects. When writing in regards to his painting of the Boit daughters, she states that the children's 'power to act upon the adult rivalled the authority of the adult to control his subjects and, most importantly, his reactions to them.'[2] Sargent's role in this capturing of

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1 Richard Brilliant, *Portraiture*, (London: Reaktion Books, 1991), 12.
2 Sidlauskas, *Body, Place and Self*, 90.

the performance of self is a critical part of this portrait relationship, and those visual details are what this thesis is built upon.

Stanley Olson argues that 'Sargent's mighty career was the highest possible reading of that strange dialectic which produced the insatiable demand for portraits. Such a phenomenon could not have happened at any other time in history.'[3] True, the dates of Sargent's portrait career fall within a period of high demand for portraits in oil.[4] Interestingly, the artist himself did not share a desire for a similar sort of self-fashioning and only created three self-portraits, two of which were made between 1890 and 1910.[5] The first is part of the Macdonald Collection of artist's self-portraits (1886, Aberdeen Art Gallery, Aberdeen); the second was painted for the National Academy in New York (1892, National Academy, New York); and the final for the Uffizi Gallery (1906, Uffizi Gallery, Florence). All three have the same portrait configuration: the sitter before a plain coloured backdrop shown as an extended bust in three-quarter profile. The sitter wears a coat, waistcoat, white collared shirt and tie in all of them. His expression is rather neutral, and in all he looks out of the canvas directly at the viewer. Finally, a shadow is cast over the right side of his face in each image, though at differing degrees of darkness. There are a few differences; the colour of suit changes from grey, to brown, to black. The 1906 painting shows a bit more of his torso, in the 1892 portrait he wears a cap, and he paints himself within a circular configuration in the 1886 image.

All three self-portraits were painted for specific locations and were not undertaken out of the artist's own desire to engage in this practice. Sargent's lack of personal impetus to paint his own portrait, to enact the performance of self to be captured on a canvas, is not indicative of an era where people were craving this sort of representation. He also, as seen through the similarities in these three portraits, did not experiment when it came to his own portrayal. This may be because of the precedence for American artists to portray themselves as sombre professionals.[6] Or it could be indicative of Sargent's dislike of

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[3] Stanley Olson, 'Defined in Amber,' in Newall, *Society Portraits*, 11.

[4] This demand was not only found in the high number of contemporary portraits painted in the period, but also in the art market where late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century portraits were fashionable purchases. The price of oil portraits rose steadily from 1870 until the stock market crash in 1929. Ormond, *Paintings, Drawings and Watercolours*, 64.

[5] In addition to these three images, Sargent also painted a caricature of himself on a cigar-box lid (c. 1890, Private Collection). However, as this is not a traditional self-portrait configuration, it will not be included among the numbers of self-portraits.

[6] Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist*, 38.

reflecting on and capturing his own likeness. While Sargent's images of self do not contain many details that can be read inform the viewer about the life or the times of the man painted, they do act to suggest the personal visual identity Sargent sought to convey. For a man who had most of his papers, diaries and letters destroyed upon his death, his limited legacy of objects expressing visual identity similarly gives little away in terms of personal ideology or allegiances. Sargent captured such nuanced elements within images of other sitters, but within his self-portraits he largely removes such dialogue. If we look at that cyclical relationship between sitter, portraitist and viewer in the manner Sidlauskas suggests, it becomes apparent that Sargent's ethos could be imprinted on his portraits of other sitters. Throughout his oeuvre, then, we can find elements of his visual identity and ideologies. Thus, the painter's reactions to the varied figures that sat to him throughout his career could offer insight into Sargent's own thoughts about nationality, family, marriage, and gender.

Chapter 1 sought to analyse upper class British and American families through viewing the Vanderbilt and Wertheimer commissions. The resulting legacy of those families in the States and Britain turned into an interesting departure from the original intention of the close readings, but did assist in a greater understanding of what portrait commissions historically were created to do, and how Sargent's depictions of these American and British sitters adhered to and departed from those aims. For both nations, the act of commissioning portraits was found in their shared cultural heritage.[7] However, the resulting portrait commissions, the Wertheimer full of individual and group portraits of a close nuclear family and the Vanderbilt images of extended family and estate designers, relied on differing visual allusions to create varied commissions. These allusions were related to nation specific stereotypes and biases about the class of the families presented on the canvases. Not wanting to depict his sitters in a manner that would be reviled in their home nations, Sargent carefully chose art historical references relating to the class and nation that particularly fit each family.

Within his renderings of the Wertheimer family, great consideration in the presentation of these Jewish nouveau-riche sitters are particularly present regarding Sargent's treatment of stereotypical 'Semitic' features. This could be because of what Sir William Rothenstein regarded as Sargent's admiration of and enjoyment in painting the 'energetic features of

[7] Rebora, *John Singleton Copley in America*, 93.

the men, and the exotic beauty of the women of the Semitic race.'[8] Sargent's close relationship with the family and his understanding of their 'otherness' influenced his portrait images within this commission. The Vanderbilt family, formulating new American dynastic aspirations, did not have the same marginalised outsider status, nor did they fit as closely into Sargent's circle. Yet, Sargent did paint them sympathetically, referencing European court painting to visually corroborate such dynastic claims.

The second chapter moved to the formulation of marriage, the legal union in which families are made. Using an in depth reading of *The Marlborough Family* and *Mr and Mrs I.N. Phelps Stokes*, the Victorian model of separate spheres within marriage and the rise of the reformulated companionate marriage were discussed, respectively. The unhappy aristocratic marriage of convenience that George and Consuelo Spencer-Churchill entered into was emblematic of the period's decline of the British aristocracy; monetary requirements began to precipitate marriage more than sentimental or romantic ones. Edith and Newton Phelps, conversely, were signifiers of another marriage standard of the time: the modern companionate marriage. This new formulation of an Enlightenment ideal is hinted at in the casting of Edith as a New Woman and can be expanded upon using literature and popular images of the period. Sargent's allusions to tradition and genealogy found within the Marlborough image was abandoned for the modernism of the Stokes portrait, directly relating to these differing country-based expectations of formulating a marital union.

While the portraitist's thoughts on the institution of marriage are not recorded, Sargent rarely painted wedding rings on his portrait sitters, and he never married himself. In 1882 his friend Vernon Lee writes that Sargent was 'the victim of fresh matrimonial cabals' from Mrs Burckhardt on behalf of her daughter, and the two had 'fairly disgusted John already.'[9] The topic comes up a few more times in letters of the 1880s, but Sargent never wed. His distaste in the pushy Mrs Burckhardt and her rather intellectually insubstantial daughter offers insight into which marriage model with which Sargent would have found more ideological commonality. Visually, however, in these two portraits of married couples, a preference for companionate marriage instead of one of convenience for status

[8] Sir William Rotheinstein. *Men and Memories: Recollections of William Rothenstein 1872 1900*, vol. 1. (London: Faber & Faber, 1931), 195.
[9] Vernon Lee, *Vernon Lee's Letters*. Irene Cooper Willis, ed. (London: Privately Published, 1937), 96.

or monetary gain cannot be read outright. The distance between the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough is the only factor that infers this preference.

Domesticity brought forth by a discussion of separate spheres in the previous chapter was then expanded upon in Chapter 3's dissection of the performance of femininity and the Cult of True Womanhood with submissiveness, piety, purity and domesticity as prized traits. The nationalistic reception found in the evolution of feminine identity, as women ventured out of the domestic sphere and as the public sphere entered the home, influenced the performance of gender identities in *Daisy Leiter* and *The Duchess of Portland*. The American feminine nature appears colossally assertive while British aristocratic femininity is portrayed as substantial and reserved. The growing international connection of Anglo-American high society also becomes important when reading the compositional elements presented in these images. This expanded network of society relationships and intermarriage cultivated a cosmopolitan standard that Sargent was selected to capture.

Sargent's friendships with women who did not adhere to the True Womanhood ideology—such examples include Lee, Isabella Stewart Gardner and his sister Emily—meant the portraitist could have had a personal disinterest in perpetuating the subordinate female figure promulgated by the Cult of True Womanhood. One sees evidence of this most directly within *Daisy Leiter*, but, with her book, forward motion and soft gaze, it becomes possible to read elements of this revision of True Womanhood traits in *The Duchess of Portland* as well. While Sargent's ideological leanings surely affected the portrait compositions, the theatrical elements present on the canvas serve to remind the viewer that while these are staged images, the sitters ultimately enacted the performance of turn-of-the-century femininity portrayed.

Chapter 4 used the public sphere, more specifically military imperial masculinities, as a tool to examine the presentation of two individualised ideas and depictions of manliness. The portrait of British colonial administrator *Sir Frank Swettenham* was placed in dialogue with American *President Theodore Roosevelt*, and in doing so, more references were made to personal writings and formation of self than in any other chapter. While military masculinity and imperialism are important factors in reading these two portraits, the discussion of personal masculinities in this period of anxious manliness within America and Britain offered new interpretive possibilities. The reflective, intellectual and insular masculinity of Swettenham is contrasted with the assertive, physical and demonstrative

masculinity of Roosevelt. This new formation of an American masculine ideal influenced that nation for generations to come, and what was a personal expression became a social type, one that Sargent helped to craft and perpetuate.

Anecdotal evidence of Sargent's interactions with these two men are quite telling as to how he would have perceived each one of these masculine identities. While the Swettenham sessions passed pleasantly, the Roosevelt sittings ended in a near row and Sargent completed the portrait without the president present. By all accounts, more an intellectual than a physical man, Sargent's personal biography does not adhere to the manliness exalted in Roosevelt's speeches or texts. Sargent never fought in a war and as such was 'deprived of the opportunity to conform' and define his manhood through the ritual of war.[10] Much like Swettenham, Sargent travelled extensively, lived in new lands and, it can be argued, was a reformer in the genre of British portraiture. Sargent's decision to himself paint Swettenham's personal copy of the original portrait, instead of having another portraitist undertake the task, also creates a link between the character of sitter and artist. The sensitivity demonstrated by Sargent in creating the resulting image for Swettenham's collection, and the consideration in changing compositional elements, expresses a more sincere understanding of the ethos of the sitter presented.

Just as the chapters of this thesis expand on close readings and interdisciplinary research undertaken by earlier Sargent scholars, it is my hope that in this project will also be added to. Many interpretive possibilities can be explored using the tables compiled during the close reading portion of my research, and the scope and categories of compositional details can be augmented while retaining this quantifiable approach. Though at times a subjective exercise, as certain elements are left open for personal interpretation, the gathering of this information is of importance to understanding on an elemental, level what made critics regard Sargent's compositions to be successful. While national identity at the turn of the century was the focus of this specific study, the data compiled can be used more broadly throughout the entire fifty years of Sargent's portrait career for other purposes. Additionally, there is much work to be done on Official White House Presidential Portraiture within art historical scholarship. Relating these portraits to one another, the building in which they hang, when they were painted and the men they were painted to represent is a field of rich interpretive possibility. Finally, this methodology could be

[10] Lubin, *Act of Portrayal*, 16.

applied to other artists' oeuvres as well, relating those compositional elements in a similar manner. Though this study is as an exploration of Sargent's portraits, there is the opportunity to expand this work to include other portraitists who worked in other time periods.

Upon starting this project, it was evident that the initial questions posed were not ones that could be answered definitively. The reading of a portrait is at times a personal exercise, both elementally and when interpreting the whole composition. Norman Kleeblatt writes that once a portrait enters the public view that 'it is the critic and the viewer who must ultimately add their own readings to complete these remarkable, ever complicated, painted texts.'[11] Those personal interpretations, used to fill in any compositional gaps, are certainly present within the previous four chapters. While the resulting thesis attempts to link the personal identity of a sitter to art historical tradition, contemporary writings and visual culture regarding social issues and nationality, it is at times a delicate balancing act with some aspects not expressly resolved. The argument and corroborating information, then, took a primary role in attempting to sort through the proposed thesis questions. The time spent deeply looking was what led the interdisciplinary research undertaken in order to find commonality amongst these disparate issues. Working in the reverse, having a clear idea of what I was trying to prove and finding images to best fit would have likely been an easier path. Some of the data compiled from this reading of images went against my preconceived notions and made me rethink and reformulate entire chapters.[12] Similarly, the historical and sociological research undertaken exposed the nuances in American and British social ideologies at the time, particularly when those popular ideals were applied to the upper class. The result was that answers became less declarative and more vague as subtle nuances of composition and theory entered the discussion of the portraits.

Regarding his own nationality, Sargent famously wrote to fellow expatriate painter James McNeil Whistler, 'As for the question of nationality I have been invited to retouch it and keep my twang. If you should hear anything to the contrary, please state that there was no

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[11] Kleeblatt, 'Sargent's Wertheimers/Wertheimer's Sargents,' 20.

[12] One unexpected result was the fact that Sargent painted British women more often as standing figures and at a higher ratio than their American counterpoints. This went against what I had expected based on the ideal within the period of the full-figured standing and large portrayal of American women. I attempted to reinterpret this data in a variety of ways, focusing solely on the period of this thesis and even thought about including a discussion of ambiguous figural orientation where it was not easy to decipher if the sitter was sitting or standing. For a chart relating to this see Graph 9. Women Sitting or Standing by Nationality, 1890-1910.

such transaction and that I am an American.'[13] Nationality was an important signifier for Sargent within his own personal identity, and it has become apparent throughout this project that this carried into his portraits. While his self-portraits follow the sombre professionalism found historically in such images by American portraitists, throughout his oeuvre nationalistic attributes are depicted at varying levels of legibility. In reading each image closely and relating them to nation-specific tropes and values of the era, one can find Sargent's subtle, insightful, and at times humorous references to these nationalistic attributes. Context makes it possible to interpret the fundamental nature of nationality in formulating identity, as demonstrated through Sargent's deftly painted details.

[13] *John Singer Sargent to James McNeil Whistler*, Letter dated 22 January 1894 MS Whistler S31, University of Glasgow. Accessed 30 August 2012. http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence/people/display/?cid=5387&nameid=Sargent_JS&sr=0&surname=Sargent&firstname=John&rs=42.

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