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"A Touch of Art": Sarah Wyman Whitman and the Art of the Book in Boston

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“A Touch of Art”:
Sarah Wyman Whitman
and the Art of the Book in Boston

Molly Kristin Eckel

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the
Prerequisite for Honors
in Art History

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In memory of my grandparents

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CHAPTER ONE:
SARAH WYMAN WHITMAN: TWO WORLDS, TWO LIVES

“But one works in the midst of a shower of flying projectiles, leveled at one’s unhappy head by Society on one hand, and Culture on the other, till one feels as if one would rather go solitary and ignorant all one’s days.”
- Sarah Wyman Whitman¹

Sarah Wyman Whitman had a foot in two worlds. As if to mark that dual life, her friends and colleagues, Helen Merriman and John White Alexander, both painted her portrait near the end of her life and produced two very different images (figs. 1 and 2). Her friend and fellow Hunt student, Helen Merriman, represented Whitman as a professional and accomplished painter. In stark contrast, John White Alexander painted Whitman as a commanding, luxuriously dressed lady of society. Both portraits illuminate aspects of her life and personality, but, interestingly, Whitman’s female colleague emphasized her professional ambitions and her male colleague drew attention to her role as a *saloniste*. An examination of her life and career as an artist offer the opportunity to understand how these two identities overlap and inform each other.

At the age of twenty-four, Sarah de St. Prix Wyman (1842-1904) moved from Lowell, Massachusetts to Boston to marry the self-made businessman and wool merchant, Henry Whitman in 1866.² As was proper, the young, wealthy

¹ Sarah Wyman Whitman to Minna Timmins, February 2, 1890, in *Letters of Sarah Wyman Whitman* (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1907), 31-32.

² She spent the first half of her childhood in Baltimore, Maryland due to a financial scandal involving her father.

couple settled on Mount Vernon Street, in the heart of Boston's Beacon Hill neighborhood. Sarah was a descendent of old New England families, had ties to Harvard through her brother and class of 1867 alumnus, Charles Wyman, and could trace her lineage to Robert Treat Paine (1731-1814), a signer of the Declaration of Independence.³ She was, therefore, well-poised to serve as Henry's essential connection to the city's social elite, the so-called Boston Brahmins, "who were linked by common backgrounds, Harvard educations, intermarriage, and board membership."⁴ Her marriage to Henry Whitman was childless and is assumed to be loveless, but it did afford her the freedom to devote her time to her community and, eventually, to her art.⁵

Before moving to Boston, Whitman's exposure to art was limited to a typical young lady's education. Among French, German, and the study of English

³ Whitman donated a pitcher and goblet, of her own design and executed by Shreve Crump & Low to Harvard in 1892 in her brother's honor. Charles was institutionalized in Providence for most of his adult life: he died in 1911. "Scholarly Silver" in *Harvard Magazine*, May-June 1996, p. 100; Sarah Wyman Whitman file, Betty Smith, mss. notes, August 23, 1999, p. 1, Sarah Wyman Whitman file, Mount Auburn Cemetery Historical Collections, Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge, MA.

⁴ Edward S. Cooke, Jr., "Talking or Working: The Conundrum of Moral Aesthetics in Boston's Arts and Crafts Movement," in *Inspiring Reform: Boston's Arts and Crafts Movement*, ed. Marilee Boyd Meyer (Wellesley: Davis Museum and Cultural Center, 1997), 19.

⁵ Described by his neighbor at Beverly Farms as "a shadowy figure in comparison with his wife," little information and even fewer anecdotes survive about Henry Whitman. Sarah never mentioned him in her published correspondence. I have only come across one mention of him: a note she wrote to the caretaker of his grave at Mount Auburn Cemetery upon his death. As quoted in Mason Hammond, "The Stained Glass Windows in Memorial Hall, Harvard University," unpublished mss., 277, Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, MA, 1978; Smith, mss. notes, August 23, 1999, 1, Whitman file, Mount Auburn Cemetery.

literature with her tutor, Elizabeth Mason Edson, she learned drawing and penmanship. Therefore, her formal art training began relatively late in life, at the age of twenty-six, when she learned to paint in William Morris Hunt's all-female art class in Boston. Following three terms with Hunt, she traveled to Europe with fellow classmate, Elizabeth Bartol (1842-1927), to study with Thomas Couture (1815-1879). For the rest of her life, she would continue to return to Europe during the summers to exhibit abroad, see works of art and cathedrals in person, and socialize, but not to seek further instruction.⁶

In the 1870s, Sarah Whitman, or Mrs. Henry Whitman, as she often preferred to be called in public, developed a reputation painting flowers, portraits, and landscapes and exhibited for the first time in 1876 at Williams and Everett Gallery in Boston. Yet, in the 1880s, Whitman also increasingly turned her attention to crafts: stained glass and book design. She designed her first book, *Verses*, by Sarah Chauncey Woolsey in 1880 and in 1887, she established her own stained glass studio, Lily Glass Works, on Boylston Street in Boston.⁷ Shortly thereafter, she developed a partnership – the first of its kind in the industry – with the esteemed Boston publisher, Houghton, Mifflin, and Company. By designing hundreds of book covers, Whitman carved out a career as an in-house book designer for Houghton Mifflin and created a unified and marketable

⁶ Betty Smith, mss. notes, August 23, 1999, p. 1, Sarah Wyman Whitman file, Mount Auburn Cemetery Historical Collections, Cambridge, MA.

⁷ She wrote under the pseudonym Susan Coolidge. Betty Smith, mss. notes, "Biographical Outline: Sarah Wyman Whitman 1842-1904," Artist file for Sarah Wyman Whitman, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

style. In this field, somewhat isolated from the fine art world and mass-produced for public consumption, Whitman used principles of art and design as a form of philanthropy and as a tool to moralize and “beautify everyday life,” according to both the ideals of the Arts and Crafts movement and social expectations for a female member of Boston’s intellectual elite.⁸

From a twenty-first century perspective, it can be difficult to imagine Sarah Wyman Whitman as a revolutionary, trail-blazing artist. Instead, she in many ways resembles, if not typifies, the late-nineteenth-century white, wealthy, lady amateur artist. Her work in the genres of flower painting, book design, and interior design were perceived as fitting neatly within accepted feminine norms and the boundaries of domesticity. Furthermore, the content of her work, which reflect an interest in floral motifs over allegorical figures, is congruent with societal expectations and conventional conceptions of the late-nineteenth-century woman. How, then, can one categorize her as a radical, forward-thinking champion of the next generation of women artists?

To address this question – and quell any doubt about her career as a professional, path-breaking artist – Whitman must be contextualized within the history of the woman artist in the late-nineteenth century. In particular, her advocacy for academic art training, her travel and study abroad, her leadership

⁸ Sarah Whitman, *Notes of an Informal Talk on Book Illustrations, Inside and Out, Given Before the Boston Art Students’ Association, February 14, 1894*, (Boston: Boston Art Students’ Association, 1894), 5. “Beautify Everyday Life,” is also the title of chapter on Whitman by Erica Hirshler in *A Studio of Her Own: Women Artists in Boston, 1870-1940* (Boston: MFA Publications, 2001).

roles in same-sex and coeducational professional organizations, her spirit of competition within the gender-based hierarchal structure of Boston's art world and her use of art-making spaces outside of the home all demonstrate her ambition to achieve professional status in a male-dominated, public sphere. Whitman's identity as both a serious, committed artist and a lady of society was crucial in an era of rapidly changing concepts of domesticity and increasing opportunities for women outside the home.

Educational Opportunities and Challenges

Sarah Whitman was fortunate to have the opportunity to participate in William Morris Hunt's all-female class from 1868 to 1871, which was the first of its kind in Boston.⁹ However, the gendered nature of commonly held attitudes about "artistic genius" and Hunt's unconventional teaching methods, which stressed expression over precision in drawing, ultimately put his female students at a disadvantage vis-à-vis their male competitors. As a result, Whitman later advocated for a new system of education for artists in Boston: academic instruction.

William Morris Hunt's class was based on the apprenticeship model of art education, in which students learned from an established and revered professional artist. Hunt's training abroad with Jean-Francois Millet and Thomas Couture, of the Barbizon School, and his independently successful career as an

⁹ Martha Hoppin, "Women Artists in Boston, 1870-1900: The Pupils of William Morris Hunt," *American Art Journal* 13, no. 1 (Winter 1981), 18.

artist put him in the position to teach in Boston as a master. However, female students were thought to be more susceptible to permanently imitating the master than male students. Therefore, women were not only excluded from the notion of male “artistic genius,” but also faced the added challenge of proving their originality and independence.¹⁰ In fact, achieving autonomy was the greatest problem Hunt’s students faced.¹¹ In contrast, the academic system, which replaced the romantic notion of artistic genius with rational training, gave women an opportunity to compete with their male counterparts because they largely received the same training – with the exception of studying the nude.¹²

Despite Hunt’s good intentions, for many of his students, his class was their first exposure to the study and practice of art and his teaching methodology gave them somewhat of a weak foundation. As art historian, Martha Hoppin points out, in an effort to encourage his students to respond to nature, Hunt “rejected drill in drawing as the foundation of art and did not carry students through progressive stages from drawing to painting.”¹³ As a precursor to the Impressionists, the Barbizon school emphasized the importance of natural subjects, a loose, painterly style, and the qualities of light. Hunt’s students, therefore, did not receive instruction in traditional and formal studies of anatomy, perspective, and drawing, but instead, were encouraged to make spontaneous

¹⁰ Kirsten Swinth, *Painting Professionals: Women Artists & the Development of Modern American Art, 1870-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 48. 35.

¹¹ Hoppin, “Women Artists in Boston,” 21.

¹² Swinth, *Painting Professionals*, 22.

¹³ Hoppin, “Women Artists in Boston,” 19.

studies 'en plein air' and appreciate the poetics of natural landscape.¹⁴ Hunt later told his students that he was "dreadfully afraid that they'll beat you at the Art-Museum School...There they are made to be as careful as can be about all their drawing. Perhaps I should have done better to have begun so with you."¹⁵ Although Whitman had deep respect for her mentor, she was a member of the Museum School Committee to which he referred. She helped to implement an academic system of art education and stressed rigorous and precise drawing as a fundamental skill.

As late as 1880, art education in Boston made this transition away from clustering around an "artistic genius" and began to embrace a more objective and systematic approach to art instruction.¹⁶ When Whitman joined as the first female member of the Committee for the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in 1885, she demonstrated her approval for this new method.¹⁷ In her book, *The Making of Pictures: Twelve Short Talks with Young People*, which sought to explain the fundamentals of art making practices to children, Whitman remarks on the importance of "the grammar of drawing" and acknowledges drawing as the first skill a young artist must master. Furthermore, she cites schools, with resources

¹⁴ Erica Hirshler, *A Studio of Her Own: Women Artists in Boston, 1870-1940* (Boston: MFA Publications, 2001), 20, 23.

¹⁵ As quoted in Hoppin, "Women Artists in Boston," 19.

¹⁶ Swinth, *Painting Professionals*, 16.

¹⁷ Hoppin, "Women Artists in Boston," 29.

like casts, models, and routine examinations to be the superior system of education, although it was so different from her own.¹⁸

Last, Hunt's class illustrates the growing gap between women artists with professional ambitions and the "lady amateurs."¹⁹ Art education for women, historically, served to help them meet the standards for genteel womanhood. Although the model for art education was changing, Hunt's class was made up of both professionalizing women artists and dilettantes. Those preparing for careers in art had simultaneously to differentiate themselves from amateurs and assert their shared femininity. Although the American public's demand for "moral purity" in art made the discipline an appropriate pursuit for women outside the domestic sphere, women still struggled to reconcile their identities as "ladies" and artists.²⁰ It is a testament to Whitman's talent and extensive social networks that she was able to negotiate the tensions between art and gentility gracefully and ultimately achieve professional status.²¹

Travel and Study Abroad

Many women artists chose to practice the arts in Europe, which offered them independence and more abundant educational opportunities. Whitman herself summed up her experience abroad and acknowledged that travel offered

¹⁸ Sarah Whitman, *The Making of Pictures: Twelve Short Talks with Young People* (Boston: Interstate Publishing, 1886), 21, 18.

¹⁹ Laura Prieto, *At Home in the Studio: The Professionalization of Women Artists in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 24.

²⁰ Prieto, *At Home in the Studio*, 13-14.

²¹ Hoppin, "Women Artists in Boston," 20, 21, 45, 46.

a freedom not available at home in a letter to her friend Sarah Orne Jewett, “Remember that in Europe you do what you expect to do, in America that which is expected of you.”²² Although women were barred from attending Europe’s most prestigious art institutions, they could copy from originals in museum collections or work with a master (for an elevated fee). While in Paris particularly, they also profited from living in what was then the center of the art world.²³

Study abroad was a crucial marker of an artist’s dedication, seriousness, and most important, prestige. Whitman was fortunate enough to have the means and mobility to travel abroad – and relatively often: in 1875, 1877, 1879, 1894, 1900, and 1902.²⁴ In her letters to her friends, she maintains that her trips to France, England, and Italy were professionally motivated, rather than for rest or purely for leisure. To Miss Alice Weston Smith and Miss Paulina Cony Smith, she laments, on the train for Amiens in 1894: “Nothing but professional integrity could have forced me away [from London] and fly to Paris for the Champs de Mars.”²⁵ Preparations for the Paris Exposition, in which Whitman participated in 1902, were already underway. In this statement, she expresses the supreme position her “professional integrity” occupied among her priorities; it was the only thing that could wrench her away from London, her favorite city.

²² Whitman to Sarah Orne Jewett, March 23, 1900, in *Letters of Sarah Whitman*, 103.

²³ Swinth, *Painting Professionals*, 44.

²⁴ Whitman, *Letters of Sarah Whitman*.

²⁵ Whitman to Miss Alice Weston Smith and Miss Pauline Cony Smith, July 10, 1894, *Letters of Sarah Whitman*, 110.

Nevertheless, this kind of travel, although valuable for a professional career in art, was not universally available. From an economic standpoint, upper-class aspiring women artists had a significant advantage when traveling abroad; their wealth afforded them the luxury of not having to support themselves during this costly – if also professionally-motivated – transatlantic endeavor.²⁶ From a social standpoint, single and married women faced different challenges. One may assume that domestic duties restrained many women with aspirations to make the jump from dilettante to professional from seeking instruction abroad. Typically, wives whose husbands' careers demanded their participation and mothers of small children were barred from traveling at all. Even for single women, travel abroad required separation from friends and family for months, if not years, and disrupted the traditional young woman's road to marriage. According to historian Laura Prieto, "dedication to art was a substitute for marriage."²⁷ Some women chose a life of art over the opportunity to have a family.

Yet, a woman artist's reputation, on which her professional success was based, was particularly fragile in the Old World. Given her exposure to the "bohemian" lifestyle, decadence, and passion, at the whisper of a rumor of indecency – modeling nude or too-friendly relations with the opposite sex – the career of a woman artist, young or established, could crumble. Louise Lander, an American sculptor living in Rome, learned this cruel lesson first-hand. Sculptor

²⁶ Prieto, *At Home in the Studio*, 47.

²⁷ Prieto, *At Home in the Studio*, 50.

John Rogers wrote that Lander “lived on uncommonly good terms with some man...and exposed herself as a model.” She shortly lost the support of a network of artists in Rome and society at home in New England, which included Nathaniel Hawthorne, who once counted among her friends.²⁸ However unfairly, the stain of the artist’s impurity seeped permanently into her professional relationships. If her reputation – and her perceived sexual purity – survived intact, art offered a role in society compatible with the vision of ideal middle class womanhood.

Exhibitions and the Problem of Genres

Whitman’s participation in international expositions and in Boston’s burgeoning gallery world put her directly in the commercial – and largely male-dominated – public marketplace for art.²⁹ Her exhibition record demonstrates that she eagerly sought these opportunities: she actively displayed her work in venues as far away as the Paris Exposition (1880 and 1900), the Pan-American Exhibition in Buffalo, New York (1901) and the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, Missouri (1904). Closer to home, Whitman earned the particular honor of being the first woman artist to have an individual exhibition at Boston’s Doll and Richards Gallery and the St. Botolph Club, in 1883 and 1889, respectively.³⁰

²⁸ Prieto, *At Home in the Studio*, 77-79.

²⁹ Betty Smith, August 23, 1999, Sarah Wyman Whitman file, Mount Auburn Cemetery Historical Collections.

³⁰ Doris A. Birmingham, “Boston’s St. Botolph Club: Home of the Impressionists,” *Archives of American Art Journal* 31, no. 3 (1991), 31; Betty Smith, mss. notes, “Biographical Outline: Sarah Wyman Whitman 1842-1904,” p. 3, Artist file for Sarah Wyman Whitman, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Although William Morris Hunt was largely responsible for cultivating the taste for the Barbizon School and its followers among Boston's cultural elite, Whitman's participation in gallery exhibitions record illustrates, that in addition to personal connections, she also had the self-promotional skills and professional ambition necessary for becoming a successful artist.³¹

Of course, nineteenth-century conceptions of femininity offered both avenues of opportunity and unjust limitations in the commercial sphere for aspiring professional women artists. Many relied on their reputations as modest, respectable, and most importantly, "feminine" members of the middle class to earn commissions. But, they also needed to enter the male-dominated art world to do so. Properly "feminine" women were understood to be moral gatekeepers of the home and beyond, and this justified their participation in the public sphere as philanthropists, reformers, or artists. Within the boundaries of creating a "moral" or "pious" environment, then, societal expectations for middle class women granted, if not encouraged, women to shoulder certain civic and public duties. Conceptions of the ideal domestic woman, therefore, could serve as an avenue for women to produce art outside of the home. Sarah Wyman Whitman and others exploited this model to advance their artistic careers.

³¹ Hoppin, "Women Artists in Boston," 18; Beth A. Treadway, "The Doll and Richards Gallery," *Archives of American Art Journal* 15, no. 1 (1975), 12, 13. Whitman, her friends, and her fellow Boston elites including the first President of the Museum of Fine Arts, Martin Brimmer (1829-1896), "Japanistes" William Sturgis Bigelow (1850-1926), author Henry Adams (1838-1918), and philanthropist Edward W. Hooper, regularly patronized Doll & Richards Fine Art Gallery, as collectors of the Barbizon school and its American contemporaries, like Winslow Homer (1836-1910).

Concepts of femininity could also determine the choice of artistic genres for some women because “feminine” genres like interior design, flower painting, graphic art and copy-production more readily lent themselves to appreciation outside the home as a manifestation of what was perceived as “natural womanly talent.”³² As art historian Jacqueline Musacchio points out, “women, whose natural abilities were thought to be more suited to painting inexpensive copies rather than costly and intellectually demanding originals, responded to that demand.”³³ The same point may be argued for lithographic prints created by women artists that appeared magazines, novels, and catalogues. Reproductive art forms were understood largely as trades that could be taught and learned: they demanded less from artists and did not require masculine, “artistic genius.” Therefore, such disciplines were secondary to fine arts and relegated to the bottom of the artistic hierarchy, in part, because they were perceived as “feminine.” Similarly, within the fine arts, women were more likely than men to paint still lifes and flower paintings, rather than landscapes or allegorical figure paintings.³⁴ Even within the Society of Arts and Crafts, which aspired to break down the hierarchies among artistic genres, women were more likely to practice

³² Alternatively, crafts associated with homemaking, like ceramic painting, lacemaking, embroidery, needlework, and miniature portraiture, were not part of the academic hierarchy, but were suitable artistic disciplines for women.

³³ Jacqueline Marie Musacchio, “Infesting the Galleries of Europe: The Copyist Emma Conant Church in Paris and Rome,” *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 10, no. 2 (Autumn 2011):

<http://19thc-artworldwide.org/index.php/autumn11/infesting-the-galleries-of-europe-the-copyist-emma-conant-church-in-paris-and-rome>.

³⁴ Jean Gordon, “Early American Women Artists and the Social Context in Which They Worked,” *American Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (Spring 1978): 61.

textile design, basketry and pottery, whereas men were more likely to pursue glass-blowing, woodworking, and ecclesiastical work.³⁵

In spite of somewhat smoother paths for women practicing in “feminine” disciplines and genres, women artists did not unanimously choose to pursue them. Sculpture was considered the most “masculine” endeavor in art, deriving this reputation in part from the strength required for stonecutting and carving.³⁶ Women who pursued careers as sculptors, like Anne Whitney (1821-1915), Emma Stebbins (1815-1882), Harriet Hosmer (1830-1908), and Edmonia Lewis (1844-1907) faced the particular challenge of competing in a field carved out for men. For example, in 1874, a twelve-member male committee anonymously selected Anne Whitney to cast a commemorative statue of Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts. Yet, upon learning of her identity – as a woman – the committee rescinded the contest’s offer to cast and display her bronze in Boston’s Public Garden. Instead, they selected the design of a popular (male) sculptor, Thomas Ball.³⁷ Even in 1875, it was considered improper for a woman to imagine, let alone create in solid form, a man’s body. Furthermore, women were assumed to be incapable, due to their sex, of capturing the essence of the heroic male figure. This incident demonstrates how deeply ingrained the notions

³⁵ It is a testament to the respect Whitman earned as an artist in Boston that she served on this executive board and was appointed to represent stained glass, which was a male-dominated medium. Beverly Kay Brandt, *Craftsman and the Critic: Defining Usefulness and Beauty in Arts and Crafts-era Boston* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009), 150, 114.

³⁶ Prieto, *At Home in the Studio*, 63.

³⁷ Eleanor Tufts, “An American Victorian Dilemma, 1875: Should a Woman be Allowed to Sculpt a Man?” *Art Journal* 51, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 51.

of female inferiority in the United States during the nineteenth-century and in Boston in particular. Given the hostile climate for competition among male and female artists, the notion of gendered genres in art is understandable.

Whitman's choices of genre in the fine arts reveal interesting incongruities. As an oil painter, she chose to paint landscapes, portraits, and flower paintings. On the one hand, the fact that she painted landscapes demonstrates the seriousness of her ambition to be an artist – and her willingness to challenge conventions. Landscapes were a particularly prestigious genre in America, especially with respect to Europe, where history painting was particularly favored. In the United States, landscape largely remained a male-dominated genre through the turn of the twentieth century.³⁸ Yet, among the ten works of her own that she bequeathed to the Museum of Fine Arts, she included four landscapes, *Gloucester Harbor* (early 1880s or early 1890s) *Autumn Marshes* (1882), *A Warm Night* (about 1889), and *Sunset* (1880).³⁹ Whitman's landscapes also achieved some recognition during her lifetime. Leading Boston art collector, Isabella Stewart Gardner (who was known for her very high standards and who rarely patronized her female friends' work), purchased a Whitman landscape, *Dawn, Newport* as one of the first works for Fenway Court.⁴⁰ Another of Whitman's landscapes, *Moonrise on the Canal* (before 1878), is prominently

³⁸ Swinth, *Painting Professionals*, 73.

³⁹ She also donated watercolors, paintings, textiles and furniture from her collection to the Museum of Fine Arts upon her death.

⁴⁰ Kathleen McCarthy, *Women's Art and Philanthropy, 1830-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 165.

displayed in the Macknight room at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. Clearly, Whitman did not shy away from the genre of landscape painting (she completed at least six studies in landscape, in oil and pastel), but instead was recognized for her success in it.

Furthermore, as a portraitist, Whitman did not exclusively paint women and children's portraits, even though women artists were understood to be particularly suited to painting that featured domestic subjects.⁴¹ Women and children were thought to be more accessible subjects for women artists because they could more readily identify and empathize with them. Therefore, female artists were generally dissuaded from painting men, a practice that was thought to require, according to historian Laura Prieto, "greater critical distance and analytical representation."⁴² But, of course, painting male figures often garnered more prestige. Whitman challenged these stereotypes of women's artists' abilities based on her clout as a professional painter and her social networks. She twice painted Martin Brimmer (1829–1896), her close friend and the first president of the Museum of Fine Arts, to critical acclaim and to his satisfaction.⁴³

In a letter to Whitman in 1887, he praised her work, writing:

⁴¹ Prieto, *At Home in the Studio*, 55.

⁴² Prieto, *At Home in the Studio*, 86-87.

⁴³ One resides at the Harvard University Portrait Collection (Accession number: H87); the other at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston (Accession number: 19.143). It is also important to note that in addition to Brimmers' portraits, she also painted prominent citizens, Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1894) and Robert Codman (1823-1901). Oliver Wendell Holmes' portrait now hangs in the Moody Medical Library at the University of Texas. Robert Codman's portrait is in Historic New England's Collections.

I told you that I did not think I had any right to be painted. Now I feel a hundred fold that I have no right to be painted as well as this. The picture tells the story of what I should like to be. It is simple and great and strong and humbles me as I look at it. And while others praise its power, you will let the subject himself say that he is always helped and inspired by your great interpretation of him.⁴⁴

Brimmer applauded Whitman's ability to render "what [he] should be like," a skill usually reserved for male painters, and uses a masculine vocabulary to describe her work as "simple and great and strong." It has praiseworthy "power" rather than an ability to empathize with the sitter. Yet, one must also acknowledge that this commission was not won strictly on merit; Brimmer and Whitman were close friends and colleagues.

But, Whitman focused on flower paintings and avoided painting nudes, which situated her work firmly within the bounds of acceptable subject matter for women artists. She donated three flower paintings to the Museum of Fine Arts, *Roses – Souvenir de Villiers-le-bel* (fig. 4), *Rhododendrons* (1880) and *Winter Daffodil* (about 1902). Although she did execute one (if also fully clothed) allegorical figure, *Draped Female Figure* (after 1894), no examples of treatments of the male or female nude survive or are known to exist.

Here lies the essential contradiction in Whitman's work. From a twenty-first century point of view, it is difficult to recognize Whitman as an artist who pushed the boundaries of acceptable "feminine" behavior when she also shied away from depicting the nude. The two seem as incompatible as Whitman's championing of

⁴⁴ Quoted in Andrews, "Martin Brimmer," 3.

women's education and her indifference to women's suffrage.⁴⁵ As her exhibition schedule reveals, criticism and public recognition were important to her. If mastering the nude was an important stage for a professional artist, why did Whitman never attempt it, given her intense dedication to the discipline? The answer is that she made a choice and a compromise.

Expectations for genteel women and for professional artists were often at odds and incompatible. Although women who studied and executed the nude form took a professional risk – that did not always pay off – it also offered the opportunity to work with the most highly valued subjects and attain prestige unavailable through any other genre. Others purposefully avoided it, not necessarily on moral grounds, but based on the anticipated, negative response of a nineteenth-century audience. As Linda Nochlin suggested in her landmark 1971 *Art News* article “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” women's exclusion from the resources available to male artists limited their ability to succeed.⁴⁶ She cites women artists' exclusion from the study of the male nude as a significant disadvantage in a world increasingly open to women practicing art as a source of income. Therefore, women artists who avoided the nude did not do so without sacrifice.⁴⁷ There are a few possible explanations for Whitman's choices.

⁴⁵ Whitman's commitment to education, including her role as a founder of Radcliffe College, is examined in more depth in chapter two.

⁴⁶ Linda Nochlin, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists,” *Art News* 69 (January 1971): 22-39.

⁴⁷ Prieto, *At Home in the Studio*, 86.

Whitman's training with Hunt, which stressed the effects of light and color over strict academic drills, may have made the nude subject a particularly difficult challenge without basic training in drawing.⁴⁸ Perhaps one reason her model in *Draped Female Figure* is so fully covered is that she did not feel confident rendering the soft contours of the female form. Yet, this explanation is unsatisfactory, given Whitman's spirited pursuit of training abroad and in Boston. It seems more probable that she would have sought out supplemental training, if the nude had been of interest to her.

For example, in 1868, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts began a trend in American academies by offering a "Life Studies" class, with live female models for women in a strictly segregated (and also quietly advertised) classroom.⁴⁹ Yet, Boston, which was widely acknowledged as the most morally conservative city along the East coast, was slow to absorb this trend. Instead, women artists could, at the very least, model for each other. Elizabeth H. Bartol, a close friend and travel companion of Whitman's and a fellow Hunt student, modeled for Anne Whitney's *Africa* (1864). Whitney reciprocated by sitting for

⁴⁸ Whitman's sketchbook at Houghton Library, Harvard University is comprised of largely crude renderings and provides further evidence that she never received academic training in drawing.

⁴⁹ Nude male models were allowed in segregated company in 1877 at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Academy painter, Thomas Eakins, who served as professor at the PAFA beginning in 1876 and later as the director from 1882-1886, believed that all students should be trained using the nude model, regardless of gender. As Laura Prieto points out, he proved to be too progressive, but helped establish the precedent. Prieto, *At Home in the Studio*, 95.

Bartol the next year.⁵⁰ This suggests that if Whitman had wanted to explore the nude as a subject, she had the resources through her social network of women artists to do so. It is also possible that Whitman explored nude subjects using her friends as models, as Elizabeth Bartol, Anne Whitney, and others did, but that these drawings do not survive. Nonetheless, what is clear is that she never pursued the study of the nude for other genres and media beyond painting.

A more likely explanation for Whitman's subject choice is that her avoidance of the nude was deliberate on moral grounds. After all, Boston was conservative and Whitman was an incredibly devout Christian. Her dedication to the Christian teachings is evident from her thirty-year commitment to volunteerism at her churches, teaching a women's Bible study course at Trinity Church Boston and in Beverly Farms. Her close friendships with Reverend Phillips Brooks, Reverend and Mrs. Daniel Merriman, and members of her Bible study class reveal that she valued a shared spiritual grounding among her friends. Although art was arguably her most important worldly concern – above even the demands of marriage (which may strike us as another contradiction) – her relationship with God was supremely important. For Whitman, the study of the nude was likely too obscene and lewd to reconcile with her chaste beliefs. Then, it is significant, that she entered stained glass and book design, media, which could not, in general, accommodate the precision that a study of the nude usually demands.

⁵⁰ Prieto, *At Home in the Studio*, 102.

As historian Erica Hirshler astutely observed, “if her work was described as masculine, displaying a direct and confident painterly style, the [female] painter had denied her true nature; if it were described as feminine, it was often described as pretty, sensitive, and unimportant.”⁵¹ Instead of taking this formidable challenge on directly, Whitman followed in the path of John La Farge into the decorative arts. This discipline offered an avenue of artistic production that did not force her to choose between inferior status and her sense of morality. Although her Christian belief system was occasionally at odds with her professional ambitions, she did make the significant – and rebellious – choice to prioritize her career ambitions over marital responsibilities.

Art-Making Spaces and Professional Organizations

Like her male colleagues, Whitman left her domestic sphere to practice art. This choice demonstrates the seriousness of her commitment to the discipline in contrast to the more typical amateur dabbling. Between 1880 and her death in 1904, Whitman worked in three studios outside her home. In the early 1880s, she maintained a studio at 77 Boylston Street in Boston, but beginning in 1887, Whitman transitioned into a space at 184 Boylston for her stained glass studio Lily Glass Works. There she employed the foreman Alexander Walker as well as several other male workers and female designers.⁵²

⁵¹ Hirshler, *A Studio of Her Own*, 36.

⁵² Erica Hirshler, "Women Artists at Trinity: Sarah Wyman Whitman and Margaret Redmond," in *The Makers of Trinity Church in the City of Boston* ed. James

She also maintained a studio across from her home in the William Sullivan Stable (45-46 Mount Vernon Street).⁵³ The fact that she employed workers – both male and female – puts her distinctly in the commercial and professional sphere.

Whitman viewed herself as a professional artist, not a romantic dabbler who made art as a pastime, with an obligation – though not, in her case, financial – to her work; after all, her husband commanded a substantial fortune. However, in a letter to her close friend Sarah Orne Jewett in 1893, she wrote, “Work and incessant demands, together with the maintenance of habitual responsibilities and cares, preclude simple free action and make me seem a niggard.”⁵⁴ Her work in this case was art making – the mounting portrait demands, plans for stained glass windows, and ongoing book designs. Had this been anything other than her career choice, she would have prioritized differently, choosing instead to neglect art over household duties.

Another marker of Whitman’s professional aspirations was her membership in several professional organizations. Specifically, she was a member of two New York-based organizations, the National Academy of Design (beginning in 1877) and the Society of American Artists (beginning in 1880). In 1878, at a National Academy of Design exhibit, works by La Farge and Whitman

O’Gorman (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), 161. It appears as if there was a gender divide at Lily Glass Works; men performed the manual labor to execute women’s designs.

⁵³ Hirshler, *A Studio of Her Own*, 199.

⁵⁴ Whitman to Sarah Orne Jewett, March 9, 1893, *Letters of Sarah Whitman*, 76.

were “skyped” and put out of sight, in unsought-after positions.⁵⁵ Whitman and La Farge felt that they were being penalized for their European training and that the National Academy of Design was not keeping up with the trends of contemporary French art. The founding of the Society of American Artists by Helena de Kay and Richard Watson Gilder was sparked by these unfair, conservative hanging policies at the National Design Academy and the Society advocated strenuously for the inclusion of foreign-trained artists in the American market.⁵⁶ Whitman, therefore, was unafraid to lobby for her interests as an artist, even in the face of a powerful institution like the National Design Academy.

Whitman’s role as a founder and the first Vice President of the Society of Arts and Crafts Boston is another example of her commitment to changing the male-dominated culture of art-making and art criticism. Whitman took an active role in shaping the character of this organization to accommodate women artists. For example, criticism, which was a guiding principle of the Society of Arts and Crafts Boston, was a difficult field for women to enter. Some male artists did not believe women could not pass judgment on others without the (male) “genius” so important to art production. Thus, women were categorically excluded from roles

⁵⁵ Jennifer A. Martin Bienenstock, “The Formation and Early Years of the Society of American Artists: 1877-1884” (PhD thesis, City University of New York, 1983), 56.

⁵⁶ Bienenstock, “The Society of American Artists,” 18-19; Although Whitman seems to have parted ways philosophically with the National Academy of Design, she remained a member; after all, as a professionalizing female artist, she was not in a position to begin to “burn bridges” with established artists or organizations.

as critics based on the perceived inferiority of their gender.⁵⁷ In response, Whitman and fellow female officers, Sarah Choate Sears and Mary Ware Dennett, campaigned to make it mandatory for at least one woman to be present in Jury meetings in addition to a quorum.⁵⁸ As Vice President of the Society of Arts and Crafts, Whitman served as a judge for the work of male and female artists from 1900 until 1903.⁵⁹

Case Study: The Portrait

To illustrate her two identities, as a lady and an artist, that both made her artistic practice possible and imposed limitations on it, we return to the comparison between Helen Merriman's posthumous portrait, *Sarah Wyman Whitman (1842-1904)* (fig. 1) and John White Alexander's *Portrait of Sarah de St. Prix (Wyman) Whitman* (fig. 2).⁶⁰ Each portrait presents an element of Whitman's persona; examined together, one can better appreciate the ways in which she presented herself to the public, as a lady of society and as a professional painter.

Helen Bigelow Merriman (1844-1933) was a painter, writer, and wife of Reverend Daniel Merriman, of the Central Congregational Church in Worcester. She likely met Whitman originally as a fellow pupil in William Morris Hunt's class.

⁵⁷ Swinth, *Painting Professionals*, 68.

⁵⁸ Beverly Kay Brandt, *Craftsman and the Critic: Defining Usefulness and Beauty in Arts and Crafts-era Boston* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009), 143.

⁵⁹ Brandt, *Craftsman and the Critic*, 293.

⁶⁰ The portrait is based on a photograph taken of Whitman between 1880 and 1890 by Merriman. Merriman gave the portrait to Radcliffe shortly after finishing the painting in 1909-1910.

Like Whitman, Merriman came from a prosperous Boston family, with close ties to Harvard. Whitman, as an active parishioner of Trinity Church Boston, and Merriman, as a reverend's wife, shared an interest in art's role in spiritual life. Following her training with Hunt, however, Whitman was better positioned to work as a professional artist than Merriman. Unlike Whitman, who operated largely independently from her husband, Merriman shouldered significant duties as the wife of a reverend and as a mother. Her artistic practice and literary aspirations were secondary and tertiary occupations. Furthermore, during Merriman's most active years as an artist, she was in Worcester, largely removed from Boston's art scene and did not return to the city until 1900. Although limited by her location and without the freedom to dedicate her time to art, Merriman was committed to supporting her friends and creating an art community in Worcester. Merriman championed Whitman and served as an essential advocate to secure commissions, like the stained glass and interior design at her husband's church, the Central Congregational Church in Worcester, and at Stonehurst Manor, her summer home in the White Mountains in Intervale, New Hampshire.⁶¹

Merriman depicts Whitman in a commanding and confident pose, with one hand on her hip and the other balancing a palette of paint and brushes in the crook of her arm. In Merriman's portrait, Whitman's hands emerge from the dark background of the painting, emphasizing her hands, her most important tool as an artist. Whitman is presented as a mature woman who has seriously dedicated

⁶¹ Hoppin, "Women Artists in Boston," 42.

herself to the practice of art. She does not demurely smile at the viewer, but confidently asserts her vocation as an artist. Merriman chose to emphasize Whitman's dedication to her profession as an artist, rather than her social class, which was more typical for female sitters. Instead, her costume, her most important marker of social status, is plain and practical, fitting for her work as a painter and designer.

Merriman's painting calls to mind works like John Singer Sargent's portrait *William Merritt Chase*, which reference a long history of male artists' self-portraits that highlight their professional attributes (fig. 3). Sargent's portrait serves to demonstrate that Chase is both a professional and a gentleman. Merriman draws from this iconographic and stylistic art historical precedent to illustrate Whitman as a serious, professional artist and demonstrate her dedication to the discipline. Like Sargent's painting, Whitman's image emerges from a dark background and holds a palette, which glorifies her career as an artist.

John White Alexander's treatment of Whitman provides stark contrast to Merriman's painting (fig. 2). Unfortunately, the circumstances of the portrait's production remain largely mysterious. Although Alexander (1856-1915) was based in New York, he shared many mutual friends with Sarah Whitman, including Henry James, James McNeil Whistler, and Elizabeth Boott Duveneck, a former Hunt pupil. Professionally, they were also both members of the National Academy of Design and both exhibited in the Pan-American Exposition in

Buffalo.⁶² They shared a vision for American art that reflected respect for contemporary trends in Europe and it is likely, based on their professional relationship, that Whitman herself commissioned the portrait from Alexander in 1904.

In Alexander's rendering of Whitman, he presents his subject as an ideal lady of the leisure class. His signature style, heavily influenced by contemporary French art, accentuated sinuous art nouveau curves of women's bodies and lavish costumes.⁶³ Whitman and other female sitters of this genre of society ladies are "idealized visions of ladies in reverie doing nothing – beautifully," according to art historian Bernice Kramer Leader.⁶⁴ Although Alexander's rendering of Whitman does not fully capture her life as an artist, committed to her work and many civic responsibilities, he illuminates her social status, wealth, refinement, lifestyle, and piety that made that public career possible.⁶⁵ In an era of fracturing notions of domesticity, this fictionalized vision of Whitman was more tolerable than Merriman's, which glorified her public career as an artist.

⁶² After her death, he was elected president of the National Academy of Design, from 1909-1915. For a thorough examination of Alexander's career at the intersection of internationalism and nationalism, see Sarah J. Moore's *John White Alexander and the Construction of National Identity: Cosmopolitan American Art, 1880-1915* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003).

⁶³ Roger B. Stein, "Gilded Age Pilgrims," in *Picturing Old New England*, ed. William H. Truettner and Roger B. Stein (Washington, D.C.: National Museum of American Art, 1999), 63.

⁶⁴ Bernice Kramer Leader, "The Boston Lady as a Work of Art: Paintings by the Boston School at the Turn of the Century" (PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 1980), 1.

⁶⁵ Leader, "The Boston Lady," 7-8.

Whitman sits in a chair; her body faces the left corner and she gazes in the opposite direction in three-quarters view. The viewer's eye traces Whitman's body from the edge of her dress in the lower left corner to her face in the upper right quadrant. She is sumptuously clothed in a black silk dress with a bejeweled bodice. The dress features a white high-collar with thick black trim that covers her shoulders. A cape, with sheer and fur layers, envelopes her arms and provides a halo against her dark dress and background. Her left arm, and in particular her bejeweled, bangled hand, stands out against her black dress. The features of her face, like her left hand, are finely modeled, in contrast to the loose brushstrokes of the coppery brown background. Her gaze is fixed beyond the bounds of the canvas and her eyelids droop slightly as if from exhaustion or boredom.⁶⁶ In her hair she wears an extravagant, black feather headband. Her Episcopal cross on a pearl chain is prominently displayed and also stands out against her stark white skin and black dress. She holds a single red rose in her right hand that propels the eye to the red in her cross.⁶⁷

Alexander's Whitman, like Merriman's, commands respect, but it is a respect based on her status as a member of the elite Brahmin class, not her profession as an artist. Alexander highlights her social class, wealth, and leisure

⁶⁶ In her letters to her friends, Whitman complains of eye problems in the last years of her life. It is possible, though unlikely, that Alexander would include that detail in his vision of Sarah Wyman Whitman as an ideal woman. Whitman to Dr. Richard C. Cabot, August 15, 1889, *Letters of Sarah Whitman*, 44.

⁶⁷ In fact, Sarah Whitman had a reputation in the local Boston community for her outlandish and flamboyant outfits of feathers, pelts, and gaudy jewelry. Betty Smith, "Sarah Wyman Whitman: Brief Life of a Determined Artist: 1842-1904," in *Vita* (January-February 2008): 32.

by creating an image of an ideal genteel woman of society, who engages intellectually with the arts and letters. She is a glamorous object for display and a sumptuously dressed embodiment of feminine refinement. To underscore this point, Alexander has blurred away the background to a coppery-brown, allowing his subject to emerge and dominate the composition. Instead, he devoted particular attention to creating glittering surfaces – on her bodice, her headband, her bangles, and her sheer cape. Her costume exudes material wealth; her haughty attitude suggests privilege with which one is born. Her posture is regal; she commands respect from a seated position and remains aloof to the viewer's gaze. Whitman has won her position of authority in Alexander's work because of her age, her status, her ancestors and her husband. She is only a passive participant in her own success. Whitman is presented as static – even cold, distant, and arrogant – in contrast to her dynamism as an artist, philanthropist, and activist. Although her social status opened opportunities within the arts and was an important element of her identity, Whitman was an artist first.

Yet, upon closer examination, the composition of Alexander's work creates a more nuanced, if still incomplete, vision of Whitman as a socialite and artist. The pyramidal shape of her body and the diagonal work together to direct the eye to her most important features: her face and her hands. By structuring the composition in this way, he very subtly alludes to her contributions as an artist, who dedicated her life to a career working with her hands. As a member of a generation that had relied so heavily on social connections and wealth to develop

a career as a professional, his portrait illuminates an important aspect of her life, but without her energy. Whitman was bending traditional sense of propriety, but Alexander's portrait returns her to the domestic role from which she was increasingly distancing herself.

As an artist, Sarah Wyman Whitman challenged stereotypes based on her gender and had to make compromises. She was a lady and a professional artist; she was a member of elite society who had a career. She accepted her defined role as a woman to morally improve the world – but as a full-time artist outside her home. Whitman was only able to negotiate her role as a woman and an artist by pushing the boundaries of both.

CHAPTER TWO:
THE FINE ART OF CONVERSATION:
SOCIAL NETWORKS AND ART-MAKING

“Social Talent is a true and rare thing; and though it may contain some tincture of ambition, as talent always does, this is but a small part of the phenomenon. The essence of it is a reverence for the talents of other people, a belief in the powers of others, a spiritual hospitality – which discovers that other people are remarkable and almost makes them so by lavishing an incredible faith upon their development.”

- John Jay Chapman⁶⁸

A columnist for *The Art Amateur* commented in 1889 that in Boston “there is nothing that men do that is not done by women now.”⁶⁹ Although American women were freer than ever before to pursue creative outlets like writing and the visual arts, the author exaggerates.⁷⁰ Women earned this freedom, at least in part, because an appreciation for the arts was a marker for cultivation, wealth, and prestige. The growing support for women’s rights made women’s participation in the arts more common and socially acceptable – but largely as amateurs and not as professionals. The study of Sarah Wyman Whitman’s artistic career illustrates the institutional, structural, and social barriers to women’s success in Boston’s mid-nineteenth-century art world and reveals how she surmounted those barriers and adapted to a difficult environment by cultivating friendships and building inter-connected social networks. Whitman is

⁶⁸ John Jay Chapman, “Mrs. Whitman,” in *The Selected Writings of John Jay Chapman* ed. Jacques Barzun (New York: Farrar, Straus & Cudhay, 1957), 234.

⁶⁹ Quoted in Erica E Hirshler, *A Studio of Her Own: Women Artists in Boston, 1870-1940*, (Boston: MFA Publications, 2001), 4. *The Art Amateur* was a nineteenth-century American magazine, published in New York.

⁷⁰ Hirshler, *A Studio of Her Own*, 3.

an example of someone who understood and largely abided by the social rules for women, but was willing to bend them to advocate for lasting change and, ultimately, to become a successful, respected artist.

In the spirit of the observation made by *The Art Amateur* columnist, Sarah Wyman Whitman led a quasi-independent social life, participating in circles of intellectuals, artists, writers, and philanthropists, without the burden of taking care of a family. She became an active artist in stained glass, book design, and interior design, but was also a respected art collector, author, critic, philanthropist, member of Trinity Church in Boston, and a *saloniste*.⁷¹ She was a well-bred, wealthy, intellectually enlightened idealist – surrounded by like-minded neighbors on Beacon Hill. To her own benefit, Sarah consistently befriended and earned the respect of her male and female peers, whose support ultimately shaped her work in painting, stained glass, and book design.

Whitman's personal relationships, communities, and social networks made her work across media possible. Given her social position, financial security, and personality, Sarah Wyman Whitman had the opportunity to cultivate intense friendships and pursue her artistic and philanthropic passions freely. As her friend, John Jay Chapman (1863-1933) remarked:

The earliest reputation that Mrs. Whitman achieved was that of being an unknown lady from some savage town, - Baltimore, perhaps, - who had appeared in Boston. It was not many years,

⁷¹ Sue Allen, *Decorated Cloth in America: Publishers' Bindings, 1840-1910* (Los Angeles: UCLA, Center for 17th- and 18th-Century Studies, William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1994), 60; "Address of James B. Dow," *Sarah Whitman* (Boston: Merrymount Press, 1904), 2.

however, before she became a center of social influence, in which there are strands of art, idealism, - intellect.⁷²

Although Whitman not quite “unknown” – as a descendent from old New England families with strong connections to Lowell and Harvard – Chapman highlights her ability to create micro-communities of common interest.⁷³ In every social group that Sarah Wyman Whitman joined – the classroom of female artists, philanthropic circles, her church, and the literary salons of Beacon Hill and Back Bay in Boston – she made connections with people who would dedicate themselves to supporting her creative endeavors. Most important, her social networks overlapped and intersected to bring her commissions in a wide variety of media.

In the Classroom: Whitman’s Circle of Female Artists

Sarah Wyman Whitman’s social position, wealth, and residence in Boston entitled her to the privilege and luxuries of an art education, which began with William Morris Hunt (1824-1879) in Boston’s Back Bay and ended with Thomas Couture (1815-1879) outside of Paris.⁷⁴ In 1868, Whitman’s social status earned her an invitation to Hunt’s first all female art class, which attracted a wealthy, if

⁷² Chapman, “Mrs. Whitman,” 234.

⁷³ Betty Smith, “Sarah de St. Prix Wyman Whitman,” *Old-Time New England* (Spring/Summer 1999), 47.

⁷⁴ Scholar Betty Smith points out that according to the artist Daniel Chester French (1850-1931), Whitman studied “artistic anatomy” with William Rimmer, who also offered art lessons in Boston. However, Whitman never formally recognizes Rimmer in her writings or correspondence. Smith, “Sarah de St. Prix Wyman Whitman,” 62.

also largely ambitious, clientele.⁷⁵ Art historian Martha Hoppin identifies the class as “the first group of women artists to achieve professional status in Boston.”⁷⁶ In Hunt’s class, Whitman built the foundation for her artistic career in a supportive community of and for women artists and she made friendships which would persist and flourish throughout her lifetime. Hunt believed in women’s artistic potential and created a space in which they were subject to the criticism of a “man’s world” without fears of failure or inadequacy.⁷⁷

The natural product of the environment that her mentor cultivated was a women-helping-women model.⁷⁸ Whitman and her female peers relied on this network of female artists for the rest of their lives – when seeking commissions, selling their work, in collaboration, and as critics. For example, Sarah W. Whitman, Elizabeth Boott Duveneck (1846-1888), and Laura Coombs Hills (1859-1952), of Hunt’s original class, founded the Water Color Club in 1887 to organize annual group exhibitions and sales. Although the club eventually accepted male members in 1896, it was born from this tight network of women artists, of which Whitman was a prominent member.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ According to contemporary sources, it is unclear whether Hunt originally intended to offer a class restricted to women.

⁷⁶ Martha J. Hoppin, “Women Artists in Boston, 1870-1900: The Pupils of William Morris Hunt,” *American Art Journal* 13, no. 1 (Winter 1981): 46.

⁷⁷ Hirshler, *A Studio of Her Own*, 24.

⁷⁸ Hirshler, *A Studio of Her Own*, 28.

⁷⁹ Maurice Prendergast (1858-1924), John La Farge (1835-1910), Edmund Tarbell (1862-1938), Frank Benson (1862-1951), and Charles Woodbury (1864-1940) were all later admitted when the organization began to accept male members. The organization has been in continuous operation and exists as the New England Watercolor Society. Water Color Club Administrative Record Book,

In addition to their talent and the promise of his students, Hunt's prominence in the Boston art world earned these women opportunities to exhibit in Boston's elite galleries. Through his personal connections to the fine arts galleries, Hunt's class had the opportunity to exhibit their paintings together in December of 1876 and February 1888 at Williams and Everett.⁸⁰ Hunt, who was largely responsible for cultivating a taste for Barbizon-influenced art in Boston, created a market for the work of his mentors, his followers, and himself. It is likely that Hunt's friendship with E. Adams Doll, of Doll and Richards Gallery, another leading Boston dealer in the Barbizon school, helped Whitman earn the opportunity to exhibit her work in the first one-woman show at the gallery in 1883.⁸¹

For Whitman, and for many of her closest friends in Hunt's class, art education continued abroad. A sojourn in Europe offered the opportunity to study closely, first-hand, works of art that were otherwise inaccessible, but it also "let women push against the social and cultural limits imposed on them" in Boston.⁸²

1887-1916, Collection Note, Smithsonian Archives of American Art, <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/water-color-club-administrative-record-book-8846>.

⁸⁰ Betty Smith, "Biographical Outline: Sarah Wyman Whitman 1842-1904," (undated manuscript), 3, Sarah Wyman Whitman Artist File, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA.

⁸¹ Beth Treadway, "The Doll and Richards Gallery" *Archives of American Art Journal* 15, no. 1 (1975), 12; Smith, "Biographical Outline," 2.

⁸² Jacqueline Marie Musacchio, "Infesting the Galleries of Europe: The Copyist Emma Conant Church in Paris and Rome," *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*, 10 no. 2 (Autumn 2011),

<http://19thc-artworldwide.org/index.php/autumn11/infesting-the-galleries-of-europe-the-copyist-emma-conant-church-in-paris-and-rome>.

Given her wealth and social stature, it was both financially feasible and proper to study and train with artists in Europe, but it was most important if she were to pursue art seriously. However, as a woman, she could not expect to travel independently. In 1877, Whitman and her close friend and fellow Hunt pupil, Elizabeth Bartol, who was reputed by contemporary sources to be an even more skilled and talented painter than Whitman, were travel companions on a trip to Europe. As members of the same upper echelons of Boston social circles and as dedicated artists, traveling together would have been an acceptable means of getting to Europe.⁸³

The pair traveled through England, Italy, and ultimately France, to train with Thomas Couture, with whom Hunt had trained from 1847 to 1853, in Villiers-le-Bel. Although Bartol and Whitman did not join an existing community of women artists abroad, they certainly relied on each other for support during this time of intellectual and artistic growth.⁸⁴ While abroad, Whitman and Bartol were exposed to a range of traditional sources of inspiration, like Gothic architecture, Old Masters, but also contemporary art, like the Arts and Crafts Movement, Impressionism, and the Aesthetic Movement. In her 1886 book instructing school children in art-making practices, *The Making of Pictures: Twelve Short Talks for Young People*, Whitman cites her appreciation for masters like Michelangelo, Tintoretto, Velasquez, and Dürer, but also contemporaries like William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), John Everett Millais (1829-1896), Charles-Francois Daubigny

⁸³ Hoppin, "Women Artists in Boston, 1870-1900," 31–33.

⁸⁴ Musacchio, "Infesting the Galleries of Europe," 5.

(1817-1878), J. M. W. Turner (1775-1851), and Winslow Homer (1836-1910).⁸⁵

Given Whitman's trajectory as an artist and appreciation for European models, her time spent in abroad in the company of contemporary artists and great works of art were likely as significant and formative as her studies in Boston alongside Hunt.

The last component of Bartol's and Whitman's formal art educations was their study under Couture, an academic painter of the Barbizon School. Although art academies existed in Europe's cultural centers, including Paris and Rome, women were prohibited from matriculating. Instead, women organized lessons under a master artist and studied museum collections (for an elevated fee).⁸⁶ Couture's profound influence on Whitman's work is readily apparent in one of her most successful works, *Roses – Souvenir de Villiers-le-Bel* (fig. 4).

Whitman's *Roses – Souvenir de Villiers-le-Bel*, highlights the Barbizon influences on her work, but even more important, it looks forward to her career in book design. Completed in France (or upon her return), *Roses*, a small-scale work (18 X 8 in.) in oil, reflects a heightened awareness of composition, color, the effect of light, and the aesthetic principles of Couture. Although she chose to depict a formal flower arrangement, which is a classic motif from the history of still life painting, she changes the conventional perspective from eye-level to bird's eye. The viewer's attention shifts from the loosely rendered details of the

⁸⁵ Sarah Whitman, *The Making of Pictures: Twelve Short Talks with Young People* (Boston: Interstate, 1886).

⁸⁶ Musacchio, "Infesting the Galleries of Europe," 4.

flowers to the effect of the light source on their color and texture. Although Whitman primarily uses earth tones, especially green and white, she illustrates the range of both colors, as they are affected by highlight and shadow.

Whitman chooses to depict her subject in an unrecognizable and unrealistic space. She draws attention to the flower arrangement as a real object by sketching the shadow it casts, directing the viewer's eye from one corner across the composition. She arranges her composition off-axis, cutting a portion of the arrangement out of view, perhaps influenced by Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints and decorative art she saw in Paris. Whitman also daringly includes the title of the work in (what will become her) instantly recognizable letters. The asymmetric composition, successful integration of text, and diagonal thrust of *Roses – Souvenir de Villiers-le-Bel* illustrates her ability to transition between media and looks forward to her book designs.

On their return from Europe, Whitman and Bartol both continued to pursue public careers in art by exhibiting and participating in professional organizations. Whitman painted landscapes of Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Southern Maine, and New Hampshire, still lifes of flowers, and portraits of her fellow Boston elites, including philanthropist Martin Brimmer, philosopher William James, and Trinity Church Rector Phillips Brooks.⁸⁷ Though she also explored other media, Whitman continued to exhibit her oil paintings and watercolors independently in

⁸⁷ Erica Hirshler, "Women Artists at Trinity: Sarah Wyman Whitman and Margaret Redmond," in *The Makers of Trinity Church in the City of Boston* ed. James O'Gorman (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), 155.

Boston and New York, at the Museum of Fine Arts, Doll and Richards Gallery, the St. Botolph Club, and the Grolier Club. She was a member of the National Academy of Design (1877), one of three female members of the Society of American Artists in New York (1880), and a founding member of the Society of Arts and Crafts, Boston (1897-1904). Similarly, Bartol would continue to exhibit her work in the 1870s, 80s, and 90s and later was elected to membership in the Society of Arts and Crafts Boston at craftsman status as a metalworker. Although Bartol's artistic production slowed, her frail health, rather than the responsibility of domestic duties, is cited as the primary reason. Late in life, Bartol joined the Guild of Boston Artists as an Associate member, demonstrating her ongoing commitment to her identity as an artist, and like Whitman, gave money to the Museum of Fine Arts.⁸⁸ Both women's careers benefited from their formative experiences abroad, made possible by the friendships they formed in Hunt's class. The European sojourn allowed Whitman to build credentials necessary to establish herself as a professional artist in Boston and cultivated a lifelong friendship with another professionalizing woman artist.

In the City: Philanthropy in the Arts and Education

In the model of Whitman's uncle and aunt, Samuel G. Wyman and Mary Byrd, prominent citizens and generous philanthropists of Baltimore, Sarah dedicated significant energy to bettering her city and the lives of others through

⁸⁸ Hirshler, *Studio of Her Own*, 199.

philanthropy.⁸⁹ As author John Jay Chapman astutely observed of his friend, Mrs. Henry Whitman, “her chief interest always lay with the young.”⁹⁰ In her lifetime, Whitman was dedicated to education of marginalized groups and supported cultural institutions. In particular, she supported the School of the Museum of Fine Arts and Radcliffe College by volunteering her time during her life and making donations to support their futures upon her death. Even beyond the bounds of her city, she contributed to Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, a historically black college, and Berea College in Kentucky, the first co-educational and racially integrated college in the United States.⁹¹ She championed the cause of art in public schools and joined the United States Public Art League in 1897.⁹² In addition to illuminating her passions, these commitments also expose another network of friends and patrons. The professional relationships and friendships she developed as a philanthropist, in and outside the art world, offered her creative outlets within a community that shared her dreams and visions.

Whitman’s close friend, Elizabeth Cary Agassiz (1822-1907), wife of Harvard natural historian, Louis Agassiz (1807-1873), long advocated for separate women’s classes at Harvard and championed the cause of women’s education as a founder and the first president of Radcliffe College. Whitman

⁸⁹ Betty Smith, mss. notes, August 23, 1999, 1, Sarah Wyman Whitman file, Mount Auburn Cemetery Historical Collections, Cambridge, MA.

⁹⁰ Chapman, “Mrs. Whitman,” 234.

⁹¹ Betty Smith, “Sarah Wyman Whitman: Brief Life of a Determined Artist, 1842-1904,” *Vita* (January-February 2008), 32.

⁹² Hirshler, *Studio of Her Own*, 199.

financially contributed to the institution, offered her expertise in art and interior design as was necessary, and even interviewed Agnes Irwin, Radcliffe's first dean, in Philadelphia.⁹³ She painted Elizabeth Cary Agassiz's portrait in 1894, which was prominently displayed in the new building and Whitman Hall, a dormitory at Radcliffe that was named for Mrs. Henry Whitman.⁹⁴ She welcomed students from Harvard, Radcliffe, and Tuskegee, along with her friends, and literary celebrities into her parlor for discussion. It is significant that women and African-Americans, who were largely marginalized by nineteenth-century society, were included in her vision for higher education.⁹⁵

As a member of the School of the Museum of Fine Arts' Committee (serving from 1884 until her death in 1904), Whitman also advocated for art to be more accessible to Boston's public.⁹⁶ The Museum of Fine Arts Boston was intended to be a resource that was available to the entire Boston community, with the lofty goal of free-entrance as often as it was fiscally feasible.⁹⁷ The Museum, it was thought, would serve as a means to raise the public's taste as well as educate a new class of school children and of professional artists by introducing a new model of cooperation between cultural institutions and the public. Whitman

⁹³ Betty Smith, "Sarah Wyman Whitman" 32; Louise Hall Tharp, *Adventurous Alliance: The Story of the Agassiz Family in Boston* (Boston: Little and Brown, 1959), 268.

⁹⁴ Tharp, *Adventurous Alliance*, 319; Mason Hammond, "The Stained Glass Windows in Memorial Hall, Harvard University," unpublished manuscript, 277, Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, MA, 1978.

⁹⁵ Tharp, *Adventurous Alliance*, 268.

⁹⁶ Hoppin, "Women Artists in Boston, 1870-1900," 29.

⁹⁷ Harris, "Gilded Age Revisited," 552.

was likely influenced by this vision for the museum as a partner in public education. In her article, "Art in the Public Schools," she took the idea one step further by advising that art itself should be incorporated into the elementary and secondary schools. She insisted, for instance, that public school architecture should reflect basic principles of symmetry, harmony, and balance in its color, decoration, and design. Whitman advocated for adapting decorative motifs based on the discipline at hand, suggesting that "in the recitation-rooms, then, let there be busts, bas-reliefs, and the now beautifully enlarged photographs of the best art of Greece and of the Renaissance."⁹⁸ Like in book design, Whitman sought to align purpose of a room with the symbolic and historic importance of its decoration.

For aspiring professional artists, Whitman saw the opening of the School of the Museum of Fine Arts as an essential step in the establishment of rigorous art training in Boston. The founders of the museum and its financial supporters were largely drawn from Boston's social elite and, as a member of Museum School Committee, Whitman worked closely with the Museum's trustees and leadership, including its president Martin Brimmer (1829-1896), Harvard academic Charles Eliot Norton (1827-1908), and architect Charles Howard Walker (1857-1936). She was therefore professionally and personally connected

⁹⁸ Neil Harris, "The Gilded Age Revisited: Boston and the Museum Movement," *American Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (December 1, 1962): 618, 621; Sarah Whitman, "Art in the Public Schools," *The Atlantic* 79 (1897): 621.

to the arbiters of taste in Boston, whose vision of design reform cultivated an appreciation for the academic model of art instruction.

As a tireless supporter of younger artists, Whitman was particularly concerned with building a new, comprehensive art education system for the next generation, based on European art academies.⁹⁹ She was an artist of a previous generation, who, in the absence of an institutional art program, took classes from Hunt in the apprenticeship model and traveled abroad. By contrast, the School of the Museum of Fine Arts established an academic curriculum which demanded that students learn fundamental and precise drawing skills. Perhaps equally important, the Museum of Fine Arts brought reproductions and originals of Old Masters and examples of art from around the world, including textiles, furniture, and pottery to the Fenway.¹⁰⁰ In her book, *The Making of Pictures*, Whitman articulates the mission and the purpose of the Museum for young students of art: “in the Museum Fine Arts Boston, and in other cities, students are allowed to copy many of the works in the galleries; and an excellent method of improving this opportunity is not to copy the work as a whole, but to learn from each and every part of technical detail.”¹⁰¹ The school sought both to elevate the public’s taste and to serve as inspiration to the community of industrial designers and fine

⁹⁹ Trevor J. Fairbrother, "Painting in Boston, 1870-1930," in *The Bostonians: Painters of an Elegant Age, 1870-1930* ed. Fairbrother (Boston, Mass: Museum of Fine Arts, 1986), 43.

¹⁰⁰ Harris, "The Gilded Age Revisited," 558.

¹⁰¹ Whitman, *The Making of Pictures*, 26.

artists.¹⁰² Whitman believed, therefore, that the founding of the museum had positive moral, in addition to artistic, consequences.

Charles Eliot Norton, a prominent Harvard academic and confidante of John Ruskin, was an essential champion of both the museum and art reform in Boston. He was a close colleague of Whitman's in part because of his role in the museum's leadership and as first President of the Society of Arts and Crafts Boston, but also because they shared an admiration for the work of English design reformers Ruskin and William Morris. As leaders of the Arts and Crafts movement in England, Ruskin and Morris, advocated for the reunion of designer and craftsman as a means of elevating the standard for good design in an age of mass production.¹⁰³ Aesthetically, the Arts and Crafts movement drew on historical traditions, used natural materials, emphasized simplicity and unity in contrast to eclecticism, and embraced artistic production in a range of media including furniture, stained glass, fine printing, and interior design.¹⁰⁴ Whitman, a founding member and first Vice President of the Society of Arts and Crafts Boston, embraced the philosophical principles and aesthetic conventions of the movement, using art and the teaching of art as a medium to effect social change and reform.

¹⁰² Fairbrother, "Painting in Boston," 17.

¹⁰³ Anthea Callen, *Women Artists of the Arts and Crafts Movement, 1870-1914*, 1st ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979), 2.

¹⁰⁴ Susan Otis Thompson, *American Book Design and William Morris*, 2nd ed. (London: British Library, 1996), 17.

In the Church: Merriman, Brooks, and Trinity Church Boston

Although Whitman continued to paint throughout her lifelong career as an artist, she dedicated herself chiefly to design beginning in the 1880s. Whitman's first foray into this discipline was a commission in church decoration orchestrated by Helen Bigelow Merriman, a former classmate from Hunt's studio and a close friend of Whitman's.¹⁰⁵ Merriman's husband was the rector at Central Congregational Church, in Worcester, Massachusetts. Due to Helen Merriman's efforts, Whitman was selected, as John La Farge's alternate, to design a holistic aesthetic scheme for the church. It was likely her first formal opportunity to explore the expressive potential of design beyond the traditional discipline of painting.

Whitman was deeply religious and invested in her Episcopal community. In Boston and at her summer home in Beverly Farms, she routinely led Bible-study classes for women, which was perhaps how she formed such close relationships with church leadership.¹⁰⁶ In addition, she freely offered her time and expertise in art and design. In Beverly, upon the expansion of the church, the chair of the building committee approached Whitman for design advice, which she offered graciously. She also spearheaded the project to establish a library in

¹⁰⁵ Although she is known to have completed a mural for the church in 1889, the exact date of the original interior design commission remains mysterious. See Hirshler, *A Studio of Her Own*, 39, 162.

¹⁰⁶ Beverly Farms was a fashionable summer retreat on the North Shore of Massachusetts. Her neighbors at the "Old Place," included Martin Brimmer, Isaac and Edward Ober, Edward Hooper, Henry Lee Higginson, Edmund Larcom, and the Parkman family.

the town.¹⁰⁷ At Boston's Trinity Church, Whitman was an active parishioner and became a close confidante of Phillip Brooks, its esteemed rector who would eventually serve as the Bishop of Massachusetts for the Episcopal Church and hold various offices at Harvard University. Whitman contributed to the aesthetic vision of Trinity Church Boston through her friendship with Brooks.

Under Phillips Brooks, Trinity Church Boston moved from the financial district to the Back Bay, closer to the fashionable neighborhoods of its parishioners. Even in the nineteenth-century, Trinity Church Boston in Copley Square was known as "Phillips Brooks' Church."¹⁰⁸ Although the rector was only an unofficial member of the planning committees, his vision drove the project. Brooks was instrumental in selecting artists, like the architect Henry Hobson Richardson and designer John La Farge, who were sympathetic to his dream to convey theology through architectural space and decoration.¹⁰⁹ Rector Brooks, like his friend Whitman, believed that external beauty could cultivate inner spiritual growth.¹¹⁰ Notably, Whitman's most important male mentors, including Martin Brimmer, William Morris Hunt, and Phillips Brooks, were members of the

¹⁰⁷ "Address of James B. Dow," *Sarah Whitman* (Cambridge: Merrymount Press, 1904), 2-3.

¹⁰⁸ David B. Chesebrough, "Client: Phillips Brooks," in *The Makers of Trinity Church in the City of Boston* ed. James O'Gorman (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), 29.

¹⁰⁹ Chesebrough, "Client : Phillips Brooks," 24.

¹¹⁰ Hirshler, "Women Artists at Trinity," 28, 153; Virginia Raugin, "Memorial Hall Windows Designed by Sarah Wyman Whitman," in *Harvard Library Bulletin* 11, no. 1 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Library, 2000), 37.

Trinity Church building committee, formed in 1871.¹¹¹ Therefore, it is likely that Whitman was discussing the same aesthetic and philosophical questions driving the Trinity project in informal, social settings.¹¹²

Phillips Brooks' theological philosophy shaped Whitman's artistic practice. Brooks identified with the Broad Church Movement, which celebrated acts of exercising Christian principles in daily life, like good deeds and charity, but also embraced a range of theological opinions, including scientific and intellectual criticisms of the Bible.¹¹³ Whitman's work as an artist fit with the philanthropy of the Broad Church Movement by bringing good design to the masses and it, therefore, had a moral purpose. Aesthetically, Brooks was inspired by the reform of Anglican Churches abroad and believed that the earlier ages of Romanesque Christianity were more pure and "more authentic"¹¹⁴ than the era of Gothic Christianity. Therefore, Romanesque iconography, which integrates, rather than separates, earthly and spiritual experience would best serve his theology and parishioners. It is relevant, then, that Trinity Church Boston commissioned four stained glass windows designed by Edward Burne-Jones and executed by William Morris and Company. Brooks validated the ideas of William Morris of the

¹¹¹ Kathleen Curran, "The Romanesque Revival, Mural Painting, and Protestant Patronage in America," *The Art Bulletin* 81, no. 4 (December 1, 1999): 708.

¹¹² Hirshler, "Women Artists at Trinity," 28, 153; Virginia Raugin, "Memorial Hall Windows," 37.

¹¹³ Curran, "The Romanesque Revival, Mural Painting, and Protestant Patronage in America," 717.

¹¹⁴ Chesebrough, "Client: Phillips Brooks," 25.

Arts and Crafts Movement in England from within a spiritual framework. This would have appealed to Whitman as a devout Christian and an artist.

John La Farge, who served as lead decorator at Trinity Church Boston, was a role model for Whitman at a decisive juncture in her career. Whitman admired his work: she owned at least three of La Farge's watercolors in her personal collection and she was exposed to his art and his process in the making of Trinity Church Boston.¹¹⁵ His work in painting and design at Trinity legitimized a fine artist's career in a range of media. Witnessing the comprehensive design scheme come to fruition at Trinity Church Boston likely had a profound impact on Whitman's commitment to craft and her decision to pursue stained glass. Although correspondence between them does not survive, they shared mutual friends and belonged to many of the same professional organizations, including the National Academy of Design and the Society of American Artists, and may have easily exchanged ideas. Given her commitment to American opalescent stained glass, illustrated by her window, *Honor and Peace* (1900) at Harvard's Annenberg Hall, is likely that she learned stained glass techniques from La Farge in the first place.¹¹⁶

Whitman, who was in the early phase of her artistic career as Trinity Church was being built, did not have the opportunity to participate in the project immediately. By the 1890s, however, she was a respected member of the artistic community in Boston, an established member of the inner circle of the church,

¹¹⁵ As quoted in Hirshler, "Women Artists at Trinity," 158.

¹¹⁶ Hirshler, "Women Artists at Trinity," 158-162.

and in a position to contribute to the church's aesthetic. Upon the death of her mentor and rector, Phillips Brooks, in 1893, she donated a window in his honor to be installed in the Parish House. The work was designed by Whitman and likely executed in her studio, Lily Glass Works, on Boylston Street in Boston.¹¹⁷ The architectural space of the Parish House had particular significance for Whitman, who taught a women's bible study class for thirty years, until her own death, within those walls.

The *Phillips Brooks Memorial Window* is exemplary of both Whitman's increasingly modern aesthetic and her reliance on Victorian motifs (fig. 5). In contrast to windows modeled on La Farge and Tiffany, which often borrowed compositions and subject matter from the Pre-Raphaelites, Whitman's overall design relies on geometric repetition. She arranges irregular nuggets of glass in a symmetric pattern, on a grid. Her restrained color scheme and geometric design achieves a sensation of lightness and brightness, which demonstrates her awareness of the window's function as a natural light source and a place to view the garden adjacent to the building. The window's treatment of the architectural space recalls her friend Richard C. Cabot's remark that she "used to rejoice that whereas in oil painting she had to try to imitate life by poor materials, through stained glass she had the real thing, she had light itself and did not have to make a visible imitation of it."¹¹⁸ Based on its composition, her work is more of a precursor to the designs of Frank Lloyd Wright than an echo of La Farge. The

¹¹⁷ Hirshler, *A Studio of Her Own*, 161.

¹¹⁸ As quoted in Raugin, "Memorial Hall Windows," 40.

body of Whitman's work sits at this intersection between the Victorian aesthetic and the principles of modernism.¹¹⁹

In the Salon: Whitman and Boston's Intellectuals

Whitman's talents as a skilled conversationalist, gracious hostess, and dedicated friend created a network of patrons, which proved essential in the course of her career as an artist. Her friend, author John Jay Chapman, dedicates a chapter to Mrs. Whitman in his memoir, in which he illuminates her spirit of hospitality that brought the "geniuses" of Boston to her parlor:

It was the intrinsic nature of the woman rather than any special intention that led her to take the course that she did. Clever men love to be appreciated, and when as rarely happens, a woman is found with so much enthusiasm for intelligence that she turns a special reflector upon anyone possessing it and gives him the shock and glow of recognition, the clever men will flock about her, and a sort of salon will arise. It was not men alone whom Mrs. Whitman fascinated by her sympathy. She subdued every sort of person, especially old ladies, especially young school girls, especially her own incorruptible contemporaries, who had never known such a creature before, but who sooner or later lay in chains to her resourceful personality.¹²⁰

In addition to her career as an artist, Whitman dedicated herself to supporting the careers of her friends. She had a deep respect for intellectual discourse and actively created spaces for discussion and debate. Chapman was but one of the Boston authors who received and benefited from her criticism and support; her close friends, Henry and William James, also counted among them.

¹¹⁹ Hirshler, *A Studio of Her Own*, 41.

¹²⁰ John Jay Chapman, "Mrs. Whitman," 235-236.

Whitman's social circle extended from her own parlor to Annie Fields' on Charles Street, who hosted Boston literary personalities like William and Henry James (1842-1910, 1843-1916), Celia Thaxter (1835-1894), Sarah Orne Jewett (1849-1909), Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896), and Oliver Wendell Holmes (1841-1935). Through the golden age of literature in Boston, Annie Fields, the wife and widow of James T. Fields, of Ticknor and Fields Publishing House, opened her home to her neighbors, authors, and friends.¹²¹ Whitman, born into the same wealth and appreciation for literary genius a generation later, followed in her steps, offering her own salon as a forum for discussion of literary works among authors. Sarah Orne Jewett, a close companion of Annie Fields, was one of Whitman's closest friends, a vocal advocate for Sarah's pursuit of art and design, and responsible for countless commissions in book design and a number in stained glass.

These salons and their attendees cultivated Whitman's ambition to pursue book design. Initially, Whitman likely entered the profession to "oblige her friends, mainly women because she was at the heart of Boston's literary, artistic, and social world."¹²² As historian Betty Smith points out, for Sarah Wyman Whitman, "friendship, art, and patronage"¹²³ were inextricably bound. Over the course of her nearly twenty-five year career, Whitman designed one hundred and forty-four covers for seventy female authors. In an age in which literature was a male-

¹²¹ Later, Fields, Osgood, and Company.

¹²² Charles Gullans and John Epsey, "American Trade Bindings and Their Designers," in *Collectible Books* ed. Jean Peters (R. R. Bowker, 1979), 37.

¹²³ Betty Smith, "Sarah de St. Prix Wyman Whitman," 48.

dominated field, Whitman produced more designs for more women authors than she did for her male peers. Of all of the authors she worked with, including Annie Fields, Sarah Chauncey Woolsey, Celia Thaxter, and Harriet Beecher Stowe, she designed more covers for Sarah Orne Jewett than for any other client, which is a testament to both their close friendship and artistic partnership. In fact, Sarah Orne Jewett dedicates *Strangers and Wayfarers*, to “S. W. / Painter of New England Men and Women / New England Fields and Shores.” It was the same “S. W.,” who designed the cover.

Book cover art offered Whitman a forum for bringing good design to the masses. In the mid-1890s, Whitman’s designs reached their peak in popularity and during this period, she produced some of her best works, many for the popular and prolific author, Sarah Orne Jewett. In *The Country of the Pointed Firs* by Jewett, Whitman manipulates the mechanized production process of book covers to achieve the illusion of a handcrafted aesthetic (fig. 6). She achieves this by playing with seemingly contradictory motifs of geometry and organicism. Three abstracted, triangularly shaped blossoms frame the space in which the title and the author’s name are written. Although similar shapes are repeated, no two blossoms are exactly alike. The interest in and abstraction of natural forms calls on Arts and Crafts traditions, but the curving, sinuous lines of the stems of the flowers is more reminiscent of the contemporary trend of Art Nouveau. Whitman anchors the three blossoms with her signature heart, formed from two similar, though not identical, curving lines. The row of evenly spaced hearts stabilizes

and achieves a sense of balance that is disturbed by the varying heights of the blossoms. The image is enclosed within a simple, thin gold border that contains and gives boundaries to the cover.

The Country of the Pointed Firs also illustrates the influence of the aesthetics and philosophy of Japanese art on her designs. Superficially, the triangular form repeated in the blossoms and in the negative space between them makes subtle reference to Japanese fans. Philosophically, the priority placed on design due to rapid industrialization coincided with Western artists' exposure to the art of Japan, whose structure already embraced the exchange between fine and decorative art. The Japanese, who demonstrated an inherent sensitivity to design, served as a model for American decorative artists.

Throughout her career, Sarah Wyman Whitman was shaped by her relationships with friends, colleagues, fellow-philanthropists, and fellow-parishioners. As a student, she benefited from the leadership of William Morris Hunt, who cultivated a generation of women artists in Boston and connected his students to the art scene in Boston and abroad. As a member of Boston's philanthropic elite, she helped to organize the Museum of Fine Arts School. As a parishioner, she built friendships with church leadership and seized opportunities to design windows and interior design schemes for local churches. Last, she added a "touch of art" to her friends' publications. Her friendships in different communities allowed her to become a recognized painter and designer and to

straddle the boundary between artist and craftsman. In the sphere of book design, which represents her most lasting contribution to the decorative arts, Whitman applied a handcrafted aesthetic to industrially mass-produced trade bindings in an effort to democratize good design. The next chapter will examine her work in the context of the Book Arts Revolution in Boston at the turn of the twentieth century.

CHAPTER THREE:
THE BOOK IN BOSTON, 1850-1900

“You have got to think how to apply elements of design to these cheaply sold books; to put the touch of art on this thing that is going to be produced at a level price, which allows for no hand work, the decoration to be cut with a die, the books to go out by the thousand, and to be sold at a low price.”
- Sarah Wyman Whitman¹²⁴

Sarah Wyman Whitman came of age as an artist in Boston during the last sun-streaked days of the city’s “golden age” of literary philosophy and authorship. It was the generation before her that bred New England luminaries like Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864), Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862), Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882), and Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896). These writers have come to represent both the period and the city itself. For most of the nineteenth-century, Boston enjoyed this “golden age” of literature and its prominence as the center for literary thought, authorship, and higher education. It was also the American capital for publishing and book production, where mechanical innovation met authors’, academics’, and eventually, the middle class’ demands for books. In a city where the established elite prided themselves on intellectual and academic pursuits, the mass-produced book profoundly changed the structure of readership and sparked a debate on the proper art and decoration of books.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Boston’s community of authors, publishers, readers, and artists were universally concerned with the aesthetics of

¹²⁴ Sarah Wyman Whitman, *Notes of an Informal Talk on Book Illustrations Inside and Out, Given Before the Boston Art Students’ Association*, (Boston: The Boston Art Students’ Association, 1894), 5.

the book, even if their design philosophies were diverse and often at odds with one another. Boston in the 1890s offers a unique opportunity to explore the question of why a range of artists was committed to reforming the decoration of the book. Although the scales tipped (and eventually toppled) toward New York City with the advent of the poster style, the cloth-stamped designs that Sarah W. Whitman popularized is an essential, if overlooked, chapter in the history of design and craft in Boston.¹²⁵

In this new era of the mass-produced book, Boston looked to England, the center of Europe's design revolution, for inspiration. Drawing on the models of Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), Whitman swept away the Victorian clutter that persisted on book covers through the 1870s and applied principles of good design to a mass-produced object. Houghton Mifflin, a Boston publisher for whom she designed hundreds of covers, capitalized on her forward-thinking signature style and built a marketing campaign around Whitman's aesthetic. The impact of her designs and philosophies outlived her city's prominence as the epicenter for the book in late nineteenth-century America.

In the 1880s, Whitman embraced new technology to bring good design to the masses. In contrast, the next generation of book artists in Boston, the fine printers, were motivated by the nostalgia for handcraft and traditional techniques. They created limited edition, luxury objects, for the wealthiest class. Sarah Wyman Whitman and Boston's elite bibliophiles, although separated by a

¹²⁵ For a more in depth study of the poster style and its effect on the market for cloth-stamped books, see the epilogue.

generation, were both responding to the expanding market of middle class readers. Both adapted the aesthetic and philosophical creed of the Arts and Crafts movement to meet the demands of different audiences and offered solutions to the conundrums posed by Morris' sometimes-contradictory principles of reverence for handcraft and art for the masses. Whitman's book covers brought good design to the masses, as Morris never did, and paved a path for the fine printers of the next generation by cultivating a taste for good design in Boston.

The Changing Landscape of Wealth, Industry, and Books

The impact of rapid industrialization and immigration in late-nineteenth-century America affected every rung on the socioeconomic ladder, but most important for the book industry, these changes fostered the growth of the new middle class. Especially after the Civil War, but as early as the 1840s, the middle class began to read extensively, as evidenced by rising literacy rates among white men and women. The establishment of public libraries, museums, and school systems supported the middle class' interest in books and reading and this new class of readers began to collect books for their subject matter, as symbols of their increasing educational opportunities, and finally, as decorative objects, at a price they could afford.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ Richard Minsky, *The Art of American Book Covers: 1875-1930*, (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 2010), 9; Barbara Sicherman, "Ideologies and Practices of Reading," in *A History of the Book in America: The Industrial Book 1840-1880*, v.

This evolving market for the book, combined with technological advancements in book production, led to dramatic changes in the industry. Using new technology, publishers relied largely on factory labor to produce books on an unprecedented scale. Although wealthy Bostonians continued to seek out books worthy of a “gentlemen’s library,” a wider, reading public demanded cheap trade publications. Of course, these markets for the book were not totally distinct from each other. Decorated trade bindings, in particular, represented a middle ground between objects of handcraft and uninspired products of the machine age.¹²⁷ Sarah Wyman Whitman helped to popularize the beautifully designed and mass-produced book that came to be collected largely by the middle class.

The Middle Class

Until the Industrial Revolution, the book was a handmade object whose production demanded a force of specialized labor. Before the nineteenth-century, a wealthy patron purchased a book from a publisher in temporary, pasteboard bindings under the assumption that the book collector would have it bound and tooled by hand to match other books in his or her collection. Therefore, publishers were once responsible for only a specialized role: the text and the printing. Beginning in the 1830s, the industry of bookmaking became mechanized

3, ed. Scott E. Casper, Jeffrey D. Groves, Stephen Nissenbaum, and Michael Winship, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 280.

¹²⁷ A “trade binding” is a general term to describe the binding in which a publisher issues a book. Before the industrial revolution, publishers sold books in basic, impermanent bindings or enclosed in paper wrappers. In the nineteenth-century, publishers were increasingly issuing books in permanent bindings.

on a massive scale and the burden of book production and decoration shifted entirely to the publishers. Increasingly, consumers would come to expect the complete product in its permanent binding when purchasing a book from a publisher. Cloth cases, which are more durable than paper and less expensive than leather, were widely adopted.¹²⁸ Although the cloth covers were affixed to the pasteboard by hand, decoration was stamped on the cover, replacing the labor a craftsman had once performed by hand. This was made possible by the new technology of photoengraving. First, an engraver created the cover design. Its photographic image was then transferred to a brass plate and cut out by hand. Last, the brass plate was attached to a press and stamped onto the receiving substrate, which was usually a cloth-covered pasteboard. American machinery was capable of stamping sixteen to twenty books in a minute by the early 1850s.¹²⁹ Eventually, with the advent of the Houchin engraving machine, craftsmen were alleviated from cutting the design by hammer and chisel, which saved time and allowed for exact reproductions.¹³⁰ These advances in technology made the decoration of cloth-stamped books even faster and more efficient, eventually driving prices down for consumers.

¹²⁸ Sue Allen, "Machine-stamped Bookbindings, 1834-1860," *Antiques* 115 (March 1979), 564.

¹²⁹ Allen, "Machine Stamped Bookbindings," 565.

¹³⁰ Sue Allen, *A Doubly Fascinating Book: Hawthorne's Wonder-Book Illustrated by Walter Crane* (New York: American Printing History Association, 2008), 12; Charles Gullans and John Epsey, "American Trade Bindings and Their Designers, 1880-1915," in *Collectible Books: Some New Paths*, ed. Jean Peters (New York: R.R. Bowker, 1979), 35.

Ultimately, the publisher determined the budget of each book's decoration and therefore the number of brass dies, the materials used, especially the amount, if any, of gold leaf or silver fill, and the kind of cloth. One-color designs were most frugal because each additional color required a unique brass die. Although photoengraving was inexpensive, the brass plates themselves were expensive objects and represented a hefty investment. Durable enough to withstand extended use, publishers had a financial incentive to reuse the plates. Therefore, to economize, brass plates were sometimes employed for subsequent volumes whether or not the imagery or motifs were related to the content of the book. At other times, generic plates, with empty spaces to fill in the title, author, and publisher of the work, were created with this principle in mind.¹³¹

In America, the role of cover design fell to an engraver until the 1870s. Although an engraver may have had technical skills, he had limited experience with creative design. To achieve a novel and eye-catching effect, engravers combined eclectic styles and sizes of type on a single cover, recalling eighteenth century printing traditions, but losing its clarity and beauty.¹³² The covers carelessly mimicked (if also unconvincingly and crudely) the handcraft effect of

¹³¹ Paul F. Borth, "Photoengraving" in *Britannica Online Encyclopedia*, (The halftone process), 1-3
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/457873/photoengraving>.

¹³² Michael Winship, "Manufacturing and Book Production," in *A History of the Book in America: The Industrial Book 1840-1880*, v. 3, ed. Scott E. Casper, Jeffrey D. Groves, Stephen Nissenbaum, and Winship, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 45.

historic motifs and contemporary art.¹³³ The use of eighteenth century French printing marks, harsh diagonal lines, a clichéd Japanese motif, and wild typography in a single composition reflected an effort to reap the greatest profit rather than a sincere concern for good design. This phenomenon was widespread in the publishing industry and resulted in a flood of unfortunate, mass-produced experiments in design.

Artists, critics, and reformers in the third quarter of the nineteenth-century often complained of the prevailing ugliness of the cheap, mass-produced books that publishers eagerly hawked to middle class readers. Arthur B. Turnure, a member of the Grolier Club, a bibliophilic society in New York, and founder of the publication *Art Age*, said in 1883, “very few firms have done much to advance the higher arts of bookmaking, or keep pace with the growing demand for tasteful bindings, beautiful title pages, perfection of impression and suitable paper.” He was one member of the group of artists, designers, critics, and thinkers who called for simplicity and historic models in American book design.¹³⁴ Sarah Whitman, addressing the Boston Art Students’ Association in 1894, echoed Turnure’s concerns and said:

Ten years ago you would have found book covers, hundreds of them, which represented a combination of bad French art mixed with Japanese art, scrolls and arabesques, which had to do with some debased form of the book cover mixed with a bit of a Japanese fan,

¹³³ Winship, “Manufacturing and Book Production,” 59-60.

¹³⁴ As quoted in Susan Otis Thompson, *American Book Design and William Morris* (New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1977), 7.

the suggestion of a sun, a stork, or strange diagonal lines, so beautiful in pure Japanese art, but so fatal and terrible on a book.”¹³⁵

William Hardcastle Browne’s *Heartthrobs of Authors* serves as a precise example of the kind of poor design against which Whitman reacted (fig. 7). It incorporates nearly every offensive element of poor book design that she identified to the Boston Students’ Association, from the stork, to the scrolls, to the arabesques, to the “strange diagonal lines.” These similarities lead a reader who stumbles upon *Heartthrobs* to wonder if Whitman had this particular volume in mind when she so roundly castigated the book industry.

Heartthrobs is visually overwhelming. The disparate compositional elements overlap in a design that is one motif away from a chaotic mess. It appears as if at least eighty percent of the available space is covered in designs, which range from a stork in a medallion to abstract ornament that juts from the edge in harsh diagonals. The text is nearly swallowed by the decorative elements that surround it; moreover, the ornamentation does not appear to have been rendered with much sensitivity or technical skill. Ultimately, the viewer is left to contemplate the significance of the stork and tree branch, which feature so prominently in the cover’s design, yet do not appear to have any relationship to the content of the work.

If not aesthetically pleasing, designs like the one for *Heartthrobs of Authors* reveal that publishers, if only for a moment, were more interested with the novel effect of new technology than principles of good design. The lack of

¹³⁵ Whitman, *Notes of an Informal Talk on Book Illustrations*, 3.

connection between the cover's imagery and the book's content and the crude composition of discordant design elements suggest that a trained artist did not execute the design for *Heartthrobs*. Responding to this lack of attention paid to cover design, Sarah Whitman seized on the opportunity for reform.

The cover design could convey a book's content, attract an interested audience, and, most importantly for the publisher, sell more books. The Boston publishing house, Houghton Mifflin, for instance "branded" itself by commissioning designs from Sarah Wyman Whitman.¹³⁶ Her designs for *Victorian Anthology*, *The Courtship of Miles Standish*, and *Songs of Hiawatha* were among those books featured in Houghton Mifflin's advertisement for holiday editions in 1895 (fig. 8). According to scholars John Epsey and Charles Gullans, other publishers established similar – if not as long-lasting – relationships with artists. They suggest, "casually and unsystematically, beginning in the 1880s, publishers were seeking well-known artists to design book covers and sometimes interior pages as well."¹³⁷ Yet, even designers were not exempt from the limitations imposed by technology and financial constraints. Whitman made aesthetic choices from a limited array of options that met both her standard for good design and the budget dictated by her publisher. Although the book designer could advocate for his or her choices, Sarah Whitman's letters to

¹³⁶ Winship, "Manufacturing and Book Production," 59-60.

¹³⁷ Gullans and Epsey, "American Trade Bindings," 36.

George Mifflin demonstrate that the publisher ultimately had the power to approve or reject a particular design.¹³⁸

From the publisher's perspective, Whitman's cloth-stamped book designs were a kind of advertisement. For Whitman, however, her designs were "the touch of art," which communicated an appreciation for good design to middle class consumers. After all, as Whitman points out, "People do not get books from the library half so much as they buy them. If the book is popular and is really a work of art, as far as it goes, it is an aesthetic tract."¹³⁹ Working within the capitalistic model of book production and committed to democratic access to art, Whitman offered a solution to the book's aesthetic problems.

Boston's Transatlantic Inspiration and Reinterpretation

It was natural for Boston artists and book designers to look across the Atlantic for inspiration. As descendants of the British, Boston's social elite had transparent ties to Great Britain and fierce desires to measure themselves – and their art – up to their British ancestors. Americans looked to Europe as a model for culture and as historian Susan Otis Thompson points out, the "establishment of the Daughters of the American Revolution, the phenomenon of American heiresses marrying European titles, the popularity of the Grand Tour...indicate the American's desire to find roots in European culture and to flee from his own

¹³⁸ Gullans and Epsey, "American Trade Bindings," 35.

¹³⁹ Whitman, *Notes of an Informal Talk on Book Illustrations*, 5.

current problems.” At the same time, Americans were desperate to prove themselves culturally competent and sophisticated.

More specifically, American publishers imported the entire industry of trade bindings from England in the first place: the mechanical process of stamping books, the aesthetic motifs, and the cloth itself. American publishers’ zealous appropriation of English design philosophies is therefore hardly surprising.¹⁴⁰ However, in England, there was a precedent for the crafts of printing and book making that stretched back to the medieval era and grounded British nostalgia for the handmade in historical traditions. No such history existed in America, but the philosophies and practices of their role models, English artists, were eagerly imported and adapted in America – by Whitman and bibliophiles – with fewer reservations about the mechanical and industrial processes and capitalist pursuit of profits.¹⁴¹ As historian Susan Otis Thompson remarks, the two countries shared a history of “the elaboration and exuberance of ornament [in book design] made possible by the new industrialism [that] had been emotionally justified by the sentimental extravagance of the Romantic period.”¹⁴² As new technology and novelty converged, marking a dip in the history of good design, the creative community responded to meet middle class and the elite’s demand for books.

¹⁴⁰ Winship, “Manufacturing and Book Production,” 60; Charles A. Rheault, *In Retrospect the Riverside Press, 1852-1971* (Boston: Society of Printers, 1979), 6.

¹⁴¹ Thompson, *American Book Design and William Morris*, 1.

¹⁴² Thompson, *American Book Design and William Morris.*, 13,

Americans who looked abroad for aesthetic inspiration found England undergoing a design revolution. Beginning in the 1840s, at the low point in Great Britain's history of competition with France and the rest of Europe for quality products and creative ingenuity, British artists began to reimagine the expressive potential of design. Artists, designers, critics, and craftsmen including the Pre-Raphaelites, the Aesthetes, members of the Arts and Crafts Movement and, later, Art Nouveau artists joined the cause to reinvigorate and eventually modernize British design.¹⁴³ Although these movements were interdisciplinary and all emphasized craft, book design was given particular attention in England.

Ruskin, Norton, and the Pre-Raphaelite Aesthetic in America

Scholars have cited the importance of John Ruskin (1819-1900) and A.W.N. Pugin (1812-1852), whose writings on art and architecture turned the cogs in the minds of a generation of artists and designers. Both Ruskin and Pugin suggested that art, and specifically architecture, had the power to enhance one's moral character. They advocated for a return to the practices and motifs of medieval England, which were presumably Christian and democratic.¹⁴⁴ However unfairly, they characterized Greco-Roman motifs as representations of the hedonistic excess of paganism, which contrasted so starkly with the modest and

¹⁴³ Scholars have written extensively on this period in the History of Art and I only offer a summary of points relevant to this discussion. Please see works consulted for resources on the movements discussed in this section.

¹⁴⁴ Beverly Kay Brandt, *Craftsman and the Critic: Defining Usefulness in Arts and Crafts-era Boston* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 2009), 32.

pure medieval Christians they imagined. They cited medieval guilds as a model for individual, creative, and imperfect production. They advocated for reform with urgency during this historic period of rapid industrialization and exponential immigration.¹⁴⁵

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, formed in 1848, was one of the first groups of English artists to respond to the writings of Ruskin and Pugin. Consisting originally of its founders Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), and John Everett Millais (1829-1896), it also eventually included William Morris (1834-1896) and Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898). The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood sought to return to aesthetic purity by using literary motifs from the Bible, Shakespeare, Keats, and the natural world as sources. Stylistically, a jewel tone color palette and elongated female figures characterize their work. Philosophically, they challenged aesthetic conventions to encourage nineteenth-century viewers to look beyond formulaic academic paintings. They sought to align moral and aesthetic visions.¹⁴⁶

Although the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood as a group relied on many of the same familiar motifs of art history and literature, its members were in disagreement about the consequences of their art. For Dante Gabriel Rossetti, a painter who turned his talents to book design, it was poetic and symbolic

¹⁴⁵ Theodore E. Stebbins, Jr., with Susan C. Ricci, "Charles Eliot Norton: Ruskin's Friend, Harvard's Sage," in *The Last Ruskinians: Charles Eliot Norton, Charles Herbert Moore, and Their Circle* (Cambridge: Harvard University Art Museums, 2007), 14.

¹⁴⁶ Linda Dowling, *Charles Eliot Norton: The Art of Reform in Nineteenth-Century America* (Durham, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2007), 14, 17.

significance, rather than morality or beauty, which was supremely important.¹⁴⁷

This same debate about the role of morality, usefulness, and beauty in art that began with the Pre-Raphaelites continued in England and across the Atlantic well into the twentieth century.

Ruskin and his ideas about art were particularly influential in Boston because of his friendship with Charles Eliot Norton (1827-1908), who served as the first professor of Fine Art at Harvard from 1875-1898, founded the publication, *The Nation*, and shaped a generation of students and community activists. In England, in the 1850s, Norton crossed paths and formed friendships with Ruskin, Burne-Jones, Rossetti, Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and Morris.¹⁴⁸ Celebrated as the “American Ruskin” and “the most cultured man in America” Norton proselytized his ideas in Boston and supported the work of the Pre-Raphaelites, including Burne-Jones and Rossetti, from whom he commissioned two paintings.¹⁴⁹ His role at Harvard eventually mirrored that of his mentor, John Ruskin, at Oxford. As early as 1857, Norton argued in public forums, like *The Atlantic Monthly* publication, for Pre-Raphaelite aesthetic theory, which demanded that artists step outside the conventions of academic art and return to a purer age of expression and, ultimately, morality.¹⁵⁰ For Norton, art was an incredible tool for social reform because he believed that the power of the

¹⁴⁷ Raymond Watkinson, *Pre-Raphaelite Art and Design* (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1970), 49.

¹⁴⁸ Stebbins with Ricci, “Charles Eliot Norton,” 15.

¹⁴⁹ Linda Dowling, *Charles Eliot Norton: The Art of Reform in Nineteenth-Century America* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2007), 1, 2, 19.

¹⁵⁰ Dowling, *Charles Eliot Norton*, 13.

imagination could unite people across all socio-economic classes and ethnic backgrounds.¹⁵¹

As an ardent supporter of Phillip Brooks' Trinity Church, the first president of the Society of Arts and Crafts Boston, and an attendee of literary salons in Boston, Norton not only walked in the same circles as Sarah Whitman, but she also counted him among her colleagues and closest friends. As a testament to their friendship, she gave his son, Richard Norton (1872-1918), on the occasion of his marriage to Elizabeth White, a stained glass fire screen of her own design.¹⁵² Although they shared many friends in common, it is significant that Martin Brimmer, the first president of the Museum of Fine Arts, was a close mutual friend of both Norton and Whitman.¹⁵³ The three shared an aspiration to make Boston more moral through art by bringing high quality materials and good design to daily life, all of which is illustrative of Ruskin's profound influence.

Whitman's aesthetic philosophies owe a debt to Norton's influence.¹⁵⁴ In fact, her neighbor, historian, Samuel Eliot Morison (1887-1976), goes as far as to

¹⁵¹ Interestingly, Ruskin and Norton ultimately disagreed about the compatibility of a religious life and a life of art, which created a tension that never quite dissipated. Dowling, *Charles Eliot Norton*, 7, 28, 29.

¹⁵² Betty Smith, "Sarah de St. Prix Wyman Whitman," *Old-Time New England* (Spring/Summer 1999), 49.

¹⁵³ Virginia Chieffo Raugin, "Decorator: John La Farge," in *The Makers of Trinity Church in the City of Boston* ed. James O'Gorman (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), 130.

¹⁵⁴ Although not pertinent to a discussion of her book designs, it is important to point out that Whitman likely developed her deep appreciation for medieval religious architecture and stained glass in part from her relationship with Norton. In letters to her friends while abroad, she indicates that she structured her travels, after cultivating a friendship with Norton, around visiting cathedrals.

say Whitman was “a disciple of Ruskin.”¹⁵⁵ Her connection to Norton may offer insight into why she held Dante Rossetti’s book designs in such high esteem. Norton, one of her most important mentors, was a patron of Rossetti’s and likely introduced Whitman to his work. For books, Whitman used Rossetti’s designs as a model. Although she developed an independent style of her own, many of her early covers demonstrate the deep debt she owed to his designs.

The Arts and Crafts Movement in Britain and Boston

With the Pre-Raphaelites, Norton also brought to Boston an appreciation for the Arts and Crafts Movement, which shaped aesthetic criticism and discourse on design, morality, purpose, and beauty in the late-nineteenth-century. Sparked by the same writings of Ruskin and Pugin that inspired the Pre-Raphaelites, the Arts and Crafts movement largely drew its original membership from the Brotherhood, under the leadership of William Morris.

Furthermore, however drawn Whitman was to Ruskinian philosophy, it is important to acknowledge that she did not adopt the Pre-Raphaelite style of tightly handled, minutely detailed painting. There are several possible explanations for this. Practically, Whitman was more likely to interact with Norton, as Trinity Church was under construction in the early 1870s, after she had completed her studies with William Morris Hunt. Hunt, who practiced in the Barbizon style and represented an alternative aesthetic philosophy in Boston’s art scene. Given Hunt’s emphasis on expression over precision, and the fact that she did not stray far from this technique in painting, it is likely that her training with Hunt did not sufficiently prepare her to attempt Pre-Raphaelite style painting.

¹⁵⁵ As quoted in Mason Hammond, “The Stained Glass Windows in Memorial Hall, Harvard University,” unpublished mss., 273, Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, MA, 1978.

William Morris, the artist, craftsman, critic, writer, social-organizer, and political activist, was a nineteenth-century “Renaissance man,” who was successful in media as wide-ranging as poetry, interior design, and jewelry making. He established Morris and Company in 1861, along with Pre-Raphaelite artists Ford Madox Brown, Burne-Jones, Rossetti, and Phillip Webb, and eventually became the sole director of the firm in 1875. Morris and Company produced furnishings largely intended for domestic spaces and interiors, including furniture, wallpapers, textiles, and stained glass, with inherent practical and aesthetic value. Morris also advocated for coordinated interiors, shunning the prevailing taste for Victorian eclecticism.

Morris endeavored to reunite the designer and craftsman and beauty and utility to elevate the standard for good design in an age of mass production, believing that the value of an object was derived, at least in part, by how it was made.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, he thought that work should benefit the worker. In England, the socialist underpinnings of the Arts and Crafts movement shaped its character. Artists, craftspeople, and critics in the movement were advocating for widespread social change, beyond the boundaries of art, to create a more moral house and workplace in England, according to the motto, “art for life’s sake.”

Stylistically, the movement drew on medieval aesthetic and craft traditions, used natural materials, and emphasized simplicity and unity in contrast to

¹⁵⁶ Anthea Callen, *Women Artists of the Arts and Crafts Movement, 1870-1914* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979), 2.

eclecticism.¹⁵⁷ Morris' works were characterized by intricate, original patterns that incorporated familiar historic, natural, and literary motifs.¹⁵⁸ Philosophically, the movement was imbued with a democratic, if also idealistic and flawed, spirit that sought to upset the hierarchy of fine art and craft and resist the specialization of factory labor.

Morris intended Morris and Company products to serve as an alternative to contemporaneous industrially produced products made of "sham materials" by "sham techniques" that flooded the market in an age where mass production became technologically possible and financially feasible.¹⁵⁹ William Morris hoped to restore truth to material, "joy in labor," simplicity, and good design, using the medieval craft guild as an organizational model.¹⁶⁰ He believed that workers were capable of more than factory work demanded of them. He was nostalgic for England's medieval past, a time in which he imagined that artists were able to both earn a living wage and act on their creative impulses to create beautiful and useful objects. However, Morris & Company's products could not replace or

¹⁵⁷ Thompson, *American Book Design and William Morris*, 17.

¹⁵⁸ Although these patterns often seem visually busy to a twenty-first century eye, they offered a pared-down version of the Victorian equivalent.

¹⁵⁹ Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius*, rev. and expanded ed. (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2005), 14.

¹⁶⁰ Peter Štanský, *Redesigning the World: William Morris, the 1880s, and the Arts and Crafts* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1985), 32.

compete with mass-produced products because they were offered at a higher price point and marketed to an elite clientele as luxury objects.¹⁶¹

As Morris advocated, with increasing persistence, for a socialist society, he was forced to acknowledge the inherent contradictions in his proposals for the ideal artist community, in which there were no divisions of labor and craftsmen had the opportunity to design what they produced. The two most glaring contradictions were that the workers themselves could not afford to buy the products they made and that they were not all as prolific and multi-talented as Morris himself. He and his workers could not serve the masses because, in Morris' own words, "art costs time, trouble, and thought."¹⁶²

In the 1880s, in the context of this aesthetic debate, Sarah Whitman entered the field of book design. Although she rarely signed her work, Whitman's mark on a book is instantly recognizable due to her original lettering, abstract floral motifs, use of gold ink, and use of negative space.¹⁶³ Whitman sought to bring good design to the middle class, whose lives she believed, in accordance with Morris, were inundated with crude design and plagued by modern city life. In her role as designer for cloth-stamped trade bindings, she aspired to restore the mass-produced book to a work of art and bring good design to the masses by embracing the power – and limitations – of technology. She absorbed the

¹⁶¹ Pat Kirkham, "William Morris: A Life in Design," in *The Beauty of Life: The Art and Design of William Morris*, ed. Diane Waggoner (London: Thames and Hudson, 2003), 24.

¹⁶² As quoted in Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design*, 17.

¹⁶³ It appears as if she signed fewer than ten of her covers. For examples of her flaming heart signature, see *Betty Leicester* or *Strangers and Wayfarers*.

philosophies of Ruskin and Morris, introduced Rossetti's aesthetic to America, popularized cohesive designs, and advocated for a return to historic and symbolic motifs. Even more importantly, she was willing to use factory labor to reach the widest possible audience. Over the course of nearly twenty-five years in the book industry, in partnership with one of the most prominent and highly respected publishers in Boston, Sarah Wyman Whitman designed over two hundred and fifty book covers and each one aspired to bring art into a middle class home. Whitman succeeded in achieving Morris' democratic ambitions because the middle class could purchase and decorate their homes with the books she designed. Whitman and Morris, faced with the same choice between an appreciation for craft and for democratic access to art, proved to have different priorities.

The Boston Brahmins and Their Books

On the other end of the socio-economic spectrum, the proliferation of the book also had consequences for members of Boston's elite. New modes of book production disrupted the traditional model of bookmaking, which perpetuated the book as a handmade, expensive object and a symbol of cultivation. Books, which were increasingly mainstream and homogenous, were pouring off presses on a massive scale and at a rapid pace. By the 1890s, they had to be reclaimed by the elite.

The so-called “Boston Brahmins,” a term Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr. first used in 1860 to suggest, if only in jest, that there was a hereditary line of academics, philanthropists, and politicians in Boston who controlled the city’s cultural and political institutions. As descendants of the “First Families” of Boston who commanded century-old fortunes, sociologist Paul Dimaggio argues that the Boston Brahmins were “the most well defined status group of any of the urban upper classes of this period.”¹⁶⁴ The Brahmins were seen as a kind of American aristocracy, perpetuated by marriage and nepotism. In addition to their wealth and social connections, Boston Brahmins, as the cultured and learned class, were largely responsible for founding and supporting a range of Boston cultural institutions including the Museum of Fine Arts and the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Nevertheless, the Brahmins’ hold on power was not entirely unassailable. The Northeast, and Boston in particular, experienced a surge in wealth and a population boom following the Civil War. Industries like railroads, mining, and banking created a new class of wealthy families, who at times presented some competition for the Boston Brahmins.¹⁶⁵ In the face of robber baron fortunes on a gargantuan scale, the Brahmins’ identity as “cultural

¹⁶⁴ Paul Dimaggio, “Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Boston: The Creation of an Organizational Base for High Culture in America,” in *Media, Culture, and Society* (1982), 34.

¹⁶⁵ Dimaggio, “Cultural Entrepreneurship,” 39.

capitalists” in possession of both knowledge and art objects became of even greater importance.¹⁶⁶

The proliferation of book collectors’ clubs, formed by wealthy Americans in cities along the East Coast beginning in the 1850s, illustrates this phenomenon.¹⁶⁷ In 1884, New York City’s Grolier Club was formed and three years later, the Club of Odd Volumes was established in Boston to celebrate the book as an art object and a symbol of wealth and sophistication. They also supported innovation within graphic design by hosting exhibitions of trade-bindings and posters. Nevertheless, these bibliophilic clubs were committed to upholding the tradition of a gentlemen’s library as it had existed in the Victorian age. Club members cultivated an appreciation for the recently outmoded model of book based on hand-production. In a world increasingly saturated with ugly, mass-produced trade bindings, they celebrated historic examples of the book, which were least accessible and most exclusive: illuminated medieval manuscripts, French hand-tooled gilt decorations on leather, and examples of fine Renaissance printing. In Boston, they also acted as a means for Brahmins to maintain their position in society as their (often dwindling) fortunes became overshadowed by those of the railroad and steel industries. These gentlemen’s clubs, which served as pseudo-intellectual social outlets, reflected the elite’s desire to isolate themselves, based on a particular, refined interest in books that

¹⁶⁶ “Cultural capitalists” is a term borrowed from Paul Dimaggio, in his article cited above.

¹⁶⁷ Thompson, *American Book Design and William Morris*, 5.

required substantial wealth and a kind of cultural sophistication that money could not buy.¹⁶⁸

When William Morris established the Kelmscott Press in 1891, he created a new model for fine printers, typographers, and presses in the United States.¹⁶⁹ Modeled on the aesthetics and practices of fifteenth century Gothic manuscripts, a team of designers and craftsmen at the Kelmscott Press printed luxurious limited editions.¹⁷⁰ Morris republished editions of important Pre-Raphaelite texts and tales of medieval England like Chaucer and Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*. The books he and his craftsmen made were the ultimate luxury object, recalling medieval illuminated manuscripts, when only the wealthiest could even read, let alone purchase, such a book. Morris personally funded hand-printed editions of books using the highest quality materials and equipment. The final products were lavish, luxurious, expensive objects for the elite, which, ideologically, were in direct conflict with Morris' mission to democratize art and craft. Morris was not ever able to resolve this conflict by whole-heartedly embracing the machine in favor of hand-production.¹⁷¹

Stylistically, works by the Kelmscott Press are easily identifiable. Dense, Gothic-style type and woodcuts were set by hand and printed on handmade laid, linen paper in very black ink and often accented with red. The Doves Press bound the works in imitation of medieval techniques, using a combination of

¹⁶⁸ Thompson, *American Book Design and William Morris*, 18.

¹⁶⁹ Thompson, *American Book Design and William Morris*, 22.

¹⁷⁰ Thompson, *American Book Design and William Morris*, 28.

¹⁷¹ Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design*, 17.

traditional, medieval, and anachronistic materials, including vellum, leather, and paper.¹⁷² The text pages were often decorated sparsely, but the title, frontispieces, and opening pages were laden with intricate woodcut illustrations, elaborate floral and patterned borders, and historiated initials, designed by Morris, Burne-Jones, Charles Marsh Gere, and Walter Crane. The books printed at the Kelmscott Press are considered to be Morris' most lavish and extravagant creations in his career as an artist.

Although in England Morris' venture into fine printing illuminates the irresolvable contradiction between handcraft and the socialist impulse to reform the workplace for laborers, followers of Morris in the United States were not politically motivated. Instead, they could freely adapt Morris' techniques, appreciation for craft, and aesthetic for profit. Fine printing met a demand in Boston, in particular, for distinctive and elite printed matter that celebrated the book as a luxury object and symbol of "cultural capital."

In the 1890s, the cloth-stamped trade bindings, which Whitman pioneered, reached their height of popularity and the beginning of the end of their era. At the same moment, William Morris established the Kelmscott Press and Boston's artists and craftsmen once again looked to the models of the Arts and Crafts movement. In response to the changing character of the book as a commodity, Boston's printers revived the art and craft of fine printing. The next generation of book artists, like Daniel Berkeley Updike, Bruce Rogers, and Carl P. Rollins,

¹⁷² Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design*, 24-5.

dedicated themselves to the practice of historical printing methods and produced handcrafted, high-quality objects of art. Although the philosophies of the Arts and Crafts movement were carried into the twentieth century by the work of fine printers, they owed a deep debt to Sarah Wyman Whitman, who if philosophically opposed to their methods, helped to cultivate an appreciation for elements of good design on the book in Boston.

CHAPTER FOUR:
STONE, GLASS, AND CLOTH:
A THEMATIC AND AESTHETIC SURVEY
OF WHITMAN'S BOOK DESIGNS

"In old books we see none of these coarse, familiar, and most inartistic renderings of the inside of the book on the outside. What we do find is a very delicate and sensitive allusion to the owner of the book, to the person who is going to use and hold the volume. And so I say, the best art had regard in book covers to the reader. It is the reader, the person who owns it, who cares for it, who is going to have a certain feeling about the book, to whom the cover will have significance."
- Sarah Wyman Whitman¹⁷³

Upon the death of Martin Brimmer's adopted niece, Gemma Timmins (1862-1890), who was "like a daughter" to Whitman, Sarah remarked in a letter to her friend, Sarah Orne Jewett:

She fought so long, my dear little Gemma, and she went forth in the sunrise. It was so peaceful and beautiful with her that one can only feel as she felt; but the human heart cries out in pain and must cry, yet knowing that God is greater than our hearts and will console and bless.¹⁷⁴

In honor of Gemma's short life, Whitman designed her memorial at Mount Auburn Cemetery, which was executed by the stone-carvers, John Evans and Company

¹⁷³ Sarah Whitman, *Notes of an Informal Talk on Book Illustrations, Inside and Out, Given Before the Boston Art Students' Association, February 14, 1894*, (Boston: Boston Art Students' Association, 1894), 4.

¹⁷⁴ Betty Smith, "Some Additional Connections," Sarah Wyman Whitman file, August 23, 1999, p. 1, Mount Auburn Cemetery Historical Collections; Sarah Whitman to Sarah Orne Jewett, May 26, 1890, *Letters of Sarah Whitman* (Cambridge, MA: Merrymount Press, 1907), 67. Gemma and her sister, Minna (1861-1897), were raised in Italy by their father, Mrs. Brimmer's brother, and their Milanese mother. Upon their parents' deaths, the Brimmer family adopted them. Gemma died at a young age, but her elder sister, Minna Timmins later married the author, John Jay Chapman (1862-1933). Whitman is thought to have been instrumental in convincing Brimmer of Chapman's worthy character.

of Boston (fig. 9).¹⁷⁵ In the center of the flat, rectangular stone, which is set into the ground, there is an inscription bearing Gemma's full name and the years of life in Whitman's lettering. The phrases are not separated by line breaks, but instead by abstract floral motifs one recognizes from Whitman's book designs. Above the inscription, there is a cross, made from stylized fleurs-de-lis, similar to one in the design for Louise Imogen Guiney's *The Martyr's Idyl* (1899). Below, there is a crest featuring a "lamb of God," which symbolizes the perfect sacrificial offering in the Christian tradition. The edge of the stone is inscribed with an excerpt, in Italian, from Dante's *Purgatorio*: "Beyond the steep ways and the narrow art thou/ Behold the sun that shines upon thy forehead."¹⁷⁶

The work is striking in its stylistic resemblance to Whitman's book designs. Like her cover designs, Whitman seamlessly integrates text in her signature lettering with familiar, abstracted floral motifs and Christian imagery. Although Gemma's stone is perhaps the most detailed and lavish one Whitman designed, she was commissioned to complete at least five other monuments at Mount Auburn Cemetery, including those of Mary Greenwood Lodge, James Lodge, and a single stone for Roger Wolcott (1847-1900) and Edith Prescott

¹⁷⁵ Founded in 1831, Mount Auburn Cemetery was a fashionable location to bury one's family – or take a Sunday stroll - in the nineteenth-century. It served as both a resting ground for the dead and as a park in which one could appreciate and contemplate the beauty of nature. For a discussion of Mount Auburn Cemetery within the context of romanticism in Boston, see Thomas Bender, "The 'Rural' Cemetery Movement: Urban Travail and the Appeal of Nature," in *The New England Quarterly* 47, no. 2 (June 1974): 196-211.

¹⁷⁶ "Gemma Timmins Monument Inscription," Sarah Wyman Whitman file, Mount Auburn Cemetery Historical Collections, Cambridge, MA.

(1853-1934). These funerary monuments in stone and her work in stained glass demonstrate that her use of imagery, sense of unity, and philosophies of book design translated effortlessly across a range of media. An aesthetic and thematic survey of her book covers offers an avenue to study her style and principles of design.

Before Sarah Wyman Whitman's designs, Boston publishers often left the decoration of a book cover to an engraver, with technical abilities, but limited experience in design. The brass plates they had at hand were expensive and publishers reused them in an effort to conserve resources. The common result was a cover design that did not have much, if any, relation to the book's content. Whitman herself complained of the cheap effect that nonsensical combinations of motifs across cultures and time periods produced. Her design philosophy, which cleared away the clutter, emphasized the symbolic importance of her motifs, and ultimately, elevated books to decorative objects profoundly changed the model of book design in Boston. Although Whitman's was grounded in an aesthetic philosophy, her approach also appealed to publishers because she was willing to work within financial constraints of the industry to bring art to the people. Aesthetically and philosophically, Whitman was carving out a new path, with Dante Rossetti, a British Pre-Raphaelite artist and designer, as her model, a

generation before Daniel Berkeley Updike, Bruce Rogers, and Will Bradley enter the field.¹⁷⁷

Over the course of her twenty-five year career in the book industry, Whitman designed hundreds of covers, largely for a single publisher, Houghton Mifflin and Company. Unfortunately, no official contract of employment, if such a record ever existed, survives. It is possible, though admittedly unlikely, that she was commissioned independently for each design for Houghton Mifflin, given the sheer number of covers she produced.¹⁷⁸ Therefore, her earnings, terms of employment or commission, and budgets remain largely mysterious.¹⁷⁹ Even her original drawings have been lost, other than one sketchbook; only a handful of the brass plates remain.¹⁸⁰ In the commercial industry in which Whitman was working, there were important negotiations among author, publisher, and designer, which shaped, at least in part, her designs. Even Whitman had generic

¹⁷⁷ Charles Gullans and John Epsey, "American Trade Bindings and Their Designers, 1880-1915," in *Collectible Books: Some New Paths*, ed. Jean Peters (New York: R.R. Bowker, 1979), 38.

¹⁷⁸ Whitman signed fewer than ten of her covers with her flaming-heart signature. However, Stuart Walker, conservator at the Boston Public Library, has compiled an unpublished manuscript, which outlines the books designed by Whitman and estimates that she designed around two hundred and fifty book covers.

¹⁷⁹ Although portions of her correspondence between Whitman and executives of Houghton Mifflin and Company, including George Mifflin and Horace Scudder, survive, the letters are largely polite and social in nature. She occasionally mentions her book designs, but her comments are limited to fine tweaks in color or layout. Her drawings, unfortunately, do not survive other than in a small sketchbook at Houghton Library, Harvard University.

¹⁸⁰ Many of the brasses were discarded in the early 1970s when the Riverside Press was sold. Charles A. Rheault managed to save several of them, including the brass plate for Sarah Wyman Whitman's design for *The Country of the Pointed Firs*.

designs, in which she reused a floral motif or image of a wreath, adding only the title in her distinctive lettering. We may speculate that this was a cost-saving or laborsaving technique for small-scale editions or little-known authors. In this chapter, I propose several possible explanations for a range of her design choices, given the inevitable, if also unknown, financial constraints of the publisher, requests of the author, limited selection of inks and cloth, and demands of the designer.

The First Experiments in Book Design

In 1880, Sarah Wyman Whitman designed her first book, *Verses*, for Sarah Chauncey Woolsey (1835-1905) and Roberts Brothers Publishing in Boston (fig. 10). Woolsey, who wrote using the penname Susan Coolidge, was an author of children's stories, a poet, and a descendent of one of New England's first families, who could trace her lineage to John Winthrop, Jonathan Edwards, and a line of Yale University Presidents. As an author, she is best remembered for her series of *What Katy Did* stories (1873-1890) whose setting and characters are largely drawn from her experience as a student at Mrs. Hubbard's Boarding School, an all-girls academy in New Hampshire.¹⁸¹ Woolsey spent most of her childhood in New Haven, but became a "New Englander" when her family moved

¹⁸¹ Ruth K. MacDonald, "Sarah Chauncey Woolsey (Susan Coolidge), 1835-1905," in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vol. 42, ed. Glenn E. Estes (Detroit, MI: Gale Research Co., 1985), 397.

to Newport in 1855; they later built a summer home in the Catskills.¹⁸² Whitman and Woolsey shared many mutual friends among a network of women artists, authors, and activists including Annie Fields, Sarah Orne Jewett, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Rose Lamb, Helen B. Merriman, and Elizabeth Cary Agassiz. When Woolsey made winter trips to Boston to visit her friends, she often stayed with Mrs. Whitman on Beacon Hill, which attests to their close friendship and overlapping social circles.¹⁸³ Their collaboration on *Verses* was probably the result of personal connections among this female network.

Whitman began her career in book design with *Verses* by imitating British models. In general, this and other early designs make overt reference to the work of Dante Rossetti, the Pre-Raphaelite painter and designer who later worked as a designer for William Morris. Whitman's design for *Verses* was based largely on Rossetti's book cover for Algernon Charles Swinburne's collection of poetry, *Atalanta in Calydon*, published fifteen years earlier in 1865 (fig. 11). It was the second in a series of three covers Rossetti designed using rondel motifs, which included his brother's translation for *The Comedy of Dante Alighieri* (1865) and Swinburne's *Songs Before Sunrise* (1871). In *Atalanta in Calydon*, four gold rondels with Japanesque motifs were stamped onto the front covers: two on the fore edge, in the upper and lower corners, and an overlapping pair in the middle, adjacent to the spine. Rossetti draws from Japanese traditions to create the

¹⁸² Frances C. Darling, "Susan Coolidge, 1835-1905," in *The Hewins Lectures*, ed. Siri Andrews (Boston: Horn Book, 1963), 254, 259.

¹⁸³ Darling, "Susan Coolidge," 261.

simplicity and asymmetric balance, which is essential to the aesthetic concept of the cover's design. The boards were covered in white buckram, a linen or cotton cloth stiffened with starch, that made the gold rondels stand out.¹⁸⁴

Coolidge's *Verses* therefore incorporates the same creamy white cover, Japanesque gold rondels, asymmetric layout, and appreciation for negative space as Rossetti's original. The rondels, if stylistically similar to those on *Atalanta*, feature different motifs and are also larger. She likely made this choice in an effort to highlight the details of their patterns and textures. Whitman also changed the layout of the gold rondels. She brought the three circular motifs to overlap on one another in the upper right quadrant of the cover, instead of balancing them individually in the corners and against the spine. The overlapping configuration is, therefore, her invention. The composition for *Verses*, unlike *Atalanta* or the others in Rossetti's rondel series, is dramatically asymmetric and reflects her appreciation of Japanese design principles.

Although one must credit Rossetti's creative innovations, Whitman deserves to be recognized for her good taste and sensitivity to trends in British book design. Her radically simple and unified design would have contrasted starkly with the over-gilded, ornament-encrusted covers produced for contemporary American publications. Instead, she introduced a new model for book design, which was an important precursor to Art Nouveau. Although she used Rossetti's work as a model, Whitman made a bold choice to replace the

¹⁸⁴ Jerome J. McGann, "Binding Design: *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865)," *Rossetti Archive*, 2008. <http://www.rossettiarchive.org/docs/sa121.rap.html>

standard dark cloth cover with a white one (a color which soiled so easily) and to introduce Rossetti's principles of design to the American market.

Perhaps even more important than *Verses'* similarity to *Atalanta* is the significant change Whitman made to Rossetti's design; in *Verses*, Whitman included textual information on the cover. Although we may only speculate as to whether Whitman made this choice at the request of the author or publisher (and therefore was beyond her control) or if it was an intentional feature of her design, Whitman's ability to gracefully integrate text and image became a hallmark of her style. Even in *Verses*, her first work in book design, Whitman demonstrates an interest in text and lettering. The title of the volume and the author's name are stylistically integrated into the overall design and rendered in what will become her distinctive lettering, recognizable for its flat-topped A's, curved E's, and swirly G's.¹⁸⁵ Other than the title, author's name, and an image of three overlapping circles arranged asymmetrically below the text, the cover is simply and literally white space. Therefore, Whitman's appropriation of negative space, asymmetry, and Japanesque motifs reveal her debt to Dante Rossetti, but she would soon develop her own aesthetic philosophy that celebrated lettering.

Nearly a decade later, when Roberts Brothers published *A Few More Verses* by Susan Coolidge in 1889, Whitman was again commissioned for the design. She had gained essential experience, having designed approximately

¹⁸⁵ Whitman likely adapted what became her characteristic flat-topped "A" from Dürer's signature, which appears on his prints. Alternatively, the shapes of Japanese Shinto structures may also have inspired her style.

one hundred covers since *Verses*, her first commission in book design. The cover strongly recalls Whitman's original design of *Verses*, which may have been at the request of the author or publisher or a decision Whitman made herself. Nevertheless, what is apparent is that the aesthetic consistency between the two books signals that they are both part of the same series. The title and author's name are written (if more consistently and confidently) in Whitman's familiar lettering. The composition is strikingly similar, using the same set of three Japanesque rondels in the upper right corner. The only significant change Whitman makes to the design nearly ten years later is the addition of another set of rondels diagonally opposite from the original. The reuse of the original set of rondels may have been a cost-saving technique, if Roberts Brothers still owned the original brass plate, but the decision to model *A Few More Verses* on her 1880 design for *Verses* more likely reflects the author and publisher's appreciation for Whitman's original cover. Ten years later, Whitman still held Rossetti's spirit of design in high esteem.

Design on a Budget

As Houghton Mifflin's book designer, Whitman was responsible for the gamut of books published by the firm, from beloved Boston luminaries, to her close friends, to little-known authors who struggled to achieve recognition in their own time. The covers Whitman designed reveal a hierarchy within the book design industry, which allocated more resources to well-known and financially

successful authors. This is best illustrated by comparing her elegant designs for Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun* (originally published in 1860, reprinted with Whitman's designs in 1889 and 1899) with Alice French's (who wrote under the pseudonym Octave Thanet) *Knitters in the Sun* (1887). For Hawthorne's volume, Whitman designed a holiday edition in two color schemes and a "Roman Edition," which both demanded intense creative labor and extensive resources. In contrast, Alice French, who is remembered for her local-color writing, was a popular short-story writer in the 1890s. Whitman's design for *Knitters in the Sun* is extremely restrained, using only basic geometric shapes and a simple color scheme. These works suggest that particular authors received different standards of financial and creative resources from the designer and publisher.

In 1889, when Whitman's edition of *The Marble Faun* was released for the holiday season, Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864) had already earned a reputation as celebrated, respected Boston author and was recognized as a member of the mid-nineteenth-century circle of Boston's literary luminaries (fig. 12).¹⁸⁶ For the republication of *The Marble Faun* in 1889 and 1899, Whitman designed two different covers and it appears that no expense was spared, from the raw materials, to the time and creative capital required to design them (fig. 13). In 1889, the holiday edition was published with the same design in cloth and in vellum, which reflects Houghton Mifflin and Company's interest in creating the illusion of luxury and medieval traditions for a mass-produced object. Ten years

¹⁸⁶ William Ticknor and James Fields at Ticknor and Fields, the firm that Henry Oscar Houghton eventually purchased, had originally published the book in 1860.

later in 1899, Houghton Mifflin rereleased *The Marble Faun* as the “Roman Edition,” which featured an entirely new design in Whitman’s signature style. The fact that Houghton Mifflin released several editions is itself demonstrative of the project’s large budget.

For the 1889 edition of the *Marble Faun*, Whitman turned once again to Dante Rossetti’s designs for inspiration, specifically, the cover for *Poems* (1870) and *Ballads and Sonnets* (1881, fig. 14). Both of those designs featured grids of stylized circles, which regularly integrated floral motifs and spanned the recto and verso covers of a book. Whitman integrated these two design elements, creating her geometric grids from a fleur-de-lis and an upside-down heart, a motif which became a hallmark of her designs. Last, she overlaid the grids with a solid, stylized shell and leaf motif. Like Rossetti’s original, Whitman does not expend effort replicating the fleurs-de-lis with precision; instead she preserves the rustic quality of the hand-drawn design by the allowing for variation in shape. Within the field of book design, which demanded a designer to produce a high volume of designs, Whitman’s intricate and layered design demanded extensive creative labor and reflects the significant investment that Houghton Mifflin expected would pay off.

The “Roman Edition” of *The Marble Faun*, released in 1899, represents a departure from designs heavily influenced by Rossetti and the emergence of Whitman’s celebrated style. The Roman Edition featured one of Whitman’s

signature motifs: the flower blossom and its sinuous stem.¹⁸⁷ Like the 1889 edition, no text appears on the cover, but instead, the title and author's name are found on the spine in her lettering. Four flower blossoms, oriented horizontally, span across the recto cover. When the book is closed, the edges of the stems meet over the fore edge of the book. Across the spine of the book, a solid line connects the head of the flower on the verso cover with its stem on the recto cover.

In her design, Whitman draws the viewer's attention again to the illusion of hand-labor. From a distance, the flowers appear to be identical, but upon closer examination, the viewer understands that the flowers, though similar in shape, are made from unique petals and that each pair of stems entwines in a different direction. The variations among the flowers were deliberate. Whitman sought to use her drawings as a means to bring good design to the masses at a low price. This is a particularly beautiful example in her oeuvre, which simultaneously acknowledges the value of handcraft and embraces the technology that makes mass-production possible.

Octave Thanet's *Knitters in the Sun* offers a stark contrast in its austere, restrained design (fig. 15) Although Whitman achieved a bold, and arguably modern, aesthetic in this work, the extreme simplicity of the composition, shapes, and colors, especially in contrast to high-budget design commissions, suggest

¹⁸⁷ This same floral motif featured in her designs as early as 1884, in *A Roman Singer* and later in *Nine Love Songs* (1890) and *The Great Remembrance* (1893) before its use in *The Marble Faun*.

that Whitman had fewer resources with which to create the design. Alice French (1850-1934), like Whitman herself, was well connected to the prosperous social elite in Boston. However, French's father's business moved to the mid-west and there she found a niche as an author, specializing in local color story writing.¹⁸⁸ *Knitters in the Sun*, a novel set in Arkansas, is an example of her work within that genre.

Whitman's design for *Knitters in the Sun* illustrates that she could make evocative choices with limited financial resources, while still giving careful thought to composition and motifs. For *Knitters*, Whitman drew inspiration for the cover's imagery from the novel's title. Sarah's placement of a circle in the highest quadrant of the cover and the choice to clothe the book in yellow fabric concisely evokes an image of a sun, hovering above the horizon line. Other than the text, Whitman includes only one other motif. She draws a dark line off-center, which perhaps, evokes the image of a knitting needle or the popular two-color, three-part binding convention. Although Whitman was committed to clearing the Victorian clutter from book covers, *Knitters* takes her interest in negative space and minimalism to an extreme.

It is Whitman's distinct lettering that helps to create the illusion that the book is a unique, hand-made object. The second "T" in "Knitters" and the subtle inconsistencies among the s' and a's make it is obvious that she wrote the text by

¹⁸⁸ Ethel C. Simpson, "Octave Thanet, (1850-1934), in *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2008), <http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=1651>

hand. Like all her designs, the inconsistencies in her lettering evoke the calligraphic tradition, but more important, illuminate her willingness to embrace the technology that made the mass-produced book financially feasible in the late-nineteenth-century. Whitman creates the “aura” of a handmade object by mechanical means and she makes typography and lettering the significant design element. Practically, this was an elegant, economically efficient solution for the primary book designer at a large publishing house. Whitman was able to add “a touch of art” to any volume by rendering the textual information in her signature script against stark and liberating negative space.

Yet, Whitman’s design for *Knitters in the Sun* raises many questions: did Whitman design the cover according to a set of restraints dictated by her publisher? Or did she consciously employ a stark and restrained composition to test the extremes of her aesthetic principles? Aesthetics aside, it is relevant that for *Knitters*, Whitman had to perform very little labor in drawing. Had Alice French been a high-budget author, it seems likely that she would have protested that Whitman did not create a more sophisticated design. After all, Whitman created a demand for her style, characterized by her signature lettering and familiar floral and symbolic motifs – and this design bears little resemblance to the ones which made her famous.

Medieval Models

Like the English Pre-Raphaelite artists before her, Whitman used the medieval book as her model. For many late-nineteenth-century American intellectuals, like Whitman's mentors, Phillips Brooks and Charles Eliot Norton, medieval England was a proper historical source because it represented a purer era of Christianity and artistic production, free from the pagan influence of the Greco-Romans. For books in particular, it was deemed appropriate and suitable to decorate nearly any book with medieval motifs, regardless of its content. Although this appears contradictory to Whitman's commitment to conveying content through covers, she felt justified using medieval motifs on any book because she understood decorated trade bindings to be a part of a long history of the book, which she could trace back to the medieval era.¹⁸⁹

Whitman's most-often borrowed motifs include historiated initials, to reference medieval scribal practice, and the metal clasps common in luxury books of hours. She experimented with highly stylized and more traditional evocations of medieval motifs over the course of her career in book design. The contrast between her two approaches is best illustrated by comparing her cover designs for Bret Harte's *A First Family of Tasajara* and Frances Hopkinson Smith's *A White Umbrella in Mexico*, which were both published in 1892 (fig. 16, 17). These designs are reflective of Whitman's historicist aesthetic philosophy and illustrate how she made medieval content modern and relevant.

¹⁸⁹ Whitman, *Notes of an Informal Talk on Book Design*, 4.

Whitman's design for Bret Harte's volume reflects a more traditional approach, which draws directly from medieval sources.¹⁹⁰ The historiated initial is surrounded by an irregular, leafy pattern, which references the tradition of decorated manuscripts of the medieval era. In those volumes, the first letter of the page or section would be given particular creative attention, usually within a square or rectangular border. As in the manuscript era, the historiated initial serves as the focal point in her design for *A First Family of Tasajara*. Also, much like the monks and lay scholars who made medieval manuscripts, and the Pre-Raphaelites contemporary to her, Whitman was inspired by nature and history. She surrounds the historiated initial with a delicate border of ivy that entwines the "A" on a background of empty space. Grounded in historical tradition and inspired by contemporary aesthetic trends, the most innovative feature of the design is that Whitman chooses to combine the historiated initial with the stark negative space, which commands most of the composition.

Whitman's design for Frances Hopkinson Smith's *A White Umbrella in Mexico* illustrates her ability to synthesize inspiration from contemporary and historical sources. The design demonstrates her potential to innovate, rather than simply identify and imitate aesthetic trends. *A White Umbrella* features a pared-down historiated initial that is bold in its elegant simplicity. Whitman eliminates the busy and complex floral motif in favor of a solid gold background for the first

¹⁹⁰ Other similar designs by Whitman and authored by Bret Harte include *The Heritage of Dedlow Marsh and Other Tales* (1889), *Barker's Luck and Other Stories* (1896) and *The Bell-Ringer of Angel's* (1894) and George Edward Woodbury's *The North Shore Watch and Other Poems* (1890).

letter of the title. Her choice to stamp the design in gilt successfully evokes the tradition of books as luxury objects. Whitman's treatments of the historiated initials for *The First Family* and *The White Umbrella*, are still more examples of her ability to make the lettering itself the most compelling and important design element on a book cover. Although the history of this practice stretches back to the medieval era Whitman cited, it was an innovation for mass-produced trade bindings.

Although Whitman most commonly cited the historiated initial among a range of medieval motifs, she did occasionally make allusions to raised-cord bookbindings, enameled clasps, and protective metal corner plates. Oliver Wendell Holmes' (1809-1894) *The One Hoss Shay With its Companion Poems* is an illustrative example of her references to medieval bookbinding (1892, fig. 18).¹⁹¹ In addition to Whitman's signature lettering, the binding features three fleurs-de-lis, which wrap around the spine to the back cover. Their placement gestures toward a medieval binding technique, which involved sewing on regularly spaced cords that wrapped around the spine and attached to both covers. The spine was then wrapped in leather to cover the cords, but they remained raised and visible. Whitman's choice to decorate the fore-edge of the cover with two ornate motifs resembling clasps cites a time when handcrafts like

¹⁹¹ See also Whitman's designs for Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha* (1895) and *Evangeline* (1897), Oliver Wendell Holmes' *Dorothy Q, together with A Ballad of the Boston Tea Party & Grandmother's Story of Bunker Hill Battle* (1893) and *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table* (1894) and Theodora Walton Woolsey's *From Day to Day* (1898).

jewelry making and metalwork were revered and incorporated into the production of the book. It is significant that *The One Hoss Shay* was released as a trade edition, with metallic ink on dark gray cloth and also in a luxury edition, with maroon ink on leather. In either case, by use of leather or shiny ink, the materials make Whitman's intentions to allude to the medieval book more apparent and the clasp motifs themselves even more convincing.

Japonisme

Boston's small and overlapping circles of wealthy intellectuals nearly guaranteed that Sarah Whitman was exposed to Japanese art first-hand through Ernest Fenollosa (1853-1908), Edward Sylvester Morse (1838-1925), and William Sturgis Bigelow (1850-1926), Boston's famous "Japanistes." They were members of the Harvard intellectual circle, whose art collections founded the Asian Department at the Museum of Fine Arts. Fenollosa, who served as the first curator of the Asian Art Department, organized popular exhibitions of Japanese art, which had a profound effect on the taste and art production in Boston. As a member of the Committee of the Museum School, Whitman certainly crossed paths with Fenollosa and her minimalist designs, asymmetric compositions, and use of Japanese motifs demonstrates the far-reaching influence of *Japonisme* on her work.

During the "Japan Craze" of late-nineteenth century Boston, Japanese motifs were appearing on all kinds of American decorative objects, from

silverware to ceramics. Across the decorative arts, Japanese motifs were often imitated without proper context and for Whitman, the appropriation of symbolic motifs demanded sensitivity. She aspired to restored Japanese motifs to their “proper place” on the covers of books dedicated to the subject of Japan. Whitman’s choice to decorate the cover of Lafcadio Hearn’s book *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan* (1895), which is based on his experience living in Japan in the 1890s, with bamboo shoots is therefore appropriate.

Another successful design inspired by Japanese motifs was *Occult Japan* or *The Way of the Gods* by Percival Lowell (1894, fig. 19). In this understated design, Whitman sought to restore Eastern motifs, like the lily, their proper places as symbolic motifs. Whitman made a unified motif from the title and the lily blossom and then asymmetrically positioned it the fore edge of the cover. The rest of the design is negative space. In *Occult Japan*, Whitman paid homage to Japanese woodblock prints, which featured balanced compositions and long expanses of negative space. Last, she restores the lily blossom, a Japanese motif that was particularly abused in the context of bad design, to its proper place on a book addressing Japanese culture.¹⁹²

Whitman’s Best, According the Artist Herself

In 1902, Victor L. and Ernest H. Briggs, of Briggs Brothers Publishing,

¹⁹² See also Whitman’s design for *The Soul of the Far East* by Percival Lowell (1888). Her design is based largely on the design for *The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (1876), which is often attributed (though with controversy) to Dante Rossetti.

asked Mrs. Whitman to identify her favorite and most successful designs throughout her twenty-year career for their publication, *Twentieth Century Book Design* (1902). Among them, Whitman cites Martin Brimmer's *Egypt* (1892) and the Roman Edition of Hawthorne's *Marble Faun* (1899), which are both designs that have earned and maintained critical approval. Somewhat surprisingly, she also mentions Hawthorne's *Our Old Home* (1891) as a design that ranks among her best work.¹⁹³

Whitman's design for Martin Brimmer's *Egypt* is among her most celebrated designs and is another stunning example of her ability to integrate symbolic imagery and text (fig. 20). Its success is reflection both of her strength as a designer and their close friendship. The book is comprised of three essays on the history, religion, and art of ancient Egypt, written by her friend, mentor, and patron, Martin Brimmer, who served as the first president of the Museum of Fine Arts Boston. The cover's design features three stylized papyri in gold, which align with the text of the title, and a dashed gold border hugs the edge of the covers. As essential raw material for the boats, shoes, and most importantly, the written record, it is a thoughtful choice to represent Egypt with this indigenous plant. The stems of the trio of papyrus plants overlay the "Y" in "Egypt," leaving only the arms of the letter exposed. The stems of the flower therefore become an extension of the text, whose shape mimics that of the "Y" itself.

¹⁹³ I am grateful to Stuart Walker, who came across Whitman's original letter to the publishers in his research, and shared his transcription with me. The letter is currently in a private collection.

Hawthorne's *Our Old Home* features three gold flower blossoms in a triangular cluster, which hover above a tangle of vines and leaves that fill in the circle in their background (fig. 21). This image sits in the middle of the red cover; a border of x-shaped motifs outlines it, with blossoms in each of the four corners. The design for *Our Old Home* is uncluttered, simple, and therefore a successful illustration of the modern notion of negative space. Yet, it is also an unconventional choice because it does not stand out among other designs with floral motifs, like Celia Thaxter's *An Island Garden* (1894, fig. 22) or Louise Imogen Guiney's *The Martyr's Idyl* (1899, fig. 23). In the aforementioned designs, Whitman presented innovative and visually interesting compositions. *Our Old Home* lacks the visual inventiveness that makes *An Island Garden* and *The Martyr's Idyl* great designs. *The Martyr's Idyl* integrates the image of a blossom, a cross, and a geometric pattern and looks forward to abstraction and the even more stylized imagery of the early twentieth century. The effect of *An Island Garden* was more immediate - her cover was quoted in the background Ethyl Reed's 1895 cover design for the *Boston Sunday Herald* in the poster style.¹⁹⁴

Whitman also remembers with fondness several of her small-scale, privately printed, unique or limited editions, initiated by community members and friends. One imagines that these commissions allowed her the largest degree of creative freedom, but also the opportunity to use expensive materials and

¹⁹⁴ Nancy Finlay, *Artists of the Book in Boston, 1890-1910* (Cambridge, MA: The Houghton Library, 1985), 21. Ethyl Reed's 1895 cover design for the *Boston Sunday Herald* is discussed in more detail in the epilogue.

dedicate her time to the design. These small-scale commissions likely afforded her the significant and unique personal satisfaction of being valued by one's friends – without the publisher and middleman between her vision and the book. For example, philanthropist Robert Treat Paine (1835-1910) commissioned three copies of V.G. Allen's *The Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks* in 1901.¹⁹⁵ Unfortunately, these limited edition volumes, executed by Whitman according to commission, are difficult to identify because they rarely enter into public collections. Many other small-scale designs produced on commission may exist in private libraries and collections.

Intermedial Designs

Throughout Whitman's prolific career in book design, she was also working on commission for funerary monuments, stained glass, interior design, painting, and graphic design. Although Whitman's book designs are interesting as a body of work, the motifs and compositions of her book designs overlap and intersect across media in surprising ways. Her work in one medium informed all the others.

For example, the *Phillips Brooks Memorial Window* (1893) in Trinity Church Boston's Parish House looks familiar to a viewer with any exposure to Whitman's oeuvre in book design.¹⁹⁶ Her lettering is, of course, an obvious clue,

¹⁹⁵ Stuart Walker, comp., "Sarah Wyman Whitman Bindings," undated manuscript, courtesy of author, 1.

¹⁹⁶ Please see chapter two for a thorough art historical analysis of this work.

but even after setting aside the textual element in the design, the familiarity of the motifs, decorative borders, and the liberal use of negative space strike one immediately as Whitman-esque. Furthermore, upon closer examination, the three rectangular windows even resemble book covers in their proportions.

If one were to isolate the central panel in the *Phillips Brooks' Window*, Whitman's design for Helen Choate Prince's *The Story of Christine Rochefort* immediately comes to mind (fig. 24). Designed two years after the window, the cover design is an adaptation of the original work in glass. Whitman drew its inspiration directly from the composition and motifs at Trinity: both works feature a wreath, a shield, and a quatrefoil motif. Yet, the most striking difference between the two works is the ways in which the limitations of each media change the design. In the glass, chunky ornaments of glass sit at the intersections of the leading on a grid. One wonders if Whitman intended the quatrefoils to be aligned regularly or if the leaded grid made her design structurally possible. *The Story of Christine Rochefort* offers one possible response.

In book design, the limitations of the medium are fundamentally different from those of stained glass. In particular, the integrity of the book's structure does not depend on its design, as it does in stained glass. Without the lead grid, the quatrefoils would be unstable. In her book design, Whitman is relieved from this constraint; in *Rochefort*, the fleur-de-lis motif (rather than a quatrefoil) hover in a diamond pattern, unconnected by lines that would simulate the effects of leading in stained glass. Similar floating floral motifs also appear in other designs in the

same year, including *Ten New England Blossoms* (1895) and *Timothy's Quest* (1895, fig. 25). Furthermore, Whitman's celebrated design for Sarah Orne Jewett's *Deephaven* (1894) also features a floating floral motif. In this design, unlike in *Ten New England Blossoms* or *Timothy's Quest*, the sinuous vine that connects the flowers would have been difficult to create in glass. This observation raises still more questions: for Whitman, was her work in book design an improvement of the original design in stained glass because it more closely reflected her original intention? Or did she conceive of the designs in these two media as wholly independent projects?

To help answer these questions, it is worth noting that the floating quatrefoil motif was not the only element Whitman adapted to book design in the 1890s. Wreaths also begin to appear in Whitman's cover designs following the *Phillips Brooks Memorial Window* in 1893. The motif, in various styles, graces the covers of at least ten books from *A Victorian Anthology* (1895) to Lowell's *Latest Literary Essays* (1895).¹⁹⁷ The wreath motif appears in different styles, as a delicate Roman-inspired laurel to a ring of flower blossoms. However, the original wreath from the *Phillips Brooks Memorial Window* is replicated with precision in the design for *Addresses Delivered by Henry Lee Higginson* (1902) and again in

¹⁹⁷ Other Whitman designs which feature wreaths include: *The Poems of George Pellet* (1892), *Horatian Echoes: Translation of the Odes of Horace* (1893), *The Life of Nancy* (1895), *Venetian Life* (1896), *Memories of Hawthorne* (1897), *Betty Leicester's Christmas* (1899), and *The American Anthology* (1900).

her eulogy, *Sarah Whitman* (1904).¹⁹⁸ The wreaths on those covers feature the same, oblong, textured leaves, the interspersed berries, and irregular outline as the original in stained glass. In particular, the wreath on *Higginson* is nearly the same design, other than the striking absence of color in the book design. The result on *Higginson* is that the wreath appears more stylized. In the window, the colored glass is the most important element of the overall design. The natural light shines through the glass and allows the viewer to appreciate the nuances of the shades of color in the glass, which Whitman hand-selected. When this design was adapted to book design, was it a conscious design choice on Whitman's part to make the wreath monochromatic or a compulsory effort to work within the limitations of the medium?

Although difficult to offer definitive answers to those questions, the *Courage, Love, and Patience Window* demonstrates that Whitman's inspiration for designs across media was fluid (fig. 28). She drew inspiration not only from works in stained glass, but also from her book designs; in this case, she used previous designs to create the backdrop for an allegorical representation of America in stained glass. The stylized, abstract evocation of vines between the columns against a blue sky recalls the book designs for *A Rambler's Lease* (fig. 26) and *Being a Boy* (1897, fig. 27). In these designs, Whitman experimented with solid, irregular shapes, connected with a vine at hard angles to evoke an

¹⁹⁸ Her eulogy was published after her death, so she is not directly responsible for the design. However, it is likely that Daniel Berkeley Updike of the Merrymount Press, who designed the cover, recycled her design. Stuart Walker corroborates this theory.

image of flora. In *Courage, Love, and Patience*, Whitman made the soft edges in *A Rambler's Lease* and *Being a Boy* into hard ones. In glass, the shapes are more geometric and abstract, which is essential to the design's stability in stained glass.

Sarah Wyman Whitman's prolific career in design across stone, glass, and cloth illustrates her commitment to principles of good design. Whitman was able to adapt to financial constraints and approached each project with sensitivity. With Rossetti as her model, Whitman created a signature style of lettering, motifs, and compositions that she adapted to stained glass, book covers, and funerary monuments. Throughout her career as a book designer for Houghton Mifflin, Whitman fulfilled her commitment to middle class audiences by offering designs that transformed practical objects into ones worthy of display.

EPILOGUE:
CHANGING TASTES, CHANGING COMMUNITIES

“It is important in evaluating her to understand that she thought through the problems for herself before Beardsley, before Will Bradley, with a single example from Rossetti to guide her through the historical wilderness of the book.”
- John Epsey and Charles Gullans, on Sarah Wyman Whitman¹⁹⁹

The Poster Style

In 1890, during the height of Whitman’s career as a book designer in cloth and gilt, the Grolier Club of New York hosted the first-ever exhibition in America dedicated to poster design. The colorful, bold, pared-down, and abstract designs were made possible by half-tone technology that made color reproductions from lightweight, inexpensive zinc plates possible on a commercial scale.²⁰⁰ Posters and paper dust jackets in this style were popular and asserted by tastemakers and critics as an art form. Despite some public outcry against the poster style, it eventually prevailed and replaced gilt-stamped bindings in the mass-produced book industry with colorful paper dust jackets. In Boston, Whitman’s work, which cleared away the clutter of mid-century book covers, paved the way for this aesthetic.²⁰¹

Originating in France, Jules Chéret (1836-1932), Henri de Toulouse-

¹⁹⁹ Charles Gullans and John Epsey, “American Trade Bindings and Their Designers, 1880-1915,” in *Collectible Books: Some New Paths*, ed. Jean Peters (New York: R.R. Bowker, 1979), 38.

²⁰⁰ Paul F. Borth, “Photoengraving” in *Britannica Online Encyclopedia*, (The halftone process), 2-3.

²⁰¹ Boston Public Library, *American Posters of the Nineties* (Lunenburg, VT: Stinehour Press, 1974). 8, 11.

Lautrec (1864-1901), and Théophile Steinlin (1859-1923) made the poster popular in France by advertising entertainment venues, like the theatre, cafés, and art exhibitions.²⁰² In England, however, the poster style was more closely related to the publishing industry. Walter Crane (1845-1915) and Aubrey Beardsley (1872-1898), artists with wildly different aesthetic styles, were two of England's most important designers and illustrators. Walter Crane, who was a member of the Pre-Raphaelites and worked closely with William Morris at Kelmscott Press, experimented with posters design when he worked as an illustrator for "yellowbacks," the British equivalent of American dime novels, and children's book illustrations. Aubrey Beardsley, an aesthete, co-founded the literary journal, *The Yellow Book*, and designed its covers in a style heavily influenced by Art Nouveau. Beardsley's interest in the sinuous line and pattern had a major impact on the aesthetics of graphic design in America.²⁰³

²⁰² To Americans, this kind of amusement was associated with excessive alcohol, freer sexuality, and debauchery. Although the Grolier Club and author Brander Matthews of *Century Magazine* in the United States claimed poster designs as exciting aesthetic innovations, other critics deemed them morally unsuitable for the American populace, given their recent history in connection to decadent revelry and deviant sexuality in Europe. Boston Public Library, *American Posters*, 8.

²⁰³ In addition to the salacious context from which poster design emerged in France, art critic and author Oscar Wilde's trial and imprisonment for sodomy and indecency tainted the ideals of the Aesthetic Movement in the mid-1890's. In the immediate aftermath of the trial, the climate in England was particularly hostile to the poster design work of Aubrey Beardsley, who was a friend of Oscar Wilde. Furthermore, the content of his work, which often glorified the grotesque and erotic created enough of a scandal to be denounced by some critics. Such frank explorations and depictions of sexuality – let alone those considered to be deviant – were unwelcome in the United States' publishing industry. Boston Public Library, *American Posters*, 11.

Similar to developments in England, the United States' publishing industry employed innovative poster designers.²⁰⁴ Just as middle class readers could collect and display bindings by Sarah Wyman Whitman, subscribers could cut out the covers of magazines and present them as decorative objects in their homes.²⁰⁵ Will H. Bradley (1868-1962), Louis Rhead (1857-1926), Ethyl Reed (b. 1876), Charles Dana Gibson (1867-1944), Maxfield Parrish (1870-1966), and Edward Penfield (1866-1925) championed the art of poster design ed States. Advertisements were marketed to the middle class based on Houghton Mifflin's model. Whitman's work created a "house style" that was an incentive for readers to collect their books. Monthly publications, including *Harper's*, *Century*, *McLure's* and *Scribner's*, used paper cover designs to attract and maintain subscribers at a lower cost.

Although the poster style was a radical technological departure from cloth-stamped bindings, artists in Boston designing paper dust jackets and posters drew from Sarah Wyman Whitman's style. Although it manifested in paper, as a magazine cover, poster, or billboard, the style was also deployed, in the mid- to late-1890s, on cloth-stamped book covers. Regardless of the medium, the poster style's purpose was to attract potential consumers from a distance, so the most (financially) successful designs were starkly outlined and boldly simple. Whitman's lettering continued to be used in poster designs and cloth-stamped books, juxtaposed with new Art Nouveau images and motifs.

²⁰⁴ Boston Public Library, *American Posters*, 8.

²⁰⁵ Boston Public Library, *American Posters*, 10.

The work of Amy Sacker (b. 1876), a student at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts and a member of the generation of female artists Whitman helped to foster, demonstrates that Whitman's oeuvre was an essential bridge between nineteenth- and twentieth-century book and graphic design. Sacker designed the cover for Frederic Lawrence Knowles' *Cap and Gown* (1897, fig. 29), which combines Whitman's lettering, using Whitman's flat-topped "A" in the title, and an image of the "New Woman" in solid blocks of black ink and empty white space.²⁰⁶ This new female subject, pioneered by Charles Dana Gibson (1867-1944) was young, beautiful, and increasingly independent. She was a symbol for this new generation of college-educated women who participated unapologetically in the public sphere.²⁰⁷ Although Whitman's aesthetic, which favored abstract floral motifs over figural subjects, became increasingly "old-fashioned" at the turn of the century, her lettering and use of negative space was appropriated by the next generation.

As historian Nancy Finlay points out, Boston poster designer, Ethyl Reed, who also would have been familiar with Whitman's work, incorporated the floral motif from Celia Thaxter's *An Island Garden* in her 1895 cover design for the *Boston Sunday Herald* (fig. 30).²⁰⁸ According to scholars, this design is thought to be one of Ethyl Reed's first accepted submissions. Reed's choice to draw

²⁰⁶ Nancy Finlay, *Artists of the Book in Boston, 1890-1910* (Cambridge, MA: The Houghton Library, 1985), 53.

²⁰⁷ Laura Prieto, *At Home In the Studio* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 146.

²⁰⁸ Prieto, *At Home in the Studio*, 21.

upon Whitman's work as she was making her foray into the art world demonstrates that Whitman's aesthetic principles continued to be relevant and integrated into the aesthetics of design in Boston. This design marked the beginning of Reed's success in the industry and the persisting relevance of Whitman's designs.

The Fine Printing Revival

At the same moment in the 1890s when the poster style was emerging, William Morris established the Kelmscott Press in 1891 in England. Robert Brothers of Boston, for whom Whitman designed her first cover, published a photo-facsimile of the Kelmscott Press edition of *The Story of the Glittering Plain* in 1891.²⁰⁹ Its publication marked the beginning of the next era of printing and graphic design in Boston, championed by Daniel Berkeley Updike (1860-1941), Bruce Rogers (1870-1957), and Carl P. Rollins (1880-1983).

In "A Note by William Morris on His Aims in Founding the Kelmscott Press," Morris announced, "I began printing books with the hope of producing some which would have a definite claim to beauty, while at the same time they should be easy to read and should not dazzle the eye, or trouble the intellect of the reader by eccentricity of form in the letters."²¹⁰ Morris sought the unity in design for which Whitman and others had long advocated. However, Morris'

²⁰⁹ Susan Otis Thompson, *American Book Design and William Morris*, 2nd ed., (London: British Library, 1996), 30.

²¹⁰ William Morris, *A Note by William Morris on His Aims in Founding the Kelmscott Press* (Hammersmith: Kelmscott Press, 1898).

books, which are made from fine handmade paper, printed by hand on the letterpress, and assembled with respect to traditional techniques, were not objects intended for the middle class, as Whitman's trade bindings were. Objects produced by the Kelmscott Press were expensive, limited, and luxurious; they contradicted the democratic principles his studio purported to uphold.

In the United States, the Arts and Crafts movement was more openly capitalistic and not politically motivated. Designers of the next generation, born as Whitman was coming of age as an artist, including Updike (1860-1941), Rogers (1870-1957), and Rollins (1880-1983), abandoned Morris' ambition to democratize art and make books intended as collector's items or evidence of exquisite taste for profit. They largely discarded Morris' "heavy types and elaborate ornaments," but remained committed to his – and Whitman's – principle of unity within design and the marriage of the book's content with its design.²¹¹

Yet, it is surprising that women were markedly absent from this new vision of fine printing. Women were once invited to participate in book design, but they were excluded from the next generation of printing and typography design. Printing, as opposed to design, was firmly situated in the masculine realm and the audience for the Fine Printing Revival was assumed to be male. Although artists, like Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue (1869-1924), who was trained as an architect, designed both cloth-stamped books and fine printed material, women

²¹¹ Nancy Finlay, "A Millennium in Bookmaking: The Book Arts in Boston," in *Inspiring Reform: Boston's Arts and Craft Movement* (Wellesley: Davis Museum and Cultural Center, 1997), 117.

were unable to make the same leap. For example, it is significant that Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue designed the first exhibition of the Society of Arts and Crafts Boston catalog cover in 1897 in the fine printing style. The typeface is angular, uniform, and serified; the title is justified on the page. It does not resemble Whitman's signature lettering, other than the inclusion of flat-topped A's and the dots between the words. The other three-quarters of the composition is dominated by a patterned, abstracted, Tudor rose and pomegranate that recall the intricate and delicate borders of Morris' editions at the Kelmscott Press and Whitman's work in cover design.²¹² Although a founder and Vice President of the society, whose work in book design was featured in the exhibition, Whitman was not selected to design this cover, nor is she known to ever experimented with printing.

There are some exceptions to women's lack of participation in the Fine Printing Revival, like Hannah Dustin French (1907-1993), Research Librarian at Wellesley College and founder of the college's Annis Press. However, it is significant that French did not enter the field of printing – as a teacher, not an independent printer – until the 1940s.²¹³ It is not a coincidence, then, that the Club of Odd Volumes, a bibliophilic society popular with designers of the Fine

²¹² Beverly Kay Brandt, *Craftsman and the Critic: Defining Usefulness and Beauty in Arts and Crafts-era Boston* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009), 102.

²¹³ For an in depth study of Hannah French and the Book Arts Laboratory at Wellesley College, see Alexa Dinniman, "Preservative of All Arts': Hannah French and the Art of the Book at Wellesley College (Undergraduate thesis, Wellesley College, 2000).

Print Revival, is one of the last all-male social clubs in Boston.²¹⁴ The Fine Printing Revival in America, out of which the next generation of influential typographers and designers were born, was a hostile environment for women.

Changing Tastes, Changing Communities

Whitman, whose work – in popularity and in volume – reached a peak in the eighteen nineties, was branded “old-fashioned” by the end of her life, in 1904. Had she lived five years longer, she would have seen the production of cloth-stamped book covers come to a halt. By 1909, the less expensive, more colorful Art Nouveau style paper dust jackets won out.²¹⁵ After over twenty years in the book-designing business, crafting a recognizable style, motifs, and lettering, Whitman, approaching her sixties, was set in her ways. Against the colorful poster-style dust jackets, Whitman’s color scheme of dark cloth covers and gold ink became increasingly associated with a Victorian, pre-modern aesthetic.

Although she never altogether ceased producing artwork, Whitman suffered from illness in the last two years of her life and her production significantly slowed. In fact, Whitman complained of eye problems as early as

²¹⁴ In 1987, under pressure from the Boston Liquor Licensing Board, the Club of Odd Volumes lost its license to serve liquor rather than admit women. It was one of two social clubs in the city of Boston, of fifty-seven, that chose to remain all male. Ironically, the Club of Odd Volumes is housed in Whitman’s former home at 77 Mount Vernon Street.

²¹⁵ Richard Minsky, *The Art of American Book Covers: 1875-1930*, 1st ed. (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 2010), 21.

1889, in a letter to Dr. Richard C. Cabot, her neighbor in Beverly Farms.²¹⁶ After 1900, she designed fewer than ten covers and exhibited only twice, in 1901 and 1904. Instead, she spent the spring of 1902 abroad in London, Paris, and Madrid, visiting cathedrals like Chartres and Burgos, dining with her friend Henry James, following up on John Singer Sargent's stained glass recommendations, and attending salons.²¹⁷ It is unclear whether she chose to focus on her health and leisure, if Houghton Mifflin stopped commissioning works from Whitman, or it was due to a combination of the two.

In 1904, Whitman died of heart disease and was mourned by her friends at a service in Beverly Farms, Massachusetts.²¹⁸ She had no heirs, but distributed her wealth and her late-husband's estate among cultural and educational institutions she supported, including the Museum of Fine Arts, Radcliffe, Tuskegee, and Berea College.²¹⁹ Her friends published her eulogy and a collection of her letters after her death to commemorate her contributions to art and society, in 1904 and 1907, respectively. Whitman's last great work in stained glass, *Courage, Love, and Patience* (see chapter four), exhibited at the Louisiana Purchase, St. Louis World's Fair during the year of her death, was purchased by her friends and donated to Radcliffe in her memory. In the Trinity

²¹⁶ Whitman to Richard C. Cabot, August 15, 1889, *Letters of Sarah Whitman* (Cambridge, MA: Merrymount Press, 1907), 44.

²¹⁷ Whitman, *Letters*.

²¹⁸ Betty Smith, "American National Biography" (1995) mss. notes, p. 4, Sarah Wyman Whitman file, Berwick Academy Archives, South Berwick, ME.

²¹⁹ Although Sarah's brother lived until 1911, he was institutionalized for mental illness.

Church Parish House, a window was given on behalf of her students and installed opposite to the Phillips Brooks Memorial, to commemorate her commitment to the Women's Bible Study Class that she led there for thirty years. In 1907, the Society of Arts and Crafts mounted a memorial exhibition of Whitman's work in her honor.²²⁰

"When she died, a whole society seemed to be suddenly extinguished. Vesuvius had covered the town of Boston, and we went about poking among the ashes to find each other in holes, corners, and side streets," John Jay Chapman remarked of the city after Whitman's death.²²¹ Although her passing left a void in Boston, at the moment of her death, the Boston she had known was beginning to change. Although Boston was slow to adapt, the poster style eventually won out; the niche she worked to develop disappeared. The salons of intellectual elites that had existed in Boston's Beacon Hill and Back Bay neighborhoods and that had made Whitman's work possible began to decline in popularity. The city's publishing industry began to weaken and, in the early twentieth century, New York City indisputably became the center of the literary world.²²² For her twenty-five year career, the combination of middle class demand for books, increasingly formalized educational opportunities for women in the arts, a cultural climate that

²²⁰ Mason Hammond, "The Stained Glass Windows in Memorial Hall, Harvard University," unpublished mss., 274, Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, MA, 1978.

²²¹ John Jay Chapman, "Mrs. Whitman," in *The Selected Writings of John Jay Chapman* ed. Jacques Barzun (New York: Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, 1957), 235-238.

²²² Finlay, *Artists of the Book in Boston*, xii.

encouraged women to seek public roles for the moral betterment of society, and extensive social networks propelled Sarah Wyman Whitman into a leadership role in commercial book design. Whitman's oeuvre in book design and intermedial, holistic approach to art production was an essential bridge between late-nineteenth-century tastes and a generation oriented toward the new century. Her work as a woman artist in the commercial sphere in late nineteenth-century Boston was unprecedented and path breaking.

Illustrations

1. Helen Bigelow Merriman, *Sarah Wyman Whitman (1842-1904)*, 1909-1910, oil on canvas. Courtesy of the Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.



2. John White Alexander, *Portrait of Sarah de St. Prix (Wyman) Whitman*, ca. 1904, oil on canvas. From *Picturing Old New England* (Washington, D.C.: National Museum of American Art, 1999), page 64.



3. John Singer Sargent, *William Merritt Chase*, 1902, oil on canvas. Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.



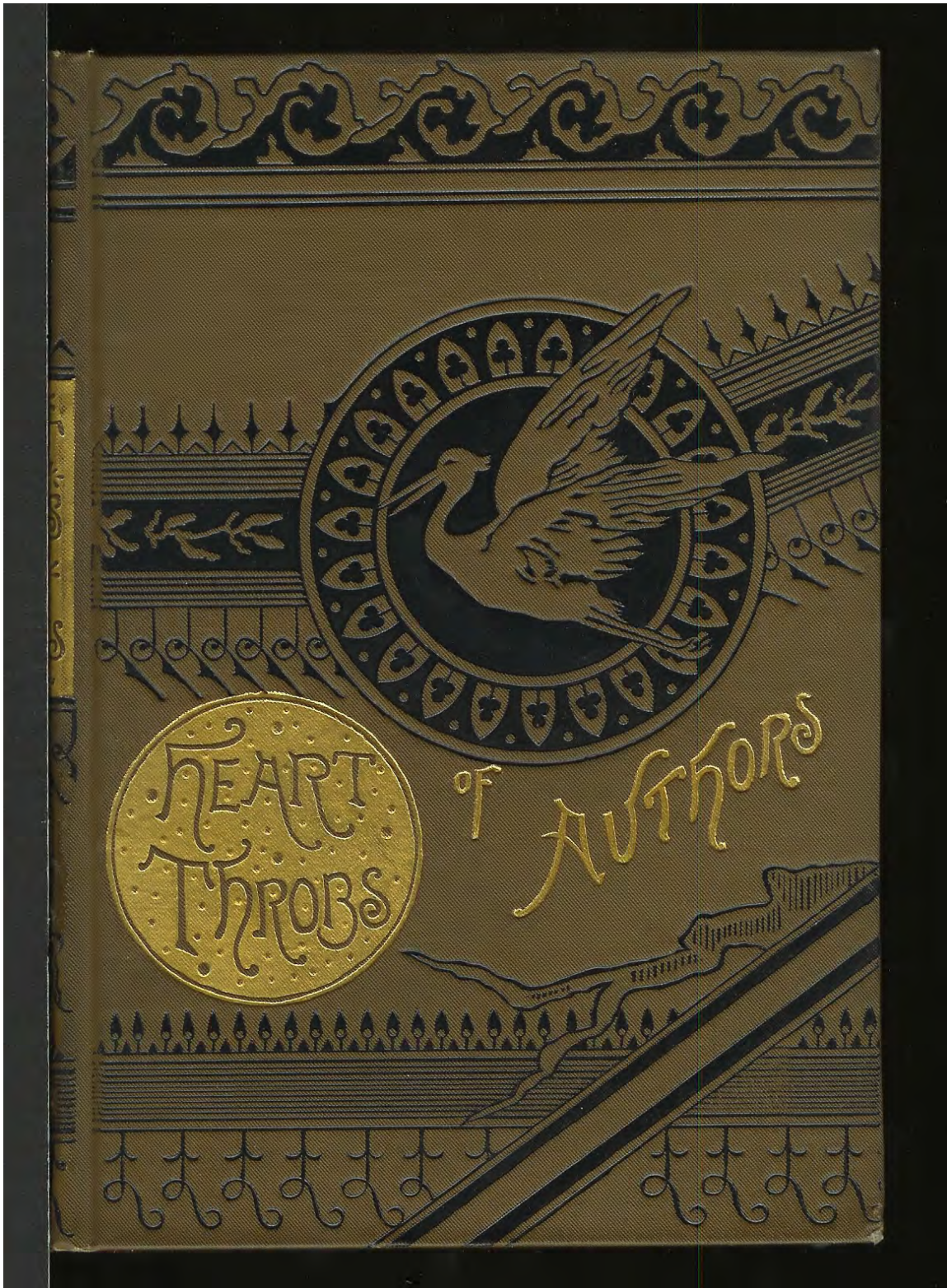
4. Sarah Wyman Whitman, *Roses – Souvenir de Villiers-le-bel*, 1877 or 1879, oil on panel. Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts Boston.



5. Sarah Wyman Whitman, *Phillips Brooks Memorial Window*, 1893, stained glass. Trinity Church Parish House, Boston, MA.



6. Book cover by Sarah Wyman Whitman for Sarah Orne Jewett *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1896). Boston Public Library, Rare Books Department. (photo courtesy of Stuart Walker. *Sarah Wyman Whitman Bindings*, Boston Public Library Flickr Photostream, http://www.flickr.com/photos/boston_public_library/sets/72157604192955355/)



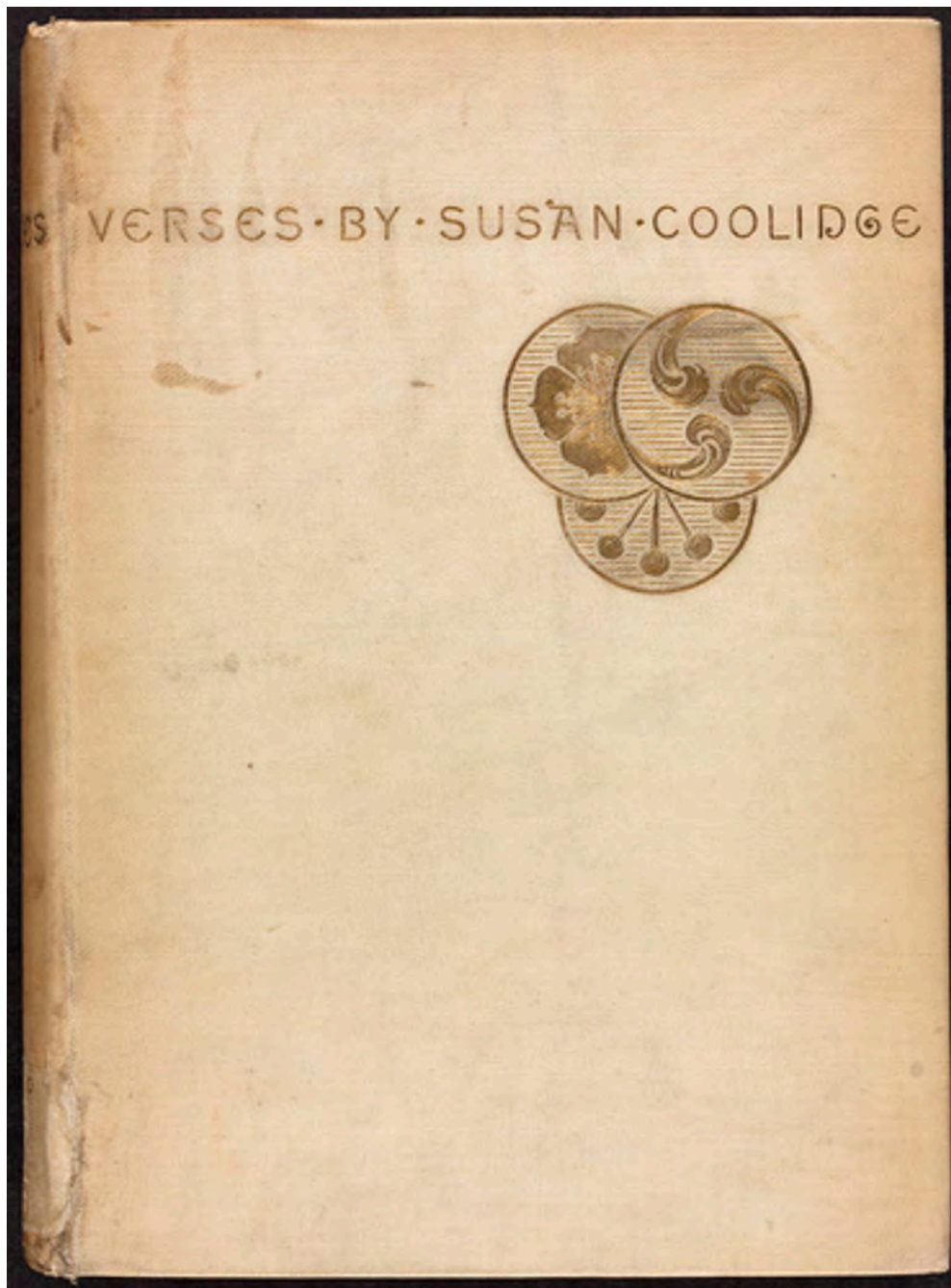
7. Designer unknown for William Harcastle Brown, *Heartthrobs of Gifted Authors* (Philadelphia: David McKay, 1878). Courtesy of Stuart Walker.



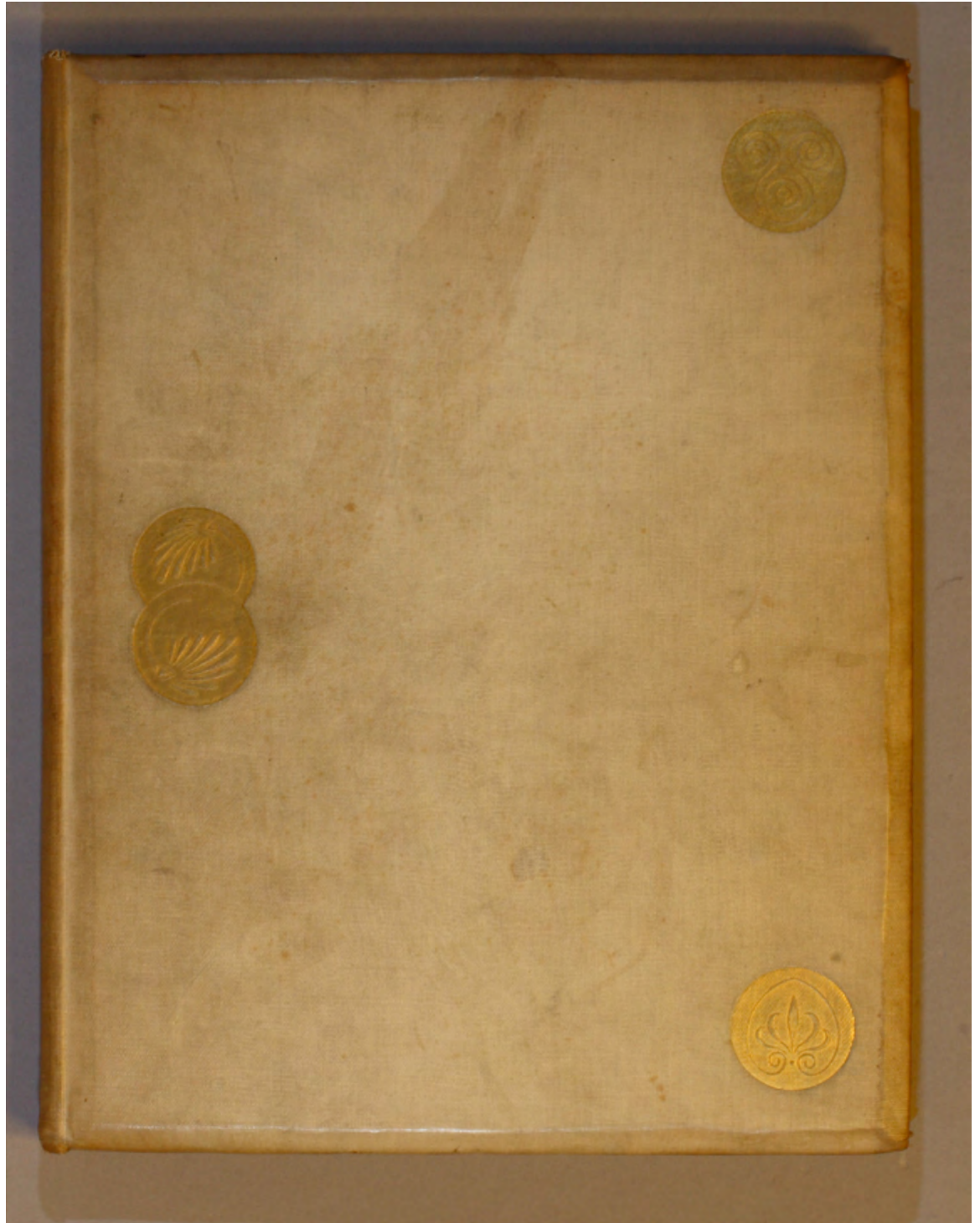
7. Advertisement for Houghton Mifflin and Company's Holiday Books for MDCCCXCV (1895). Chromolithograph. Boston Public Library, Print Department (photo courtesy of *American Trade Book Index*, Boston Public Library Flickr Photostream).



9. Funerary monument by Sarah Wyman Whitman, Gemma Timmins (ca. 1890), Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge, MA.



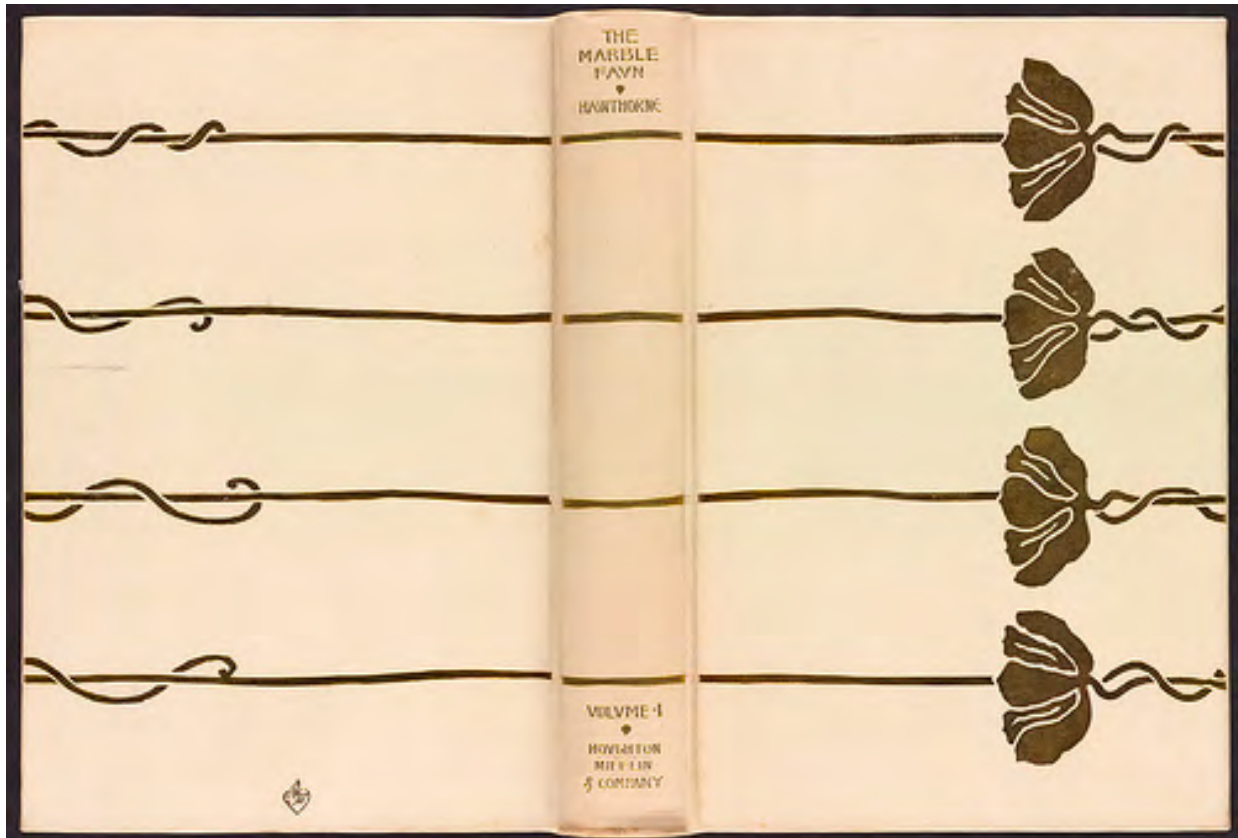
10. Book cover by Sarah Wyman Whitman for Susan Coolidge (Sarah Chauncey Woolsey), *Verses* (Boston: Roberts Brother Publishing, 1880). Boston Public Library, Rare Book Department (photo courtesy of Walker, *Sarah Wyman Whitman Bindings*, BPL Flickr Photostream).



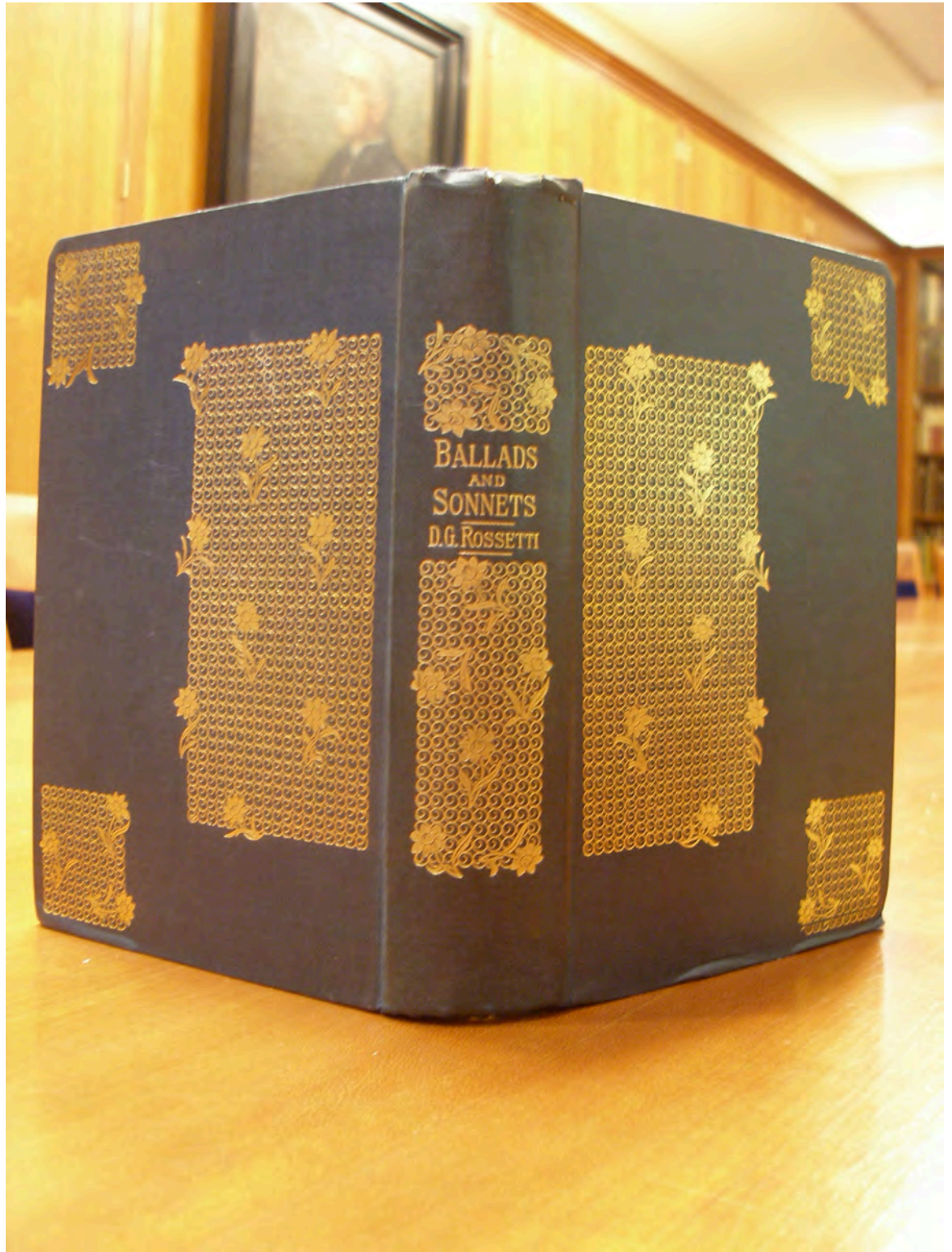
11. Book cover by Dante Gabriel Rossetti for Charles A. Swinburne, *Atalanta in Calydon* (London, E. Moxon & co., 1865). Courtesy of the author.



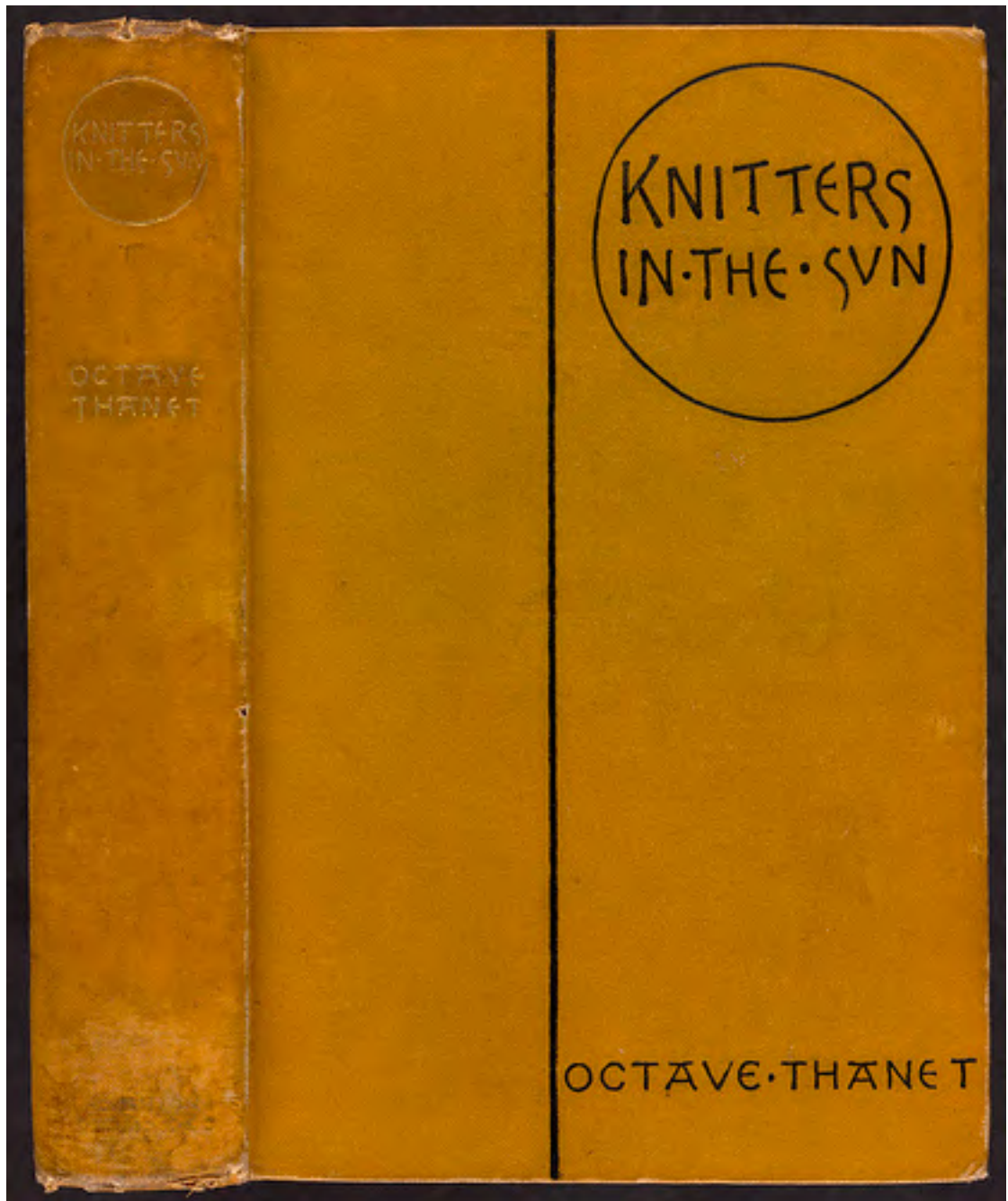
12. Book cover by Sarah Wyman Whitman for Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1889). Boston Public Library, Rare Book Department (photo courtesy of Walker, *Sarah Wyman Whitman Bindings*, BPL Flickr Photostream).



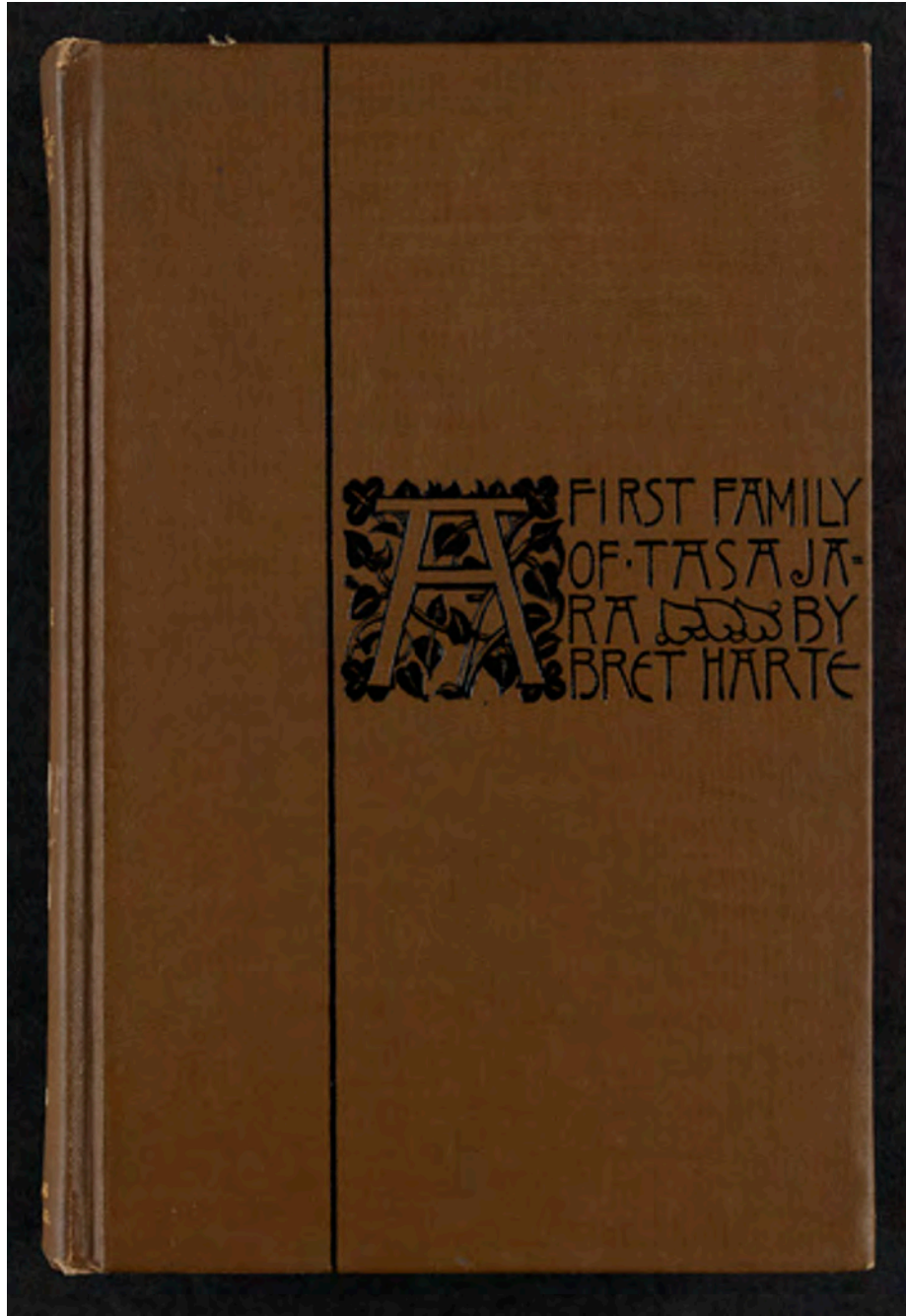
13. Book cover by Sarah Wyman Whitman for Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun* [Roman Edition] (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1899). Boston Public Library, Rare Book Department (photo courtesy of Walker, *Sarah Wyman Whitman Bindings*, BPL Flickr Photostream).



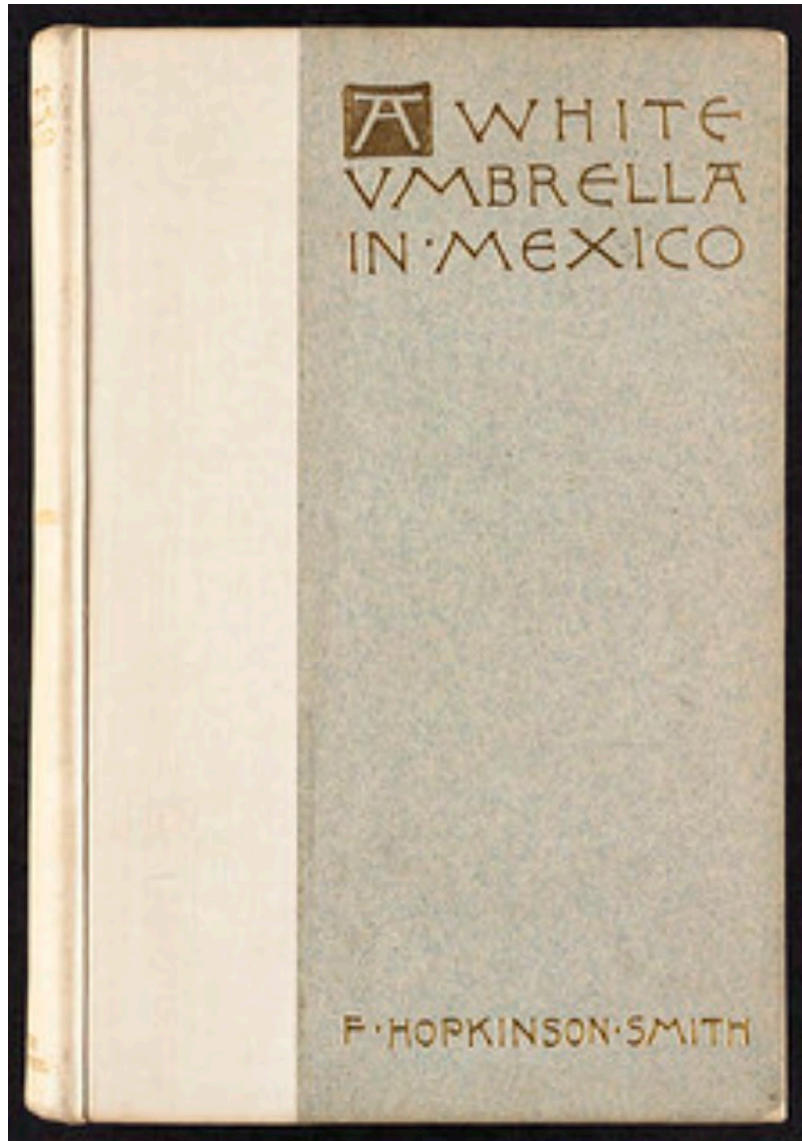
14. Book cover by Dante Gabriel Rossetti for Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Ballads and Sonnets* (London : Ellis and White, 1881).



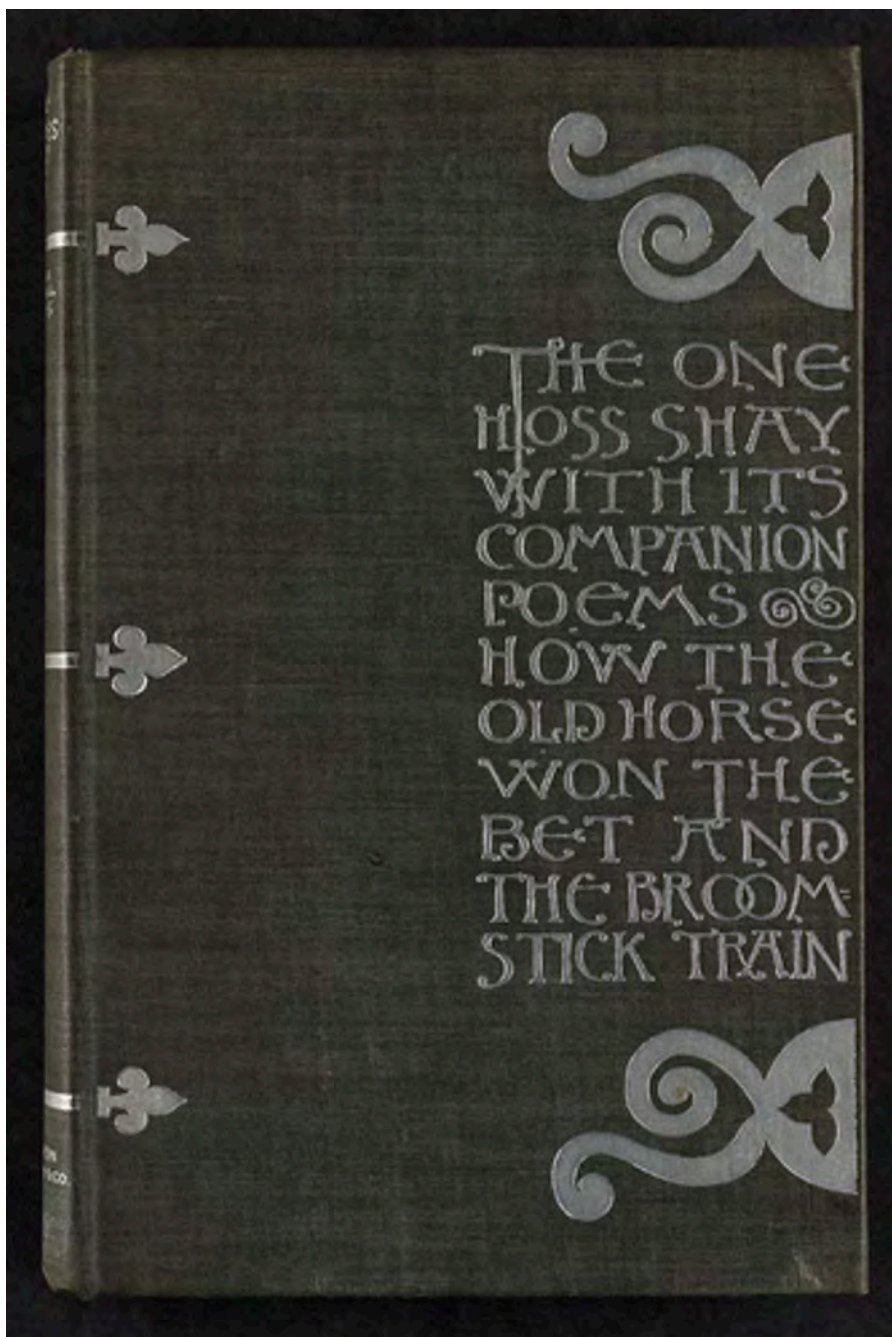
15. Book cover by Sarah Wyman Whitman for Octave Thanet (Alice French), *Knitters in the Sun* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1887). Boston Public Library, Rare Book Department (photo courtesy of Walker, *Sarah Wyman Whitman Bindings*, BPL Flickr Photostream).



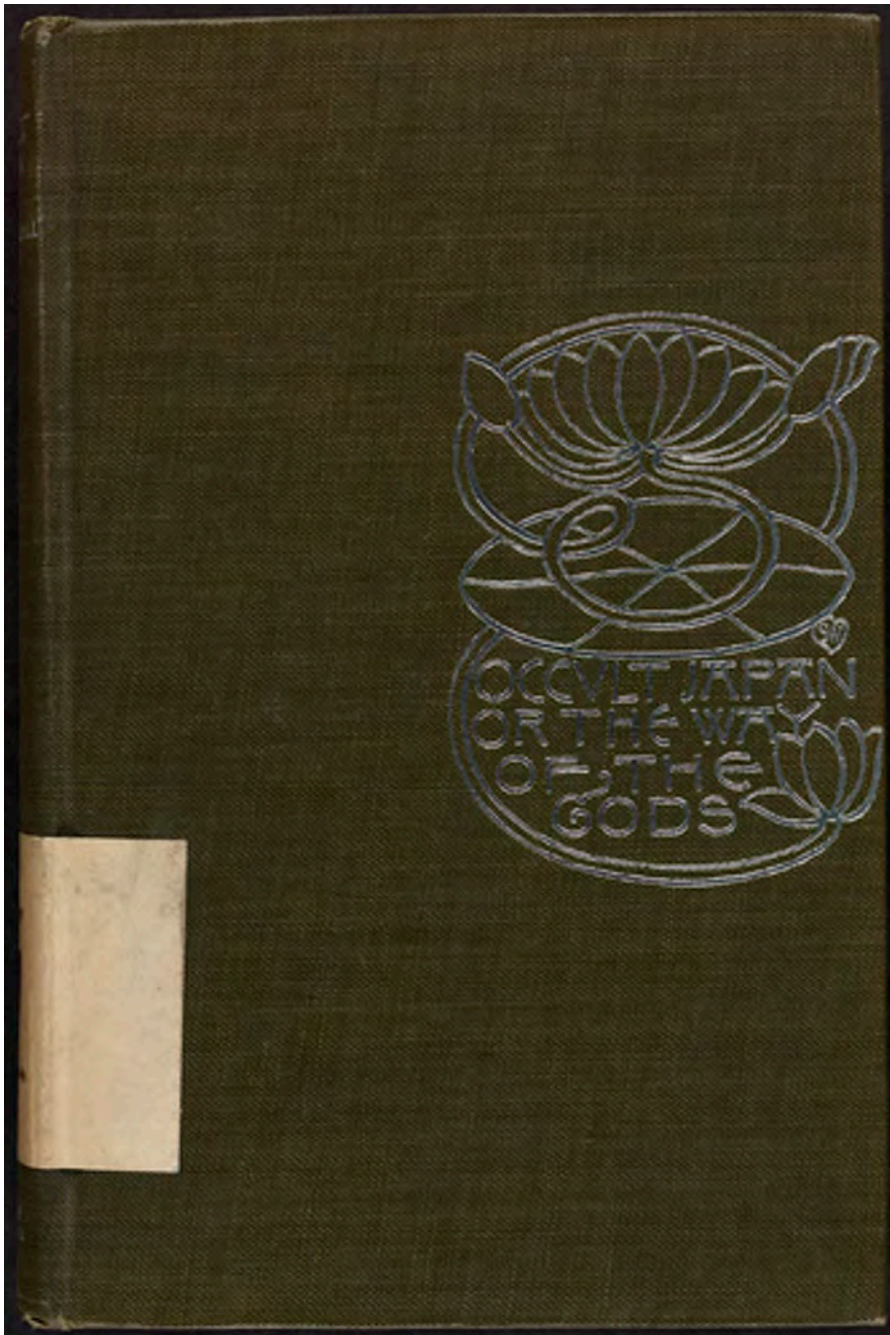
16. Book cover by Sarah Wyman Whitman for Bret Harte, *The First Family of Tasajara* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1892). Boston Public Library, Rare Book Department (photo courtesy of Walker, *Sarah Wyman Whitman Bindings*, BPL Flickr Photostream).



17. Book cover by Sarah Wyman Whitman for Frances Hopkinson Smith, *A White Umbrella in Mexico* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1892). Boston Public Library, Rare Book Department (photo courtesy of Walker, *Sarah Wyman Whitman Bindings*, BPL Flickr Photostream).



18. Book cover by Sarah Wyman Whitman for Oliver Wendell Holmes, *The One Hoss Shay* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1892). Boston Public Library, Rare Book Department (photo courtesy of Walker, *Sarah Wyman Whitman Bindings*, BPL Flickr Photostream).



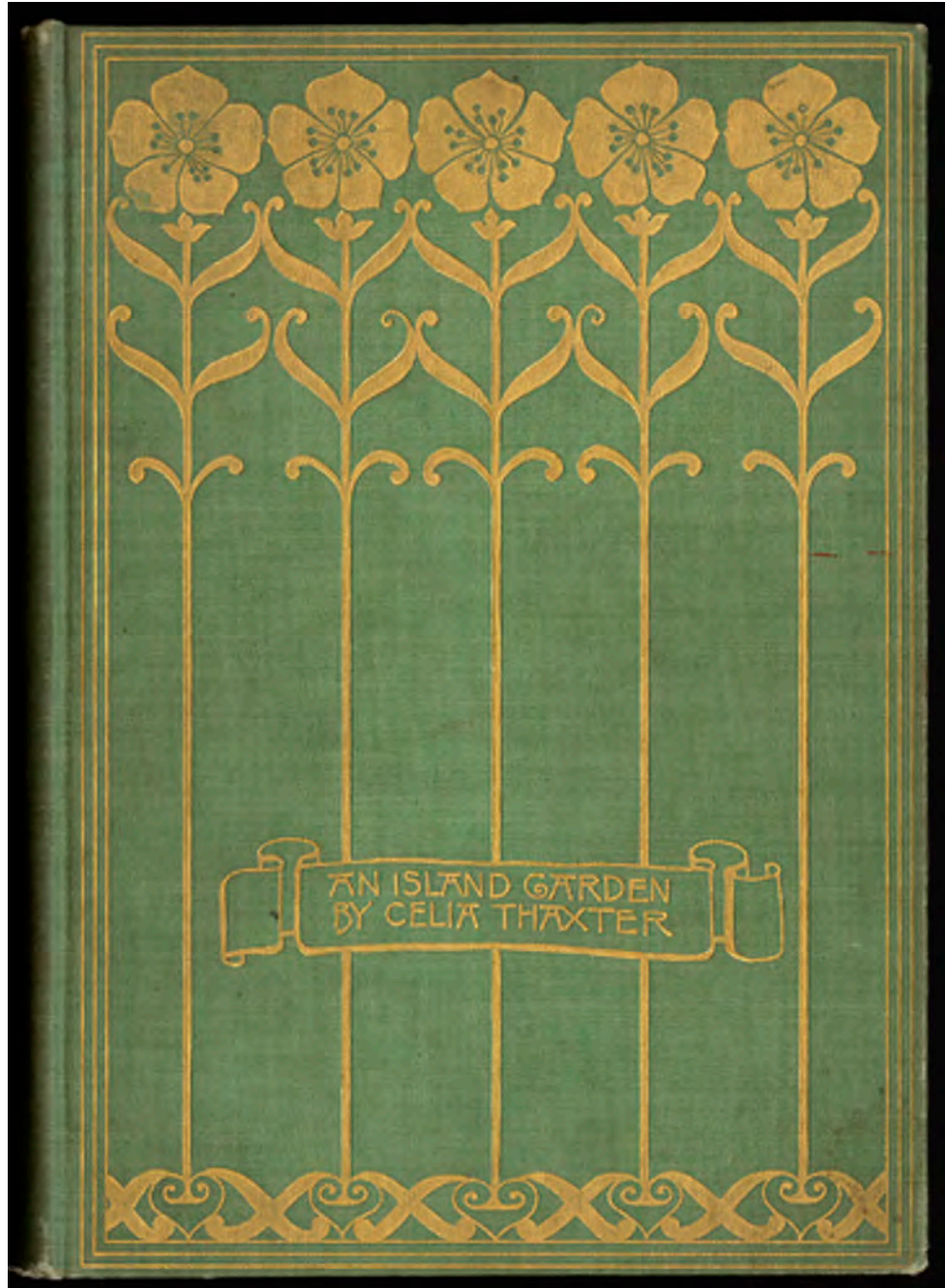
19. Book cover by Sarah Wyman Whitman for Percival Lowell, *Occult Japan or The Way of the Gods* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1894). Boston Public Library, Rare Book Department (photo courtesy of Walker, *Sarah Wyman Whitman Bindings*, BPL Flickr Photostream).



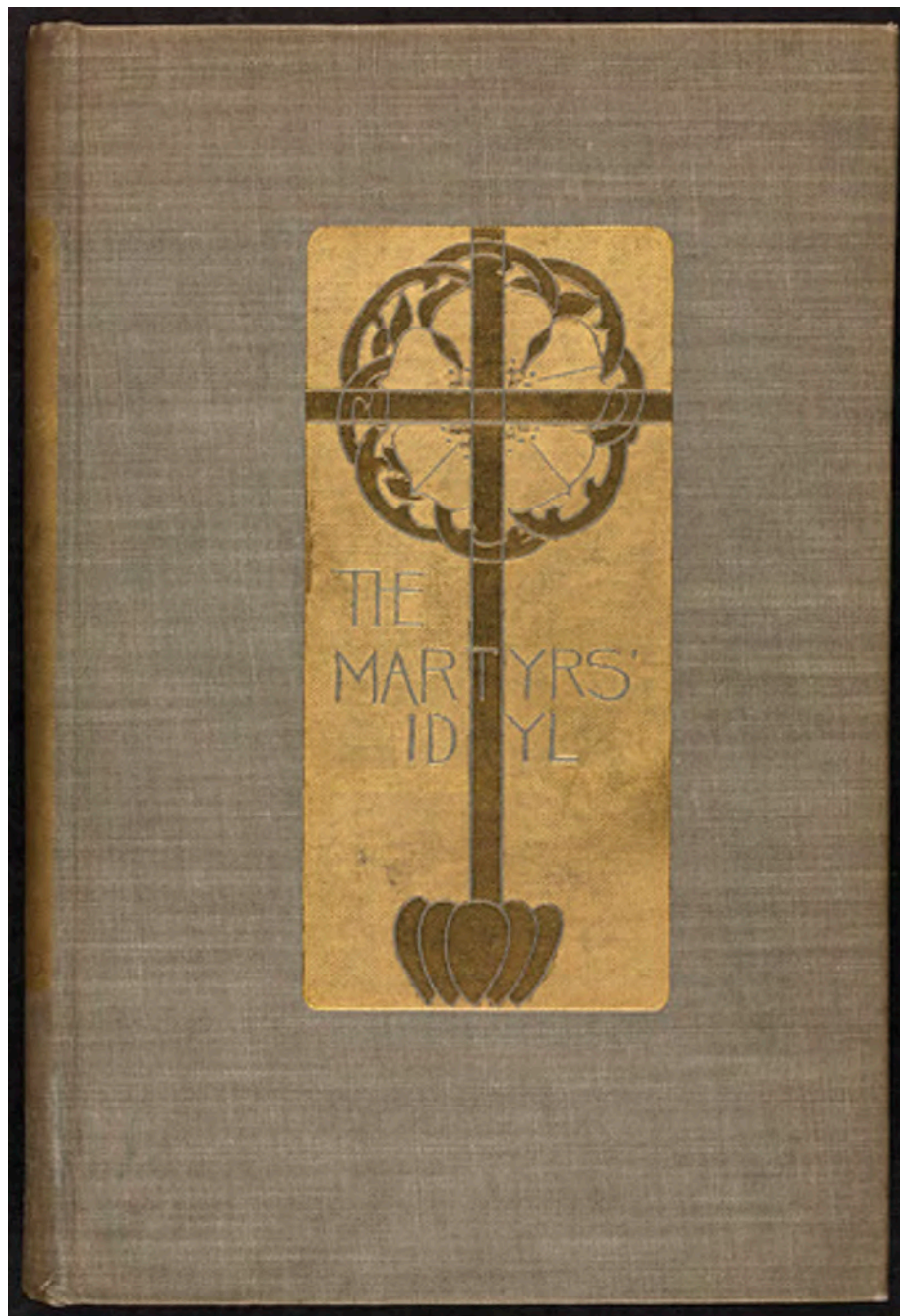
20. Book cover by Sarah Wyman Whitman for Martin Brimmer, *Egypt* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1892). Boston Public Library, Rare Book Department (photo courtesy of Walker, *Sarah Wyman Whitman Bindings*, BPL Flickr Photostream).



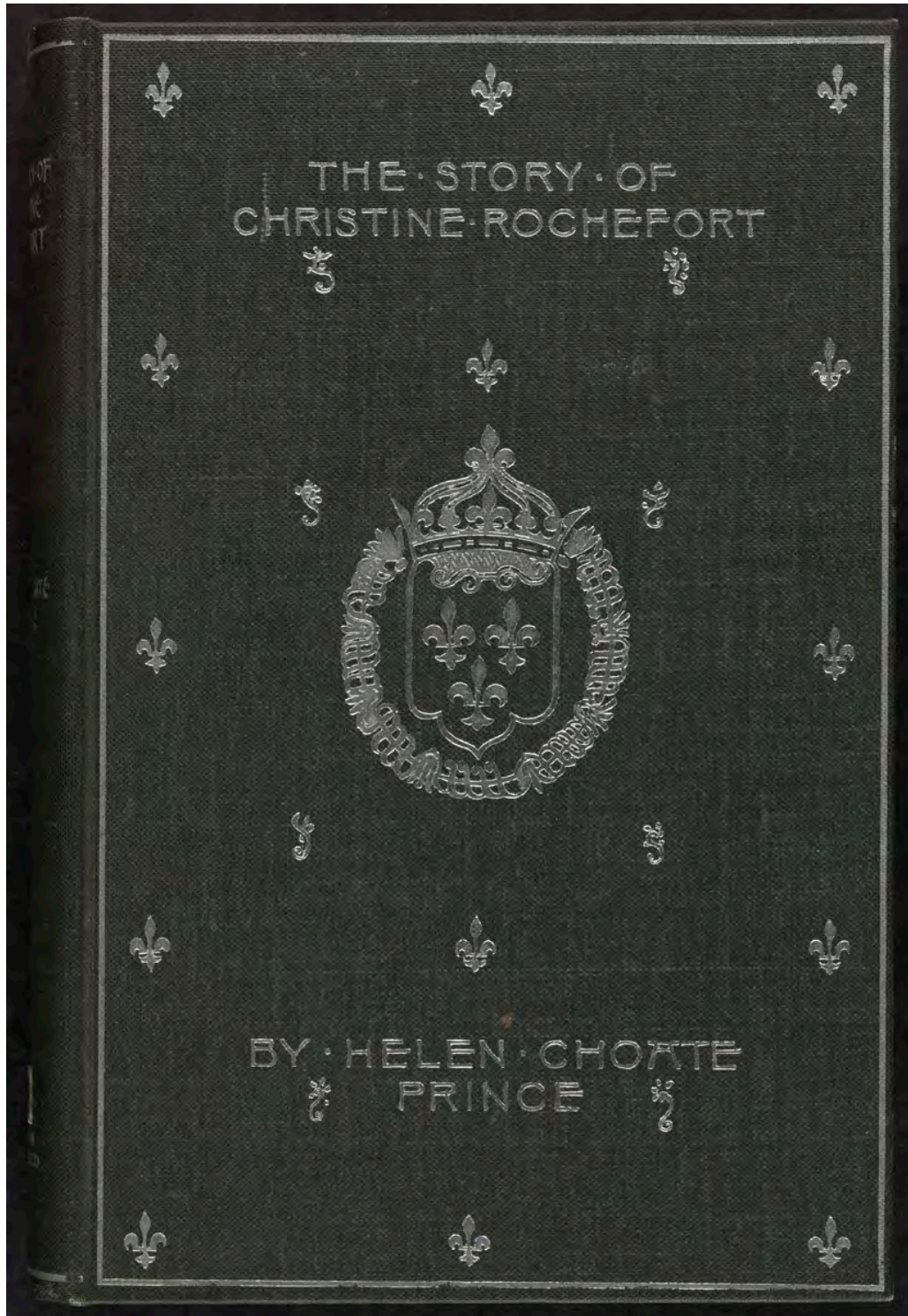
21. Book cover by Sarah Wyman Whitman for Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Our Old Home* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1891). Boston Public Library, Rare Book Department (photo courtesy of Walker, *Sarah Wyman Whitman Bindings*, BPL Flickr Photostream).



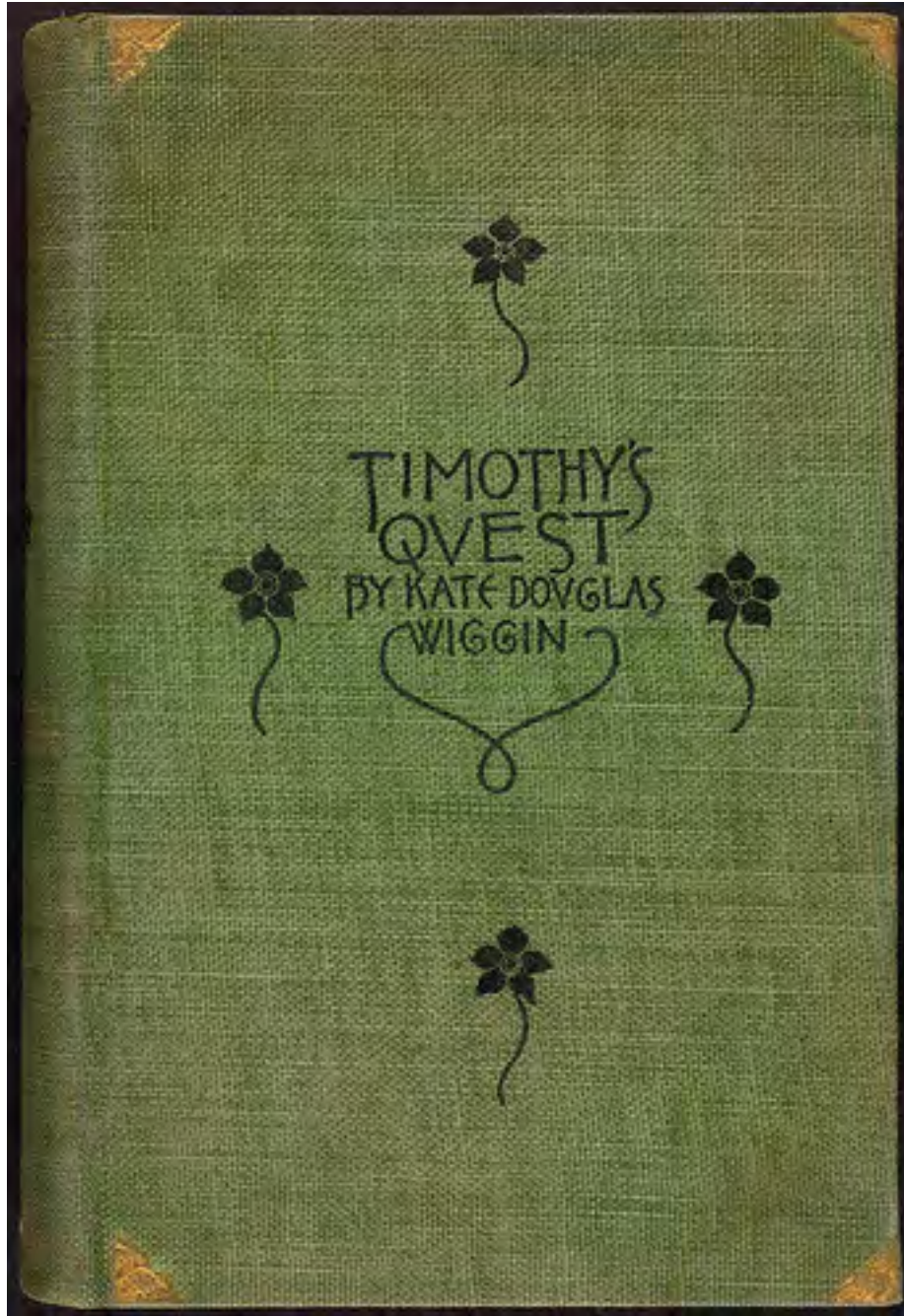
22. Book cover by Sarah Wyman Whitman for Celia Thaxter, *An Island Garden* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1894). Boston Public Library, Rare Book Department (photo courtesy of Walker, *Sarah Wyman Whitman Bindings*, BPL Flickr Photostream).



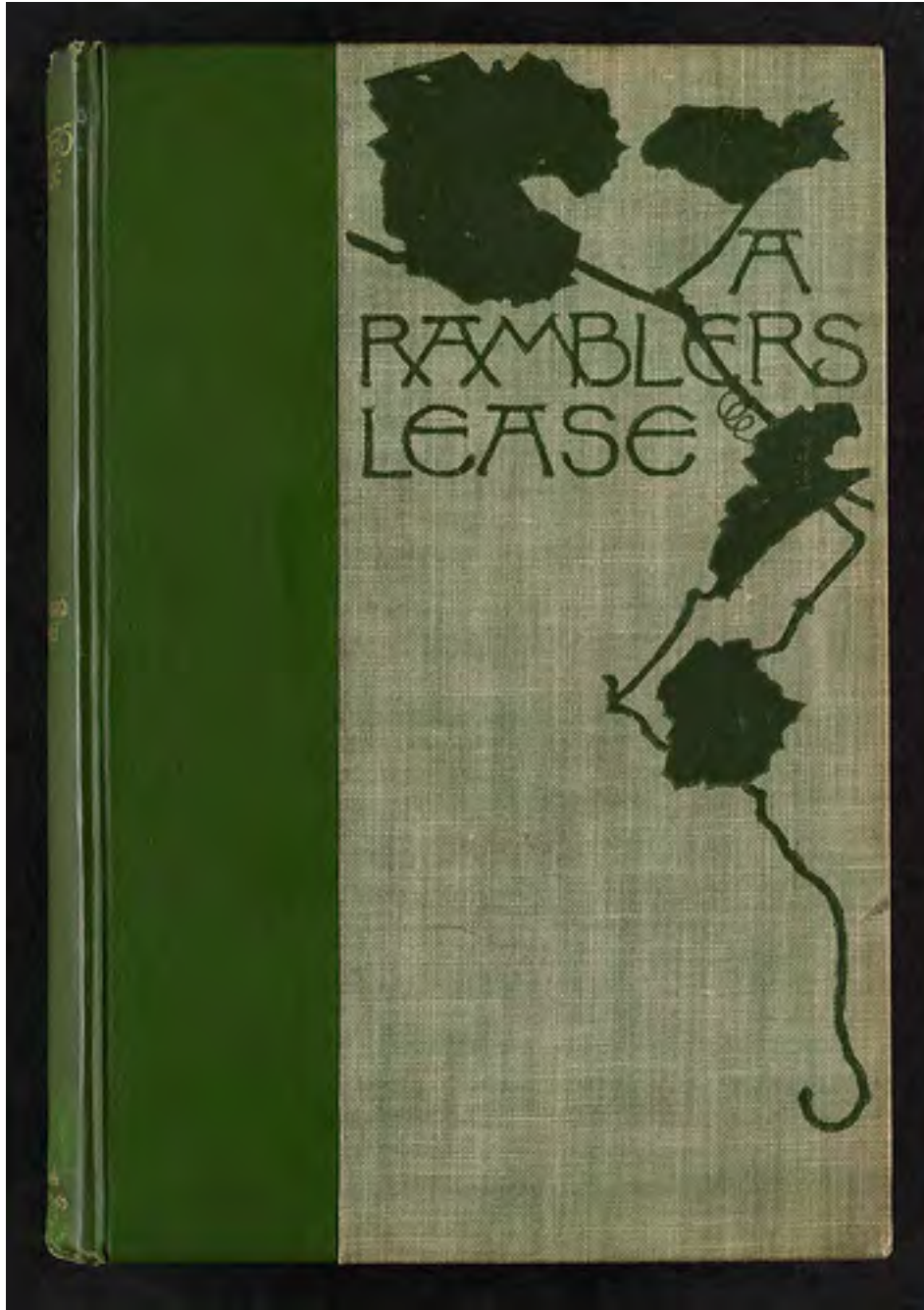
23. Book cover by Sarah Wyman Whitman for Louise Imogen Guiney, *The Martyr's Idyl* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1899). Boston Public Library, Rare Book Department (photo courtesy of Walker, *Sarah Wyman Whitman Bindings*, BPL Flickr Photostream).



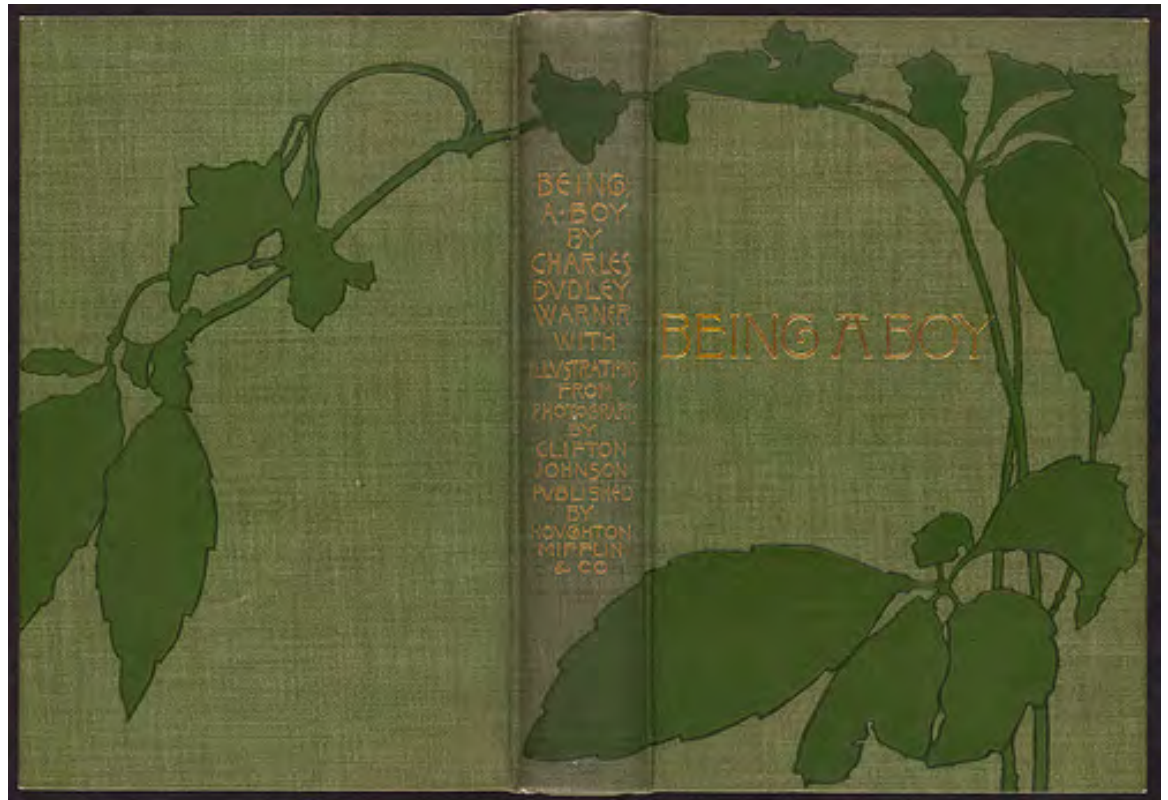
24. Book cover by Sarah Wyman Whitman for Sarah Choate Prince, *The Story of Christine Rochefort* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1892). Boston Public Library, Rare Book Department (photo courtesy of Walker, Sarah Wyman Whitman Bindings, BPL Flickr Photostream).



25. Book cover by Sarah Wyman Whitman for Kate Douglas Wiggin, *Timothy's Quest* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1895). Boston Public Library, Rare Book Department (photo courtesy of Walker, *Sarah Wyman Whitman Bindings*, BPL Flickr Photostream).



26. Book cover by Sarah Wyman Whitman for Torrey Bradford, *A Rambler's Lease* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1889). Boston Public Library, Rare Book Department. (photo courtesy of Walker, *Sarah Wyman Whitman Bindings*, BPL Flickr Photostream).



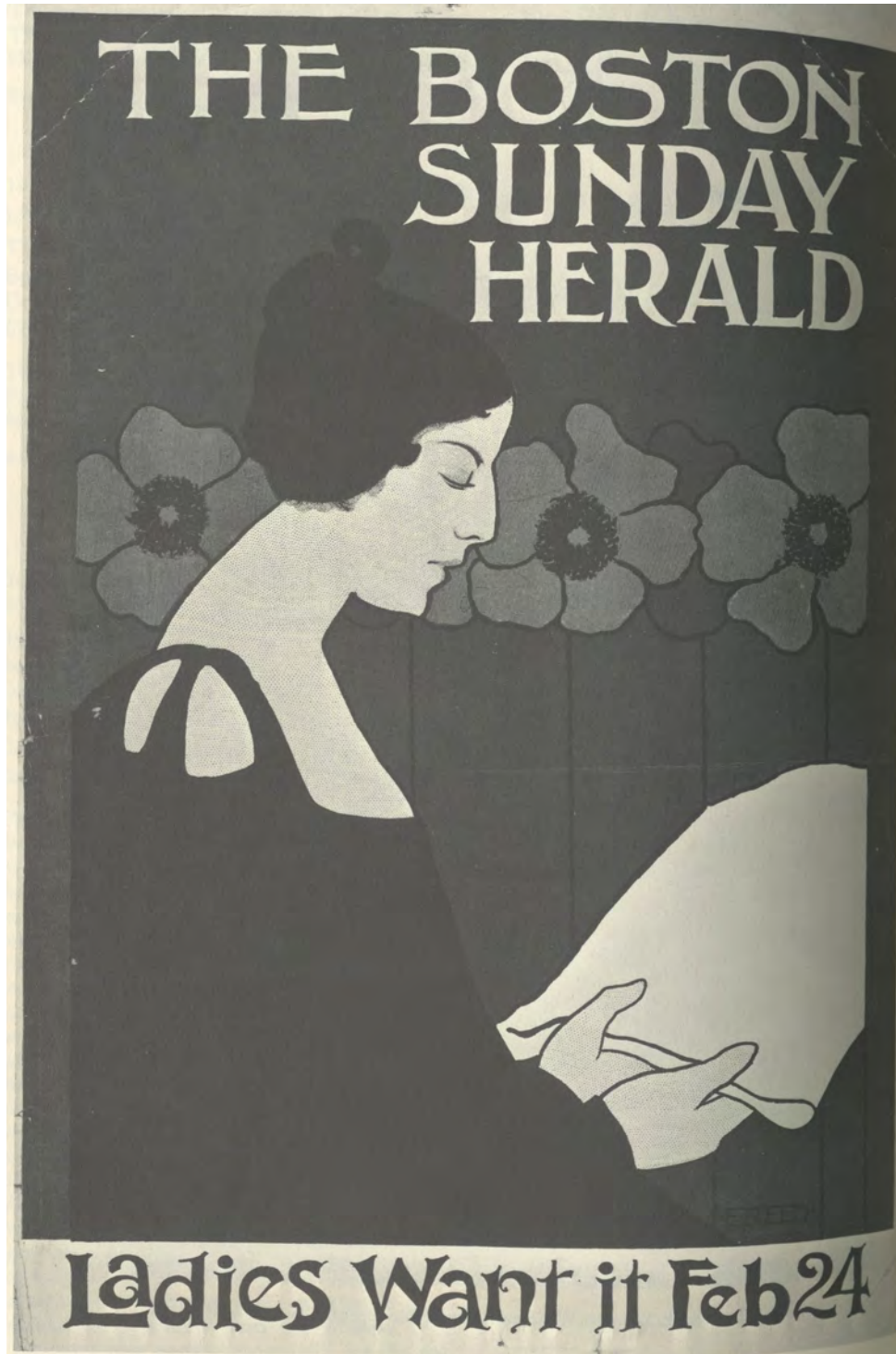
27. Book cover by Sarah Wyman Whitman for Charles Dudley Warner, *Being a Boy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1897). Boston Public Library, Rare Book Department. (photo courtesy of Walker, *Sarah Wyman Whitman Bindings*, BPL Flickr Photostream).



Harvard University, Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, W382346_1
 28. Sarah Wyman Whitman, *Courage, Love, and Patience Window*, 1902, stained glass. Courtesy of Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.



29. Book cover by Amy Sacker for *Cap and Gown* (Boston: L.C. Page and Company, 1897). From *Artists of the Book in Boston, 1890-1910* (Cambridge, MA: Dept. of Printing and Graphic Arts, Houghton Library, 1985), page 52.



30. Cover by Ethyl Reed for *The Boston Sunday Herald*, February 24, 1895. From *Artists of the Book in Boston, 1890-1910* (Cambridge, MA: Dept. of Printing and Graphic Arts, Houghton Library, 1985), page 20.

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