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THE WOMEN'S WOOD ENGRAVING REVIVAL AND ITS GLOBAL IMPACT (1912-  
1960): GWEN RAVERAT, CLARE LEIGHTON, AND JOAN HASSALL

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Texts and Technology  
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## **ABSTRACT**

Using a feminist media historical lens, this dissertation examines three women artist-illustrators who participated in the early twentieth century wood engraving revival in the United Kingdom: Gwen Raverat (1885-1957), Clare Leighton (1898-1989), and Joan Hassall (1906-1988). Little scholarship exists on the wood engraving revival from a feminist media or book history perspective. To fill this gap, I examine the biographies of these women and the books and magazines they illustrated in their historical context, with attention to how their gender impacted their experience. This dissertation finds that women's participation in the wood engraving revival is significant because it afforded opportunities for women to become professional artists through a medium that had previously been controlled by men. They influenced print culture domestically and globally by illustrating political and literary magazines to broaden their visual appeal and by illustrating a variety of fiction that reflected how commercial publishing was being impacted by the "Book Beautiful" movement. This research further reveals how social networks and institutions played a complex role in the careers of women artist-illustrators in this period, and, as a result, in the development of the book in the twentieth century.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Summary.....	1
Research Questions and Significance.....	2
Research Questions.....	5
Historical Context.....	6
The History of Wood Engraving in Britain.....	6
Women and Wood Engraving.....	12
International Wood Engraving Influences/Influencers.....	17
Theoretical Framing.....	19
Feminist Book History.....	19
Feminist Media History.....	21
Literature Review.....	22
Feminist Book History.....	22
Art History.....	24
Women and the Arts and Crafts Movement.....	25
Literary and Illustration Studies.....	28
Modernist and Periodical Studies.....	30
Research Design and Chapter Overview.....	32
Objects of Analysis.....	32
Research Design.....	33
Chapter Overview.....	34
References.....	39
CHAPTER TWO: GWEN RAVERAT: FORGING A NEW PATH FOR WOMEN ENGRAVERS, BOOK ARTS, AND THE “ENGLISHNESS” OF HER CRAFT.....	46
Introduction.....	46
Early Influences: The Slade School and Elinor Monsell Darwin.....	50
Early Career and Periodical Illustrations.....	57
<i>The Apple</i> .....	58
<i>The London Mercury</i> .....	61
<i>The New Leader</i> .....	62
<i>Time and Tide</i> .....	65

Book Illustrations: Raverat’s Influence as Artist and Reader.....	66
International Influences on Raverat’s Work.....	75
Conclusion .....	80
References.....	82
<b>CHAPTER THREE: CLARE LEIGHTON AS AUTHOR-ILLUSTRATOR: CARVING A TRANS-ATLANTIC PATH FOR THE WOOD ENGRAVING REVIVAL .....</b>	<b>87</b>
Introduction.....	87
Early Years: At Home with the Leightons.....	90
At the Central School: The Heart of the Engraving Revival .....	93
Leighton’s Early Illustrations and Early Career Influences.....	96
Leighton as Author and Illustrator: Boredom and Art for Everyday People .....	103
Leighton’s Transition to Author-Illustrator .....	103
Leighton’s Publications for <i>The Studio</i> and her Artistic Philosophy.....	106
Leighton’s Development as Author-Illustrator .....	110
Leighton’s Work in the United States: The Wood-Engraving Revival as a Trans-Atlantic Movement .....	114
Conclusion: Clare Leighton’s Variety of Work and Impact.....	120
References.....	123
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: JOAN HASSALL, “OLD-FASHIONED” ENGRAVINGS, AND WARTIME PUBLISHING: A NEW ERA FOR THE “BOOK BEAUTIFUL” .....</b>	<b>127</b>
Introduction.....	127
Joan Hassall’s Education and Early Influences .....	131
Hassall’s Early Career: Changes in Publishing and “Middlebrow” Novels.....	137
World War II and the Post-War Years: Teaching, Scotland, and the New “Book Beautiful”	143
Hassall’s Work in Scotland.....	145
Subscription Book Clubs: Hassall’s Post-War Appeal.....	149
The National Book League’s <i>Reader’s Guides</i> .....	152
<i>Housewife</i> and <i>London Mystery Magazine</i> .....	155
Conclusion: Master of the Art Workers’ Guild .....	156
References.....	160
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>165</b>
Introduction.....	165
Summary.....	166
Interpretation.....	171

Limitations .....	182
Areas for Future Research .....	184
References.....	187



## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Summary

In a December 1925 issue of *The Sphere*, coverage of the annual Wood-Engraving Exhibition held at St. George's Gallery in London praises the event as “an opportunity...to see the wonderful prints which artists are doing in this medium, and which have become so popular in recent years” (“Modern Woodcuts and Old Masters” 382). The purview of this dissertation is the recent movement in the art of wood engraving hinted at by this description. This research makes an insertion into book historical scholarship of the twentieth century by examining the impact of women wood engravers on print culture between approximately 1915 and 1960, focusing on their engraved illustrations of books and serials. The wood engraving revival, which began in the United Kingdom around 1912, built on the ideals of the Arts and Crafts Movement, a political and aesthetic movement lead by William Morris and others who used “[t]heir designs, writings, socialism and anti-commercial posturing” to advance “a radical alternative model for living and working that rejected the corrupting demands of capitalism and elevated the decorative, arguing for its equal importance to society as fine arts” (Thomas 151). In this dissertation, I argue that, while bound up with the limitations of the gendered legacy of the Arts and Crafts Movement and the remnants of the Victorian era, the Wood Engraving Revival afforded women illustrators new opportunities to develop as artists, and therefore, new avenues for influencing early and mid-twentieth century print culture and material texts. To craft this argument, this dissertation uses a combination of biography studies and feminist historical media analysis to understand the significance of the illustrations created by three of the wood engraving revival's most active participants—Gwen Raverat, Clare Leighton, and Joan Hassall—but also to

argue that understanding their work requires connecting their art to the external networks that influence its creation. These networks include their education, friendships, families, and professional connections that backdrop the creation of their media but often go unattended in scholarship.

This chapter introduces my study of artist-engravers Gwen Raverat, Clare Leighton, and Joan Hassall by outlining the significance of this study and my research questions—which look both specifically at women’s relationship to the wood engraving revival and more broadly at women’s relationships to the material text— followed by historical background on the engraving revival and women’s relationship to wood engraving and the Arts and Crafts Movement. This is followed by the theoretical framework with which I am approaching this dissertation and the literature review. Lastly, I present an explanation of my research methods and an outline of the following chapters.

### Research Questions and Significance

This dissertation is built upon the premise that material variables are part and parcel, rather than ancillary to, a text’s significance, which means that the visual arts that are the “paratexts” or part of the bibliographical codes of print culture play a role in creating meaning. An overarching question this dissertation seeks to understand is how the material variables in illustrations by Joan Hassall, Clare Leighton, and Gwen Raverat reveal the artists’ print, social, and artistic networks; what is the significance of these networks to the three women’s careers? The aim of this dissertation is to understand how this group of women and their role as women artists in a specific movement contributed to that meaning and contributed to the development of the book’s materiality in the twentieth century.

As I mention in my literature review, there has been little examination, outside of the field of art history, of the wood engraving revival generally or women's relationship to it specifically. The significance of filling this gap matters because women's work—whether that is defined as work done by women or work done by any gender that is coded as “feminine”—matters and how we understand such contributions to print culture in turn impact perception of print culture and literary production. My theoretical framing reveals how feminist scholars in the field of book history and bibliography have been calling attention to the lack of scholarship on gender in book creation and have been arguing for an expansion of the kinds of roles and types of texts considered to include those activities and types of writing frequently undertaken by women. Feminist scholars argue that book history has traditionally ignored the issue of gender, focusing on roles within the lifecycle of the book that are most frequently occupied by men. This dissertation attempts to fill the gap in our understanding of the contributions of how work deemed “feminine” (or traditionally considered appropriate for women to undertake) shapes print culture and the book as a material object.

The history of the roles women have traditionally occupied around the production of a text remain relevant today: in their 2018 examination of gender discrimination in the publishing industry, Dana B. Weinberg and Adam Kapelner explain how allocative gender discrimination operates in the current publishing industry, where female and male authors are allocated to different genres according to gender. “As a result,” they argue, “female authors might be differentially selected for publication and highly concentrated in certain genres or publishing outlets and underrepresented in others,” resulting in a price gap of 45 percent between titles authored by women and men (Weinberg and Kapelner). While this dissertation is looking at

illustrators rather than authors, this information on the contemporary publishing landscape shows how, even in the present day, work around book production remains divided along gendered lines. This dissertation also deals with the legacy of gender and the Arts and Crafts Movement, a legacy which is still being grappled with today. Susan Luckman points out the cultural parallels between the Arts and Crafts Movement, which “created middle-class desire for artisanal working-class and rural skills as a response to the later stages of the Industrial Revolution” and the modern market for handmade crafts made available through sites like Etsy that provide income streams for women in a way that continues the “long, but previously less visible, tradition of middle-class women using their creative skills to contribute from home to the family income” (Luckman). But as my literature review will show, while affording women new means of supporting themselves, the Arts and Crafts Movement did little to overturn gender hierarchies around labor, and similarly, modern craft entrepreneurial movements provide income opportunities for women while doing “little to shift traditional gender divisions within the household” (Luckman). This dissertation adds to the history of both of these areas of gendered labor—around textual production and in regard to arts and crafts—in ways that shed light on the current trends that exist in these areas.

Another approach central to my theoretical framing is the work of Jerome McGann. In *The Textual Condition* (1991), Jerome McGann calls attention to the need for textual criticism to broaden its scope to what he terms “bibliographical codes”: the understanding of a text as “a laced network” of factors that comprise a text’s existence, including “variables at the most material ... levels of the text: in the case of scripted texts, the physical form of books and manuscripts (paper, ink, typeface, layouts) or their prices, advertising mechanisms, and

distribution venues” (McGann 12-13). The importance of the book’s bibliographical codes rests in the fact that, according to McGann: “Literary works do not know themselves, and cannot *be* known, apart from their specific material modes of existence/resistance. They are not channels of transmission, they are particular forms of transmissive interaction” (McGann 11). My research in this dissertation is predicated on the idea that in tracing the book’s development, examining the bibliographical codes of the books under consideration are of equal importance to examining their contents, and as a result, examining the work that produces the bibliographical codes—such as that done by illustrators— is also of importance.

### Research Questions

Further research questions include:

- What is the significance of women’s participation in the wood engraving revival?
- What can their experience tell us about the historical relationship between women and media, especially as it relates to the materiality of the text?
- How did their illustrative work, arising from their training in the revival, impact early and mid-twentieth century print culture?
- What can these artists’ contributions tell us about the historical relationship between women illustrators and the genres of the book and the serial; what opportunities did each of these formats afford them as artists?

## Historical Context

### The History of Wood Engraving in Britain

Wood engraving as an illustrative technique was popularized by British illustrator and author Thomas Bewick (1753-1828), but owes its existence to its predecessor, woodcutting, which was invented in China in the seventh century and “enabled the widespread publishing of a variety of texts, and the dissemination of knowledge and literacy” (“The Invention of Woodblock Printing”). Woodcutting involves carving away sections of wood around a design to make an impression on a textile or page, so that the section that is cut away creates white space while the inked remainder prints in black. In Europe, woodcuts were used to make books in the fifteenth century, shortly before and slightly overlapping with the invention of movable type, but had come to be considered “crude,” associated with “images in vulgar, sensationalist lower-class broadsides and chapbooks” (Harthan 60, Beegan 49). Bewick changed this trend by carving on the harder end-grain section of wood (rather than the softer side grain used in woodcutting) and by using an engraving tool more typically used for metal engraving, which had been “at the top of the hierarchy of reproductive processes” but took considerable time to complete (Beegan 49). By applying metal-engraving tools to end-grain wood, Bewick’s approach to wood engraving achieved “a much higher level of detail than was possible with woodcuts”—more akin to the level of detail found in a copper engraving—but with the advantage of being cheaper and faster than engraving copper (Heritage and St. Onge 112). Another advantage of wood engraving, as opposed to intaglio print methods like copper engraving, where the ink fills the crevices of the block rather than covering a raised design, is that the wood blocks could be “printed along with the accompanying type on a relief printing press using just a single impression” (Heritage and St. Onge 112). Wood-engraving, then, overcame the limitations in detail of woodcutting, while also

being more cost effective and efficient to print than the popular copper engraving method. One of the most transformational aspects of Bewick's developments with wood engraving was the way in which it made illustrated books more affordable. Much of Bewick's work focused on natural history subjects, like birds and mice, and his engravings made images of these things available for the first time for individuals other than the wealthiest consumers (Uglow xvi).

Bewick's name will reappear many times in the chapters that follow—he was especially influential on Gwen Raverat and Joan Hassall—but the century that elapsed between Bewick's death in 1828 and the revival's beginnings in the early 1900s is crucial for understanding how the revival was attempting to renew engraving. Bewick was an autographic artist-engraver, meaning he both drew the images he carved and carved them in wood himself, and he trained his apprentices in this tradition. The skill set that Bewick's apprentices gained from him was, from the perspective of the revivalists, wood engraving's undoing, as their abilities became in greater demand on a commercial scale and their artistry became less important. In the mid-nineteenth century, the market for engraved illustrations for advertisements and publications expanded so much that “there was more work than engraving offices could cope with,” resulting in the expansion of facsimile—rather than interpretive—engraving, which could be done with less training (Beegan-58). “Publishers,” according to Jaffe, “wanted only the skill and speed” of Bewick's apprentices, “and into this trap most nineteenth-century master wood-engravers were to fall,” with the result that “the intimate relationship between design and engraving, established by Thomas Bewick, was almost completely lost in the course of the next generation, and the division between artist and reproductive engraver became accepted as natural” (9). Firms like the Dalziel Brothers employed engravers (who operated anonymously, signing only the firm's signature to their work) to render images drafted by someone else, operating, as Bethan Stevens

argues, like a “ghostwriter,” whose “job was to concretise lines designed by other artists” (Stevens 649). The result of this division of labor and commercial scale of production was, from the perspective of the revivalists, a loss of quality in wood engraving. Rodney Engen describes this period in engraved illustrations as one of “dull graphics produced to meet strict deadlines,” but wood engraving’s ubiquity as a cheap, efficient illustration technique was not long lived: the 1890s saw the end of its popularity, with the rise of photomechanical technology requiring fewer engravers to be employed, as more of the reproduction process could be done by machine (Engen 81; Beegan 69). Emblematic of this transition, Dalziel Brothers’ wood engraving firm declared bankruptcy in 1893 (Beegan 69).

As a response to the industrialization of engraving, the wood engraving revival sought to recapture the artistry of Bewick as an autographic engraver and rescue wood engraving from the segmented roles that commercial engraving firms relegated it to. Histories on the revival credit Noel Rooke with solidifying the movement through the introduction of wood engraving instruction to the Central School of Arts and Crafts, but Rooke’s moves to institutionalize training in autographic engraving occurred against the backdrop of the Arts and Crafts Movement’s ideals of creating books as beautiful objects. The Arts and Crafts Movement, led by William Morris and reacting to the lowered production standards and fragmented production processes of industrialization, was a social and artistic movement that sought to elevate the importance of beauty in everyday objects, to democratize the hierarchies between fine art and functional art (or craft), and to return to “an age in which the craftsman was both designer and maker, when, before the division of labour, an artefact was the product of a single individual who saw the creative process through from beginning to end” (Callen 2). James Hamilton describes the work of William Morris as giving “new dignity to the ... limited manufacture by



hand of domestic and functional objects, in the wake of the lowered design standards after the Industrial Revolution” ( 36). Among the many facets of the movement was an increased interest by Morris and his contemporaries in the “beauties of Renaissance illustrated books and woodcut prints” and, harkening to that era, an emphasis on the production of the book as an aesthetically attractive object, which Morris termed ““The Book Beautiful”” (Jaffe 12; Harthan 223). As a result, Morris founded his own private press in 1891, the Kelmscott Press, an endeavor whose motivations he describes in *Note by William Morris on his Aims in Founding the Kelmscott Press*:

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. I have always been a great admirer of the calligraphy of the Middle Ages, & of the earlier printing which took its place. . . . And it was the essence of my undertaking to produce books which it would be a pleasure to look upon as pieces of printing and arrangement of type. (Morris et al. 1)

Later in this explanation, Morris identifies the role of woodcuts specifically in creating these aesthetically pleasing books:

I have always tried to keep in mind the necessity for making my decoration a part of the page of type. . . in designing the magnificent and inimitable woodcuts which have adorned several of my books . . . my friend Sir Edward Burne-Jones has never lost sight of this important point, so that his work will not only give us a series of most beautiful and imaginative pictures, but form the most harmonious decoration possible on the printed book. (Morris et al. 5-6)

The harmonization mentioned here by Morris likely refers to the design of the illustrations, in relation to the other factors he describes, such as spacing and typeface, but likely also refers to the harmony of relief printing, where the illustration and text can be printed by the same press run. This theme of harmony in relation to woodcuts and engravings will be revisited by other revivalists, like Noel Rooke, explored in more detail below.

Although the Kelmscott Press only lasted for seven years and existed approximately twenty years before the engraving revival began in earnest, it was the first of the private press movement that followed and “its influence for good or bad on the work of its successors was considerable” (Cave 143). The private press movement was central to advancing the wood engraving revival, as presses like Golden Cockerell and Curwin often solicited wood engraved illustrations in their endeavors to produce attractive volumes.

Yet, it is important to note that one aspect of the revival was the celebration of wood engraving as an independent art form, not just as an illustration technique, and part of this movement was the use of the white line engraving technique, which opposed the “black line engraving used by hack illustrators in the nineteenth century” (Taylor 79). In the earliest days of the movement, engravers like William Nicholson (1872-1949) and his pupil Edward Gordon Craig (1872-1966) developed the white line technique, in which the lines that appear on the page are carved out of a black background, with the profile of the image literally appearing in white lines, rather than carving the background away from the lines, and thus having the image appear in black. Craig and Nicholson were, according to Hamilton, “part of a growing movement in Britain and France to find a new role for wood engraving in the visual arts” (45), a movement which sought to develop wood engraving on its own terms, rather than attempting to mimic the look of prints produced by mechanical means. “[A]rtists,” wood engraver Bernard Sleigh argued,

“should play to” wood engraving’s “strengths” (Hamilton 45). Through the white line technique, Nicholson and Craig brought “fresh possibilities of atmosphere, characterization, movement, as well as new subject matter that artists could find in the new twentieth century” and their work was widely popular (Hamilton 45-46). Gwen Raverat is credited with further developing the white line technique, discussed in more detail in chapter two. As a result of these stylistic changes, around the turn of the century, art galleries began to display this new style of engraving as an art form unto itself, “rather than page decoration or illustration” (Hamilton 48). While the wood engravings I examine in this dissertation are used for illustrations, it is nonetheless important to note the efforts of the revivalists to elevate the status of wood engraving to that of an independent art form, and many of the revivalists, including Gwen Raverat and Clare Leighton, had their work displayed in art galleries or in art books.

Another figure who further advanced the cause of the engraving revival, and of white line engraving specifically, was Noel Rooke, a professor of book illustration at the Central School of Art and Design (now known as Central Saint Martins College of Arts and Design). Rooke introduced wood engraving to the curriculum of the Central School in 1912, several years after he discovered wood engraving could ameliorate his dissatisfaction with how poorly photographic technology “reproduced his drawings” (Hamilton 54; Balston 8). Rook’s dissatisfaction with facsimile engraving is clearly registered in his 1926 booklet *Woodcuts and Wood Engravings*, originally a lecture to the Print Collectors’ Club: “after an illustration had been drawn, there was only a one to fifty million chance that a genius could be discovered to do the dull work of translating it by engraving into terms of printing” (11-12). Rooke also speaks to how the revivalists sought unity, not just of artist with engraver, but with engraving and text, speaking to how the relief printing process contributed to this unity: “The reason that wood cuts and

engravings harmonise so well with type, and make far more satisfactory illustrations than those made by any other method, is partly this physical one. The illustrations are not something of alien nature inserted in the book; they are part of the book” (17). Rooke then goes on to point out how this unity with the text of the book is impossible with photo-mechanical methods or with intaglio methods like copper engravings (17).

Though Rooke institutionalized training in engraving, he was not alone in his efforts to revive autographic wood engraving. Among others involved in the revival was Eric Gill, a fellow student with Rooke under Central School calligraphy professor Edward Johnston. Gill “welcome[d] Rooke’s idea” of a school of autographic engraving, “and the two men set to work to evolve the new language and concepts which were to give rise to a national school of wood engraving” (Garrett 145). Both Rooke and Gill’s names appear many times throughout the following chapters, as they exerted influence over the careers of the engravers studied here.

### Women and Wood Engraving

In *A History of British Wood Engraving* (1978), British engraver Albert Garrett describes how, “By the end of the Second World War,” several women engravers and sculptors, including all three of the women studied in this dissertation, “had arrived” in their artistic fields (278). “Men have been marveling at women’s performance in art ever since,” Garrett says, “[i]n the history of engraving there is no precedent for such a talented group of females. It is strange that these women artists broke through and established themselves in the two most difficult disciplines of wood engraving and sculpture rather than in the easier field of painting” (Garrett 278). Garrett’s wonderment at women’s accomplishments in the challenging discipline of engraving is reminiscent of art historian Linda Nochlin’s 1971 essay, “Why Have There Been

No Great Women Artists?,” in which she refutes as mythological the idea of artistic genius, instead arguing that “the total situation of art making...occur[s] in a social situation, are integral elements of this social structure, and are mediated and determined by specific and definable social institutions” (Nochlin 158). In his surprise at the accomplishments of women engravers, then, Garrett is overlooking specific material conditions that made the engraving revival a scene in which women artist engravers could thrive.

First, the educational conditions were changing in such a way as to make training in the craft more accessible for women. Prior to the revival, engraving was taught under the apprenticeship system, which excluded women. Although women engravers practiced prior to the revival, their role was limited to the facsimile engraving undertaken by firms like Dalziel Brothers (Kooistra 279). Crucially, even the division of labor around commercial engraving had gendered hierarchies: the draftsmanship required to draw the image on wood was considered a masculine domain, whereas carving the image in wood was considered a more appropriate occupation for women, in keeping with the “familiar premise that women were better suited to dexterous and repetitive crafts than expressive art” (Flood 110). In becoming artist-engravers, then, the women of the engraving revival were challenging these hierarchies.

The power exerted by patriarchal art organizations over the field of engraving is fully displayed in an example Patricia Jaffe gives of a Female School for design which opened in London in the early 1840s and included classes on wood engraving but “by 1848 the Art Union was urging that the class be abolished on the grounds that there were sufficient male engravers, and women were therefore not wanted” (11). The classes continued despite objections from the Art Union, but as Jaffe points out, “what these young women were preparing themselves for was reproductive engraving. However sensitive their work, they would always remain servants to a

creative artist” (11). As the industry for commercial facsimile engraving declined toward the late nineteenth century, there was less motivation for male engravers to act as gatekeepers around their profession: “To be a reproductive engraver had ceased to be a secure profession. Coincidentally men ceased to worry about the infiltration of women into the trade” (Jaffe 13). Through the craft’s introduction to the curriculum at London’s art schools, women gained institutional access to training in wood engraving, or, in the case of Gwen Raverat (who learned engraving from her cousin rather than art school), they gained artistic training that contributed to their careers.

Another aspect of the engraving revival that provided openings for women to succeed are aspects of the medium itself that fit the roles often assigned to women. Although the wood engraving revivalists advocated for the craft as an independent art form, the best way to make a living at wood engraving throughout the revival was through illustration, a career choice which, during the Victorian era explosion of print culture, had become a viable option for middle-class women who needed to make a living. Helen Goodman points out two key reasons why book illustration came to be considered a suitable occupation for women in this period: firstly, the fact that illustration is artwork, and that artwork had traditionally been associated with the domain of the home, meant that women who took up the profession were not viewed as a threat to “male-female labor divisions” and their work, because it was done in the home, was considered “‘natural’ and safe,” an “extension of women’s domestic role” (14). Secondly, because illustration was and is considered a “stepchild among the arts” as a commercial rather than fine art, this meant that “genius was not needed, merely a serviceable talent, training, and on-the-job experience” with the resulting view that the occupation was “eminently suitable for and not beyond the reach of women” (14). These aspects of book illustration fit with the roles women

often occupied in the Arts and Crafts Movement as well; as histories of the movement show, women often took up crafts like illumination and jewelry making, in part because these activities “could easily be done in the home” (Callen 186; Wolf 30). These dynamics around the labor of wood-engraving meant that the wood engraving revival was an approachable movement through which women could become professional artists. These cultural factors were likely assisted by the materials of engraving itself: with only a few necessary tools—wood, graving tools, and light source—wood engraving requires little financial investment to begin. Gwen Raverat’s experience in particular shows how the medium was approachable for women who needed to make a living; as chapter two discusses in greater detail, Raverat picked up wood engraving easily from a relative who gave her the necessary tools, and later in life, often illustrated at home while her kids were in school. The reality that wood engraving, as something that could be done from the home, was particularly accessible to women is echoed in Zoë Thomas’s discussion of how women’s exclusion from the male-run workshops of the Arts and Crafts Movement meant that many women set up businesses independently, “where they had greater freedom to design work, pick materials and commissions, employ staff, and make a name for themselves” (156). Wood engraving’s flexibility catered to this trend, as women pursued their art in their own spaces, without having to deal with the exclusion of male-dominated workshops. The fact that Clare Leighton traveled extensively, even moving across the Atlantic, implies how wood engraving could facilitate women’s mobility and spatial control.

Lastly, because wood engraving was being “revived” from its commercial status to the status of an art form, the mechanisms of control around it, such as art schools, were less restrictive than those around the fine arts. Jan Conway characterizes engraving’s status in the nineteenth century as a “means to an end” and “less as a fine art or original creative medium and

more as a purely commercial enterprise” (Conway 227). This status meant that institutions that had resisted the entrance of women into the realm of professional artists held less sway over the field. Looking at the history of women as professional artists in the late nineteenth century, art historian Pamela Gerrish Nunn chronicles how, even after admitting women to life drawing classes in 1894, viewed by feminists as a marker for women’s progress in the art world, the Royal Academies of Art continued to resist equal treatment of women as professional artists well into the twentieth century (Nunn 168, 185). The 1891 British census showed that the number of women “identifying as painters, engravers, or sculptors” was only a third of that of men—an improvement over prior years, but still indicative of gatekeeping around the profession (Nunn 177). The Royal Academies’ perceived conservatism around forms of high art and reticence to accept forms of craft is one reason for the founding of schools like the Central School under the influence of the Arts and Crafts Movement, as I discuss in more detail in chapter three. The opportunity for women to attend newer art schools with fewer gatekeeping mechanisms around fine arts versus craft provided an entry point for them to take part in the formation of wood engraving as an art form, rather than entering a more strongly segregated field like painting. This distinction between women’s ability to make a living at wood engraving versus other kinds of art is evident when comparing the experiences of women engravers to those of their male contemporaries in the revival.

James Hamilton explains how the “quick results” of training in wood engraving made it an “attractive medium for artists who never had any intention of being restricted to it for life. Painters and sculptors of the calibre of William Nicholson, Paul Nash, Leon Underwood and Edward Wadsworth explored wood engraving with concentrated surges in creative energy, and then put it aside for good” (14). Unlike these men, the women engravers studied here used their



craft to earn a living as illustrators, often across multiple decades. How men and women's roles differed in the engraving revival, and in the art world more generally, is addressed in more detail in chapter three, but for now it is important to note that women engravers often also possessed other artistic skills in addition to wood engraving, but that the characteristics of wood engraving as a commercial craft made it particularly accessible for women to advance in ways they likely would have struggled to in the more male-dominated fine arts.

#### International Wood Engraving Influences/Influencers

The artists examined here are all British by birth and trained in British schools of engraving—"school" here being used in both the literal educational sense and in the figurative sense to denote common practices and trends among British engravers, with Gwen Raverat and Joan Hassall especially working in what Kristin Bluemel terms the "Bewickian tradition" of English wood engraving that "memorialized a disappearing English countryside" and with "pastoral forms" that "came to represent an authentic national heritage for generations of English readers" (207-08). Yet despite the English style of their engravings, each artist in their own way influenced or was influenced by literary and artistic trends occurring in other countries at the time. Clare Leighton is the most obvious example of this because she moved to the United States in 1939, where she lived the rest of her life, depicting in great detail scenes from the American South and New England, for instance. Leighton also wrote books wood engraving with examples from artists across the globe. Gwen Raverat was heavily influenced by French impressionism, using light in ways that made her engravings unique from those of her predecessors and contemporaries. And Joan Hassall exerted influence on Scottish print culture through her work on chapbooks and reprints of Scottish poets.

The purpose of examining the international elements of Raverat, Leighton, and Hassall's careers is to acknowledge and incorporate the ways in which wood engraving has, despite its strong associations with Bewick, emerged from and been influenced by global cultures and transnational exchanges. As I briefly mentioned earlier, wood engraving's predecessor, woodcutting, was developed in China. Wood engraving on long grain wood (rather than the end grain, like British engraving) has also had a lengthy history in Europe, especially in Germany, where a strong tradition of engraved illustrations developed with the growth of print culture in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (Garrett 60, 65). German *formschneider* (shape cutter) engravers operated similarly to the nineteenth century engraving firms in the UK, with the labor of engraving divided among an artist, a draughtsman, a *formschneider*, and a printer (Garrett 66). Garrett points out, though, that unlike the commercial facsimile engravers of the nineteenth century, whose roles "demanded complete subjugation of individuality," *formschneiders* played a more significant role in the "complete drawing and interpretation of it in an engraving" (66).

In addition to its international roots, wood engravers and woodcutters were working in many other countries around the same time as the British revival. Michael Sullivan discusses how woodcutting also experienced a revival in China around this time; although woodcutting in China predates its existence in the West by several hundred years, the development of engraving in the Western culture influenced its renewed use as a "medium for mass education and propaganda" in 1930s China (Sullivan 80). Roberta Quance addresses the woodcut illustrations created by Norah Borges (sister of Jorge Luis Borges) in Interwar Spanish and Latin American print culture (Quance). With the introduction of Japanese culture into Western culture in the nineteenth century, Japanese methods of creating colored woodcuts influenced movements in England and the United States, where colored woodcutting techniques were more limited (Art 9-

10). Through investigating the international influences on and by Raverat, Leighton, and Hassall, then I am complicating the perception of British wood engraving as inherently “British,” while hopefully doing justice to the craft’s Asian and European roots.

### Theoretical Framing

#### Feminist Book History

In *Old Books & New Histories: An Orientation to Studies in Book and Print Culture* (2006), Leslie Howsam begins her definition of book and print culture studies with an acknowledgement of just how overwhelming the scope of the field can be, given the many iterations that a text can assume, and quotes Peter J. Rabinowitz by admonishing the book and print culture scholar: “Readers need to stand somewhere before they pick up a book” (Howsam 3). The “somewhere” that Howsam refers to here is the disciplinary framework with which a book culture scholar approaches their subject, and this dissertation uses a feminist media historical framework—specifically, labor that is coded feminine that occurs around textual production—as that entry point into the History of the Book. In this section, I introduce this book historical approach through situating this dissertation within the field of feminist book history.

The existence of the field of book history traces its roots back to Robert Darnton’s 1982 article, “What is the History of Books?” in which he conceives of a the “life cycle” of the printed book as a “communications circuit that runs from the author to the publisher (if the bookseller does not assume that role), the printer, the shipper, the bookseller, and the reader” (Darnton 67). One of the most useful aspects of Darnton’s model, according to Michelle Levy, “has been to re-embed authors within the larger fields of activity by which books were made and sold, distributed and read” (Levy 298) . Yet, feminist scholars have taken issue with how Darnton’s

communication circuit is limited to the types of roles and types of texts occupied by or authored by men. Howsam opens the conversation on feminist approaches to book history in 1998, arguing that, despite an increasing amount of scholarship on women in book history, the field of book history remains dominated by an assumption of maleness around the object of the book itself, with focus on women's contributions devoted to "atypical individuals, outstanding anomalies in a cultural field dominated by men" ("In My View: Women and Book History" 1). To redress this assumed masculine status around the book, Howsam argues for expanding book history beyond the roles usually occupied by men—the roles which are the focus of Darnton's circuit, such as printing, editing, and publishing—to explore texts through a framework of how they have been used and shared. This, Howsam argues, opens the field to other kinds of texts traditionally authored by and often used by women, like "cookery and household books, for example" (1, 2). Michelle Levy similarly critiques "women's apparent absence from the circuit," arguing that Darnton's communication circuit "is too rigid to capture the full range of women's involvement in the production and dissemination of literary writing" (300). This dissertation aims to fill this gap in the "full range of women's involvement" in the material text by examining the work of women as illustrators. Illustrators are not specifically mentioned by Howsam or Levy; in fact, in his 2012 article "Defining Illustration Studies: Towards a New Academic Discipline," Paul Goldman points out that book history has traditionally overlooked illustrations, favoring instead "economics of book production, reading habits, literary and textual problems and so on" (17). Yet Howsam's discussion of the gender of the book creates a useful opening for considering the role of the illustrator because of her argument for how a feminist book history framework should emphasize the process of creation and usage of the text, not simply the book as a finished product. Howsam argues that one of the influences patriarchal culture has brought

to bear on the physical book is a fixation on collection and possession: “In patriarchal culture, books have been valued for their rarity with the first edition being highly prized. Not only have most collectors been men ... but the language of book collecting is the language of possession” (1). Howsam counters this narrative by borrowing from the work of feminist literary scholar Jane Marcus, who advocates for a process-centered rather than product-centered focus on women’s writing: ““History is preserved not in the art object, but in the tradition of *making* the art object”” (qtd. in Howsam 2). In “Working Toward a Feminist Printing History” (2020), Sarah Werner builds on Howsam’s ethos of a feminist book history by extending Marcus’s focus on the creation process beyond writing and use of texts to also encompass the act of printing (Werner 15). This is useful for thinking about wood engraving because Werner emphasizes the many repetitive actions involved in printing, which resonates with the repetitive nature of wood engraving, both in the act of repeatedly digging the engraving tool into wood but also in the repeated uses of the same block for multiple copies of the printed object.

### Feminist Media History

Looking at the role of gender in the production of the book necessarily requires a feminist media historical approach to understand the politics of cultural products created by women. *In Feminist Media History: Suffrage, Periodicals and the Public Sphere* (2011), Maria Dicenzo, Lucy Delap, and Leila Ryan define feminist media history as “feminist interpretations of early forms of media and institutions, be they feminist or not,” noting that “While feminist histories generally share an interest in the relationships between gender and power, research has been characterized by major differences at the levels of objects of study, critical approaches, even purpose/motivation” (7). In this dissertation, I am focusing on media (illustrations) produced by

women—but going back to Howam’s embrace of a feminist book historical approach that emphasizes process over product, I focus here not just on the media produced but also on the politics of the production process. As the historical background in this chapter shows, the production of wood engraved illustrations by women is, like any aspect of labor and textual production, a politically fraught topic. Thus, to examine the wood engraving revival from a feminist media historical perspective means attending to the politics of the craft itself and how each factor of creation intersects with the gender politics of the art and publishing worlds. In doing so, I take up the challenge posed by Shelley Stamp in the introduction to the first issue of *Feminist Media Histories*, when she states that “Feminist media historiography is not simply about finding women and inserting them into conventionally understood trajectories, or even about rewriting those trajectories” but rather is “about confronting the absence of women, understanding the effects of that absence and grappling with its results” (Stamp 2).

### Literature Review

#### Feminist Book History

In taking up a feminist book history framework, this dissertation adds to a growing body of recent scholarship that acknowledges women’s contributions to the material text while also arguing for an expansion of what kinds of work are valued in examining the object of the book. Such works include Kate Ozment’s 2020 article “Rationale for Feminist Bibliography,” where she constructs a case for the need for feminist bibliography to dismantle the white male domination of the book history field, arguing that the concept of bibliographic work should be expanded to include “service-oriented” work often coded feminine, like librarianship (Ozment 167). The 2021 essay collection *Thanks for Typing: Remembering Forgotten Women in History*

contributes to this effort by including chapters that illuminate the labor of women in print culture (among other topics), with an entire section devoted to women who have worked as secretaries and editors, including the “invisible labour” of women who worked tirelessly for Penguin in its “formative decades from the 1930s to the 1960s” (Lyons 50). “This chapter,” states Rebecca E. Lyons, “puts forward an alternative picture of the labour behind some of the most iconic paperbacks of the twentieth century” (51). Lyon’s argument is of particular relevance here because the women examined in this dissertation formed close and often long-lasting relationships with the publishing firms with which they worked; like Allen Lane’s assistant Eunice Frost, who rose “through the ranks at Penguin to become an editor, and eventually the first female director of the publishing house,” the illustrators studied here combat the notion of the publishing industry as a masculine space, a perception that Howsam claims has contributed to the treatment of the book as a masculine object: “publishing, which after all has to do with ‘making public’ means moving a text out of the private sphere, the world identified as domestic and feminine, and into the political, competitive, and commercial place where ideas and writings jostle for dominance” (1). Additional recent scholarship on women in book history, such as Molly G. Yarn’s 2021 monograph *Shakespeare’s Lady Editors*, points to “the marginalization of the ways in which women participated in the life cycle of a book,” arguing that “much work remains to be done in order to disentangle, as much as possible, how agents other than the ‘author’ contributed to the creation of books” (Yarn 39). While Yarn’s book focuses on the work of editing, specifically, her argument rings true for illustrators, as well, and this dissertation takes up the challenge she poses to examine non-authorial contributors to the book.

## Art History

Most scholarship focused on the wood engraving revival as a phenomenon and on its participants in particular comes from the field of art history. This scholarship falls into two main categories: histories of wood engraving in Britain and art school histories. In the first category, Thomas Balston's *English Wood-Engraving: 1900-1950* (1951) provides an overview of the revival, its origins, and its participants, although many facets are not covered in great detail. Rodney Engen's chapter on wood engraving in *British Printmakers, 1855-1955* similarly gives a useful historical overview of wood engraving in Britain from the time of Bewick to the revival. Albert Garrett's *A History of British Wood Engraving* (1978) provides a very detailed account of the revival itself and of engraving before the revival, aiming to fill a gap in art historical scholarship on what Garrett terms the "British school of wood engraving with a common philosophical vision and dominant aesthetic language" (Garrett 21). James Hamilton's *Wood Engraving & The Woodcut in Britain, c. 1890-1990* (1994), as the title implies, traces both branches of xylography: wood engraving and woodcuts and brings the history of crafts in Britain much closer to the present day. The only history of the movement to focus exclusively the history of the revival from a gender perspective is Patricia Jaffe's *Women Engravers* (1988), which is a history of women's participation in the craft, covering the period of the revival up until the late twentieth century. Lastly, Joanna Selborne's *British Wood-Engraved Book Illustration, 1904-1940* (1998) elucidates the relationship between the revival as a cultural movement and its manifestations in illustration, providing useful historical background on the revival and its participants.

The second category of art historical scholarship which contributes to our understanding of the revival and its participants is histories of art educational institutions between the late-



nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries. Sylvia Backemeyer's *Making their Mark: Art, Craft and Design at the Central School, 1896-1966* (2000), for instance, looks at the impact of the artists of the Central School of Arts and Crafts; although Backemeyer addresses the issue of gender in arts education, her study is more broadly focused on all of the arts and crafts taught at the school, not exclusively engraving. Similarly, Mengting Yu's *London's Women Artists, 1900-1914: A Talented and Decorative Group* (2020) assesses the impact of another crucial institution in women's arts education, the Slade School, but is not focused on engraving exclusively. Susan Owen's *The Wood Engraving Revival and the Slade, 1921-1950* (2020) also speaks to that particular institution's part in the movement, but, once again, is aimed toward art scholars and does not speak particularly to the issue of gender. All of these histories have provided valuable historical research on engraving, its teaching in art schools, and the relationship of women to some of London's art schools. This dissertation builds on the research provided in these sources, narrowing the scope to look at Raverat, Leighton, and Hassall's experiences in particular and adopting a feminist book historical lens.

### Women and the Arts and Crafts Movement

Because of the engraving revival's emergence from the Arts and Crafts Movement, one theme addressed throughout this dissertation is how the work of the engravers examined here extends the legacy or reach of the movement. Histories of women's roles in the movement are limited yet growing, and this dissertation adds to that expanding body of scholarship. One of the first authors to open the discussion of the relationship between gender and the Arts and Crafts Movement is Anthea Callen, whose 1979 book *Women Artists of the Arts & Crafts Movement* argues that the "history of the Arts and Crafts movement has been traditionally studied and

understood within the confines of the history of its leaders....In particular, the important position and function of women within the history of the movement has been left unnoticed, thus reflecting general patterns within a male-dominated view of history” (Callen "Preface"). Callen’s work covers women’s participation in a variety of creative mediums, including embroidery, lacemaking, and interior design, with a chapter devoted to “Hand-printing, Book-binding and Illustration.” Callen’s discussion of women involved in reviving illumination such as Phoebe Traquair and Jessie Bayes, provides helpful historical context on women’s relegation to certain subjects or art forms. In particular, women’s inability to train under the apprenticeship system, Callen argues, meant they were “ill-equipped to tackle the more complex painterly problems posed by the treatment of the human figure” and were thus relegated to “painted borders and landscape backgrounds in illuminations” (185). The exclusion of women from training in depicting the human form is a topic revisited in chapter two, and provides useful background on why wood engraved illustrations, with their emphasis on the pastoral, was an applicable art field for women to enter. While like Callen my aim is to “provide...new material which will contribute to our understanding women’s position as ‘outsider’ in a patriarchal culture,” Callen focuses on the earlier turn-of-the-century days of the movement, whereas my analysis of women in the revival extends our understanding of women’s engagement with the Arts and Crafts Movement well into the twentieth century (“Preface”).

Toni Lesser Wolf’s 1989 article “Women Jewelers of the British Arts and Crafts Movement” provides a useful study which shows how many overlaps exist between the experience of women wood engravers and women jewelers. Like wood engravers, women who wished to make jewelry were excluded from learning the craft by the apprenticeship system but

gained entrance into the industry through art schools like the Royal Academy and the Central School of Arts and Crafts (Wolf 28-30). Like wood engraving, portions of the jewelry making process were easily undertaken in the home, which made it an appealing and therefore growing industry for late-nineteenth century women who now had expanded access to training in the craft. Yet, as Wolf states, women jewelers still had to contend with the “dualistic atmosphere of forward-looking revisionism and retrograde double-standardization” that accompanied a movement that was rhetorically left-leaning and socialist, but whose male leaders gave women only “benevolent tolerance” and excluded them from male-only guilds (31). This dissertation extends our understanding of how these gender dynamics around creation and production of art continue to play out in the later years of the Arts and Crafts Movement with wood engravers specifically.

The most recent addition to scholarship on women of the Arts and Crafts Movement is Zoë Thomas’s 2020 monograph *Women Art Workers and the Arts and Crafts Movement*. Like Callen, Thomas’s work redresses the trend within Arts and Crafts Movement scholarship of focusing only on the (male) leaders of the movement. Thomas’s research instead focuses on women’s arts and crafts organizations, such as the Women’s Guild of Arts, the spaces they inhabited, and “the relationships that played out within these sites” (Zoë Thomas 2). Like book history scholarship, information on women in the Arts and Crafts Movement, according to Thomas, tends to be limited to women “through their close association by marriage or kin to celebrated men” and are often “framed around notions of individual exceptionalism” (5). Although Thomas’s book does discuss some illustrators, including Joan Hassall (the focus of chapter four), the scope of her book is much broader in the arts and crafts industries covered. This dissertation uses the

historical context on women and the Arts and Crafts Movement provided by Thomas to focus more specifically on one field within the movement.

### Literary and Illustration Studies

Literary and illustration studies have engaged the wood engraving revival on a limited basis, often focusing on the relationship between the engraver/engravings and the works they illustrated. A 2015 special issue of *Nineteenth Century Gender Studies*, focused on illustration and gender, points to a growing interest in scholarship on illustrations. As Kate Holterhoff and Nicole Lobdell point out in the introduction to the issue, “contemporary literary critics have tended to sideline illustrations, treating them as tangential to the text, while art historians have ignored them for being lowbrow, unimaginative, or merely commercial” (Holterhoff and Lobdell). Susan Walton’s article on Florence Claxton’s illustrations for Victorian author Charlotte Yonge, included in this special issue, is one of the few examples of scholarship on women wood engravers, focusing on Claxton as a rare example of a nineteenth century engraver who was also drafted the images she engraved (Walton).

Ian Rogerson looks at wood engravings done by Agnes Miller Parker and others for the Folio Society’s mid-twentieth century editions of Thomas Hardy’s novels, setting their work against the backdrop of the emergence of book clubs like the Folio Society and the Heritage Press (Rogerson). Rosalind Parry also examines wood engraved illustrations and their role in twentieth century republications of *Jane Eyre* as engraved by Fritz Eichenberg (Parry, “Engraving Jane Eyre”). More relevant to the women under consideration here, Parry also examines the wood engravings done by Claire Leighton for 1928 edition of Hardy’s *Return of the Native*, focusing especially on how Leighton immersed herself in “Hardy’s world” to create

the illustrations (Parry, “Clare Leighton’s Egdon Heath”). Additional sources on these wood engravers from a literary and illustration studies perspective are dissertations by Rosalind Parry and by Kathleen Rice. Their research on the lives and work of Clare Leighton and Joan Hassall especially is helpful in understanding their work in context. I build on this research by focusing more on the gender politics of production in the careers of these artists,

Like Rogerson, Kristin Bluemel also examines the work of Agnes Miller Parker, along with other women participants in the revival like Joan Hassall and Gwen Raverat. Bluemel looks especially at how the engravings by these women inform perceptions of rural, interwar Britain and our understanding of rural modernity. More so than Parry or Rogerson, Bluemel addresses the gender dynamics in which these engravers-as-illustrators are working, noting that despite the conservatism of the subject matter they engraved, which Bluemel sets against the backdrop of interwar nostalgia, Raverat and Hassall “were gender deviants, whose lived experiences as independent, professional artists put them at odds with just about every social and economic structure of the English arts, illustration, and publishing establishments,” emphasizing that these were “*modern* women creating a *modern* art” (“A Happy Heritage” 209-10). Bluemel’s examination of Hassall and Raverat in particular informs this study because of how she contextualizes the work of these two figures. Bluemel’s acknowledgement of the tension between the conservatism of the content of work by these women and their status as “gender deviants” hints at the variety of political and artistic movements in which women engravers would participate. By using a feminist book and media history lens, this dissertation takes up the challenge offered by Bluemel when she states that “Any scholarly account attending only to the forms of a picture—their subjects and designs—without considering the picture’s methods of production and reproduction and its relation to language cannot fully say what the picture

means” by looking at the politics of production and reproduction in particular ( “Windmills and Woodblocks” 93).

Conversations occurring among scholars of children’s picturebooks are also of relevance here because of how picture book scholarship treats the relationship between text and image. Scholarship on children’s picturebooks tends approach the illustrations from an art appreciation perspective or study the content from a pedagogical perspective, with “literary studies often neglect[ing] the visual aspect or treat[ing] pictures as secondary” (Nodelman ix-x; Nikolajeva and Scott 3). Perry Nodelman, Maria Nikolajeva, and Carole Scott instead advocate for an approach to the picturebook that treats the image/text relationship holistically, providing “tools for decoding the specific ‘text’ of picturebooks, the text created by the interaction of verbal and visual information” (Nikolajeva and Scott 3). In this dissertation, my approach to the illustrated media I examine is predicated on Nikolajeva and Scott’s belief that “the text and image, two different forms of communication, work together to create a form unlike any other” (2). While the majority of the illustrations considered in this dissertation are in content aimed towards adult audiences, and therefore were created with a different purpose from those created for children, the illustrations and texts nonetheless work together in these instances to create a form of media that is unique from what that same text would be without illustrations.

### Modernist and Periodical Studies

At the time of the engraving revival’s emergence, the modernist periodical, or “little magazine,” was a prolific form of media, particularly among literary and intellectual leaders of the era. Periodicals like *Time and Tide* gave voice to the feminist movement and others, like *Blast*, provided an avenue for the progressive artistic movements of the early modernist period.

Owens points out the artistic tensions in which the revival existed, noting that it “was marked by two seemingly opposing ideas, one modernistic and forward-looking, the other rooted in the early Nineteenth Century” (6). Owens adds that Vorticist Percy Wyndham Lewis, whose publication *Blast* included engraved illustrations, reacted to the conservatism of the teaching at the Slade School (11). Robert Scholes and Clifford Wulfman characterize Literary Modernism as a movement “in which works of art and literature appeared together with manifestos and critical exegesis” in periodicals where dialogue and debates about modernism occurred (Scholes and Wulfman 74). Thus, understanding the role of engraving in modernist periodicals is important to understanding its role as an “old” technology being employed in a “new” arena. But despite the progressive or avant-garde nature of the periodicals published in this period, wood engraving would also be used, particularly in the depressed inter-war 1930s, “to arouse in readers associations with a slower, sleepier, pre-industrial time” particularly in rural England (Bluemel, "The Saltire Chapbooks" 75). While modern Periodical Studies as an area of research has expanded greatly in recent years, attention to the intersection between the engraving revival and the illustrations of such periodicals is limited. By looking at the engravings in the context of their media form, I will be filling this gap in scholarship by increasing understanding of the relationship between serials and books and how that relationship plays out in the competing political and artistic contexts of wood engravings as a tool in progressive literary circles and, in other contexts, as a representation of nostalgia and cultural conservatism.

## Research Design and Chapter Overview

### Objects of Analysis

To understand the significance of women's involvement in the wood engraving revival and their impact on print culture and the book's materiality, this dissertation takes a feminist media historical approach to examining the lives and output of Gwen Raverat (1895-1957), Clare Leighton (1898-1989), and Joan Hassall (1906-1988). I have chosen these three women because of how prolific their output as book and periodical illustrators was. Although there were many women participants in the revival, the degree to which each woman developed a career as an illustrator varies significantly, with some like Monica Poole or Margaret Pilkington being very involved in the exhibition of wood engravings but doing only a few book or magazine illustrations (Horne 351-356).

Raverat, Leighton, and Hassall were also chosen because they all created engravings that were used in a variety of media or genres of print. For instance, Raverat engraved for *Time and Tide*, other serials such as *The Apple* and *The London Mercury*, and was also quite prolific in several book genres, including children's literature and novels for publishers such as Faber and Faber, Ashendene, Macmillan, and Cambridge University Press. Clare Leighton worked on some of the same periodicals as Gwen Raverat, but also is the only engraver among the three to author guides on wood engraving and global surveys of the field, while also writing several of the books she illustrated. Joan Hassall also contributed to several periodicals, including *Housewife* and *London Mystery Magazine* as well as working in multiple book genres, including poetry collections, short story collections, chapbooks, and nineteenth century novel reprints like Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford*. Hassall and Leighton both worked frequently with the increasing



number of “middlebrow” publishers of the 1930s, and Hassall did a significant body of work for the post-war subscription clubs like the Folio Society.

These three women were also selected because of their differing ages means they each represent a different stage of the revival and played a different role in its development, from its early years just after the turn of the century to the end of its most active years in the 1940s. Raverat, for instance, learned engraving around the same time that it was introduced at the Central School just as it was gaining in popularity. Hassall’s career, on the other hand, did not get underway until the 1930s, and she was therefore significantly influenced by the changing publishing landscape of World War II. Leighton’s departure for the United States in the late 1930s makes her role in the revival particularly unique. Each artist-illustrator, in various ways, contributes to our understanding of the revival as a whole.

### Research Design

To understand the politics of the media produced by Raverat, Leighton, and Hassall, this dissertation uses a combination of biography studies and content analysis. My reason for choosing to foreground the biographies of the women under consideration here is because, as the introduction to this chapter mentions, this study is grounded in understanding the external networks that influence media production. D.F. McKenzie’s theory of the “sociology of texts” provides the framework on which this study is based by advocating for an approach to bibliography which “directs us to consider the human motives and interactions which texts involve at every stage of their production, transmission, and consumption” (McKenzie 15). Similarly, Kate Ozment argues that book history’s “emphasis on processes and objects” in book production “may obscure the human hands that perform and create them” (Ozment 154). This

dissertation seeks to illuminate the “hands” that make books by analyzing the lives of Raverat, Leighton, and Hassall, the individuals that impacted them, the institutions that they moved through, and the relationships between gender and power in those institutions.

In taking this approach, historical analysis is necessary to understand the cultural contexts in which they lived and built their careers. I analyze historical scholarship on the families into which Raverat, Leighton, and Hassall were born, the institutions they attended, and the publishers with which they interacted. I focus especially on sources that elucidate the relationship between gender and each of these factors to understand how their experiences as artists were shaped by their realities as women coming of age and developing careers in the early twentieth century. I also look at the content of their illustrations and situate the themes presented in their work in relation to the publishing dynamics and artistic movements of the time to understand what each artist was doing to contribute to print and visual culture.

### Chapter Overview

Each chapter begins with an overview of the early lives of the artists by looking at their families, arts education, and other factors that contributed to the establishment of their careers. As Zoë Thomas points out in her analysis of the homes and studios of women art workers, “Debates about whether the home was a site of empowerment or confinement for women is one of the most enduring questions of women’s and gender history”; like the women Thomas discusses, for Raverat, Leighton, and Hassall, their parents often dismantled tropes of “the mother as the ‘angel of the house’ and the stern distant father” and their home environments included a mix of artistic nurturing and pressures over career choices (109-110). Similarly mixed messaging was often their experience at art school, where even in progressive institutions like

the Slade School that allowed women in typically masculine spaces like life drawing classes, only men served as professors. Looking at these early stages of Raverat, Leighton, and Hassall's lives cast light both on their emergence as artists and on the limitations and tensions they encountered as women becoming professional artists.

Next, each chapter looks at the early career stage of each artist, focusing on their work for periodicals (where applicable) and early book illustration commissions. For each artist, the earliest book illustration commissions they received often set precedents for the kinds of work that would continue through their career and established early connections in the book publishing industry that also shaped their later lives. Periodical illustrations, often undertaken early in the engraver's career, were also an important outlet for developing a reputation and cultivating literary networks. Studying their periodical illustrations lends complexity to our understanding of the revival and engraving as a craft, as the periodicals in question were often more overtly political than the reputation of wood engraving as a purveyor of rural nostalgia would suggest. These early career illustrations also often shed light on the artists' own political motives, which, in the case of Clare Leighton especially, play a significant role in their later work.

Each chapter then dissects the significance of each artist's mid- and late-career illustrations to understand how their work developed over time and how their illustrations (and the books they appeared in) contributed to the literary and visual culture of the interwar, war, and postwar years. While the bodies of work of each artist are too broad for me to examine each illustrated book or periodical they illustrated, I select the most significant commissions to understand how their work is contributing to early and mid-twentieth century literary and visual culture. In doing so, I depend heavily on publishing histories to guide my understanding of why particular books were published (or republished) at particular times and by specific publishers. A

recurring theme among the publications of the 1930s and after is a desire, on behalf of publishers, to produce attractive books with quality illustrations (like those of the private press movement), but at affordable prices for mass consumers. Each engraver examined here participates in this legacy of transmitting private press aesthetics to commercial publishers seeking to appeal to a growing consumer base. Examples of this include Gwen Raverat's partnership with Penguin to produce an ultimately unsuccessful line of illustrated novels and Joan Hassall's much more successful partnership with the Folio Society to produce quality reprints of nineteenth century fiction for their subscribers. Lastly, each chapter also looks at how each artist influenced or was influenced by artistic, book production, or visual culture movements happening in other countries during their lifetimes.

Each chapter focuses on a different artist, ordered chronologically based on the artist's birth year. Chapter two looks at Gwen Raverat (1885-1957), whose use of the white line technique and French impressionism brought a unique approach to engraving in the early years of the revival. Raverat's status as the granddaughter of Charles Darwin has often been a point of discussion for scholars of her work, but this chapter instead highlights her relationships with female relatives who impacted her career, while acknowledging the way being born into the Darwin family enabled but also complicated Raverat's artistic ambitions. Raverat's work on several periodicals shows the variety of contexts in which wood engraved illustrations were published in the early twenties and shows how wood-engraved illustrations were viewed as a means of making political publications more appealing to consumers. In considering Raverat's book illustrations, I look at how she influenced multiple aspects of book production, beyond images, a theme which recurs with Leighton and Hassall as well. This chapter concludes with an

argument for how Raverat's work represents the intersection of the Arts and Crafts and modernist movements.

Chapter three is about Clare Leighton (1898-1989), who, although primarily a visual artist, became an author as well, reflecting her upbringing by parents who were both authors. Educated by Noel Rooke at the Central School, Leighton eventually authored a how-to guide on wood engraving for the Arts and Crafts Movement-associated periodical *The Studio*. Her work to make wood engraving an approachable craft that produced affordable prints was in keeping with her status as a socialist, a theme which also appears in her books. Her move to the United States in 1939 brought the wood engraving revival abroad, at a time when wartime publication strictures was about to severely limit the market for wood engravers in the UK. I argue that Leighton's success at becoming an artist-illustrator who was not confined to illustrating another author's text demonstrates how she navigated the tension between two competing ideas: the ideal of the aura of the original artwork and the Arts and Crafts Movement value of beauty in everyday objects for the masses.

Chapter four on Joan Hassall (1906-1988) examines in greater depth a theme introduced in chapter three: how commercial publishers were adapting to a broadening reading public and using the work of the engraving revivalists to make attractive but affordable books. Hassall's education at a London technical school shows the variety of institutions where engraving was taught, and while her father was a commercial poster artist, her pursuit of engraving as a career was in tension with her mother's desire for her to become a teacher. Hassall was heavily influenced by the nineteenth century engraving style, and thus her illustrations were popular for eighteenth and nineteenth century novel reprints. For this reason, her style is sometimes spoken of pejoratively, but Hassall's ability to capture in historically-accurate and detailed scenes from

the past made her a perfect fit for the kind of comfort reads that would become popular during and after World War II. Her illustrations for the Folio Society in the 1950s show how the engraving revival was continuing to influence publication, well beyond its most innovative years.

My conclusion then revisits my research questions, in light of the information presented in chapters two, three, and four, to see in what ways my examination of Raverat, Leighton, and Hassall answers those questions, as well as how the wood engraving revival and its participants can benefit from further research.

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## **CHAPTER TWO: GWEN RAVERAT: FORGING A NEW PATH FOR WOMEN ENGRAVERS, BOOK ARTS, AND THE “ENGLISHNESS” OF HER CRAFT**

### Introduction

When Gwen Raverat (née Darwin) encountered Thomas Bewick’s engravings of the natural world as a teenager in her aunt’s London home, her admiration of his work and dreams of being his wife profoundly foreshadowed her career as a professional artist and wood-engraver. Teenaged Raverat (then still Gwen Darwin) pontificated that, as Mrs. Bewick, “surely he would, just sometimes, let me draw and engrave a little tailpiece for him. I wouldn’t want to be known, I wouldn’t sign it. Only just to be allowed to invent a little picture sometimes” (qtd in Spalding 90-91). The impact Raverat had upon the field of wood engraving highlights the irony of these statements, where she did indeed build a name for herself, unlike the anonymous facsimile engravers who came before her in the nineteenth century. Another factor that makes this moment of particular interest and which is one focus of this chapter is how Raverat encounters Bewick’s work at the home of her aunt, signaling the very pivotal role that women in Raverat’s family played in her development as an artist and illustrator, even though, as a Darwin, she is often viewed in the light of her famous grandfather’s scientific heritage, rather than through the lens of the accomplished women in her family. This chapter examines Raverat’s education and introduction to wood-engraving, her illustrations for four periodicals, and her development as a book illustrator, all with an effort of understanding how she contributes to the wood engraving revival, but also what her experience as an engraver and illustrator tells us as readers and viewers about the relationship between women artists and book production. Lastly, this chapter looks at

how Raveat's engraving work channels international influences on her art in ways that challenge notions of "Britishness" in her work, for engraving more generally, and for the materiality of the book more broadly.

In *The Kiss of Lamourette*, Robert Darnton argues for an expanded history of the book, one that includes "a broader conception of literature, one that will take account of men and women in every walk of life who had a way with words," adding that even if book historians "restrict literature to communication through the printed word, their conception of it could be expanded to include some unfamiliar figures" (136). Here I am building on his theory of expanding the history of the book by including the "unfamiliar figure" of the illustrator, and in looking at Raveat's life and work specifically, I am arguing that seemingly inconsequential connections—ones that cannot necessarily be quantified by sales numbers or reprints—are nonetheless just as crucial to forming the book as an object. In doing so, I borrow from the ideas of feminist scholars like Jacqueline Wernimont, who argue that recovering women's literature (or in this case, women's work *on* literature) should avoid the pitfalls of "patriarchal tropes of size, mastery, and comprehensive collection" (Wernimont). In looking at the moments and connections—the nodes—that assemble Raveat's career, I am resisting the notion that quantity alone is what "counts" in the history of the book. I am also drawing on more recent periodical studies scholarship that has emerged from Victorian studies and extended the history of the book into material periodical studies. Specifically, I am building on the characterization of periodicals "as part of a dense web of 'live wires' which interact and share audiences, networks of distribution, and publishing practices" by applying the concept of connecting wires to the books, periodicals, and social networks discussed here (Delap and DiCenzo 64).

Although perhaps better known publicly for her memoir, *Period Piece* (1952), Gwen Raverat is regarded by art history scholars as one of the most important figures in the wood engraving revival. In their analysis of her work and impact on the field, Joanna Selborne and Lindsay Newman remark that, despite her popularity through *Period Piece*, Raverat's "greatest achievement—her innovative and enduring contribution to British wood engraving—has until recently been unjustifiably neglected" (11). This assessment of her contribution is reinforced by Thomas Balston's including her among the revival's "chief women engravers," and discussion of her prolific work in the nascent years of the revival (8, 16). What made Raverat unique as an engraver, which I address in more detail later, is her use of light in engraving: "Apart from Lucien Pissarro, she was virtually the only practitioner in the early days of the revival to apply the lessons of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism and to retain an interest in light effects throughout her work" (Selborne 76). Along with their acknowledgement of her impact on the revival, scholars often contextualize her life and work by mentioning her status as the progeny of Charles Darwin. Biographer Frances Spalding points to aspects of Raverat's intellectual inheritance from her family, identifying, for instance, the observational skills akin to her grandfather's that she demonstrates in her work (230). Selborne and Newman describe her "keen powers of observation" as a "natural outcome of a scientific background" (15), and Patricia Jaffe says Raverat was "evidently lucky to have been born a Darwin, eccentric, uninhabited, direct" (23). Such observations obscure the fact that Raverat, as an artist, felt like an outlier in a family of scientists and encountered frustration at the limitations of being a woman; these characterizations also distract from the role that Raverat's female family members—her cousins Elinor Monsell Darwin and Frances Cornford specifically—play in the development of her career. It should also be acknowledged that Raverat's mother, Maud Du Puy, was herself a



painter. Although she apparently stopped painting at some point after marriage, she is quoted in Raverat's memoir as saying, "I believe in every girl being brought up to have some occupation when they are grown-up, just as a boy is" (Spalding 45; Raverat 60). By tying her identity to her grandfather, scholars both discount Raverat's own individuality while also perpetuating patriarchal notions of what counts as "accomplishment" by overlooking the women artists and writers of her family.

Raverat's entrance into the field of wood engraving, though, has to be contextualized against a backdrop of a craft which women are gaining entrance to, not just because of increased educational opportunities, but also because of the leading men in the field losing interest in the craft for economic reasons in late nineteenth century. When Jaffe notes that "As women artist-engravers had not emerged in the nineteenth century, no feminine style had been set" this points to the complicated legacy of the field opening to women, at least in part, because the lack of commercial vitality in the craft meant that male engravers were less inclined to limit women's participation in the trade (13). At the same time as expanding opportunities for women artists in the early twentieth century, the remnants of Victorian gender ideologies were alive and well during Raverat's lifetime; thus it is significant that Raverat and her peers could gain access to training in engraving (and other arts), but their options remained limited. The notion of illustration as secondary to a text means that this is still an appropriate artistic outlet and livelihood for women, but as Gwen Raverat's career shows, her work challenges the text/illustration dichotomy, therefore challenging the male author/female illustrator dichotomy as well.

### Early Influences: The Slade School and Elinor Monsell Darwin

In looking at the material factors which influenced Raverat's trajectory as an artist—and as a woman artist—the role of London's Slade School of Art is significant, both for what Raverat was taught there and for the training she *did not* receive there. The Slade School, founded in 1868, had a reputation for progressive values, and that reputation was warranted in many ways. From its inception as the first London institution to teach fine art other than the Royal Academy, the Slade accepted both women and men, with benefactor Felix Slade expressly stating that the scholarships he endowed were “merit-based, and ‘irrespective of sex’” (Yu 16). These progressive aims would continue, with the school attracting faculty who gave “greater freedom to women students to do figure drawing and nudes at a time when other schools were afraid of affronting Victorian primness” (Yu 18). By allowing women to join the nude drawing class from the time of its founding, the Slade signaled an “open-mindedness that in time gained the Slade a reputation and resulted in a rapid increase in the number of women students” (Yu 18). Unlike the Slade, the Royal Academy did not permit women to participate in life drawing classes until 1894, and some institutions required the life drawing classes to be segregated by gender well into the twentieth century, whereas women and men drew together in the Slade life drawing classes as early as 1881 (Nunn 168; Yu 27). The significance of providing a learning environment in which women moved more freely cannot be underestimated in its impact on someone like Raverat, for whom drawing was a significant part of their career, both as an art in and of itself and in its connection to engraving.

It seems likely that Raverat's access to the Slade, where she attended from 1908 to 1910, stems at least in part from her family's class status, although a flexible fee schedule and availability of scholarships “enabled the school to attract quite a diverse social mix” (Spalding

157). It is unclear exactly how much money the Darwins had during Raverat's lifetime, but certainly her father George Darwin's employment by Cambridge and money he inherited from his wealthy father ensured a degree of security (Spalding 12)—in addition to the less tangible benefits of growing up in an academic environment. But even though there is an element of privilege in Raverat's access to her education, it was an experience for which she had to fight: she “found it hard to persuade her father of her need for professional training in art” and fought “the unspoken assumption” of art as an appropriate women's pastime but not an “all-consuming passion” (Spalding 116-17). Raverat's mother believed from the time of Gwen's infancy that her daughter would be a mathematician, until her daughter's talents proved otherwise: “But, later on she, for once, was defeated; and strange to say, retired baffled before my obvious mathematical idiocy” (Raverat 60). In choosing to go to art school, amidst the background of a family steeped in the sciences and skeptical of art as a women's occupation, Raverat's life experience was exhibiting William Morris's division of civilization between the “leaders of modern thought” who “hate and despise the arts” and the “minority” who “know assuredly that the arts ...are necessary to the life of man” (Morris 520).

This tension between access to art (and art training) as an appropriate woman's pastime on the one hand, and the resistance to it as a career on the other, is also indicative of early twentieth century London, caught between the social progress of the Suffragette movement and the remnants of restrictive Victorian gender ideologies. As Mengting Yu observes, “women who worked as artists at the turn of the century had to confront the common notion that proper college art education, while suitable for so-called feminine accomplishment, would rarely be perceived as potentially professional” (34). These limitations that art education could not single-handedly overcome are ideas Raverat likely internalized from a young age, growing up in Cambridge, near

an elite institution that did not grant degrees to women. Spalding notes that the Darwin family trended toward progressive ideals but was hardly radical (67).

The focus of Raverat's education at the Slade was on drawing; according to Selborne and Newman, "Printmaking played a subordinate role and there was no tuition in wood engraving" (15-16), although Spalding notes that the "Slade emphasis on drawing ...deepened her love of line" and "made her especially sympathetic to etchings and engravings" (184). But the formal, skills-based training received at the Slade does not fully encompass how Raverat's education shaped her during this same period. It is hard to estimate—but should not be under-estimated—the extent to which attending an art school where women were a significant part of the student body played a role in developing Raverat's confidence as an artist. Data from Yu's history of the Slade during this period indicates that around the turn of the century, women students outnumbered men by a ratio of three to one; no data is presented for the years Raverat attended, but in the year immediately following her departure—1910-1911—women outnumbered men 189 to 64 (19). This aspect of the student body, combined with the permission of women to join the life art class, would have created a more welcoming environment for women students, rather than an environment like Cambridge during the same period, where women could only use the university's library if "two MAs certified that they were engaged in serious study" and were segregated in a "special room" (Spalding 67). Obviously, the differences between Cambridge University and the Slade School are vaster than can be encompassed in their treatment of women students, but the contrast points to how greatly Raverat's own education differed from what she observed as a child in Cambridge. Other art schools were also more restrictive of women: as a point of comparison, Andy Friend notes in his biography of painter and engraver Eric Ravilious, who attended the Royal College of Art, that engraver Peggy Angus "struggled in the Painting

School [of RCA], where men outnumbered women by three to one, and in the third term, attracted by the possibilities of illustration, she transferred to the Design School,” a department where, though “seen by some as a step down,” it meant taking classes where women “predominated” (Friend 31).

Yet, to avoid any notion that the Slade embodied a utopia of gender equality, it must be noted that the Slade did not actually employ women as professors. As Hilary Taylor notes, “It is disappointing to find that the Slade School, wherein students proclaimed their freedom from convention, was ... run along strictly segregated lines in many ways” (235). As part of their scholarship obligations, women students did fill the role of student teachers (Yu 23); their duties were to “render any assistance in teaching, and to attend any course of lectures which the Professor shall direct” (Weeks 328). This implies that the Slade, while not employing women in positions of power or leadership, was willing to use their labor for the running of the school. As a result, despite its progressive aims for its students, the institution contributes to the conception of academic distinction being a man’s role. If Gwen Raverat had wanted to be an art professor, she would not have seen that as a possibility in the Slade, despite the large number of women who attended the school.

Another important facet of Raverat’s experience at the Slade School is the extent to which the Slade’s curriculum, unlike that of the Royal Academy, exerted French influence on their students’ art. Yu notes that this influence begins with the early leadership of Sir Edward Poynter (who himself studied art in France), and continued through the Slade’s hiring of its own graduates (20). This French influence occurred in the “academic attitudes based on drawing and observation of nature” and “were intended to give students greater freedom for imagination while being harnessed to the essential art vocabulary of composition” (20). Yu credits this early

influence, followed by the leadership of Frederick Brown and instruction of Henry Tonks (under whom Raverat studied) and Philip Wilson Steer for “realign[ing] the overall trajectory of English painting at the turn of the century” (21). This influence appears to have moved beyond just painting: French impressionism, especially its treatment of light, is one of the markers that distinguishes Gwen Raverat’s wood engraving style from her contemporaries. Jaffe notes that, in examining one of Raverat’s pieces created while living in France, “one immediately identifies Gwen Raverat’s affinity with a French style. Back one goes to the impressionistic technique of depicting form in terms of incidence of light” (23). I will delve more deeply into the significance of the French influence on Raverat’s style later in this chapter, but for now it should be noted that this aspect of her work, which made it so unique among engravings, should at least in part be credited to the Slade’s French-centric curriculum.

But as I alluded to earlier in the chapter, what Raverat was learning outside of the Slade is as important as what was happening within the school’s walls. Print-making was not an emphasis in the Slade at this period, and in fact, wood-engraving would not be offered at the Slade until the 1921-22 academic year (later than the Central School for instance, where it was taught in 1912), and even then it was optional and given a “lowly status” (Owens 13). Susan Owens notes that inclusion of engraving in the Slade’s curriculum in 1921 is “[p]rompted by the shift in attitude towards wood-engraving, and its new status as a creative rather than a reproductive medium” (13), which calls into question the extent to which Raverat herself helped shift this attitude and, ultimately, influence the curriculum of her alma mater.

Most histories of Raverat’s trajectory as an artist acknowledge how she was given the tools for and some basic instruction in wood engraving by her cousin Bernard’s wife Elinor, around 1909 when Gwen would have been 24 years old, but none delve extensively into the

history of this moment that is so seminal in the emergence of wood-engraving. This relationship between Gwen and her cousin-in-law Elinor and the way in which it transfers the craft of engraving, outside the bounds of institutions of higher learning (and before the craft is being taught) is a significant indicator of how book history is formed through seemingly inconsequential connections.

Elinor Monsell Darwin had an impact on Raverat's artistic endeavors from the early days of their relationship when they met in 1906 after Elinor became engaged to Raverat's cousin. Elinor had already taken a year of art training at Slade in the 1890s and was already friends with Virginia Stephen Woolf, at a time when Raverat would have known Virginia and her siblings, but at an intimidating distance (Spalding 117). Spalding notes that after meeting and becoming enamored with Elinor, "With another artist in the family, Gwen began to take her own work more seriously" (118). How Elinor herself got connected to wood engraving is unclear: it is suggested by Thomas Balston that Laurence Binyon, a writer and art critic employed during this period by the British Museum's Department of Prints and Drawings, was behind Elinor's connection to engraving, as they both held an "enthusiasm for Japanese prints," although Selborne notes that Elinor's daughter believed she began engraving in Ireland (her home) before attending the Slade (78, n118). The potential connection with Binyon is an important one though: he is credited by Owens with being among the first generation of artists and scholars looking to resurrect wood engraving (9). Regardless of whether or not she learned directly from Binyon, the fact that Elinor Darwin was connected to him signifies her own status on the "ground floor" of the revival.

Elinor Darwin herself, though, was not a prolific wood engraver. Balston states that she "desisted owing to the pressure of other work" and Selborne suggests that she often used other

mediums for illustrations (9; 78n118). But her influence on Gwen Raverat signals a direct link between Raverat's entry into wood engraving and the Arts and Crafts Movement. In *Women Artists of the Arts & Crafts Movement*, Anthea Callen mentions Elinor Monsell Darwin as an engraver of a pressmark in 1907 for the Dun Emer Press, a private press founded by Elizabeth Yeats, sister of WB Yeats (184). Callen characterizes Dun Emer Press as a "welcome exception" to the "predominantly male sphere of activity" in the private presses (Callen 184-85). Elinor's work for the women-run press of Dun Emer is significant both because it signals the under-represented networks of women artists of the Arts and Crafts Movement but also functions as a foreshadowing of the similar work Raverat would do in the 20s and 30s for feminist publication *Time and Tide*. Spalding states that, in introducing Raverat to engraving, Elinor gave Raverat engraving tools to take with her to school and "would have shown Gwen how to hold these tools, how to turn the block as it rests on the sandbag in order to achieve a curved line, and how to progress gradually from darkness to light, patiently cutting away those parts that would appear white in the finished print" (159). Raverat seems to have immediately fallen in love with the medium: after learning the basics, she made four engravings for Elinor and a bookplate for Elinor's daughter, writing to her sister in the fall of that year: "I have found happiness this summer – I can't tell you the inexpressible joy woodcuts have been to me" (qtd. in Spalding 160). It is especially remarkable here that Raverat is introduced to and falls in love with wood engraving not only outside the walls of an art institution, but before one of the key moments often associated with the engraving revival—Noel Rooke's introduction of engraving classes to the curriculum of the Central School of Arts and Crafts in 1912 (discussed in more detail in chapter three).



Many other facts of Raverat's family, their connections, and her early years played a role in her output as an engraver, but I open with her connection to Elinor Monsell Darwin and her time at the Slade as two particularly foundational elements on which the rest of Raverat's career is built. And both are indicative of the kinds of tensions an aspiring woman artist-illustrator at the turn of the century would have been dealing with: Raverat had access to education, but knew an artistic career would be met with resistance by her family (and culture more broadly); her access to education affords Raverat opportunities, but only in connection to other opportunities—namely, being introduced to engraving by Elinor Monsell Darwin.

### Early Career and Periodical Illustrations

The unique use of light that characterizes Raverat's style brought attention from influential members from the art and literary community, such as Malcom Salaman, editor of *The Studio*, who Spalding credits as “one of the first critics to write about the revival of interest in this medium as an independent, expressive art form” (264). Issues of *The Studio* focusing on wood-engraving in the 1920s played a pivotal role in expanding its popularity, and Salaman himself introduced Raverat's work to Herbert Furst, who became an agent for Raverat and whose serial, *The Apple*, eventually featured her engravings (Spalding 270). Although the emphasis of this dissertation is on how women engravers influenced the object of the book, Raverat's work on book illustrations cannot be fully understood or appreciated without examining also her work on periodicals. This is especially important because her illustrations channeled her political interests in more overt ways than her book illustrations and advanced her illustrative career while the book publishing market “caught on” to the increasing popularity of wood-engraved illustrations. This section focuses on the four main periodicals for which Raverat did engravings:

*The Apple*, *The London Mercury*, *Time and Tide*, and the *New Leader*; all four magazines will be discussed in an effort to convey the extent to which wood engraving was used in a variety of political and publishing contexts, although special emphasis will be placed on Raverat's work for *Time and Tide* and the *New Leader* because of the way her work for these leftist publications challenge conservative preconceptions of British wood-engravings.

Kristin Bluemel seeks to “rescue” Raverat and other women engravers’ work from the shadow of Bewick’s conservative pastoralism, arguing that these are “*modern* women creating a *modern* art” (Bluemel, “A Happy Heritage” 210). I add to Bluemel’s argument by advocating for how Raverat’s work in particular across periodicals and books—but especially periodicals—demonstrates the modernity of wood engraving as it develops in the revival, not so much because the content of Raverat’s work is visually abstract or avant-garde. In fact, unlike many of her Slade school and Friday Club contemporaries, Raverat’s work largely avoids overt avant-garde themes, as she did not endeavor to produce work to match any particular movement. But because of her work’s contributions to print cultural movements like feminism and socialism through publications like the feminist *Time & Tide* and the Labour Party’s *New Leader*, her engravings were used to make the supposed “radical” messaging of those left-leaning magazines more appealing for mass audiences.

### *The Apple*

One of Raverat’s earliest works to appear in a periodical was published in *The Apple (of Truth and Discord)*, a quarterly magazine featuring a combination of literature and visual art, published from 1920-1922 and which Herbut Furst endeavored to promote as “a progressive interdisciplinary magazine” that “encourage[d] links and interactions between seemingly

different forms of art” (Kane 17). Raverat’s work on *The Apple* is one of multiple outcomes of her relationship with Furst. In 1920, he displayed 92 of Raverat’s prints at his establishment, Little Art Rooms in the Adelphi London, and later that year, Furst published a monograph of her work in his series of publications, *Modern Woodcutters* (Spalding 269). It is of little surprise, then, that when Furst established *The Apple* as a literary and visual arts endeavor, Raverat should be one of the magazine’s contributors.

It is evident from the forward to the first issue that this publication is an ideal avenue for wood engravings when the editors assert that “‘The Apple’ has only one policy: to entertain its readers with living literature and art collected from many gardens and culled occasionally from the ever living, ever fruitful orchards of the past” (Furst 5). This combination of new and old matches perfectly with what Raverat and the engraving revival were doing, by making a new movement from a craft with ancient roots. Raverat’s first illustration in the first issue of *The Apple* is a *pietà*—an image of Jesus and Mary with simple lines and forms that departs from the more complex representations of light seen in the scenes of France that her later publications in *The London Mercury* depict. This image appears above an article from W.L. George, advocating for trade unions among artists, musicians, writers, and entertainers (Raverat, *pietà* 12). Later in the same issue, *A Dream* and *The Prodigal Son* are positioned on a page with an essay by Charles Marriott discussing the artwork included in the periodical, saying “I am quite sure you will get much more fun out of the pictures in this number if you look at them primarily as something done with the human hand with different materials” (40). The article goes on to emphasize again the materiality of the included art: “Your fun will be increased if you think about the materials, because it is obvious that with every fresh material the human hand has to be used in a different way” (40). The values being espoused in these essays echo the overlaps of the

Arts and Crafts Movement and early Modernism described by S.K. Tillyard, who argues that members of both movements “saw themselves as asserting, against the prevailing trend of fine art, the importance of fundamentals against inessentials, and structural coherence rather than surface detail,” advocating for an approach of ““truth to materials”” which honored the “laws and limitations of their medium” (45). By taking on the modernist form of the little magazine, while at the same time advancing these artistic ideals within its pages, *The Apple*—and its publication of wood engraving, a craft where medium and materials interact with content so clearly—represents these overlaps described by Tillyard.

Legacies of the Arts and Crafts Movement can also be seen in how, according to Rebecca Beasley, the aim of the magazine was to appeal to broad audiences, and yet the advertising signaled an upper-class readership—a conflicted place between desire for universal readership, but with the affordability constraints that ultimately lead to the magazine’s demise, as its six-shilling price was “considerably more” than its competitors (Beasley 497). This trajectory parallels the problems faced by private presses, whose publications were financially inaccessible to the broadening reading public of the 1920s and 30s.

*The Apple* is an important publication for the advancement of popularity of wood engraving. As we will see in the other periodicals that published Raverat’s engravings, the images produced by the medium were intended to create mass appeal for the publication itself. In *The Apple*, Beasley argues, Furst saw a “means of public education that would result in ... greater support for contemporary artists, and ultimately, a reinvigoration of aesthetic and cultural life for all” (502-03), yet unlike the other periodicals that Raverat illustrated, *The Apple* “became a major forum for the dissemination of original woodcuts and wood-engravings,” with Furst becoming a “key figure in the field” (499). Thus, *The Apple* itself is significant in advancing the

popularity of the craft, and Raverat's work on the periodical and her relationship with Furst symbolize the relationships that were moving the engraving revival forward.

### *The London Mercury*

Another literary magazine that published Raverat's engravings was the *The London Mercury*. Two illustrations appeared in *The London Mercury* in 1923 and 1924, a journal which Spalding characterizes as "high-brow," but which Matthew Huculak describes as "middle-brow," in discussing Virginia Woolf's scorn for the genre (although Woolf herself had worked published in the periodical) (Spalding 323; Huculak). The prints published in *The London Mercury* were *La Place en hiver*, *Vence* and *Jeu de Boules, Vence*—both created during the time Gwen and her husband Jacques Ravearat lived in the south of France. *La Place en Hiver* appears in a set of four woodcuts, two by Eric Gill, one by Ethelbert White, and one by Raverat (Scott-James and Squire 524).

Relevant to Raverat's work for *The London Mercury* are the perspectives on arts she espoused later in her career when she wrote for *Time and Tide* in the 1930s. In these pieces, Raverat shows a bias against abstract art, instead advocating for art as representation: "Painting is the product of the thing seen . . . and the passion felt about it. Representational art is on the whole greater than abstract art, partly because it is difficult to have so primitive and passionate a feeling about a cube as a cow" (qtd. in Spalding 359). Spalding attributes this attitude to Raverat being "now perhaps too much of an illustrator" (359). In her memoir, Raverat describes her early approach to sketching as one where she copied everything she saw, believing photorealism to be the goal of drawing, but she eventually discovered that her drawings were of a better quality when rendered from "a vision of a landscape, not a remembered scene" (*Period Piece* 64). This

approach to art as representational but resisting obsession with photorealism echoes William Morris's philosophy on the function of art as one that "was representational" yet "should also appeal to 'something beyond the self'" (Kinna 45). These aspects of Raverat's approach to art is perhaps why Selborne says, "her work was entirely unselfconscious and unaffected by fashion for its own sake" even amidst the changing artistic landscapes of high modernism (Selborne 85).

This artistic philosophy—in addition to wood-engraving's associations with pastoralism mentioned above—is possibly what made her an ideal fit for publication in *The London Mercury*. *The London Mercury's* editor, JC Squire, was derided for his conservatism. As Huculak points out, among the 1920s literati, tension between editors over whose power and literary heft would dominate the scene existed between Squire and his avant-garde contemporaries, yet "periodicals such as *The London Mercury* show that there was never a monolithic understanding of modernism as solely an avant-garde movement; rather post-war London was composed of groups with competing artistic convictions battling each other on the pages of periodicals" (Brooker et al. 240, 41). The significance of Raverat's illustrations for *The London Mercury* lie in how her work for this publication shows that wood engraving was being used in this period in a variety of contexts—from the conservative literary emphasis of *The London Mercury* to the left-leaning and overtly political publications of the *New Leader* and *Time and Tide*.

### *The New Leader*

In looking at Raverat's work for the socialist *New Leader* and feminist *Time and Tide*, it should be noted that as she advanced toward adulthood, Raverat demonstrates in her letters a growing frustration at her powerlessness as a woman with increasing awareness of her class privilege. She frequently travelled internationally with her parents but resisted a 1905 tour of

South Africa because “the prospect of having to dress and behave like a young lady for months on end was too horrifying” (Spalding 107). Her cousin Frances tells her in a letter: ““You said you didn’t feel as if you wanted to travel, you would feel ashamed to see people working all over the world and you just sloppeting [*sic*] round with watercolours, and doing no good to anybody’,” citing this as evidence of Gwen’s increasingly attune “social conscience” (qtd in Spalding 111). Living at home after her years at school, Gwen yearned for more: “I can’t bear to just be a young lady living at home and waiting for someone to come and marry her as most girls are. . . . O O O why wasn’t I a man and why haven’t I to earn my living,” (qtd. in Spalding 112). She goes on to claim that while earning a living would be more difficult, it would be “easier” for her “conscience,” a comment no doubt linked to her desire that “it was just about time that some of my socialist principles should come into force” (qtd. in Spalding 112). Little did Raverat know at this point in her young adult years that in just a few years’ time, she would be contributing to the political forces she identified with at this relatively early stage in her life.

Raverat’s work for the *New Leader*, a publication by Britain’s Independent Labour Party, coincides with the broadening of Britain’s reading public in the post-war years, echoed in F.M. Leventhal’s description of the leadership’s vision for the future of the periodical: “[H.N.] Brailsford believed that the working class consciousness and education had developed to a point at which a mass audience would welcome a serious weekly: the *New Leader* would bridge the gap between the quality periodicals and the popular press”(Leventhal 97). Brailsford, as newly appointed editor of the Independent Labour Party’s weekly newspaper, believed literature and art, along with specifically political content, should be crucial parts of the publication and therefore solicited illustrations, often from young artists who would tolerate the low fee (Leventhal 98). An ad for the publication in an October 1922 edition of *The Highway* states that

under Brailsford's leadership, the *New Leader* will be "A weekly for the workers that will give them the best there is in every department of life—Politics, the Arts, Science, Industry; not only facts, but ideas" ("The New Leader"). Raverat's illustrations were published in "portfolios of woodcuts and drawings that accompanied the *New Leader* annuals for 1924 and 1925" (Spalding 323). In the 1924 annual, Raverat had the unique position of being the only included artist whose engravings (of which there are five: *The Gypsies*, *The Gooseherd*, *The Travellers*, *The Cobbled Yard*, and *Clerk Saunders*) are placed "In the Text," as opposed to "In the Portfolio," where work from other notable engravers like Eric Gill and Clare Leighton are placed (*The New Leader Book*). *The Travellers* [sic], *The Gooseherd*, and *The Cobbled Yard* all appear alongside poems focused on pastoral and spiritual themes. *The Gypsies* and *Clerk Saunders* (referred to by the title *Clerk Saunders' Ghost* in other places) grace the table of contents and back cover. While all the images deal with realist representations of humans, nature, and mostly, humans in nature, there is variety in the style of each piece, with varying degrees of light used. Looking at these images against the backdrop of Brailford's aims to make the *New Leader* a publication with mass appeal, it seems fitting that Raverat's work should be located on the table of contents and back cover, perhaps positioned so as to draw in the reader with their comfortable light and realism, whereas more avant-garde pieces by JJ Murphy, for instance, are given single-page spreads inside the book. A later year's annual features Raverat's work both in the portfolio of the book and within the text, with two woodcuts total. The 1926 issue of *The New Leader* that features one of her engravings specifically gives permission for the printing of *The Barber's Shop* to "H. Furst" of "The Little Art Rooms," indicating that this was print was likely part of an earlier display of Raverat's work there, and showing how her early relationship with Furst was instrumental in her work being spread to other periodicals ("Contents of the Book").



### *Time and Tide*

Raverat's relationship with *Time and Tide* spanned several years and included wood engraved and pen-and-ink illustrations and, eventually, book reviews and art criticism by Raverat (*Time and Tide*). Spalding credits Raverat's friend Virginia Woolf with initiating Raverat's relationship with *Time and Tide* through an introduction to the magazine's editor, Lady Rhondda, as the recently-widowed Raverat was looking to expand her illustration career (321, 323). Although the Raverat's grandson William Pryor acknowledges that the closest friendship was actually between Virginia and Jacques, rather than Gwen, he notes that Gwen's introduction to Virginia and her family began early: "Gwen's father, Sir George Darwin, and Virginia's father, Sir Leslie Stephen, were good friends—their families, prominent in British intelligentsia, moved in the same rarified academic circles" (Woolf, Raverat, and Raverat 15-16). Overlaps in these circles are seen in Raverat's reverence for Woolf's sister Vanessa as an artist and eventual association with Vanessa's Friday Group, with whom Raverat participated in her first wood engraving exhibit (Spalding 211).

Raverat's work for *Time and Tide* includes drawings and wood engravings; her work appeared alongside the regular Monthly Calendar feature, a poem by Eleanor Farjeon, under the pseudonym Chimaera. Catherine Clay connects Raverat's work for *Time and Tide* to that of her illustrations for the *New Leader* by examining how both publications engaged with the visual culture of socialism. Farjeon herself was a socialist, and the "poems she wrote under pseudonyms for socialist newspapers and journals reveal an undeservedly forgotten radical poet" (Clay 42). Farjeon also published poems (yet again under a pseudonym) in *The New Leader*, and she and Raverat would collaborate also on illustrations for Farjeon's 1933 children's book, *Over the Garden Wall*. Like the *New Leader*, the role of illustrations in *Time and Tide* was to create a

broader appeal for the publication. Clay points out that by including illustrations, which *Time and Tide* increasingly did in the late 20s, the publication separated itself from the “intellectual weeklies which rarely incorporated any graphic art apart from advertising, and from the literary reviews associated with modernism” (Clay 124). It is important to point out that this turn toward illustration for *Time and Tide*, of which Raverat was a part, is characterized by Clay as working across “popular, commercial and ‘middlebrow’ markets”—the use of “middlebrow” being particularly important here because of Woolf’s scorn for the concept (Clay 124). And yet, this turn toward the middlebrow appeal is still connected to the more “highbrow” associations of the book arts trend; Clay describes *Time and Tide*’s use of wood engravers like Raverat and Leighton and combination of the visual and the textual as “marking similarities with .. the book arts fostered by the Bloomsbury Group and the Hogarth Press” (Clay 124). This phenomenon of using the wood engraved illustration as a way to translate private press aesthetics to a more commercial audience is also seen within the book publishing industry and will be looked at in more depth later.

#### Book Illustrations: Raverat’s Influence as Artist and Reader

To understand Gwen Raverat’s impact as a book illustrator, I will briefly backtrack to her childhood and the earliest days of her career, in 1915, before her work on periodicals. Even though Raverat did not become a prolific book illustrator until the 1930s, her identity as a book illustrator began to develop from her drawings as a child and from her first illustrated book in 1915. Because of the numerous books that Raverat illustrated, it is impossible here to account for the significance of each and every one to her career, so in keeping with the themes of this chapter, I focus here on projects she worked on that evidence the way Raverat involved herself in

multiple facets of book production—not just illustrations—and that reflect how her relationship with other women artists and authors, especially those in her family, impacted her career.

From her youth, a strong affiliation between books and drawing emerged in Raverat's artwork. Growing up, Raverat's father read to his children from works by Shakespeare, Chaucer, and Scott, and learning from her mother at home, she had a great deal of time for reading (Spalding 61, 70). This is evident in records of her children's activities kept by Raverat's mother, which show her voracious consumption of stories by the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen (Spalding, "Not a Tear or a Prayer in It" 231-32), and Spalding argues that her "love of books developed in tandem with her love of drawing, for an impulse to draw grew largely out of her desire to illustrate the stories she had read" (70). Raverat spent much of her childhood with a book to read and a sketchbook in hand, to the extent that her mother could not entrust her to babysit her brother because she found reading and drawing so distracting (Spalding 77).

Because of this interrelationship of books and drawings in Raverat's artistic experience, it is no surprise that one of the earliest published illustrations of her career would be for her cousin Frances's 1915 book of poems, *Spring Morning*. The fact that *Spring Morning* was not followed by more book illustrations, however, is indicative of the publishing economics of the time: Selborne states that, under advisement of her Slade professor Henry Tonks, Raverat sent proofs to publisher Edwin Arnold, who turned them down, as he "professed to prefer pen and ink drawings for illustrative purposes, no doubt for reasons of economy," and at this point in time, wood-engravings appeared more frequently in periodicals than books (Selborne 80). An exception to this trend, *Spring Morning* was published by Harold Monro of the Poetry Bookshop, which is praised for being "taken up by commercial publishers at a time when few acknowledged 'modern' wood engraving as a suitable illustrative medium" (Selborne and Newman 12) and in

studying Raverat's relationship with Monro during this process, we can see the emergence of an illustrator who took a very hands-on role with the entirety of the text, not just the engravings.

Raverat's cousin Frances Cornford wrote *Spring Morning*, a collection of poems, for which Raverat did seven small illustrations. Raverat's illustrations made *Spring Morning* the first book of this period to be illustrated by white-line engravings, in which the white lines represent form through light, rather than representing forms directly (Spalding 240). Though largely forgotten now and "overshadowed by the reputation" of her more famous male relatives, Cornford was a prolific poet who sold well in her lifetime, published both in collections of her own (like *Spring Morning*) and in periodicals and anthologies (Dowson 43-44). The poems in *Spring Morning* were largely aimed toward children, although "[s]ome of them have a rather more adult appeal" (Grant 115). In her history of the Poetry Bookshop, Joy Grant describes Cornford's poetry in *Spring Morning* as "the work of a sweet-natured, domesticated woman bred among men of culture from whom she had learnt discrimination. It [*Spring Morning*] was a creditable, but quite uncontroversial addition to the Poetry Bookshop's list" (Grant 116). Although, Jane Dowson notes that as "a]n eclectic reader of both traditional and contemporary poetry, Cornford was not, as has been suggested, ignorant of poetic fashions. She was her own most severe critic, counting her early poems as 'juvenilia ... Kiplingesque and cliched'" (44). These criticisms of Cornford's work as simple and domestic mirror the kinds of criticism that Bluemel describes against wood engraving in general—as hopelessly pastoral—and just as Cornford herself was aware of how her own style fit among other poetic forms, so too does Raverat's work for other publications show the extent to which wood engravings' conservative, domestic reputation oversimplifies a complex art form and a complex contribution to print culture.

Aside from the remarkability of *Spring Morning* as Raverat's first book illustration, the relationship that Raverat formed with Munro in the process of its production is significant to her career. Regarding *Spring Morning*, she "was of the firm opinion that while her illustrations should relate to the text they should express its *mood* rather than be subservient to it; an attitude which she continued to apply to her later books" (Selborne 83-82). In working out the layout of the book, Raverat became very involved with other design aspects, like the print and cover design, criticizing some of Munro's choices, which he took to heart and consequently made alterations around (Selborne 82). This level of involvement with the layout of the book "helped shape her decided view on illustration which had a significant influence on commercial book design" (Selborne 82). Cornford and Raverat, lifelong friends, would collaborate again in 1934 with the illustration of Cornford's *Mountains and Molehills* (1934) for Cambridge University Press. In her work on this collection, along with *Four Tales from Hans Andersen* (also for Cambridge University Press), Raverat "pioneered the use of the double-page spread," a style also employed in *The Runaway*, which is discussed below (Spalding, "Not a Tear or a Prayer in It" 231). As with her introduction to engraving by Elinor Monsell Darwin, Raverat's collaboration with Cornford shows how her work with other women in her family represents how print culture can advance outside of and around the traditionally masculine literary marketplace.

Despite wood engraving's common association with and influence upon/by the private press movement, amidst her prolific output, Raverat only illustrated one book for a private press: Longus's *Daphnis et Chloe* (1933) for Ashdene Press. In this way, she differs from male contemporaries like Eric Gill or Robert Gibbings who are strongly associated with the private presses. Nonetheless, Gwen's work on this piece is indicative of the kind of influence she, through her work, would exert on facets of the book other than strictly illustration. The fact that

these illustrations were undertaken in the early 30s is significant: Ashendene Press would close in 1935. Raverat's work for them near the beginning of her career but near the end Ashendene's existence is indicative of how her work as an illustrator entered the marketplace amidst the shift from private press books to more commercial interests. Ashendene was a hobby of its founder C.H. St. John Hornby, whose publishing work was directly influenced by that of Morris and the Kelmscott Press and which Will Ransom credits as "the zenith of superb bookmaking," along with Kelmscott and Doves (Cave 143; Ransom 95). Spalding notes that St John Hornby had previously employed Gwen Raverat's husband, Jacques Raverat. Although she doesn't specify if this is the particular connection for Gwen, she does indicate the attractions of the private press for Gwen, who was "attracted" by the "promise of high quality printing" (Spalding 339). Spalding also notes that after seeing an example of the typeface, page size, and text area planned for the project, Gwen "sent Hornby many preliminary sketches and working drawings" and tailored her style to the chosen typeface, "knowing that her designs had to balance the density and weight of the type" (Spalding 340). Although Spalding notes that as regards their content, Raverat's illustrations for *Daphnis et Chloe* do not evince experimental modernist values, Raverat's work with a private press in and of itself is noteworthy, given the socialist ideals of both herself and the Arts and Crafts Movement. In looking at the Arts and Crafts Movement's preoccupation with historical texts like the ancient Greek works of Longus, the limits to which these socialist politics could ever be considered radical are clear. This preoccupation with the past is also seen in the Ptolemy typeface used by Ashendene, which originates from an Ulm printer of Ptolemy's *Geographia* in 1482 (Ransom 100).

Another commission from the early 30s which is significant to Raverat's collaborations with other women artists is her illustrations for *Over the Garden Wall* by Eleanor Farjeon,

published in 1933 by Faber and Faber. Like several of Raverat's other illustrations, including the ones for her memoir *Period Piece* and Charlotte Yonge's children's book *Countess Kate, Over the Garden Wall* was illustrated with line drawings rather than wood engravings, but I discuss it here because of it was the first of her commissions from Faber and Faber, with whom she would work on many other books (Spalding 344, 389). Although little information is available about her collaboration with Farjeon on this book, it seems likely that it was an outcome of their relationship built through working together on *Time and Tide*. The pairing of Gwen Raverat with Eleanjor Farjeon for this project is significant because, as we have seen, their work together on *Time and Tide*, though perhaps not overtly political in its subject matter, is extremely political in its publishing context. Raverat's collaboration with Farjeon, though, occurs through the significantly more conservative genre of children's poetry, and was the second such work to be illustrated by Raverat; she first illustrated the *Cambridge Book of Poetry for Children*, edited by Kenneth Graham, in 1932. The Cambridge collection was, according to Spalding, Raverat's "first commercial illustrated book" and it "aroused wide interest in her work and placed her name among the foremost illustrators of the period" (342-43).

That *Over the Garden Wall* was published by Faber and Faber is important, both because of what Faber and Faber signifies for British publishing and because of Raverat's prolific work for the firm. John Xiros Cooper credits Faber and Faber's relationship with T.S. Eliot, begun in 1925, as a significant bridge in the movement of modernism from London's avant-garde spaces and into mass consumption. Aesthetics and marketing are significant parts of Faber and Faber's history: "All publishers had and have a house style, but until Faber, and then Penguin and Gollancz, came along, this did not necessarily extend to layout, typography, dust jacket design, use of colour and so on" (Cooper 95). Many of Faber and Faber's books in the 1930s dealt with

the visual arts, as it was “Faber’s ambition to create a profile for his firm which would embrace the modern and avant-garde” (Holman). Although several of the books Raverat illustrated for Faber and Faber were children’s books rather than books of art (although not all were children’s books, as my discussion of A.G. Street’s *Farmer’s Glory* will show), her work with the firm is an important symbol of how wood-engraving was infiltrating mainstream publishing, and yet how its association with conservative subject matter oversimplifies the meaning of the craft. At Faber and Faber, Raverat worked closely with Richard de la Mare (son of Walter de la Mare) and their working relationship spanned the 1930s, even beyond: Raverat consulted de la Mare in 1949 when forming her ideas for *Period Piece*, which Faber and Faber would publish in 1952 (Faber 193).

This infiltration of wood engraving’s association with the private press movement is also seen in the work Raverat did for Penguin Illustrated Classics. The project was commissioned by Robert Gibbings, who handed control of his private press Golden Cockerell over to Christopher Sandford and others during the financial strain of the 1930s (Cave 193). Gibbings became art editor for Penguin in charge of the illustrated classics series (Spalding 375). Hamilton characterizes Gibbings’s move to Penguin as “the end of the journey for the wood engraving from the calm perlieus and vellum bindings of the private press book to the paperback of the station bookstall, and it is appropriate that Gibbings should have nursed the medium every step of the way” (140). Sadly, this iteration of the Penguin Illustrated Classics was doomed for failure by the encroaching war, and Spalding speaks negatively of Raverat’s illustrations for Laurence Stern’s *A Sentimental Journey*, saying they lack “feeling and atmosphere” (Hamilton 140; Spalding 375). Although Raverat’s work on this project does not “count” for much in financial or even literary success, given the short-lived nature of Gibbings’s endeavor with this illustrated



classics series, the fact that she was employed by a publisher associated so strongly with easily obtained books for the everyday reader is significant for what it implies about the economics of publishing and illustrating at this period.

The extent of the development of Raverat's reputation by the 1930s can be appreciated when looking at the role she played in the re-publication, with her own illustrations, of *The Runaway* by MacMillan in 1936. Raverat encountered the book in childhood and had a strong nostalgic attachment to it from reading it in her grandmother (Emma Darwin's) home; in fact, her memories of reading it in the house's "enormous four-poster beds" would inspire the illustrations she created (Spalding 361). Based on Raverat's reputation, in 1935, Howard MacMillan "immediately accepted her suggestion" that MacMillan publish the title (Spalding 362). Of particular interest in her work on this children's book is the role Gwen played in editing its content and its typography. Because of her familiarity with book production, "she requested the right to have a say in the choice of type and size of page," also suggesting that it should be printed by Cambridge University Press because of their experience printing wood engravings (Spalding 362). Spalding states that "She worked always with the text near to hand and, at her own suggestion but with the publisher's permission, she shortened the first three pages of the book" and also cut one verse of a poem in the text (364). In the case of the *The Runaway*, we see how her established reputation in one aspect of the text—illustration—gave her leverage in impacting other pieces of the book, including its content. Although Spalding points out that *The Runaway* "never entered the canon of memorable children's stories" and eventually became more of a collector's item (it was reprinted with Gwen's illustrations by Duckworth in 1953), it signifies an important intersection of the illustrator and text (362-63). The intimate connection Raverat felt to *The Runaway* that inspired her to approach MacMillan with the project is similar

to the familial connection which influenced the final work I will discuss in the next section, *The Bird Talisman*. In these examples, we see how the intimate relationship between text and image that Raverat embraced strongly echoes William Morris's belief that wood engraving was uniquely suited to achieve harmony between the typeface and decorative elements. We also see how this approach reflects the arguments by children's picturebooks scholars discussed in my introduction about how images and texts interact uniquely in that genre. In the children's literature Raverat illustrated, she interacts with the image and text both on a very material level.

While the books covered in this section represent only a small portion of Raverat's body of illustration work—she illustrated at least seventeen books, not including her memoir (Horne 361)—they represent how Raverat was involved in a crucial aspect of the relationship between wood engraved book illustration and book publishing. The technology of wood engraving itself, according to Selborne, meant that illustrators of wood engravings often worked more closely with publishers than did artists who worked in other mediums: “In contrast to their predecessors, the twentieth-century engraver-illustrators, with no intermediaries or photographic methods employed to translate or reproduce their designs, had a direct route to their publishers, who, in many instances, involved them to varying extents in the production process” (397). Through working with a medium that promoted close relationships between the illustrator and the production process, we see how the wood engraving revival and resulting illustration work gave women like Raverat the opportunity to use their skills in myriad aspects of book production, despite the common association of the publishing marketplace as a masculine domain.

### International Influences on Raverat's Work

A thread that I have been building up to throughout this chapter is how artistic movements from places outside the United Kingdom exerted influence on Gwen Raverat's work and how these influences challenge the idea of wood engraving as innately British, as it became associated, in Bewick's time, with "an authentic national heritage for generations of English readers" (Bluemel 207). One reason for this association, proposed by Kathleen Rice, is that Thomas Bewick, used wood engraved illustrations in scientific or natural history books like *The History of British Birds*. Rice states, Bewick's "depictions of animals in natural settings and his close observations of country life established viewers' association of wood engravings with naturalistic and rustic topics" (Rice 25). This aspect of the craft's reputation makes it an obvious fit for the English pastoral scenes with which it is often associated. One of Raverat's best known illustrated books is A.G. Street's *Farmer's Glory*, a memoir of rural English farm life by Street, positioned alongside thirty-six engravings by Gwen Raverat, which Bluemel says both "confirm our expectations of what rural modernity should look like—representing contemporary farming machines or roaring twenties costumes and games" yet also contains "plenty of generic country scenes too, of sheep on meadows, of hayricks, scythe-bearing harvest workers, cows and barns" (Bluemel, "Rural Modernity and the Wood Engraving Revival in Interwar England" 241). Bluemel argues that the apparent rural nostalgia in Raverat's images for *Farmer's Glory* is complicated by the book's publication by Faber and Faber and by its resistance to "rustic simplicity" in favor of "emphasizing the sophistication of the labourers working in the machines of his [Street's] childhood" in ways that challenge the rural modernism/urban modernism binary (243). Similarly, I would argue that owing to the international influences on Raverat, her

illustrations can never be viewed as fully British; they will always complicate a British/not British binary by representing several intersecting forces.

As I discussed earlier, French Impressionism played a significant role in what made Raverat's wood engravings unique from those of her contemporaries. As Jaffe notes, while Raverat was learning to employ the "originality of her painterly directness," using light to articulate her objects, at Noel Rooke's Central School classes, the more conventional form of using the engraver to "describe the forms they were depicting" was being taught (22). Jaffe grants high praise in particular to Raverat's piece *Jeu de Boules, Vence, in Sunlight*, produced while the Raverat's were living in France, as the apex of Raverat's "affinity with a French style . . . Back one goes to the impressionistic technique of depicting form in terms of the incidence of light" (Jaffe 23). By the time of her work on Street's *Farmer's Glory*, Raverat's French-influenced style had earned her a reputation for uniqueness that brought her this meaningful commission from Faber and Faber. This work by the "already famous Gwen Raverat," paired with Street's narrative, sold well enough to be reprinted multiple times (Bluemel "Rural Modernity" 243). So while Raverat's white-line style and Street's "nostalgic descriptions of pre-war" farming days filled readers' desires for rural Englishness, the illustration style employed resists any essential Englishness (244).

But French Impressionism is not the only global influence on Raverat's work, which is why the final section of this chapter looks at her color wood engraving for *The Bird Talisman*. Republished in 1939, *The Bird Talisman* was a fairytale written by Raverat's great uncle, Henry Allen Wedgwood, brother of her grandmother, Emma Darwin. *The Bird Talisman* and its original illustrations by Wedgwood was published in 1852 in *The Family Tutor* and was later privately published again by Emma Darwin in 1887 for her grandchildren. Although the bulk of

the engravings for this book are in the usual black and white style, eight are in color. Spalding's description of the production process is evidence of Raverat's typically hands-on approach to illustration and layout: "She held off agreeing to a contract until she had experimented with one of these [colour plates] and settled how to do the various cuts. She decided in each case to undertake the main block herself, but to hand over to a blockmaker those that would carry the colour" (Spalding 375). Interestingly, Raverat's involvement in the production of *The Bird Talisman* evinced an awareness of book production-as-politics: when her Faber and Faber contact, Richard de la Mare, planned to have the colour blocks cut in Vienna, "Gwen objected, owing to the German occupation of Austria, and asked him to estimate the cost of Austrian blocks, postage and insurance against the cost of using either English or French blockmakers as she was willing to pay the difference" (Spalding 375). Ultimately, the blocks were made in England, and her work on the various shapes and sizes of the books many blocks "make this the most sumptuously decorated of all her books" (Spalding 376).

These color engravings for *The Bird Talisman* are significant because they represent the influence of Japanese color block style on Raverat's work. European and American interest in Japanese color engravings began in the nineteenth century, as Japonaiserie began to infiltrate Western society, and prints-making techniques, as easily moved and distributed cross-cultural artifacts, were among this Asian-European-American exchange of artistic ideas (Art 9-10). While color woodblock printing had been attempted in the West, they were usually limited to only a handful of colors, while Japanese techniques were proficient at including as many as a dozen different colors (Art 10). This fascination with the Japanese color block style was adopted by British artists alongside the other movements within the engraving revival. Artists like Lucien Pissaro and Frank Morley Fletcher adopted these techniques in the early twentieth century, and

Fletcher wrote a book titled *Wood-block Printing: a description of the craft of woodcutting and colour printing based on the Japanese practice*, which Alan Guest describes as “most influential” in helping to make the Japanese colour block method “very popular” (218). But in discussing the history of the Society of Wood Engravers that Raverat assisted in founding, James Hamilton points out that one of the driving principles behind the society’s founding was to differentiate the work of European-influenced engravers from those following the Japanese styled colored woodcut (Hamilton 70). Thus, the circles of engravers in which Raverat moved were not, it would seem, interested in adopting the Japanese approach. Yet, according to Guest, by the 1930s “all kinds of prints were being produced in the colour woodcut” (218), which implies that even though Raverat had not followed this approach early in her career, she was likely aware of the popularity of the colour woodcut when she illustrated *The Bird Talisman* in 1939, “reinstat[ing] the colour wood-engraved illustration as Pissaro had perfected it at the turn of the century” (Selborne 76-77). Although it is unclear if Raverat specifically used the Japanese method of brushing paint mixed with rice paste onto the blocks, her choice to use color engravings, popularized by the infiltration of the Japanese style, indicate the degree to which the connections between Japanese and British artistic approaches during this period were influencing artists like Raverat.

It is not clear why Raverat opted to use color blocks in *The Bird Talisman*, though she perhaps was inspired by the book’s setting in India and accompanying British stereotypes of exoticism in the subcontinent. Joyce Irene Whalley and Tessa Rose Chester say that *The Bird Talisman* illustrations “beautifully evoke the mystery of the East with the strong and positive tones of the coloured engravings enhancing the atmosphere,” a description which lends additional credibility to the idea that the setting of the book played a role in the use of color

(185). Raverat had previously experimented with color printing for one illustration in *Four Tales from Hans Andersen*, published by Cambridge University Press in 1935 (Spalding 360). In *The Bird Talisman*'s forward, Raverat states that "we children always felt that the appearance of the book was rather arid; so that I have at last overcome my feeling of sacrilege in tampering with a sacred work and have tried to illustrate it myself . . . . I should add, that the author was never in the East in his life; and that neither he nor I have made any effort to be accurately Indian" (*Raverat - The Bird Talisman*). The images from *The Bird Talisman* sadly embody this ignorance of what Indians and India look like in real life: representations of humans in the book are stereotypes, with exaggerated facial features, and the landscapes frequently include flora and fauna that Western audiences typically associate with the East, like tigers, elephants, and jungle themes. Yet, although "no one today recommends *The Bird Talisman* as bedtime reading," Bluemel argues that it earns the status of "quality children's literature," based on Raverat's engravings, quality production by Faber and Faber, and its "mention in two admirable histories of children's book illustration" in the mid twentieth century along with inclusion in late twentieth century collections on children's book illustrations (Bluemel, "A Happy Heritage" 213).

Raverat's work on *The Bird Talisman* is an appropriate note with which to conclude this chapter because it embodies several aspects of her artwork, gender, and relationship to the book that I have sought to capture throughout the chapter. Of note is that *The Bird Talisman* was handed down through generations of the Wedgwood-Darwin family by Emma Darwin, pointing back to how the Darwin women (rather than the more famed academic men of the family) influenced Raverat's work in important ways, as evidenced in her collaborations with Frances Cornford and her training by Elinor Monsell Darwin. Additionally, Raverat's involvement in the project, from its conception to illustration, are typical of the ways in which she treated

illustration as holistically part of, rather than separate and subordinate to, the book as a whole. When *The Bird Talisman* went to print, the process took longer than usual because of the number of Cambridge University Press employees who had been drafted for service in the early days of World War II (Spalding 376). Raverat's work in a role "approved" for women, as illustrator, using a medium that lends itself to domestic production (much of Raverat's work was completed at her home in Cambridge while her children were at school or at night, with the use of an acetylene lamp and glass globe [Spalding 332]), while Britain's men were marching to war seems to reinforce preconceived notions of gendered divisions of labor. And yet, as I have endeavored to show here, Raverat was a leader in her field whose gender complicated but did not define her contributions to print culture.

### Conclusion

In concluding this chapter, I draw together the theme of how Raverat acted upon and *was* acted upon by the Arts and Crafts Movement and by modernism, and how her work represents the intertwining of these two ideas. Through helping to popularize a new iteration of wood engraving, Raverat was perpetuating the ideals of the Arts and Crafts movement: the value of autographic engraving, with artist and engraver as one person, embodied an "orient[ation] towards reasserting unity in a world perceived to be artificially fragmented" (Crook 26). At the same time, what Raverat was doing with the craft of engraving was, in many regards, quite modern. Through her role in the publication of modernist periodicals, it is evident how the Arts and Crafts and modernist movements can be understood through Tom Crook's definition of "alternative modernities," which understands the Arts and Crafts Movement alongside other



contemporary movements “dealing with a plethora of competing and complementary modernities that express themselves in various ways” (25).

Through combining both movements through the craft of wood engraving and her impact on print culture, Gwen Raverat’s work shows how these movements work alongside one another and are interconnected, but she also brought this interconnection to bear on book publication. Through working with Faber and Faber, with their influence on bringing modernism to popular audiences, and through using wood engravings to illustrate books for mass consumption—rather than, primarily, the private press movement—Raverat began a tradition of using Arts and Crafts methods to influence book production. This tradition will continue through the career of Clare Leighton, covered in my next chapter. Underscoring her work in and through all of these movements, the strength of Raverat’s career shows how advances in the training of women artists enabled women like herself to attain careers in the arts and crafts and influence print culture in the process.

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## CHAPTER THREE: CLARE LEIGHTON AS AUTHOR-ILLUSTRATOR: CARVING A TRANS-ATLANTIC PATH FOR THE WOOD ENGRAVING REVIVAL

### Introduction

In 1923, realizing she needed to use her artistic talents to earn a living, Clare Leighton began attending evening classes at the Central School of Arts and Crafts, where she learned the craft of wood engraving under the tutelage of Noel Rooke. Of the early days of her relationship with Rooke, Leighton says that “he turned out to be one of the most important happenings in my life as an artist. Launching me upon my new medium . . . I remember the joy on his face as he showed me how to hold my graver” (Leighton, *Clare Leighton* 9). The moment recorded here in a collection of Leighton’s essays, *The Growth and Shaping of an Artist-Writer*, is significant not just for Leighton’s own career but because, in introducing Leighton to this medium, Rooke was launching the career of one of the engraving revival’s most prolific artists, and therefore expanding the reach of the wood-engraving revival. Considered by Thomas Balston, along with Gwen Raverat and Agnes Miller-Parker, as one of the “three chief women engravers,” the body of work Leighton produced in her lengthy career, which spanned well into the mid-twentieth century, took the revival even further from its early private-press book phase and into commercial publishing, and, perhaps most importantly, across the Atlantic (9).

Born in 1898, Leighton’s illustration career began in earnest in the mid-20s, and in 1939, she moved to the United States, where she eventually became a citizen and lived until her death in 1989. The most prominent aspect of Leighton’s career and influence on the revival is the sheer magnitude of her output; she lived a long life and enjoyed a lengthy career that spanned into the 1970s (Horne 292). In this time, she not only illustrated many books for famous authors like

Thornton Wilder, Thomas Hardy, and Emily Brontë, but she wrote and illustrated her own books as well and authored informational work on the craft of wood engraving. She also designed posters for the Empire Marketing Board and London Transport and created illustrations for Wedgwood China, showing how the versatility of engraving was being embraced for other types of media besides print (Horne 289, 292). Leighton was also unique in her approach to illustration: immersing herself in the atmosphere she wished to depict by moving to various parts of England and North America was a crucial part of her method of illustrating and eventually, writing.

Because she was thirteen years younger than Gwen Raverat, Clare Leighton's career began around the time that the revival was picking up steam; by the early 20s, not only had art schools begun to teach wood engraving, but its popularity was spreading among periodical publishers and was soon to catch on with book publishers. Therefore, the timing of Leighton's career positioned her to participate in and carry the revival onward in ways that her predecessors were not able to. As someone who both wrote about her craft and who illustrated prolifically in England and the United States, she was able to take the revival's impact beyond London and continental Europe; yet her focus on depicting the experience of working class individuals in both England and the US ties her transatlantic work together, showing both her socialist values and the ways in which her work reflects the values of the Arts and Crafts Movement in Britain and beyond.

As with the previous chapter, this chapter uses historical, biographical, and textual analysis to understand Leighton's impact on the engraving revival. I begin tracing Leighton's life and career by looking at the earliest influences on her work—her parents, both prolific authors—as well as her education and the professional connections that facilitated the growth of her career.



I examine examples of her early illustration work to explore the development of her career and approach to illustration. Next, I look Leighton's work as an artist and author, in the 1930s in the UK and in the 1940s in the United States, and what her art books mean for the craft of wood-engraving and for print culture more broadly. In looking at the vastness of Leighton's output, this chapter examines how her identity as an artist-illustrator, in particular, reflects the values of the Arts and Crafts Movement in its British and American iterations.

As my introduction states, throughout this dissertation as a whole, I am tracing the impact of the Arts and Crafts Movement on the women engravers being examined and looking at how their careers further the legacy of the movement. In this chapter specifically, we can see very directly the impacts of the ideals of the Arts and Crafts Movement on Leighton's body of work and her approach to art and illustration. As my literature review shows, scholars such as Anthea Callen in *Women of the Arts and Crafts Movement, 1870-1914* (1979) and Zoe Thomas in *Women Art Workers of the Arts and Crafts Movement* (2020) "Challeng[e] the long-standing assumption that the movement simply revolved around celebrated male designers like William Morris and his circle" (Thomas 2). This chapter argues for how Clare Leighton's work embodies the ideals espoused by Morris, and in doing so, adds to scholarship that testifies to the overlooked impact of women in the movement. Yet the timing of Leighton's career, as the revival shifts further from its private press roots to popular publishing, is crucial to understanding Leighton as an artist and the tensions around her career: she supported affordable, accessible art for the masses, while finding the role of illustrator too confining. This tension between aesthetics versus affordability is a theme that continues into the next chapter, with the emergence of subscription book clubs.

### Early Years: At Home with the Leightons

The roots of Leighton's career—as an artist, an author, and an illustrator--can be traced back to her youth in the Bohemian neighborhood of St. John's Wood in London, where she was raised by Robert and Marie Conner Leighton. Robert and Marie were both authors: Robert of adventure stories for boys and historical romances, Marie, most notably, of lady detective fiction (Crewdson 19). According to Kathleen Rice, the books written by Robert and Marie Leighton were “part of the first wave of modern illustrated books,” and therefore young Leighton would have had exposure to the relationship between text and image from an early age, although the style of these illustrations, with a strictly literal representation of the text in the image, differed greatly from the approach Leighton herself would take to illustration (22-23). Leighton's early years were dominated by her parents'—and especially her mother's—writing careers, an environment in which Leighton herself says “normal behavior in the household was one of unceasing work” (CL 5). In *Tempestuous Petticoat*, Leighton's hybrid memoir of her childhood and biography of her mother, she shows the extent to which family life was consumed by her mother's livelihood, describing a scene in which her mother couldn't figure out how to end a story she was writing and left a delivery boy (and the family meal) waiting for hours until she was ready for him to take her finished manuscript to the newspaper that published her stories (TP 4).

While Leighton's father was a successful author, with several novels that sold well in the 1890s and eventually becoming literary editor the *Daily Mail* (Crewdson 19), it was Marie Conner Leighton whose writing brought in the most money: “The entire household revolved around my mother's writing, for it was the large sums of money she earned that supported us. My father's work was not supposed to matter nearly as much, because he earned far less”

(Leighton, *TP* 4). This unconventional scenario created a dynamic between Leighton's parents that both fueled Clare's own development as an artist and, likely, helped prepare her for her own future supporting herself with her work. Leighton quotes her mother as saying to her father:

I have no objection to being the member of the family to earn most of the money.  
... But if I'm to slave away all my days on these potboilers and never have the time to write the *real* literature and poems that are inside me, the very least I can ask of you is that you also work, instead of enjoying yourself with these pictures.  
(*TP* 20)

The pictures mentioned in this quote are paintings that Robert Leighton tried to create behind his wife's back; painting, according to his daughter, was his true passion, not writing, and in encouraging his daughter's painting, Robert tried to live vicariously through her:

Finding that my mother expected him to go on with his writing, to help in earning the family income, he had tried to satisfy this urge by encouraging me in my earliest enthusiasms. 'You've got to be an artist when you grow up,' he would tell me. 'It's what I've always wanted to be myself—more than anything else. I shan't feel so bad about it, though, if I see you painting pictures.' (*TP* 11).

Members of Robert's family were artists, such as Clare's Uncle Jack and Aunt Sarah, a fact which Marie resented (*TP* 146). And while Clare herself did not admire their art, they did exert influence on her; Sarah tutored Clare in art from early on in ways that "chartered her creative potential and stabilized her personal growth" (Fletcher et al.), and as a young adult, she would go on "painting trips to France and the Balkans with Uncle Jack" (Stevens et al. 6). Although, in *Tempestuous Petticoat*, Leighton notes that Aunt Sarah and Uncle Jack held "contempt" for the

style of her early paintings, and Leighton did not consider either her aunt or uncle a good artist, so the extent to which their own artistry influenced Leighton remains unclear (146-47).

Marie Leighton seemed to possess a great deal of contempt for artists, going so far as to criticize art students she observed in her neighborhood as “anemic degenerates” (Leighton, *TP* 146), which makes Leighton’s eventual attendance of, indeed, two different art schools particularly interesting. Nonetheless, the influence of Leighton’s mother can be seen in a number of ways: not only does her prolific output as an author mirror the vast body of Leighton’s own work as both illustrator and, eventually, author, but as a published author of lady detective novels, Marie’s work engaged in “revision and extension of the script for female gender performance” (Kestner 282,) or as Jaffe states it, “This situation inculcated in Clare a healthy streak of female independence” (35). Leighton says of the tension between writing and visual art in her childhood home, “What did it matter that downstairs in the study the medium was the written word, while upstairs in the nursery the small child was drawing patterns of shapes and lines and colours? It was a case of priority being given to creativity” (*Clare Leighton* 5). Leighton’s ability to embrace all forms of creativity into one unified whole becomes especially apparent in her own writings, discussed later in this chapter.

The seeds of Leighton’s own relationship to the material text can be seen in her accounts of growing up around her mother’s writing from very early on, when her mother’s world was fixated on her “bundles” (manuscripts): “These bundles were the most important things in the house. They contained the outlines of the serials she was writing, and if anything were to happen to them she would be unable to remember what she had planned for her villains” (*TP* 6). Marie carried these bundles of manuscript around the house with her, Leighton recalls, obsessive over making sure a spark never caught them (*TP* 7). Leighton daily spent time in her parents’

workspace, and from a young age, she recalls drawing on pieces of manuscript paper from their study with her mother's pencils (*TP* 12). These realities of young Clare's lived experience forecast the unity between visual and verbal art that would characterize her work.

Despite Marie Leighton's disregard for visual art, Leighton and her mother eventually collaborated on a particularly tragic endeavor: when Leighton's brother Roland (fiancée of writer and suffragist Vera Britain) was killed in World War I, Marie wrote a book about him, titled *Boy of My Heart*, for which Clare illustrated the dust jacket and binding at age seventeen—apparently her first published illustration, which Rice describes as “the seemingly natural merging of her life and art” (24). Like Raverat, then, we see with Leighton an early collaboration with her female relatives, although for Leighton this occurs before she even attended art school.

#### At the Central School: The Heart of the Engraving Revival

Unlike Gwen Raverat, who was mostly self-taught as an engraver, although influenced heavily by her time at the Slade School, Clare Leighton attended both the Slade School and the Central School of Arts and Crafts, which is where she learned wood engraving. At the Slade, which she attended between 1921 and 1923, Leighton studied painting and drawing, not wood engraving, even though wood engraving was offered there beginning in the 1921-22 academic year (Owens 13). As I discussed in the previous chapter, the Slade School is significant for women artists of this period because it had a reputation for being progressive and welcoming women, with a female-dominated student body and professors that permitted women to take life drawing classes earlier than other institutions had. Leighton describes the Slade as a place where the training was “rigid,” and her time in the life drawing classes involved “months on end of sitting before a model and drawing and drawing and drawing” (*Clare Leighton* 8).

As with Raverat, it seems likely that Leighton benefited from her time at the Slade School not just in terms of art training but also through being in an institution where women were less “othered” than in more conservative schools. In this chapter, though, I will focus more on the role of the Central School in Leighton’s development as an engraver since Central is indeed where she learned this craft that shaped the rest of her career. But even though it seems likely that the drawing training she received at the Slade helped Leighton develop her ability to engrave, as it did for Raverat, her own memoirs draw a sharp distinction between her time at each school; at the Slade, she indulged her love of painting and an obsession with light that had developed in her earlier years at the Brighton school, where she had been “changed into an Impressionist and a Pointillist” (*CL* 8). At Slade, although her approach to light was challenged, she remained “in the world of early Italian painters,” but she acknowledges that this preoccupation with light likely played a role in her attraction to engraving (*CL* 8). It was after two years at Slade, though, when Leighton had the realization mentioned at the beginning of this chapter—that her “world attuned to the Early Italians had to be abandoned” in favor of the graphic arts: “It was then that what is known as ‘real life’ stepped in. I had to earn my living. Among other things, this meant doing illustrations for some of my father’s Wild West stories. Suddenly I realized I knew nothing about black and white for reproduction. I had to face reality” (*CL* 9). This “reality” came in the form of learning to engrave with Noel Rooke, now more than ten years into teaching engraving at Central.

The significance of Leighton’s attendance of the Central School of Arts and Crafts for her training in engraving lies in the fact that the Central School’s existence was a direct result of the Arts and Crafts Movement, and consequently, was an especially influential institution in the engraving revival. Founded in 1896, the Central School of Arts and Craft’s association with the

Arts and Crafts Movement made it an ideal setting for the teaching of book arts. Founders Philip Webb (a friend of William Morris) and William Lethaby started the school in reaction to the “Royal Academy’s refusal to exhibit crafts alongside arts” (Jaffe 16). As a result, the school’s curriculum valued “declining” crafts such as lettering and bookbinding (Backemeyer 11). In 1912, Noel Rooke began teaching wood engraving in response to his own disillusionment as an illustrator with the quality of “process work and reproductive wood-engraving” which “led him to the conclusion that autographic white-line wood-engraving offered the best means of book decoration and illustration for the future” (Selborne 20). In the 1925 lecture delivered to the Print Collectors’ Club referenced in my introduction, Rooke explains the “origin of the modern movement in wood cutting and wood engraving, printed by the European method, as a means of direct artistic expression” (11). Rooke outlines the reasons why reproductive engravings are inferior because facsimile engraving cannot retain “the spirit of the drawing,” arguing that “There is only one way of getting a thoroughly satisfactory engraving: the designer and engraver must be one and the same person” (11, 25). Rooke’s desire to see unity among artist and engraver, and his dissatisfaction with the quality of illustrations produced by photomechanical processes, echo the unity of fine arts with decorative arts that Morris advocates when he argues that, when separated from one another, decorative arts “become trivial, mechanical, unintelligent, incapable of resisting the changes pressed upon them by fashion or dishonesty” (494).

Under Rooke’s tutelage many Central students and alum went on to participate in the Society of Wood Engravers, and through his connections to the publishing industry, many did illustrations for both private and commercial presses (Selborne 21). His facilitation of connections between his students and commercial presses is especially important here, as most private presses would close by the mid-twenties, so in pointing his students toward commercial

publishing, Rooke was not only impacting the illustrations of the commercial market itself, he was also helping his students find a practical means of employment with their illustrations that would last well into the 1930s, and for some, beyond. In learning from Rooke as a starting point to her graphic arts career, Leighton was in the company of other engravers such as Vivien Gible, Margaret Pilkington, and John Farleigh, who received commissions from publishers such as Golden Cockerell and Duckworth (Selborne 21). Leighton sees her introduction to him as pivotal in her career: “He turned out to be one of the most important happenings in my life as an artist” (CL 9).

#### Leighton’s Early Illustrations and Early Career Influences

Because of the expansive body of Leighton’s illustration work, even from the early years of her career in the 1920s, it is impossible to cover the content and significance of each of her commissions, but in this section, I narrow down to specific connections and illustrations that are especially formative for Leighton’s career and that indicate her immersive approach to illustration, which she carried into her approach to writing later in her career.

In the early twenties, Leighton became an art teacher, first to girls in lower-class urban London and later to “young females from the English aristocracy” (Leighton, CL 11-12), while engraving in her spare time. But even though engraving was not her full-time vocation at this point, a couple of specific moments played a role in developing awareness of her talents, which would eventually lead to her leaving teaching to illustrate (and eventually write) full time. Leighton credits the purchase of one of her prints by British sculptor, printmaker, and former Noel Rooke student Eric Gill with helping to launch her career. In fact, the print purchased by Gill, an image of Bishop’s Stortford malthouse, was only the second engraving Leighton had



ever completed, but one she credits with having “determined my future” (CL 9). Leighton states that, “Timidly, I sent the print to an exhibition, where to my amazement, it was accepted and hung. Yet more to my amazement it was purchased by Eric Gill” (CL 9). Leighton claims that as a result of Gill’s purchase, her work received attention from author Hilaire Belloc, who wrote an article about her for *The London Mercury* (CL 13).

Another important connection during this early period in Leighton’s career is H.N. Brailsford. As I discuss in the previous chapter, Brailsford, as editor of the Labour Party publication the *New Leader*, reprinted works from up-and-coming artists to grow the appeal of the left-wing publication. In addition to his reproducing some of Leighton’s prints, Leighton and Brailsford become long-term romantic partners during the 30s, a relationship which influenced her eventual immigration to the United States in 1939. Brailsford’s biographer F.R. Leventhal states that Brailsford, “instantly entranced by both the artist and her artistry, fostered her career by providing the visibility she needed at this stage to gain recognition” (Leventhal 211). In the introduction to a published collection of her work, Anne Stevens associates Leighton’s socialist values with her relationship with Brailsford (Stevens et al. 18). Leighton’s socialist leanings, Stevens argues, is why unlike many of her contemporaries, Leighton was not seeking commissions from the private presses, having “little time for these costly limited editions” (18). Balston also acknowledges that Leighton is “unique” among her fellow engravers “in having made her name independently of the Private Presses” (15).

But according to Levanthal, the fact that Leighton’s work was demonstrating an emphasis on working-class realism theme, drew Brailsford to it in the first place; he calls *The Malthouse*, the first of her engravings to be published by Brailsford in 1924, “a powerful evocation of rural labour” which “already exhibited those traits that would make her one of the most distinguished

engravers of the century—an affinity for the rhythms of nature, a strength and economy of line in depicting men and women at work” (Leventhal 212). These themes that entranced Brailsford would continue in Leighton’s work throughout her career, even after her move to the United States in 1939 when their relationship ended.

While scholarship on Leighton’s early book publications is limited, two works I want to acknowledge here to foreground her later career are illustrations for Winifred Holtby’s early novels, *Anderby Wold* (1923) and *The Crowded Street* (1924), both published by Bodley Head. Selborne speculates that Rooke “steered” another of his students, Margaret Lane Foster, “in the direction of Bodley Head,” so this may be how Leighton was connected to the publisher also (21). Or this relationship could have occurred because Leighton likely knew, from an early age, Holtby’s friend and political ally, Vera Brittain through her tragically-ended engagement to Leighton’s brother Roland. Jaffe argues that Leighton and Brittain remained friends because of their “sympathy with the same ideals: pacifism, feminism, racial and sexual equality, natural justice in all its aspects” (72). Jaffe also connects Leighton and Brittain to other artists involved in left-wing politics and the feminist movement, like fellow engraver Gertrude Hermes and author Naomi Mitchison: “Like so many women who were in their teens and twenties when they experienced the First World War, both were motivated and liberated by those times” (77-78). Catherine Clay also includes Clare Leighton among the artists whose work was featured in *Time and Tide* as part of the magazine’s efforts to “promote[e] itself as an aesthetic as well as a commodity object” (124). Work on *Time and Tide* and on Holtby’s novels show that Leighton was connected to the networks of feminist artists and authors who were active in this period in a similar way to that of Raverat. Although Holtby’s career as a novelist would not become established until the posthumous publication of *South Riding* in 1936, Leighton’s work on

Holtby's early fiction and connections to Brittain show how the engraving revival was interacting with the left-wing political forces of the period (Dowson 62).

In 1928, Leighton experienced a breakthrough in her career when she was approached by Harper & Brothers (US) and MacMillan (UK) to illustrate an edition of Thomas Hardy's *The Return of the Native* that the two houses were jointly undertaking. Rosalind Parry points out that, since it's original nineteenth century publication in *Belgravia*, Hardy's novel had never been reprinted with illustrations, meaning that "Leighton's engravings, then, offered fresh visual commentary on a novel not usually accompanied by images" (32). Parry groups Leighton's illustrations of this novel in with a larger trend in illustrated Hardy reprints published around the same time, including an edition of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* for Macmillan (1926) with engravings by Vivien Gribble and five Hardy novels engraved by Agnes Miller Parker in the 1950s and 60s (32). But, Parry argues, "Leighton's grounding in Hardy's geography was essential to distinguishing her from this group of engravers (interestingly all-female)" (32).

Leighton was genuinely excited to take on the Hardy commission, saying, "Cass Canfield of Harper's, over in London from New York, came to see me and asked if I would like to illustrate Thomas Hardy's *Return of the Native*. This was an eerie suggestion, for deep within me I had always yearned to do this" (CL 13). And by moving to Dorset to familiarize herself with the inspiration for Hardy's novel, she produced wood-engravings "full of observational intensity" (Parry 30). With fifty-nine separate engravings in total, including head and tail pieces, Leighton had helped create a book for a "new kind of reader" (Parry 30). Parry describes how this edition of *The Return of the Native*, with only 1500 prints total for both Macmillan and Harper & Brothers combined, was aimed at an emerging middle-class, book-collecting readership: "the ownership of fine books was expanding to a new public, as literate in language

as in art, and that intrigued Leighton” (31). Although many of Leighton’s contemporaries were illustrating for the private presses in the 1920s, her work with commercial publishers like MacMillan is indicative both of how the engraving revival was infiltrating publishing for mass readership, but also how the publishing industry itself was changing at this time to accommodate the tastes of middle-class readers: “Mass craft culture was undergoing a transformation, and this book, commissioned when Hardy died at the age of eighty-seven, was a part of that shift” (Parry 32).

Among Leighton’s many illustrations, I highlight her work on Hardy’s *Return of the Native* because it is important for several reasons: firstly, being sought out by MacMillan and Harper & Brothers is in and of itself indicative of the reputation Leighton had achieved. Macmillan had a long history of publishing Hardy, who had only recently passed in 1928, so her selection for this commission shows that the orchestrators of this project had a great deal of faith in her abilities and artistry (Millgate 74). Secondly, at this point in her career, Leighton forsook teaching altogether to engrave full-time, moving to Dorset temporarily to immerse herself in the world of Hardy’s fictional Egdon Heath. Or, as Leighton herself states it, “As soon as I could in decency free myself from this last binding obligation [of teaching] I did so. I went to live on a farm on Egdon Heath, so that I might become that Wessex earth” (CL 17). Leighton says of the creative process that “When I get thoroughly immersed in a job I carry my designing into my dreams at night to the point of seeming to become the inanimate objects I am engraving. While I was illustrating *The return of the native* [sic] I was Egdon Heath, feeling the hooves of the cropper ponies and the tug of the undergrowth” (CL 17). Parry separates Leighton’s illustrations for Hardy’s novel into two categories: “full-sized engravings” which “feature at least one character from the novel, and can almost always be traced to specific moments in the plot,” and

head and tail pieces, which more deeply engage with the “built or natural world,” with less specific correspondence to the plot (30). Parry further argues that it is these head and tail pieces where “the real labor of becoming earth” is most evident: “In them we can witness Leighton building a version of Hardy’s novel from the ground up” (40-41). This approach to illustration stands in contrast to the more formulaic approach used to illustrate Leighton’s parents’ novels, where the illustrations “take for granted the mimetic adequacy of the prose and the illustration serves only to mirror the text itself,” and Rice argues that this is perhaps a source of Leighton’s own eventual frustrations with the constraints of illustrating texts she did not write (23). Parry argues for how important this move was for Leighton because of how her immersion in the Dorset countryside facilitated these illustrations, but I would argue that Leighton’s approach to illustrating *The Return of the Native* is also significant to her career and her impact on print culture because this practice of immersing herself in the environments she illustrated is a practice to which Leighton would return again and again, especially in the United States and Canada.

Other notable commissions that Leighton completed in the 1920s include two novels by Thornton Wilder, *The Angel that Troubled the Waters* (1927) and *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* (1929), both for Longmans (Horne 292). In the case of *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, Leighton had to satisfy herself with a different kind of immersion—what she called her “virtual trip to Peru,” for which she “read everything available and spent far more time on research than was necessary” (CL 21). She took this approach also with a republication by Duckworth of H.M. Tomlinson’s *The Sea and the Jungle*, a travel narrative chronicling the journey of a steam ship through the Amazon, the Caribbean, and eventually to Florida. The journey occurred between 1909 and 1910 and was originally published in 1912. A December 1930 issue of *The Graphic* includes one of Leighton’s images for Tomlinson’s work in a spread titled “The Art of

Illustration,” calling it “A new novel in woodcuts” (“The Art of Illustration”). Jaffe says of Leighton’s illustrations for Tomlinson’s book that she

Was producing something specially adapted for printing on the soft pulp paper [of popular publishing]. Book illustrators soon learned to adjust to the production methods offered by publishers, and serious illustrators struck up a relationship with those houses who took a real interest in seeing that their original blocks were most faithfully reproduced. (45)

This is also evident in Raverat’s career, as she intentionally steered publishers toward printing with Cambridge University Press, because they knew how to handle and correctly print her from her blocks (Spalding 362). These instances show how Leighton and Raverat were adapting their illustration skills to the printing paper and technologies of the time, involving themselves in book production beyond the boundaries of illustration exclusively.

Leighton’s work on Wilder and Tomlinson’s books show how adaptable her engraving skills had become to varying scenes. As with Hardy’s Egdon Heath, Leighton’s reflections on illustrating *Wuthering Heights* (Duckworth, 1931) indicate that she also relocated to complete those illustrations: “In the same way, as I illustrated *Wuthering Heights* and was living in Thrushcross Grange, I became the sharp-edged rocks of Peniston Crag” (CL 17). But in working on Thornton and Tomlinson’s books, Leighton expanded her craft beyond the English countryside, which she says was “no longer able to satisfy me” (CL 21). These projects allowed her to stretch her abilities while trying to satisfy a nagging desire to challenge herself with “something new and unknown” (CL 21), preparing her for the even greater challenge of writing and illustrating her own books.

## Leighton as Author and Illustrator: Boredom and Art for Everyday People

### Leighton's Transition to Author-Illustrator

Building on her successes in the late 20s, when Leighton “had already received several prestigious commissions for book illustrations from Heinemann, Longman [sic], Macmillan, and Harper and Brothers of New York” (Jaffe 44), Leighton identifies a “leaven of restlessness” (*CL* 23). At this point in her career, she begins to yearn for greater creative freedom: “as time went by and I illustrated more books, I began to feel the constraint of interpreting other people’s work. I was growing impatient with having to sink myself into the writer’s identity. I seemed never to feel I had fully realised myself” (*CL* 23). Far from denigrating the role of the illustrator, Leighton also clarifies in her memoirs that she is “not ashamed of being labelled so often as an illustrator” even though “the book illustrator is often down-graded and not thought to belong in the higher echelon of pure art” (*CL* 23). But at this point in her career, when she shared with her publisher a desire to illustrate a book tracing the happenings of a Buckinghamshire farm over a calendar year, the publisher remarked, ““Your father and mother are both writers. Haven’t you the guts to write your own book?”” (*CL* 23). Leighton takes her publisher up on this challenge, writing and illustrating five books in the 30s alone, along with two books on wood engraving, discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

The boredom Leighton was experiencing with projects focused only on England in the 1930s seemed to stem at least in part from a recent trip to the United States, where she, “an unknown English engraver, was being treated like an established graphic artist” (*CL* 21). This trip was the first of several to North America, before Leighton finally moved to the US in 1939. Leighton says the trip was inspired by the recent publication of a collection of her prints (*CL* 21). Here Leighton seems to be referring to 1930 collection of her work published by Longmans,

*Woodcuts: Examples of the Works of Clare Leighton*, which was published in both the United Kingdom and United States. Jaffe says that through this publication, Leighton “became the first woman to have a collection of her prints issued in such a way” and describes the specifics of the collection:

A special introduction was provided by the celebrated author, Hilaire Belloc. The prints, pulled individually from the blocks, are on flimsy paper, each tipped into the volume with the titles printed on a fly sheet. The edition is limited to 450 copies, numbered and signed by the artist. It is an exceptional production in honour of a woman artist. (44)

Although the details of what inspired Longmans to publish this collection are unclear, Leighton already had a relationship with the firm based on her illustrations for Thornton Wilder’s novels. The connection between Leighton and Wilder was perhaps originally facilitated by J.C. Squire, whose serial *The London Mercury* (discussed more extensively in chapter two) had published Leighton’s work and who recommended Wilder’s books to Longmans (Briggs 379). In addition to being a noteworthy accomplishment for a woman artist, this published collection is one of the main factors that created interest in Leighton’s work in the United States, inspiring the invitations to lecture that prompted her trip there (CL 21).

Yet, while it is impressive that Leighton’s talent and fame had resulted in the publication of a collection of her prints, it should also be noted at this stage in her career that Leighton’s boredom with illustrating others’ writing—and of illustrating the English countryside—was a gendered experience based on her lack of access or opportunity to adapt her artistic skills in other ways. Allison Pease describes the experience of boredom for women of Leighton’s generation as arising from a state in which middle-class British women were “better educated as a group than at any point in their history but only marginally integrated into professional or civic life” (170).



Leighton's experience reflects the reality of a woman on the "margins" of the art profession, in that many of Leighton's male contemporaries in the wood engraving revival spent their careers engaged in a variety of artistic roles and outlets. Art historian Rodney Engen divides wood engravers in the 1930s into two categories, and notably, he does not include women in either category:

i) the specialist engraver intent upon illustration – artists like Robert Gibbings, Sydney Lee, Iain Macnab, John Farleigh, George Mackley, John Buckland-Wright, many of whom continue working to this day, or ii) primarily painters, sculptors and designers who, although only relatively small in number, helped to push wood engraving into the realm of fine arts – artists like Paul and John Nash, Edward Wadsworth, and Eric Ravilious (85).

The "specialist engravers" listed here encompass a variety of "leadership" roles: Gibbings helped found the Society of Wood Engravers and owned and directed the Golden Cockerell press for several years; Sydney Lee also helped found the Society, taught at the Central School, and became an Associate of the Royal Academy; Macnab was a teacher and founding principal of the "progressive" Grosvenor School of Modern Art in London, credited with "carry[ing] wood engraving away from the hedgerow subjects that characterized one aspect of the British approach, into the exotic subject matter of the sun-drenched Mediterranean," a description which overlooks how Raverat and Leighton diversified the British school of engraving with depictions of India and America, respectively (Hamilton 100, 139); John Farleigh, who Hamilton credits with having "carried the wood engraving out of the limited edition world and into the wider field of the High Street bookshop" was also a teacher at the Central School, eventually becoming the Head of the Department of Book Production (137, 144). If these men experienced boredom with

engraving or illustration, they had opportunities to tackle other challenges in the art and art education field. Although Leighton did become a lecturer and eventually a member of the Duke University art department, these achievements happened in the United States, far from the small artistic circles of London.

The “fine artists” mentioned here engaged in wood engraving among other artistic endeavors and movements, becoming well known painters, developing associations with surrealism (Paul Nash) and Vorticism (Wadsworth), and getting hired as war artists (Ravilious and Paul Nash). Hamilton calls Paul Nash’s series of engravings for *Genesis* (1924) “the most important single group of wood engravings of the decade,” establishing precedents that other engravers would follow, yet remarks that by 1928, Nash “tired of wood engraving” and “gave the medium up” (94). For Clare Leighton, though, “giving up” her medium was likely not an option from a financial perspective, so leveraging her illustration abilities into an authorship role was the best remedy for her boredom with illustration.

#### Leighton’s Publications for *The Studio* and her Artistic Philosophy

One of Leighton’s earliest authored works is a how-to guide for wood engraving. *Wood-Engraving and Woodcuts* (1932) was published by The Studio Publications as part of a “How To Do It” series. *The Studio* was an important periodical in spreading the work of engravers in the early 20s, one of the first publications to catch on to the revival itself. The “How To Do It” series includes more than 30 issues, covering topics from photography (by Ansel Adams) to making puppets (by Dana Saintsbury Green). Patricia Jaffe argues that the impact of this guide is significant: “it heralds the total liberation of wood-engraving from the professionals. Not only was it now to be available to art students, but also to amateurs. The series aimed to make the

practice of various art forms accessible to every man and every woman” (45). This goal of making engraving skills more widely available fits with Leighton’s perspective that art should be accessible to anyone, discussed in more detail below.

In addition to giving instruction on the craft, Leighton also includes examples of wood engravings and wood cuts, many by well-known British artists, like Eric Gill, Raverat, John Nash, Agnes Miller Parker, Gertrude Hermes, and Leighton herself. But she also demonstrates her knowledge of the international scope of movements and variety in wood engraving and woodcutting by surveying work by German, Polish, American, Russian, and French wood cutters and engravers as well. She praises the Russian approach to engraving in particular, characterizing their style as having a “silvery quality into their work which is almost unknown in that of the artists of any other country” (*Wood-Engraving and Woodcuts* 36). She criticizes the English school of engraving being too consumed with technique—and criticizes the German school with the opposite problem of focusing on emotion at the expense of technique, whereas “The Russians seem able to combine the good executive development with an aliveness that the English lack” (64). She compares Polish engraver Stanislaw Ostoja-Chrostowski’s *The Wood* with Raverat’s *Bowl Players in France*, stating that Ostoja-Chrostowski’s work shows “a greater sense of the dramatic and a far wider range of tool work and contrast of tones” (32). In keeping with Raverat’s painterly approach to engraving with an emphasis on light discussed in the previous chapter, Leighton describes *Raverat’s Bowl Players in France* as exhibiting “the painter’s attitude toward the block rather than the draughtsman’s” (33).

What matters most about these examples described by Leighton is how this work would have distributed knowledge about international artists to those who read this issue of *The Studio*, a magazine Wendy Kaplan describes as “widely available” in distributing the work of the Arts

and Crafts Movement (248). Sadly, a review from *The Bookman* short-changes the breadth of Leighton's work by saying it contains "thirty-eight examples of the best-known modern English wood-engravers" —with no mention of the many European or American artists included (Meldrum 216). But the same review praises this how-to series as "an excellent idea," whose "usefulness could not easily be surpassed" (Meldrum 216).

Another important collaboration between Leighton and *The Studio* was a 1936 publication titled *Wood Engraving of the 1930's*; the volume is a collection assembled by Leighton, categorized by type (i.e. "Book Illustration" and "Abstract Design") of wood engravings from all over the world, including Mexico, the US, and many parts of Europe. Leighton's forward reflects her perspective on the context in which she's writing and disseminating art. Posing the question, "What is the reason for the present-day popularity of the wood engraving?" she argues that the "first and perhaps most important reason is economic," citing the relative affordability of woodcuts and engravings, in comparison to "delicate copper plate prints" (*Wood Engraving of the 1930's* 9). "As there is nowadays a larger but less wealthy public educated in the appreciation of art than formerly," Leighton argues, economics "is a great consideration" (9). Leighton chronicles the development of the revival, acknowledging that now, in the mid-30s, the fervor of the movement has subsided, but praises this fact, arguing that the artist who chooses wood engraving over other print-making forms "is no longer defiant; he chooses this medium because in it he can express himself most easily and fully" (10). Economics continue to inform her perspective, in remarking that "Where, some short time back, the public had, if it wanted beautifully illustrated books, to pay for expensive limited editions, nowadays it can buy books at popular prices, illustrated by the same wood engravers who were once so precious" (10). Leighton praises the infiltration of wood-engraving into the world of commercial

art, commenting that “Good commercial art is one of the finest ways of spreading art among the masses, and the quality of commercial art should be looked upon as a serious responsibility” (13). Leighton’s socialist leanings are apparent when she remarks on how economic conditions in “a century where the distribution of wealth of the world is less unequal than it has hitherto been” means that the demand for art that is affordable for the population at large is growing. She seems to look favorably on these developments, saying “The guarded doors of the wealthy collector have been thrown down, and the people have stepped in and demanded art at a price within its means” (13). Here Leighton praises in particular how the medium of wood engraving enables affordable, original artwork because of its inexpensive production: “the limiting of the editions and the numbering of the prints is, in fact, merely a concession to the snobbishness of the collector. It would be a far more moral attitude towards art if the artist would agree to sell his prints at a lower price and in larger quantities” (13). And yet, despite holding this philosophy toward art as something that should be affordable for all, and while supportive of the commercial uses of art, Leighton’s career and writings in the 1930s indicate that she exists in a conflicted space: while she believes the illustrator should not be viewed as secondary to the author, she is increasingly bored with the confines of the role of illustrator.

We also see a theoretical conflict in Leighton’s position with regard to illustration. Rice describes Leighton as “loosely allied” with the Arts and Crafts Movement (32); certainly the simplicity of the medium accords with William Morris’s philosophy of simplicity in design, and though the engravings of Leighton and her contemporaries display great intricacy, the simplicity of the concept of wood engraving mimics Morris’s love of “the plainness of finished wooden floors” and resistance to “fussy ostentation” (Kinna 46). Rice characterizes the interwar period as a time when “the rarefied ideals of the Arts and Crafts Movement—the emphasis on

craftsmanship and the idealization of the worker—become democratized through mass production and carefully-crafted engravings” (34). But the “loose” affiliation mentioned here by Rice could be related to how Leighton’s perspective on engraving echoes some aspects of Walter Pater’s approach to aestheticism. For Pater, the art critic “will remember always that beauty exists in many forms. To him all periods, types, schools of taste, are in themselves equal” (Pater and Mosher xv-xvi). In viewing art for what it evokes within the viewer/critic, rather than in its inherent usefulness, Pater differed from Morris’s perspective connecting beauty and utility. In Leighton’s writings, we see how she embraces the usefulness of wood-engraving for utilitarian purposes, like commercial art, yet in her own work, the desire for illustration to be art in and of itself, rather than subservient to literal interpretation of the text, reflects both Pater’s aestheticism and Walter Benjamin’s critique of artistic reproductions. Benjamin’s assertion that “Making many reproductions ... substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique experience” echoes the dichotomy of Leighton’s own work (39): she sought unique experiences in places like the Dorset countryside and Canadian lumber camps to immerse herself in the worlds she illustrated, yet the nature of illustration meant those same images would be reproduced and redistributed many times, divorcing them from the “aura” of place and becoming a source of boredom for Leighton. This sense of conflict also reflects the reality of the revival itself: while the aims of the movement were to revive wood engraving as more than a mere reproductive technique, the fact remained that making a living through engraving required book illustration commissions.

#### Leighton’s Development as Author-Illustrator

*The Farmer’s Year: A Calendar of English Husbandry*, published by Collins in 1933, was one of Leighton’s first works as both author and illustrator and is also where Leighton’s

approach to writing and engraving that focus on the experience of working-class individuals—especially agricultural workers—becomes evident. Published during a period of agricultural depression in the UK, *The Farmer's Year* is among several illustrated books during this time that depict rural England; in fact, Joanna Selborne credits this work with “anticipat[ing] the demand for illustrated books on country matters” (“British Wood-Engraved Book Illustration” 378). Kristin Bluemel extensively examines Raverat and Hassall’s work on similar books (although they did not write the text for theirs), arguing that during this period of “interwar fixation on the English countryside,” cheaper publishing technology, which made books more affordable for readers to buy and “not simply borrow,” manifested in “lavishly illustrated” books that drew readers to the English countryside and engaged their sense of “longing, nostalgia, and regret over a beautiful but threatened or lost rural landscape and imagined way of life” (Bluemel 235). This backdrop of a readership and publishing industry both ripe for the appeal of rural nostalgia makes the craft of wood-engraving particularly useful for its associations with the pastoral, even while Leighton herself was ready to be challenged by other settings. *The Farmer's Year* is particularly significant to the engraving revival, according to Selborne, who credits Leighton’s “large and arresting images” in this volume with being one of the books that helped engraving become “recognized as an economically viable means of illustration” (“Making an Impression” 22-23).

Although *The Farmer's Year* was published by Collins, Victor Gollancz Limited was the main publisher for Leighton’s written and illustrated books in the 30s and early 40s. Founded in 1927, Victor Gollancz Ltd. was Gollancz’s first independent foray into the British publishing world; before establishing his own company, Gollancz worked for Benn Brother’s publishing, where his interest in art books emerged: “Victor himself preferred to concentrate on his art

books, on which he made a great reputation and a financial killing” (Edwards 146). Although, these books were not meant to be about art; they were publications meant to be consumed by “collectors of the objects illustrated” (Edwards 146). This early work on art books is carried into Gollancz Ltd., where he “emerged as the chief commercial publisher promoting wood-engraved illustrations of great subtlety and delicacy” (Jaffe 45). In addition to Leighton’s books, Gollancz published work by H.E. Bates with engraved illustrations by Agnes Miller Parker. In her history of the firm, Gollancz employee Sheila Hodges counts Leighton’s work and that of Parker and Bates as among the “beautiful art books in the early years” of the firm (Hodges 72).

Despite his publication of wood-engraved pastoral images, though, Gollancz was far from conservative in the publishing arena. Also known for his establishment in 1936 of the Left Book Club, he is considered by Jonathan Roscoe as one of “publishing’s most innovative men” alongside Stanley Unwin of Allen & Unwin and Allen Lane of Penguin (10). Gollancz was at the forefront of applying modern concepts of marketing to the expanding world of 1930s British publishing. Roscoe credits Gollancz both with talent for identifying “good detective and middlebrow fiction”—his list of authors included A.J. Cronin, Daphne du Maurier, and Phyllis Bentley (Edwards 168)—but also with having “harnessed the power of the newfangled marketing techniques that were coming to prominence,” recognizing that quality titles did not sell on their own (Roscoe 12). Gollancz employed techniques like cultivating a distinctive look with his black and yellow book covers, using “well designed” and “distinctive” ads, and advertising in newspapers (Roscoe 12). Edwards states Gollancz’s “showmanship” advanced the British publishing industry from what one critic called the “‘pony and trap period’ into the automobile epoch” (169). In working with Gollancz, then, Leighton is once again merging the Arts and Crafts origins of the engraving revival with the growth in commercial publishing in the



1930s. Other titles Leighton wrote and illustrated for Gollancz include *Four Hedges: A Gardener's Chronicle* (1935), which “describes how Clare Leighton and Noel Brailsford made the garden at their home Four Hedges in the Chilterns” and became a best-seller (Stevens et al. 18; Selborne “British Wood-Engraved Book Illustration” 379).

Leighton's restlessness with depicting the English countryside mentioned earlier seems to have been remedied, at least for a time, by her ability to write and illustrate her own work. *Four Hedges* was followed by a sequel, *Country Matters*, in 1937, which a review in *The Tribune* describes as “another of Clare Leighton's beautiful volumes ... in which the author is also responsible for the excellent wood-engravings, fitting companions for her distinguished prose” (Warman 12). It is noteworthy that the review begins with the statement, “There are few things that give more aesthetic satisfaction than a piece of fine book production” (12), with the use of “production” here seeming to acknowledge not just Leighton's work, but also that of Gollancz and his firm.

Also noteworthy is the review's title, “She Writes of the Countryside,” because this both encompasses the subject matter of Leighton's work but also implies a level of simplicity that doesn't accurately characterize Leighton's writing and illustrating. Stevens et al. describe the content of *Country Matters*: “she writes engagingly about a way of life that has now almost vanished, recalling and illustrating the unexpected discovery of chair bodgers working in the beechwoods near High Wycombe” (18). While she does indeed write about the countryside, the people of the countryside are what consistently inspire Leighton, and this theme will continue in her work in the United States.

From a feminist media perspective, Leighton's illustrating of her own writing is significant, as encompassed in this quote about the design of her first book:

It was to be *my* book. . . . It was my responsibility to design this book. I could decide the format and the type area, and make the engravings whatever size I thought best. I grew more and more terrified as I studied every beautiful book I could find . . . . I was the sole arbiter of the shape of my book, the choice of type face, of the book's entire mood. I had no alibi. (*CL* 23)

With these books, we see how the unifying goals of the Arts and Crafts Movement are realized: artist and engraver are one in the same—along with author and book designer. Rather than being continually relegated to the secondary role of illustrator to the works of others, Leighton's artwork has also afforded her the opportunity to work as an author. The meaning of this work to Leighton as an artist is emphasized by her reflection on being both artist and author for the first time: "I found myself revelling in sensuous verbal descriptions of colour. The one medium was not enough. It is as though I were permitted to be both painter and graphic artist. This ambience of creating seemed so easy and natural that it was as though I had slipped into a pre-ordained river-bed" (*CL* 25). Her later comment that "there is no need for conflict. One medium complements the other" (*CL* 25) shows how Leighton's personal experience in both mediums reinforce the goals of Webb and Lethaby, founders of the Central School, and those of others in the Arts and Crafts Movement who wanted to see craft treated equally alongside art.

#### Leighton's Work in the United States: The Wood-Engraving Revival as a Trans-Atlantic Movement

Within just a couple years of the publication of *Country Matters*, Leighton's long-term romantic relationship with Brailsford deteriorated to the point that she decided to leave Brailsford and England in 1938 when a friend, Eleanor Musselman, "offer[ed] her a refuge in Baltimore" (Leventhal 261). The choice of the United States as Leighton's second home was an

obvious one by this point: after her first trip there, she “lived and dreamed America” and “could not wait for a chance to return” (CL 21). During other trips to the US for lecture tours, Leighton felt that she was “learning a country with a view to making it my home” (CL 25). These additional trips to North America also included time spent learning the landscape for the purpose of further engravings: “I drew in the steel mills of Pittsburgh and lived in the lumber camps ... of Ottawa,” along with time spent in Boston and Georgia (CL 25). Leighton credits her time in North America—especially her work in Canadian lumber camps—as being especially crucial to her growth as an artist (CL 25, 29).

Leighton’s departure for the US was, according to Leventhal’s description, quite simple: she undertook the trip “carrying only a suitcase, a typewriter, and a paintbox, leaving Brailsford without indicating that she did not plan to return” (262). But her departure from the UK is hardly simple in what it signifies for the engraving revival. Hamilton credits Leighton leaving London as one signifier of the beginning of the end of the revival’s most productive period in the UK: “The diaspora and decline of the artists who had dominated the medium in the 1930s brought to an end the patterns of practice of wood engraving as it had been known in Britain for the past forty years” (Hamilton 143). Hamilton’s use of the term “diaspora” is especially important here, for, far from over, Leighton is shifting her career—and thus the revival’s impacts—to the other side of the Atlantic.

Upon arrival in the United States, Leighton’s first illustration project was Thomas Hardy’s *Under the Greenwood Tree*, which she saw as a way to channel her nostalgia for the English countryside, while living in urban Baltimore (Leighton, CL 29). But she quickly turned her energies to a very American project—*Southern Harvest*—specifically asking her publisher (still Victor Gollancz Ltd.) for a commission that would require her to gain intimate knowledge

of her new home, while being as “remote from England as possible” (CL 29). Relocating to North Carolina for nine years, Leighton produced *Southern Harvest* (published by Macmillan in the US in 1942 and by Gollancz in London in 1943) and *Give Us this Day* (Reynal & Hitchcock, 1943) by adapting to her new environment as she did to Hardy’s Dorset: “And so I picked cotton in the Mississippi delta and wormed tobacco in the fields of North Carolina. Doing this I was able to learn different rhythms in the movement of workers on the land” (CL 29). Leighton foregrounds *Southern Harvest* with an apology for both her Britishness and her lack of knowledge of the American South:

Of all sinners who go to foreign countries and on the scrappiest of acquaintances deem themselves worthy to write about them, we English are probably the worst . . . . My sole defense is that I have never pretended that it is a knowledgeable book. It makes no statement. It preaches no lesson. It is simply the impressions of one who has wandered over the South for several years, loving it and its people and seeing fundamentally little difference between them and the tillers of the soil of my own English countryside.

(*Southern Harvest* v)

Contrary to her claim that this book makes no statement, I would argue that, against the backdrop of World War II, this focus on domestic life—with its claim to resemblance between the working classes of the UK and US—is indeed a statement about the value of labor. Leighton’s text covers landscape as diverse as a Louisiana plantation home and the mountains of North Carolina and activities ranging from picking cotton to killing hogs and milling sorghum. The narrative is part description and part reflection. She describes scenes like a woman cooking apples over an outdoor fire for the making of apple butter and the processing of tobacco in the hot summer sun (118, 142). But she also describes her own feelings on encountering these scenes. For instance,

she acknowledges that the mayhem and destruction of the bombs being dropped in World War II inspire her to find mountains “absolute in their unchangingness,” which brings back memories for her of visiting Scotland as a girl (106). Importantly, *Southern Harvest* was published in both the UK and the US (by Macmillan), meaning while Americans were learning more about rural southern life and its similarities with rural England, the British public—the middlebrow readership to which Gollancz aimed—were learning more about the American South as well. A review in British publication *The Sphere*, while noting that *Southern Harvest* “hovers perilously close to bathos,” praises the book’s engravings as “enchanting as one would have expected and with the same rhythmical strength that one remembers chiefly from her work” (Fane 380). The similarities Leighton draws between England and the South are mentioned specifically in a review by North Carolina State College scholar C. Horace Hamilton, who notes that the book “reveals the cultural kinship between English people and the people of America at a time when the two nations need more than ever to understand and appreciate each other” (316-317). This quote makes clear how, even though *Southern Harvest* is not intended to be overtly political and is, by Leighton’s own admission, a labor she undertook for her own benefit, its message resonates in the cultural moment of the early war years.

Susan Ashbrook describes *Southern Harvest* as a book that “celebrates the traditional agricultural and craft practices that [Leighton] found in the mountains as a refutation of the European stereotype of a streamlined, industrialized America” (Ashbrook). Similarly, while her following book, *Give Us This Day*, is an acknowledgement of the industrialized world—the prologue, “The Power of the Seed,” opens with a description of welders and riveters working on a battleship that will soon be used in the war—the book itself is an argument for the primacy of the earth, the food it grows, and the people who grow it. Although *Give Us This Day*’s

illustrations were not wood engravings, but likely lithographs, I include discussion of it here because it is indicative of Leighton's impact on American print culture. This impact was facilitated by the fame she gained as a wood engraver, as engraving was a vehicle for her career to develop, even if she chose other illustration methods at times. In the book's prologue, Leighton describes a scene of herself conversing on a porch with a farmer's wife, reflecting on the futility of all the money spent on the war (*Give Us This Day* 2-3). The farmer's wife says, "If only people lived here in the country they'd know it was simple, for they'd see that the one thing that matters most in the whole world is the earth. Everything we eat comes from the earth" (2). Leighton argues for how central the earth's bounty is to all human activity: "For behind each army that fights and behind each brain that plans the design for a lasting peace, lies a field of corn" (3).

The following chapters of *Give Us This Day* delve into topics all related to food grown in the United States: the supply lines that move it, the farmers that grow it, and the food itself: meat, corn, wheat, fruit, and dairy. Like *Southern Harvest*, the narrative combines description of both the processes Leighton observes and the individuals behind those processes, along with her reflections on what she sees. In the chapter titled "Corn and Wheat," she describes similarities between harvests in the US and England, saying, "we know once more that the strongest bond among all peoples is labor upon the earth; for upon the earth all men are the same," referring to the "English harvester" and "His American brother" (32). Leighton's socialist leanings are evident in these passages where she emphasizes the commonality of working-class individuals; rather than a specific nationalist agenda, Leighton's mentions of World War II emphasize the tragedy that is the war as a whole and what it means for the earth and for workers. Although there is limited information on Leighton's relationship with Reynal & Hitchcock—they were one

of several firms with which she published in the US, including MacMillan, Houghton Mifflin, and Viking—the firm was the US publisher for Francis Brett Young’s novel *Portrait of a Village*, illustrated by Joan Hassall for Heinemann in the UK, which is discussed more extensively in chapter four. Despite publishing Young’s novel (among other fiction titles), much of Reynal & Hitchcock’s output was nonfiction work, with the goal of publishing ““a small distinguished list covering many fields”” (qtd. in Dzwonkoski 318). The fact that the firm’s output included Leighton’s work, along with the *Mary Poppins* series and, between 1939 and 1942, Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*, points to their success in covering many topics (Dzwonkoski 318).

In her history of the Arts and Crafts Movement in the United States, Wendy Kaplan describes how training in “home industries” in places like the American South “reinforced Arts and Crafts aesthetic values about regionalism and reflected the contemporary nostalgia for an idealized preindustrial past. The artistic crafts also drew upon a reverence for place” (255). These values are very visible in Leighton’s books about the United States; the region of the South is clearly at the heart of *Southern Harvest*, which includes images that embrace the scenery of the South as described by Kaplan, such as the “magnolias, live oaks, hanging moss, cypress trees, and other southern vegetation [that] were the primary motifs on the pottery and other crafts made there” (255). Certainly, idealization of nature is present, also. Ashbrook describes Leighton’s writing as having “[a]n air of nostalgia...which at times can be cloying to the modern reader, but is offset by her striking images, visual and verbal, her vivid sympathetic characterizations and lively descriptions of her adventures” (Ashbrook). I would add that, in addition to embracing some of the pre-modern, nostalgic facets of the American approach to the Arts & Crafts Movement, the complexity of some of Leighton’s images exemplify the complex relationship between natural, industrial, and modern that also characterize the Movement. The image paired

with the prologue of *Give Us This Day*, for instance, shows flowers growing alongside pipes and barbed wire in the foreground, while in the background, scaffolding and the hull of a steamship are depicted, and the two settings are tied together by cranes lifting the small petals of a dandelion. While many of the other images in *Give Us This Day* are pastoral depictions of farms, farmland, and animals, this opening picture and Leighton's descriptions of industrialism combine the natural and industrial in a fashion that reflects how the "Arts and Crafts movement, in large part, was neither anti-industrial nor antimodern. While its adherents idealized the preindustrial past, they did not reject the present" (Kaplan 12). Through this work, Leighton challenges the stereotypes of engraving and the Arts and Crafts Movement as exclusively pastoral or anti-modern.

#### Conclusion: Clare Leighton's Variety of Work and Impact

After her years living in North Carolina, depicting the South, Leighton moved to Connecticut, in response to a commission from Wedgewood to illustrate a set of plates featuring New England. Once again, Leighton set about learning her new home with intimacy and intensity: "I began to discover Maine and its lobstering, and Vermont with its sugar house and marble quarries.... I drew the boats and fishermen, grist mills and cant hooks, codfish and seagulls" (CL 31). Leighton would also write and illustrate another book while living in New England, *Where Land Meets Sea: The Tide Line of Cape Cod* (Rinehart, 1954), described by Ashbrook as "personal verbal and visual tribute to a place and its inhabitants that she knew well" (Ashbrook). It's important to note, though, that the English and American countryside were not the only places to influence her work. In addition to her many trips to North America, Leighton also spent time in various parts of Europe. Stevens et al. write that during the years between



1923 and 27, Leighton went on painting trips with her Uncle Jack to France and the Balkans (6). Hamilton says of her work published in the collection by Longmans in 1930 that “[h]er subjects are drawn from her extensive travels in Britain and Europe—landscapes in the Balkans, studies of men and women at work mending nets, building boats, and so on” (98). And Jaffe attributes to her work an “exotic fascination, providing glimpses of Toulon or Genoa, Dalmatia, New York or Boston” (Jaffe 44). In *Clare Leighton: the Growth and Shaping of an Artist-Writer*, she describes how trips to Italy inspired her to begin learning stained glass (31); she eventually made the stained-glass windows for St. Paul’s Cathedral in Worcester, Massachusetts (Horne 289).

Leighton’s moves to and within the United States, the impacts of other places traveled, along with the variety of other media she worked on (such as plates and stained glass), show the versatility and breadth of her impact on the wood engraving revival. Because her illustration style of avoiding the formulaic approaches of nineteenth century illustrations, she navigated the tensions between wood engraving as art form, or “high” culture, and wood engraved illustrations as repetitive and reproducible artifacts of “low” mass culture. In this way, Leighton’s work complicates the dichotomy of what Andreas Huyssen terms the “Great Divide,” which he defines as “the kind of discourse which insists on the categorical distinction between high art and mass culture” (Huyssen viii). Because she treated illustration as art, Leighton’s work “challenge[s] the belief in the necessary separation of high art from mass culture” (Huyssen x). While Leighton struggled with the strictures of illustration as commercial or “low” art, we see through her writings on engraving that, ultimately, Leighton did embrace William Morris’s vision of art as accessible for everyone, while challenging herself to be an author as well as an illustrator.

In addition to Leighton’s prolific output as an illustrator and writer herself, her instructional writings on wood engraving and reflections on her own art process helped to spread

the revival and the values of the Arts and Crafts Movement. In describing how the Arts and Crafts Movement was spread from the UK to the US, Kaplan mentions several figures important to the movement who visited the US, including C.R. Ashbee and May Morris, along with American reformers who visited the UK, such as Jane Addams (248-251). Although well past the late-nineteenth century origins of the movement, Leighton's move to the United States and embracing of socialist values in her writings and images of working-class individuals should be considered among these histories of trans-Atlantic connections amidst those in the arts, crafts, and literary world. As a woman moving from the traditionally more secondary role of illustrator and embracing her verbal and artistic talents through the publishing of her own writing and art, Leighton represents an important figure in the history of the book in the twentieth century by combining her father's love of art and her mother's tenacious approach to writing into one unifying identity as author-illustrator. Reflecting on her identity, Leighton says, "It is a complicated thing to be both writer and artist. . . . Sometimes I have a disquieting fear that I may be diluting my forces. But then I recollect that William Blake and Daniel Rosetti and Eric Gill felt no concern over their dual roles" (*CL* 5). Although she doesn't specifically reference her gender here, the subtext of Leighton's assertion is perhaps what makes her so work so impactful: that she embraced her talents and the full potential of her artistry in a world where her main examples of hybrid identities were men.

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## **CHAPTER FOUR: JOAN HASSALL, “OLD-FASHIONED” ENGRAVINGS, AND WARTIME PUBLISHING: A NEW ERA FOR THE “BOOK BEAUTIFUL”**

### Introduction

In 1940, Joan Hassall (1906-1988) was asked by Hubert Wellington, principal of the Edinburgh College of Art “to become a tutor of book illustration and drawing” in the place of another teacher who left the post for work related to World War II (Addison, “Design and Illustration” 161). This moment is significant in Hassall’s career because years earlier, at the behest of her mother, she had attended teacher’s college but quit because she didn’t want to be a teacher, and, in flouting gendered expectations of the era, she instead became a professional artist. At this moment in 1940, Hassall returned to the profession she had turned her back on as a young woman, but this time her entrance into teaching was of her own volition, and it occurred as a direct result of the wartime reality of shifting labor forces, with women occupying jobs previously held by men. For Hassall, this is a preview of another role she would take on later in her career that had previously been held only by men, as Master of the Art Workers Guild; this moment is also indicative of how Hassall’s career, the publishing industry, and the wood engraving revival itself would be impacted by the advent of World War II.

Joan Hassall, the third and final artist-engraver under examination here, is the only one of the three artists born in the twentieth century and was one of the most prolific artists of the engraving revival, illustrating around forty books (Horne 240) . Hassall is best known for her historically-accurate and quaint depictions of scenes from nineteenth-century novels like *Cranford* and *Pride and Prejudice*. For this reason, her work is sometimes regarded as old-fashioned or lacking in artistic risks (Parry 122; Hamilton 15). But Hassall’s influences were

different from those of her contemporaries. As this chapter shows, her arrival to the craft of engraving occurred outside of the institutions and artistic circles in which many of her fellow revivalists circulated; unlike Raverat, she lacked the high modernist connections with individuals like Virginia Woolf and she learned engraving at a public vocational school, rather than under the famed Noel Rooke, as Leighton did. Hassall's teacher, R.J. Beedham, had a lengthy career as a commercial reproductive engraver—the style of engraving to which the revivalists were reacting as they celebrated autographic engravers who created their own images. Both literally and figuratively, Hassall comes from a different “school” of engraving than many of her peers.

But Joan Hassall was an illustrator whose approach fit the needs of her time. One theme that was briefly discussed in the previous chapter on Clare Leighton, but is yet more pressing in examining Joan Hassall's career, is World War II. While Leighton's work touches on the war as subject matter from her distanced position in the United States, World War II plays an overt role in the publishing industry of the UK and, therefore, in shaping Hassall's career. Unlike Raverat and Leighton whose careers were in full bloom by World War II, Hassall's career had only begun in earnest when wartime publishing restrictions and labor shifts took their toll on the wood engraving revival. Many revivalists became engaged in war work and the commissions for wood-engraved illustrations almost disappeared for the first three years of the war (Balston 17). This meant that Hassall's illustration opportunities were limited for a period, but also meant she was perfectly positioned to take advantage of the post-war engraving opportunities with subscription book clubs like the Folio Society and Limited Editions Club, whose editors found a market in England and the United States for the nostalgic British images that Hassall crafted so well. Her career is therefore an ideal study of how the material conditions of wartime, such as paper rationing and labor shortages, and the taste for “comfortable” or familiar literature of the



past shape an artist-illustrator's output. While the conditions of World War II contributed to and reflected the industry conditions, Hassall's own work reflected post-war literary culture.

While the publishing scene was undergoing dramatic changes with the popularization of the paperback and wartime shortages, many facets of wood engraving had changed little since the eighteenth century. Publisher and typographer Ruari McLean, whose writings on and letters with Hassall form the basis for much of the research in this chapter, describes the scene in Hassall's workspace around 1960, when her career was well underway: "She engraves at an ordinary table, with electric light through a water-globe, and a sand-bag; behind are shelves of unused wood-blocks and more books" (8). What is notable about this scene is how much *hadn't* changed since the eighteenth-century days of Thomas Bewick, whose style is often compared to that of Hassall. She was deeply influenced by Bewick's approach, and in the materials of her office as described by McLean, it is likely that the only factor that had changed since Bewick's days is the use of electric light: the water globe to reflect light, the sandbag for applying pressure, and the blocks themselves seem unchanged from the days when Bewick was instructed in "how to use the clever double-pointed graver" (Uglow 48) .

Comparison with Bewick is relevant here because Hassall was deeply influenced by his style and, more than any other artist of the three examined in this dissertation, her work is directly compared to his. James Hamilton refers to Hassall and her contemporary, Reynolds Stone, as "inheritors of the Bewick tradition" (23), and McLean says her engravings are the "most delicate ... produced since the days of Thomas Bewick" (Hassall and McLean 9). Bewick biographer Jenny Uglow credits the wood engraving revival with having brought to the "surface" the "deep stream" of Bewick's influence, and among those "[f]ellow craftsman who have always appreciated Bewick's skill," she includes Joan Hassall (401). Yet, to over-emphasize

comparisons to Bewick would minimize Hassall's own accomplishments; as McLean says, "She has accepted Thomas Bewick as a master; but she has in no way allowed his influence to be limiting or narrowing" (Hassall and McLean 31). In this chapter, I build on Kristin Bluemel's argument that Hassall and her contemporaries "created admirable and unique careers out of the materials and experiences of their hyper-modern, industrialized, cosmopolitan, post-suffrage contexts" by showing just how deeply entrenched in her present moment Hassall's illustrations are, even while depicting the past in great detail ( "A Happy Heritage" 210).

This chapter begins with a discussion of Hassall's artistic influences in her early life through her family circle: specifically, her father, the poster artist John Hassall and her brother, author Christopher Hassall. But her own artistry, though also in the realm of commercial art, took a very different aesthetic turn from that of her father through her coincidental introduction to wood engraving. Christopher's literary connections would help launch Hassall's career, but only briefly—it took only one illustration, a title page for Christopher's book of poems *Devil's Dyke* (1936)—for her to be known as a creator in her own right. I then look at the development of Hassall's career through her other early illustrations, contextualizing her work in the late 1930s amidst the dynamics of "middlebrow" publishing and examining how her work exhibits nineteenth century influences that earn her reputation for having an "old fashioned" style. Next, I examine the output of the years Hassall spent teaching in Scotland and the illustration work she undertook for the Saltire Society, where she impacted Scottish print culture during their literary and cultural renaissance. I also examine her impact on the development of later iterations of the "Book Beautiful" through her work for the Folio Society and how this work shaped post-war print culture. I conclude by discussing Hassall's appointment as the first woman Master of the

Art Worker's Guild, arguing for how her appointment reflects the legacy of the wood engraving revivalists and the advancement of women into the male-dominated organizations of the Arts and Crafts Movement.

### Joan Hassall's Education and Early Influences

Like Gwen Raverat and Clare Leighton, Joan Hassall also had artistic influences close to home: her father, John Hassall, was a poster artist and illustrator, whose accomplishments include being a founding member and eventual president of The London Sketch Club and membership in the Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colours (Bryant 50). He illustrated children's books in a style that Ruari McClean describes as "typical of the Edwardian period" in "either pen and ink or watercolour, to be reproduced by the then newly photo-engraved line and four-colour half-tone blocks" (10). He is perhaps best known for a poster called *The Jolly Fisherman*, created for the Great Northern Railway, featuring the slogan "Skegness is so bracing." McLean argues that John Hassall's posters "have been longer displayed than those of any other artist," and that his work bears the characteristics of a "true poster artist" in that his images were created to be posters—"designed to strike at a distance, and catch the fancy of passers-by"—rather than created as paintings later made into posters (Hassall and McClean 10).

Like Clare Leighton's relationship to the mass-produced illustrations used in her parents' adventure stories, Hassall's development as an illustration artist in the medium of wood engraving seems to have been both influenced by and in tension with her father's career. Bluemel points out that Hassall followed in her father's footsteps by embracing commercial art, yet "her devotion to what many regard as the most conservative, nostalgic strand of this illustrative art" is a reaction to her father's "exuberant public art forms" ("The Saltire

Chapbooks" 73-74). McLean also points out the contrast between the work of Joan and John Hassall, characterizing Joan's "delicate" engravings as "the complete antithesis" to the "broad sweeps of the poster artist John Hassall" (Hassall and McLean 9). These tensions are encompassed in a quote from Hassall describing her father's approach to art in an April 1986 interview in which she says, "although I admired my father's work very much, he never used any models or studies for anything and you can't help repeating yourself if you're always working out of your head" (McEwen 55). This drive towards originality of content stands in contrast to the common perception of both craft and commercial art as repetitive and formulaic.

The decision to pursue different forms of illustration compared to those produced by her father during his commercial art career, though, is not the only way in which Hassall diverged from her parents. Her mother wanted Hassall to become a teacher; indeed, she spent three years attending teacher's college, despite her desire to become an artist. A 1956 article in *The Sphere* says of Hassall that "At the outset she encountered resistance from her parents to any notion of her following in her father's steps. The strict convictions of her mother were firmly opposed to so unorthodox a calling. The vocation of a schoolmistress was judged more becoming" (Wallis 450). It might have interested Hassall's mother to know that her daughter would eventually become a teacher, but only for a few years out of a multi-decade career. After leaving teachers' college in 1925, Hassall spent two years as secretary at the London School of Art, which was run by her father and where her love of drawing bloomed alongside her secretarial duties. The sixty pounds in savings she had were enough to begin classes at the Royal Academy Art Schools (Wallis 450). The fact that Hassall's mother was so reluctant for her daughter to become an artist, yet apparently permitted her to work as a secretary (not student) at the art school run by her father, is indicative of the gender codes that Hassall was working against at the time: her

labor was valued in a secretarial capacity or teaching capacity, but not as an artist. But this phase of Hassall's life is also indicative of how her middle-class status provided access to a job where she could save money and explore her interest in art.

Like Gwen Raverat's supplementing her training at the Slade with her cousin's instruction in engraving, or Clare Leighton's decision to pursue illustration classes at Central to augment her painting instruction at the Slade, Hassall did not actually learn to engrave wood at the Royal Academy Schools of Art. Notoriously conservative, the Royal Academy schools in the late 1920s still considered wood-engraving a "craft" and did not teach it (Jaffe 79). Hassall's instruction in the medium occurred quite randomly when a classmate asked her to attend night classes at the London County Council School of Photoengraving and Lithography, where attendance was so low the school was at risk of closing (Hassall and McLean 11). It was here that Hassall was introduced to wood engraving, and even though her encounter with it was seemingly by chance, several factors coalesced to make this introduction possible and significant.

Firstly, the history of the London County Council School of Photoengraving and Lithography is relevant; founded in 1894 as the Guild and Technical School, its establishment was related to a broader move to create technical schools in underserved areas of London that would, "in the face of new technologies and foreign competition" provide "relevant practice [sic] skills" (University of the Arts London). Although wood engraving was hardly a "new" technology, it seems in keeping with the school's original function to give instruction in a "craft" (as the Royal Academies were still deeming it) for commercial applications. Although the work of Hassall and the other revivalists was undermining the entrenched attitudes toward engraving as "just a craft," the affordable cost of tuition (fifteen shillings a year) kept the classes from

being prohibitively expensive, since Hassall attended the class to “swell its numbers and keep it open” rather than for the training itself (Hassall, “My Engraved Work” 141-42). The fact that, like her predecessors, Hassall had to attend a less conservative or more technically focused school to receive training in the art that would become her vocation shows that, despite the engraving revival’s growth in the 1920s, its relationship to art institutions remained complicated and, at least in some quarters, wood engraving was still viewed as a vocational skill rather than a fine art.

This emphasis on vocation was reflected in the teaching at the School of Photoengraving and Lithography. Hassall’s instructor in engraving was Ralph John Beedham, whose career was largely spent creating reproductive engravings for catalogues (Hassall and Chambers vii). Beedham was apprenticed as a wood engraver just as its popularity for mass illustration was being eclipsed by photography, but despite changes in the field, Beedham managed to have a lengthy career in engraving even though he “was unable to draw and never engraved any work which he had created” (Garrett 155). Ironically, although a commercial, rather than artistic, engraver, Beedham represents one of Hassall’s first significant encounters with the influences of the Arts and Crafts Movement: Beedham had “been taught letter design and letter cutting by Eric Gill at Ditchling, and was to remain his assistant in that for the rest of Gill’s life” (Jaffe 79). In chapter two, I discussed how Eric Gill’s purchase of one of Clare Leighton’s wood engravings helped launch her career; here we encounter Gill again through the influence of Ditchling, a village in Sussex where Gill lived and eventually established the craft Guild of St. Joseph and St. Dominic. Deeply influenced by the values of the Arts and Crafts Movement while studying at the Central School, Gill’s homestead at Ditchling was a reaction to modern life and mechanization: “Gill’s idea was to return to what he thought of as ‘the normal life’ of his ancestors ... Manuel

labour was the order of the day on Ditchling Common” (MacCarthy 44, 117). One outcome of the emphasis on manual craft in the artists’ community established at Ditchling was a book on wood engraving that Beedham wrote “at the urging of the Ditchling community” and featuring an introduction and appendix by Gill (Jaffe 81). While working as Gill’s assistant at Ditchling, Beedham helped carve the woodblocks that Eric Gill and Robert Gibbings used for their illustrations. Garrett argues that Beedham’s prolific output enabled Gill and Gibbings to “achieve a volume of book illustrations” that would not have been possible otherwise (Garrett 157).

Under Beedham’s instruction, Hassall says she was unaware of the “other classes for wood-engraving at various art schools in London,” characterizing Beedham’s teaching as “first-rate technical instruction” with “nothing at all about the subject as ‘art’” (Hassall and Chambers vii). It’s clear that tension between engraving-as-art and engraving-as-vocation was present at the School of Photoengraving and Lithography, as Hassall and her classmates were aware that their section head worried that the “art schools might claim us as we were not ‘trade’” (viii). These factors did not mitigate Hassall’s attraction to engraving, evident from her description of her early encounters with it: “from the second moment I had an engraving tool in my hand I knew how to do it, as if I was just a channel and someone else was doing it for me” (qtd. in McEwen 55).

In addition to her training as an engraver, other aspects of Hassall’s relationship to book production emerge in her recollections of her years in school. About a year into her classes at the School of Photoengraving and Lithography, Hassall and two friends with whom she began the classes decided to source their own printing press, rather than be at the mercy of the school’s printers. Among the three friends, Hassall was “delegated to find the press” and devoted time to locating one small enough to fit the studio space they had been given, eventually locating the

1832 Albion press that they purchased for 18 pounds (Hassall and Chambers ix). “When it was assembled ...my admiration knew no bounds,” Hassall recalls, before explaining that she eventually bought out her friends (who did not become professional engravers) and, as of her writing in 1985, the press was still functional (Hassall and Chambers ix). Apparently, the desire to print her own materials stayed constant; in the introduction to his book on her engravings, McLean talks about the four printing presses in Hassall’s studio at that time, of varying sizes, which Hassall used to print Christmas cards. The fact that she was familiar with the color printing process—“when printing in colour she uses a different press for each inking” (Hassall and McLean 8)—demonstrates the breadth of knowledge of printing procedures that she developed over the course of her career.

Yet, in the early years of Hassall’s career, living at home while developing as a professional artist caused such tension in Hassall’s life that a “nervous breakdown seemed imminent” (Hassall and McLean 12). Although McLean doesn’t mention Hassall’s parents as the source of this tension, her mother’s reluctance for her daughter to become an artist instead of a teacher is a possible cause of this friction between homelife and career. The situation was ameliorated by Sir Edward Marsh, a friend of Hassall’s brother Christopher, whom Hassall refers to as her “greatest artistic support” (qtd. in McEwen 55). Marsh had a significant influence on Christopher Hassall’s poetry career and provided Joan Hassall with “a weekly allowance which enabled her to leave home” (Hassall and McLean 12). Sir Edward Marsh’s patronage is significant because of his role in literary circles: as the “founding father” of a series of poetry anthologies, he was “one of the great literary enablers of the century” (Dunnett 282). Marianne Thormählen describes Marsh as a “supporter of struggling poets” who “created a new genre, that of the anthology of contemporary poetry,” and this poetry anthology, *Georgian Poetry*, was



published by Marsh's friend Harold Monro and his Poetry Bookshop—also the publisher of Raverat's first book commission for Frances Cornford's poetry collection *Spring Morning* (1915) (Thormählen 728). Unlike Raverat and Leighton, Hassall's career did not begin with periodical illustrations and the accompanying artistic and intellectual networks (though she did illustrate for periodicals and various other forms of media later in life). And she didn't have the exposure to the book arts connections at the Central School, where Leighton was trained and where Noel Rooke's tutelage had produced many engravers employed by private presses. But her relationship with her brother and Marsh show how her network in the literary world developed to provide illustration opportunities.

#### Hassall's Early Career: Changes in Publishing and "Middlebrow" Novels

Hassall's first book illustration commission was for the title page for her brother Christopher Hassall's 1936 poetry book, *Devil's Dyke*, published by Heinemann. The fact that Hassall's first commission was gained through a family connection is similar to how Gwen Raverat's first published book illustrations were in her cousin's book; the experiences of both women are indicative of how their social networks helped launch their careers. Joan Hassall would go on to illustrate title pages for two additional books by Christopher, *Christ's Comet* in 1937 and *Penthesperon* in 1938, but Jaffe and Hassall herself both agree that the intricate, full-page, title page illustration for *Devil's Dyke* helped launch her career because it opened the door for additional commissions from Heinemann. Before the work with Heinemann on *Devil's Dyke*, Hassall says she "had about eighteen months of agonized visits to publishers and agencies trying to get work," with one agency telling her they wanted "bathing beauties" rather than her illustrations (Hassall, "My Engraved Work" 142). But after the first commission for Heinemann,

Hassall “never lacked employment” and Jaffe says that the “consequences” of her work on *Devil’s Dyke* “were exceptional in the history of English wood-engraving” because it prompted Heinemann to commission other writing “specifically as a vehicle for Joan Hassall’s engravings” (“My Engraved Work” 142; Jaffe 81). For her full-page engraving, Hassall received five pounds, which she only afterward found out was deducted from her brother’s royalties (Hassall and Chambers x).

Understanding the context in which Joan Hassall’s illustrations were published is impossible without explaining the endeavors of the publishing industry in the late 30s to produce inexpensive books for the growing “middlebrow” audience. At the forefront of this era was the advent of the Penguin paperback; their creator, Allen Lane, “completely dominates British book publishing in the 1930s” (Stevenson 73). With the use of the paperback and its distribution in places previously unexplored by booksellers, like department stores, Lane successfully created “a brand that combined accessibility with quality, cheapness with worth, and most of all the identification of a new market that would buy paper-backed books ‘for the price of a packet of cigarettes’” (Stevenson 102). Although Hassall did not personally illustrate for Penguin, the advent of the paperback is important to acknowledge because it indicates how the physical characteristics of the book were being adapted to a broader reading public. Beginning in the late 30s with *Devil’s Dyke* and continuing into the next decade, Hassall illustrated mainly (but not exclusively) for three publishers: Heinemann, Jonathan Cape Limited, and Harrap. These three firms all represent the trends in modern publishing in the late 1930s. Like Penguin, Heinemann’s history shows how the book as a medium was changing to become more affordable. Joseph McAleer contextualizes Heinemann’s emergence against the backdrop of the end of expensive three-volume novels in the 1890s: “The displacement of the costly three-volume novel by a one-

volume, six shilling edition, which was followed by even cheaper editions if demand warranted, encouraged the distribution of literature among all classes” (McAleer 27). Heinemann was one of the first publishers of the “new one-volume novels” in 1894 (27), and as mentioned above, Heinemann provided Hassall’s first commission.

Her next commission for Heinemann is one of Hassall’s best-known works, a novel called *Portrait of a Village* by Francis Brett Young, which embodies the characteristics of popular novels in this period: regional and middlebrow. Bluemel defines “middlebrow” as a phrase which “functions descriptively, not pejoratively, as a shorthand term that condenses and contains within it the phrase ‘literature that would, in the interwar period, have been designated middlebrow by dominant critics’” (Bluemel, “Regions, Maps, Readers” 3). Describing *Portrait of a Village* as a novel that contained “predictable, blandly reassuring sketches of country folk,” Bluemel argues that Young “became one of England’s most successful novelists of rural England” in ways that married “rural regionalism and illustrated realism” (3). Even if Young’s novel’s contents were lackluster, its commission was significant: Hassall says that Young was asked to write the book specifically for her to illustrate, which she considered “a great compliment” (“My Engraved Work” 145). Like Clare Leighton’s illustrations of Egdon Heath and the Dorset countryside, Hassall also took herself to the world of Young’s novel by going to visit the author and traveling the region with him, absorbing remarks from Young on different scenes he visualized for various chapters (Hassall, “My Engraved Work” 145). Hassall’s illustrations for *Portrait of Village*, which include three full-page and several smaller engravings are significant to her career because the selection of the book for the illustrator—rather than the other way around—show how her work was influencing book production at the time (Hassall and McLean 12-13). Sadly, Young’s biography, written by his wife Jessica Brett Young, only

briefly mentions that *Portrait of a Village* was “illustrated by Joan Hassall’s engravings on wood,” with no discussion of how Young was chosen to write for Hassall’s engravings and not the other way around (Young 233).

In the United States, *Portrait of a Village* was published by Reynal & Hitchcock, who, five years later, would also publish Clare Leighton’s *Give Us This Day*. Although known for publishing non-fiction titles like Leighton’s, Young’s novels were one of a “few literary titles” Reynal & Hitchcock published in the 30s, a selection which included other British authors such as Rosamond Lehmann and P.L. Travers (Dzwonkoski 318). Reynal & Hitchcock’s publishing of *Portrait of a Village* with Hassall’s engravings included meant that, with only her second commission, Hassall’s work was already being distributed across the Atlantic.

Once again, the use of wood engravings for affordable one-volume novels for mass production shows the continued influence of the Arts and Crafts movement on publishing beyond the private presses. And in Hassall’s process for illustrating this book, we see signs of an approach to the materiality of her illustrations which will continue with one of her other noteworthy commissions: a reprint by George G. Harrap and Company Limited of the nineteenth-century novel *Cranford* by Elizabeth Gaskell. As a firm, Harrap had a history of emphasizing attractive book designs and illustrations: early in their history, their “Books Beautiful series proved popular despite the relatively high price of the volumes” and just a few years after their founding, they began publishing illustrated volumes (Beetz 142). The *Dictionary of Literary Biography* mentions the importance of their first illustrator, Willy Pogány, who worked for the firm before World War I, and the “internationally acclaimed artist Arthur Rackham” who illustrated a number of volumes in the late 20s and 30s, along with Stephen Gooden—but sadly, there’s no mention of Hassall’s work, even though her illustrations of

*Cranford* 1940) and of Mary Russell Mitford's *Our Village* (1946) undoubtedly contributed to Harrap's reputation "among the leading publishers of illustrated books" (Beetz 143-44).

Hassall's time-intensive work on *Cranford* would certainly merit such distinction: in order to capture historically accurate images of Victorian-era fashions, Hassall researched the materials of the novel through "buying relevant fashion plates at the local bookstore," while living in Highgate, a village-like part of North London that "she thought similar to Cranford" (Parry 119). In Highgate, Hassall met a local doctor who allowed her to study his collection of nineteenth-century women's fashion (Hassall and Chambers xxv). Parry remarks that as part of Hassall's research for *Cranford*, she considered "how the novel treated clothes" giving careful attention to how the narrator of the novel remarked on certain characters' fashion choices being outdated by comparison with others (Parry 120), which shows the level of detail to which Hassall attended in the twenty-four engravings completed for the novel. "Here," in *Cranford*, argues McLean, "flowered for the first time her genius as a book illustrator" (Hassall and McLean 13).

*Cranford* was the first of what would be many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novel reprints illustrated by Hassall, a publishing trend beginning before World War II and picking up greater steam afterward with the founding of the Folio Society, explored in more detail below. For now, though, is important to look at what it was about Hassall's style made her so appealing for reprints of novels by authors like Gaskell, Austen, and Trollope. Although Gwen Raverat's name is often paired with that of Thomas Bewick because of the quote in her biography expressing a desire to be "Mrs Bewick," (Spalding 90-91), Hassall's engraving style is more frequently compared to Bewick's. Hassall wasn't exposed to Bewick's work as early in life as the teenaged Raverat, but she was introduced to his work within a couple years of her wood engraving training through a lecture by one of her Royal Academy teachers and "thought it was

the most marvelous thing I had ever seen” (“My Engraved Work” 145). After the lecture, she purchased a book containing Bewick’s prints, and “from then on had a new sense of direction” (145). But beyond mere inspiration, scholars have repeatedly remarked on the stylistic similarities between Bewick and Hassall’s engravings. Bluemel comments on the “technical, formal and tonal qualities” that Bewick and Hassall have in common (“The Saltire Chapbooks” 69); David Chambers says Hassall has “most nearly matched the delicacy, the humour and the fine workmanship of Bewick’s vignettes” (Hassall and Chambers xxii). As opposed to Raverat’s innovative use of light in broad sweeping images, or Leighton’s illustrations that “sweep backwards and forwards across the edge of the woodblock,” Hassall’s style is “strictly ordered,” often done on a small scale (Hamilton 138; Hassall and Chambers xxii). Parry describes her style as “reflective of a deeply nineteenth-century approach to wood engraving” and says that across Hassall’s career, her “style remained extremely consistent, in that it remained rooted in nineteenth-century British influences” (117, 122). These influences include the 1839 *Treatise on Wood Engraving* written by Bewick pupil John Jackson, on which Hassall “bas[ed] her work” (Wallis 450). Here, Parry may also be referring to similarities between Hassall and what illustration scholar John Harthan terms “The genteel book” of the late nineteenth century, when the “tradition of popular, middlebrow, commercially produced illustrated books continued to flourish;” Harthan includes among these “genteel” illustrated books of the 1890s some of the same authors illustrated by Hassall 50 years later: Austen, Gaskell, and Mitford (Harthan 238). Hassall’s stylistic resemblance to nineteenth century illustrators is owing to how she “stud[ied] the engravings not of her contemporaries but of the great nineteenth-century engravers and the pleasing archaism of her work recommended her particularly as illustrator, for some of our greatest classic women novelists” (Jaffe 81). This emphasis on past styles in Hassall’s work

earns her some criticism; Hamilton argues that Hassall, while technically proficient, never “tested the limits of [her] medium” (15), and yet, this antiquated style makes Hassall the ideal candidate for the literary culture of the wartime and post-war need for escapism.

### World War II and the Post-War Years: Teaching, Scotland, and the New “Book Beautiful”

World War II played an inescapable role in Hassall’s career because of how it altered her own vocational direction, because of how the publishing industry was impacted by labor and supply shortages, and because of how publishing responded in the post-war years. The war’s impact on the material conditions of production was pronounced: paper rationing began in March of 1940, with publishers receiving only a small percentage of the paper being imported; the bulk of the paper coming from “increasingly isolated Scandinavia” or “across an Atlantic infested with U-boats from Canada” was allocated to the government, and, to a lesser degree, magazines and periodicals, while book publishing received the smallest allocation (Stevenson 115-16). Supply shortages had a particularly marked effect on illustrated books, as the availability of metals needed for reproducing half-tone photographs became harder to obtain (Stevenson 118). Although metal shortages would not have had an impact on woodblocks, the supply shortages and need to produce lighter-weight books apparently reduced the potential market for illustrators (Stevenson 119). This state of affairs reflects Robert Darnton’s communication circuit in the degree to which these constraints hampered the flow of materials between the publisher and the bookseller by impacting the printers (through labor shortages) and the suppliers (through rationing) (Darnton 68). In *The Kiss of Lamourette*, Darnton describes the publishing process as one of necessary erasures: “A dozen plots were always brewing, and the ones that succeeded were the exception—the transactions that brought into being a small amount of literature from

the nebulous vastness of the literature-that-might-have-been” (*The Kiss of Lamourette* 138). In the limitations of wartime publishing, the reality of “literature-that-might-have-been”—and book illustrations that might have been—is especially relevant. Yet, the work done by Hassall and women like her during the war resonate with feminist critiques of Darnton’s communication circuit who posit that the circuit is biased toward roles traditionally occupied by men. Hassall’s time teaching book illustration in Scotland during the war and her work on Scottish chapbooks indicate how, even when the intersections of the communications circuit are especially limited, work on the book continues through other channels.

The reality of the war is seen not only in the material conditions of publication but also in the visual culture around wood engraving; whereas in earliest years of the revival, Hamilton claims engraving “was for a moment the catalyst of a new language for art,” in the 1940s it became “a backwater in British art” (145-46). These changes were likely wrought in part by British artists leaving their vocations for war work and by the closure of many private art schools (Garrett 278). Yet, this pejorative characterization of engraving as a “backwater” minimizes the work of illustrators like Hassall who used their craft in creative formats and various media during the war and post-war years to adapt to the restrictions of their present moment, while still trying to earn a living at their vocation. In this section, I argue that the conditions of the war made it possible for Joan Hassall to take her craft across national borders and, like Leighton, influence the print culture of other Anglophone nations, and later, take a central role in crafting how “attractive volumes” would take shape in the post-war years.

Among the many changes brought about by the advent of war, the British art scene at this time became more insular, as the war fragmented connections to continental Europe. This is seen in Penguin’s decision to publish a line of books focused on British art and painters:



the British genius for painting, so long decried and undervalued, was celebrated in a new Penguin series, published at a time when art-lovers were cut off from the Continent and better disposed than usual to home-grown products . . . .  
proclaiming the virtues of British artists helped boost morale on the home front and the image of Britain overseas, and coincided with a yearning, part patriotic and part escapist, for the music of Elgar and Vaughan Williams, for poets and writers who celebrated the English countryside and a lost Arcadia of country houses and Trollopian cathedral closes (Lewis 188).

This desire for the nostalgic aura of the English pastoral scene is evident in the illustration commissions Hassall undertook in the years immediately before and after the war, yet the generalized emphasis on Britishness of war-era art and culture minimizes the significance of how women engravers took their art to other places and represented other cultures. This is seen clearly in Clare Leighton's depiction of American workers, especially in the South, and in Joan Hassall's work for Scottish institutions like the Edinburgh College of Art and the Saltire Society.

#### Hassall's Work in Scotland

Hassall's life was immediately impacted by wartime labor shortages when Kingsley Cook, who taught book illustration and drawing at Edinburgh College of Art, suggested that Hassall take his job when he left the school to join the Merchant Navy (Addison; Horne 149). Cook, an oil painter and wood engraver, was also educated at the Royal Academy schools, which is perhaps how he knew Hassall (Horne 149). According to McLean, the transition was not an easy one; Hassall found teaching "taxing and exhausting labour, and there was hostility from certain of the Scots at the appointment of a southerner" (Hassall and McLean 14). Hassall's

letters reflect this reality; writing to McLean in 1950, she characterizes her years in Edinburgh as an “exile from the South,” saying that her “unhappiness was bred by the irksomeness and exhaustion of teaching and also by a very definite hostility which I was quite unprepared for from some “Scotland for the Scottish” people who resented my appointment” (Hassall 106). Hassall goes on to say that she eventually made “many loving and faithful friends” after living there for three years, but the initial tensions between Hassall and her Scottish colleagues makes her work on the Saltire chapbooks, discussed in detail below, even more significant. It is also important that Hassall took on this teaching role, not just because she was English working in Scottish institution, but because wartime labor shortages provided an opportunity for her, as a woman, to teach in an art school (even if she didn’t enjoy it). Up to this point, the art school professors covered in this dissertation—Rooke, Beedham, and the professors of the Slade—have all been men.

During her several years in Edinburgh, Hassall was chosen to illustrate a series of chapbooks for the Saltire Society, an endeavor which was motivated both by wartime publishing restrictions and by Scottish identity. The Saltire Society was founded in 1936 with the goal of promoting Scottish culture; it’s “grand objective” was a “richer, fuller life, for all inhabitants of Scotland” and with a marked eschewing of any notion that Scottish identity and cultural products were inferior to that of England: “There was to be no feeling of inferiority. Comparisons with Scotland’s southern neighbor were abandoned” (Marsden 21, 22). The Society’s founding occurred against a backdrop of economic grievances experienced by Scotland in the wake of World War I that soured relations with the British government and “led to a noticeable rise in nationalist ideologies in Scotland’s political landscape” in the interwar years and an increased desire among Scottish writers to bring awareness to Scotland’s cultural history (Marsden 25).

This desire to emphasize Scottish history and identity is evident in how the chapbooks, according to Rosemary Addison, represent “a revival harking back to the eighteenth century when popular Scottish stories, Jacobite songs, verses or texts that were satirical, humorous, or subversive in tone appeared in small cheap booklets light enough for travelling hawkers to take all over Scotland” (Addison, *Joan Hassall, Wood-Engraver*). The portable aspect of chapbooks—they measured five and a fourth by three and a half inches—made them especially appealing during wartime paper shortages, as would their cheap purchasing price (Hassall and McLean 15; Addison).

The society published thirteen chapbooks in total, beginning in 1943 and continuing into the 50s, with Hassall illustrating and designing ten of them (Hassall and Chambers xxv). Hassall was also an integral part of the production of the books. According to Bluemel, her name appears frequently in the minutes of the Saltire Society meetings as they worked out the format and printing of the books (“The Saltire Society” 78). The contents of the books include poems, children’s stories such as *The Marriage of Robin RedBreast and the Wren*, and folk tales. Although the goal of the society’s publications of the books was cultural gain rather than profit, the early books sold well, motivating the publication of more (Bluemel “The Saltire Society” 78). The intended audience for the books was both the society members and the general reading public, and the fact that the society’s membership “quadrupled in size” between 1941 and 1946 certainly points to the successes of their publication aims (Bluemel “The Saltire Society” 81).

Hassall’s work on the books is universally praised: McLean says of the “miniscule” books that Hassall has “done more ambitious work” but that it “is doubtful if she will do anything more beguiling” and Chambers says they “contain a great deal of her most pleasing, and finely engraved, work” (Hassall and McLean 15; Hassall and Chambers xxvi). A simple

explanation for Hassall's selection as illustrator for the chapbooks would be her availability—unlike many of her peers, she was not engaged in war work—and the successes of her prior illustrations. Yet, it is still noteworthy that as an English woman, who had only been in Scotland for approximately two years by the time of the first chapbook's publication, she was chosen to illustrate books viewed as very central to Scotland's literary and cultural heritage, especially given the prejudice she experienced upon arrival in the country. And she would continue to work on the chapbooks into the 1950s, even after moving back to England. Nor were the chapbooks the extent of her illustration for Scottish literature. In 1949, Oliver & Boyd, a publishing firm who worked with the Saltire Society, published an anthology of Scottish poems with a title page featuring an engraving by Hassall. Although not explicitly stated in Marsden's history of the society, it seems likely this collection is one of the many publications the society undertook between 1939 and 1965 (Marsden 29).

Other connections between Hassall and Scottish literature include a collection of Robert Burns poems for the Limited Editions Club that Hassall illustrated in 1965. Although Limited Editions was headquartered in the US, in the early days of the society, founder George Macy preferred when possible to employ illustrators from the same counties as the authors of the books selected. Hamilton mentions this aspect of Macy's publication before describing the output of the Club: "If the members of the Club were almost exclusively American, the Club's series of illustrated British poets presented an opportunity for British wood engravers to work on a series of fine books. The first volume, *The Poems of Robert Burns*, was published in 1965 with wood engravings by Joan Hassall" (Hamilton 169). The fact that there's no mention here of having a Scottish illustrator work on the text of the Robert Burns collection is likely indicative that the American audience for the collection would not know or possibly even care that Hassall and

Burns were not of the same nationality. This instance likely indicates more about an American market for Hassall's thatched cottages, thistles, portrait of Burns, and images of the Scottish countryside than it does the intimacy of her relationship with Scotland, but her work on the chapbooks and on Burns's poetry indicate that her skills surpassed any association with "Englishness" exclusively.

#### Subscription Book Clubs: Hassall's Post-War Appeal

Returning briefly to the beginning of the war, Harrap's edition of *Cranford* marks an important moment: the war largely halted commissions for wood engraved book illustrations for the first three years and exhibition opportunities with the Society of Wood-Engravers stopped for a decade (Balston 17). *Cranford* was one of only a handful of books with engraved illustrations to be published 1939 and 1940, owing to it being mostly finished before the war (Balston 17). It is possible that the commission for *Cranford* was inspired in part by the impending possibility of war; Stevenson points out that publisher's lists in the late 30s are largely divided between "international politics and escapist literature in great and probably equal profusion" as "[b]oth genres were products of the impending sense that war was imminent and that readers both needed to understand it and try to put it from their minds" (107). Harrap's *Cranford*, with its quaint village setting and Hassall's illustrations of cozy domestic scenes, would certainly fit the latter category by offering an escape to rural Victorian England.

Even after the war's ending, trends in wartime publication appear to play a role in Hassall's various book commissions. For example, accommodating paper shortages meant publishing shorter books, increasing the popularity of anthologies, short story collections, and poems and a dramatic decrease in fiction manuscripts (Hewison 80-83). These realities may have

inspired Jonathan Cape's reprint of *Fifty-One Poems* by Mary Webb, with illustrations by Hassall. Cape had been publishing Webb's work since 1924, helping to make her award-winning novel *Precious Bane* a bestseller (Rose 54). With paper rations making publishers more wary of introducing new fiction titles, a posthumous collection of poems by an established romance novelist, with charming landscape imagery by Hassall was likely a safe bet for Jonathan Cape, a firm that struggled to grow in the post-war years (Hewison 83; Rose 61).

In addition to supply shortages, the need for nineteenth century escapist fiction seemed to continue into the postwar years. The Folio Society opted to publish two story collections by Anthony Trollope, *The Parson's Daughter* (1949) and *Mary Gresley and Other Stories* (1951), likely because Trollope was, according to Robert Hewison, "The English author who probably benefited most from the war" because his "elaborate pictures of Victorian life offered an escape into a retrospectively secure past" (82). Hassall's illustrations contribute to this "elaborate picture" with images of emoting characters and many flowers and trees, evoking the desire for "poets and writers who celebrated the English countryside and a lost Arcadia of country houses and Trollopian cathedral closes" described by Lewis during the war (Hassall and Chambers 52-53, 68-69).

Hassall would continue to receive frequent commissions for nineteenth century novel reprints. Specifically, a series for which she is best known is her illustrations for the Folio Society's series of Jane Austen's novels. Founded in 1947, the Folio Society and a similar US-based club, Limited Editions, harkened to nineteenth century book clubs which existed to "publish or to bring back into print books and manuscripts which would not be commercially viable" (Rogerson 59). Twentieth-century iterations of the book club, however, "published fine books or unlimited editions and existed to make a profit" through subscriptions by their members

(59). The Folio Society's publications were meant to satisfy founder Charles Ede's "dissatisfaction with 'the present state of the printed book'" (Rogerson 61). Their mission statement was "'to produce editions of the world's great literature in a format worthy of the contents, at a price within the reach of everyman'" (Parker 122). A precedent for wood-engraved illustrations for book club volumes was established by Limited Editions (and their imprint, Heritage Press) when they commissioned British engraver Agnes Miller Parker to illustrate five of Thomas Hardy's novels, beginning in the 1940s. According to Rogerson, book clubs like Limited Editions and the Folio Society "provided an absolutely indispensable outlet for creative wood engravers" (62). Now, in the post-war years, the Folio Society became part of what Harthan, in the *History of the Illustrated Book*, describes as a "brief but vigorous renewal of book illustration in English general publishing between 1943 and 1955," which arose in response to the "drabness" of wartime and post-war life (278). As the twentieth century wore on, The Folio Society and Limited Editions Club would become the main sources of illustrated literary fiction (Harthan 279).

In addition to the emphasis on attractive volumes, the legacy of the Arts and Crafts Movement is apparent in the leadership of the Folio Society: among the society's first directors was Christopher Sandford, who was also manager of Golden Cockerell Press, one of the very few private presses to survive the Depression (Cave 229). Golden Cockerell and the Folio Society also shared offices for a period, and one of Golden Cockerell's employees worked as an accountant and production manager at the Folio Society (Parker 122). With its founding so closely following the end of World War II, paper rations played a role the design choices at Folio, with "handsome but not over elaborate books" and with paper quotas limiting the number of titles per year to five (Rainey 35; Parker 122).

Hassall illustrated Jane Austen's novels for Folio Society over a period of five years, from 1957 to 1962. The choice of Jane Austen's works by the Folio Society was in keeping with their early emphasis on "major works of fiction and some poetry, drama, and memoirs" but also reflected the need to economize by choosing titles already in the public domain, a trend among book clubs of the era (Parker 122; Rogerson 62). Hassall's approach to Austen's novels mirrors that of her work on *Cranford*, with an emphasis on period-appropriate textiles. According to Parry, Hassall was "involved in every aspect" of the design of the Austen novels, beyond the illustrations themselves (119). Hassall used her own collection of vintage fabrics to inspire her designs for the paper covers of the Austen novels: "The designs were all Hassall's, and they were drawn from her personal collection of fabric prints from the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century" (Parry 117). These designs were used on multiple facets of the books: "covers, bindings, headpieces, and frontispieces" (Parry 118).

In response to the perceived conservatism of Hassall's representations of Austen and to her illustrations being left out of scholarship on Austen afterlives, Parry argues that Hassall "took a female and craft-based ownership of the Austen canon" (116). I add to Parry's argument by pointing out that the importance of Hassall's work for The Folio Society is not limited to how she influences the visual culture of the Austen canon. In her work for the Folio Society and their endeavors to produce beautiful books amid years of post-war austerity, Hassall plays an integral role in shaping the mid-century illustrated novel.

#### The National Book League's *Reader's Guides*

In looking at the individuals involved in the publishing industry at this period, the gender divide seems clear, with men like Robert Gibbings, Sandford, Lane, and Cape "running" the



industry, hiring women like Hassall and her contemporaries to do the decorative work. Yet, it is evident from accounts of Hassall's working style that she, like Raverat, took an integral role in the publishing process that went beyond illustration. Not only that, but her illustrations played a role in developing the "taste" of mid-century post-war Britain through the illustrations of pamphlets for the National Book League. Established in 1925 as the National Book Council, the organization's goal was "to promote the habit of reading and the wider appreciation of the value of books" with services "designed to inform and enlighten readers, both at home and abroad, to encourage suitable provision of books by public authorities of all kinds and to heighten the possibility that books will be used widely and with discrimination" (qtd. in Simmons 210). Responding to changing times and changing reading demographics, the Council became the League in 1944, with an emphasis on education and on garnering membership among "influential people in all professions and walks of life" (Simmons 211). The series of pamphlets that Hassall illustrated were published between 1947 and 1951, and according to Chambers included "Standard scraperboard designs on front and back covers, with wood-engraved devices appropriate to the subject on the front" (xl). Each guide included an introduction by a subject-matter specialist and an annotated bibliography on the subject in question—and subjects varied widely, from book and reading-focused topics, like *Enjoying Poetry* and *Book Collecting* to other hobbies, like flower gardening and cricket, and facets of British life and empire, like *Colonies* and *English Country Houses* ("Notes and Comments"; Hassall and Chambers xl-xli).

The pamphlets were well-received and admired for their aesthetic qualities: a review in a 1949 edition of *The Highway: The Journal of the Worker's Educational Association* praises both the contents of the booklets and the decorations, saying "at one shilling they set a very high standard of production" ("Notes and Comments"). Praising especially Hassall's work on *Books*

*for Children*, the review concludes that the booklets are “collectors pieces of their kind” (“Notes and Comments”). Chambers describes the booklets as “ingeniously designed” and “things to collect for their own sake as well as for the information they contained” (Hassall and Chambers xxvi). Hassall’s wood engravings for the *Reader’s Guides* are small—their reprints in *Joan Hassall: Engravings & Drawings* show them to be the size of a head or tailpiece—and as varied in subject matter as the guides themselves, from film reels to fish, but they all evince the nostalgic tones seen in Hassall’s book illustrations (Hassall and Chambers 40-43).

Although little historical information on the publication of the *Reader’s Guides* exists, it seems likely that they were part of a broader move among post-war publishing and cultural institutions to shape British taste and consumption with an eye toward the future. The 1951 Festival of Britain, organized with the goal to “provide a ‘tonic for the nation’ whose citizens were emerging from more than a decade of conflict, austerity, rationing, shortages and economic torpor” published a series of 13 ‘About Britain’ guides, each focused on a different region of the country and all containing illustrations and maps (Stevenson 133-34). The ‘About Britain’ guides were meant to be “modern accounts of British regions looking forward to industrial and social prosperity” (134). Although the subject matter differs from those of the *Reader’s Guides*, both series reflect the view that “Books were see as tools of social and economic transformation in the brave new world of what should shortly become known as the ‘New Elizabethan Age’” (Stevenson 135). Stevenson describes the typical features of non-fiction publishing in the 1950s, which includes “relatively lavish use of colour printing, the recognition among publishers of a new consumer market beyond traditional book-buyers, the value of commercial sponsorship and the bringing together of high quality literary writing” (135). *The Reader’s Guides* appear to be

part of these mid-century publishing trends, and in so doing, provided an outlet for Hassall's illustrations while shaping the interests of the public.

### *Housewife and London Mystery Magazine*

Another mid-century illustration opportunity for Joan Hassall was for *Housewife* magazine. Unlike my chapters on Gwen Raverat and Clare Leighton, I have not devoted a significant section of this chapter to Joan Hassall's periodical illustrations. This is because there is no indication that periodical illustrations played a role in developing the early years of Hassall's career, which likely signals how the engraving revival had, by the thirties when her career began, caught on with many book publishers, whereas in the early and mid-twenties, periodicals still provided a significant outlet for illustrators. While Hassall did illustrate periodicals, it appears that most of her magazine illustrations occurred in the 1950s, and unfortunately, limited scholarship is available on most of the magazines for which she worked. One such magazine was *Housewife* and although it is unclear when Hassall illustrated for the magazine, it was likely in the war or post-war years because the magazine was started in 1939 (Horne 240; Forster 2). According to Laurel Forster, *Housewife* was "easily dismissed as a domestic handbook for women" yet "often pointed artfully towards areas of complexity in women's lives," envisioning post-war years where "women would lead the call for both an intelligent response to the madness of war and a sensible and fair distribution of wealth and resources" (Forster 3). Even though access limitations preclude me seeing the content of her illustrations, it is important to note the politics of Hassall contributing to a women's magazine as an artist whose career as a professional developed at a time when the concept was still new. Other magazine illustrations include the front cover for *London Mystery Magazine*. Again,

scholarship on *London Mystery Magazine* and access to its issues is limited, but a website devoted to chronicling the magazine's history says that it "ran for thirty three years" beginning in 1949 (*About - The London Mystery Magazine*). Although it is impossible to prove the site's claim that *London Mystery Magazine* became "so synonymous with Britain that it ranks among other such iconic symbols as the red telephone box, the black cab and the Dalek," the magazine did run for three decades, changing hands in the early 50s when increased paper demand at the end of paper rationing posed financial challenges for the publication (*About - The London Mystery Magazine*). Hassall was tasked with creating a factotum for the cover that could be repeated each issue with different images inserted, and her design was used for more than thirteen years (*Joan Hassall - The London Mystery Magazine*). Because the factotum Hassall designed allowed for other images to be changed in and out of her background on each issue, the work is easily overlooked, but evinces the ornate flourishes and nineteenth century style seen in much of her other work.

The difficulty in accessing more information on and copies of *Housewife*, *London Mystery Magazine*, and the other periodicals Hassall contributed to (which includes, according to Horne, *Masque*, *The Periodical*, and *Saturday Book*) makes it impossible to fully discern the role that these illustrations played in her career, but they are important nonetheless for showing the diversity of contexts in which her work was published and how, a few decades after the revival's beginnings, it continued to bear fruit in a variety of print culture (240).

#### Conclusion: Master of the Art Workers' Guild

While Joan Hassall continued to work as an illustrator as late as 1980, perhaps her most significant accomplishment in the later part of the twentieth century was becoming the first

woman to be Master of the Art Workers' Guild in 1972. Established in 1884, the Art Worker's Guild was at the heart of the Arts and Crafts Movement as one of the "tripartite institutional representations" of the movement, along with the Home Arts and Industries Association and the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society (Thomas 3). The Guild's founding was, according to William Morris biographer Fiona MacCarthy, "a decisive movement in the history of architecture and design and craft," but that "Attitudes toward women amongst Morris's craftsmen followers were in general much more conservative than Morris's own" (*William Morris* 593, 595). The Guild's history is fraught with patriarchal control and class elitism. Not only was it male-only until 1964, just 8 years before Hassall's 1972 appointment as Master, but the Guild fostered disciplinary elitism by requiring that members not only be male but also be "an architect or designer (not simply a maker)," and among their membership were leaders of the Arts and Crafts Movement such as Morris and C.R. Ashbee (Thomas 4). These factors, and the fact that many members were already of the same social network, meant that "the relationships formalised there fortified a pervasive model of elite artistic masculinity well into the twentieth century" (Thomas 4). The Art Workers' Guild, Thomas argues, was "part of the ongoing tendency to position privileged male individuals and male-only institutions as uniformly appreciated symbols of expertise and disseminators of cultural knowledge" (4), a fact which obviously undercuts the supposedly democratic aims around the movement's founding. It should be noted, though, that women contributed tangentially to the work of the Guild, in ways that have been minimized or erased: for instance, Thomas points out that a casket made for the Prince of Wales is attributed to artist Nelson Dawson in the memoirs of Guild member (and eventual Master) Walter Crane, when in fact the casket was made by both Dawson and his wife Edith B. Dawson (36-37). MacCarthy mentions that Morris's daughter May performed in the 1899 Art Workers' Guild Masque (677);

both examples show how women's work contributed to the productions of the Guild long before their admission to membership.

The decision to admit women to the Guild in 1964 was motivated by a perception among the membership that they were losing their cultural influence and becoming out of step with the rest of the world, especially since women had gained full enfranchisement more than three decades prior (Thomas 220-21). But the decision was not instantaneous: debates about giving women membership had been ongoing since the 50s, and as Thomas points out, women whose work was overtly political would have been unappealing to the conservative Guild; women artists of Hassall's generation were often already friends with men in the Guild and thus Hassall, with her images of "thatched cottages, woodland animals, and women with ringlets in Regency dresses" would not have posed a great challenge to the institutional elitism and conservatism of the Guild (Thomas 225, 224). Hassall herself did not publicly align with feminist causes, and in an interview for BBC *Woman's Hour* about her appointment, her focus is on the attributes of the Guild, not on the political significance of her appointment (Thomas 224-25). These aspects of Hassall and her career—that her art was not politically challenging, that she herself was an established artist in what was perceived as a conservative craft, that her own rhetoric did not tackle feminist issues—make her a good fit for the role of "first woman leader" in a historically masculine organization. Nonetheless, her appointment seems a significant indicator of the status wood-engraving had achieved through the work of the revivalists.

Hassall's role as Master of the Art Workers' Guild and her role as a teacher at the Edinburgh College of Art show how women wood engravers were taking on leadership positions in the arts world, building a legacy that far surpasses mere "book decoration." And yet, in book work as both illustrator and designer Hassall played a crucial role in creating the visual culture of

her time period. Her work with the Folio Society shows that, long after the era of the nineteenth century reproductive engraver had passed, the legacy of nineteenth-century engraving styles lived on through her. Though nineteenth-century reproductive engraving was arbitrarily viewed by revivalists as being less artistic, I would like to conclude by arguing that Hassall's career is in fact an ode to the invisible women engravers of the nineteenth century. In her scholarship on the nineteenth century reproductive engraver Clemence Housman, Lorraine Janzen Kooistra acknowledges how women reproductive engravers have been erased or overlooked, owing to the invisibility of their work rendering someone else's image (an invisibility which "mapped particularly well onto Victorian gender roles" because it "offered the possibility of working unseen within the labour market" [279]) and to the lack of social network that women engravers had by comparison to male engravers trained under the apprenticeship system (280). In adopting a nineteenth century style of illustration—often for Victorian texts and often for novels written by women like Austen and Mitford—Hassall was bringing visibility to an era of illustration where women labored on behalf of engraving firms, creating images for periodicals that usually bore the name of the firm rather than their own (280). In viewing Hassall's work through the lens of continuity from the previous century, it's especially relevant that, through Beedham, she learned from a reproductive rather than autographic engraver. In Joan Hassall, then, we see the historical divide of "men's" artistry and "women's" crafts united in one woman's career—a woman who became the leader of a male-only organization in a way that healed the breach between what the Arts and Crafts Movement *was* and what it *could be* for women.

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## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

### Introduction

A March 2023 article from the UK newspaper *New Milton Advertiser & Lymington Times* advertises the “A SCENE Through Wood” exhibition coming to the Lymington’s St. Barbe Museum and Art Gallery, featuring work by a variety of wood engravers across time, including William Blake, MC Escher—and Gwen Raverat and Clare Leighton. The exhibition, celebrating the one hundredth anniversary of the Society of Wood Engravers, provides, according to the curator, “a visual feast of some of the finest wood engravings of the last 100 years and celebrates the extraordinary artists who made them” (qtd. in Waters). A 2020 article from *The New Statesman* admires the work of engraver Gertrude Hermes, considered by author Michael Prodger to be among “a coterie of highly talented women” engravers, a list in which he also includes Gwen Raverat, Clare Leighton, and Joan Hassall (Prodger).

These recent publications point to how the legacy of the wood engraving revival, for its women participants in particular, is now, more than a hundred years after Raverat’s first book illustration in 1915, being acknowledged and celebrated. Yet neither article acknowledges the role of these wood engravers as book illustrators, a fact which points to the effectiveness of one of the revivalists’ goals—to recognize wood engraving as a visual art unto itself, not just as a reproductive technique—but overlooks one of the most prolific avenues of influence for wood engravers. In this dissertation, I echo children’s literature scholar Perry Nodelman’s assertion that illustrations are “serious art” deserving of “the respect we give other forms of serious art” (x).

This chapter first summarizes the previous three chapters on Gwen Raverat, Clare Leighton, and Joan Hassall. I then address the significance of this research by revisiting my original research questions, as outlined in my introduction, to examine how the findings of chapters three, four, and five answer these questions. I follow this section with an explanation of the limitations of my research and with suggestions for areas of further research.

### Summary

To understand the role of women in the wood engraving revival, I have examined the careers of three of the early-mid twentieth century's most prolific women artist-engravers: Gwen Raverat, Clare Leighton, and Joan Hassall. Born several years apart and educated through different means, these women represent the variety of experiences of the participants in the revival. To understand their impacts on print culture and the significance of their work, I have adopted a feminist media historical approach, grounded in feminist book studies. This approach means examining the gendered politics of these women's experiences, while looking at the media they created in its historical context. By approaching this study with a feminist book studies lens, I am contributing to a growing body of scholarship on women's contributions to the book, and simultaneously advocating for roles other than that of authorship to be acknowledged for their significance in book production and print culture. In practice, this means that, using McKenzie's theory of the sociology of the text, I am examining the interrelated web of individuals and institutions that produce books, with wood-engraved illustrations and their illustrators as my entry point into understanding the book as a material object in the early and mid-twentieth century (McKenzie 15).

My first chapter focused on Gwen Raverat, the oldest of the artists under consideration here, and therefore the earliest to participate in the revival. Raverat brought a unique approach to engraving, combining the newly-developed white line technique with the influences of French Impressionism. Her illustrations for her cousin's poetry collection *Spring Morning* marks the first white line book illustration to be published, according to her biographer (Spalding 240). Raverat's family, especially her female relatives, had a marked influence on her career; she was introduced to engraving by her cousin's wife, Elinor Monsell Darwin, and yet being a Darwin, Raverat defied familial expectations by pursuing a career as a professional artist, at a time when women rarely did so. Raverat illustrated a number of periodicals ranging in genre and in viewpoints from the artistically conservative *The London Mercury* to the politically liberal *New Leader*, showing the range of contexts in which wood engravings were being published at that time. Many of Raverat's book illustration commissions resulted from her partnership with Faber and Faber, a firm known for bringing modernist writers like TS Eliot into mass consumption while forging new paths with their marketing techniques. This partnership, along with her work on a Penguin Illustrated Classic, show how the forces of the engraving revival as a remnant of the private press movement was converging on modern publication practices that valued marketing for mass audiences, a theme which is continued in the chapters on Leighton and Hassall.

Other significant illustrations done by Raverat include A.G. Street's *Farmer's Glory*, one of several books published in the 1930s that celebrated nostalgia for the British countryside. Despite this British appeal, Raverat's work evinces the impact of wood engraving and woodcutting movements from abroad, with the use of light in her work reminiscent of the impressionist style and her use of color engravings in *The Bird Talisman*. Her illustrations for *the*

*Runaway* and *The Bird Talisman* show the extent to which Raverat's reputation had developed, enabling her to take a greater role in the production decisions around the books she illustrated. Raverat's career shows, among other things, the intertwining of the modernist movement and the Arts and Crafts Movement, a nexus she represents and brings to bear on publishing in the interwar years.

The next chapter examined Clare Leighton, whose education at the Central School under Noel Rooke placed her squarely in the center of the engraving revival, learning from one of its leaders and alongside other artist-engravers, such as Vivien Gobble and John Farleigh. Her upbringing by two authors—Robert Leighton and Marie Conner Leighton—meant that in her homelife, she was surrounded by elements of textual production, although her own approach to illustration resisted the mass-produced images that would have appeared alongside her parents' detective and adventure stories. Like Raverat, her first book collaboration was with a female relative, when she illustrated the dust jacket and binding for her mother's book about her brother who died in World War I. In addition to Noel Rooke, whose influence Leighton credits as one of the most important events of her life, Leighton's career was also fostered by Eric Gill, who purchased one of her engravings, and by H.N. Brailsford, a fellow socialist who published her work in *The New Leader*. Like Raverat, Leighton's work was also published in feminist publication *Time and Tide* and in *The London Mercury*.

Leighton's socialism is a common theme in her work, as she advocated for art that was affordable and accessible for everyone to make and consume. These beliefs manifested in the authorship of a how-to guide for those interested in wood engraving, and in other works Leighton both authored and illustrated, she emphasizes solidarity among working-class individuals across national boundaries. Leighton's status as an eventual author-illustrator points



to a level of boredom she endured as an illustrator, finding the role of interpreting another author's text to be confining; after making a name for herself with early career illustrations for Thomas Hardy's *Return of the Native*, among others, she began to write her own books, focused first on her home in the countryside, and eventually, after moving to the US, on rural and working-class Americans. Like Raverat, Leighton illustrated (and wrote) for publishers who were at the forefront of modernizing their industry by developing distinctive looks and by publishing an expanding body of "middlebrow" fiction that held mass appeal. Leighton illustrated and wrote several books for Victor Gollancz, one of the most important among them being *Southern Harvest* (1942), which was the first book she wrote and illustrated after moving to the United States in 1939. *Southern Harvest*, through its texts and images, shows in detail the agrarian workers and atmosphere of the US South; published both in the US and the UK, this book was viewed as fostering connection between American and English citizens in the early years of World War II.

Leighton's significance to the wood engraving revival is considerable because of her expansion of the revival's legacy to the United States and through the works she authored on wood engraving, which included (and therefore spread) information on wood engravers across the globe. In taking on the challenge of both author and illustrator, Leighton embodied the unifying goals of the Arts and Crafts Movement, while her ability to create illustrations holistically from their environs, as opposed to the more formulaic commercial mode of the nineteenth century engravings, demonstrated the potential of wood engraving to be both a "high" art while also being approachable for everyone.

In chapter four, I examined the career of Joan Hassall, who is the youngest among the three engravers covered in this dissertation. Like Raverat and Leighton, Hassall's parents were a

source of encouragement and tension; she resisted her mother's gendered expectations that she become a teacher, and while pursuing a career in commercial art like her father did, she adopted a medium and style very different from his. Although she attended the Royal Academy Schools of Art, Hassall learned engraving from R.J. Beedham at a vocational school, and was heavily influenced by Thomas Bewick and engravers of the nineteenth century, which caused her to develop a style that was very appealing to publishers of eighteenth and nineteenth-century novel reprints. Like Raverat, Hassall's first illustration commission came through a family member—specifically, the title page for her brother Christopher's book of poetry. This established her reputation, which grew through her work on *Portrait of a Village* and *Cranford*. Similar to Leighton, her approach to illustration was one of intense research on the places and styles she was rendering, and she developed a deep knowledge of period dress to accurately represent authors like Gaskell and Austen. While criticized for an antiquated style, Hassall's traditional approach to engraving perfectly positioned her for post-war publications by The Folio Society, a mid-twentieth century iteration of the private presses that operated on subscriptions to offer hard-cover illustrated volumes. World War II exerted a huge influence on Hassall's career because of the shifts it caused in the publishing industry, largely pausing the market for wood engravers, and because labor shortages caused Hassall to take a teaching post in Edinburgh for several years. Here she influenced Scottish print culture through the illustration of a series of chapbooks, which were published as part of a Scottish literary renaissance. She also helped shape British cultural tastes through illustration of *Reader's Guides* for the National Book League. And in the later years of her career, Hassall became the first woman master of the Art Worker's Guild, an influential organization in the Arts and Crafts movement, with its membership initially limited to

men only. In doing so, Hassall helped the Arts and Crafts Movement—albeit several decades too late—live up to its potential to afford opportunities for women artists equally with men.

### Interpretation

In this section, I review my research questions, as outlined in my introduction, and respond to each based on the findings of my studies of Raverat, Leighton, and Hassall to interpret the significance of this study.

#### **1). What is the significance of women’s participation in the wood engraving revival?**

Women’s participation in the wood engraving revival was significant because of what it meant for women as professional artists; for women’s relationship to the Arts and Crafts Movement; and for women’s opportunities to impact print culture and publishing history, and, in doing so, to change the narrative around the gendered assumptions of the industries in which they worked. Discussing women’s advancements in wood engraving in the twentieth century, Patricia Jaffe remarks that before 1900, “women played a relatively small part in any branch of its development” and thus that it “does seem a strange phenomenon, this flourishing band of women print-makers, but on closer examination one sees that the mystery is not that they have appeared now, but that their equals should have been denied the chance to appear a century earlier” (Jaffe and Jaffé 8). Unlike the many anonymous women facsimile illustrators of the nineteenth century, the wood engraving revival afforded Raverat, Leighton, and Hassall the opportunity to forge their own paths as professionals, with their identities known rather than concealed behind the anonymity of an engraving-firm signature. Catherine Flood’s analysis of gender and wood engraving is useful for establishing the significance of these women’s careers

as artist-engravers. Flood cites several instances, in literature and in reality, of Victorian women in the home engaged in engraving woodblocks: “The vision of a wife sympathetically and faithfully cutting her husband’s drawings on wood enshrined the idea of wood engraving as women’s natural function within the processes of illustration . . . . The association of women with the amateur rather than the professional, the artisan rather than the artist, resisted the idea of women drawing on wood” (Flood 111). By developing careers as artist-engravers, Raverat, Leighton, and Hassall both resisted the gendered stereotype of the woman as only an engraver, not one who can draw images, and became professional artists at a time when the woman doing arts and crafts “professionally” was still a novel concept. In doing so, they changed the narrative of the “all-but invisible role of” of women illustrators (Holterhoff and Lobdell).

We see evidence of how wood engraving was their path to an identity as a professional artist not just in their ability to earn a living as a book illustrator but also through the other endeavors that their work as illustrators afforded them. Examples of this include the fact that Gwen Raverat eventually published a memoir with her own drawings and the fact that Clare Leighton had a book of her prints published by Longmans and became the author and illustrator of her own books. Even though, as my introduction explains, the wood engraving revival did not upend the cultural ideas around illustration as an appropriate role for women, the women of the engraving revival used the skills and reputations they developed in the revival to expand their identities in multiple ways.

To my second theme of how the revival was significant for the relationship between gender and the Arts and Crafts Movement, these three women extended the legacy of the movement in ways that have until now been unrecognized. As Callen’s history of women and the

Arts and Crafts Movement shows, women who participated in the movement often did so in ways adjacent to or subsumed under the identities of their male relatives, reminiscent of the image of the husband as draughtsman and wife as engraver described above. Examples of these relationships include May Morris, daughter of William Morris, who “often helped at her father’s Kelmscott Press, although no particular work seems to have been credited to her specifically” and Esther Pissarro, wife of wood engraver and Eragny Press owner Lucien Pissaro, who worked on the press with her husband (Callen 181). “Various sources,” Callen says, “note that she [Esther Pissarro] was skilled and talented in her own right as an artist, but it does appear that her creativity was made subservient to the demands of Lucien’s ideas” (182). Although Raverat, Leighton, and Hassall were all influenced by, and at times helped in various ways, by male family members, their work was not invisibly hidden beneath the reputation of a husband or father; they had their own identities as artists. In doing so, these women helped the values of the Arts and Crafts Movement, even years after its most active period, become realized. Examples of this include how Joan Hassall became the first woman master of the Art Worker’s Guild many years after its establishment as a male-only group and how Clare Leighton adapted the ideal of art for everyday people in her guide on how to engrave wood.

As artists, they should be recognized for the ways in which they approached illustration holistically, in a departure from the nineteenth century’s mass production approach to illustration. Selborne’s remark that Raverat believed illustrations should capture the “mood” of a text rather than being “subservient” to it is one example of how they approached illustration as an art unto itself and not as formulaic or secondary to the texts involved, as were Clare Leighton’s extensive efforts to live in the locations she rendered on her woodblocks (Selborne

82-83). This approach to illustration shows how these women carried out the value of harmony between text and image, as envisioned by Morris and Rooke.

Raverat, Leighton, and Hassall also helped to change the trajectory of publishing; while many wood engravers were closely associated with the private press movement, these three artists, as I have shown in their individual chapters, were instrumental in moving private press aesthetics into the commercial publishing sphere. In Roderick Cave's history of the private presses, he credits Robert Gibbings and his acquisition of the Golden Cockerell press with developing the wood-engraving revival: "In his hands it [Golden Cockerell] was to be transformed into the principal vehicle for the renaissance of wood-engraved book illustration which took place in the years between the wars" (Cave 192). Cave specifically credits four male wood engravers, including Eric Gill and John Nash, as examples of the engravers Gibbings worked with (192). This characterization of the revival overlooks, firstly, the women who engraved for Golden Cockerell, and secondly, the ways that that engravers like Raverat, Leighton, and Hassall used their talents in commercial presses during this same time period. This telling of the engraving revival masculinizes both the revival and the publishing industry. The prior chapters of this dissertation have shown that Raverat, Leighton, and Hassall were intimately involved in book production and in shifting the aesthetic values of the private presses into mainstream firms that were more affordable for the public. Their illustrations were part of a broader movement in publishing to embrace modern advertising techniques, to expand their formats through popularizing the paperback, and to broaden their base of booksellers by using department stores and not just bookstores to sell their titles. Wood-engraving illustrators, then,

give us an entry point into understanding this very expansive time in the history of book publishing.

While my previous points explored the significance of women's involvement in the engraving revival as it relates to impacting movements outside the revival itself, I also want to touch on what their involvement meant within the engraving revival, and what can be learned from that. These women had significant impacts as leaders in the revival, even if they have not been recognized as such. Leadership roles in the wood engraving revival are typically assigned to the male teachers, like Noel Rooke, male publishers, like Robert Gibbings, and other male artists like Eric Gill, or even journalists like Malcolm Salaman who spread word about the revival through *The Studio*. But these women were leaders, too. Gwen Raverat was one of the founding members of the Society of Wood Engravers; Clare Leighton authored how-to guides on wood engraving; both Leighton and Hassall spent periods of their careers as art teachers; and Hassall became the first woman master of the Art Worker's Guild. Through their leadership within the revival, these women enable us to rewrite history by demonstrating the range of activities with which women have engaged in cultural and artistic movements.

Lastly, the careers of Raverat, Leighton, and Hassall also indicate how, despite its reputation as a humble art form with a focus on British pastoral scenes, women wood engravers were far from culturally insular. Their engravings show evidence of influence from other artistic movements and cultures, while they used their engravings to influence print culture in places like the United States and Scotland. Clare Leighton's authorship of a guide to engraving around the world shows the extent to which these women were in touch with global artistic currents. In addition to complicating the notion of wood engraving as simply a mode for transmitting images

of pastoral Britain, the international facets of Raverat, Leighton, and Hassall's careers contradict the idea that "craft" done by women—something often associated with domesticity and the private sphere—has no broader cultural significance.

**2.) What can their experience tell us about the historical relationship between women and media, especially as it relates to the materiality of the text?**

Women's relationship to the media they produce is often intimately tied to their social networks and families in ways that both enable and restrict them. We see how their relationships to other women play a major role in developing their interests and skills. Examples of this include Raverat's cousin teaching her how to engrave and how Leighton's mother's status as an author whose earnings supported her family is reflected in Leighton's own pursuit of authorship as she supported herself. And yet, each artist had connections to specific men in the literary or artistic world that provided support or exposure for their work. For Gwen Raverat, Herbert Furst acted as an agent early in her career, displaying her work in his art gallery and publishing her prints in *Modern Woodcutters* and *The Apple*. Clare Leighton's career was boosted by the purchase of one of her earliest prints by Eric Gill, which enabled her work to receive further attention. For Joan Hassall, patronage by Sir Edward Marsh allowed her to move out of her parents' house early in her career and her brother's poetry books provided some of her first illustration opportunities. This trend reflects the reality that for women in this period to learn an art or craft, even at a reputed organization like the Slade or Central School, was not in and of itself enough to launch their careers. This shows the deeply entrenched reality that women could receive training in the arts for the betterment of a hobby, but to become a professional, education alone was not enough, and social networks were key to making a living at their art or craft.



The limitations of women's professional artistic training ties into my next point about what Raverat, Leighton, and Hassall's careers tell us about the history of women producing media. Their relationships with institutions, like their families, were simultaneously enabling and limiting. That fact these women could develop careers through the engraving revival, even though into the 1920s engraving was still contested ground as a form of art, is likely reflective of the fact that, despite their training, other forms of traditionally "high" art were not areas where they could become professionals. Raverat and Leighton learned art and drawing skills at the Slade and Hassall studied at the Royal Academy Schools of Art—and for Raverat especially, this training was crucial to her engraving style—but the specific skill through which they would all ultimately earn a living was not found through the institutions they all originally attended.

This is indicative of how, within the field of education, hierarchies around what constitutes "art" placed limits on the skills taught in those institutions and, consequently, on the training available to would-be professional artists. As I discuss in chapter two, even "progressive" schools like the Slade were several years behind the Central School in adding wood engraving to their curriculum, and the impetus behind the founding of the Central School was a reaction to the Royal Academies conservatism around teaching crafts. This reality is reflected in how Leighton and Hassall both got training at other art schools specifically in the graphic arts, with Hassall notably attending an affordable public school after having attended a private one and with Raverat learning to engrave outside of an institution altogether. Like the limitations on becoming professional artists that women experienced during this time, their educational experience also seem to indicate that the training they received at one institution was not the type of training that was required for them to make money, pushing them to seek skills

from other places or schools. This does not necessarily indicate that Raverat, Leighton, and Hassall wanted to be artists in other disciplines and saw wood engraving as second choice; indeed, Hassall and Raverat's recounting of their first encounters with the work of Thomas Bewick indicates a genuine love for wood engraving and motivation to take it up. But the fact that they pursued training in and careers in a field that conservative schools were slow to recognize as an art form seems to indicate that they perceived openings in engraving where other fields retained more masculine gatekeeping. The fact that all of the teachers these women learned from in their respective art schools were men is a manifestation of this gatekeeping and conservatism.

The lives of these women also point to how uncovering one woman's contributions to a text also uncovers the contributions of others whom history has often forgotten. Raverat's introduction to wood engraving through her cousin-in-law Elinor Darwin is one example, as is her other cousin, Frances Cornford, whose poetry sold well in her lifetime but has been labeled with pejorative terms like "domesticated," or Raverat's colleague at *Time and Tide* Eleanor Farjeon, who wrote poetry for socialist publications using a pseudonym and became better known under her own name as a children's author. Even Raverat herself fits this description; her quaint memoir *Period Piece*, for which she is best known, overshadows her contributions to left-wing publications. In *Shakespeare's Lady Editors*, Molly G. Yarn explains how publisher Frederick Warne & Co published an edition of William Shakespeare's works in 1868 without identifying an editor. The likely editor, Yarn reveals, was a woman named Laura Valentine. Yarn argues that gender is quite possibly the reason why Valentine was not identified as editor: "Valentine wrote and edited prolifically for Warne, but her name was associated with domestic

genres such as novels and children's books. Perhaps her authorial persona did not match the Chandos Classics brand that Warne wanted to develop" (5). Looking at the networks of women around these artist-illustrators, we see a similar trend to that observed by Yarn: the genres of work for which women authors and illustrators are known is reflective of the genres that were socially acceptable for them to work within. They were able to develop reputations around more "acceptable" forms of production (children's books, for instance), while diminishing their identities when publishing work in something of more serious intellectual content.

### **3.) How did their illustrative work, arising from their training in the revival, impact early and mid-twentieth century print culture?**

The illustrations of these three women impacted print culture in broad ways; their work spanned multiple genres and movements. With Raverat's work, for instance, we see how her illustrations were used in both socially progressive/left leaning publications and in more artistically conservative contexts like *London Mercury* and later, in children's literature. Her work traversed movements like Modernism and Arts and Crafts. The careers of these women show how the wood engraving revival prompted the use of wood engraved illustrations to provide a broader appeal for certain magazines, which meant that Gwen Raverat and Clare Leighton, for instance, were contributing to the expansion of the feminist messages of *Time and Tide* through using this medium to make the magazine more visually appealing to readers.

They all used their engraving skills to expand the interwar market for works that celebrated the British countryside and appealed to a rural nostalgia among the English public. For Gwen Raverat, this appeal took shape in her work on A.G. Street's memoir of farm life; in Clare Leighton's work, this theme was manifested in books she wrote herself that celebrated

agricultural workers; and Joan Hassall worked on Francis Brett Young's novel about a rural village. Although the rural, pastoral themes overlap in all of these works, the variety of genre here—fiction and non-fiction, with varying emphases—shows how versatile wood engraving was, even within common themes.

Another large area of impact on print culture for these artists was the republication of many nineteenth century novels. Joan Hassall is the prime example here because of her work on all of Jane Austen's novels for the Folio Society, but Clare Leighton also illustrated two Hardy novels as well as *Wuthering Heights* and, later in her career, the works of Henry David Thoreau for an American publisher. Although not one of the works covered here, Gwen Raverat illustrated a reprint of Victorian novelist Charlotte Yonge's *Countess Kate* (albeit with line drawings rather than wood engravings). These commissions are all indicative of a taste for British and American readers to reencounter texts from the past in new ways, with new illustrations.

Lastly, these artists impacted print culture by bringing art to mass consumers through affordably-priced books that contained beautiful illustrations, as part of a larger move to make art books and guides more publicly available. Amy M. Von Lintel has written about how wood engraved illustrations in the nineteenth century allowed for the spread of illustrated art history publications across national boundaries, for both academic and public audiences (Von Lintel 516). We see evidence of this trend continuing in the twentieth century with books containing wood engraved artwork, like the collection of Clare Leighton's prints published by Longmans, and Joan Hassall's illustrations of the National Book League's *Reader's Guides*. And the previously discussed fact that wood engraved illustrations during the interwar years allowed for

private press aesthetics to become affordable for broader audiences shows how these women played a key role in making art and art education more available and affordable for more people.

**4.) What can these artists' contributions tell us about the historical relationship between women illustrators and both the genre of the book and the serial; what opportunities did each of these formats afford them as artists?**

These women show us how wood engravers as illustrators played significant roles in the production of books, beyond just the illustrations. This could perhaps be said of male illustrators as well, but given the gendered dynamics around illustration as secondary to the text, or as something which can be done in the “private sphere” of the home, this is especially important to point out when talking about women illustrators. These women did not simply render a story in wood; they also had a hand in what books were published, with publishers either choosing titles based on their suggestions (such as Raverat with *The Runaways*) or even choosing titles specifically as a medium for their illustrations (like Hassall and Francis Brett Young), but they also played a hand in other features of the book, like print layout and cover design. In doing so, they carried forward Morris's value of embracing the book as an aesthetic object holistically.

As I've discussed elsewhere, periodical publications operated as a means for these women to begin their careers and develop their reputations through the social networks around these publications. But magazine illustrations also afforded them the chance to contribute to political causes they believed in; in their own writings, Raverat and Leighton give indications of being socialists, and Raverat in particular expresses dissatisfaction with society's expectations of her as a woman. It seems likely, then, that they would have identified with the political aims of the periodicals for which they illustrated. Although these themes in Leighton's work reoccur in

the books she authored, for Raverat, it seems that book illustration was less of an outlet for her political convictions.

### Limitations

One of the limitations of this study is that I do not have access to publishing records that can provide more specific information on sales numbers or pay rates for the books that these women illustrated or their own compensation. This being the case, understanding the impact of these women on print culture from a quantitative standpoint is hard to accomplish. Indeed, histories of many of the publishers they worked for are limited, which therefore limits the extent to which the contexts for all of their work can be understood. For this reason and for spatial considerations, I had to be selective in focusing on what I determined to be the most significant illustrations completed by each woman; for all three artists, there were several more illustrated books that could be examined to provide a broader understanding of their careers and impacts on print culture. Some aspects of their careers have been covered by other scholars; for instance, Kristin Bleumel's "'A Happy Heritage': Children's Poetry Books and the Twentieth-Century Wood Engraving Revival" looks in detail at Gwen Raverat's illustrations of *The Cambridge Book of Poetry for Children* and Joan Hassall's *A Children's Garden of Verses*, but some of Raverat's later work, many of Leighton's illustrations done in the United States, and many of Hassall's later illustrations have not received any scholarly attention.

Another limitation with regard to source materials relates to what Scholes and Wulfman term "the hole in the archive" (196). The "hole" refers to the inaccessibility of many modernist periodicals for researchers, owing to their scarcity in libraries and the fact that even when libraries possess "copies of the fragile but important magazines" from "the first decades of the

twentieth century,” their copies are incomplete or in disrepair (Scholes and Wulfman 196). For many of the periodicals discussed in this dissertation, I was only able to access portions of the volumes made available on amateur internet archives or from images included in the work of other scholars. As a result, the depth of my analysis of the work done by these artists on modernist periodicals is limited. For example, my ability to analyze Raverat’s work on *The New Leader* is limited to what I can see on a seemingly amateur site publishing three volumes of the *New Leader* that do not appear to be complete. While this gives me an idea of the publishing context for Raverat’s work, the depth of my analysis is limited by not being able to view these volumes in their entirety.

Issues of access also played a role in my examination of mid-twentieth century pamphlets and periodicals, such as the National Book League *Reader’s Guides*, Saltire chapbooks illustrated by Joan Hassall, and several magazines she illustrated as well. Once again, I used historical context and images as published in other contexts to fill in these gaps, but my analysis could be more thorough given the opportunity to view the publications in their entirety.

An additional spatial limitation was in selecting the artists covered. Many women participated in the wood engraving revival; other participants mentioned in Patricia Jaffe’s history of women and the revival include more of Noel Rooke’s “best-known pupils,” such as Vivien Gribble, Mabel Annesley, Dorothy Haigh, Muriel Blomfield Jackson, Rachel Marshall, and Margaret Pilkington (18). The full extent of women’s experiences as wood engravers, then, cannot be fully understood without looking at the lives of other women as well.

### Areas for Future Research

In this dissertation, I have looked at the history of the engraving revival up to the mid-twentieth century, after the end of World War II and with the beginning of subscription clubs like the Folio Society. However, histories of British wood engraving cover the works of engravers further into the twentieth century, with Jaffe and Hamilton covering engravers working well into the 1980s. Hamilton in particular discusses how engravers of the 60s and 70s experimented with other engraving approaches, despite the fact that wood engraving had fallen out of vogue in that period in favor of other technology like screen printing (176). How the revival's legacy has lived on—both for wood engraving as an art form and as a method of illustration—would be a fruitful area of research, especially as printmaking technologies have continued to emerge and evolve.

As my discussion of limitations mentions, time and spatial constraints limited my study to just three women engravers, and many more women participants could be examined to understand the movement in greater depth and to shed more light on the history of women's contributions to textual materialism in the twentieth century. For instance, Margaret Pilkington, another wood engraving student of Noel Rooke, was a secretary and eventually chairman of the Society of Wood Engravers and was responsible for the acquisition of wood engravings by the Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester (Horne 351). Although her output as an illustrator included only three books according to Horne, her role in the engraving revival should be examined with an eye toward her leadership in art/engraving organizations (Horne 352). Art historian Lotte Crawford recently published a biography of Tirzah Garwood, the wife of the more prominently known painter, engraver, and illustrator Eric Ravilious. Garwood, like the engravers studied here, had multiple talents: she painted, engraved wood, marbled paper for book publishers, and



wrote her autobiography. The fact that scholarship on her is growing indicates how fruitful women artists of this time period is for further research and publication—especially women like Garwood and others who worked on multiple facets of textual production.

Additionally, the women I examined here could also be studied in greater depth. While a biography of Gwen Raverat does exist, there are none of Leighton or Hassall, or, to my knowledge, any of the other women revivalists. This scholarship would be enhanced by looking at the other genres of print these women illustrated, in addition to books and periodicals. Clare Leighton, for instance, created images for a series of Wedgwood China plates; Joan Hassall illustrated book plates, Christmas cards, hotel menus, and, in 1953, the invitation to the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II (Hassall 196). Not only would scholarship on this work expand our understanding of Leighton and Hassall's careers, but this would be a productive way to expand what "counts" in women's contributions to print culture beyond the book and periodical. Understanding the wood engraving revival would also benefit from a more in-depth analysis of both its male and female participants, with comparison of how their careers developed to better understand how gender plays a role in their experience.

Whenever possible, I have tried to acknowledge historical sources that have overlooked the contributions of these illustrators, and I have found that publishing histories are particularly egregious when it comes to erasing women, or roles typically occupied by women. Examples include Roderick Cave's history of private presses mentioned above. Others include M.H. Black's history of Cambridge University Press from 1584-1984 which makes no mention Gwen Raverat, despite the fact that she illustrated three books for them, nor does the history seem to give attention to illustration in general (Black). Toby Faber's history of Faber and Faber includes correspondence with Raverat regarding the publication of her memoir, but only briefly mentions

one book she illustrated for the firm, even though she illustrated seven books for Faber and Faber, more than she did for any other publisher (Faber 192-94; Horne 361). Jeremy Lewis's history of Penguin indicates the poor treatment that women receive in publishing history when he describes Eunice Frost, assistant to Penguin's director and eventually director herself, as "pushy and prickly" and "sensitive to slights" (Lewis 123). What these histories have omitted, or, in Lewis's case, disparaged, is indicative of the pronounced need for book history, and publishing history especially, to be rewritten with an eye towards women contributors and how the roles that they have traditionally occupied should be a greater area of emphasis. Sadly, the omissions in these histories reflect Maria Dicenzo, Lucy Delap, Leila and Ryan's warning in the introduction to *Feminist Media History* that "because women's history represents an area that has suffered in obvious ways from preconceived notions, generalities, and entrenched narratives . . . . Feminist media historians cannot take the 'history' part of media history for granted" (8). The research undertaken in this dissertation has unearthed additional areas where publishing history can be productively rewritten to include the full range of women's contributions to demasculinize our understanding of how knowledge is created. Such an undertaking would also have significant implications for marginalized groups, such as people of color and LGBTQ individuals, whose identities have been obscured in these histories' emphasis on white male figures. It is my hope that others or I will be able undertake this challenge, and that in doing so, will be able to create a history of the twentieth century book that centers the work and the stories of individuals whose identities have been diminished or those unable to live their authentic identity.

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