CATHARINE LORILLARD WOLFE:

COLLECTING AND PATRONAGE IN THE GILDED AGE

by

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Abstract

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Until now, Lorillard-tobacco heiress, philanthropist, and art patron Catharine Lorillard Wolfe (1828–1887) has been largely overlooked in the study of the cultural life of post–Civil War America. Nevertheless, as one of the founders of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and a preeminent collector of contemporary European art that she bequeathed to the Museum, she made her mark in the 1870s and 1880s as a prominent tastemaker in Gilded-Age New York. At the same time, Wolfe extended her artistic reach to the seaside resort of Newport, Rhode Island. With her architects, the firm of Peabody & Stearns, she embarked on the construction of a great summer house that enabled her to showcase her architectural and artistic sophistication. Her patronage of leading artists and designers of the English Aesthetic and Arts & Crafts movements there helped propel their work into the American visual consciousness.

There were two components to Wolfe's patronage, each encompassing a specific residence, a particular locale, and a distinct aesthetic. Few art patrons, especially unmarried women, have had such a direct impact on the Gilded Age's cultural landscape in this dual way. Using a method derived from material culture and patronage studies, and the archival and contextual analysis of objects and buildings, this dissertation analyzes the range and significance of her contribution to the two sites she inhabited. The study of Wolfe's projects and her ability to negotiate between the domains of city and resort enable one to assess how

one member of New York's elite was able to use the amassing of material culture to elevate her status in the city at a time when social classes were being redefined. It was also a transformative period in Newport, which was on its way to becoming the premier resort on the Eastern seaboard. Wolfe's creation of a great house there became an important signifier of her status and made a permanent mark on the built environment of Newport. This dissertation contributes to our understanding of art consumption, display, and identity formation, and how they functioned in different contexts and in different ways through the acts of collecting and patronage.

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Working to bring into the twenty-first century consciousness a previously underexplored personage from the nineteenth century is far too great a task for one person. To this end, I am deeply indebted to the many institutions and individuals—from New York to Newport to California to the UK—who have graciously provided me with crucial intellectual and financial support and, in many cases, access to resources without which this study would not have been possible. The research of this dissertation was underwritten by grants and fellowships from the following institutions: Department of Art History at the Graduate Center, the City University of New York (Catherine Hoover Voorsanger Fellowship, Webster Art History Fellowship, and various Graduate Research Travel Grants); Center for the History of Collecting at the Frick Art Reference Library (Junior Fellowship and Leon Levy Fellowship); Lunder Consortium/Freer Gallery of Art (Whistler Fellowship); William Morris Society (Joseph R. Dunlap Memorial Fellowship); and the Huntington Library and Art Collections (Robert R. Wark Fellowship).

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The experience of working with such a fine adviser has been made even more exceptional by my having had such a superb dissertation committee. I wish to extend my profound appreciation to Sally Webster, Jane Roos, and Richard Guy Wilson, all exemplary leaders in the field of nineteenth-century art history, who so generously gave of their time and expertise. I also wish to thank Richard Guy Wilson for the helpful introductions he made on my behalf to scholars in Newport, and Patricia Mainardi for her generous support of my work at the Graduate Center.

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Historical Society, the American Museum of Natural History, the National Academy of Design, the Phillips Library at the Peabody Essex Museum, and the Getty Research Institute. Additionally, curators, librarians and archivists from the Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery and the Fitzwilliam Museum were helpful in every regard.

My dissertation would not have been possible without access to key repositories in Newport, including the Preservation Society for Newport County, the Newport Historical Society, McKillop Library at Salve Regina University, and the Redwood Library and Athenaeum. Personal thanks to Maria Bernier, Cailtin Emery, Miranda Keagle, Bert Lippincott, Paul Miller, Whitney Pape, Julie Swierczek, James Yarnall, and Catherine Zipf. I would also like to thank Melody Barnett Deusner, Morna O'Neill, and John Ott for their helpful feedback on patronage issues, and Kathleen Foster who so generously provided access to the archives and files on Winslow Homer's *The Life Line* at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

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On a personal level, I am grateful to my friends and family members who have so patiently and enthusiastically encouraged me during this entire process, most especially my mother, Rose Marie Laster and my uncle, the late Owen Laster. I dedicate this dissertation to the memory of my father, Seymour Laster, who has remained my intellectual muse.

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INTRODUCTION

Dubbed the richest unmarried woman in America at the time of her death, Lorillard tobacco heiress, philanthropist, and art patron Catharine Lorillard Wolfe (1828–1887) has all too frequently been overlooked in the study of the cultural life of post–Civil War America. She has not been one of the major figures on whom art historians have focused, yet, as one of the earliest supporters of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and a preeminent collector of contemporary European art that she later bequeathed to the Museum, Wolfe made her mark in the 1870s and 1880s as a prominent tastemaker in New York's Gilded Age.

Wolfe extended her artistic reach beyond the confines of the city to the seaside resort of Newport, Rhode Island. With her architects, the firm of Peabody & Stearns, she embarked on the construction of a summer house that enabled her to showcase her architectural and artistic sophistication, while helping to propel the work of leading artists and designers of the English Aesthetic and Arts & Crafts movements into the American visual consciousness. Through her implementation of diverse aesthetics in different milieus, Wolfe's accomplishments were groundbreaking. She not only played an important role in the formation of a major museum, but also helped construct an architecturally innovative oceanfront house and, in the process, brought elements of English design into the lexicon of one of America's most prominent watering places at a key moment in its history. It is important to keep in mind that Wolfe operated on a public stage, both at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and in the exclusive environs of Newport, so one must consider her career in

relation to both of these settings.[1] Few art patrons, especially unmarried women, have had such a direct impact in this dual way.

The issue of gender, and the extent to which the collecting and patronage of art in late nineteenth-century America was (or was not) congenial to women, must permeate any discussion of Wolfe, particularly in light of her single status, and does so in this dissertation. However, the primary aim of this study is to analyze the significance of her choices in the two locales she inhabited. Using a method derived from material culture and patronage studies, and the archival and contextual analysis of objects and buildings, it strives to examine her collecting and patronage as they developed from and influenced Gilded-Age aesthetics.

Assessments of Wolfe's achievements have focused almost exclusively on her acts of philanthropy, specifically her contributions to the then burgeoning Metropolitan Museum of Art.[2] As institutional archives of the Museum reveal, Wolfe played a pivotal role in the institution's early development as a prominent donor, its first female subscriber, and the first woman to be elected benefactor. Among the 106 sponsors of the museum, she was the sole woman during the crucial formative years of 1870–71.[3] In an essay published in *Apollo* in

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[1] An earlier discussion of these issues is to be found in Margaret R. Laster, "The Collecting and Patronage of Catharine Lorillard Wolfe in Gilded-Age New York and Newport," in *Power Underestimated: American Women Art Collectors*, ed. Inge Reist and Rosella Mamoli Zorzi (Venice: Marsilio, in association with the Frick Art Reference Library, 2011), 77–99.

[2] See "Charity Losing a Helper," *New York Times*, April 5, 1887, 8; and Frank Allaben, "Wolfe,
Catherine [sic] Lorillard," *National Magazine: A Monthly Journal of American History* 18 (May–October 1893): 187–88.

[3] At one meeting, the Museum's executive committee reportedly discussed the possibility of appointing a committee of women to solicit subscriptions for the fledging institution, but this idea was never implemented. Winifed E. Howe, *A History of the Metropolitan Museum of Art: With a Chapter on the Early Institutions of Art in New York* (1913; repr. of vol. 1, New York: Arno Press, 1974), 133.

1998, Rebecca A. Rabinow credits Wolfe with helping to place the Metropolitan Museum of Art on New York's "cultural map."[4]

For her New York brownstone on Madison Square, Wolfe amassed art by some of the most renowned living European artists. Her holdings included pictures by prominent academic masters, Salon favorites, and Barbizon artists, among them William Bouguereau, Pierre-Auguste Cot, Camille Corot, and Alexandre Cabanel, the latter from whom she commissioned her portrait on visits to his Paris studio in 1876 (fig. 1). In his multivolume *Art Treasures of America* (1879–82), Earl Shinn praised Wolfe's assemblages for having been "harvested from all the World's Fairs of Europe…evidences of the most advanced 'collectorship' are everywhere visible."[5]

Wolfe's reputation as a collector and donor underwent a meteoric rise within the highest echelons of the New York art world after her death in April 1887. The terms of Wolfe's historic bequest gave her 143 paintings and works-on-paper to the Metropolitan Museum of Art to be housed in the Catharine Lorillard Wolfe.[6] The Museum opened the gallery in her name in November 1887, accompanied by an exhibition catalogue with an essay

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[4] Rebecca A. Rabinow, "Catharine Lorillard Wolfe: The First Woman Benefactor of The Metropolitan Museum of Art," *Apollo* 50, no. 433 (March 1998): 48–55.

[5] Earl Shinn, *The Art Treasures of America: Being the Choicest Works of Art in the Public and Private Collections of North America*, ed. Edward Strahan (pseud.), 3 vols. (Philadelphia: George Barrie, 1879–80), 119.

[6] Will of Catharine Lorillard Wolfe, dated March 24, 1885, proved May 31, 1887, New York (County) Surrogate's Court, Record of Wills, Liber 39, Clause 6, 122.

about her, together with the titles of her paintings, providing a complete inventory of her gift.[7] Four decades before Louisine Havermeyer's 1927 landmark bequest of Impressionist paintings to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Wolfe's formed the initial core of the fledging institution's contemporary European art collection, ensuring its accessibility to the citizens of New York. The announcement of her bequest in the *New York Times* celebrated what their critics judged to be the contents of one of the finest private collections in the country.[8] Wolfe's gift to the Museum led a critic in Britain, writing in the *Art Journal* in 1889, to declare: "I do not recall any gift of a similar nature worth mentioning except that of the old masters given to the National Gallery by the Queen."[9]

Less critical attention, both at the end of the nineteenth century and in our own time, has been addressed to what I believe was a more creative component of Wolfe's patronage: namely, her role in Newport as an early American supporter of William Morris and his firm, Morris & Co., to design the interior and create art for her Newport home, Vinland. Rabinow discusses Wolfe's commissions in Newport, but they are peripheral to her main focus, Wolfe's gift to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Wolfe's activities in Newport may have become less known following her death because her collection there was not included in her bequest. Case in point: Richard M. Bayles's 1888 compendium *The History of Newport County*, charting the lives of luminaries who had resided in Newport, reproduced verbatim the

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[7] Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Part I. The Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Collection; Part II. Pictures by Old Masters, in the East Galleries* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1887).

[8] "Miss Wolfe's Bequest," *New York Times*, April 9, 1887, 4.

[9] Walter Rowlands, "The Miss Wolfe Collection." *Art Journal* [London], n.s. 44, no. 3 (January 1889): 12.

essay published in the 1887 Metropolitan Museum catalogue accompanying the opening of her gallery, cited above, which makes no reference to her art in Newport.[10] Moreover, many of the works of art and décor she commissioned for Vinland would be dismantled as ownership of the house changed hands and it became part of an academic institution.

It was in the early 1880s, that Wolfe selected the Boston-based firm of Peabody & Stearns to build her new residence on the oceanfront Cliff Walk. Four years earlier, the firm had built the original Breakers for Wolfe's cousin Pierre Lorillard IV, whose land would later be adjacent to hers.[11] Wolfe's house was named Vinland to commemorate her interest in putative Viking exploration of this region of the New England coastline. The finished house was evidence of Peabody & Stearns's practice of accepting commissions in an amalgam of historical styles, much like the English architects of the Queen Anne movement, whose multi-style approach Robert Peabody had publicly lauded.[12] At the time it was completed, an observer described the house as "a modern, modified, and subdued Norseman (or Norman)

[10] Richard M. Bayles, *The History of Newport County, Rhode Island: From the Year 1638 to the Year 1887* (New York: L. E. Preston & Co., 1888), 611–13. In this entry there is a reproduction of a photograph of her house, credited as the home of her heir Louis L. Lorillard, but there is no mention in the text of the art she commissioned there.

[11] For literature on Peabody & Stearns, see Annie Robinson, *Peabody & Stearns: Country Houses and Seaside Cottages* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010), and Kevin D. Murphy, *Colonial Revival Maine* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004).

[12] See Robert Swain Peabody, "A Talk About 'Queen Anne,'" *American Architect and Building News* 2, no. 70 (April 28, 1877): 133–34.

building."[13] In the years since its construction, the resulting design for Vinland has been alternatively labeled Romanesque-Revival, Scandinavian-style, and Queen Anne.[14]

For Vinland's interior, William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones, and Walter Crane created art and décor depicting scenes of Viking exploits to commemorate the local legends about the discovery of this part of the New England. Vinland constituted one of Morris & Co.'s earliest large-scale commissions for a private house in America. Their projects for Vinland included a nine-panel stained-glass window of Viking gods and heroes and a monumental frieze depicting scenes from a Henry Wadsworth Longfellow 1841 ballad about the discovery of the land that became Newport. To this artistic mix Wolfe added a major acquisition, Winslow Homer's marine painting *The Life Line* (1884). Wolfe's patronage culminated in the building of a unique structure whose design was a mixture of architectural and decorative styles. One reviewer cited Wolfe's contribution and credited the artistic program at Vinland as "another example of what good art can do in the service of a good master."[15] Its structure, art, and decoration were endowed with a narrative that asserted the significance of Vinland's location in Newport by articulating its roots in local legend and tradition.

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[13] "Vinland: A Newport Home. The Opening of Miss Wolfe's New House," *New York Evening Post*, September 13, 1883, 1.

[14] See Wheaton A. Holden, "The Peabody Touch: Peabody and Stearns of Boston, 1870–1912," *Journal of the History of Society of Architectural Historians* 32, no. 2 (May 1973): 120–21; Richard Guy Wilson, "Oscar Wilde, Colonialists, and Vikings: Newport and the Aesthetic Movement," *Nineteenth Century* 19, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 4–11; Mark Girouard, *Sweetness and Light: The 'Queen Anne' Movement, 1860–1900* (1977; repr., New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 212.

[15] "Vinland, a Newport Home: The Opening of Miss Wolfe's New House," *New York Evening Post*, September 13, 1883, 3.

In her *Enchanted Objects, Enchanted Lives* (2008), Dianne Sachko Macleod claims that Vinland was an escapist fantasy for Wolfe.[16] I disagree, and argue instead that Wolfe intended Vinland not as a shield from the mundane world, but as a public projection of the identity she crafted in this seaside resort.

As an early patron of Morris & Co. on these shores, Wolfe immersed herself in what was becoming a cutting edge component of interior design. Proponents of the Aesthetic and Arts & Crafts movements proselytized the idea of an artist's ability to transform space into an integrated environment. Wolfe's assemblages in Newport represented a sharp departure from the subject and display of her New York holdings: the former itself a work of art, the latter constituting an accumulation of paintings, the sort that were very popular in the New York art world in which Wolfe herself operated. A visitor to her New York brownstone had characterized the impact of walls covered with pictures: "A collection of masterpieces, hung here, there, everywhere….It is not an easy matter to view these pictures is it?"[17] At Vinland, the goal of the design was to create a unified construct both inside and out. This dissertation considers what motivated Wolfe to tap into this notion.

When examined against her patronage of the Salon painters whose pictures she chose for her New York home, Wolfe's involvement with Morris, Burne-Jones, and Crane suggests that for Vinland she changed course 180 degrees. How could these seemingly disparate collecting strategies coexist within the patronage of one individual? One must acknowledge

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[16] Dianne Sachko Macleod, *Enchanted Lives, Enchanted Objects: American Women Collectors and the Making of Culture, 1800–1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, with the assistance of the Getty Foundation, 2008), 69.

[17] "Tète-À-Tète Sketches: Miss Catharine Lorillard Wolfe," *Town Topics* (February 24, 1887): 18.

that there were other collectors—among them Henry G. Marquand, who engaged in different strands of collecting and whose personal taste did not necessarily dictate the choices of art he donated to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.[18] In Newport, Wolfe revealed strains of Anglophilia seemingly at odds with the more Francophilic nature of the bulk of her New York works. Not only were there literal geographic barriers separating the different elements of her collecting, but in each locale she appeared to favor artists who themselves came from different geographic roots. These apparent dualities imply that Wolfe possessed a remarkable adaptability, allowing her to turn her attention in Newport from the academic painters and fashionable continental artists whose works she would continue to collect in New York to practitioners from Britain at the forefront of interior design, just as she herself traveled from city to seaside.

This dissertation, then, seeks to identify the factors that motivated Wolfe. What did these two collections say about what how she wished to be perceived in each setting, and how may they have functioned in the spaces for which they were intended? After all, the different environments of her patronage were distinct not only physically and functionally, but aesthetically and socially as well.

One may conjecture that Wolfe gained a greater degree of physical freedom in Newport than in New York, in terms of having more space, more property, a larger house, a vista, and a view. There must also have been psychological and metaphorical implications connected to the smaller enclave of Newport, a resort initially separate from many of the societal mores and dictates of New York and thereby allowing Wolfe greater freedom in

[18] See Melody Barnett Deusner, "'In seen and unseen places': The Henry G. Marquand House and Collections in England and America," *Art History* 3, no. 4 (September 2011): 754–73.

terms of lifestyle and creativity.[19] Moreover, life in New York would entail the physical barriers of a conservative space—the traditional family brownstone on a lot sizable for the city but comparably smaller than Vinland—not to mention the obligations required among New York's old-money society. Moreover, at the time Wolfe created Vinland, her New York collection was destined to be left to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, thereby branding it with an official status in her mind. Distance from the city and her involvement there must have been liberating.

In the course of Newport's history, the town had undergone many evolutions in its social structure, in the source of its prosperity, and in its architecture. The narrator of Thornton Wilder's 1973 novel *Theophilus North* compares the nine cities of ancient Troy to the many layers of Newport's development:[20] the seventeenth-century village, with its Calvinist tenets; the eighteenth-century prosperous seaport, whose economy would founder during the American Revolution; and the mid-nineteenth-century intellectual haven, attracting such luminaries from New York and Boston as the Henry James family, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Julia Ward Howe, abolitionist and author of the 1861 *Battle Hymn of the Republic.* Drawn to Newport, the painter William Morris Hunt established an art school there in 1859; his students included artist John La Farge and young William and Henry James.[21]

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[19] See Kevin D. Murphy, "'Secure from All Intrusion': Heterotopia, Queer Space, and the Turn-of-the-Twentieth-Century American Resort," *Winterthur Portfolio* 43, no. 2/3 (Summer/Autumn 2009): 185–228, which provides a methodological frame here.

[20] Thornton Wilder, *Theophilus North* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 14.

[21] Sally Webster, *William Morris Hunt, 1824–1879* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 54–55.

Henry James would later recollect that Newport was then "the one right residence," for it was a stimulating cultured community.[22]

In the final decades of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, another Newport would rise. Even during the course of Wolfe's time there, Newport became the Gilded-Age summer playground of Astors and Vanderbilts, who built palatial houses dominating its landscape. This new Newport might be best epitomized by Richard Morris Hunt's completion of the new Breakers for Cornelius Vanderbilt II in 1895, replacing the earlier Peabody & Stearns Breakers, which had burned down in 1892.

In her anecdotal history of Newport published in 1944, Maud Howe Elliott, the daughter of Julia Ward Howe, defines the town's main assets as "climate, beauty, and historic buildings."[23] These attributes would lure the rich to make Newport their social capital in the decades following the Civil War. Howe Elliott charts Newport's architectural progression from modest homes and popular hotels to the creation of what she cites as "princely dwellings," recalling the best in Europe.[24] Jon Sterngass's *First Resorts* (2001) contextualizes these social, economic, and architectural changes within the larger perspective of the competition between Newport and two contemporary watering places, Saratoga Springs and Coney Island. He argues that it was in part due to its desire to "one-up" Saratoga Springs that Newport evolved from a society with a dominant hotel industry before the 1860s to one with increasing formality and "barricades of exclusivity" provided by private cottages, "each

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[22] Henry James, *Notes of a Son and Brother* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1914), 277, cited by Webster, *William Morris Hunt*, 59.

[23] Maud Howe Elliott, *This Was My Newport* (Cambridge, MA: Mythology Co., A. M. Jones, 1944), 3.

[24] Ibid., 157–61.

grander than its predecessor."[25] At this transitional moment in the course of Newport's social and cultural trajectory, before the great White Columns abounded everywhere, Wolfe was able to create a house grounded in the community's legendary history. Vinland in effect served as a second announcement of self for Wolfe, much like the act of acquiring and donating an art collection.

I re-create the aesthetic that existed in each venue to the extent possible, for the original spaces no longer exist in New York, and in Newport the art itself has been dispersed. Neither of Wolfe's collections remains available to us in the coherent form she possessed during her lifetime. In the decades following her death, the works of art she had amassed, both in New York and Newport, quite literally began to spend more time apart than they ever had together. The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Gallery, first established in 1887, has long since been dismantled, and only half of her original gift of 143 works of art remains part of the Museum's current holdings, although some of her paintings, among them Cabanel's portrait, are on view in a room in the Museum's nineteenth-century galleries. The fund established in her will has been used to purchase some of the most important works in the Museum, among them, Jacques-Louis David's *Death of Socrates* (1787) and Pierre-Auguste Renoir's *Mme. Georges Charpentier and Her Children* (1878).

Subsequent owners of Vinland raised and enlarged the original house, hiring Peabody & Stearns, Wolfe's architects, to do so. These owners also began to dismantle and de-accession much of the original art and décor in favor of a French Beaux-Arts style.[26] Vinland

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[25] Jon Sterngass, *First Resorts: Pursuing Pleasure at Saratoga Springs, Newport, and Coney Island* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 198–212.

[26] "Raising a Newport Villa," *Newport Journal and Weekly News*, December 28, 1907; and "A New Vinland," *Newport Journal and Weekly News*, May 15, 1909.

still stands, albeit no longer as a private dwelling; it is under the aegis of Salve Regina University.[27] While the Morris/Burne-Jones windows were dismantled in the 1930s, the Crane frieze remained intact until 1987, when the university put it up for auction at Christie's, New York, where it was purchased by a private collector.[28]

It is important to note a few additional caveats. As far as I have been able to determine, Wolfe never wrote a memoir and left few notes behind, creating a dearth of written documentation revealing any of her intentions. [29] Archival material on Wolfe herself, as well as sources that enable us to understand her New York aesthetic, can be found in such institutions as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the New-York Historical Society, and the Frick Art Reference Library and its Center for the History of Collecting. In Newport, there are archives at the Preservation Society of Newport County—most notably compiled in Wolfe's "Vinland Scrapbook"—and at the Newport Historical Society and Salve Regina University. Although we have a visual record of different incarnations of the gallery that was once in her name at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, we do not have any photographs of the art *in situ* in her New York brownstone. We do not have photographs of Vinland's interior as it existed in her brief residence there. Moreover, while we are able to refer to an inventory of her pictures in the original bequest listed in the Museum's 1887 catalogue, there is no complete inventory of the art at Vinland, save for the memorabilia Wolfe herself preserved. In both New York

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[27] Vinland was donated to Salve Regina College, later Salve Regina University, in 1956.

[28] See sale cat., *Nineteenth Century European Paintings, Drawings and Watercolors*, Christie's East, New York, October 28, 1987, lot 238, 249–52.

[29] I am especially grateful to Rebecca A. Rabinow of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and to Paul Miller of the Preservation Society of Newport County for helping me locate pieces of Wolfe's scattered correspondence.

and Newport, then, we must rely on accounts written by those who viewed her art and design in the original context.

Additional materials pertinent to this dissertation include dealer ledgers and receipts, collector and museum inventories, collectors' correspondence, artists' articles, documentary photographs, period maps, pictorial studies of interiors, papers and records of the architects and designers, and reviews and critical commentary in nineteenth-century periodicals about the work and reputation of artists and architects. I have relied on analyses of the phenomenon of patronage to help situate Wolfe, her accomplishments, and the spatial assemblages she created within the larger social and cultural worlds of her time. Recent scholarship on the part of the Lunder Consortium for Whistler Studies has honed my thinking regarding the fabrication and social functions of interiors as articulated in the collaborations between patrons, artists, and architects.[30]

Discussions of the period in essays and novels by such seminal writers as Henry James and Edith Wharton are another point of reference to help frame how status and social mores were connected to material culture in the Gilded Age, although Wolfe herself is not mentioned in either of the authors' works. In *The Age of Innocence* (1920), Edith Wharton situates the final rendezvous of her two Gilded-Age protagonists at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The two lovers decide to avoid "the popular 'Wolfe collection,' whose anecdotic canvases filled one of the main galleries" and wandered instead to a lonely gallery of

[30] I had the opportunity to serve as the consortium's inaugural fellow from 2010 to 2011, and proposed and developed the symposium "Palaces of Art: Whistler and the Art Worlds of Aestheticism" in October 2011 at the Freer Gallery of Art, which offered new interpretations of these very issues. A publication of the proceedings will be released in 2014.

antiquities more suited to their somber mood.[31] This episode in Wharton's novel reminds us that Wolfe's gallery was once understood as a cultural place-marker.

Collecting and patronage involve the consumption of art.[32] Collecting centers on the act of acquiring works of art from exhibitions, dealers, or from intermediaries serving as liaisons between purchasers and artists. Patronage, on one level, entails the existence of a direct connection between client and artist; frequently, though not always, the client is involved in the creation of the final product that he or she has commissioned. On another level, patronage encompasses the financial support of cultural institutions, or the collaboration with or the underwriting of the work of artists, designers, and architects. Collecting and patronage are not mutually exclusive acts, however, and it is sometimes difficult to locate a clear divide between the two, as is exemplified by the different components of Catharine Lorillard Wolfe's career. Her collecting and patronage in New York and Newport were inextricably bound to the image she wished to construct about her identity in each locale. In a larger sense, then, this dissertation explores how the acquisition or consumption of art functioned in various ways and in different contexts for one individual.

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[31] Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence* (1920; repr., New York: Collier Books, 1986), 309.

[32] For a sociological approach to issue concerning consumption, patronage, and taste, see Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. by Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).

Chapters

The chapters are not organized chronologically but according to the locale under consideration. Each chapter seeks to piece together and decode the overall aesthetic dominating the choices Wolfe made. Chapter one situates Wolfe within the dynamics of the urban art scene; the civic exhibitions to which she lent her support; and the creation of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It also considers possible overlaps between her philanthropy and her art patronage, emanating in part from aspects of her own biography. The major emphasis is on her Madison Square brownstone and on the assemblage of paintings for this domestic interior. It tries to ascertain why she selected what she did and how she used particular works to help carve out her identity. I point to her action with other tastemakers and consider the role of her cousin John Wolfe, himself a prominent collector who is frequently credited with shaping her artistic vision. I argue that while he served as an adviser to Wolfe, there were fundamental differences in their approaches to patronage and in the way they defined themselves as collectors.

Chapters two and three examine how the architecture and decorative ensembles Wolfe commissioned were meant to function in Newport, interpreting what we know about the architects, designers, locations, and other issues underlying their production. Chapter two turns to Wolfe's creation of Vinland as it relates to her selection of Peabody & Stearns as its architects. I examine the implications of that commission, and assess how Vinland fit in with the prevailing architectural paradigms of the resort at the time, including references to the work of McKim, Mead & White and H. H. Richardson, who executed prominent works there in the 1870s and 1880s. Central to this chapter is a consideration of Robert Peabody's advocacy of the Queen Anne style. The chapter also explores Wolfe's well documented land

purchase and the Viking theme she supported as well as its historical ramifications as interpreted within the larger New England *zeitgeist*. It analyzes how the architecture of the finished Vinland reveals that the architects and patron were united by a common desire to mark periods of New England's heritage.

Chapter three analyzes the dynamics of Wolfe's collaboration with William Morris. Why did she select the British firm of Morris & Co., which was at a physical remove from the site, over other design firms presumably more readily available to her? In this context, I consider the extent of Peabody's role in the selection of Morris & Co. Additionally, I explore how Wolfe's choices were connected to what she perceived as a commonality of interest in Viking lore that she shared with Morris. The balance of the chapter attempts re-create the underlying decorative aesthetic that once dominated the interior at Vinland, with particular attention to the primary commissions for the house: the Morris/Burne-Jones window and the Walter Crane frieze, as well as Wolfe's addition of Winslow Homer's *The Life Line*. While neither of the British projects remains *in situ*, there are fragments and relevant studies in the curatorial collections and archives of such institutions as the Delaware Art Museum, the Huntington Library and Museum, the Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, and the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. A firsthand examination of these materials has allowed me an opportunity to visualize the scale and impact of the art created for Vinland.

While the first chapter places Wolfe and her New York pictures within the city's art scene, the second and third chapters contextualize a consideration of the significance of architectural and decorative choices she made in Newport. In so doing, they provide a means to forge new connections between the Arts & Crafts movement and the Queen Anne style, as they manifested themselves in interpreting Viking themes at Vinland.

Chapter four provides a close examination of two key paintings, and uses them to frame a discussion of Wolfe's positioning of self in two different venues. This focused study of Cot's *The Storm* and Homer's *The Life Line* assesses how these particular works would have functioned for Wolfe and evaluates how they addressed or did not address issues of gender and class, factors which would have played a role in Wolfe's purchase and decisions involving their display. Ultimately, this chapter offers a final perspective as to how this single woman of great means utilized art and the amassing of material culture to position herself in two distinct places at particular and dynamic moments in their history.

There have been patronage studies and institutional histories of New York's Gilded-Age elite and studies of nineteenth-century American resorts (including Newport), but none has attempted to relate the self-fashioning of the elite in the city and country simultaneously, especially through their houses, furnishings, artistic patronage, and collecting. Catharine Lorillard Wolfe is a preeminent subject for such a study because of her progressive choices in the development of the Gilded-Age city and resort. While we have studies of rich women who used art to position themselves culturally and socially, this dissertation reveals a rare breed of woman who does so effectively just prior to the full flowering of Newport as a place of social ritual for the rich and New York as a world-class city.

CHAPTER ONE

Collecting, Patronage, and Identity Formation in Early Gilded-Age New York

In the Gilded Age decades of the 1870s and 1880s, the Empire City emerged as a financial and cultural center with which to be reckoned. As the city strove to present itself as a flourishing economic capital, it self-consciously attempted to develop a cosmopolitan artistic culture on a par with its European counterparts. A new and powerful bourgeoisie emerged, composed of entrepreneurs and industrial millionaires who differed from the mercantile elite that preceded them. Among the city's most prominent business leaders, they built great houses, engaged in the consumption of cultural artifacts and works of fine art, and elevated themselves through visible associations with the city's rising cultural institutions ostensibly designed for the public benefit.[1]

It was in this urban landscape that Lorillard tobacco heiress and philanthropist Catharine Lorillard Wolfe constructed an identity for herself as an art collector and patron of the work of some of the most celebrated living European artists of her time. An unmarried woman of considerable fortune and privilege, Wolfe strove to establish herself as a prominent cultural arbiter in New York. She operated in a less publicity-seeking fashion than did some of her contemporaries who collected similar art, including department-store mogul Alexander Tierney Stewart (1803–1876); railroad tycoon William Henry Vanderbilt (1821–1885); and her cousin John Wolfe (1821–1894), who frequently was credited as her influential adviser.

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[1] See Madeleine Fidell-Beaufort, "Art Collecting in the United States after the Civil War: Civic Pride, Competition and Personal Gains," in *Artwork through the Market: The Past and the Present*, ed. Ján Bakos (Bratislava: VEDA, 2004), 125–36; and Allan Wallach, "The Birth of the American Art Museum," in *The American Bourgeoisie: Distinction and Identity in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Sven Beckert and Julia B. Rosenbaum (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 247–56.

Wolfe's contribution to the city's cultural ascendancy stemmed from her support of burgeoning cultural institutions, most notably the Metropolitan Museum of Art, for which she was the first female subscriber and benefactor, along with 105 male sponsors, from the time of its incorporation in 1870.[2] Over a period spanning the 1870s and 1880s, Wolfe developed a deliberate strategy of amassing art to live with and enjoy as an intact collection, which ultimately would be shared with the public in the form of a posthumous gallery, in her name and according to the guidelines she devised, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.[3] Her landmark bequest was unique in an era in which gifts from women to public arts institutions were confined primarily to works of decorative art.[4]

During her lifetime, Wolfe did not provide much direct testimony about what propelled her to form her collection, keep it intact, and then give it away. In her 1998 study *Writing a Women's Life*, literary scholar Carolyn G. Heilbrun reflects upon inherent gaps in the narratives women who are public figures produce about their own lives:

> Women of accomplishment, in unconsciously writing their future lives... have had to confront power and control. Because this has been declared unwomanly...women have been deprived of the narratives, or the text, plots, or examples, by which they assume power over—take control of—their own lives….Power is the

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[2] Winifred E. Howe, *A History of the Metropolitan Museum of Art: With a Chapter on the Early Institutions of Art in New York* (New York: Arno Press, 1974), 133. For a record of Wolfe's initial subscription of $2,500, see letter of Catharine Lorillard Wolfe to Metropolitan Museum of Art, November 20, 1871, Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Collection files, Office of the Secretary Records, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives [hereafter cited as MMA Wolfe Collection files].

[3] Will of Catharine Lorillard Wolfe, dated March 24, 1885, proved May 31, 1887, New York (County) Surrogate's Court, Record of Wills, Liber 39, Clause 6, 122.

[4] See Kathleen D. McCarthy, *Women's Culture: American Philanthropy and Art, 1830–1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 118.

> ability to take one's place in whatever discourse is essential to action and the right to have one's part matter.[5]

This perspective on issues of power and control in narratives by and about women is particularly apposite when we consider Catharine Lorillard Wolfe's career in New York.

Wolfe's narrative is articulated not through documents, since few survive, but the particular decisions she made as she used the materials of cultural currency to achieve recognition as an art patron in New York. In this regard, her motives differed from those of the post-bellum new "entrepreneurial and managerial elites [who] reconfigured patronage of the arts as an expression of class identity."[6] Because of her secure social status there, Wolfe did not need to use art patronage as a vehicle to transcend class boundaries in New York City, to declare monetary success, or to gain the confidence of others, as many of her male collecting peers did. Instead, she used collecting to align herself with the city's rising cultural institutions, although this was presumably to solidify her standing in some way.

This chapter seeks to situate Wolfe in the metropolis to provide a context for her collecting and patronage activities there, and takes into account how her social choices related to her domestic and collecting ones. It argues that her art patronage provided the instrument enabling Wolfe to gain cultural power and personal sovereignty. An investigation of Wolfe in New York also sets the stage for what will be the subject of subsequent chapters: namely, an exploration of the shift in architectural, artistic, and decorative aesthetics, which would characterize Wolfe's choices when she developed Vinland, her house in Newport, Rhode Island, in the 1880s, during the last decade of her life.

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[5] Carolyn G. Heilbrun, *Writing a Woman's Life* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988), 16–18.

[6] John Ott, "The Manufactured Patron: Staging Bourgeois Identity through Art Consumption in Postbellum America," in Beck and Rosenbaum, eds., *The American Bourgeoisie*, 257.

As the introduction to this dissertation establishes, there appears to have been a fundamental dichotomy between Wolfe's pursuits in New York, and the way in which she functioned in Newport. Among the differences that emerge are: life in the city as against time spent as a summer resident in a resort; the use of a pre-existing family residence in the city, as opposed to the creation of a new alternate one elsewhere; the collecting of pictures by living European Salon painters for New York, rather than commissioning a coterie of British artists of the Aesthetic and Arts & Crafts movements for Newport. We see Wolfe deliberately construct a legacy in New York, all-the-while fulfilling official obligations, in contrast to reaping the benefits of a different identity in a haven seemingly removed from the constraints of the city. Understanding the significance of the specific aesthetic she chose for each locale will enable us to draw conclusions about how Wolfe announced herself through navigating the distinctive cultural terrains of the urban center and the emergent resort respectively. Ultimately, one must consider her careers in New York and Newport in relation to each other because they reveal two aspects of her creative drive.

There were two spaces at the core of Wolfe's self-fashioning in New York. The first was the relatively private space of her family home overlooking Madison Square, the site she used as the venue for her picture collecting. The second space was the museum she supported and later designated as the final repository for her collection, so as to cement in perpetuity her name as a cultural benefactor. Studying her patronage in New York also underscores the fact that she did not commission an architect to create a new house in the city to foreground her art and her identity, as did many of her peers. Instead, Wolfe used the walls of the pre-existing spaces in her family brownstone for the installation of her pictures. Furthermore, as far as we

can ascertain, she did not embark on the construction of a purpose-built gallery, designated exclusively for the hanging and viewing of art, as did many of her contemporaries.

In this context, I apply the term *gallery* to refer to a specific room in a domestic interior, not to point to one in a museum, nor to invoke the broader usage of the term in the nineteenth century as a label to characterize a collection itself.[7] By permitting limited public access to her art collection during her lifetime, and placing provisions in her will dictating how her pictures were to remain together in a public museum after her death, Wolfe employed a formidable degree of control as to how her pictures and, ultimately, *she*, were to be perceived. Thus Wolfe demonstrated a clear awareness of the divide separating the domestic sphere and the institutional one as sites for the custodianship of art. The fact that Wolfe insisted, in her will, on a dedicated gallery for the collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art indicates that she certainly understood the difference between the kinds of display—domestic and institutional—and wanted the final destination of her collection to be an official and prestigious public one.

Research on Wolfe as a collector in New York is challenged by the relative paucity of a written record about her motivations, as I have indicated; by the fact that the house where she lived and kept her pictures no longer exists; and by the lack of photographic evidence of her art *in situ* in its original domestic setting. There is also a lack of commentary on her part about the pictures she owned, and an absence of correspondence between her and the artists

[7] For further discussion of these varied definitions of the term *gallery*, see Anne McNair Bolin, "Art and the Domestic Interior: The Residential Art Gallery in New York City, 1850–1870" (PhD diss., Emory University, 2000), 5. A case in point of the term *gallery* being used to denote a collection rather than the room that housed art can be found in Cicerone, "Private Galleries: Collection of Miss Catharine L. Wolfe," *Art Amateur* 2, no. 4 (March 1880): 75–76.

she patronized. One must strive to balance an approach that provides a contextualized analysis of her choices and accomplishments along with the use of archival recovery.

While no one until now has attempted to fully consider how, in the urban milieu she inhabited, Wolfe forged an identity as an elite patron, scholars in recent years have begun to delve into her New York legacy. In an essay published in *Apollo* in 1998, Metropolitan Museum of Art curator Rebecca A. Rabinow charts a linear narrative of the collecting patterns of this under-recognized patron and benefactor, and credits Wolfe with helping to place the Metropolitan Museum on New York's "cultural map."[8] Rabinow assesses from an institutional perspective how Wolfe fit into the Museum's history and, in so doing, places less emphasis on spatial, social, or gendered concerns about how she functioned as a collector.

By contrast, in *Enchanted Objects, Enchanted Lives*, written a decade later than Rabinow's essay, Dianne Sachko Macleod inserts Wolfe into a psychological interpretation of female collectors that spans the early nineteenth century into the twentieth. Macleod acknowledges that Wolfe possessed the financial resources needed to establish herself as a philanthropist and cultural benefactor of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in a capacity far beyond what was typically possible for a Victorian spinster, one that even transgressed expectations for women and men. She says of Wolfe: "Her subjectivity was shaped by the social and cultural norms of the Gilded Age, but she stretched the boundaries of genteel femininity by venturing into worlds of male patrons, philanthropists, attorneys and accountants."[9] While Rabinow bases her analysis on the historical record of Wolfe's

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[8] Rebecca A. Rabinow, "Catharine Lorillard Wolfe: The First Woman Benefactor of the Metropolitan Museum of Art," *Apollo* 50, no. 433 (March 1998): 48.

[9] Dianne Sachko Macleod, *Enchanted Lives, Enchanted Objects: American Women Collectors and the Making of Culture, 1800–1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, with the assistance of the Getty Foundation, 2008), 65.

collecting, Macleod appears to overlook that record almost entirely. After acknowledging the breadth of Wolfe's benefactions, Macleod categorizes the art Wolfe amassed and lived with as symptomatic primarily of a repressed sexuality, and further asserts that Wolfe "staged her possessions to assist in her escapist fantasies."[10] This view provides a segue to what will constitute Macleod's critique of Vinland as an escapist refuge for Wolfe in Newport. In the end, while Macleod raises provocative issues as to the psychic and social strictures faced by Wolfe and other single women in the late nineteenth century, she underestimates Wolfe's real accomplishments. Wolfe did not fill her rooms with the art she purchased as an escapist activity; instead, her engagement with the spaces of her picture-filled Madison Square house functioned as a microcosm of the developing art worlds and art markets surrounding her there.

Both Rabinow and Macleod contribute to our picture of Wolfe in New York, but neither scholar seeks to decipher the particular strategies Wolfe used in an accumulation of art to create what would be her legacy. A focused examination of choices Wolfe made in New York—and options she did not pursue—in the spaces she navigated, reveals how she carved out a palpable civic identity of her own making. Since the identity Wolfe forged was initially dependent on her roots in New York, one needs to engage first in a retrieval of relevant facts about her lineage and station there.

The Persona of the Collector

Wolfe was bred to be part of the city's Gilded-Age elite stemming from her dual heritage as a Lorillard and a Wolfe, families whose roots in the United States were formed in the years before the American Revolution. Born in the city on March 8, 1828, she would remain a New

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[10] Ibid., 67.

Yorker until her death from Bright's Disease on April 4, 1887. The third child of John David Wolfe (1792–1872) and Dorothea Ann Lorillard (1798–1866), she was the only one of their issue to reach adulthood and ultimately survive them.[11] From the time she was in her twenties, Wolfe thus lived with the knowledge that she was to be the sole recipient of her parents' wealth.

Her mother was an heir to the vast Lorillard tobacco empire. Traces of the Lorillard footprint still exist on the site of what was then part of Westchester County, land later destined to be part of the Bronx Botanical Gardens.[12] The Lorillard presence in New York dates back to the eighteenth century, when Pierre Abraham Lorillard (1742–1776), a Huguenot from Montpelier, fled France in the wake of religious persecution, and established a tobacco business in 1760 on Chatham Street in what is now Lower Manhattan. The tobacco Lorillard used came from Virginia, presumably from the plantation owned by George Washington.[13] In 1776, Lorillard was murdered by Hessian soldiers because of his anti-Tory sympathies. Later, his son, Pierre Lorillard II (1764–1843), transferred the expanding tobacco

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[11] John David Wolfe and Dororthea Ann Lorillard were married on April 23, 1822. Their first child was Mary Lorillard Hoffman (1823–1847). Their second child, David L. Wolfe (1825–1829), only reached the age of four. For further Lorillard family history, see "Records of the Lorillard Family taken from the Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Churches in New York City, 1858," 3, Archives of the New York Botanical Gardens.

[12] The snuff mill there, originally owned by Wolfe's maternal grandfather, has been under renovation as a National Historic Landmark. See Stephen Jenkins, *The Story of the Bronx from the Purchase Made by the Dutch from the Indians in 1639 to the Present Day* (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1912), 305–6. It is important to note that in the literature of the history of the Lorillard family, the line of sons are interchangeably referred to as Pierre or Peter, the former presumably to stress their French origin. For the sake of clarity, I will refer to them as Pierre.

[13] For more of this history, see "Pierre Lorillard," in Lyman Horace Weeks, ed., *Prominent Families of New York...* (New York: The Historical Company, 1897), 375; and Harry Dunkak, "The Lorillard Family of Westchester Country: Tobacco, Property, and Nature," *The Westchester Historian* 71, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 53.

business to Westchester and became so successful an entrepreneur there that term *millionaire* is said to have been coined to describe him.[14]

A significant clause in his will ensured that his son and four daughters—one of whom was Wolfe's mother—be named "tenants in common" and provided that the funds relegated to his daughters be for their use only, not to be under the control of a husband.[15] The likelihood is that Catharine Lorillard Wolfe's mother's inheritance from Pierre Lorillard II's vast estate would have been passed on to Wolfe herself following her mother's death in 1866, thereby releasing funds for the acquisition of pictures and for her original subscription to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

In 1866–67, the year following his wife's death, Catharine Lorillard Wolfe's father, John David Wolfe, was cited as the seventh-richest man in America.[16] He, too, had forebears of note, including a grandfather who emigrated from Saxony and served under General Washington during the American Revolution.[17] John David Wolfe inherited the successful hardware business of Wolfe & Bishop from his father, and would amass large real estate holdings in his own right, which he later passed on to his daughter.[18] His great financial

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[14] See Dunkak, "The Lorillard Family of Westchester County," 56.

[15] Ibid.

[16] T. W., "Our Millionaires," *Galaxy* 5 (May 1868): 529. The author goes on to state: "Mr. Wolfe not only inherited a good fortune, but his business doubled it, and his marriage to a Lorillard tripled it." Ibid., 533.

[17] Albert Bernhardt Faust, *The German Element in the United States with Special Reference to Its Political, Moral, Social, and Educational Influence* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1909), vol. 2, 450.

[18] John David Wolfe was also a founder and director of Chemical Bank and director of the Hudson River Railroad Company. See Walter Barrett, *The Old Merchants of New York City* (New York: Carleton, 1864), 152; and George Wilson, comp., *Portrait Gallery of the*

comfort would allow him to retire from the day-to-day operation of his family business in 1842, at age fifty, so he could devote himself to philanthropy. Among his charities was Grace Episcopal Church, an institution to which his daughter would become a prominent communicant and contributor.[19] John David Wolfe also immersed himself in New York's cultural institutions, as a member of the board of the New-York Historical Society, as a contributor to the National Academy of Design and, more significantly, as first president of the American Museum of Natural History, from the time of its founding in 1869 until his death in 1872. In this latter capacity, the former merchant John David Wolfe served alongside the patrician Theodore Roosevelt, Sr., and the powerful industrialist J. Pierpont Morgan.[20] John David Wolfe established a model for the alignment of wealth and cultural governance that his daughter would inherit and appropriate as a template for herself.

In 1878, six years after the death of her father, Catharine Lorillard Wolfe presented the American Museum of Natural History with a replica of the 1871 portrait of her father painted by the artist Daniel Huntington (1816–1906; fig. 2); the original would remain in her possession during her lifetime. In a letter addressed to the Museum's Trustees, his daughter referred to the portrait as a "work which I venture to think is not unworthy of your acceptance and that of your successors in office. I do so in the confidence that you will not be unwilling to possess this memorial of one whose name is identified with your Board as its first president

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Chamber of Commerce of the State of New-York (New York: Press of the Chamber of Commerce, 1890), 151.

[19] See William Rhinelander Stewart, *Grace Church and Old New York* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1924), 174, 179, 291, and 432.

[20] See *The First Annual Report of the American Museum of Natural History* (New York: Printed for the Museum by the Major & Knapp Engraving, Manufacturing, and Lithographic Co., January 1870), 3.

and one of its most constant friends."[21] It is clear that Wolfe intended that this portrait preserve her father's memory in a museum he had helped to found. Her desire that his contribution to the American Museum of Natural History endure was a strategy she would later apply, on a larger scale, in her own bequest to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Wolfe's fortune, which had been passed down to her from her Lorillard and Wolfe forbears, did not represent new money, and the pictures she accumulated would not be acquisitions borne of new wealth. Unlike many male collectors of her time, who were among the growing number of New York's newly minted millionaires, Wolfe's wealth was inherited; unlike many women of her social standing, she did not receive funds through the direct ties of her own marriage. The fact that she chose not to marry must have been deemed unusual, or at least worthy of mention by nearly all who spoke of her during her lifetime and in the years following her death. After all, her elevated social status must have afforded her opportunities to marry had she wished to do so.

One speculates as to whether her decision to remain single was based on a lack of interest in men or came from a religious bent widely thought to be bred into the DNA of some Victorian spinsters. There was one line of speculation about the existence of a possible suitor, although this rumored liaison never culminated in marriage.[22] Some of her contemporaries surmised that Wolfe was convinced that the men who paid attention to her were motivated

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[21] Catharine Lorillard Wolfe to Trustees of the American Museum of Natural History, November 4, 1878, cited in Minutes of the Meeting of the Trustees, November 11, 1878, Archives of the American Museum of Natural History. In her letter, Wolfe makes it clear that it was Huntington who executed the replica. Earlier she donated funds and a collection of valuable shells to this institution in her father's honor. See Wolfe to Officers of the Museum, March 6, 1874, Archives of the American Museum of Natural History; and "Museum of Natural History. Purchase of Skeletons of the Dinornis—Some Account of That Strange Bird, "*New York Times*, March 14, 1874.

[22] See "Charity Losing a Helper," *New York Times*, April 5, 1887, 8.

primarily by a desire to gain access to her wealth, so she preferred to remain unattached and be "custodian of her vast possessions."[23] Another observer characterized Wolfe as "the possessor of a lamp the rubbing of which bringeth forth the all-mighty dollar….Fain would any one of that numerous and persevering tribe known as fortune-hunters possess himself of Miss Kitty...but the lady prefers to say the tiny little word 'No' in its iciest form."[24] Wolfe's blatant rejection of the possibility of marriage, noted here, did run counter to prevailing codes of etiquette about the rules governing courtship and marriage.[25] Furthermore, the phrase "Proposals of Marriage Not Accepted!" was rumored to have been written on Wolfe's calling card, according to folklore about her still circulating in Newport more than a century later.[26]

It may well have been a desire to ensure that her money remain under her own control that fueled her decision to stay single, although we have to remember that Lorillard wills, dating back to the empowering clauses initiated by her maternal grandfather, Pierre Lorillard II, incorporated provisions to protect the financial security of the women in his extended family.[27] In Wolfe's own gifts to individual women stipulated in her will, she specified that the money such female beneficiaries would receive be protected from the interests of their

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[23] "Catharine Lorillard Wolfe's Millions—Her Palatial Seaside Home," *The Atlantic Constitutions* (August 3, 1884): 2.

[24] Noel Ruthven, "Where Cottages Are Palaces," *Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly* 18, no. 2 (August 1884): 135.

[25] See Harvey Green, *The Light of the Home: An Intimate View of the Lives of Women in Victorian America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 10–28.

[26] This is recounted in Ed Morris, *A Guide to Newport's Cliff Walk: Tales of Seaside Mansions and the Gilded Age Elite* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2009), 37–38.

[27] Dunkak, "Lorillard Family of Westchester County," 56. See also Will of Dorothea Ann Lorillard, proved November 12, 1866, New York (County) Surrogate's Court, Record of Wills, Liber 23.

husbands.[28] Moreover, an assumption that the control of her money might have been in jeopardy had she married does not take into account the very real possibility that Wolfe could have married someone as wealthy or even wealthier than she was. What is most significant is that Wolfe did not need to marry to become a collector and patron; her choice to remain single allowed her to maintain her independence and the ability to exercise control over her life.

In 1876, when in her late forties, Wolfe made the decision to sit for her portrait in the Paris studio of the highly esteemed Salon painter Alexandre Cabanel (1823–1889; fig. 1). The specific circumstances of Cabanel's commission to paint Wolfe's portrait have not been documented. However, when planning to paint a replica of this portrait in the aftermath of Wolfe's death, and the projected transfer of the original picture to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the artist Daniel Huntington speculated that the usual fee that Cabanel would have asked for a sitter in a similar three-quarter pose would have approximated about 5,000 francs. Huntington added that it had been rumored that the artist may have charged Wolfe a far greater amount, possibly as much as 50,000 francs, although he does not offer an explanation for what might have contributed to this inflated sum.[29]

Cabanel's life-sized portrait of Wolfe, presumably painted after multiple sittings, depicts an elegant and composed woman who looks directly at the viewer. She is dressed in a yellow satin gown trimmed with sable and lace. Wolfe customarily ordered gowns and accessories from Charles Frederick Worth, the Paris-based couturier favored by wealthy

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[28] Will of Catharine Lorillard Wolfe, clause 20, 132.

[29] See Daniel P. Huntington to Luigi Palma di Cesnola, August 16, 1887, MMA Wolfe Collection files, in which Huntington discusses possible insurance he would need in order to keep the original Cabanel portrait in his studio for three months while he was painting a replica.

American clients.[30] In a far less flattering image of Wolfe in an undated photograph (fig. 3), she also wears expensive attire and lace, and her gaze replicates the forthright expression of the one in the portrait.[31]

In Cabanel's portrait, Wolfe poses in front of a table draped in a velvet fabric, on which her hand rests. She stands against a maroon background, near what seems to be a highly decorated empty picture frame, possibly alluding to the setting of the artist's studio or signaling Wolfe's identity as an art patron. The artist had a high regard for his ability to paint such pictures: "I have painted the portrait of a great many Americans, the delicacy and grace and refined type of American beauty being particularly congenial to my pencil."[32] Cabanel received great praise for his idealized representation of this American heiress. One of Wolfe's compatriots admired Cabanel's portrait for its "expression of highly-bred refinement of attenuated elegance, such as will be found in their highest manifestations in one of our select

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[30] See, for example, Catharine Lorillard Wolfe to Mrs. Lorillard Spencer, May 16, 1884, Archives of the Preservation Society of Newport County, Newport, Rhode Island. In this letter to her cousin, who was then living in Paris, Wolfe refers to orders for an outfit for a dinner at Newport, and details about antique lace and a satin dress. For more on Charles Frederick Worth and his American clients, see Diana De Marly, *Worth: Father of Haute Couture* (London: Elm Tree Books, 1980), 137–38, 167–68, 197–98.

[31] This photograph is reproduced in Walter Whipple Spooner, "Catharine Lorillard Wolfe," in *Historic Families of America: Comprehending the Genealogical Records and Representative Biography of Selected Families of Early American Ancestry, Recognized Social Standing, and Special Distinction***,** 3 vols. (New York: Historic Families Pub. Association, 1907), vol. 1, 283.

[32] Interview with Cabanel, translated and cited after his death in "Cabanel's American Paintings," *Critic* 11, no. 267 (February 9, 1889): 69. It is worth noting that in this interview Cabanel refers to many of his American sitters but does not mention his portrait of Wolfe. For further analysis of Cabanel and his society portraits of American women, see Leanne Zalewski, "Alexandre Cabanel's Portraits of the American 'Aristocracy' of the Early Gilded Age," in *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*, 4, no. 1 (Spring 2005). [http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/index.php/spring05/300--alexandre-cabanels-portraits-of-the-american-aristocracy-of-the-early-gilded-age]

American types."[33] Another writer credited Cabanel with giving his New York sitter an aristocratic look and, at the same time, softening "traces of age."[34] An English critic writing about the portrait two years after Wolfe's death asserted that it was "[a]n exquisite specimen of Cabanel's skill as a painter of *dames du monde*….In this case, the costume has not been made much of and the fine personality of the sitter dominates the whole."[35] The painting would be hung and re-hung in the private space of Wolfe's New York brownstone before becoming part of her gift to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The arresting image of Wolfe in this picture and the fact that she chose to pose for a portrait by this eminent French artist provide a clear statement of how she desired her status in New York to be perceived. It also conveys the idea that the subject inhabited a world of money and privilege.

While Cabanel's portrait is a depiction of an elite woman in the Gilded Age, it harks back to the way in which American sitters, in the decades and century that preceded it, wished to be represented in the portraits they commissioned. Portraiture was used as a vehicle of self-fashioning, rather than as a record of an accurate likeness. In his essay "The Meaning of 'Likeness': American Portrait Painting in an Eighteenth-Century Consumer Society," T. H. Breen claims that "[t]he portrait did not seem to enjoy independent standing as fine art. It found meaning for contemporary Americans largely within a context of other objects…. of material culture."[36] Breen elaborates on the fact that sitters were less interested in having their

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[33] Earl Shinn, *The Art Treasures of America: Being the Choicest Works of Art in the Public and Private Collections of North America*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: George Barrie, 1879–80), vol. 1, 120.

[34] "The Wolfe Pictures," *New York Times*, November 7, 1887, 4.

[35] Walter Rowlands, "The Miss Wolfe Collection," *Art Journal* 44, no. 3 (January 1889): 14.

[36] T. H. Breen, "The Meaning of 'Likeness': American Portrait Painting in an Eighteenth-Century Consumer Society," *Word & Image* 6, no. 4 (1990): 340.

portraits be renditions of reality than they were in having the garments they wore, or the settings in which they were depicted, be markers of their social and economic class.[37]

In this context, Margaretta M. Lovell argues in *Art in a Season of Revolution* (2005) that portraits by such noted artists as John Singleton Copley (1738–1815) can be interpreted as evidence of his subjects' concern that their portraits convey crucial aspects of their identity. Case in point: In Copley's celebrated 1763 portrait of the newly married Mary Turner Sargent (fig. 4), housed today at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, the sitter's dress "suggests in the intrinsic value of its visible imported materials, the unpicturable value of its wearer as legatee of an extraordinary patrimony."[38] Lovell notes that even the blue color of the sitter's dress references her as a "blue blood."[39] If we consider Wolfe's portrait in relation to such earlier prototypes, we see how her act of having of this portrait painted demonstrates a profound commitment to self-fashioning. Her implicit collaboration with the artist resulted in the deliberate creation of the cultural, financial, and social prism through which she wished to be viewed.

This highly choreographed depiction of Wolfe on Cabanel's canvas reveals, as well, a strong and confident woman. These qualities characterized her dealings with the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It was an institution which would never grant Wolfe recognition as a Trustee, despite her unique support and standing as the first woman to be elected as Benefactor, and her role as a model for later women donors. It is striking that at a moment in the late 1870s,

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[37] Ibid., 340–45.

[38] Margaretta M. Lovell, *Art in a Season of Revolution: Painters, Artisans, and Patrons in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 60.

[39] Ibid., 63.

when the Trustees of the Museum failed to purchase the Castellani collection of maiolica for the institution's permanent holdings, a letter from the art critic, Clarence Cook, published in the *New York Tribune*, deplored what he judged to be a signal failure on the part of the Museum's officers. Cook asserted that "Miss Wolf [sic], and the rest of our rich citizens...could not have turned a deaf ear" had they been solicited to contribute funds for this purchase.[40] Yet the Museum's records reveal that Wolfe was not always a docile donor. In the early 1880s, during the second decade of the Museum's existence, she felt its officers did not fulfill the fundraising goals they had previously set for themselves. As a result, Wolfe cancelled a promised large subscription to what was to be the "Permanent Fund of the Metropolitan Museum." [41] This act revealed a firm stance in her interaction with the very institution that ultimately would become the recipient of her cultural patrimony.

Madison Square

It is significant that after the death of her father, Wolfe chose to remain in the space of the Wolfe family residence at Madison Square. Following his death, she would inherit considerable real estate holdings in New York, much of which were sold at auction at her death.[42] The family house, where she continued to reside, together with the art collection she was acquiring, was an 1850s double-width brownstone situated at 13 Madison Avenue on the

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[40] Letter of Clarence Cook cited in *New York Daily Tribune*, February 18, 1878. I would like to thank Professor Timothy Wilson of the Ashmolean Museum, the University of Oxford, for bringing this incident to my attention.

[41] James P. Kernochan to Luigi Palma di Cesnola, September 1, 1882, MMA Wolfe Collection files.

[42] For the dispersal of buildings, see *Auction Sale by the Order of the Heirs of Catharine Lorillard Wolfe, deceased, by Adrian H. Muller & Son at the Real Estate Exchange and Auction Room, January 19, 1888* (1888; repr., New York: P. F. McBreen, 1988).

northeast corner of 24th Street (figs. 5, 6).[43] On its avenue side it faced what was the neighborhood park, Madison Square, and, on its street side, it looked across to the James Renwick Gothic Revival Madison Square Presbyterian Church, built in 1854. Since the Wolfe house no longer stands, one must weave together data from period photographs, maps, and other archival sources, to resurrect the effect of the facade and interior of the brownstone.

In the mid-1840s the Wolfe family lived at 744 Broadway, on the southeast corner of Astor Place, close to Grace Episcopal Church at East 10th Street and Broadway, where they worshipped, and would continue to do so after their move to Madison Square.[44] The Astor Place location was near the residence of Dorothea Ann Lorillard's brother, Pierre Lorillard III (1796–1867), whose son, Wolfe's cousin Pierre Lorillard IV (1833–1901), would build the original Breakers (designed by Peabody & Stearns) in Newport in the late 1870s. It was on land adjacent to what would become Wolfe's summer residence, Vinland, designed by the same architects in the early 1880s.

A deed of sale, dated November 24, 1853, verifies that for the sum of $50,000 John David Wolfe and his wife purchased a series of five contiguous city lots on Madison Avenue from Henry and Mary Dwight.[45] If we compare the language of the deed with the division of

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[43] Although 13 Madison Avenue is cited as her official address in correspondence and legal documentation, the property is alternatively identified as 11 Madison Avenue on maps and on other signage.

[44] See Luther S. Harris, *Around Washington Square: An Illustrated History of Greenwich Village* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2003), 44–45.

[45] Deed of sale dated November 24, 1853, Liber 651, p 331, New York Office of the City Register, Department of Finance. The document records a purchase of five lots, forming two perpendicular rectangles measuring 150 feet east–west, parallel to 24th Street; 98.9 feet north–south parallel to Madison Avenue; 50 feet east–west parallel to 24th Street; the second rectangle measuring 24.8 feet southerly parallel to Madison Avenue; and 100 feet parallel to 24th Street.

lots delineated in a 1915 sketch of the block (fig. 7), it appears that the five lots the family bought were later reconfigured to constitute four lots, identified here as lots 1, 3, 5, and 6. This land had been vacant a year prior to their purchase, as indicated on a map of 1852.[46] The Wolfes themselves likely commissioned the construction of their double brownstone, although the name of the architect is unknown.

The family's decision to move from Astor Place further uptown was consistent with a pattern of gradual migration north on the part of affluent New Yorkers. Their choice of Madison Square led them to what had become a fashionable residential neighborhood.[47] Designated a public space since the seventeenth century and named for President James Madison in 1814, and once the site of a potter's field, Madison Square was opened as a park in 1847. Along with nearby Fifth Avenue and 23rd Street, it soon attracted the city's wealthy and fashionable, as well as those who sought to enhance their own social standing.[48] Lines of newly constructed row houses with brownstone facades filled the streets surrounding Madison Square and the nearby environs of the East 20s and 30s.[49]

The use of brownstone—a generic term for sandstone or freestone—for these connected and seemingly identical houses was regarded as a socially acceptable expression of urban domestic architecture, even if their relative uniformity may have appeared at odds with

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[46] Matthew Dripps, *Maps of the City of New York 1852–1854*, pl. 7.

[47] See Marcus Benjamin, *A Historical Sketch of Madison Square* (New York: Meriden Britannia Company, 1894); and Miriam Berman, *Madison Square, The Park and Its Celebrated Landmarks* (Salt Lake City, UT: Gibbs Smith, 2001).

[48] Charles Lockwood, *Bricks and Brownstones: The New York Row House, 1783–1929* (1972; rev. ed., New York: Rizzoli, 2003), 206.

[49] Ibid.

the vaunted American trait of individualism.[50] Writing in 1906, the architectural historian Montgomery Schuyler observed what he perceived as the dreariness of brownstones:

> By looking out of the back windows of a New York block, you might sometimes get a notion that Manhattan was populated by individuals differing among themselves in manners and customs. But the monotonous rows of high stooped brown stone fronts were an expressed negation of that notion, denying individuality and sternly repressing variety among their inmates.[51]

In *The Age of Innocence*, Edith Wharton's 1920 acerbic account of the lives of the privileged in New York of the 1870s and 1880s, the author uses the unarticulated thoughts of her protagonist, Newland Archer, to reveal her point of view. In one instance, Archer launches into a private salvo directed at "the brownstone of which the uniformed hue coated New York like a cold chocolate sauce."[52] Decades later, Wayne Craven characterized what must have been the cultural impact of these brownstones from a different perspective: "To the eyes of the parvenus, the very sameness of brownstone houses all in a row reflected the petrified social order that prevailed."[53] Case in point: In 1856, Caroline Schermerhorn Astor (1830–1908), a descendant of the city's original Dutch settlers—*the* Mrs. Astor—was adamant that her husband, William B. Astor II, commission the building of a large freestanding brownstone

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[50] See Robert A. M. Stern, Thomas Mellins, and David Fishman, *New York 1880: Architecture and Urbanism in the Gilded Age* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1999), 567.

[51] Montgomery Schuyler, "The New New York House," *Architectural Record* 19, no, 2 (February 1906): 84.

[52] Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence* (1920; repr., New York: Collier Books, 1986), 7.

[53] Wayne Craven, *Gilded Mansions: Grand Architecture and High Society* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2009), 34.

(fig. 8); it was designed by the architect Griffith Thomas, on land at the southwest corner of Fifth Avenue and 34th Street.[54]

Thus the Wolfes' selection of brownstone for the facade of their house was not unusual for people of their social and economic standing in New York society in the mid-nineteenth century, however unfashionable it was later to become. A map of 1867 (fig. 9) reveals that their house spanned at least twice the usual width of a row house, with what appears to have been an alley to the left, possibly leading to outbuildings behind it.[55] The photographs of the street (figs. 5, 6) shows that the Wolfes' double-brownstone was large, freestanding, and patrician. It appears to have been an elegant dwelling three stories high, three bays wide, with the central doorway situated between two windows on the ground floor, presumably on its avenue entrance. Its facade, like that of the Astors, ten blocks further north, was constructed of brownstone in the Italianate style, incorporating an adaptation of Italian Renaissance and Baroque architectural elements for an urban residential building.[56] In the photographs, we see the contrast with the rows of brownstones adjacent to it. These latter houses appear to be four stories high, whereas the Wolfes' is three, but even so its facade is significantly taller and its rooms significantly greater in height than those in the adjoining

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[54] Ibid., 35–36.

[55] Matthew Dripps, *Plan of New York City, from the Battery to Spuyten Duyvil Creek. Showing every lot and building thereon; old farm lines, street numbers at the corners of blocks, railroads, steamboat landings, bulkhead and pier lines, etc. Based on the surveys made by Messrs. Randall & Blackwell, and on the special survey by J. F. Harrison Plans of New York City* (New York: 1867), Sheet 10.

[56] See Kevin D. Murphy, *The American Townhouse* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2005), 30. The former Irad Hawley House, later the Salmagundi Club, located on Fifth Avenue between 11th and 12th Streets, is one of the few extant brownstones with Italianate features from the 1850s, the era of the Wolfe residence. See "The Salmagundi Club," *New York Times*, January 20, 1880, 5.

houses. Among the benefits of greater height would have been the existence of walls high enough to accommodate rows of paintings.

In 1859, a few years after the completion of the Wolfe house, Leonard P. Jerome, a Wall Street player of note, built an extravagant six-story brownstone on Madison Square at 32 East 26th Street. It was one of the first residences in the city to incorporate elements of a French Second Empire architectural style. Jerome's house later served as the temporary quarters of the Union League Club. The history of the Union League Club, an institution that Wolfe as a woman could never join, dovetailed with her own interests. It was there that at a meeting in 1869 of prominent New Yorkers (many of whom would later serve on the Board of the Metropolitan Museum of Art) debated the possibility of creating what would be the city's first major civic museum.[57] William Cullen Bryant, the presiding officer, spoke of "founding in this city a Museum of Art...which shall be in some measure worthy of this great metropolis and of the wide empire of which New York is the commercial center."[58] Among his arguments for a museum that would rank with those of other cities in Europe was the need for a public repository in New York, in order that private collectors would be able to donate their holdings to the public should they wish to do so.[59] Though Wolfe would not have been invited to attend such planning meetings, she became one of the Museum's initial subscribers.

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[57] See Will Irwin, Earl Chapin May, and Joseph Hotchkiss, *A History of the Union League Club of New York City* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1952). The Union League Club was also the site of art exhibitions, which were open to women. See, for example, "A Brilliant Reception Ladies' Night at the Union League Club," *New York Times*, February 28, 1878, and "Brilliant Reception, Ladies' Day the Union League Club," *New York Times*, January 24, 1879.

[58] William Cullen Bryant quoted in Howe, *A History of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 106–7.

[59] Ibid., 108.

In 1860, a building site nearby, at 23rd Street and Fourth Avenue, was purchased for the construction of the first permanent home of the National Academy of Design (fig. 10), founded in 1825 as a school and showcase for the work of American artists.[60] The building, designed by architect Peter B. Wight, opened in 1865 in a Venetian Gothic Revival style believed to be inspired by the Doge's Palace or the Ca d'Oro, although the architect later insisted that his sources were not Venetian, but were Florentine and Veronese.[61] The proximity to Madison Square of this institution would contribute to the cultural ambience of the neighborhood and would have been of great interest to Wolfe. She supported their ventures and later would lend pictures for exhibitions in their galleries.[62]

In the late 1860s, prominent residents of the city began to move further uptown and, concurrently, the use of brownstone material dwindled in popularity, in favor of marble and limestone facades for residences of the elite. In a demonstration of the vicissitudes of taste, Marianna Griswold van Rensselaer, the unabashedly aristocratic representative of old money, acknowledged, "We once admired our brownstone very heartily; it became, indeed, an almost proverbial synonym for all that is desirable and elegant." However, she went on to declare brownstone as "one of the most unfortunate substances that ever went by the honorable name of stone—cold and unattractive in color, and too poor in substance to receive carving well."[63]

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[60] Sarah Bradford Landau, *P. B. Wight: Architect, Contractor, and Critic, 1838–1925* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1981), 16.

[61] Ibid., 18.

[62] Evidence of Wolfe's financial contributions can be found in an entry in the National Academy of Design Council Minutes, May 10, 1875, noting her contribution to the building's mortgage fund. Volume 4/D (1870–1875), Archives of the National Academy of Design.

[63] Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, "Recent Architecture in America V: City Dwellings," *The Century Magazine* 31, no. 4 (February 1886): 550.

The very homogenizing qualities of brownstone as a signature of an orderly urban culture were now looked upon as an insufficient building material for the representation of what newly moneyed citizens wanted as a projection of their status. In 1864, the department store mogul, Alexander T. Stewart, purchased land across the street from the Astors' brownstone on Fifth Avenue and 34th Street, tore down the existing brownstone on the site, and commissioned the architect John Kellum to design a white marble residence in a Beaux-Art design, using architectural elements of the Parisian Second Empire style (fig. 11).[64] This endeavor became an expensive piece of gamesmanship on the part of Stewart to attempt to outshine the Astors. When it was completed in 1869, a writer in *Harper's Weekly* commented: "Everyone who looks upon the result must feel that this splendid palace was never designed primarily for a private dwelling. It is a temple rather than a mansion."[65] Another reviewer at the time called Stewart's new residence "a huge marble pile...very elaborate and pretentious, but exceedingly dismal, reminding one of a vast tomb. Stewart's financial ability is extraordinary, but his architectural taste cannot be commended."[66]

As the century wore on, the urban landscape of Madison Square and its environs would shift and become increasingly commercial, culminating at the century's end with the

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[64] Craven, *Gilded Mansions*, 69–70.

[65] "Mr. Stewart's New Residence, *Harper's Weekly* 13 (August 14, 1869): 521. The view that this architectural style was better suited to public buildings, rather than to private houses, is reinforced by David Van Zanten, who confines his discussion of successful Second Empire architectural influences in Philadelphia to nineteenth-century public or government buildings, such as the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts; see Van Zanten, "Second Empire Architecture in Philadelphia," *Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin* 74, no. 322 (1978): 12–15.

[66] Junius Henri Browne, *The Great Metropolis: A Mirror of New York* (Hartford, CT: American Pub. Co., 1869), 292, quoted in Jay E. Cantor, "A Monument of Trade: A. T. Stewart and the Rise of the Millionaire's Mansion in New York," *Winterthur Portfolio* 10 (1975): 168.

arrival of such corporate entities as the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, which would extend its brand of "civic identity" into the formerly residential spaces of the neighborhood.[67] The railroad yards nearby, which were already there in the 1850s when the Wolfe family moved to 13 Madison Avenue, and the coach factory to the northeast, eventually would diminish the desirability of area, and would foreshadow the further commercialization to come, as a map of 1897 demonstrates (fig. 12).

Catharine Lorillard Wolfe resisted the lure of relocation, even as fads in architectural style and ornamentation were changing and as her own neighborhood was becoming increasingly commercial.[68] She opted to remain in her family's pre–Civil War brownstone, and was confident enough not to need to engage in the race to build something larger and more magnificent. Constructing a grander house would have enabled her to announce herself in competition with other urban elites, as did Stewart and, later, railroad tycoon William Henry Vanderbilt. Vanderbilt's Renaissance palazzo at 640 Fifth Avenue, spanning 50th and 51st Streets, completed in 1881, became the largest and most elaborate mansion anyone in New York had ever seen (fig. 13); it was described as the "most superb [house] in America."[69] It deliberately outshined Stewart's palace, then in the possession of

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[67] See Roberta Moudry, "The Corporate and the Civic: Metropolitan Life's Home Office Building" in Moudry, ed., *The American Skyscraper: Cultural Histories* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 120–46.

[68] In his 1939 memoirs, a former neighbor of Wolfe who, in his youth, resided near the brownstone on Madison Square, provides a firsthand recollection of Wolfe in the neighborhood, recalling her as a supporter of local benefactions. He remembers her as one who would "stand at a window of her house and wave her handkerchief in returning the joyful salutations of a long line of little boys and girls…whom she was sending for a glorious afternoon at Barnum and Bailey's 'Greatest Show on Earth' then performing at the Old Madison Square Garden, two blocks up the avenue." See William H. Owen, *I Remember* (New York: Privately printed [Yale University Press], 1939), 36.

[69] "Vanderbilt's New House," *New York Times*, March 8, 1882.

Stewart's widow, although its construction was of brownstone, not marble, linking it to the social and architectural traditions of New York.[70]

Perhaps Wolfe felt she already had garnered enough attention among the social networks in New York and did not have the need to relocate or construct a more elaborate home, or perhaps she needed the sense of being rooted by family connections. It is also possible that her house was not her favored venue for self-fashioning; rather, it would be her collection of pictures that advertised her independent status to her peers. It is noteworthy, however, that in January 1886, sixteen months before she died, Wolfe purchased an additional adjacent lot, identified as lot 4 (fig. 7), from the estate of Mary G. P. Binney.[71] With this final acquisition, Wolfe's property constituted a complete rectangle, measuring nearly 100 by 150 feet, dominating the corner of Madison Avenue and East 24th Street. Even though the size of the parcel would not come close to equaling the totality of the acreage she had already acquired in Newport, it was significantly larger than many of city lots directly around it. Without clear evidence of why Wolfe might have wished to extend her property in New York, we do not know if a desire to gain additional privacy or to create more space for her picture collection sparked what was her only recorded land purchase in the city. Had she lived longer than an additional year from the time of her purchase of this extra lot, she might have eventually rebuilt the house.

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[70] Vanderbilt's mansion was originally supposed to be faced with white marble; however, his declining health and wish to see the project completed led him to choose a façade of brownstone. There is some dispute about who should be credited as the primary architect. Traditionally, John Snook has taken the lion's share of credit, but it is believed that Charles Atwood, hired by the design firm Herter Brothers, collaborated with him. See Craven, *Gilded Mansions,* 88–90.

[71] Deed of sale dated January 4, 1886, Liber 1922, pp. 273, 276. New York Office of the City Register, Department of Finance.

If we look at the representation of the Wolfe house on the maps of 1867 and 1897 (figs. 9, 12), we see that by the time of the later map, the house appears to have been expanded at the rear with an added bay. This possible addition might have been created to add more room for her pictures, although there is no evidence that there was a space that took on the function of a designated gallery.[72] Wolfe would have been aware of the possibility of constructing a purpose-built gallery for the display of art, for she would have seen such a space in the home of John Taylor Johnston (1820–1893), railroad baron and the first President of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In the 1860s, Johnston converted the second floor of the stable at the rear of his marble-faced row house on Fifth Avenue and 8th Street into an art gallery; there he held receptions and opened his gallery to the public one day a week.[73]

By not designing a new house in New York, as she would in Newport, Wolfe did not grant herself the opportunity to collaborate with architects. The architecture of the house at 13 Madison Avenue served a different function than it did at Vinland, where an aesthetically conceived exterior would be an integral component of the storytelling within. In New York, by way of contrast, Wolfe's pre–Civil War house remained as a statement of the continuity of her standing as the single representative of two long-established New York families. The exterior of her brownstone, with its architectural materials a reminder of the taste of an earlier era, was aligned with the social order of her lineage. Yet its interior had become a repository for the most sought-after contemporary European art Wolfe collected.

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[72] As early as the 1840s, New York row houses had open galleries spaces, sometimes several stories tall, built across the rear of the house, which could serve as "tea rooms" or galleries, see Lockwood, *Bricks and Brownstones*, 70–72. For reference to "extension" galleries added onto rich people's houses for the purpose of displaying art, see William Smallwood Ayres, "The Domestic Museum in Manhattan: Major Private Art Installations in New York City, 1870–1920" (PhD diss., University of Delaware, 1993), 20.

[73] See Bolin, "Art and the Domestic Interior," 76–78.

Living with Art

Although the stark facade of her 1850s brownstone provided few clues of the display within, the bulk of the artists whose pictures Wolfe acquired for her New York home represented a literal "who's who" of the leading European painters of her day, an international assemblage of the work of living artists. In a chapter devoted to Wolfe's collection in his monumental study *Art Treasures of America* (1879–1882), Earl Shinn describes her pictures as "harvested from all the world's fairs of Europe."[74]

Wolfe's earliest documented art acquisition took place in 1846 when, at age eighteen, she acquired *Landscape Sunset*, a work by the Hudson River painter Jasper Francis Cropsey. The work had been included in the annual lottery of the American Art-Union, an institution for the promotion and exhibition of the work of American artists.[75] This picture, one of her few forays into collecting American art, was not part of her later gift to the Museum, and there is no record as to whether it was among her holdings at Madison Square at the end of her life.

Before the formation of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Wolfe would have attended exhibitions at such institutions as the New-York Historical Society and the National Academy of Design. She probably attended the Metropolitan Art Fair of 1864, an exhibition organized

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[74] Shinn, *Art Treasures of America*, vol. 1, 119.

[75] See "Fine Arts," *Anglo American* 8 (December 12, 1846): 189; and "List of Paintings Distributed among the Members of the American Art-Union, at the Tabernacle, New York, Friday, the 18th December, 1846," *Transactions of the American Art-Union*, 1846 (New York, 1847), 33, no. 88; the notices supply no additional information. According to Kenneth Maddox of the Newington-Cropsey Foundation in an e-mail to author, January 28, 2010, it would be nearly impossible to locate this work in the archives of the American Art-Union because the records are incomplete for the years 1845 and 1846.

to support the Union cause, and possibly viewed a picture by the French artist, Thomas Couture, which was on display at the Fair. Twelve years later, in 1876, Wolfe purchased the picture *Day Dreams*, an allegory of the brevity of life, later named *Soap Bubbles* (fig. 14*).* One of the few pictures she might have inherited from her father was William Bouguereau's 1871 genre painting *Breton Brother and Sister* (fig. 15). Another New York collector, Robert Leighton Stuart (1806–1882), sugar magnate and second president of the Museum of Natural History would, in 1873, introduce her to other works by this academic painter, although she never purchased another Bouguereau.[76] In 1880 she lent *Breton Brother and Sister* to the Metropolitan Museum of Art for its opening exhibition in its final location at the edge of Central Park.[77]

Wolfe's sense of civic responsibility must have provided the impetus for her participation as a lender to the 1883 Pedestal Loan Exhibition at the National Academy of Design, a benefit created to raise funds for the construction of Richard Morris Hunt's base for France's gift of Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi's Statue of Liberty; earlier, she served on the Special Committee on Pictures for the 1877 Society of Decorative Art Exhibition and on the general committee for the Society's benefit the following year.[78] More significantly, she gave

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[76] Robert L. Stuart to William Bouguereau, December 10, 1873, stating that he showed sketches to Mr. Bishop and Ms. Wolfe; reprinted in Robert Isaacson, "Less collectionneurs de Bouguereau en Angleterre et en Amérique," in *William Bouguereau 1825–1905* (Montreal: Montreal Museum of Art, 1984), 110. I am grateful to Stephen Edidin of the New-York Historical Society for drawing my attention to this letter. For further discussion of Stuart, see Paul Spencer Sternberger, "'Wealth Judiciously Expanded': Robert Leighton Stuart As Collector and Patron," *Journal of the History of Collections* 15, no. 2 (November 2003): 229–40.

[77] Winifred E. Howe, *A History of the Metropolitan Museum of Art,* 90. See also "The New Museum," *Evening Post*, March 29, 1880, 4.

[78] Maureen C. O'Brien, *In Support of Liberty: European Paintings at the 1883 Pedestal Fund Art Loan Exhibition* (Southampton, NY: Parrish Art Museum, 1986), 31–32.

some of her pictures a public airing as a donor to the 1876 New York Centennial Loan Exhibition of Paintings, a highly patriotic venture held at the National Academy of Design, commemorating the hundredth anniversary of the nation and saluting the private collectors of New York.[79] A contemporary review of the exhibition credits Wolfe with having "the most notable collection present….It is no exaggeration to say that aesthetic and artistic people would willingly pay double the admission fee for either her pictures or those of Gov. Morgan."[80]

It was at the National Academy of Design that Wolfe would later make one of her most publicly noted acquisitions. There, on the opening day of the Academy's annual exhibition in 1884, she bought Winslow Homer's *The Life Line* (fig. 16), a painting of the same year, now at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. A compelling image of a dramatic rescue of a woman caught in the aftermath of a wreck at sea, which would eventually become an iconic work of American art, it initially received a mixed critical reception at the National Academy. The *New York Herald* of April 7, 1884, reported that Wolfe's purchase showed that "the tide is turning and that our richer collectors are beginning to patronize American as well as foreign art" and further expressed the hope that it would be "well fitted to rank with the foreign paintings in Miss Wolfe's superb collection."[81] However, Wolfe bought this picture for Vinland in Newport; we have no knowledge that it was ever displayed on Madison Square

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[79] *Catalogue of the New York Centennial Loan Exhibition of Paintings: Selected from the Private Art Galleries, 1876, at the National Academy of Design* (New York: National Academy of Design, 1876), 22–23.

[80] The Fine Arts: The Loan Collection, Continuation of the South Room—The Noble Pictures of Miss Catharine L. Wolfe—Gems from Other Collections," *New York Times*, June 25, 1876.

[81] "Fine Arts. The Exhibition at the National Academy Which Opens To-Day," *New York Herald*, April 7, 1884, 8.

and it was not part of her bequest to the Metropolitan Museum. One can infer that for Wolfe, the subject of a rescue of an imperiled woman by an intrepid seaman was better "fitted" to co-exist among the Viking narrative that dominated Vinland's architectural and interior aesthetic, rather than on the walls of her city brownstone. But the fact that these critics wanted this American picture to be displayed with her contemporary European art in New York underscores the fact her holdings were widely recognized as highly prestigious, and that she was considered a taste-maker.

Many factors contributed to the popularity of the living European artists whose pictures Wolfe and her contemporaries purchased in the decades before the craze for Old Master paintings took over in the early 1890s, after Wolfe's death. A new brand of art criticism and commentary emerged in the United States, even before the Civil War, geared to counseling American consumers of the fine arts. In 1863, the Boston art critic James Jackson Jarves, a leading advocate for the need to form public art institutions in the United States, announced: "Art in America has advanced from indifference to fashion. Within a few months past it has become the mode to 'have a taste'. Private galleries are becoming almost as common as private stables"; and he goes on to preach that art-buying "requires an educated public appreciation of its true meaning and purpose."[82] Others were wary of the hurdles facing the development of a public museum: "And are we to have an Art-Musée in this country? ....Even after getting over the absorbing dedication of the American mind to material comfort, and its rooted conviction that 'old masters' are bores, there remains the immense mercantile barrier between a modern purchaser and almost any authentic work of ancient art."[83]

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[82] James Jackson Jarves, "Art in America, Its Condition and Prospects," *Fine Arts Quarterly Review* 1 (May–October 1863): 399–400.

[83] Erastus South, "An Art Musée in America," *The Aldine* 5, no. 6 (June 1872): 127.

Earlier, in 1855, the periodical *The Crayon* had warned prospective purchasers about the quantifiable dangers of fraud and forgery when one attempted to collect Old Master paintings: "Always prefer a modern to an old picture," and advised those who had "been deluded into making great bargains in Titians, Van Dycks, Claudes, or any other old masters' works, [to] burn them up at once if you can afford it."[84] The sentiment that Americans had to be cognizant of the authenticity of acquisitions of art from an earlier time continued into the years in which Wolfe operated.[85]

Among the plenitude of factors contributing to the particular American taste for the work of living European artists was the proliferation of international exhibitions of their pictures, most especially at the Universal Exposition of Paris in 1867, where the enthusiastic reception granted to European academic painters far exceeded the response to the work of the Americans who exhibited there.[86] John Taylor Johnston, whose gallery Wolfe visited, had been a committed collector of American painting, but changed direction after he saw European artists winning medals at the Paris Salons.[87] In addition, in the post–Civil War years, there was increasing international travel on the part of artists and American collectors,

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[84] "Picture-Buying," *The Crayon* 1, no. 7 (February 14, 1855): 100.

[85] See, for example, "Bric-A-Brac: What It Really Is and Some Great Collections of It," *New York Times*, July 15, 1882, in which the author concludes "Caveat emptor."

[86] See Albert Boime, "America's Purchasing Power and the Evolution of European Art in the Late Nineteenth Century," in Francis Haskell, ed., *Saloni, gallerie, musei e loro influenza sullo sviluppo dell'arte dei secoli XIX e XX* (Bologna: Editrice CLUEB, 1979), 123–39; and Carol Troyen, "Innocents Abroad: American Painters at the 1867 Exposition Universelle, Paris," *American Art Journal* 16, no. 4 (Autumn 1984): 2–29. Troyon calls Wolfe "the greatest collector of French academic art," ibid., 20.

[87] See Fidell-Beaufort, "Art Collecting in the United States after the Civil War," 133.

including Wolfe herself.[88] A visit to the Louvre in the early 1870s must have led her to commission the artist Blaise-Alexandre Desgoffe to create a still-life painting of objects in the Louvre (fig. 17), including a sixteenth-century rock crystal vase, enamels, agates, and a writing table believed to have belonged to Marie-Antoinette.[89] In choosing the objects that would comprise this assemblage, Wolfe followed a pattern established by American collectors who commissioned such still lifes to link themselves to what they considered a cultured past.[90]

Transatlantic interchange was further facilitated by the growing presence of dealers who represented European painters and established strong footholds in New York. Among them was Michael Knoedler, who in 1857 took over the New York venue of the French firm Goupil & Co. Wolfe became an important client of M. Knoedler & Co., and purchased at least seventeen pictures from them, among them a version of Camille Corot's *Ville d'Avray* (1870;

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[88] On May 1, 1873, Wolfe filed for a passport in her own name to "travel abroad with my maid servant": Passport Application, 1795–1905 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1372, 694 rolls); General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, National Archives, Washington DC. There is evidence that she traveled overseas earlier, but the existence of this 1873 document attests to later journeys to the capitals of Europe, where she would visit exhibitions, dealers, and artists' ateliers. Thus far, I have been able to verify at least five occasions in which Wolfe traveled to Europe, including her trips in the 1880s to England to meet with William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones, and Walter Crane.

[89] See Charles Sterling and Margaretta M. Salinger, *French Paintings: A Catalogue of the Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 3 vols. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1955–67), vol. 2: *XIX Century* (1966), 184–85.

[90] Desgoffe became a model for American painters who could produce still life paintings of objects of *virtu* for American collectors: "Many of the Knickerbocker and wealthy families of New York possess articles of *virtu* as interesting as those belonging to any of the queens of France"; see "Still Life," *The Aldine* 9, no. 6 (December 1, 1878): 181.

fig. 18), which she purchased in 1881; Jean-Léon Gérôme's *Prayer in the Mosque* (1871; fig. 19), purchased in 1884; and Rosa Bonheur's *Weaning the Calves* (1879), purchased in 1885.[91]

There are 142 paintings listed in the catalogue that the Metropolitan Museum of Art published on the occasion of the opening of the Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Gallery in November 1887.[92] Wolfe owned the work of 111 artists from twelve countries: France (66); Germany (17); Belgium (8); Spain (5); Holland (4); Italy (3); America (2, including neither the Cropsey nor the Winslow Homer); England (2); and one each from Austria, Denmark, Hungary, and Sweden. Many of the images depicted on these canvases depicted scenes and vignettes geographically, topographically, or temporally distant from Wolfe's late nineteenth-century urban experience. As Didier Maleuvre observed in his study *Museum Memories: History, Technology, Art* (1999):

> Collecting is a way of taking possession of the world, a way of domesticating the exotic…and of enshrining personal memory by means of a souvenir. All this has the effect of making the home the center of a wide temporal and geographical circle at the core of which the world is encapsulated in the miniature form.[93]

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[91] These acquisitions from Knoedler took place between 1870 and 1881, and included the Bouguereau purchased by Wolfe's father. I am grateful for the notes that DeCourcy E. McIntosh shared with me, as the archival records of Knoedler & Co. have been inaccessible to scholars during my work on this dissertation. In the fall of 2012, it was announced that this resource had been purchased by the Getty Research Institute, which plans to open it to scholars. For historical background on Knoedler & Co. and their operation in New York in the 1870s and 1880s, see Irving Sandler and DeCourcy E. McIntosh, *The Collector as Patron in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Knoedler & Co., 2000), 39–50.

[92] See Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Part I. The Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Collection; Part II. Pictures by Old Masters, in the East Galleries* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1887), 7–29 [hereafter cited as MMA *Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Collection*].

[93] Didier Maleuvre, *Museum Memories: History, Technology, Art* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 115.

Maleuvre's revelatory statement serves to characterize how Wolfe operated as an art patron. She domesticated the art she collected, much of which came from worlds she herself did not know, and amassed these pictures on the walls of her brownstone.

On multiple levels, then, the display of art at Madison Square was connected with the idea of "home" as the center of a larger universe. Her pictures fulfilled Wolfe's taste for works with associative or symbolic focus, on the one hand, while others revealed vague or fleeting literary or historical associations with little narrative clarity or frame of reference. Wolfe's purchases encompassed her interest in genre paintings; scenes of idyllic peasant life; landscapes; religious themes; architectural ruins and subjects in Orientalist settings. The subjects of these paintings are often seen as a reaction to urbanization and industrialization in France or in their country of origin; they were appealing to American collectors as well. Such a notable picture as Gérôme's *Prayer in the Mosque* (fig. 19) speaks to Wolfe's interest in the popular genre of Oriental themes, and the art and archaeology of the Near East. Although we do not have evidence that she herself traveled to this region, a journey that would have been difficult for a single woman, a decade later, in 1884, Wolfe would underwrite a notable archaeological expedition to Assyria and Babylonia.[94]

It is particularly striking that Wolfe owned a series of large-scale pictures of lone langorous females in various states of reverie and undress, none completely nude. Each of these images is of female longing for pleasures wanting or denied, for none of the figures is pictured with the object of her desire. The canvases included Hugues Merle's *Falling Leaves: Allegory of Autumn* (1872; fig. 20), a representation of a melancholy female, partially enveloped in diaphanous flowing fabric, shown alongside a departing Cupid. Another is the

[94] See J. W. Ward, "The Wolfe Expedition," *Journal of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis* 5, no. 1 (June–December 1885): 56–60.

figure of Haydee, clothed in a transparent yet revealing garment, in Charles Chaplin's 1873 picture of the same name. (In Byron's 1824 epic poem "Don Juan," Haydee nursed the shipwrecked hero and fell in love with him.) A third picture is a fully clothed representation of Graziella (fig. 21), the heroine of Alphonse de Lamartine's 1849 novel, painted by Jules-Joseph Lefebvre in 1878. She is mending a fish net, yet her gaze is far from her task and suggests a similar unfulfilled desire. Since the artists provided little narrative detail in these pictures, the viewer would have had to use his or her imagination to understand the situation of each protagonist, or have known the themes or stories underlying the titles.

In Wolfe's New York holdings, no painting in this genre elicited more commentary than did Cabanel's 1875 *The Shulamite* (fig. 22), a picture Wolfe purchased from the artist that year.[95] A year later, she lent it to the Salon of 1876, and also sat for her portrait with Cabanel. *The Shulamite*, no longer in the holdings of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and its current location unknown, is a life-size image of a seated woman, bare-breasted in loose-fitting transparent attire. The picture was inspired by the *Old Testament's* "Song of Songs;" the subject is a bride of King Solomon, listening to the song of her beloved, whose presence she pines for. The catalogue published by the Museum in November 1887, at the time of the opening of Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Gallery, lists *The Shulamite* with the accompanying verse:

> The voice of my beloved! Behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains skipping upon the hills….He standeth behind our

[95] There was some speculation that *The Shulamite* may originally have been commissioned in the 1860s by Empress Eugenie, the wife of Napoléon III. At that time, presumably the artist was unable to secure a suitable model "with the desired type of countenance," either in Paris, where he had begun work on it, or in Italy, where he took the canvas. His work on the picture ceased, and Empress Eugenie lost interest in the project. When, in the mid-1870s, Cabanel finally came upon the "desired model," he was able to complete the picture. See Lucy H. Hooper, "Art in Paris," *Art Journal* (New York), n.s. 2, 3 (1876): 90.

> wall…My beloved spake [sic], and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.[96]

Critics in the 1870s and 1880s spoke of *The Shulamite* as a biblical image and debated about the quality of Cabanel's execution. Earl Shinn judged it as representative of the artist's decline. However, he acknowledged that painter depicted a "type of beauty [that] is quite oriental….devoured with passion and the keen agonies of hope, the Shulamite crouches by the door, and listens like a watch dog." He further noted that "here is a voluntary softness of touch that seems unsexed; a melting of human flesh into glutinous deliquescence…and in conception itself, a boudoir elegance."[97] Shinn also informed the reader that Wolfe chose to hang the painting in a prominent spot on the main wall of her drawing room, thereby confirming that she valued the picture.[98]

In her 2008 study of women collectors, Dianne Sachko Macleod found it surprising that Shinn would be so "liberal" as to not express shock that a Victorian spinster would display such a sexually charged picture in her drawing room, and comments that "Shinn's attempts to diminish the eroticism of the painting by arguing for its 'unsexed' representation stretches the limits of credulity."[99] Macleod acknowledges that although we do not know the extent to which Wolfe herself was fueled by heterosexual or same-sex impulses, one cannot consider her ownership of such a picture as *The Shulamite* to be removed from her private

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[96] "Song of Solomon," 2nd chap., verses 8–10, cited in MMA *Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Collection*, entry 20.

[97] Shinn, *Art Treaures of America*, vol. 1, 120.

[98] Ibid., 119.

[99] Macleod, *Enchanted Lives, Enchanted Objects*, 67.

fantasies.[100] Wolfe might have had a subliminal attraction to subjects involving a woman's sensuality, be they real, imagined, or denied, though not necessarily to the extreme degree that Macleod postulates.

In a discussion of the acceptability of nude figures in the work of such artists as Cabanel and Bouguereau in his seminal 1984 book *The Painting of Modern Life*, T. J. Clark commented:

> The confusion of the genre centered, or so the critics said, on matters of propriety and desire, and the fact that there appeared to be so little agreement about either. Most writers and artists knew that the nude's appeal, in part at least, was straightforwardly erotic.[101]

In speaking of *The Shulamite* as "devoured with passion," Shinn seemed to acknowledge the eroticism in Cabanel's painting, even if he also described the figure as "unsexed."[102] What made a sensual image acceptable for the French was that it was embedded in a "high-art" narrative, usually biblical or mythological and clearly distant from the viewer's time and place.

That Wolfe would have been familiar with the narratives about the women in these pictures must have initiated her wish to purchase or commission them from the artists who painted them. The very existence of these narratives, however indirectly they may have been alluded to in the pictures themselves, provided an excuse for Wolfe's owning them. As established earlier, one does not know Wolfe's views about sexuality nor, beyond speculation, why she chose never to marry. What we can say is that she clearly did not object to the

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[100] Ibid.

[101] T. J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 123.

[102] Shinn, *Art Treaures of America*, vol. 1, 120.

display of partially nude females on her walls, and may have been in some way attracted to these subjects.

In another context, one must take into account the fact that the sensual females in Wolfe's New York pictures did not convey the same image of womanhood as did Wolfe herself. Her portrait, also by Cabanel, was a staging of the image she wished to convey about herself: elegant, independent, and possessed of an undeniable aura of worldly confidence. Perhaps, then, Wolfe's attraction to such depictions of females in Merle's *Allegory of Autumn* or Cabanel's *The Shulamite* stemmed less from a prurient fascination than from an admiration of a type of woman, stereotypically feminine—waiting and pining— was so different from her own driving force.

Another significant painting in Wolfe's holdings with sexual overtones was *The Storm*, an 1880 picture by Pierre-Auguste Cot (1827–1883; fig. 23), depicting two young lovers fleeing an impending storm, where the female figure's petticoat provides a covering for them both. Wolfe would purchase the picture in Paris from the artist in 1880.[103] In her 2012 monograph on Winslow Homer's *The Life Line*, Kathleen A. Foster speculates that Wolfe's later attraction to *The Life Line* may have stemmed from the fact that its "romantic and chastely erotic narrative suited her penchant for such paintings" as Cot's *The Storm*.[104] *The*

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[103] Wolfe's purchase of the Cot was announced in Montezuma, "My Notebook," *Art Amateur* 4, no. 1 (December 1880): 2. She was believed to have purchased this picture at the suggestion of John Wolfe—himself one of Cot's patrons—who owned the artist's *Springtime* of 1873, showing two lovers frolicking on a swing. *Springtime* is listed as no. 50 in *Catalogue of John Wolfe's Gallery of Valuable Paintings* (New York: George A. Leavitt, 1882), 17.

[104] See Kathleen A. Foster, *Shipwreck!: Winslow Homer and* The Life Line. (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2012), 112, n. 232. I am grateful to Dr. Foster for our conversation about a possible link between Wolfe's interest in the Cot painting and in Winslow Homer's *The Life Line*.

Storm would fall out of critical favor in the decades following Wolfe's death, but it retained its hold on the public; copies and other versions continued to proliferate.[105]

What is most striking about Wolfe's choices for her collection in New York is that she had the foresight to know which artists to patronize so as to put her collection on a level playing field with those of many of the city's most powerful citizens who had bought into the social and cultural cachet of art collecting. Missing in Wolfe's holdings were large-scale history paintings, comparable to such works as Stewart's 1875 Jean-Louis-Ernest Meissonier's *1807, Friedland* (fig. 24), an eight-foot canvas paying homage to Napoléon, the scale of which would have been too large for her walls or may have been too focused on the machinery of war for her taste. She did own a small painting by Meissonier, *A General and His Aide-de-camp* (1869), which presented two military figures on horseback and was only peripherally about the subject of making war.

An 1883 edition of *The American: A National Journal*, attempted to quantify the monetary value of the art in major New York City private collections. It claimed that William H. Vanderbilt's gallery contained the most valuable collection of them all, estimated at $1,000,000; Stewart's gallery, then in the possession of his widow, the second most valuable at $500,000; and "Miss Catharine L. Wolfe's collection followed close behind as third most valuable with a sum of $450,000."[106] Wolfe's picture-filled rooms would have contrasted with the gallery designed as a showcase for pictures in Stewart's huge picture-lined gallery at the

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[105] For example, a later version of *The Storm*, signed by Cot, was put up for auction at Sotheby's; see *19th Century European Paintings and Sculpture*, Sotheby's, New York, November 1, 1995, lot 117. The reception of this painting is the subject of James Henry Rubin, "Pierre-Auguste Cot's *The Storm*," *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* 140 (1980): 191–200.

[106] "Art Notes," *The American: A National Journal* no. 130 (February 1883): 270.

back of his marble mansion, where even the bases of statues supported pictures (fig. 25). Even more lavish was the two-story art gallery with a separate public entrance created for Vanderbilt's palazzo (fig. 26).[107]

Although Wolfe did not have a designated gallery, there is evidence that the rooms of her brownstone functioned as quasi-public spaces at set times, when, in the early 1880s, they were open to art students and to others with appropriate qualifications, as was Vanderbilt's gallery and, earlier, John Taylor Johnston's, although in Wolfe's case, clearly not on so grand a scale.[108] We can also contrast Wolfe's New York space with what we know about Mrs. Astor's pictured-filled ballroom, added in 1875 to her original brownstone on Fifth Avenue and 34th Street, so to function both as gallery and ballroom. In Mrs. Astor's case, the ballroom would be emptied of its furnishings when she invited members of New York's finest to the social events of the season; the ballroom's spatial dimensions of 35 feet square accommodated the exclusive 400 of her set.[109] The underlying social use of Mrs. Astor's ballroom was apparent, although she also displayed pictures there.

Since we do not have photographs of the interior of Wolfe's New York brownstone nor of her pictures *in situ*, an examination of a typical floor plan of an 1850s brownstone in Wolfe's neighborhood would provide clues as to the possible interior footprint of Wolfe's

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[107] "Mr. Vanderbilt's Art Levee: Viewing the Pictures in the Fifth-Avenue Palace," *New York Times*, December 21, 1883, 2.

[108] For a notice that Wolfe would no longer be opening her collection to select members of the public, see "Art Notes," *The American: A National Journal* 180 (January 1884): 236. I am grateful to Samantha Deutch of the Center for the History of Collecting at the Frick Collection and Art Reference Library for drawing my attention to this source.

[109] Craven, *Gilded Mansions*, 36.

house.[110] The spatial configuration of Wolfe's interior would have included an entrance hall, a double-parlor, a large dining room beyond, and a series of ancillary rooms, including a library, and bedrooms on upper floors. Those who were invited to view Wolfe's pictures noted that the rooms in her brownstone did not delineate a separation between domestic space and picture display.

Her pictures were hung in Salon style—one above the other—and the art mingled with the furniture and objects of daily life. It may well have been this arrangement that led to Mrs. Marianna Griswold Van Rensselaer's 1887 recollection of an earlier visit to see Wolfe's collection: "I had seen it [the collection] scattered about in Miss Wolfe's house several years ago. The poorer pictures could then easily be overlooked and in process of time they faded from my mind, leaving only the memory of those which had impressed me by their excellence."[111] The wording of Mrs. Van Rensselaer's retrospective commentary reveals that the works on Wolfe's walls appeared to be mixed together without regard for quality and without separation from the objects of ordinary existence, and that such a lack of a system allowed her to overlook the pictures she considered inferior.

In his chapter on Wolfe's collection in *Art Treasures of America*, Earl Shinn asserted that "There is no gallery built expressly, but the suites of rooms are very brilliant," and noted that Wolfe integrated her paintings with both furniture and objets d'art:

> Evidences of the most advanced "collectorship" are everywhere visible, expressed in ivories, enamel and faience; their usefulness is to give a home character to the interior, and take

[110] For examples of plans of the first- and second-floor interiors of brownstones constructed in the 1850s, contemporaneous with the Wolfe residence, see Lockwood, *Bricks and Brownstones*, 160.

[111] Mariana [Mrs. Schuyler] Van Rensselaer, "The Wolfe Collection at the Metropolitan Museum," *The Independent* 39 (November 17, 1887): 6.

> away from the public-gallery or museum air which might otherwise be conferred by walls so completely covered by canvases.[112]

He concludes that the way her pictures are hung in this domestic setting is superior to what he considers overcrowded museum installations. Nevertheless, Shinn commented that Cabanels' portrait of Wolfe would be better served hung "in the civic museum that records the national character of the period," rather than closeted away in some family portrait gallery.[113]

Shinn's favorable response to the cumulative effect of viewing Wolfe's collection differs from the reaction of the writer of an 1887 piece in *Town Topics,* printed two months before Wolfe's death. This visitor characterized the impact of the covered walls in Wolfe's home from an alternative perspective: "A collection of masterpieces, hung here, there everywhere…It is not an easy matter to view these pictures is it? It involves the patrol of the house, for they are everywhere—in halls and bedrooms, in parlors, passages, and staircases.[114] Yet the writer conceded that despite the proliferation of paintings, "the eye is never weary and the quest never dull. And the touch of the woman, refined and elegant, is everywhere."[115]

The author of the *Town Topics* review cited rooms in Wolfe's house which must have served public and private functions, suggesting that he or she had access to areas not customarily open to guests. This description indicates, as well, that Wolfe did not limit the display of her pictures to the walls of reception rooms. Instead, she chose to hang them in all the areas of her brownstone. The reference to the staircases reinforces the inference that

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[112] Shinn, *Arts Treasures of America*, vol. 1, 119.

[113] Ibid., 120.

[114] "Tète-À-Tète Sketches: Miss Catharine Lorillard Wolfe," *Town Topics* (February 24, 1887): 18.

[115] Ibid.

Wolfe's pictures were not limited to one level, but traversed the terrain of the house on a vertical slant, from floor-to-floor.

That her house is described in contemporary accounts as crowded with paintings is surprising when one considers that this particular 1850s brownstone was relatively large. While the space for hanging pictures was smaller than what would have been available in the galleries of the elaborate palaces being constructed by other collectors, it is not as though Wolfe was constrained by what would appear to be limited space. Still one gets the sense that the author in *Town Topics* found the visual effect overwhelming, as if the paintings protruded from the walls, creating a visual overload for the viewer. Without access to inventories of her parents' estate, it is not possible to determine what was in the house when she inherited it. However, since Wolfe continued to live in the family home where they had resided since the 1850s, it is probable that the interior was already full of furnishings and other objects when she began collecting pictures.

It is illuminating to consider what is meant by "crowded" or "scattered" in the literature of the period. Were the reviewers of Wolfe's collection referring to the lack of a thematic program or sense of order, which would have given structure to her display, either according to subject matter, theme, artist, or picture size? Or were they responding to a propensity for hanging a panoply of pictures on every possible surface, radiating the sense of art emanating everywhere, thus making the cumulative effect more striking than the display of individual canvases would have been? One wonders as well to what extent Wolfe's house conveyed the effect of a woman's domestic space, and to what extent such gendered characteristics may have colored the language of the criticism.

In speaking of Victorian women in her essay "Woman's Domestic Body," Beverly Gordon comments:

> In this period it seemed that a simile—women and interior were like one another—the simile was transformed into a synonym. The woman was seen as the embodiment of the home, and in turn the home was seen as an extension of her—an extension of both her corporeal and spiritual self.[116]

If we take Gordon's words into account, the possible conflation of Wolfe and her pictures, both existing in the same domestic setting, may have contributed to an underlying motivation for her later demand that her art remain together as a unit in the Museum, hung in a designated public gallery named for her, albeit one physically segregated from the rest of the Museum's collection.

In this regard, the terms of Wolfe's will differ from the strategy that would be employed a generation later by the Boston art collector and patron Isabella Stewart Gardner (1840–1924), who, according to Anne Higonnet's 1989 *Art in America* essay "Museums: Where There's A Will…," intended Fenway Court to be an entity that obfuscated "the distinctions between home and museum, between domestic and institutional space and between private and public experience" with her preplanned installations of art and household furnishings.[117] Higonnet elaborates on the fact that Gardner's goal was to orchestrate the viewer's aesthetic experience in "the houselike aspect of the museum," which she wished to perpetuate after her death.[118]

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[116] Beverly Gordon, "Woman's Domestic Body: The Conceptual Conflation of Women and Interiors in the Industrial Age," *Winterthur Portfolio* 31, no. 4 (Winter 1996): 282.

[117] Anne Higonnet, "Museums: Where There's a Will…," *Art in America* 77, no 5 (May 1989): 66.

[118] Ibid.

Had Wolfe opted to construct a separate gallery in her brownstone—either as an adjunct space or deliberately converted a preexisting room as a gallery—it is possible that her final bequest might not have included the conditions she would delineate in her will. In contrast to Gardner, Wolfe possessed a definitive preference for the domestic character of her collecting in her brownstone, but desired a public gallery for her art that she envisioned and designed to be her legacy. The parameters of Gardner's iron-clad will differed from the terms that Wolfe set down in her bequest; in Wolfe's case, the choice of emphasizing the domestic nature of her display in her brownstone was intended only for her own lifetime.

Earlier, in the mid-1880s, Wolfe's decision to make a significant change in the display of three pictures in her then private collection served to generate what later became a dispute about the differences between fine art and decorative art. Wolfe had first hung her Cabanel portrait (fig. 1) in her library, together with Daniel Huntington's 1871 portrait of her father (fig. 2). A large-scale genre painting by Léon Bonnat (1833–1922), *Roman Girl at a Fountain* of 1875 (fig. 27), also hung in her library. This painting, which she had commissioned, was reputed to be one of her favorite pictures.[119] In 1885 Wolfe transferred her portrait to a niche in the dining room and created a similar niche for her father's portrait in the library; she would credit her cousin John Wolfe for his help in carrying out this installation.[120] According to John Wolfe, the Bonnat was now moved to the dining room and "placed in an oak frame, attached to a section of a cabinet, to correspond with Miss Catharine Lorillard Wolfe's

[119] According to a note in the Bonnat curatorial file (87.15.141) in the Department of Nineteenth-Century, Modern, and Contemporary Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

[120] That the placement of her portrait and that of her father was of considerable importance to her is noted in a letter she wrote to a relative: "I have had my father's portrait built into the library mantel…the same has been done with my portrait in the dining room." Catharine Lorillard Wolfe to Mrs. Lorillard Spencer, October 18, 1885, Archives of the Preservation Society of Newport County.

portrait over the mantel."[121] She had the original frames removed from each of these three pictures.[122]

That Wolfe created niches for two pictures important to her, and secured the Bonnat picture to a cabinet, reveals an attention to structural detail that transformed the two-dimensional pictures into three-dimensional entities. Perhaps the use of the Bonnat as a decorative fixture was influenced by the designs and decoration of the furniture William Morris & Co. produced for Vinland. The reinstallation of the portraits into niches constitutes what was Wolfe's most extreme form of architectural intervention in New York, other than her purchase the following year of the lot adjacent to her brownstone.

The resulting wrangle involving fine and decorative art generated by Wolfe's new display was initiated by another of Wolfe's cousins, David Wolfe Bishop (1834–1901), the heir to her New York residence. Bishop requested that before any of her pictures be released to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Daniel Huntington paint copies of the Cabanel portrait and of his own portrait of Wolfe's father to fill the empty niches where they had last hung.[123] In addition to making demands about the portraits, Bishop was adamant about the status of the Bonnat. Bishop's claim that this picture was no longer a work of fine art but part of a piece of furniture led to a dispute about whether Wolfe had intended to donate the Bonnat painting to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.[124] The officials of the Museum countered that "the painting

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[121] Statement of John Wolfe, November 4, 1887, Bonnat's *Roman Girl*, 1887–1888, MMA Wolfe Collection files.

[122] Ibid.

[123] Daniel P. Huntington to Luigi Palma di Cesnola, August 3, 1887, MMA Wolfe Collection files.

[124] Luigi Palma di Cesnola to Judge Daly, August 30, 1888, Bonnat's Roman Girl, 1887–1888, MMA Wolfe Collection files.

in question being by a great master not otherwise represented in the Wolfe collection, its abstraction from it considerably diminishes the importance, character and value of the whole collection."[125] John Wolfe supported the Museum's successful claim that his cousin, who had written her will before this change in installation, never intended the work to remain a permanent fixture in her house; rather, it was to be part of her bequest.[126]

John Wolfe

The fact that John Wolfe had been asked by the Trustees of the Metropolitan Museum of Art to be a witness on their behalf is indicative of the credit he garnered as an important adviser to his cousin. John Wolfe and Catharine Lorillard Wolfe were contemporaries, although he was seven years older; he died in 1894, seven years after her death. The extent of his influence on her art patronage has been a source of speculation ever since she died, in 1887. While commending the taste of the donor Catharine Lorillard Wolfe, the text of the 1887 Metropolitan Museum catalogue noted that she had accepted counsel in formulating her decisions about patronage from John Wolfe, a fellow collector from whom she purchased some of her paintings.[127] It is beyond dispute that some of the pictures she purchased he had formerly owned, although not always in a direct chain of ownership.[128] Of the 109 artists

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[125] Ibid.

[126] Ibid.

[127] MMA *Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Collection,* 5.

[128] Thomas Couture's *Soap Bubbles*, originally titled *Day Dreams*, is an example of a work that once belonged to John Wolfe but that she purchased later from another collector, James T. Sanford.

whose works comprised Wolfe's gift to the Museum, 90 of them were also represented in the holdings of John Wolfe.[129]

John Wolfe was one of the supporters of the National Academy of Design, an active member of the American Art Association, the Architectural League, the American Museum of Natural History, and a member of the Century Club. Unlike his cousin, he relocated uptown in 1881 to a large house at 8 East 68th Street, designed by the architect Lamb Wheeler, with interior décor by Detlef Lienau.[130] Various obituaries issued at the time of John Wolfe's death in 1894 cited his accomplishments and reminded the reader that he had visited Europe annually.[131] It is possible that his cousin accompanied him on some of his trips, or that he pursued collecting interests on her behalf during his own travels. However, without evidence of notes and correspondence between them, it is difficult to discern the nuances of the interplay between the two cousins who had works by many of the same artists but had different approaches to collecting.[132] Wolfe did not fit into John Wolfe's mold as a collector:

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[129] In his initial activities as a patron, John Wolfe collected engravings and began to amass holdings of works by Düsseldorf artists; but he was also drawn to French, English, and American pictures. In the mid-1850s, reviews praised his collection as one of the largest in New York, "peculiarly valuable from its containing so many favorable representations of the different European schools," see "Sketchings: Our Private Collections," *The Crayon* 3, no. 1 (January 1856): 27.

[130] Arnold Lewis, James Turner, and Steven McQuillin, *The Opulent Interiors of the Gilded Age: All 203 Photographs from "Artistic Houses"* (New York: Dover Publications, 1987), 158–59.

[131] See, for example, "John Wolfe is Dead," *New York Herald*, January 20, 1894, 8.

[132] John Wolfe's skill as a deal maker was crucial in the eventual acceptance of his low offer in the late 1850s for one of William Holman Hunt's sketches for *Light of the World* (1851–53). Correspondence between Hunt's dealer, William Michael Rossetti, and Hunt himself proves that the artist needed to be convinced that the fact of John Wolfe's possible ownership of the picture would compensate for what was clearly a disappointing offer. See William Michael Rossetti to William Holman Hunt, February 23, 1858, cited in William Michael

she collected neither for speculation, nor for profit. She did not engage in sales ventures as did her cousin, who bought and sold his pictures to start over again. John Wolfe has been credited as one of the first Americans to demonstrate the potential possibility of great returns from an investment in contemporary art.[133]

An 1863 sale of his pictures at the Old Dusseldorf Gallery in New York yielded the unprecedented sum of $114,000, providing strong evidence to other collectors, and possibly to Wolfe herself, that there was money to be made from buying and selling such pictures.[134] His landmark sale in 1882 of the work of French academic and Salon artists at the Leavitt Art Galleries provided yet another opportunity for him to demonstrate his ability to make a profit. Proceeds from this sale yielded the unexpected sum of more than of $131,000.[135] His pictures were on view for several weeks before this sale, and visitors were required to pay an admission fee, which *Art Amateur* defended as well worth the price.[136]

Unlike his cousin, John Wolfe's gifts to the Metropolitan Museum of Art were few in number, including an 1875 version of Cabanel's 1863 *The Birth of Venus* (fig. 28). The

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Rossetti, *Selected Letters of William Michael Rossetti*, ed. Roger W. Peattie (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), 95–96.

[133] See Lois Marie Fink, "French Art in the United States, 1850–1870: Three Dealers and Collectors," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* (September 1878): 94; and Bolin, "Art and the Domestic Interior," 100–104.

[134] "Mr. Wolfe's Gallery," *New York Daily Tribune*, December 3, 1863, 12. However, the author of this review notes that some funds from the sale of his collection were designated to provide support for the nursery of the Woman's Hospital and Child's Nursery, leading some to extol that the sale of his art to the public would benefit the "interest of woman and child."

[135] Montezuma, "My Note Book," *Art Amateur* 6, no. 6 (May 1882): 115; and "High Prices for Paintings," *New York Times*, April 6, 1882. This sale included Bouguereau's *Nymphs and Satyr*, was sold for more than $10,000.Wolfe's purchases at the sale included another genre painting by Léon Bonnat, now known as *An Egyptian Peasant Woman and Her Child.*

[136] Montezuma, "My Note Book," *The Art Amateur* 6, no. 5 (April 1882): 93.

decision to leave *The Birth of Venus*, and another painting, Adolfe Schreyer's *Battle Scene: Arabs Making a Detour*, must have come very late in John Wolfe's lifetime, for arrangements were made for them to be delivered to the Museum only weeks before his death in January 1894.[137] In the catalogue accompanying the posthumous sale of his art at New York's Fifth Avenue Galleries, as well as in obituaries, John Wolfe was praised for his business acumen, and named "largely instrumental" in the selection of the paintings his cousin had bequeathed to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.[138] Other accounts went so far as to credit him as the major influence on her decision to leave her art to the Museum.[139] Thus at the time of his death, her legacy as patron and donor became partly his, although he was not the donor. However, it is important to consider that by the end of his life, John Wolfe's own personal legacy and reputation was partly compromised because he was thought to have been overly commercial as a collector.[140] Perhaps the statements accentuating his involvement with his cousin were made to mitigate the strength of such accusations. And what role did he have in the formulation of her aesthetic in Newport? None, as far as any records reveal.

In the months following John Wolfe's death, the art dealer Samuel P. Avery urged Henry G. Marquand, then the Museum's president, to ensure the timely display of Cabanel's and Schreyer's paintings John Wolfe had donated, while the public memory of him might be

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[137] Henry G. Marquand to John Wolfe, December 20, 1893, Wolfe, John, 1893–94, Office of the Secretary Records, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives.

[138] *Catalogue of Modern Paintings to be Sold at Auction by the Order of the Executors of the Late John Wolfe … Sale, April 12, 1894.* (New York, 1894), 2.

[139] See "John Wolfe, Art Collector," *The World* (New York), January 21, 1894, 3.

[140] See "The John Wolfe Paintings," *New York Times*, April 12, 1894.

still strong, with the hope that it might give "a hint to others not to wait."[141] Whatever the assistance John Wolfe gave to help form his cousin's collection, his mode of operation as a collector did not provide the model for Catharine Lorillard Wolfe's gift to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Gift to the Museum

Even before her death in 1887, there was speculation as to the fate of Wolfe's art and the ultimate disposal of her fortune. These queries extended to members of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Board. That powerful figures in the Museum were interested in Wolfe's collection is indicated in a note from Henry G. Marquand, then treasurer, to General Luigi Palma di Cesnola, its director. Marquand discusses Wolfe's purchase of bronze Etruscan cisterns for the Museum and speculates about the possibility that she might leave her pictures to the Museum.[142]

Catharine Lorillard Wolfe's reputation as a collector and donor underwent a meteoric rise in New York in the aftermath of her death and the opening of her gallery, initially in a temporary space in November 1887. In the months following the announcement of her gift, the Museum began to receive queries from the public as to when the Wolfe pictures would be on view.[143] Despite the disagreement about the distinction between decorative and high art

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[141] Samuel P. Avery to Henry G. Marquand, Undated, Wolfe, John, 1893–1894, Office of the Secretary Records, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives.

[142] In this letter, Marquand says to Cesnola: "Dr. Nevin says the idea with Miss Wolfe was whether she would have a museum at her house—all to go to the Museum after her death." Henry G. Marquand to Luigi Palma di Cesnola, September 5, [year omitted], Gift of Loan of Bronze Cists, 1885–1887, MMA Wolfe Collection files.

[143] Luigi Palma di Cesnola to David Wolfe Bishop, July 27, 1887, MMA Wolfe Collection files.

would lead to the feud about Bonnat's painting with her familial heir, David Wolfe Bishop, the terms of her will made it clear that only the furniture and personal effects stay with the house on Madison Square. Wolfe's art collection was not to be tied to the house; all of it, including her portrait and the portrait of her father, was to become part of the paintings and works-on-paper left to the Museum in their original frames to be housed and hung together in a fireproof room, the Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Gallery (fig. 29). Her will was written to ensure the accessibility of her art "with a view to the [public's] education and cultivation of the fine arts."[144] Wolfe also provided the institution with a significant endowment for the upkeep of these pictures and for future acquisitions.[145]

Many of Wolfe's peers sold their holdings during their lifetime, passed them down to family, or chose to give individual works to museums. The language of her will articulates a goal of benevolence in leaving her pictures to a civic museum. Yet her bequest also promoted the branding of the Wolfe name—*her* name, in particular, and the power it conveyed—through the fact of the gallery she established. Wolfe's gift to the Metropolitan Museum of Art replicated, on a far more expanded scale, her donation earlier of a duplicate of her father's portrait to the American Museum of Natural History. She fulfilled her duty as a Lorillard and a Wolfe to give back to the city of her birth in a substantive way, yet equally as important, she memorialized herself in the process. If her gift had been merely in the form of a donation, she could have handed her pictures to the Museum without provisos and not insisted that they be kept together. The fact of making the gallery an essential component of her bequest served to acknowledge on a very public scale her contribution to the Museum and to foreground her

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[144] Will of Catharine Lorillard Wolfe, Clause 6, 122.

[145] Ibid.

reputation as a collector, one that, unlike her cousin John Wolfe, she seemed to maintain outside of the realm of the market place, although it was her engagement with that very market place that provided the source of her bequest.

In her 2010 discussion of collecting and museum formation, Anne Higonnet observes: "Decorating a home with an art collection was a perfectly respectable activity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Founding a public institution was not—but if the lady was careful and clever, no one would realize quite what she was doing until it was too late."[146] In Wolfe's case, her final act of governance, the terms of her gift to the Museum, allowed her to conflate patronage with philanthropy, thereby securing her standing as a New Yorker of considerable stature. The presence of Cabanel's portrait among all the paintings she donated would provide a constant visual reminder of her identity as collector and underwriter of this space. After all, if Vinland was the house that she did not construct in New York, the Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Gallery became the purpose-built gallery she did not create for Madison Square.

Following her death and the announcement of the bequest, a reporter from the *New York Daily Tribune* commented that "gifts such as Wolfe's help make New-York more than a commercial capital. It is not too fanciful to hope," the article continued, "that at some day not very distant, New-York may come to rival Paris itself in all that makes a city a capital of civilization."[147] Wolfe's use of her cultural and financial capital in her final act of self-

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[146] Anne Higonnet, *A Museum of One's Own: Private Collecting, Public Gift* (Pittsburgh: Periscope Publishing, 2010), 192.

[147] "New-York's Art Treasures: A Rapidly Growing Institution," *New York Daily Tribune*, April 17, 1887, 13.

fashioning in New York coincided with a transformative moment in the evolution of the Empire City, when it strove to rival the great European capitals.

The house at Madison Square, which she would leave empty of its art to her cousin, David Wolfe Bishop, would be demolished in 1903, when his estate sold the property to the Madison Square Presbyterian Church, the Gothic structure located across 24th Street.[148] The Church needed to move, since it faced its own eventual displacement as the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company continued to expand and take over the block, surrounding the sanctuary with its "white monolith of the home office."[149] The land on which the Wolfe house stood would become the site of a new Madison Square Presbyterian Church completed in 1906 by Stanford White (fig. 30).[150] As will be discussed in the next chapter, Stanford White's partner, Charles Follen McKim, a founding member of McKim, Mead & White, was the architect whose design for Vinland Wolfe would reject in favor of a plan submitted by Peabody & Stearns. In an ironic twist of fate, then, Stanford White seemed to have the last word on behalf of his firm, when the church he helped create replaced what had once been Wolfe's brownstone at 13 Madison Avenue.

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[148] Deed of sale dated May 1, 1903, Liber 91, p. 335, New York Office of the City Register, Department of Finance. According to this deed, the Executors of David Wolfe Bishop sold lots 1, 3, 5, and 6 (the original lots purchased by Wolfe's parents) to the Madison Square Presbyterian Church. Wolfe's executors had sold lot 4—the one that Wolfe purchased for herself in 1886—to David Wolfe Bishop in January 1888, but that land was not part of this 1903 exchange.

[149] Roberta Moudry, "The Corporate and the Civic: Metropolitan Life's Home Office Building," in Moudry, ed., *The American Skyscraper: Cultural Histories* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 124.

[150] Leland M. Roth, *The Architecture of McKim, Mead & White, 1870–1920: A Building List* (New York: Garland, 1978), 91.

CHAPTER TWO

From the City Grid to the Seaside: Constructing a House and a History in Newport

This chapter turns from Catharine Lorillard Wolfe's urban existence as a prominent art collector and museum founder in New York to her activities in the New England seaside resort Newport, Rhode Island. It is the first of two consecutive chapters that together present a contextualized consideration of Vinland, her monumental stone oceanfront "cottage" and the design of its exterior and, in the next chapter, its interior architecture and the decoration of its rooms. In the early 1880s Wolfe embarked on the creation of Vinland (figs. 31, 32). She purchased land, hired the Boston-based architectural firm Peabody & Stearns to design the house and ancillary buildings on the estate, and sought the services of the British design firm William Morris & Co. for the interior.

Among the issues at the core of this dissertation is how, while maintaining her New York identity in what would be the last decade of her life, Wolfe traversed locales and articulated an aesthetic vision in Newport, seemingly in opposition to what governed her patronage in New York City, her primary residence. In Newport she commissioned a great house and envisioned an Arts & Crafts assemblage for its interior. In its entirety Vinland would appear to be a marked departure from the architectural expression, the aesthetic, and the art and its display in Wolfe's New York brownstone, yet the materials of its construction were the same.

Wolfe's involvement in the conception of the architectural program of this new summer residence in Newport, and the role she assumed there as patron of her architects, Peabody & Stearns, provide a key to what made this shift possible. Her vision for Vinland and the steps she took to make it a reality lend credence to a late twentieth-century architectural

historian's statement: "Architecture is involved in forming matter in conformance with ideas; thus it partakes of the rational, the non-material, the ideal."[1] Although Wolfe had summered in Newport earlier and owned a house in the resort town (fig. 33), her decision to acquire new land, hire architects, and embark on the construction of a grand house was significant. The creation of Vinland constituted a bold move for a single woman, even one possessing great wealth, and it was an act that foreshadowed architectural commissions on which later female patrons would embark. In New York, Wolfe's self-fashioning was less connected to the architecture of the pre–Civil War Italianate brownstone built by her parents than it was to the art she collected and displayed within its walls. In Newport, the style of the house and its grand monumental stone facade, its exterior imagery linked to the narrative within, redounded to the credit and daring of its owner and its architects.

The house they created differed demonstrably in appearance from any residence Gilded-Age Newport had ever seen. In contrast to the traditional 1850s brownstone, which gave little indication of the character of its inhabitants, Wolfe's Vinland with its bold stone facade and rich sculptural program announced the arrival of its owner through a new kind of "cottage" steeped in vernacular tradition. Moreover, she initiated the building of "cottages" that were actually somewhat urban in terms of scale and materials.

When we study photographs of Vinland as it originally appeared in the early 1880s (figs. 31, 32), it is as if we have encountered a building from an even earlier era; indeed, it seemed old at the time of its completion. In his chronicle of Gilded Age country estates, published in 1887 soon after Wolfe's death, George Sheldon said of Vinland, a residence he

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[1] Deborah Fausch, "The Knowledge of the Body and the Presence of History—Toward a Feminist Architecture," in Debra Coleman, Elizabeth Danze, and Carol Henderson, eds., *Architecture and Feminism* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), 39.

called one of the most beautiful and commodious in the world: "The painful air of a plebeian newness is missing. One thinks of the English manor house, and its centuries of associations."[2] Vinland's physical characteristics—its formidable, monumental volume; its rusticated stone facade; and its sculptural details replete with runic motifs—made the house appear as if it had somehow been moved from the Old World even when it was still new. It seemed like a transported medieval building and its name, Vinland, brought to mind associations with the tales and times of Viking exploration that played an important role in the formation of Newport's legendary history.

At the time of Vinland's construction, in the years 1882 to 1884, architectural invention in Newport encompassed an amalgam of styles, such as the Queen Anne of the large sprawling mansions, among them the original Peabody & Stearns's Breakers of 1878, owned by Wolfe's cousin, tobacco magnate Pierre Lorillard IV (1833–1901), a house which would be replaced by an even more palatial Richard Morris Hunt–designed Breakers in the 1890s. The proliferation of houses in the Shingle Style, one seemingly custom tailored for the resort, was also contemporaneous with Vinland. Among the houses in this style were Henry Hobson Richardson's Watt Sherman house of 1874–75 and McKim, Mead & White's Isaac Bell house of 1881–83. Although recognized as a quintessential Shingle Style house, the Watts Sherman house is also credited with helping to bring the Queen Anne to American soil and to the consciousness of American architects.[3] By contrast, Vinland's historicist aspect at

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[2] George W. Sheldon, *Artistic Country-Seats: Types of Recent American Villa and Cottage Architecture with Instances of Country Club-Houses* (New York: D. Appleton, 1887), vol. 2, 185.

[3] See Vincent Scully, Jr., *The Shingle Style and the Stick Style: Architectural Theory and Design from Downing to the Origins of Wright* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), 14.

the time of its construction, the result of the collaboration between the architects and the patron, made it appear seemingly at odds with any of the prevailing architectural paradigms of the resort.

Although no one until now has provided a thorough discussion of Vinland's exterior from Wolfe's perspective, scholars who have studied the house have differed as how best to cast Vinland in architectural terms. Some have labeled it an example of the Romanesque Revival; others call it a Norman or Scandinavian design; or an early Beaux-Arts mansion.[4] To be sure, the task of assigning a specific style to Vinland has been complicated because two decades after its completion, later owners, relatives of the Vanderbilts, hired the original architects to enlarge and alter Vinland by literally cutting it in half, filling in the center, raising the roof and, in the process, changing key aspects of its exterior design and its interior (fig. 34).[5] It can be difficult to decipher what was part of the original program and what came later.

To date, the only architectural historian who has attempted to describe Vinland's facade as it was first designed is Wheaton Holden. In "The Triumph of the Eclectic," a chapter of his 1969 doctoral dissertation on the first seventeen years of the firm of Peabody & Stearns, Holden characterizes Vinland as being in no specific style, but concedes that it is

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[4] For an example of the first category, see Montgomery Schuyler, "The Romanesque Revival in America," *Architectural Record*, 1, no. 2 (October–December 1891): 194. For examples of the second, see Richard Guy Wilson, "Oscar Wilde, Colonialists, and Vikings: Newport and the Aesthetic Movement," *Nineteenth Century* 19, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 9; and Annie Robinson, *Peabody & Stearns: Country Houses and Seaside Cottages* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010), 50–52. For the third category, see James L. Yarnall, *Newport Through Its Architecture: A History of Styles from Postmedieval to Postmodern* (Newport, RI: Salve Regina University Press in association with University Press of New England, 2005), 127.

[5] See "Raising a Newport Villa," *Newport Journal and Weekly News*, December 28, 1907, and "A New Vinland," *Newport Journal and Weekly News*, May 15, 1909.

"firmly rooted in the late Middle Ages," and he concludes that it is "more Romanesque in feeling than it is in fact."[6] What Holden does not do is to make any reference to the Viking theme. Moreover, while he cites Wolfe as the architects' patron, he makes no attempt to position the commission and the architectural program of the house within the social context of its creation. This chapter picks up where Holden left off and strives to be more specific about Vinland's historic references.

The formal aspects of Vinland's facade reinforce the fact that everything about its appearance was deliberately selected and staged as part of a joint effort by its patron, and its architects and designers. Far from being merely cloaked in the past, Vinland's architecture was very much engaged in announcing itself in what was unquestionably the here-and-now of Newport in the early 1880s. Vinland was a building that spoke to its setting and to the world of the socially and architecturally evolving resort around it. Its theme, its size, and its use of massive masonry projected a public image of great stature for its owner, Wolfe, the summer resident, as one who had built a great house rooted in Newport's history. By linking herself with this local history, Wolfe was no longer simply the rich New Yorker but, in effect, one of Newport's own.

The strategies and solutions her architects employed not only enabled them to respond to their client's personal fascination with Newport's putative Viking history, it also provided them with a template with which to engage in issues of historicism. Ultimately, their use of a monumental form of masonry in their work at Vinland led them to develop what must be seen

[6] Wheaton A. Holden, "Robert Swain Peabody of Peabody and Stearns in Boston: The Early Years (1870–1886)" (PhD diss., Boston University, 1969), 142–43.

as a new iteration of the Queen Anne revival idiom in America.[7] A thorough analysis of the significance of the Viking theme; the particular site Wolfe selected; the ramifications of her choice of architects; and the dazzling end-result of their collaboration, all serve to reinforce the fact that Vinland was meant to function as a daring social and architectural statement for its owner, its architects, and the resort for which it was intended. Although Vinland was steeped in references to the past, paradoxically it was viewed as avant-garde.

Newport and Its Viking History

In the early 1880s, when Wolfe embarked on the creation of Vinland, its name served as a recognizable reference to Newport's mythic Viking past. Such ideas had generated an ongoing public debate at that time. An indisputable historical record charted the trajectory of Newport's development from its origin in the seventeenth century, when British settlers fled from the religious hegemony of the Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth Bay colonies. Later, in the wake of Tory sympathy during the American Revolution, Newport's thriving eighteenth-century port foundered. In the first half of the nineteenth century, its natural landscape and rustic charm contributed to Newport's development as a summer colony, albeit nowhere near as grand as it would become in the post–Civil War decades, changing from a haven for the literati to the premier watering place on the Eastern seaboard.

The course of Newport's trajectory—its decline as a port at the end of the eighteenth century, its subsequent resuscitation as an antebellum summer colony, and, in the final

[7] I wish to thank Professor Kevin D. Murphy for sharing his ideas about Vinland as a building that constitutes a movement to a new more monumental style on the part of its architects in his talk "Robert Peabody and the Making of a Modern American Architecture" at the symposium *Peabody & Stearns: Residential Resort Architecture* in Newport, RI, on May 7, 2011.

decades of the nineteenth century, its emergence as a leading resort—was not unique. As Kevin Lynch reminds us in his 1972 study *What Time Is This Place?*:

> Many now charming New England towns and farming areas were well-to-do in the early 1800s but in the later years of the century sank into the trough of the westward wave of national expansion. This stagnation must be followed by a second period of wealth (whether belonging to the resort itself or brought in by visitors) that can bear the cost of preservation.[8]

Kevin D. Murphy adds another level of contextualization to Lynch's analysis: namely, that boom-and-bust economies in the United States generated areas of obsolescence. The subsequent phenomenon of the rediscovery of their historic resources by outsiders occurred in New England in Newport, Nantucket Island, and Portsmouth, New Hampshire, among others, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.[9]

In the midst of its rising prosperity, there existed a longing on the part of Newport's citizens for what was considered the simplicity of an earlier time. Pre–Civil War New England revealed signs of a palpable nostalgia for what its inhabitants perceived to be the simplicity, vigor, and homogeneity of a pre-industrial colonial past of the "white village," engaging a strong sense of community in each of its towns. These sentiments would continue to grow in intensity in the years following the Civil War, particularly with the advent of the celebration of the centennial of the American Revolution in 1876. In his 2001 *Imagining New England*, Joseph A. Conforti argues:

> The identity of New England has been encoded in [such] narratives…. New England's past inspired, beginning in the nineteenth century, abundant visual and material artifacts of regional identity—statues,

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[8] Kevin Lynch, *What Time Is This Place?* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1972), 31.

[9] Kevin D. Murphy, "Historicism in the Built Environment," in *A Companion to American Art*, ed. John Davis, Jennifer A. Greenhill, and Jason D. LaFountain (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, forthcoming).

> monuments, sacred landscapes, prints, photographs and more. New England identity acquired concrete shape through such material artifacts.[10]

Conforti asserts that Rhode Island and its inhabitants' view of history stood on the periphery of this veneration of the New England idyll, in part due to the state's earlier identity as a haven from the Puritan ethos.[11] Nonetheless, Conforti's observations about a palpable yearning for remnants of an earlier period, resulting in a local veneration of objects and sites, provide a framework for our understanding of the Colonial Revival movement and, conversely, for the proliferation of myths in Newport about a much earlier Nordic past.

Newport legends held that Aquidneck Island, the landmass on which the town is situated, had a history that pre-dated the recorded seventeenth-century British settlement there. Icelandic sagas recounted the exploits of Nordic adventurers, among them Leif Eriksson, who was said to have journeyed south of Greenland, where he and his fellow mariners reputedly discovered America in the tenth century, before returning to colonize it in the next. [12] These sagas established the Vikings as the first people of European origin to reach the New World half a millennium before Christopher Columbus. The Norse explorers assigned the name Vinland to identify the region they discovered, and to characterize the vegetation they found there.[13] Such tales endowed Newport with a special status as perhaps the first area in North America to be colonized by Europeans.

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[10] Joseph A. Conforti, *Imagining New England: Explorations of Regional Identity from the Pilgrims to the Mid-Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 6–7.

[11] Ibid., 197.

[12] See Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson, eds., *The Vinland Sagas: The Norse Discovery of America* (London and New York: Penguin Books, 1965).

[13] Ibid., 7.

Residents of Newport were not alone in favoring this version of an early history; they had rivals vying for a revisionist history as one of the first discovered landmasses situated on the East Coast, including other areas in New England, among them Boston and Taunton, Massachusetts.[14] These theories were not confined solely to New England locales. Conflicting details in the Viking sagas made it impossible to establish "irrefutable identifications of any of the particular bays and havens visited by the Norsemen, or the exact location of their main settlement in Vinland."[15] Nordic fever abounded in various pockets of the Eastern seaboard as distant from one another as the Hudson Bay and Virginia.[16]

Such beliefs became imbedded in Newport's social and cultural folklore for a good part of the nineteenth century, and remained current in the decades when Wolfe lived there. A compendium of Wolfe's private memorabilia—including broadsides, pamphlets, and other documents—attests to her involvement with this fantastic past and reveal, as well, that she studied Icelandic history and accumulated reports of early Viking discoveries in the New World.[17] Her correspondence in 1885 with philologist William Henry Carpenter (1853–1936) of New York's Columbia College confirms Wolfe's interest in the subject. In offering her an edition of an Icelandic saga, one whose title is not identified in the body of his letter, Carpenter commented: "I am constantly scanning catalogues of Icelandic books that I think

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[14] See, for example, "Where Was Vinland?" *New York Times*, December 25, 1889, 3. For a late-twentieth-century rehashing of a legend that the Vikings brought their longboats up to the Charles River in Boston, see William M. Fowler, Jr., "Christopher Did Not Discover America: A Vote for the Norsemen," *Boston Globe*, October 12, 1998.

[15] Magnusson and Pálsson, *Vinland Sagas*, 8.

[16] Ibid.

[17] See "Vinland Scrapbook," Archives of the Preservation Society of Newport County, Newport, RI.

would be of interest to you and hope before too long to be able to increase your collection by a few volumes."[18]

To help substantiate claims of a Viking past, antiquarians and literati undertook the search for signs of architectural markers or other remnants—what Conforti would refer to as "material artifacts"—that would provide concrete evidence of early Nordic explorations.[19] In nineteenth-century Newport, the most widely held theory about its Norse lineage focused on a circular tower or mill (fig. 35), composed of mortared local fieldstone, believed to be a relic of early Viking exploits.[20] This tower was initially located on a prominent hill in an orchard or pastureland, which later became Touro Park. That public space in the town center was created around the tower in the mid-1850s to help preserve it.[21] Wolfe's first Newport residence, which she purchased in the early 1870s, was situated directly across from Touro Park and the tower or mill (fig. 36). The proximity of her house to a monument thought by many to be a relic of early Nordic exploits may well have ignited Wolfe's interest in this aspect of Newport's past.

In his 1837 volume *Antiqitates Americanae*, the Danish antiquarian Carl Christian Rafn (1795–1864), a founder and Permanent Secretary of the Royal Society of Northern

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[18] William Henry Carpenter to Catharine Lorillard Wolfe, February 28, 1885; Archives of the Newport Historical Society, Newport, RI.

[19] See Conforti, *Imagining New England,* 6–7.

[20] See Johannes Hertz, "Round Church or Windmill? New Light on the Newport Tower," *Journal of the Newport Historical Society* 68, pt. 2 (1997): 55.

[21] In 1854, Judah Touro bequeathed to the city of Newport the "sum of ten thousand dollars, on condition that the sum be expended in the purchase and improvement of the property in said city known as 'Old Stone Mill,' to be kept as a public park or promenade ground." Excerpt from the will of Judah Touro, executed in 1854, cited in Richard M. Bayles, *The History of Newport County, Rhode Island: From the Year 1638 to the Year 1887* (New York: L. E. Preston & Co., 1888), 495.

Antiquaries, identified the site of the land the Vikings had named Vinland in areas of Rhode Island and Massachusetts. He pronounced the Newport tower to be a relic of Viking construction; Rafn's findings were first published in Latin before they were translated into English in the following year, 1838, indicating that they were initially directed to antiquarians and later to a more popular audience.[22] His history relied on references to sailing directions, regions, descriptions, landscape, and animal life, which he extrapolated from the texts of the Viking sagas he studied.[23] From his reading of the sagas, Rafn drafted accounts of the exploits of warriors who embarked on voyages of discovery; among them, Leif Eriksson, the son of Erik the Red, who discovered the vines and grapes that gave the land, Vinland, its name.[24] In his *Mémoires de la Société Royale des Antiquaires du Nord* (1838) Rafn presents his case for the tower's Viking provenance:

> Of the ancient structure in Newport, there are no ornaments remaining which may possibly have served to guide us in assigning the probable date of its erection. That no vestige whatever is found of the pointed arch, nor any approximation to it, is indicative of an earlier, rather than later period…. I am persuaded that all, who are familiar with old Northern architecture, will concur: that this building was erected at a period, decidedly not later than the twelfth century.

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[22] Excerpts from Rafn's original text can be found in his *America Discovered in the Tenth Century* (New York: W. Jackson, 1838).

[23] *Voyages of the Northmen to America: Including Extracts from Icelandic Sagas Relating to Western Voyages by Northmen in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries, in an English Translation by North Ludlow Beamish, with a Synopsis of the Historical Evidence and the Opinion of Professor Rafn as to the Places Visited by the Scandinavians on the Coast of America,* ed. and introduction by Rev. Edmund F. Slafter, A.M. (Boston: Printed for the [Prince] Society, 1877), 10–11.

[24] Rafn, *America Discovered in the Tenth Century*, 6–7.

He went on to say: "This remark applies, of course, to the original building only, and not to the alterations that it subsequently received…that this building could not have been erected for a wind-mill is what an architect would easily discern."[25]

Although Rafn's interpretation of the Nordic sagas would come under criticism and many would later doubt the Newport tower's Viking lineage, his writings would be cited by those who alleged that the region had received explorers of European origin before Columbus. Beginning in the 1840s, Ashabel Davis, a former chaplain of the New York Senate and a corresponding member of the New-York Historical Society, was persuaded by the force of Rafn's argument and embarked on an extensive lecture tour across the Eastern seaboard of the United States. In his lectures, published in 1847 as *Antiquities of America: The First Inhabitants of Central America and the Discovery of New-England by the Northmen Five-Hundred Years before Columbus*, Davis asserted that "the old stone building at Newport, RI, was erected by the Northmen; for it is exactly like the stone houses of Norway, built as baptisteries," thereby identifying the tower as a remnant of an early place of worship.[26] Wolfe may well have attended one of Davis's many lectures or read a later edition of his manuscript,

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[25] Rafn, cited in John Ross Dix, *A Hand-Book of Newport and Rhode Island* (Newport: C. E. Hammett, Jr., 1852), 30–31.

[26] Ashabel Davis, *Antiquities of America: The First Inhabitants of Central America and the Discovery of New-England by the Northmen Five Hundred Years before Columbus*, 19th ed. (New York: Daniel Adee, 1847), 21. Another discussion of the tower's Nordic origins can be found in Joshua Toulmin Smith, *The Northmen in New England; or, America in the Tenth Century* (Boston: Hillard, Gray, 1839), 304–5 : "It is certain that it has not been built by an Anglo-Saxon hand since this country was colonized from England else some record must remain....We have seen it demonstrated from the manuscript documents, the evidence of which we have examined, that the Northmen resided in this immediate neighborhood [Newport], for, at any rate, some years…that the buildings erected here by the Northmen were substantial, most probably of stone, as dwellings erected by them are found to have been in Greenland."

since a frontispiece and a pamphlet with Davis' text, dated 1852, are among the papers she preserved for her personal scrapbook.[27]

Those who opposed the idea of Newport's Viking heritage supported the alternate view that the tower or mill was a colonial artifact that had been constructed during the English rule of the colony, and was built or belonged to Benedict Arnold (1615–1678), Governor of Rhode Island, who settled in Newport in 1651.[28] According to the architect George Champlin Mason (1820–1894), this structure was built soon after the colony's establishment on land owned by the Governor's family, and used as a mill for grinding corn.[29] Part of the rationale for this view was that the Newport structure seemed to resemble a similar mill in Governor Arnold's native Chesterton, in Warwickshire, England. Supporters of this hypothesis also referred to a clause in Arnold's will, executed in 1677, in which he stated that he wished to be buried near "my dwelling house leading to my stone-built windmill in the town of Newport;" this excerpt from Arnold's will was published in an 1852 guidebook to Newport alongside an opposing statement about the tower's Viking past culled from Rafn's writings.[30]

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[27] "Vinland Scrapbook," 48.

[28] For supporters of this structure's colonial provenance, see Charles Timothy Brooks. *The Controversy Touching the Old Stone Mill, in the Town of Newport, Rhode-Island: With Remarks, Introductory and Conclusive* (Newport, RI: C. E. Hammett, Jr., 1851); Charles P. Coggeshall, "Some Old Rhode Island Grist Mills," *Newport History: Bulletin of the Newport Historical Society,* no. 39 (January 1922): 1–21; and Nick Phelan, "Stone Tower Myth Crumbles," *Newport Daily News*, February 27, 1996, A7. Arguments based on scientific analysis can be found in Janine Landry, "Test Refutes Viking Tie to Mill," *Newport Daily News*, December 4, 1995, C1, 5, and in Hertz, "Round Church or Windmill?," 92–97 (appendix).

[29] Mason wrote multiple essays on this topic. For the most concise argument, see "The Old Stone Mill at Newport," *Magazine of American History* 3 (1879): 541–49.

[30] For an excerpt from Governor Benedict Arnold's 1677 will and an excerpt from Rafn's 1838 *Memoires de la Société Royale des Antiquaires du Nord*, see Dix, *A Hand-Book of Newport and Rhode Island*, 29–31.

Speculations about the tower in its various historical incarnations made their way into nineteenth-century American visual culture and fiction, to which Wolfe herself would have been attuned. An 1844 painting by the architect George Champlin Mason, *Old Stone Tower, Newport* (fig. 37), sets the tower in an Arcadian setting presumably prior to British colonization.[31] Another image, a cartoon by Frederick Burr Opper (fig. 38) published after Wolfe's death, depicts the tower and a group of Viking figures in various stages of inebriation; the caption reads "Cheapest Newport Season."[32]

James Fenimore Cooper's 1828 novel *The Red Rover*, a work that would be reprinted during the course of the nineteenth century and thus accessible to Wolfe, provides a skeptical view of the tower's Norse pedigree. In the novel, one protagonist speculates that the tower was a more recently constructed flour mill, whose high arches protected the flour-making process from the rats roaming the ground below: "The windy situation, the pillars to keep off the invading vermin, the shape, the air, the very complexion proves it. Whir-r-r, whir-r-r; there has been clatter enough here I warrant you."[33] In his preface to an 1850 edition of *The Red Rover*, reprinted in 1872, Cooper comments: "We pretend to no exclusive knowledge…never having seen this much talked of ruin but once….It must be confessed that it struck the writer as the very obvious remains of a wind-mill and nothing else."[34]

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[31] I am grateful to William Vareika, president of William Varieka Fine Arts, Ltd., Newport, RI, for sharing this image with me.

[32] The cartoon was originally included in Bill Nye, *Bill Nye's History of the United States* (Chicago: Thompson & Thomas, 1894).

[33] James Fenimore Cooper, *The Red Rover: A Tale* (New York and London: D. Appleton, 1872), 54.

[34] Ibid., 8. In her study of James Fenimore Cooper, Mary E. Phillips notes that Cooper was for a time skipper of a whaling ship, which landed once in Newport. He explored the "old ruin

When an old skeleton and bits of armor were unearthed in Fall River, Massachusetts, the myth of tower's Norse origins inspired Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–1882) to write his 1841 ballad "The Skeleton in Armor." The poem chronicled a Norse warrior's discovery of the land that became Newport and told of the construction of the tower (fig. 39).[35] Earlier, in 1835, Longfellow had visited Copenhagen, studied Icelandic, and examined Viking artifacts at the Museum of Northern Antiquities there. According to Longfellow's biographer Charles C. Calhoun, the poet's immersion in medieval Norse culture in Denmark provided a source for images of "shields and swords and helmets," in the 1841 ballad.[36]

In an introduction accompanying the 1842 edition of his poems, Longfellow wrote about "The Skeleton in Armor":

> The following Ballad was suggested to me while riding on the seashore at Newport. A year or two previous a skeleton had been dug up at Fall River, clad in broken and corroded armor; and the idea occurred to me of connecting it with the Round Tower at Newport, generally known hitherto as the Old Wind-Mill, though now claimed by the Danes as a work of their early ancestors.[37]

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there, but no fancy could ever persuade him to see more than a windmill in it." Phillips, *James Fenimore Cooper* (New York: John Lane Co., 1913), 158. A review written in 1993 of the 1991 edition of *The Red Rover* edited by Thomas and Marianne Philbrick focuses on Cooper's early use of "that significant American form, the sea adventure romance," and makes no reference to anyone's characterization of the tower or mill in Newport. See Susan Manning, "Reviews," *Review of English Studies, New Series* 44, no. 175 (August 1993): 450.

[35] See Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "The Skeleton in Armor," *Ballads and Other Poems* (Cambridge, MA: John Owen, 1842), 31–41.

[36] Charles C. Calhoun, *Longfellow: A Rediscovered Life* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), 112. Calhoun's twenty-first-century reassessment of Longfellow emphasizes the poet's multiculturalist bent and gift for languages.

[37] Introduction to "The Skeleton in Armor," in Longfellow, *Ballads and Other Poems*, 29–30. In reaction to Rafn's allegations that the tower was actually a Viking relic, Longfellow wrote: "I will not enter into a discussion of the point. It is sufficiently well established for the purpose of a ballad."

The practice of anchoring his poems to tangible sites and, as well, to images celebrating the simplicity of the American past characterized much of Longfellow's verse.[38] A version of the circumstances underlying the impetus for what became Longfellow's ballad is provided in the memoirs of Maude Howe Elliot, the daughter of Julia Ward Howe, published in 1944, a century after the ballad's composition: "My mother's brother, Sam Ward, went to see the ancient relics, and wrote to Longfellow… 'Dear Longo: There is a poem in this for you.'"[39] In a letter to Sam Ward of December 1840, a document that Wolfe would acquire in the intervening decades, Longfellow wrote that he wished to read to Ward '"The Skeleton in Armor' which is too long to copy…which as yet, no eye but mine has seen, and which I wish to read to you first….At present, dear friend, my soul is wrapped in poetry."[40]

Wolfe preserved a copy of Longfellow's ballad among her memorabilia.[41] Further, she would choose the exploits of his Viking protagonist to be the subject of a large-scale frieze for Vinland's interior. Longfellow's "The Skeleton in Armor" also elicited dramatized renditions of its plot, including the production of fêtes and pageants in Newport, well into the early twentieth century.[42] David Glassberg argues that such civic, artistic, non-commercial pageants

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[38] See Kevin D. Murphy's reference to Longfellow's pervasive imagery in Murphy, *Colonial Revival Maine* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004), 2–3.

[39] Maud Howe Elliott, *This Was My Newport* (Cambridge, MA: Mythology Co., A.M. Jones, 1944), 80.

[40] Henry Wadsworth Longfellow to Sam Ward, Esq., December 1, 1840, "Vinland Scrapbook." It is possible that Wolfe received this letter from Maude Howe Elliott or Julia Ward Howe, both of whom were visitors to Vinland, as noted on an entry of September 17, 1883, in the Guest Book of the scrapbook.

[41] See "Vinland Scrapbook," 36.

[42] See "'The Viking,' Fine Newport Pageant," *New York Times*, August 30, 1922. There was a citation the day earlier in "Pageants Growing Popular," *New York Times*, August 29, 1922, in

were fueled by the desire on the part of "genteel intellectuals" to return to the traditions of medieval and Renaissance Europe, which were not to be found in modern industrial America.[43] The spectacle of Newport processions celebrating the Viking past linked the participants and the spectators with the traditions of an earlier era of heroic deeds.

In the years immediately surrounding Wolfe's creation of Vinland, speculation about the identity of the tower continued to appear in popular publications and periodicals. An 1882 guidebook to Newport refers to the "Old Stone Mill" as one of the resort's most striking cultural curiosities: "It is, most certainly, very old, and certainly of extremely obscure origin. We cannot tell you much about it, yet there it stands, Sphinx-like, awaiting your cleverest guess."[44] In an 1879 edition of *Scribner's Monthly*, the architect R. G. Hatfield, then president of the New York chapter of the American Institute of Architects, supported Rafn's claims and offered another theory, namely that the relic in Touro Park was once a stone baptistery built by the Northmen at least six hundred years before the Mayflower reached Plymouth Rock; Hatfield goes on to propose that the tower undergo restoration in order to become a museum of American Antiquities.[45]

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which the writer credits the people of Newport for not forgetting the Longfellow ballad and "the esthetic possibilities of a Norse setting."

[43] David Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry: The Uses of Tradition in the Early Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 35.

[44] James H. Bowditch, *Newport: "The City by the Sea"* (Providence, RI: J. A & R. A. Reid, 1882), 36–37.

[45] R. G. Hatfield, "The 'Old Mill' at Newport: A New Study of an Old Puzzle," *Scribner's Monthly* 17, no. 5 (March 1879): 635–36. A contemporary review of Hatfield's article commented that if Hatfield could provide additional physical evidence for his view, they would support his claim; see "Tower at Vinland," *The American Architect and Building News* 5 (March 1, 1879): 65.

Alternatively, an 1882 article in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, a copy of which was in Wolfe's possession, positions Rafn's ideas as picturesque and romantic myths rooted in the claim that "These Northmen, or Vikings, were not merely a far-away people with whom we have nothing in common….These Norse Vikings were, like most of us, Scandinavians, and so were really closer to us in blood and in language than the great Columbus."[46] The author of this article suggests that the desire for a heritage of Anglo-Saxon purity could have been a catalyst contributing to the spread of these myths.[47]

Wolfe's fixation with this reading of a Norse past for Newport seems to have been motivated less by belief in the veracity of Rafn's claims, or by underlying assumptions about racial purity or class; rather, it would seem to have stemmed from the literary and cultural outpourings that the tower and the legend generated. By moving from her old residence across from the actual tower in Touro Park, and deliberately labeling her new one Vinland, as an identifying sign on her Gate Lodge testified (fig. 40), Wolfe was able to conflate her own persona in Newport with the mythic history of the resort. To do this, she employed the communicative power of the medium of architecture to create in Vinland a reference to the actual tower or a reminder of it through the name attached to a very different building in a different locale. Her house in its final form, enhanced by the interior program she commissioned, would become a Gilded Age monument to Viking legends about the origin

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[46] Thomas Wentworth Higginson, "The Visit of the Viking," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 65, no. 388 (September 1882): 516.

[47] Ibid. For a late-twentieth-century interpretation of this view, see Robin Fleming, "Picturesque History and the Medieval in Nineteenth-Century America," *American Historical Review* 100, no. 4 (October 1995): 1078. Fleming argues that medieval researchers in the nineteenth century were motivated by "the fact that the nation's ruling elite, which was white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant, was beginning to lose its grip on the country in the face of mass immigration and industrialization."

and history of Newport. In the end, Catharine Lorillard Wolfe audaciously appropriated this history to enhance her own standing there.

The Land

When Wolfe made the decision to embark on the building of a new summer cottage in Newport, she had owned the property across from Touro Park for almost a decade; it would remain her summer residence until the completion of Vinland, and be part of her estate at the time of her death in 1887.[48] Wolfe's attention to the physical layout of the original house continued until a few years before she embarked on the Vinland project, when she saw to the construction of a bay window there.[49] It was indicative of Wolfe's desire to establish herself anew that she chose to buy land in what was becoming a fast developing oceanfront site for Newport's moneyed elite: Ochre Point (fig. 41).[50]

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[48] There are different accounts as to the purchase of her house at 5 Touro Park West. The 1871–72 Social Register of Newport lists her father, John David Wolfe, as the owner of property on Pelham Street, near Bellevue Avenue, which are the boundaries for Touro Park. However, John David Wolfe died in May 1872 and there is no evidence of his ever residing in Newport. The 1873–74 Social Register lists Wolfe herself as the owner. Other accounts cite Wolfe as the purchaser of this property in 1872 for the sum of $35,000 from Daniel M. Edgar; see Archives of the Newport Historical Society, Newport, RI; this information is confirmed in records of the Land Evidence Office, Book 43, Page 204, which dates the sale at October 12, 1872, which means the transaction would have been finalized five months after the death of Wolfe's father. Possibly his name was given because of his daughter's unmarried status or because funds were transferred from his accounts. There was also an additional notice in "Real Estate Sales," *Newport Mercury*, September 26, 1874, which stated that "Ms. Catharine Lorillard Wolfe purchased the Eckley estate on Pelham Street for $25,000," thereby adding to the property she owned adjacent to this new acquisition. Evidence of this second transaction from the estate of Julia Anne Eckley taking place on October 28, 1874, is provided in Land Evidence Records, Book 43, Page 204.

[49] "The Newport Cottages," *New York Times*, May 13, 1877, 1.

[50] See "The Building Boom," *Newport Mercury*, November 12, 1881.

The history of this cliff-lined cape on the Atlantic Ocean harked back to the early British occupation of Newport, for there is a record of a land grant for the location given to one Thomas Brassee in 1641.[51] Sometime between the years 1721 and 1727, Robert Taylor purchased the land, which he then deeded to his sons, Nicholas and Joseph, and the property became known as the Taylor Farm; Wolfe preserved copies of documents attesting to this early history of the ownership of land that she would later purchase.[52] In the 1820s, strains of ochre were reportedly discovered at this site, giving the rocks on the coast a recognizably yellow tint, presumably leading to the name. An alternative explanation for the metallic yellow tint of the rocks derived from a rumor that there had once been a gold mine on this site.[53]

In the fourth decade of the nineteenth century, Ochre Point became the locus of land speculation when the eminent New York jurist, later Lieutenant Governor and Acting Governor of Rhode Island, William Beach Lawrence (1800–1881), bought this land (fig. 42). Frequently cited as Newport's first resident millionaire, despite subsequent rumors of financial difficulties, Lawrence acted on the advice of Alfred Smith, a notorious real estate salesman and promoter, one who played a major role in instigating and facilitating numerous

[51] See "Vinland Scrapbook." I am also grateful to Bertram Lippincott III, Librarian and Genealogist at the Newport Historical Society, for his assistance in tracing the chain of ownership at Ochre Point.

[52] See the will of Robert Taylor, proved January 10, 1763, in "Vinland Scrapbook," 12.

[53] May [Mrs. John King] Van Rensselaer, *Newport: Our Social Capital* (Philadelphia and London: J. B. Lippincott, 1905), 92. She also credits William Beach Lawrence, the owner of the property who would sell the land to Wolfe, with coining the term Ochre Point.

land transactions for the wealthy in Newport.[54] At Smith's urging, Lawrence purchased virtually all of Ochre Point, an area comprising a landmass of more than sixty acres overlooking the Atlantic coast, for the reported sum of $12,000. Accounts vary in the literature and press clippings of the period, and in the obituaries written at the time of Lawrence's death in March 1881, as to when he embarked on this spectacular purchase. However, the deed of purchase in Newport confirms that in 1836 Lawrence bought the property, once belonging to the eighteenth-century owner Taylor, from John Wilbour on September 25, 1836.[55] There is, however, an additional deed of purchase dated October 1, 1836, which cited a transfer of ownership from George Armstrong, who had been a co-owner of this land with Wilbour.[56] Other sources claim that Lawrence made the purchase a decade and a half later, in 1850, from the estate of George Armstrong, at a time when Lawrence, an outsider, originally a New York lawyer, had become a full-time resident of Newport and embarked on a career of public service and land acquisition there.[57]

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[54] See Jon Sterngass, *First Resorts: Pursuing Pleasure at Saratoga Springs, Newport, and Coney Island* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 185–87, and Alan T. Schumacher, "Newport's Real Estate King," *Newport History* 209 (Spring 1988): 37.

[55] According to the records of the Newport Land Evidence Office, City Hall, Newport, RI, Box 21, Pages 240–42, Lawrence's purchase from John Wilbour took place on September 25, 1936. This information is confirmed in a letter from Francis X. Girr to Richard Guy Wilson, October 27, 1997, which Professor Wilson kindly shared with me.

[56] Newport Land Evidence Office, City Hall, Newport, RI, Box 21, Pages 242–43.

[57] See, for example, "The Record of Deaths: William Beach Lawrence," *Newport Mercury*, April 2, 1881, 1, and "The Season at Newport: Recent Purchases by Summer Visitors: New Arrivals at the Cottages," *New York Times*, May 20, 1882. A letter of October 10, 1945, from Margaret Bokee was published in the "Grist Mill" column, in which she claimed that Lawrence had made his purchase in 1850 from her great-grandfather, George Armstrong; a copy of this letter is in the archives of Salve Regina University, Newport, RI.

According to the architect George Champlin Mason, writing in 1875, Lawrence's purchase, which he dates as 1835 in the "early days of Newport as a watering place," constituted the largest and most valuable tract in the area, with an ocean view on two sides. Mason also notes that the property encompassed two lesser reefs, Taylor's Long and Short Points, both sites well-known to fishermen.[58] Although the exact date of its construction and the identity of the original architect are in question, Lawrence's Greek Revival house became popularly known as one of the largest and most expensive of its day (fig. 43).[59] Richard Morris Hunt (1827–1895), early in his architectural career, is credited with renovating and enlarging what was once Lawrence's homestead and its ancillary buildings between the years 1860 and 1861.[60] Land records are unclear about the homestead's precise location, but it was believed to have been on the property Wolfe purchased.

While the date of Lawrence's land acquisition was at question in the nineteenth century, despite the evidence of the deeds of purchase in the 1830s, what has never been at issue is the extraordinary profit Lawrence would make from dividing up and selling individual parcels of his property during his lifetime, again at the urging of Smith. Nor is there any doubt of the even greater financial windfall that would accrue to his estate from transactions continuing after his death in 1881.[61] Lawrence's decision to divide his property into dozens of

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[58] George Champlin Mason, *Newport and Its Cottages* (Boston: J. R. Osgood, 1875), 42. Mason adds: "The view is unrivaled, for it takes in the whole sweep of the ocean from Gay Head round to Coggeshall's Ledge, and on the north far up to the Town's Beach."

[59] See "Building Notes: William Beach Lawrence," *Newport Mercury*, April 6, 1861.

[60] See Paul R. Baker, *Richard Morris Hunt* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1980), 118, 538.

[61] See "Real Estate in Newport: A Farm Bought for $12,000 Now Worth a Million and a Half," *Newport Mercury*, December 24, 1881. It is beyond the scope of this project to quantify the number of the land transactions that evolved from Lawrence's original purchase,

separate lots not only resulted in huge profits for him and, later, for his estate, but also provided a supply and satisfied a demand for land at or near the ocean. His later purchasers included Pierre Lorillard, Wolfe's cousin, who in 1877 bought ten prime acres facing the ocean for $96,147, and would then commission Peabody & Stearns, also Wolfe's future architects, to design the original Breakers.[62]

The real estate ventures Lawrence's activities put into play helped ensure that this location would be accessible only to those able to afford a huge expenditure of money. The buying and selling of prime real estate on the part of Lawrence, aided initially by Alfred Smith, the high-powered salesmen and speculator, contributed to the escalation of the land value and the attendant desirability of properties near the ocean.

The author of an 1875 guide to American summer resorts describes Newport as then being on its way to becoming the epitome of American watering places: "Indeed, this ancient and once renowned seat of commerce, after shrinking into near-oblivion, has been Rip-Van-Winkled into fame again, and is now in the bloom of a vigorous summer life."[63] Henry James's 1878 novella *An International Episode*, set in Newport four years earlier, in 1874, explores the lure of the natural ambience of Newport's coastline through the eyes of two visiting English aristocrats: "[They] had an extraordinary sense of ease, of drives in the late

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because many of the properties were bought and resold over time and there is conflicting information about some of the land deals.

[62] See ibid. Some of Lawrence's other sales included: three acres sold for $39,795 to Professor Fairman Rogers of Philadelphia, with an additional acre in 1877; one acre to George Pendleton for $10,000 in 1876; and, in 1879, an additional three-quarters of an acre was purchased by Pierre Lorillard.

[63] John B. Bachelder, *Popular Resorts and How to Reach Them: Combining a Brief Description of the Principal Summer Retreats in the United States and the Routes of Travel Leading to Them*, 3rd ed. (Boston: J. B. Bachelder, 1875), 104.

afternoon over gleaming beaches, on long sea roads, beneath a sky lighted up by marvelous sunsets…in the summer starlight, above the warm Atlantic."[64] The appeal of this setting must have been instrumental in Wolfe's decision to relocate at considerable expense, and then fashion for herself a new identity at Ochre Point.

The *Newport Mercury* of October 22, 1881, announced that "Miss Catherine L. Wolfe of New York" had purchased thirteen acres from Lawrence's Ochre Point estate, including the former Lawrence homestead, for the extraordinary price of $192,000.[65] Wolfe's purchase from Lawrence's executors was finalized on November 3, 1881, according to records from the Newport Land Evidence Office.[66] The *Newport Mercury* noted that in making this purchase, Wolfe had been granted a release from an initial, more modest acquisition (of $42,000) of an unspecified parcel of land, also from Lawrence's estate.[67]

The spectacular oceanfront property located at the intersection of Shepard and Ochre Point Avenues, which she did acquire, was more than four times as expensive and most likely a significantly larger plot of land than the property Wolfe reportedly turned down, marking what can only be interpreted as a highly deliberate change of venue on her part. There must have been a series of negotiations as to the terms of the transaction before Wolfe's ultimate purchase could be finalized. Her payment of $192,000 for thirteen acres was the highest sum per acre expended by any single purchaser of Lawrence's land, and no doubt it made her one

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[64] Henry James, "An International Episode," in *The New York Stories of Henry James*, edited by Colm Tóibín (New York: New York Review Books, 2006), 149–50.

[65] "Large Sale of Real Estate," *Newport Mercury*, October 22, 1881, 1.

[66] Newport Land Evidence Office, City Hall, Newport, RI, Box 52, Pages 336–37.

[67] "Large Sale of Real Estate," *Newport Mercury*, October 22, 1881, 1.

of the dominant female owners in this area of Newport at the time.[68] Soon after her initial purchase, she bought additional lots of land for the construction of ancillary buildings on her property, including a lot owned by her cousin Pierre Lorillard.[69]

In selecting the prime spot on Ochre Point, Wolfe positioned herself close to other wealthy buyers, as indicated by plots identifying them on a map of 1883 (fig. 44).[70] Moreover, in choosing this location, Wolfe's land would border her cousin's property, then heralded for its magnificence.[71] The acreage she purchased would not have been available to her cousin at the time of his earlier transaction, since its owner, Lawrence, would still have been living there.

The record sums Wolfe and others paid for land originally belonging to Lawrence further testify to the growing eminence of Newport and to the escalation in monetary value of land near the water. As one local commentator noted, such transactions "beautified the 'Point' by the erection of costly villas and laying out of elaborate grounds….It is safe to predict that handsome summer houses will be built, and that Ochre Point…will be one of the most attractive spots at Newport."[72] Another writer acknowledged: "From these figures [tax values]

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[68] These later buyers included: Gen. H. J. Van Alen of New York, who bought ten acres for $98,942.50; Julia Rhinelander of New York, who bought four acres for $60,000; and Mrs. M. C. Acosta of Baltimore and Mrs. H. C. O'Donnell, who bought smaller properties not on the water.

[69] Newport Land Evidence, City Hall, Newport, RI, Box 53, Pages 417–18; this purchase is recorded as taking place on December 12, 1882.

[70] *Atlas of the City of Newport, Rhode Island from Official Records, Private Plans and Actual Surveys* (Philadelphia: G. M. Hopkins, 1883), pl. 18.

[71] See "The Season at Newport," *New York Times,* June 24, 1878.

[72] "Newport: Important Real Estate Sales in the Fashionable Localities: More Elegant Cottages Going Up in the Fashionable Localities," *Newport Herald*, December 12, 1881, 1, cited in "Vinland Scrapbook," 63.

it will readily be seen that owning a cottage in Newport for summer occupancy is an expensive luxury, and one in which the ordinary run of mortals cannot indulge."[73]

The resulting publicity surrounding these sales served to obfuscate a controversial aspect of Ochre Point's charged earlier history: the conflict between William Beach Lawrence, the wealthy land owner, and the citizens of Newport. That Lawrence was concerned with shielding visual access to his property is illustrated in a fragment of a map of 1850 (fig. 45) revealing a grove of trees encircling his homestead on all sides, save for the one with an uninterrupted view of the ocean. The main issue at stake was public access to the Cliff Walk, the three-and-a-half-mile rocky pathway along the ocean's edge, which traversed Lawrence's oceanfront property and would later cross Wolfe's land. During the course of Lawrence's ownership of Ochre Point, he authorized the construction of a stone wall that curtailed long-cherished public access to the Cliff Walk and, presumably, to the reefs on his property, which fishermen had customarily used for many decades. In response to the barrier he erected, Newport citizens tore down the wall; Lawrence then took additional action and had the wall rebuilt, this time with an installation of a dangerous facing of broken glass. He took further action by placing a bull at the site to frighten off anyone who attempted to trespass on what he considered his private domain.[74]

Years of strife and litigation ensued when in 1852, in the case of *David P. Hall vs. William Beach Lawrence*, the Supreme Court of Rhode Island found in favor of Hall, a

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[73] Undated press clipping in "Vinland Scrapbook," 65.

[74] See Cleveland Amory, *The Last Resorts* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948), 183.

seaweed collector.[75] Citing a contract made with former owners of Lawrence's property, John Wilbour and George Armstrong, entitling Hall's continued access to the cliffs, the court ruled that "the plaintiff…had a right of common to take from the shore of the defendant's estate sea-weed and gravel and stones below highwater mark, at all times at his will and pleasure."[76] Although not referenced in the transcript of the 1852 case brought to the Supreme Court of Rhode Island, the right of public access to the shore was part of the 1843 Rhode Island Constitution, stating that "the people shall continue to enjoy and freely exercise all the rights of fishery, and the privileges of the shore, to which they have been heretofore entitled under the charter and usages of the state," thus reinforcing a right earlier granted in the 1663 Royal Charter of Charles II.[77]

In an account of American summer resorts, published in the same year as the 1852 case, George William Curtis describes the attraction and tradition of the Cliff Walk:

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[75] *David P. Hall vs. William Beach Lawrence* (August Term, 1852), cited in Thomas Durfee, *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Supreme Court of Rhode-Island*, vol. 2 (Providence, RI: E. L. Freeman Co., State Printers, 1854), 218–43. The lawyers for the plaintiff asked for "an injunction to restrain the defendant from obstructing or hindering the plaintiff or his tenant, or servants or agents of such tenant, in passing or repassing over a certain path or drift-way to the shore or beach, and procuring sand, gravel, and sea-weed from said shore or beach upon or adjoining the defendant's farm, and stones (below high water mark) thereon, and tipping sea weed on the bank of said defendant's farm, as they had the right and had been accustomed to do. The bill further prayed an account of sea-weed taken by the defendant from said shore, and for damages for obstructions to the use of the way aforesaid." Ibid., 219.

[76] Ibid., 221, 243.

[77] Constitution of the State of Rhode Island, Article I, Section 17, cited in Larry Lowenthal, "The Cliff Walk at Newport," *Newport History: Bulletin of the Newport Historical Society* 61, no. 212 (Fall 1988): 110. The colonial charter of Charles II stated that man could "strike whale, take dumber thus or other great fish and pursue them unto any part of the coast and there kill them without molestation," cited in Paul A. Darling, "Rhode Island's Cliff Walk: Its Wild Origins and Bright Future," *Yankee* 36 (November 1972): 63. See also "Cliff Walk, A History," prepared on March 31, 1987, by the US Department of the Interior, National Parks Service, Boston, in the archives of the Newport Historical Society.

> A little further on are the finest cliffs in Newport…these are the haunts of the bass fishers. We have left our horses behind, for there is only a foot-path along the hills. But by a happy old condition of the sale of these lands, the path will long remain public. For when the colonists took the land from the Indians, a right of way along the sea was secured to them forever, for fishing and the gathering of seaweed.[78]

It would be not only fishermen and the ordinary citizens of Newport, then, who would want to gain access to the Cliff Walk, but also an increasing number of tourists and curiosity seekers, a trend that would continue to accelerate during the years of Wolfe's residency at Ochre Point.

Although the 1852 law suit settled in favor of the plaintiff's right of access took place two decades before Wolfe became a summer resident of Newport at Touro Park in 1872, and three decades prior to her 1881 purchase of land from the Lawrence estate, she could not but have been aware of class tensions that continued to mount in Newport between year-round and summer residents. In 1887, in what would be the final year of Wolfe's life, the wealthy summer residents at Ochre Point would be able to use their clout to defeat the construction of a proposed sewer for the drainage of the entire area and, as well, to block plans for the building of a horse railroad that citizens of the town desired.[79]

Cognizant of the fact that the Cliff Walk was to remain a public path, Wolfe never attempted to curb access to the walkway that bordered her estate and her cousin's in the aggressive manner that Lawrence had. She did, however, attempt to lower the level of the Cliff Walk in order to provide landfill needed for the formation of a hill to block noise from neighbors on the south side of her property. Her landscape architect Ernest Bowditch (1850–

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[78] George William Curtis, *Lotus-Eating: A Summer Book* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1852), 182.

[79] See "Ochre Point Sewer: A Question Which Is Creating Much Interest in Newport," *New York Times*, October 29, 1887.

1918), who proposed this scheme, noted, as well, that changes in the gradient from lowering the walk would not only provide the necessary landfill for this project, but would also serve to "more 'set up' [the house] above the natural surface than it actually was."[80] This project was met with indignation from a local citizen, and the grading of the path was restored to its original level.[81] However, it cannot be ignored that had this effort to lower the portion of the Cliff Walk that bordered Wolfe's property been carried out, it would not have raised the vantage point of the house, as Bowditch claimed. Instead, it would have served to make views of Vinland less accessible to walkers on the path, and make the walkers on the path less visible to the owner of Vinland.[82]

Wolfe's spectacular purchase, and the anticipation of the house she would build on her new Ochre Point property, became the subject of much gossip and speculation. A Newport guidebook of 1882 noted that Ochre Point had become so altered in appearance that anyone who remembered the configuration of the land in Lawrence's day would scarcely be able to recognize the site.[83] A notice in the *New York Times* of that year stated "The large estate of William Beach Lawrence has been nearly closed out. Miss Catharine Lorillard Wolfe of New

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[80] Ernest W. Bowditch, "The Year 1881 at the Office," MSS 3, p. 14, Bowditch Family Papers, vol. 2; Archives of the Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA.

[81] Ibid.

[82] A decade later, in 1896, when Vinland was now in the hands of Wolfe's cousin, Louis Lorillard, a reporter from the Liverpool *Evening Standard* commented: "There is nothing to prevent you if you are rude enough, from walking up the lawn and staring into Mr. Lorillard's… lordly windows. No one does, but anybody might…The result is such a combination of natural and contrived beauty, open for the enjoyment of all, as is not to be seen on such terms anywhere else in the world"; cited in Arnold Lewis, *American Country Houses of the Gilded Age (Sheldon's "Artistic Country-Seats")* (New York: Dover Publications, 1982), no. 100.

[83] Bowditch, *Newport: "The City by the Sea*," 26.

York…is now changing the old dwelling into a Queen Anne form."[84] The local press more correctly explained that Lawrence's house was not simply being altered, but being torn down, for Wolfe would not pay to have it moved to clear the way for her house, since it would necessitate an "insignificant tree" being cut down.[85] Thus in razing Lawrence's former homestead, Wolfe deliberately erased the visible signs of its previous owner.

The Newport papers vied with each other in making claims about the potential magnificence and the great cost that the house under construction would entail, culminating in what might possibly be the most expensive cottage in Newport.[86] In making such a publicly acknowledged purchase of a coveted piece of land, Wolfe set the stage for the creation of a house that would serve as the ultimate statement about herself and her status in the resort. Had Wolfe not made such a strong claim to Newport's history, she might have been seen as more nouveau riche, or arriviste, given the extravagance of her project.

Choosing an Architect

After securing the purchase of land for her new summer residence, Wolfe faced the task of having to choose an architect whose ideas would be responsive to hers. In the early months of 1882, she would settle on the Boston-based firm of Peabody & Stearns to design Vinland.[87]

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[84] "The Season at Newport," *New York Times*, May 20, 1882.

[85] See undated press clipping, "Vinland Scrapbook," 65; "New Villa at Ochre Point," *Newport Mercury*, March 18, 1882, and "DN," *Newport Daily News*, April 25, 1882.

[86]See "Local Matters: The Fashionable Quarter," *Newport Mercury*, November 11, 1882, 1, and "Newport Notes: The Rise in Value of Ochre Point—Plans for the Coming Season," *Official Dispatch to the World*, undated.

[87] Peabody & Stearns are identified as Wolfe's architects in "New Villa Ochre Point," *Newport Mercury*, March 18, 1882. While Robert Peabody's diaries from the years 1882 and 1883 are lost, in his diary of 1884 he does make references to meeting Wolfe in Newport; see

They were the architects who four years earlier had designed the Breakers (figs. 46, 47) for Pierre Lorillard, on property that now would be directly adjacent to hers. This fact might lead us to conjecture that Wolfe always had had this firm in mind. Not only did the two properties belong to members of the same family, and would be the work of the same architectural firm, but the landscape that framed both residences would be the result of the conception of one designer, the eminent landscape architect and engineer Ernest W. Bowditch.[88] Earlier, Bowditch had been responsible for the planning and cultivation of the elaborate grounds surrounding The Breakers, and went as far as to suggest that he personally secured the Wolfe commission for Peabody & Stearns.[89]

In an offhand comment, Bowditch expressed a desire that Vinland's grounds be configured as a contiguous natural landscape bridging the two properties, so that they would "act as foils for each other" in the service of beautifying Ochre Point.[90] As Abigail Van Slyck comments, Bowditch attempted the configuration of a serpentine path to enhance the natural

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Wheaton Holden Papers, Box 1, John Hay Library, Brown University. A card file once belonging to the firm of Peabody & Stearns (the location of which is now unknown) listed their work for Wolfe on Vinland as dating from 1882 to 1884, with alterations in 1884; see appendix to Wheaton Holden, "Robert Swain Peabody," 357.

[88] For a discussion of Bowditch's career as landscape architect and engineer, see Kevin D. Murphy, "Ernest W. Bowditch and the Practice of Landscape Architecture," *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 125, no. 2 (April 1989): 162–76.

[89] Ernest W. Bowditch, "EWB First Office," MSS 3, p. 5, Bowditch Family Papers, vol. 2, Archives of the Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA.

[90] Bowditch, "The Year 1881 at the Office," 10. This remark is also cited in John R. Tshirch, "The Evolution of a Beaux-Arts Landscape: The Breakers in Newport, Rhode Island," *Journal of the New England Garden History Society* 7 (Fall 1999): 5. There is no evidence that Wolfe solicited the services of Bowditch at the early date of 1881, especially since the notebooks of Robert Peabody date the meeting between Wolfe and Bowditch about this project to October 3, 1884 (although they may have met earlier, under other circumstances); see Wheaton Holden Papers, Box 1, John Hay Library, Brown University.

appearance of what was a contrived layout.[91] Later, Bowditch acknowledged that the disparities in the architectural design of the Breakers and Vinland complicated the task of creating a seamless spread of land, although he concluded that he was satisfied with the end result of his design.[92] Of Wolfe, Bowditch allowed that "Occasionally customers like Miss C.L. Wolfe of New York and Newport…introduced another element into what otherwise might have been a monotonous professional life." He describes her character as "impulsive and in a way very exacting [but] … very reasonable and simply wanted things well done, without a splurge and an unnecessary expense."[93] Thus Bowditch presented an image of Wolfe as an opinionated and determined patron, a woman with extremely strong ideas about what she wanted to do with architecture and landscape, and with the means to carry out those ideas. Such characteristics were at play in what became a complicated and highly publicized scheme for which Wolfe enlisted Bowditch's help: namely, to transport to Vinland by coal barge two fern-leafed beech trees, each forty feet in height, from a property in Westchester County formerly belonging to her father. [94]

The selection of Peabody & Stearns reveals that Wolfe's engagement in the architectural process was a more considered and deliberate act than one of simply hiring her cousin's architects or possibly acting on the counsel of Ernest Bowditch. The existence of a submission for the job by another architect verifies the fact that Wolfe arranged an informal competition. She would choose the design submitted by Robert Swain Peabody (1845–1917)

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[91] Abigail A. Van Slyck, "The Spatial Practices of Privilege," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 70, no. 2 (June 2011): 222–23.

[92] Bowditch, "The Year 1881 at the Office," 10.

[93] Ibid., 5, 16.

[94] Ibid., 17–19.

over a drawing offered by the more classically minded contender, Charles Follen McKim (1847–1909) of the New York firm McKim, Mead & White.[95] Both architects were understandably gunning to acquire for their respective firms what no doubt would be a highly desirable commission from an elite, moneyed client.

Wolfe may have courted more than one firm because she did not possess previously established working relationships with architects, for she had not been responsible for the details and construction of the New York residence she inherited from her parents, nor save for some minor changes, had she been involved in the building of her earlier Newport house. That she dealt with more than one firm lends credence to the idea that although Vinland in its completed form would serve as a deliberate projection of self for its first owner, Wolfe had been open to reviewing different approaches from architects of proven merit to help her articulate her vision during the planning stages. In many accounts of American architecture, Peabody & Stearns would be overlooked and eclipsed by the reputation of some of their contemporaries, including McKim, Mead & White.[96] However, at the time of Vinland's construction, and in the immediate decades that followed, both firms were leading forces in the development of American architecture.

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[95] See Leland M. Roth, *The Architecture of McKim, Mead & White, 1870–1920: A Building List* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1978), 169.

[96] Case in point: Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Jr., dismisses Peabody & Stearns as one of the more successful "imitators of Richardson's monumental masonry style" in his study *The Architecture of H. H. Richardson and His Times* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1936), 160. Even though a reproduction of the facade of Peabody & Stearns's Kragsyde of 1883 is on the cover of Vincent J. Scully, Jr.'s canonical mid-twentieth-century study *The Shingle Style and the Stick Style* and is cited as the firm's one great masterpiece, elsewhere in the text Scully refers to Peabody & Stearns's work in a disparaging manner: "Even in Lorillard's 'Breakers,' the monumental design turned into a kind of burlesque through confused intentions," 81, 99. Scully makes no mention of Vinland in this volume or in Antoinette F. Downing and Vincent J. Scully, Jr., *The Architectural Heritage of Newport, Rhode Island, 1640–1915*, 2nd ed., rev. (New York: Bramhall House, 1967).

There were clear interconnections in the training and the careers of the two competitors for the Wolfe commission. To begin with, both Peabody and McKim had attended Harvard College and were students at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris in the late 1860s, situating them at a formative moment in their careers among a rarified group of American architects who trained there. These included Richard Morris Hunt, who arrived in 1846, and Henry Hobson Richardson (1838–1886), who came over in 1859. Both Peabody and McKim were admitted to the École des Beaux-Arts in April of 1868.[97] The École offered those who studied there a curriculum formed on classical principles and models of design based on ideals of "unity, harmony, balance, repose—[through the study of] the great monuments of Greece, Rome, Renaissance Italy, and Baroque France."[98] Voluntary lectures were offered to students on such subjects as the theory and history of architecture, construction, perspective, and mathematics. At regular intervals, students were evaluated through a series of *concours* or competitions on architectural composition and on the construction of projected buildings, the latter accompanied by mathematical proofs verifying that the projected buildings would stand.[99] In a tribute to McKim following his death in 1909, Peabody reminisced about their days together as students in Paris, "We lived a simple, frugal

[97] Of the fifty-seven applicants who took the entrance exam to the École that year, Peabody placed nineteenth and McKim placed forty-first; see Robinson, *Peabody & Stearns*, 24.

[98] See Joan Draper, "The École des Beaux-Arts and the Architectural Profession in the United States: The Case of John Calen Howard," in Spiro Kostof, ed., *The Architect: Chapters in the History of the Profession* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 212–13.

[99] See Richard Chafee, "The Teaching of Architecture at the École des Beaux-Arts," in Arthur Drexler, ed., *The Architecture of the École des Beaux-Arts* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1977), 82–83.

life in the splendid Paris of Louis Napoleon, working hard, and he especially, with a dogged earnestness."[100]

Both men traveled and worked in England in 1869, McKim toured and interacted with architects, while Peabody served an apprenticeship that summer in the office of the British architect, Alfred Waterhouse (1830–1905), there he gained exposure to the planning of English country houses and worked, as well, as a draftsmen in the design for the Manchester Town Hall.[101] In her 2010 study *Peabody & Stearns: Country Houses and Seaside Cottages*, Annie Robinson characterizes the practical experience Peabody accrued in working in Waterhouse's firm, which made him comfortable with designing buildings in such styles as "Gothic, Queen Anne, Italian Renaissance, and Colonial Revival in Peabody's case—viewing individual styles as secondary to function and artistic composition."[102] Years later, in a 1905 essay "On the Design of Houses," Peabody would write of English architecture, which he first encountered in his early travels: "[It] starts with the home as the unit and as the grandeur of the house increases, it is still an enlarged home….The world has never known houses more homelike than these, for in them domestic charms take the place of splendor, and that homely aspect is retained which characterizes cottage, manor house, mansion … throughout the length and breadth of England."[103]

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[100] Robert Swain Peabody, "A Tribute," *Brickbuilder* 19 (February 1910): 55.

[101] See Colin Cunningham and Prudence Waterhouse, *Alfred Waterhouse, 1830–1905: Biography of a Practice* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 143 n. 23.

[102] Robinson, *Peabody & Stearns*, 26–27.

[103] Robert Swain Peabody, "On the Design of Houses," 1905, reprinted in *An Architect's Sketch Book* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1912), 86–87.

While in England, Peabody and McKim became familiar with the work of Richard Norman Shaw (1831–1912), whose designs became synonymous with the Queen Anne revival style in England. The term *Queen Anne* was actually a misnomer, for it represented an amalgam of historic styles; what Mark Girouard has described as "an architectural cocktail with a little genuine Queen Anne in it, a little Dutch, a little Flemish, a squeeze of Robert Adam, a generous dash of Wren, and a touch of Francis I."[104] For Shaw, the Queen Anne represented a movement to recover English vernacular architecture, which grew out of tradition and the landscape itself. One of Shaw's masterworks, the large country house Leys Wood of 1868–70, gives the appearance of growing out of such tradition and of the land itself.

When they returned to America, McKim worked in the office of H. H. Richardson before starting his own firm, and Peabody joined with John Goddard Stearns, Jr. (1843–1917) in 1870. Both men, each in his own way, would weigh in on how American architects could learn from the English Queen Anne movement and strived to modify it in their work to create an American analogue, using architectural elements from the colonial past. In 1877, Peabody observed:

> With our Centennial year, have we not discovered that we too can have a past worthy of study?—a study, to, which we can subsequently explain and defend by all the ingenuous Queen Anne arguments

[104] Mark Girouard, *Sweetness and Light: The 'Queen Anne' Movement, 1860–1900* (1977; repr., New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 1. James D. Kornwolf refers to the influence of the Aesthetic Movement on the architecture of the Queen Anne movement and on Norman Shaw's work in its "muted handling of an eclectic mix of period motifs and the effort to achieve no style"; see Kornwolf, "American Architecture and the Aesthetic Movement," in Doreen Bolger et al., *In Pursuit of Beauty: Americans and the Aesthetic Movement* (New York: Rizzoli, 1986), 346.

> strengthened by the fact that our colonial work is our only native source of antiquarian study and inspiration.[105]

Two years later, under the jurisdiction of the American Institute of Architects, Peabody and McKim served as members of the committee, "The Practice of American Architects and Builders in the Colonial Period and the First Fifty Years of National Independence" to promote the serious study of colonial architecture.[106] In many ways, they played parallel roles in the development of the profession of architecture in America and in the study of the colonial past at a moment when the field underwent a long-needed transformation from a craft to a profession.

There is no record of a formal competition for the Wolfe commission in the structured mold in which architects typically vied for commissions for large-scale public or civic projects, involving fixed rules, monetary advances and, at times, a public review.[107] Indeed, such a formalized competition for a private residence would have been highly unusual. A widely publicized competition, in which both Peabody and McKim participated, took place in 1879 for the design for the first purpose-built home for New York's Union League Club. The Club had been founded in 1863 to support the Union cause in the Civil War; further, its members possessed a strong abolitionist bent, which had led to a break with New York's

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[105] Robert Swain Peabody, "The Georgian Houses of New England," *American Architect and Building News* 2, no. 95 (October 20, 1877): 338.

[106] See Roth, *McKim, Mead & White, Architects*, 46.

[107] See Sarah Bradford Landau, "Coming to Terms: Architectural Competitions in America and the Emerging Profession, 1789–1922," in Helène Lipstadt, ed., *The Experimental Tradition: Essays on Competition in Architecture* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1989), 53–62.

Union Club.[108] The impetus for the architectural competition in the late 1870s was a fire in its interior. As a result, the Union League Club needed to move from its temporary quarters, the former home of Leonard P. Jerome, one of Wolfe's Madison Square neighbors, to a more permanent location. They chose the up-and-coming site at Fifth Avenue and Thirty-Ninth Street.[109] It is noteworthy that the Club's anticipated relocation uptown mirrored migration north on the part of many of Wolfe's peers who, unlike Wolfe, were themselves building houses in newly fashionable locations.

Peabody & Stearns, and the firm then known as McKim, Mead & Bigelow, were among the nine sets of architects who submitted plans to the Club's presiding committee.[110] Peabody & Stearns was the only firm from Boston; the remaining group consisted of New York–based firms. At the time the Committee was considering Peabody & Stearns's plan, they noted that granting the commission to them might function as a quid-pro-quo equalizer between Boston and New York: "Should this selection be confirmed, and the award be given to the Boston firm, it will in a measure, offset the Trinity Church, which was built in Boston after the design of New York architects."[111]

The Union League Club displayed the architects' elevations and perspective drawings so that their members could review the various proposals. In the end, although there would be changes implemented before the new Club opened its doors in March 1881, Peabody's Queen

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[108] For additional background on the Union League Club, see Will Irwin, Earl Chapin May, and Joseph Hotchkiss, *A History of the Union League Club* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1952).

[109] Ibid.

[110] See "Correspondence: Union League Club-House Competition," *American Architect and Building News* 5, 174 (April 26, 1879): 133.

[111] Ibid.

Anne design (fig. 48) was chosen over the other submissions, including the Italianate design proposed by McKim, Mead & Bigelow.[112] The publicity this competition attracted, published in such journals as *American Architect and Building News,* not only underscored distinctions in the approaches to the commission in the work of the participating firms, but it also allowed future clients of these firms, possibly including Wolfe herself, to engage in a close comparison of what each proposed.

The award of the commission to Peabody & Stearns very likely contributed to their decision to set up a temporary office in New York City in the years 1880 and 1881, as indicated in the Directory of New York addresses for that period.[113] It is not unreasonable to infer that the fact that they had established an office in New York City while they were involved in the Union League Club project would have helped place Peabody & Stearns in Wolfe's visual consciousness even before she hired them to design Vinland.

Without the availability of details that would be customarily recorded in the case of a formal architectural competition, one must attempt to weave together what we do know in

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[112] Of McKim's submission, the critic for the *American Architect and Building News* wrote: "Mr. McKim has a very peculiar design which manifests a curious notion of club life in New York. There might have been good reason for such a contrivance had the club been situated in an Italian city, but such a hanging garden would be a deserted domain for ten months of the year, and during the other two months when clubmen were out of town." Of Peabody's submission, the same author noted: "The designs of Messrs. Peabody & Stearns's is intended to be of brick and Belleville stone…In their Queen Anne outlines the architects get what no formal style will permit—a freedom to arrange the elevation to meet the exigencies of the plan." Ibid. Writing in 1883, Montgomery Schuyler—no fan of the Queen Anne—said of the finished building: "This, indeed, is not even a sacrifice to the architectural or social conventions, but a specimen of what can be achieved by gentle dullness gone rampart. If tame Queen Anne is a somewhat ineffectual thing, what can be said of wild Queen Anne?" Schuyler, "Recent Building in New York," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 67, no. 400 (September 1883): 567.

[113] In the inside cover to his diary of 1881, Peabody also listed his address as 21 Cortland Street, New York, in addition to 60 Devonshire, Boston. Wheaton Holden Papers, John Hay Library, Brown University.

order to envision the parameters of the Vinland competition. For evidence that Charles McKim was ever under consideration for Wolfe's Newport commission, we must rely on the existence of a drawing now housed in the archives of McKim, Mead & White at the New-York Historical Society (fig. 49).[114] The label accompanying the drawing reads: "Architectural drawing By Charles Follen McKim for an unidentified house."[115]

The watercolor rendering is twenty-three inches wide by ten inches high on brown-tinted paper; there appears to be a green mark at the center, as if part of the design had been erased, scratched out, or never completed. Descriptions of McKim's working method reveal that he would characteristically make a preliminary sketch before handing it to draftsmen to fill in the lines and contours, and add the details and ornaments.[116] The quality of this sketch does not match the refinement characteristic of the drawings that McKim's new partner, Stanford White, who had joined the firm in 1879, would customarily create as presentation pieces for clients. Moreover, there is no notation of a date, nor any obvious identifying referent linking it to the work of the firm, such as the firm signature, or a reference to a project or a client. The only identifying mark on the drawing is an inscription on the lower-left hand corner, presumably added after the architect showed it to Wolfe, which reads: "To My Friend Henry Bacon, Charles F. McKim."

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[114] Archives of the New-York Historical Society, McKim, Mead & White Architectural Record Collection, PR 42, Series I, FF 67. I am grateful to Sue Kriete and Marybeth Kavanagh of the Department of Prints, Photographs & Architectural Collections at the New-York Historical Society for helping me locate this drawing, earlier identified in Roth, *The Architecture of McKim, Mead & White*, 169.

[115] This label also indicates the drawing was a gift from the firm's archives to the New-York Historical Society in 1950.

[116] See Henry Bacon, "Charles Follen McKim—A Character Sketch," *Brickbuilder* 19 (February 1910): 39.

The lack of a specific date assigned to this submission makes it difficult to ascertain the circumstances surrounding Wolfe's solicitation of a design from Charles McKim. In a 1978 publication documenting McKim, Mead & White's many architectural projects, Leland M. Roth speculates that the sketch, which he labels the "Catherine Wolfe project, house, Ochre Point," would have been executed in the years 1880 or 1881, although Roth does not elaborate about the source for these dates.[117] Since we know that by March 1882 Wolfe chose Peabody's firm, if we accept Roth's dating of the sketch, then she must have approached McKim, first, and then Peabody, rather than examined both of their proposals in tandem.

Moreover, given the fact that Wolfe could only begin the process of acquiring the land that would include Lawrence's homestead after his death in March 1881, it seems unlikely that she would have approached McKim before that date. The dates Roth offers call into question whether the assignment was for McKim to design a house on the actual land where Vinland would ultimately be constructed. Had McKim been asked to make his submission in 1880, a year before she secured the estate, it is possible that Wolfe was simply envisioning a house for the future, even though she probably had already set her sights on purchasing land on Ochre Point. If Wolfe was envisioning what was not yet firmly in motion, she may not have handed McKim many overt directives. It is possible, then, that McKim may not have been as well briefed by this client, as prepared, or as willing as Peabody ultimately was, to meet the specific requirements of this patron.

While scholars have commented briefly on various aspects of the sketch, none has hypothesized about what McKim ultimately had in mind. Leland M. Roth characterizes the sketch as "McKim's efforts to translate various Richardsonian and Francis I elements into

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[117] Roth, *The Architecture of McKim, Mead & White,* 169. Leland Roth has no additional information; e-mail to author, August 31, 2012.

brick, set off against the expanses of a blank wall."[118] Richard Guy Wilson notes that the sketch reveals a "stone, vaguely Tudor house."[119] While it is not uncommon for architectural historians to disagree about style, the fact that they cannot even agree about the identification of the building material serves to accentuate the very preliminary nature of the sketch McKim submitted.

The house that McKim drew is situated on what appears to be a manicured lawn; there is no sign of the ocean; instead there is land with trees on the right. The presence of a circular driveway or turn-around, mirroring the spatial configuration of the later landscape at Vinland, suggests that this is the formal entrance or front facade of the property. The road or path leading to the circular driveway underscores the fact that this house probably would not have been immediately accessible or visible from a public road. There are trees depicted, along with a bench, and two urns are placed on either side of a stairway that leads to the house, designating the main entrance. There is also a balustrade or fence spanning nearly the entire width of the house, with a break for the stairway. The main doorway appears to be covered by Gothic tracery, marking it as a significant entrance. There is a tower-like structure next to the Gothic tracery; and crenellations of some sort at the roofline at the left. There is a series of arcades to the right, which may have been McKim's allusion to a resort terrace, extending the space of the interior into the exterior, conjoining the inside and outside. A large mullioned window on the left might possibly have been placed at a stairway landing, allowing for the flow of light as one entered the house.

The flat surface of the building leads one to speculate that the exterior was to be composed either of stone or stucco, reinforcing the possibility that McKim had envisioned an

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[118] Roth, *McKim, Mead & White, Architects*, 80.

[119] Wilson, "Oscar Wilde, Colonialists, and Vikings," 5.

Italianate style for the house, with its arcades, and railings. Certainly the various arches and the corbelling suggest the solidity of stone material. If McKim had intended the exterior to be built of stone, as would later be the case with Peabody & Stearns's Vinland, then one must conjecture that the request for this material would have come from Wolfe herself, since stone was not yet a commonly used building material for cottages in Newport. It is possible that Wolfe's desire for a stone facade for a projected resort home, either in this iteration by McKim, or in the eventual Peabody & Stearns design, would have had as its source, the material of her New York brownstone. Wolfe's insistence on stone may have potentially initiated what became a shift in Newport's architecture.

In contrast to other architectural renderings of the period, which frequently incorporated depictions of human figures as part of the scene with the imagined building, here we see the faint lines of a sculptural figure of a cupid carrying a bow, a mythological reference, on the lower-right hand of the composition (not visible in the photograph of McKim's sketch; fig. 49), possibly adding a classical element to the whole. There is no reference in the design to any Viking theme or motif. In sum, the sketch presents a disjointed assemblage in which elements from different periods and architectural styles are pieced together without the force of a unifying core or coherence. This may be why Wolfe rejected it.

The presence of the personalized inscription reinforces the fact that McKim kept the sketch and at some unknown point in time gave it to Henry Bacon, who had served as a valued draftsmen in his firm beginning in 1884, after Peabody's Vinland was completed, and continuing in to the 1890s. Bacon would later become the architect of the Lincoln Memorial. It is noteworthy that Bacon chose to incorporate this drawing for an unexecuted project in a

tribute that he published after McKim's death, labeling it a "charming sketch of a Newport house."[120]

Referring to McKim's failed submission, Mosette Broderick comments in her 2010 *Triumvirate: McKim, Mead & White* that for the architect, "The Wolfe house was one that got away."[121] There may also have been aspects of McKim's personal reputation in Newport that did not commend him to Wolfe. Charles McKim had just been a participant in a scandalous divorce suit initiated by his wife Annie Bigelow. The breakup of their marital union also led to the dissolution of the professional partnership of McKim, Mead & Bigelow in 1879, when Annie Bigelow insisted that her brother, the architect William Bigelow, leave the firm.[122] McKim was involved as well in an unpleasant parting of the ways with Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Dunn, clients in Newport, in 1877 over a dispute about projected costs for a building that was never realized.[123] In the small enclave of Newport, it might well have been awkward for a single woman, such as Wolfe, to be linked by association with McKim at that time, especially when she may have been a social acquaintance of the Bigelows or the Dunns. If this was indeed the case, it reveals that Wolfe carefully adhered to social mores and personal reputations within the society she traversed, or that she herself may not have trusted McKim.

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[120] Bacon, "Charles Follen McKim—A Character Sketch," 47.

[121] Mosette Broderick, *Triumverate: McKim, Mead & White: Art, Architecture, Scandal, and Class in America's Gilded Age* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 155.

[122] Ibid., 41.

[123] Richard Guy Wilson, "The Early Work of Charles F. McKim: Country House Commissions," *Winterthur Portfolio* 14 (August 1979): 257; and Broderick, *Triumvirate*, 48–49. I wish to thank Mosette Broderick for suggesting the possibility that the Dunns influenced Wolfe's decision not to hire McKim, e-mail to author, May 14, 2011.

Peabody, by contrast to McKim, was a minister's son and known to comment on the importance of balancing artistic aims with fiscal responsibility.[124] Ernest Bowditch described Robert Peabody as "cousin to half the world (meaning Boston) and friends of the other half. It was always claimed by their professional competitors, and not denied by them, that they [the firm of Peabody & Stearns] were always ready to work for less than the regulation commission."[125] Wolfe herself had a firm appreciation of prudent fiscal practices, as demonstrated in her dealings with the Metropolitan Museum of Art, when she canceled a promised large contribution in 1882, as noted earlier.[126] For Wolfe, Peabody may have represented a socially appropriate and economically prudent selection over what she may have perceived as the more extravagant McKim.

Ultimately, in aligning herself with the firm of Peabody & Stearns, Wolfe must have been persuaded by Peabody's brand of historicism, one that was rooted in the tradition of the English country house. Robert Peabody had already made these views known in his published talks, where he promoted an approach to architecture with its foundation based on an American analogue of the Queen Anne movement in England. In his 1877 "Georgian Houses of New England," he asserted, "In studying this colonial work, we find all the delicacy, grace and picturesqueness, that any model can suggest to us…the riches and finest models we have date from between 1727 and 1700, when George II reigned."[127] Peabody advocated a return to

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[124] See Robinson, *Peabody & Stearns*, 22.

[125] Bowditch, "EWB First Office," 3.

[126] James P. Kernochan to Luigi Palma di Cesnola, September 1, 1882, MMA Wolfe Collection files.

[127] Peabody, "Georgian Houses of New England," 338.

vernacular building on these shores, and an engagement with the past through the re-use of its architectural elements in newly designed buildings.

This approach to architectural design would serve as a hallmark of his career, and would be rearticulated in an essay written nearly two decades after the firm had completed their work for Wolfe at Vinland: "Strict archeology is as much out of place in American house design as is the demand for a new and wholly American style. There still remains the possibility of adapting the art of past ages to our own uses. This is the only work worthy of an artist….He is the true artist who can just adjust in a natural and straightforward way, without pedantry or affectation, the traditions of the past to the life and need and ways of the present."[128]

In the 1870s and into the 1880s, Peabody worked to adapt in his own firm's commissions Richard Norman Shaw's Queen Anne style with its emphasis on irregularity, the use of local materials, the connection of architecture to its site, and the desire to give his buildings the appearance of having grown out of their settings. A sketch of Shaw's Leys Wood in Sussex, 1868–69 (fig. 50), reveals broken rooflines with projected bays, clustered chimneys, emphasizing the building and its relationship to the landscape.[129] Shaw's Cragside in Northumberland, 1869–84, also plays up the drama of the irregularity of traditional vernacular architecture. Mark Girouard, in *The Victorian Country House* (1979), comments about Cragside: "The nature of the site [a rock ledge] and the building history of the house combine to produce a sprawling and additive plan of just the kind to which Shaw's

[128] Peabody, "On the Design of Houses," 88.

[129] See Charles. L. Eastlake, *A History of the Gothic Revival* (London: Longmans, Green, 1872), 343.

development was already tending."[130] We see Peabody & Stearns's debt to Shaw in what might be their most well-regarded resort house, Kragsyde of 1882–84 (fig. 51), located on the North Shore of Boston, which also shows the influence of the work of H.H. Richardson (fig. 52). Kragsyde's Shavian characteristics and elements of its debt to Richardson would be at play in their conception of the massive stone expression of Vinland, also built during these years.

In perhaps his most memorable statement, from "A Talk About 'Queen Anne,'" in which he espouses his architectural philosophy, Peabody conflates two concurrent movements, the Queen Anne and the Colonial Revival:

> To those who do not believe in revivals, "Queen Anne" is a very fit importation into our offices. There is no revival so little of an affectation as that of the beautiful work of the Colonial Days…in fact, anyone who in summer drives over the ancient turnpike from Hingham to Plymouth, will not only pass through a beautiful country full of old homesteads, but will find the sunflowers still nodding behind the gambrel-roofed houses that line the road through Queen Anne's corner.[131]

As Kevin D. Murphy notes in his 2004 *Colonial Revival Maine*, a slippage in the language of Peabody's discussion of these two movements "suggests the equation Peabody drew between the two sources of inspiration available to his contemporaries."[132]

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[130] Mark Girouard, *The Victorian Country House* (1979; rev. and enl. ed., New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), 309. See Andrew Saint, *Richard Norman Shaw* (1976; rev. ed., New Haven and London: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2010), who observes of both Leys Wood and Cragside: "These rocky sites seem sometimes swept by the searchlight of the eye, here and there encountering projections natural or built, etching in relief the sure outlines of the whole conglomerate composition." Ibid., 90.

[131] Robert Swain Peabody, "A Talk About 'Queen Anne,'" *American Architect and Building News* 2, no. 70 (April 28, 1877): 134.

[132] Murphy, *Colonial Revival Maine*, 18.

Although Peabody's commitment to the colonial past differed from Wolfe's ideas, which had evolved from her fascination with Newport's Viking legacy, they shared a desire to re-engage history in the conceptualization of what became Vinland. It was the interplay of their common interest in the local vernacular and the history of New England, whether real or imagined, that allowed the patron and her architects to forge a partnership that worked.

Alice T. Friedman's 2006 *Women and the Making of the Modern Home: A Social and Architectural History* presents a series of case-studies of architecturally groundbreaking domestic building projects initiated by female clients during the years 1890–1930. Most of these patrons were, like Wolfe, unmarried and financially able to commission the services of prominent architects themselves. Friedman argues that the motivation on the part of these women to hire the leading architects they selected was to validate "the decision not to marry; by foregrounding history and memory with particular attention to women's roles as family historians and collectors; and by highlighting the importance of spectacle, and of the home as a representation (in stylistic as well as spatial terms) of the activities and values of its occupants."[133] Each of these independent women possessed her own vision of domesticity to be redefined spatially and physically, and sought architects whose work would articulate these values.[134]

Frank Lloyd Wright's 1919 design for Hollyhock House in Olive Hill, Los Angeles, for the American heiress Aline Barnsdall, was to be a home and theater complex, which the patron hoped would rival similar projects in the capitals of Europe.[135] For the architect, the

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[133] Alice T. Friedman, *Women and the Making of the Modern House: A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 17.

[134] Ibid., 16.

[135] Ibid., 34–51.

project allowed the fusion of an ancient amphitheater with a new architectural language inspired by the Southern California landscape. Their long-term collaboration involved disagreements between them, yet Wright and Barnsdall were able to engage the issue of "the home as a theater of representation, a place in which physical appearance, social behavior, and personal privacy are displayed and interpreted."[136] Another case study presents the harmonious collaboration of Truus Schröder and Gerrit Rietveld. Their interplay resulted in the modular design of the Schröder House in Utrecht, the Netherlands, in the mid-1920s, a house that fulfilled Schröder's ideals about "family life, women's rights and the responsibilities of individuals to themselves and to each other."[137]

If we consider these narratives in relation to what must have been the dynamics between Wolfe and those involved in her building project in Newport, one can envision a trajectory in which she may be viewed as a precursor of some of the independent women whom Friedman discusses. In the case of Wolfe's collaboration with Peabody & Stearns, there is a dearth of material documenting the commission. We do not have access to correspondence or to other records revealing the contours of the lines of communication between them, since Peabody's journals—themselves more or less cursory records of dates and skeleton details—for the years 1882 and 1883, crucial years of Vinland's construction, are lost to us, as are most of the firm's records. Yet given her commitment to this project and her forthright behavior in other contexts, it is difficult to imagine Wolfe as a passive client. Once she acted upon her decision to hire Peabody & Stearns as the architects of her projected oceanfront Newport residence, the large-scale project would have begun to take shape.

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[136] Ibid., 24.

[137] Ibid., 81.

Presumably, they would have engaged in a series of negotiations as to the scope of the design, the architect's fees and payments to vendors, and the steps leading to Wolfe's final approval. Clearly, there would have been an understanding between patron and architects just as crucial to the formation of Vinland as were the relationships engaged in by many other later female patrons and their architects.

The anomaly in Friedman's account of female patrons and their architects is the fractious relationship that developed between the architect, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, and the patron, Dr. Edith Farnsworth. This conflict was generated by Mies's decision to impose his own vision in the construction of a glass structure, Farnsworth House, with little regard to his client's personal needs and wish for privacy. For Mies, formal and theoretical concerns overweighed practical ones; for Farnsworth, the plans and models given to her were not enough of an indication of what would be the form and spaces of the finished house.[138] This ruptured relationship, where an architect's goals were blatantly at odds with the needs of the client, provides an alternate yardstick with which to measure and compare the synergy between Wolfe and her architects. Peabody & Stearns were sensitive to Wolfe's vision of the resort's Viking history in the design of what would become a great house. Yet they did not merely carry out orders dictated by their client. Instead, they melded her ideas with their own notions of historicism in a desire to create a building that might satisfy their client while also advancing their standing as an architectural firm in the resort.

[138] Ibid., 134.

Wolfe's and Peabody's Vinland

Although their primary work for Vinland (figs. 31, 32) was completed when Wolfe opened the house to the acclaim of Newport society in September 1883, the architects would continue their involvement with the property and its ancillary buildings, among them a Gate Lodge (fig. 53) and a Hennery (fig. 54), through 1885. Vinland would be celebrated as one of the most superb summer residences in Newport, even though its style seemed to resemble that of no other house in the resort. A contemporary observer characterized the exterior of the house as "a modern, modified and subdued Norseman (or Norman) building."[139] Another described it as "one of the most delicious specimens of bizarre architecture in the world….It is as solid as a medieval fortress."[140] These responses to Vinland's architecture show that early criticism understood it as Norse, and saw its distinctiveness ("bizarre") and fortress-like quality. The solidity of the finished stone structure provides a stark contrast to the image of a house composed of a series of disparate architectural elements delineated in the sketch Charles McKim had earlier submitted to Wolfe (fig. 49). Although, as noted, McKim's proposal was in the form of a preliminary drawing, it is hard to believe that his sketch could have been developed into a coherent design without substantial revisions on the part of the architect and, as well, input from Wolfe.

That Wolfe had solicited a design from McKim before she made the decision to hire Peabody & Stearns reinforces the idea that she might not initially have intended to select the Boston architectural firm. Nevertheless, it is difficult to imagine that when she began to

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[139] "Vinland, a Newport Home: The Opening of Miss Wolfe's New House," *New York Evening Post,* September 13, 1883, 1.

[140] Noel Ruthven, "Where Cottages Are Palaces," *Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly* 18, no. 2 (August 1884): 135.

conceive her own plan, Wolfe would not have studied what her cousin, Pierre Lorillard, had built earlier in 1877–78 on land adjacent to what became her own property. Lorillard's commissioning of Peabody & Stearns for the original Breakers must have provided him with his own form of self-fashioning at the time he initiated it, although he would sell the Breakers to Cornelius Vanderbilt in 1885 and move to Tuxedo Park, New York, a few years after the architects completed Vinland.

The Breakers (figs. 46, 47) provided the firm with the opportunity to engage in a deliberate appropriation of the Queen Anne style, with an attempt to make a direct link to the work of Richard Norman Shaw. In May 1878, the *Newport Mercury* predicted before the house was completed, it would be "among the most handsome of the multitude of handsome estates which Newport contains."[141] The writer continued: "This style is especially prominent in the style of the Queen Anne. The 'Old English' architecture is characterized by sharp gables. The gables are numerous and the roofs are pitched at an angle of 60 degrees….Mr. Lorillard's villa carries out the full English design."[142] Photographs of the original Breakers reveal a three-gabled facade of brick, enameled brick, bluestone, brownstone, and shingles, with a prominent tower, and a shingled roof said to have been painted red.[143] The facade consisted of irregular massing, clustered chimneys, and other elements reminiscent of the Queen Anne style. However, that was not the whole story.

The construction of the Breakers coincided with the publication of Robert Peabody's essays on the heritage of the Queen Anne and its connection to the Colonial Revival in

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[141] "Lorillard's Villa on Ochre Point," *Newport Mercury*, May 23, 1878, 2.

[142] Ibid.

[143] Robinson, *Peabody & Stearns*, 43.

America. The Breakers, then, would have served as a visual template for ideas Peabody espoused in his writing. The architects' incorporation of colonial motifs, as well as Renaissance and medieval elements, in their design for the Breakers reinforces the firm's commitment to an investigation of earlier American architectural styles.[144]

In Lorillard's Breakers, these motifs included picturesque forms made with American materials: wood shingles rather than the slate tiles Shaw might have used. In the 1886 edition of *Artistic Country-Seats*, published a year after Lorillard sold the property to Vanderbilt, George Sheldon notes that in their work on the Breakers the architects have "depended principally for effect on the tower and the numerous gables. Beyond these features there is little of complexity in the design, and the spectator is impressed chiefly with a sense of solidity, simplicity and commodiousness."[145] These attributes seem more appropriate to a characterization of Vinland, where the disparate elements cohered more successfully and revealed no jarring vertical element that existed at the Breakers. The architectural historian Vincent Scully, writing in the mid-twentieth century, would be deeply critical of the Breaker's amalgam of styles, leading to what he perceived as an incoherent design.[146] Yet Scully allowed that the original Breakers fitted "the semisuburban site" better than Richard Morris Hunt's "palazzo," which replaced it.[147] In 2010, Annie Robinson would describe the exterior of the Breakers as a "mélange of Classical and Colonial Revival motifs. Patterned shingling accents and tall English chimneys were accompanied by a myriad of Classical details, broken

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[144] See Murphy, *Colonial Revival Maine*, 71.

[145] Sheldon, *Artistic Country-Seats*, vol. 1, 143.

[146] Scully, *The Shingle Style and the Stick Style*, 80.

[147] Ibid.

scrolls, wreaths, and urns."[148] This juxtaposition of classical and colonial elements, not anchored by a central theme, characterizes a key aspect of the difference between the Breakers, and Vinland, on which Wolfe would embark a few years later.

If, with the Breakers, Peabody worked to create an American version of the Queen Anne style using colonial elements—whether successfully or not—his Kragsyde (fig. 51) reveals a more comprehensive attempt to adapt qualities of Shaw's Cragside in a location as challenging as was the setting for its prototype. Built for George Nixon Black, Jr., at Lobster Cove, Manchester-by-the-Sea, Massachusetts, in 1882–84, the years of Vinland's construction, Kragsyde was situated on rocky terrain, above crags overlooking the ocean. While made of shingles, a staple of American architecture, Kragsyde nevertheless projected an emphasis on irregularity and seemed to grow out of its setting, as had its English antecedent.[149] The choices Peabody & Stearns made were in response to the difficult terrain their patron had selected, so that the drama of Kragsyde would be rooted in its almost geological connection to the land and to the rocks on which it was built. The architects created a wide and heavy shingled archway over the entrance drive, positioned at a diagonal to the main mass of the house. According to Vincent Scully, the arch in its wooden configuration reveals the architects' debt to H. H. Richardson, for his use of masonry for an arch at the entrance of the Ames Gate Lodge (1880) in North Easton, Massachusetts (fig. 52).[150] Kragsyde's unusual design was marked by such features as polygonal turrets and window bays, hip roofed dormers, and an extensive array of porches appropriate for a summer

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[148] Robinson, *Peabody & Stearns*, 43.

[149] Holden, "Robert Swain Peabody," 137.

[150] Scully, *The Shingle Style and the Stick Style*, 99.

home.[151] As Wheaton Holden states in his analysis of Kragsyde: "Perhaps it was the systematic rationalization of its many complications that lend 'Kragsyde' its uniqueness and distinguish it as one of the great examples of the shingle style in America."[152]

The challenges that Peabody & Stearns faced in the creation of Vinland did not encompass the physical or geographic constraints of a Kragsyde. The land that Wolfe chose was not dangerous terrain, but a large cultivated property in a socially prominent neighborhood, Ochre Point, overlooking the Cliff Walk and the breaking waves of the Atlantic Ocean beyond. In contrast to Black's demand that the architects construct his house right on the rocks, Wolfe's land purchase required the architects to capitalize on a relatively flat site offering a view of a dramatic coast.

The original drawings and plans that Peabody & Stearns conceived for Vinland in the early 1880s are housed in the Peabody & Stearns Collection in the Fine Arts Department of the Boston Public Library. However, these materials require considerable conservation and consequently are not currently available to scholars who must rely on other sources. A reproduction of a plan of the ground floor of the interior (fig. 55) was published in 1887, shortly after Wolfe's death. [153] In 1886, a year before Wolfe's death, her house and its Gate Lodge would be one of only two Newport properties illustrated in *L'Architecture Américaine*,

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[151] Holden, "Robert Swain Peabody," 138.

[152] Ibid.

[153] The plan of the ground floor was reproduced in Sheldon, *Artistic Country-Seats*, vol. 2, 187. Since ownership of the house had transferred to Wolfe's cousin Louis L. Lorillard, rooms are marked "Mr. Lorillard." Without access to the complete collection of drawings at the Boston Public Library, it is impossible to know whether the architects made any immediate changes to these plans prior to the original construction of Vinland.

a survey of contemporary American architecture published in France.[154] There also exists a series of photographs and renderings ofVinland's exterior created either during or soon after Wolfe's lifetime, but certainly before the house was enlarged by its original architects on behalf of later owners in the 1890s.

It has been an objective of this chapter to attempt to contextualize Vinland as it existed in the time, the setting, and the resort for which it was created. Only by doing so, can we gauge how the partnership between Wolfe and Peabody & Stearns played out and served as a predecessor to the type of collaboration between single women of great means and their architects, which Alice T. Friedman examines. Since Vinland still stands today, albeit it in a modified form, one needs to piece together evidence from a number of ancillary sources to understand how the finished house would have fulfilled the aspirations of its architects and functioned for their patron.

Vinland's stone facade, an unusual choice for the resort at that time and presumably the result of Wolfe's insistence, not only resembled the materials of the Touro Park stone tower the house commemorated, but recalled as well the exterior of her Madison Square house. During the 1870s and 1880s (before their involvement in the Vinland project), her architects worked assiduously in the Back Bay neighborhood in Boston, whatever their other design commitments may have been. Bainbridge Bunting's *Houses of Back Bay* (1867)

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[154] This three-volume survey was published in 1886 by André, Daly Fils et Cie. The photographs have been reproduced in Arnold Lewis, *American Victorian Architecture: A Survey of the 70's and 80's in Contemporary Photographs* (New York: Dover Publications, 1975). For the entries for Vinland, see ibid., 103, 138. In his "Notes on the Plates," Keith Morgan speculates that many of the buildings were chosen because they had been published in American books or in architectural journals, such as *American Architect and Building News*, which the French knew and relied on in forming their ideas about the development of American architecture; see ibid., 140. See also William H. Jordy and Christopher P. Monkhouse, *Buildings on Paper: Rhode Island Architectural Drawings, 1825–1945* (Providence, RI: Bell Gallery, List Art Center, Brown University, 1982), 141.

records that Peabody & Stearns worked in a variety of architectural styles and materials there, all reflecting some aspect of their commitment to historicism.[155] Of their work at Vinland, Wheaton Holden remarks that "certain features seem to have been adopted from the firm's own town house vocabulary, especially some of the bay and gable forms."[156]

In Vinland's original incarnation (figs. 31, 32), its bays, gables, porches, turrets, chimneys, and other geometric forms were constructed on an asymmetrical plan, had irregular massing, and came together in a large solidified whole. As will be explored in the following chapter, the interior of the house had a central hall (fig. 55), but its function was to provide access to the other rooms on the house's ground floor, rather than to serve as a space for gathering in the manner promoted by Richard Norman Shaw and adopted by some contemporary American architects. The house was 168 feet long by 58 feet deep and its facade was composed of red sandstone from Longmeadow, Massachusetts, in a pattern of rock-faced ashlar and smooth brownstone trim, with red tiles on its roof. The grandeur of its size and the materials of its composition confirm the successful use of monumental masonry on the part of its architects.

On its west facade (figs. 31, 32), a porte-cochere was located at the entrance at the head of a circular drive. Above the porte-cochere there was a gabled dormer of textured stone in a diaper pattern with a tripartite window capped with a finial. When one faced the house

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[155] Bainbridge Bunting, *Houses of Back Bay: An Architectural History, 1840–1917* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1967). Bunting references a series of row houses designed by these architects, for example: 271–281 Beacon Street (1876–77) made of academic brick with stone trim for the builder G. W. Freeland, ibid., 187; a house at 20 Gloucester Street from the 1880s, inspired by medieval forms built for Charles Frances Adams, ibid., 304; and a Queen Anne structure, the Mrs. Nathan Thayer House, at 305 Commonwealth Avenue (1884), ibid., 427.

[156] Holden, "Robert Swain Peabody," 143.

from the perspective of the driveway, one would see two bays to the left of the entrance—one angular, the other circular—both with roofs of a pyramidal shape. To the right of the entrance was a one-story round bay window; above the bay was a gable and one of the house's several chimneys, which collectively added a degree of verticality to what was for the most part a dominantly horizontal structure.

On grassy terrain in front of the porte-cochere, Wolfe would place a large terra cotta jar (fig. 56), presumably from Roman antiquity, which had been excavated in the foundations of Saint Paul's Within the Walls, then a newly constructed church in Rome and one of Wolfe's charities. The jar was sent to Wolfe by Robert Jenkins Nevin, her friend and adviser, who was also rector of this American church in Rome.[157] The presence of this object, thought to be a relic from the time of Saint Paul's preaching in Rome, adds another layer to the historical narratives articulated throughout Vinland's design.

On the south side of the house (fig. 57) was a covered porch with a long low pitched roof reinforcing the horizontality of the design. It faced a circular enclosed garden or terrace, which still exists today. We do not have images of how the house appeared up close on its north facade. However, photographs reveal that to its south and northwest, the house was surrounded by Ernest Bowditch's landscape designs (figs. 58, 59), which provided winding paths, and vistas and views of the main house from various perspectives. The cumulative effect of this landscape scheme must have provided a sense of privacy and protection for Wolfe and Vinland.

The east facade of the house (fig. 60) looked out onto an extended lawn, the Cliff Walk, and had an uninterrupted view of the Atlantic Ocean, thereby exposing Wolfe and, to

[157] Robert J. Nevin to Catharine Lorillard Wolfe, June 22, 1884; "Vinland Scrapbook," 95.

some degree, the house to the public gaze. One of Peabody's drawings reproduced in an 1885 edition of the *Sanitary Engineer* illustrates this fact: we see a mother and child walking on the grounds at the oceanfront side of Vinland (fig. 61).[158] The architectural forms on this side of the house are irregular, although the bays on either side of a large porch are somewhat symmetrical, though not identical. The stone is treated differently in each bay, and in the case of the bay on the right, there is a gable with a tripartite window and a balcony. Above the back porch is a gabled dormer with four windows. At the far right is a gable in a saltbox profile with a double-window at the top. The saltbox, an important Colonial Revival motif, must have been a deliberate inclusion on the part of the architects to reference one aspect of the vernacular tradition they fostered.

The varied shapes and openings of the house on the west, south, and east sides of Vinland are unified by the masonry of the whole, creating a look reminiscent of ancestral, baronial English country houses, which Peabody would have encountered in his travels in England. As noted earlier, soon after Wolfe's death, George Sheldon commented about Vinland: "One thinks of the English manor house, and its centuries of associations."[159] This perspective is also upheld by Wheaton Holden who makes no reference to a Nordic element, but sees precedents for Vinland in Elizabethan and Jacobean stone manors.[160] An assessment of Vinland as an example of the Romanesque Revival style is suggested by Montgomery Schuyler in his incorporation of a photograph of the eastern facade of Vinland in his landmark

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[158] "Our Special Illustration: Residence of Miss Catherine [sic] Wolfe," *The Sanitary Engineer* 11 (March 26, 1885): 355.

[159] Sheldon, *Artistic Country-Seats*, vol. 2, 185.

[160] Holden, "Robert Swain Peabody," 142.

1891 article "The Romanesque Revival in America."[161] Schuyler extols what he calls "a Romanesque character, the character of massiveness and simplicity, of 'rest and immobility.'"[162] Schuyler credits H. H. Richardson's Trinity Church (1872–1875) as the starting point for this revival, which includes, by implication, Vinland.[163]

Although barely visible in the period photographs, the facade, window surrounds and string courses of Vinland were also covered with intricate decorative details of Nordic and runic motifs, sea dragons, and vines whose sculpted tendrils reinforced the name, Vinland, and the Viking theme of the house (figs. 62, 63). There is even a large Viking figurehead of a beast, as if on the bow of a ship, on the Eastern roof (fig. 64). Much of this decorative detail still remains. The Viking/Norse aspect as reflected in the massive masonry and the sculptural details gave the whole structure a discipline that the Breakers had lacked. Given Wolfe's strong interest in this subject matter and what appears to have been her insistence that the house be made of what was then such an unusual building material for the resort, she must be given credit for her involvement and participation in the planning of this aspect of its design.

The monumentality of the main house would be echoed in Vinland's Gate Lodge (fig. 53) situated at the western edge of Wolfe's property as one turned to enter the driveway. Composed of the same red sandstone and red roof tiles of the main house, it features many of the triangular and rounded architectural elements of Vinland itself, albeit on a reduced scale. Most notable is a two-story windowed turret with a pyramidal roof and the sign announcing the name of the house (fig. 40). As Richard Guy Wilson observes, the presence of rounded tower-like bays, once on the main house, and still present on the Gate Lodge, provided the

[161] Montgomery Schuyler, "The Romanesque Revival in America," 194.

[162] Ibid., 186.

[163] Ibid., 152.

architects with a "conscious attempt to interpret the Viking tower" to satisfy their patron's obsession with it.[164]

The Hennery (fig. 54), a chicken coop attached to a cottage for the hen keeper, and also part of the Vinland estate, was not made of the same stone material as the main house. Rather, it was a shingled construction with a gambrel front and the colonial element of a saltbox on the back. It was among a series of farm buildings that provided fresh food for Wolfe's estate. While the idea of a "gentlemen's farm" to support an estate was not uncommon, Vinland's farm buildings were unique because they were on her property there, not in a town outside of Newport and removed from its summer activities.[165] As such, Wolfe's thematically conceived complex represented a "different approach to a wealthy urbanite's retreat to the country" than was customary at the time.[166]

An observer in 1885 noted that the Hennery was a "very picturesque structure with archways and oriental domes for her chicken incubating process….The structure is one of the curious features in the landscape of Ochre Point."[167] The chicken coop and the cottage for the hen keeper were separated for hygienic purposes by a Romanesque archway, which crowned by an ornate iron brace recalling Vinland's Viking theme.[168] The construction of this archway

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[164] Wilson, "Oscar Wilde, Colonialists and Vikings," 9.

[165] See Salve Regina University, *"The Hennery" (Peabody & Stearns, 1882–1884) Newport Historical Society Preservation Award Submission* (April 2003) in the Vinland File, Archives of the Newport Historical Society, Newport, RI.

[166] Ibid.

[167] Excerpt from *The Art Age* (July 1885): 192, cited in Wheaton A. Holden, "The Peabody Touch: Peabody and Stearns of Boston, 1870–1917," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 32, no. 2 (May 1973): 121. Holden also labels the Hennery "one of the most unique designs in all Newport." Ibid.

[168] Yarnall, *Newport Through Its Architecture*, 110–11.

at the Hennery, as was the case at Kragsyde, was a deliberate reference to the work H. H. Richardson.

Vinland's architecture in its totality possessed some of the qualities associated with Richardson's monumental stone architecture of the period, a kind of massiveness and volumetric coherence that held everything together. One is reminded again of the Ames Gate Lodge (fig. 52), an earlier project created by Richardson in 1880 to satisfy the need for a guest house for visitors to Langwater, an estate in North Easton, Massachusetts. The lodge was constructed of massive boulders and irregularly quarried stones. The resulting monumentality created by the boulders and rock-faced stones elicited the comment from the architectural historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Jr., that the Ames Gate Lodge was in effect a "man-made mountain" suggesting "the work of some legendary Icelandic hero in a romance by William Morris." Hitchcock went on: "Richardson was here not content with the twelfth century; he seemed to be seeking his inspiration back in the time before architecture took form."[169] Certainly, an element of the palpable solidity of the Ames Gate Lodge is present at Vinland in its solid masonry facade. In her 1997 study of Richardson, Margaret Henderson Floyd states that the Ames Gate Lodge set the stage for a new horizontal aesthetic on the part of the architect.[170] One can also observe this aspect of Richardson's influence in the dominant horizontally of Vinland and the Hennery's design.

At the same time, Vinland was an emerged as an example of the use of irregular massing. There was obviously little symmetry and no set regularity in the placement of the elements across the facade, except for the bays. While irregular massing was a known

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[169] Hitchcock, *Architecture of H. H. Richardson and His Times*, 202–3.

[170] Margaret Henderson Floyd, *Henry Hobson Richardson: A Genius for Architecture* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1997), 251.

hallmark of the Queen Anne and Shingle Styles, when one compares Vinland's facade to that of McKim, Mead & White's Bell house of 1881–83 (fig. 65) and Richardson's Watts Sherman house of 1874–76 (fig. 66), one finds that Vinland's irregular facade is the most striking. The material of Vinland's exterior projected the sense of monumentality, solidity, and an imposing presence of great durability, as opposed to the fragility and relative delicacy of references to the Japanese aesthetic in the wood shingles of such buildings as the Bell House (fig. 65). The porches and the stories of the tower-like structure at the Bell House are supported by faux bamboo posts in contrast to the solid columns of Vinland; and the shingles that cover the facade of the Bell House project a sense of rhythmic movement as against the unyielding quality of Vinland's exterior.

It is also illuminating to consider Vinland as against Richardson's design for the Watts Sherman house (fig. 66), the latter a synthesis of the English manorial style and American colonial architecture. As Jeffrey Karl Ochsner and Thomas C. Hubka point out, "[i]ts combination of simplicity in plan and volume, an exterior largely of stone and shingles (with brick, wood, and stucco details), and the broad front gable mark the house as … a radical departure in American design."[171] These authors present a strong case for the hypothesis that Richardson added the wide front gable on the facade of the Watts Sherman house after construction was already underway, thereby creating an outline of a New England saltbox and, as well, enhancing the horizontality of the design and its American colonial reference. In the case of Vinland, as we have seen, the design Peabody & Stearns created referenced the English manor house and possessed a vernacular element harking back to the mythic Nordic

[171] Jeffrey Karl Ochsner and Thomas C. Hubka, "H. H. Richardson: The Design of the William Watts Sherman House," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 51, no. 2 (June 1992): 122.

past. Thus both Richardson and Peabody & Stearns attempted to conjoin Queen Anne characteristics with different representations of Newport's local vernacular history and decorative styles in order to satisfy their patrons. Far from being removed from the implicit conversation between these houses, in their conceptualization of Vinland, Catharine Lorillard Wolfe and Peabody & Stearns positioned themselves at the forefront of architectural design at this juncture in Newport's history to the extent that was moving towards greater monumentality.

The joint enterprise of architects and patron allowed Peabody & Stearns to expand their stylistic arsenal, and granted the New Yorker, Wolfe, the status connected to the ownership of a unique summer "cottage" distant from the house she possessed in New York. Paradoxically, however, the material of its facade gave it an urban look. The building Wolfe named Vinland represented a new historicism, an act of reviving the architecture of the past or other places, not simply referencing the New England White Village or the Gothic or Greek Revival styles. An addendum to Robert Peabody's involvement with the Viking aspect of this project may be found in the windows of his 1887 family cottage in Marblehead, Massachusetts (fig. 67), where he placed leaded glass inserts of what appear to be Viking ships.[172]

In the end, the house that Wolfe commissioned signaled a transition to the massive residences for the elite that would populate Newport's coastline and boulevards as this resort reached a Gilded-Age pinnacle in the final years of the nineteenth century. Peabody & Stearns's design of a great stone house for Wolfe marked a movement from the Colonial Revival idiom of the 1870s to the more monumental, grandiose masonry of the mansions of

[172] See Robinson, *Peabody & Stearns*, 94–95.

the later 1880s and beyond. Peabody & Stearns went on to construct other large-scale mansions of masonry in Newport, among them Rough Point (1889–1890) and Rockhurst (1891).

As this chapter has argued, it was under Wolfe's patronage that Peabody & Stearns developed a new idiom for Newport's "cottage." Among the factors that led to the design of Vinland beyond Wolfe's fascination with Viking themes, were Robert Peabody's own interest in Queen Anne eclecticism; the model of H. H. Richardson's stone masonry and the Romanesque Revival; the facade of the brownstone residence with which Wolfe was familiar, as was Peabody; and the American "colonial" style as articulated in the saltbox profile. Though scholars continue to debate about Vinland's architectural heritage, ironically, it may be Wolfe's more intimate Hennery, which seems today a more exciting amalgam of these influences.

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CHAPTER THREE

Designing Vinland's Interior: A Nexus of Myth, History, Space, and Identity

Vinland's monumentality, architectural massing, and the stone material of its facade lent it the ambience of an English manor house. Yet the imagery of the exterior sculptural program alluded to legends about Newport's Icelandic forebears, those who purportedly discovered this region of the New England coastline and the verdant richness that the name Vinland underscores. The historicist referents that linked Vinland to the resort's storied past are not limited to the building's exterior: The Norse motifs articulated on the facade are complemented by the interior's decorative assemblages, the work of avant-garde British artists and designers, most notably, William Morris (1834–1896) and his firm, Morris & Co. Although they were separate spaces and the result of the work of separate designers, Vinland's exterior and interior must be considered together in order to understand how their respective imagery was mutually reinforcing from a thematic point of view. The sculptural decoration of abstracted interlaced organic motifs on Vinland's exterior were echoed in some of Morris's designs for the interior.

That Wolfe commissioned William Morris and others of the firm of Morris & Co., along with Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1896) amounted to an unusual choice. Morris was personally invested in Viking lore, and Burne-Jones to a lesser degree. By separate arrangement, Wolfe also hired Walter Crane (1845–1915). These artists and artisans of the British Aesthetic and Arts & Crafts movements were not yet household names in the United States, but they would become so later. Vinland was Morris & Co.'s first large-scale project conceived for an American private house. Morris & Co. and the other artists were able to

design the interior spaces of Vinland as settings for social interaction that functioned, as well, as veritable stage sets, enhancing the historicist themes and allusions of the house's exterior, ultimately to create for its owner a total environment.

For Vinland's rooms, Morris and the others were responsible for the design and production of art, stained glass, wall hangings, embroidery, furniture, lighting fixtures, mosaics, and interior architecture, much of which had a Viking theme. As a contemporary observer remarked, Vinland told the story of Newport's past "in stone and wood, in glass and fresco painting."[1] The projects for the interior included a nine-paneled stained glass window of Viking gods and heroes, the collaborative work of Morris and Burne-Jones, and a monumental frieze created by Walter Crane, depicting a Viking warrior's voyage of discovery to Newport, based on Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's 1841 ballad, "The Skeleton in Armor." Wolfe's choice to display an 1884 painting by Winslow Homer, *The Life Line,* depicting the scene of a rescue at sea further reinforced the fact of the house's location overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. On multiple levels, then, the resulting décor emphasized the significance of Vinland's setting both geographically and historically.

A review in the *New York Evening Post* published in September 1883 attests to Wolfe's success in aligning herself with the physical locale of the resort and with Newport's mythic history. Despite the fact that the decorative program was not complete, the writer proclaimed: "The name of Vinland typifies the story that is told by the house itself, and by the decorative work that makes it a treasure-house of art."[2] The writer goes on to credit Wolfe's

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[1] "A Viking's Successor," *Philadelphia Ledger and Transcript*, September 26, 1883, 1.

[2] "Vinland, a Newport Home: The Opening of Miss Wolfe's New House," *New York Evening Post*, September 23, 1883, 3.

taste as "another example of what good art can do in the service of a good master."[3] The interior décor, which revealed Vinland's connection to the past, thus served to elevate Wolfe's standing in contemporary Newport society.

Wolfe purchased individual works of art, such as Homer's *The Life Line*, in addition to the art and décor that was designed to be part of the house and its fixtures. Her role as patron in the resort differed from that of art collector and museum benefactor in New York. Vinland's interior, in its original incarnation, provided a striking contrast to the style and mode of display of the art in her New York residence. There, in the house that she had inherited from her parents, the popular academic and Barbizon pictures lined the walls with little apparent overarching scheme of display, with pictures hung "here, there, everywhere."[4]

In contrast, at Vinland, where much of the art and décor was conceived for or purchased specifically for its interior, the entire assemblage became part of the overall design. Wolfe's approach to the interior design of Vinland demonstrated that she substituted a predilection for collecting in New York, where each individual work seemed to preserve an element of its own autonomy, here for the goal of a unified interior. What would emerge was the result of Morris's approach to design and decoration where every element would become integrated into an organic whole. In its finished form, Vinland's interior, though less well-known than others in Newport—such as Stanford White's 1881 additions to the Watts Sherman House—nonetheless served as an early and important example of this aesthetic for American domestic interiors.

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[3] Ibid.

[4] "Tète-À-Tète Sketches: Miss Catharine Lorillard Wolfe," *Town Topics* (February 24, 1887): 18.

Acting independently without the potential constraints of a husband's wishes, Wolfe was able to play a substantive role in the design of Vinland's interior. As we have seen, in her 1996 essay, "Woman's Domestic Body," Beverly Gordon argues that in the nineteenth century (and into the twentieth) women were themselves conflated with the interiors of the houses they occupied. For instance, Gordon cites the fact that female protagonists in Edith Wharton's Gilded-Age novels often took on the physical traits of their houses or transformed themselves to fit the spaces they occupied: "Rooms took 'possession' of these women; a house had an 'almost human power to command.'"[5] In contrast to Gordon's characterization of these sometimes lightly fictionalized women in Wharton's novels, Wolfe's energies were not subsumed by the rooms in her Newport house, even if her identity was associated with it. She was one of the players shaping its interior, a role she could not fully play in New York because the house there was not her creation. In Newport she was not a passive agent having to respond to someone else's plans.

Wolfe did not hire and then turn over all the power to artists and decorators to realize what they thought was her vision of the interior, or what they assumed would be appropriate for a woman of her status. Instead, Wolfe's role as patron of Vinland's interior was far more personalized and deliberate. In helping to build upon the spatial configuration of Vinland's rooms, Wolfe not only required those she hired to enhance the themes of the house's exterior, she actually attempted to replicate the type of involvement she had established with her architects. It must have been Wolfe's ongoing working rapport with Peabody & Stearns, especially with Robert Peabody, which provided her with the model for the way in which she wished to engage with those who would be responsible for the house's interior design. In her

[5] Beverly Gordon, "Woman's Domestic Body: The Conceptual Conflation of Women and Interiors in the Industrial Age," *Winterthur Portfolio* 31, no. 4 (Winter 1996): 282.

dealings with her English designers, there was not always the perfect accord Wolfe had hoped for.

Vinland still stands, albeit as a university building and no longer a private residence; the interior of the 1880s, the time of Wolfe's ownership, no longer exists. To begin with, most of the art and decoration that she had commissioned for its rooms was dismantled in the years following her death, and sometimes objects were sent to locations unknown. As previously noted, there is scarce documentation of Vinland's original interiors, and the building itself underwent significant alteration when the original architects were rehired in 1907 by subsequent owners, relatives of the Vanderbilts, to enlarge and renovate it.[6] Peabody & Stearns would be charged with drastically changing its interior footprint and, in the process, they had to reconfigure many of the rooms and eliminate much of the original Morris & Co. interior detail, although some traces of it still remain.

The task of trying to understand how the original interior décor functioned is also complicated by the fact that we have not uncovered period photographs documenting how these rooms looked during Wolfe's lifetime, nor have we located an inventory of the interior's contents. However, material gleaned from descriptions by contemporaries who were invited to see the completed house, and from correspondence and commentary by the artists themselves, some of which is preserved in Wolfe's personal Vinland Scrapbook, enhances our awareness of how Vinland operated spatially and how its art functioned. In addition, studies for some of the original art, preserved in museums and repositories in the United States and the United Kingdom, are crucial to understanding Vinland's interior aesthetic as conceived by Wolfe.

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[6] "Raising a Newport Villa," *Newport Journal and Weekly News*, December 28, 1907; and "A New Vinland," *Newport Journal and Weekly News*, May 15, 1909.

Although no one until now has fully considered the decorative program of the interior at Vinland from the perspective of the interplay between Wolfe, her architect, and her designers, scholars have discussed some of the original pieces in the house.[7] Adrienne Sharpe's 2006 Master's thesis on Morris & Co.'s American projects examines their involvement at Vinland in relation to two other projects to which the firm contributed, namely, Trinity Church in Boston (1872–1877) and the Glessner House in Chicago (1885–1887), both the work of architect Henry Hobson Richardson (1838–1886).[8] In another context, in her 2010 essay "Paintings from Nowhere: Walter Crane, Socialism and the Aesthetic Interior" and in her monograph of the same year on Walter Crane, Morna O'Neill situates Crane's contribution to Vinland in relation to his evolving political and social agenda.[9] She reminds us that in the frieze he painted, Crane changed the focus of the Viking warrior in Longfellow's ballad to be on the labor involved in building the Newport tower, rather than on the discovery of the land that became Newport. This view of a shift in

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[7] Cases in point: in his 1974 canonical book, A. C. Sewter provides documentation about individual panels of stained-glass from Vinland, but offers no contextual analysis of the circumstances of their creation; see Sewter, *The Stained Glass of William Morris and His Circle*, vol. 2 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 1974–75), 224–25. In Diane Waggoner, ed., *The Beauty of Life: William Morris and the Art of Design* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003), the Vinland window is briefly noted as an important American commission for Morris & Co.; see Edward R. Bosley, "Two Sides of the River: Morris & American Arts and Crafts," in ibid., 140–41.

[8] Adrienne Sharpe, "Literary Aspirations, Ancient Touchstones, and Varnished Legends*: Morris & Company's Contributions to, and Arts and Crafts Influences Upon, Three American Commissions, c. 1870–1896"* (Master's thesis, Bard Graduate Center, 2006).

[9] Morna O'Neill, "Paintings from Nowhere: Walter Crane, Socialism, and the Aesthetic Interior," in *Rethinking the Interior, c. 1867–1896: Aestheticism and Arts and Crafts*, ed. Jason Edwards and Imogen Hart (Surrey, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub. Co., 2010), 147–68; and O'Neill, *Walter Crane: The Arts and Crafts, Painting, and Politics, 1875–1890* (New Haven: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2010), 83–93.

iconography in Crane's frieze suggests that the artist treated Longfellow's romance as propaganda about the innate dignity of labor rather than as a reinforcement of Wolfe's agenda commemorating the Viking past.[10]

In her 2008 study of American female art collectors, Dianne Sachko Macleod acknowledges that Vinland served for Wolfe as an "organic blending of architecture, decoration, and self-expressive personal space," but Macleod does not offer extensive analysis of either the house's exterior or interior aesthetic programs.[11] She maintains that the creation of Vinland and its Viking-inspired motifs provided Wolfe with an escapist haven, what she, Macleod, characterizes as a manifestation of Wolfe's psychic need to create a "fairytale cottage by the sea."[12] Macleod suggests further that the house became a "monument to the longing and fantasy of a woman for whom money was no object."[13] Such a perspective does not adequately take into account the extent to which Wolfe intended Vinland to be inextricably bound to its location and to the history of the resort. In this vein, it is difficult to imagine how such a deliberate assertion of place—with so many references to the architecture, the site, and the resort—can be viewed merely as an escapist fantasy for its owner.

That Wolfe would be attracted to the particular British artists and designers she hired suggests that she wished the interior of Vinland to be as ambitious and progressive in design

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[10] O'Neill, "Paintings from Nowhere"; O'Neill, *Walter Crane*, 83–93.

[11] Dianne Sachko Macleod, *Enchanted Lives, Enchanted Objects: American Women Collectors and the Making of Culture, 1800–1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, with the assistance of the Getty Foundation, 2008), 67–68.

[12] Ibid., 69.

[13] Ibid.

as was its exterior. It is difficult to imagine that her architect Robert Peabody would not have played a prominent role in her choice of these designers, given his interest in English architecture. In the end, the process of the interaction and collaboration with Morris & Co. and the others involved in the project may not have been as straightforward as either Wolfe or Peabody intended.

In soliciting their services, Wolfe worked with those whose perspectives and agendas, despite a shared interest in the Viking theme on the part of some of the key players, did not always match hers. Moreover, it is worth considering that for the design of a house whose location in the resort was so integral to its character, Wolfe would decide to import the work of designers who were physically so far removed from the site. It is true, however, that Walter Crane did come to see Vinland years after Wolfe's death, accompanied by Peabody.[14] A thorough investigation of the dynamics underlying this collaboration; an assessment of the perspective of the parties involved; and a study of works of art and décor they created for Vinland reveal how, despite their sometimes divergent views, the artists and designers were able to create for their patron an interior that functioned on its own, and in relation to its exterior architecture, as a complete work of art.

The House Beautiful

Wolfe's Vinland project took form in the early 1880s at a pivotal moment in approaches to interior design when Americans increasingly began to define themselves through the objects they chose in order to enhance the domestic component of their lives. Jean-Christophe Agnew's 1989 observations about Gilded-Age interior décor are particularly apposite in this context: "The purchased interior . . . became for many observers a convenient metaphor with

[14] Walter Crane, *An Artist's Reminiscences* (London: Methuen, 1907), 374.

which to convey the new predicaments they were beginning to discern in their own bourgeois existence."[15] New ideas about the décor of houses came about as a reaction to what was judged rampant commercialism, on the one hand, and a drive to supplant what was considered Victorian clutter and the resultant lack of design coherence, on the other.

A multiplicity of guides or manuals bent on nurturing the development of taste in interior design were widely circulated among a new audience interested in these concerns. The American art critic Clarence Cook applied the term "The House Beautiful" to an 1878 compilation of his ideas on domestic furnishings and décor, which had first appeared in installments of *Scribner's Monthly* from 1875 to 1877.[16] Cook's manual had as its frontispiece Walter Crane's illustration *My Lady's Chamber* (fig. 68), an image of a middle-class lady of the house in the genteel act of pouring tea, surrounded by what was unquestionably the sort of aesthetic interior that Cook's didactic text espoused. A decade earlier, in 1868, the British architectural designer Charles L. Eastlake published a compendium of his essays, *Hints on Household Taste*.[17] Eastlake's guide ran through eight editions in the United States, from 1872 to 1886.[18]

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[15] Agnew continues: "In their hands the commodified home became something more than a likeness or an even an expression of the selves placed in it; it became something interchangeable with those selves." See Jean-Christophe Agnew, "A House of Fiction: Domestic Interiors and the Commodity Aesthetic" in Simon J. Bronner, ed., *Consuming Visions: Accumulation and Display of Goods in America, 1880–1920* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989), 136.

[16] Clarence Cook, *The House Beautiful: Essays on Beds and Tables, Stools and Candlesticks* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong, 1878).

[17] Charles L. Eastlake, *Hints on Household Taste in Furniture, Upholstery, and Other Details* (London: Longmans, Green, 1868).

[18] See Marilyn Johnson, "The Artful Interior," in Doreen Bolger et al., *In Pursuit of Beauty: Americans and the Aesthetic Movement* (New York: Rizzoli, 1986), 111.

Eastlake had a profound affinity for Gothic architecture and design; but an important element of his advocacy of what he judged to be a suitable domestic interior was grounded in his belief in the need for a confluence of utility and beauty in design. In a seminal statement, he observes: "Use and beauty are, in theory at least, closely associated: for not only has the humblest article of manufacture, when honestly designed, a picturesque interest of his own, but no decorative feature can legitimately claim our admiration without revealing by its very nature the purpose of the object which it adorns."[19] These ideas were at the core of William Morris's rule: "Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful."[20] It is striking to find in Eastlake's manual the dictum that the blacksmith and the goldsmith share the same aesthetic laws.[21] Thus, for Eastlake, fine art and applied art are not inimical to one another.

In *The House Beautiful*, Cook builds on Eastlake's positions, and fulminates about the inadequacy of a "stylish" New York parlor in which

> no merely useful thing is permitted…things are bought from pure whim, or because the buyer doesn't know what to do with her money….in time the intruding camel crowds out the occupant of the tent.[22]

He allows, however, that

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[19] Eastlake, *Hints on Household Taste*, 167. Eastlake also warns his readers that "gaudy and extravagant trash" will attract purchasers, but he goes on to predict that once these consumers "become familiar with the sight of good forms and judicious combinations of colour… we may one day aspire to the formation of a national taste," 118–19.

[20] William Morris, "The Beauty of Life," 1880, repr. in William Morris, *Hopes and Fears for Art* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1882), 108.

[21] Eastlake, *Hints on Household Taste*, 172.

[22] Cook, *The House Beautiful*, 100.

> A change is coming over the spirit of our time, which had its origins partly, no doubt, in the memorial epoch through which we are passing, but which is also a proof that our taste is getting a root in a healthier and more native soil.[23]

We see in Cook's writings a call for a revival of the simplicity of the designs of the past, in order to capture the spirit of that earlier time. Here the American Clarence Cook links himself directly with some of the core ideas of William Morris, who called for a return to methods of pre-industrial production, albeit to those of the Middle Ages.

The celebration of the American Centennial to which Cook alludes brought to the fore a longing on the part of many Americans to have the interior of their homes reflect a deliberate revival of the styles of the past. In a 1985 essay Celia Betsky notes that Gilded-Age Americans "proudly displayed objects [referencing the Colonial past] in their homes, and placed the inner qualities ascribed to people of the past in the foreground of their emotional and moral value systems."[24] Such ideas about the moral values implicit in an earlier America would likely have resonated with Wolfe, even if the past she herself would focus on predated the Colonial era that had ignited the imagination of many of her contemporaries. Since editions of the writings of Cook and Eastlake proliferated in the 1870s and 1880s, before and during the time of the creation of Vinland, they would no doubt have been accessible to Wolfe. Her goals, however, for the design of Vinland's interior would prove to be more ambitious and more particular than those of many of these pundits' readers.

It was also at this very moment that the extended 1882 American lecture tour of the British self-styled aesthete, Oscar Wilde (1854–1900), helped to popularize the idea of an

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[23] Ibid., 187.

[24] Celia Betsky, "Inside the Past: The Interior and the Colonial Revival in American Art and Literature, 1860–1914," in *The Colonial Revival in America,* edited by Alan Axelrod (New York: W.W. Norton, 1985), 254.

aestheticized interior. In his lectures and in the myriad interviews Wilde gave to the press, as he traveled the length of the United States, he reiterated the notion that beautiful surroundings were essential for the home and crucial for the well-being of the national psyche. In 1882 the *New York Evening Post* recorded his comment "Beauty is nearer to most of us than we are aware. The material is all around us, but we want a systematic way of bringing it out. It may be subjective, don't you know, or objective; but it is there, and the science of how to get at it is what I come to lecture about."[25]

Wolfe could very well have attended any one of his lectures in the Northeast or been a member of the audience at his talk on "The Decorative Arts," given in Newport at the then newly constructed Casino Theatre in July 1882, while Vinland was under construction.[26] Had she been in attendance at Wilde's Newport lecture, Wolfe would have been privy to Wilde's standard exposition on new British design theory, as well as his view of the profound need for an aesthetic component to elevate ordinary life. Had Wolfe been there, or read accounts of Wilde's lecture in local Newport papers, she would have also known of Wilde's attempt to

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[25] "Oscar Wilde," *New York Evening Post*, January 4, 1882, 4, cited in Matthew Hofer and Gary Scharnhorst, eds., *Oscar Wilde in America: The Interviews* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 16.

[26] For reference to Wilde's visit to Newport, see Julia Ward Howe to Maud Howe Elliott, July 14, 1882, cited in Maud Howe Elliott, *This Was My Newport* (Cambridge, MA: Mythology Co., A.M. Jones, 1944), 100. According to the society note, "Summer Days at Newport: The Recreation of the Cottage Residents," *New York Times*, July 15, 1882: "Oscar Wilde 'did' Newport yesterday, under the efficient direction of Sam Ward." The author cites the lecture that evening as Wilde's farewell performance before his departure for Japan. Elsewhere in this *Times* article, Wolfe is listed as a guest at a luncheon attended by Newport elite on that day, adding to the likelihood that she would have gone to the Casino Theatre that night to hear Wilde.

localize his themes by concluding with an evocative reference to New England and to two of its most venerated seers, Thoreau and Longfellow.[27]

An undated and anonymous clipping in Wolfe's personal scrapbook at Vinland calls to mind Wilde's mantras. It reads: "If there is any form of extravagance that is pardonable, it is that which manifests itself in the beautifying of the home…Money spent in making the home more attractive, in adding to its comfort, and even to its luxuries is money not spent unwisely."[28] That she preserved this clipping may be interpreted as a possible justification on her part for having embarked on the building and design of an extravagant residence.[29] Had Wolfe merely created an expensive and richly decorated house, one lacking a cohesive theme relating to the resort's mythic past, the result might have been judged by Newport contemporaries solely as the product of the vast wealth of a transplanted New Yorker eager to showcase her limitless funds. This was not the result Wolfe wanted, nor what Vinland became.

That Wolfe would opt to devote considerable attention to the formation of the visual program for the interior of the house that she had had Peabody & Stearns build for her as an identity statement in the resort was not surprising. What seemed surprising, however, was her decision to entrust that responsibility to the highly innovative and avant-garde British firm of

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[27] Wilde concluded his lecture: "Art is eternal. The little house at Concord may be desolate, but the wisdom of New England's Plato is not dimmed. The lips of Longfellow are still musical for use though his dust be turning into the flowers which he loved." These remarks were recorded in the *Newport Journal*, July 22, 1882, 4, and cited in Richard Guy Wilson, "Oscar Wilde, Colonialists, and Vikings: Newport and the Aesthetic Movement," *Nineteenth Century* 19, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 5.

[28] "Making the Home Beautiful," undated clipping, "Vinland Scrapbook," 75, Archives of the Preservation Society of Newport County, Newport, RI.

[29] For an example of this view, see Macleod, *Enchanted Lives, Enchanted Objects*, 70. The author speculates that every time Wolfe would leaf through her scrapbook, she would assuage twinges of guilt.

Morris & Co. as Vinland's primary designers. To be sure, there were commonalities between Morris's approach to design and the current climate of ideas about interiors, with which Wolfe would have been familiar as a result of the availability of the manuals on design that were widely circulated, and the ubiquity of public lectures by such figures as Oscar Wilde.

Nonetheless, the selection of Morris & Co. was a bold and deliberate move on her part. Had she so desired, a woman of Wolfe's wealth and status could have attracted any number of prominent, well-regarded, and fashionable American designers working in the environs of New York and Newport at that time. She could have chosen such luminaries in the field as Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848–1943) or John Le Farge (1835–1910). Yet there is no evidence that Wolfe had a designer other than Morris in mind for the assignment, unlike her earlier consideration of more than one architectural firm for the construction of the exterior.

Selecting Morris & Co.

We do not know the terms of the original commission, nor do we know the date or the exact circumstances surrounding Morris & Co.'s initial involvement with the Vinland project. The earliest extant record documenting the firm's work on Vinland is a letter from Morris to an American colleague in Newport about designs that Morris and Burne-Jones were already preparing for the interior. The letter was dated April 3, 1883, a few months before Wolfe herself would visit Morris in England.[30] Wolfe journeyed to England to meet with the artists and discuss details of the commission, but Morris never came to the United States before,

[30] William Morris to "Dear Sir," April 3, 1883. Cited in "Vinland Scrapbook," 96, and in William Morris, *Collected Letters of William Morris*, ed. Norman Kelvin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), vol. 2 (1881–1884), 182–83.

during, or after the completion of Vinland. While Wolfe and Morris was each drawn to the theme of Iceland, her selection of Morris and his associates must be seen as an act that encompassed a complex conjoining of other important relationships, interconnections, and shared interests. Although the final decision to select them was hers, it was not a decision Wolfe would have made in isolation. The influence of key advisors would prove crucial, most notably that of her architect Robert Peabody who as the designer of Vinland's exterior would have had the most at stake.

In 1905, in what would be the final decade of his career, Robert Peabody would return to England, a country he had visited in the years since his early apprenticeship in the architectural office of Alfred Waterhouse in 1869, following the completion of his training at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. These visits to England included a trip he took there in 1882, about the time he was working for Wolfe on the Vinland project.[31] Much of Peabody's architectural philosophy was based on his study of the uses of the past in British design, which had fueled his desire to locate an American analogue in the Colonial Revival and, in the case of Vinland, in the Viking past. It is difficult to imagine that Peabody would not have felt a sense of communion with designers such as Morris, his near contemporary, who shared his advocacy of vernacular architecture and his historicist bent.[32]

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[31] In an 1882 essay, Peabody comments about the country and village houses he saw in England: "For dryness and cleanliness and as healthy homes they certainly cannot stand comparison with our ugly Yankee wooden cottage"; Robert Swain Peabody, "Rural England" (1882), reprinted in Peabody, *An Architect's Sketch Book* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1912), 39.

[32] In his essay "A Talk About 'Queen Anne,'" *American Architect and Building News* 2, no. 70 (April 28, 1877): 134, Peabody indicates a direct knowledge of Morris's wallpaper, fabric, and stained glass as indicative of the English heritage America received.

These ideals, which influenced Peabody's own architectural designs, including his interpretations in new buildings of the British Queen Anne style, remain a major theme in his retrospective 1905 essay, "On the Design of Houses." Here Peabody refutes the argument of anyone who questions why we need to draw upon the styles of past buildings: "Let such an objector, however, try to design even so familiar a building as a country house, and he will soon agree that the world must needs be more artless and less sophisticated than we find it today to permit him to ignore the work of the past."[33] For Peabody, "He is the true artist who can just adjust in a natural and straightforward way without pedantry and affectation, the traditions of the past to the life and needs and ways of the present."[34] It must have been Peabody's unswerving commitment to the integrity of past design, and an admiration of the use of the methods and materials of the past evident in Morris's work, which, more than two decades earlier, provided the rationale for Peabody's recommendation of Morris & Co.

Had Peabody and Morris actually ever met each other during the course of any of Peabody's visits to England, their encounter was never recorded. Even if they did not know each other personally, however, Peabody may have felt an early connection with Morris because of the latter's architectural training in the office of George Edmund Street. It is very likely that Peabody would have been familiar with the firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.—the earlier incarnation of Morris & Co.—which had been established in 1861, eight years before Peabody first traveled from Paris to London in 1869 to apprentice with the architect Alfred Waterhouse.

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[33] Robert Swain Peabody, "On the Design of Houses" (1905), reprinted in Peabody, *An Architect's Sketch Book*, 78.

[34] Ibid., 88.

The firm that William Morris founded and essentially bankrolled developed from the interest of like-minded acquaintances, young artists and architects, among them Edward Burne-Jones, Morris's lifelong friend whom he had met when they were both students at Oxford, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882). Four years earlier, in 1857, Morris, Burne-Jones, and Rossetti painted scenes from the *Morte d'Arthur* for each of the ten bays of the debating hall of the Oxford Union.[35] Morris, Burne-Jones, and Rossetti formed the firm Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., along with Ford Maddox Brown, Charles Faulkner, Peter Paul Marshall, and Philip Webb. With the ambitious goal of uniting all the arts, these young men styled themselves in the new firm's prospectus as "Fine Art Workmen in Painting, Carvings, Furniture and the Metals," thereby emphasizing their pool of talent and ability to create mural decoration, carving, stained glass, metal work, furniture and hand-designed objects of a beautiful character, using techniques of medieval artisans.[36] The firm grew to be enormously successful and was reputed to be a cynosure of good taste.[37]

A possible catalyst for the formation of Morris's original firm was the 1859 collaboration of some of these artists with the architect Philip Webb (1831–1915) to develop a total environment for the interior of what became Red House (fig. 69), so named because of the red brick chosen for the exterior. Red House was to be a home for Morris and his bride, Jane Burden, but where they lived only until 1865. For Red House, the group chose a site in Upton in Bexleyheath, Kent, in what is now part of Greater London but was then a rural

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[35] Paul Thompson, *The Work of William Morris* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 9–10.

[36] Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris: A Life for Our Time* (London: Faber and Faber, 1994), 171–72.

[37] Ibid., 166.

retreat. Its construction emphasized the local vernacular, with such details as a pointed arch, irregular gabled roofs with tall chimneys, and a connection to the past in the use of the traditional material of its red brick exterior laid in English bond, in place of industrial metals and materials.[38]

The goal of Red House was to conflate the process of design and production in a manner recalling the creation of earlier buildings, especially those dating from the Middle Ages. The asymmetrical L-shaped plan of the house created an additive configuration of organic forms that directly related to the site.[39] Morris, Jane Burden, Burne-Jones, and Rossetti created site-specific furniture, embroidered hangings, murals, and stained glass with allegorical motifs for the small windows of the house.[40] Among the furnishings at Red House was a wooden settle (fig. 70) with painted vignettes illustrating what some scholars have identified as scenes from the medieval Germanic sagas, the *Nibelungenlied*.[41] It is possible that the painted scenes on the settle refer instead to the Icelandic *Volsunga Saga*, which, in a letter to his American friend Charles Eliot Norton in 1869, Morris indicated he preferred over the Germanic version of the sagas.[42] Red House's embrace of the vernacular, its linkage to the

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[38] Pamela Todd, *William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Home* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2005), 22–24.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Pat Kirkham, "William Morris: A Life in Design," in Waggoner, ed., *Beauty of Life*, 34; and Linda Parry, ed., *William Morris* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996), 93–95.

[41] See, for example, Edward Hollamby, *Red House: Bexleyheath 1859* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1991), fig. J, unpaginated.

[42] William Morris to Charles Eliot Norton, December 21, 1869, cited in William Morris, *The Letters of William Morris to His Family and Friends*, ed. Philip Henderson (London and New York: Longmans, Green, 1950), 31–32. In 1873, after he had made two trips to Iceland, Morris complained about Wagner's use of the German sagas: "I look upon it as nothing short of desecration to bring such a tremendous and world-wide subject under the gaslights of an

landscape and local materials, and its anti-industrial, hand-crafted aspect inside and out have contributed to its being labeled the first Arts and Crafts building.[43] Red House revealed Morris's view of the need for an inextricable connection between architecture and interior spaces, a conviction that he seemingly never lost: "noble as that art is by itself, and though it is specially the art of civilization, it neither ever has existed nor ever can exist alive and progressive by itself, but must cherish and be cherished by all the crafts whereby men make the things which they intend shall be beautiful." This statement was included in a lecture reprinted in Boston in 1882, the year Peabody began working on plans for Vinland.[44] The Vinland commission would appear to provide the opportunity for Morris to create an interior space that would fulfill his ideals about crafts and beauty existing simultaneously, even if he would only experience the result from afar.

In *The Victorian Country House* (1979), Mark Girouard defines an artistic house as one in which "everything down to the smallest detail was selected with a discrimination that could make a harmonious whole," and he asserts that Red House originated the idea of an architect's collaboration with fellow artists to create a total environment.[45] That "the designer

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opera…the idea of a sandy-haired German tenor tweedledeeing over the unspeakable woes of Sigurd, which even the simplest words are not typical enough to express!;" William Morris to H. Buxtan Forman, November 12, 1873, cited in ibid., 60–61.

[43] Todd, *William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Home*, 23.

[44] William Morris, "The Prospects of Architecture in Civilization," in Morris, *Hopes and Fears for Art*, 169.

[45] Mark Girouard, *The Victorian Country House* (1979; rev. and enl. ed., New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), 68. Girouard positions the work of such designers as Morris at Red House, and includes his designs for "Caroline [sic] Wolfe" at Vinland within his larger discussion of the eclecticism and use of past styles characteristic of the Queen Anne movement in *Sweetness and Light: The 'Queen Anne' Movement, 1860–1900* (1977; repr. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 16, 153, 212.

of furniture or lamps or textiles is just as important an artist as the painter" would become a belief that resonated for many of Morris's admirers.[46] One wonders if Peabody or Wolfe, during any of their English sojourns, visited Red House or had seen such harmoniously conceived spaces as the 1867 Refreshment Room (later, the Green Dining Room) in the South Kensington Museum. One may infer that the idea of an underlying interchange between architects, artists, artisans, and patrons in dealing with elements of an interior and exterior, which were originally worked out at Red House, would come into play two decades later in the design of the interior of Wolfe's house and its spatial relation to the whole.

At the time of the Vinland commission, Robert Peabody and Catharine Lorillard Wolfe would need to deal with a reorganized Morris firm. In March 1875, the initial firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. was dissolved at Morris's insistence, an act which created a great deal of acrimony among the original partners; the business became known as Morris & Co. under Morris's sole ownership.[47] Morris still continued to work with other artists, especially Burne-Jones, who contributed designs for stained glass and tapestries for many projects, later including Vinland.

Morris had become a singularly successful entrepreneur in addition to being the polymath leading a firm and creating designs for wall-paper, fabrics, stained glass, furniture, embroidery, interior architectural detail and, as well, lecturing on the decorative arts. Yet accounts of Morris reveal his palpable awareness that the work he and his firm produced, ideally to transform the built environment surrounding ordinary people, amounted to a utopian dream that rarely came to fruition. He famously complained to his friend the architect Philip

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[46] Nikolaus Pevsner, "Fifty Years of Arts & Crafts," *Studio* 116 (November 1938): 225.

[47] MacCarthy, *William Morris*, 342.

Webb in the late 1870s that he was tired of "ministering to the swinish luxury of the rich."[48] Such a perspective would color other relationships, including his attitude toward Wolfe and the Vinland commission.

In a letter written in July 1883 to his daughter Jenny, Morris writes very slightingly of his patron: "I went to see Miss Wolfe this morning & she ordered the embroidery: but I am sorry to say that she is sadly stupid; and I believe monstrously rich. 50/s a week is more than she could usefully spend. Hurrah therefore for the social revolution."[49] This summary rejection of Wolfe must have been motivated by the fact that she was an American, and therefore an abhorrent capitalist, as well as by his ongoing socialist prejudice against the wealthy. Nevertheless, Morris had no compunction about taking on the project which she had commissioned. Had he known of the breadth of Wolfe's philanthropy he might well have been less dismissive of her and less biased about the magnitude of her wealth. Moreover, had Morris ever seen Vinland, its architecture, and its site on Newport's coast, he might have had more respect for the intellect and vision of the woman who conceived the project.

Charles Harvey and Jon Press assert in their 1996 study of Morris's business career that he often had to compartmentalize his idealism, his socialist beliefs, and his commitment to the past, while navigating his career competently to meet the demands of a highly competitive market environment.[50] In 1911, fifteen years after Morris's death, Walter Crane

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[48] This statement is recounted in William Richard Lethaby, *Philip Webb and His Work* (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), 94.

[49] Morris to Jenny Morris, July 21, 1883, cited in Morris, *Collected Letters*, vol. 2 (1881–1884), 208.

[50] According to Charles Harvey and Jon Press, "At the intellectual level, Morris may well have hated the age he lived in. At the practical level, he accommodated it quite well, and at this level, he was no crank"; see Harvey and Press, *Art, Enterprise and Ethics: The Life and Work of William Morris* (London: Frank Cass, 1996), 64.

speaks of the many different sides of Morris: "we know that the 'idle dreamer of an empty day' was also the enthusiastic artist and craftsmen, and could become the man of passionate action on occasion, or the shrewd man of business or the keen politician."[51] That what his firm produced would be too costly for most clients other than the rich provided a source of splenetic irritation for Morris, although at the same time, he very much depended on the patronage and income Morris & Co. derived from wealthy clients, including Catharine Lorillard Wolfe.

The initial attraction of Morris & Co. as the chief designers for the interior of Vinland presumably derived as well from the fact of their growing reputation in America as a firm in the forefront of design. In January 1881, just over a year before Peabody & Stearns was awarded the commission to design Vinland, Peabody would doubtless have seen three consecutive issues of the *American Architect & Buildings News* (to which he was a contributor) of reprints of lectures on "Hints on Household Decoration," which Morris had given to the Birmingham Society of Artists.[52] The statement that preceded the first of the three reprinted lectures made it clear that the editors felt that Morris should be viewed as the greatest of living "house decorators advisedly, not so much on account of his eminence in any one branch…as for the admirable energy and unerring taste with which he has taken up so

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[51] Walter Crane, *William Morris to Whistler* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1911), 3–4.

[52] William Morris, "Hints on Household Decoration I," *American Architect & Building News* 9, no. 263 (January 8, 1881): 16–18; "Hints on Household Decoration II," *American Architect & Building News* 9, no. 264 (January 15, 1881): 28–30; and "Hints on Household Decoration III," *American Architect & Building News* 9, no. 265 (January 22, 1881): 40–43.

many drooping arts and set them in the way of renewed life."[53] Wolfe herself may have seen reports praising Morris's taste and designs in such journals as *Art Amateur*.[54]

Morris & Co. had begun marketing their designs for furniture, wall-paper, stained glass, and hangings to selected American customers, initially in Boston, a fact Wolfe might have been aware of and certainly her architect and other advisors would have known. However, initial attempts in the 1870s to sell Morris wares in the United States were impeded by their high cost.[55] Prominent members of the Boston literati who traveled in England and knew Morris as a writer, most notable among them Harvard's Charles Eliot Norton, who became a great friend of Morris, began to collect his products, and spread awareness of them among his circle to such writers as William Dean Howells and Henry James.[56] However, from the time of their exposure at the American Centennial, one year after the formation of Morris & Co., a larger clientele for the firm began to develop in America, so much so that they hired representatives to be their agents, and began to showcase their wares in commercial settings. Their reputation in America would be further enhanced by their exhibits in Franklin Hall at

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[53] "Editorial," *American Architect & Building News* 6, no. 263 (January 8, 1881): 14.

[54] See for example, "'Morris' Art in Decoration," *Art Amateur* 4, no. 3 (February 1881): 66.

[55] For example, an article in *Scribner's Monthly* spoke of the challenges facing Morris, Marshall & Co. in America: "they work in many directions—in poetry, in painting, in decorative designs, in designs for furniture, and their influence has been wildly felt on the art in England even here," but the author continues, "these articles are very expensive and, going exclusively into rich houses, do not influence the popular taste to any perceptible degree." "Culture and Progress: The William Morris Window," *Scribner's Monthly* 6 (June 1873): 245.

[56] See Lindsay Leard-Coolidge, 'William Morris and Nineteenth-Century Boston," in Peter Faulkner and Peter Preston, eds., *William Morris Centenary Essays* (Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 1999), 158.

the Boston Foreign Fair of 1883; and Wolfe and her advisers may well have attended the Fair, since it was in progress during the time of Vinland's construction.[57]

Another source of Morris's influence in America, which would not have been lost on Peabody or on Wolfe herself, was the support the firm received from the architect H.H. Richardson. In a trip to England in 1882, Richardson visited Morris's home in Hammersmith and his workshop at Merton Abbey.[58] Richardson placed Morris products in his studio and, more important, arranged for high-profile commissions for Morris & Co., the first of which was for two stained-glass windows for Boston's Trinity Church, originally built in 1877 by Richardson, and an architectural commission for which Peabody & Stearns had earlier competed. The windows were designed by Morris and Burne-Jones, and funded by wealthy Bostonians. Richardson gained a reputation as an assertive promoter of Morris's goods by introducing them to his clients, including John Jacob Glessner and his wife Frances, whose house Richardson built in Chicago.[59] As with the circumstances of Vinland, Richardson's collaborations with Morris involved working with artists who were very much removed from the site of the commission. Although Peabody presumably did not have the same early rapport with Morris that Richardson had, he would have been highly aware of Richardson's sponsorship of Morris. As we have seen, Peabody was influenced in the design of Vinland's exterior by Richardson's use of monumental masonry in such commissions as the Ames Gate

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[57] See catalogue of Morris exhibits reprinted in Harvey and Press, *Art, Enterprise, and Ethics*, 116–50.

[58] Their relationship is recorded in correspondence. For example, in a letter to his daughter, Morris writes, "apropos of fat I wonder when Mr. Richardson will turn up"; see Morris to May Morris, August 31, 1882, cited in Morris, *Collected Letters*, vol. 2 (1881–1884), 12–24.

[59] See Mary Alice Molloy, "Richardson's Web: A Client's Assessment of the Architect's Home and Studio," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 54, no.1 (March 1995): 8–23.

Lodge. The fact that Peabody looked to Richardson in the planning of the Vinland commission supports the idea that he would have been drawn to Morris through the latter's affiliation with Richardson.

Richard Codman (1842–1928), the American decorator Wolfe hired for Vinland was also a collaborator with Richardson, whom he had known at Harvard and with whom he later traveled.[60] Scholars often confuse the identity of Richard Codman with that of his more celebrated nephew, Ogden Codman, Jr. (1863–1951), who in 1898 collaborated with Edith Wharton on their manual of taste, *The Decoration of Houses*. Richard Codman, a decorator of homes for the Boston elite, became known as an importer of furnishings, wallpaper, and materials from Morris & Co.[61] In his 1923 *Reminiscences*, Codman defines his role as decorator as one who "supplement[s] the work of the architect in the furnishing and decoration of his houses, and [carries] out his ideas further than he [the architect] would have the time to do."[62]

In these memoirs, Codman speaks of the pleasure and aesthetic satisfaction that he experienced when visiting Morris at Hammersmith in 1881, during a shopping expedition on behalf of American clients. There is no mention of Wolfe, presumably because the visit came before he started work as decorator at Vinland. He remarks that those who worked in Morris's

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[60] Richard Codman commissioned from Richardson a house in Roxbury, Massachusetts, which, in the end, would never be realized. See Jeffrey Karl Ochsner, *H. H. Richardson: Complete Architectural Works* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982), 56.

[61] For background on Richard Codman, see Pauline C. Metcalf, ed., *Ogden Codman and the Decoration of Houses* (Boston: Boston Athenaeum, D.R. Godine, 1988), 6, 32.

[62] Richard Codman, *Reminiscences of Richard Codman* (Boston: North Bennet St. Industrial School, 1923), 31. Codman added that it would be his role as a decorator to charge a commission, as did the architect, but that he would reimburse his clients the amount of discounts he would receive from the trade in order to avoid any extra expense for them, 32.

firm felt that art and decorative art had reached such a low ebb in the Victorian era that it was necessary to return to medievalism; the experience of going to tea at Morris's house made Codman feel as if he had literally returned to the Middle Ages: "It was not only the room itself but everything in it."[63] It is difficult to assess the extent to which Richard Codman would have participated in the design plans for the interior of Vinland; it is more likely that the role he filled was that of facilitator or intermediary between Wolfe and Morris at the request of Robert Peabody.[64]

A trans-Atlantic influence on Wolfe's selection of a design team came from her close friend and frequent advisor, Robert Jenkins Nevin (1839–1906), the rector of St. Paul's Within the Walls, the American church in Rome. It was a newly constructed church for American expatriates built within the walls of the Vatican, and was designed by the English architect G. E. Street, who had received the commission in 1872.[65] Nevin was the major fundraiser for this new Protestant Episcopal Church, which had become one of the beneficiaries of Wolfe's many charities. The Church's Baptistery supported a bell tower that was dedicated to the memory of Wolfe's father, John David Wolfe, its first trustee and, as well, in gratitude to Wolfe herself for her continued support.[66] As Fiona MacCarthy relates in

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[63] Ibid., 36.

[64] Codman's connection with Peabody also extended to another decorating project—this time excluding Morris—concurrent with his work at Vinland, for the interiors of Peabody's newly constructed Queen Anne and Colonial Revival–style Allen Winden House in Lenox, Massachusetts; see Annie Robinson, *Peabody & Stearns: Country Houses and Seaside Cottages* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010), 106–7.

[65] According to the material in the "Robert J. Nevin Collector File" at the Getty Research Institute, Nevin was in Rome in 1871 when he reportedly asked G. E. Street to design St. Paul's Within the Walls.

[66] Judith Rice Millon, *St. Paul's Within the Walls in Rome: A Building History and Guide, 1870–2000* (Dublin, NH: W. L. Bauhan, 1982), 135–36.

her 2011 biography of Burne-Jones, Street had known Edward Burne-Jones as the friend of his one-time pupil, Morris, and recommended him, Burne-Jones, for the commission of decorating Nevin's church. After Street's death in 1881, Burne-Jones's prospective commission nearly foundered, and it fell to Nevin to ask Burne-Jones to create mosaics to cover the entire interior of St. Paul's Within the Walls, and he raised money for the ambitious undertaking.[67] The mosaics for St. Paul's Within the Walls become another one of those projects where the designer, in this case Burne-Jones, worked at a complete geographical remove from the site of the commission, although, initially, at the start of what became a project of many years duration, Burne-Jones did travel to the site in Rome.

Especially since Wolfe was one of the major underwriters of the mosaic project Burne-Jones was working on at the time of the Vinland commission, it is not unreasonable to speculate that Nevin would have enthusiastically recommended Burne-Jones to Wolfe for Vinland.[68] An April 1885 letter from Burne-Jones to Wolfe about a projected meeting with her in his studio, written during one of her trips to England, well after the Newport commission would have been underway, makes reference to Dr. Nevin, a mutual acquaintance.[69] That Nevin had a vested interest in Vinland's decoration is also supported by

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[67] Fiona MacCarthy, *The Last Pre-Raphaelite: Edward Burne-Jones and the Victorian Imagination* (London: Faber and Faber, 2011), 352–53.

[68] I am grateful to Dr. Margaretta Frederick, chief curator of the Delaware Art Museum, for discussing with me a possible connection between St. Paul's Within the Walls and the Vinland commission on October 8, 2010, while attending the symposium "Useful and Beautiful: The Transatlantic Arts of William Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites" at the University of Delaware.

[69] Edward Burne-Jones to Catharine Lorillard Wolfe, April 15, 1885, "Vinland Scrapbook," 91. In this letter, Burne-Jones tells Wolfe that he had received "Dr. Nevin's note and your card" from William Morris.

the fact that, as Walter Crane's 1907 memoirs attest, Nevin had been personally responsible for bringing Crane into Wolfe's project. Nevin's sponsorship led to the artist's undertaking the design and execution of a frieze based on Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's ballad.[70] Crane rented a studio in Rome to work on the frieze, which he would later complete in London, before having it shipped to Newport.[71] Nevin was also responsible for arranging an additional commission for Crane at Vinland, namely, the design of a set of stained-glass panels for the library, these not on Viking themes.[72]

Nevin would continue his involvement in Vinland and in Wolfe's patronage and philanthropy, including a role as intermediary between the Metropolitan Museum and Wolfe to arrange for her purchase of antique bronze cisterns for the Museum.[73] His 1884 gift to Wolfe of a large terra cotta jar (fig. 56), which had been excavated from the site during the construction of St. Paul's Within the Walls, and was believed to date from the time of Saint Paul, was an acknowledgment of her generous support of the long-term construction and

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[70] According to Crane, *An Artist's Reminiscences*, 239, "No sooner had we arrived in Rome than I received a letter form Dr. Nevin, who was the clergyman of the American church (designed by Mr. G. Street) in Rome. This was to ask me to undertake the design and painting of an important frieze for the newly built house at Newport, Rhode Island, of Miss Catherine [sic] Wolfe of New York."

[71] Ibid., 240.

[72] Walter Crane to Catharine Lorillard Wolfe, October 10, 1883, "Vinland Scrapbook," 37.

[73] Luigi Palma di Cesnola to Dr. Robert Nevin, July 27, 1885, Gift of Loan of Bronze Cists, 1885–1887, MMA Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Collection files: "My Dear Sir: …the antiquities which you have brought with you are very valuable indeed; they would be an important addition, and a most desirable acquisition for Museum. Some of our generous patrons, like Miss Wolfe, or Henry G. Marquand, ought to buy them and present them to this institution."

embellishment of the Church in Rome.[74] Wolfe would place this specimen from antiquity near the porte-cochere on the grounds of Vinland.

The strength of the recommendations Wolfe would have received from her coterie of advisors, from Peabody to Nevin and, as well, from the knowledge she had gained of Morris & Co.'s approach to design and their growing reputation in America, would be instrumental in her decision to hire Morris. However, what ultimately clinched the deal for her must have been for what she hoped would be a fusion of his intense interest in Iceland and Icelandic sagas, and her fascination with Newport's Viking heritage.

Morris and Iceland

Victorian Britain witnessed a growing interest in Viking legends and in Norse culture, fueled in part by excavations of Viking burial sites and other remains.[75] In her private album at Vinland, Wolfe had records of such excavations; these included a clipping about bone ornaments with runic motifs said to be rare relics of the Danish occupation of London, preserved in the Guildhall Museum there.[76]

William Morris's decision to accept Wolfe's commission at Vinland, which would entail his embarking on the design of art and décor whose subject encompassed Viking

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[74] Robert J. Nevin to Catharine Lorillard Wolfe, June 22, 1884, "Vinland Scrapbook," 95.

[75] See Andrew Wawn, *The Vikings and the Victorians: Inventing the Old North in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000). In what appears to be a revisionist study of this particular fervor and here an indirect reference to Wolfe, Wawn makes note of the fact that "wealthy widows on the seaboard of the United States commissioned designer-label stained-glass representations of the Viking-age discovery of Vinland lovingly prepared (and unscrupulously priced) by William Morris," 8.

[76] Untitled and undated clipping about Scandinavian relics in England, "Vinland Scrapbook," 67.

themes, would appear to feed into what had already been for him a more than two decade-long commitment to Iceland and to the study of Viking traditions. Although Morris would operate on the Vinland project at a great remove, an ocean away from the site of Wolfe's house, his experience of Iceland and his knowledge of its sagas were at first-hand. It has been well-documented that Morris studied Icelandic, translated Icelandic Eddas, and wrote poems inspired by Icelandic lore.

A decade before taking on the Vinland commission, Morris embarked on two arduous trips to Iceland, the first in 1871, and the second in 1873, both chronicled in the journals that he wrote for his friend Georgiana Burne-Jones during these voyages. The journals charted what he encountered and how he reacted to what he experienced.[77] Before his first trip, Morris wrote another friend:

> I am going [on] what to me is a long journey this year….I am really going there [Iceland] this summer: there is no art there at all, and there is nothing to interest most people there but its strangeness and wildness; yet I have felt for long that I must go and see the background of the stories for wh[ich]: I have so much sympathy & which must have had something to do with producing & fostering their strange imagination: also to such a cockney & stay-at-home as I am there is a certain amount of adventure about the journey itself which pleases me.[78]

Two years earlier, in 1869, Morris had worked on translating the *Volsunga*, the Icelandic version of the Germanic sagas the *Nibelungenlied*, and asked the poet Algernon Charles

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[77] See William Morris, *Icelandic Journals*, introduction by Magnus Magnusson (London: Mare's Nest, 1996). For his first trip, Morris was accompanied by Eirikr Magnusson, his co-translator Charles Faulkner, and another friend, W. H. Evans. Faulkner would travel with him again in 1873.

[78] Morris to Edith Marion Story, May 10, 1871, cited in Morris, *Collected Letters*, vol. 1 (1848–1880), 132.

Swinburne, for advice about the translation.[79] In writing about the *Volsunga Saga* to Charles Eliot Norton, in a letter previously cited, Morris characterized the Icelandic version of the *Nibelungen* as "nobler and grander" than the Germanic one; he further stated that the characters in Icelandic sagas touched him more than anything in literature to which he had been previously exposed.[80]

Later, in 1876, Morris completed the writing of an ambitious epic, *The Story of Sigurd the Volsung and the Fall of Niblungs.* Morris's epic poem emphasizes the stalwart and glorious character of the hero Sigurd (Sigfried in the Wagnerian version of the *Nibelungenlied*), ready to do battle with evil:

> Ye have heard of Sigurd aforetime, how the foes of God he slew;
> How forth from the darksome desert the fold of Waters he drew;
> How he awakened Love on the mountain, and wakened Brynhild the Bright,
> And dwelt upon Earth for a season, and shone in all men's sight.[81]

Theodore Watts, a contemporary reviewer of Morris's epic, commented: "And that quaint homeliness blent with sublimity which is the characteristic of the Northern mythology, finds a sympathizer in Mr. Morris, such as it has never had before outside the nations that are purely Teutonic."[82]

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[79] Morris to Algernon Charles Swinburne, December 21, 1869, cited in Morris, *Letters of William Morris to His Family and Friends*, 30–31.

[80] Morris to Norton, December 21, 1869, cited in ibid., 31–32.

[81] William Morris, *The Story of Sigurd the Volsung and the Fall of the Niblungs* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1877), 392.

[82] Theodore Watts, unsigned review in *Athenaeum* 2563 (December 1876), reprinted in Peter Faulkner, ed., *William Morris: The Critical Heritage* (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), 231.

In her 2005 essay, "Rediscovering the Topography of Wonder," Phillippa Bennett remarks that Iceland "fulfill[ed] a latent desire in the nineteenth-century traveler to inhabit a marginal and marvelous space."[83] The trips to Iceland were for Morris a personal restorative, distancing him from the tribulations of his marriage and his wife's liaison with his friend Rossetti. They were also journeys to a site of geographical and natural grandeur. While Morris was one of scores of English travelers to Iceland at this time, his response and his connection with the land he encountered was intensely personal. In contrast to what he perceived as laissez-faire industrialism ruining the English countryside and destroying the quality of life in English towns, Morris viewed Icelandic traditions and values as admirable.[84]

Often after spending difficult and sometimes fearful hours on horseback navigating a continuously challenging, changing terrain, his journal entries, such as the following one, reveal the intensity of his response: "I seemed to understand how people under all disadvantages should find their imaginations kindle amid such scenes."[85] And later he writes, "I was quite ready to break my neck in my quality of pilgrim to the holy places of Iceland."[86] For Morris, the reality of journeying there and the recognition of its present condition of deep poverty strengthened a growing commitment to Socialist values and his involvement in the Socialist League. In a long letter of retrospection, written to a colleague active in the Socialist

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[83] Phillippa Bennett, "Rediscovering the Topography of Wonder: Morris, Iceland, and the Last Romances," *Journal of the William Morris Society* 16, nos. 2–3 (Summer–Winter 2005): 33. Bennett theorizes that Morris's journeys to Iceland inspired his later romances.

[84] See Parry, *William Morris*, 46.

[85] Morris, *Icelandic Journals*, 43.

[86] Ibid., 53.

movement, in 1883, at the time he would also be creating designs for Vinland, Morris recalls his first trip to Iceland:

> In 1871 I went to Iceland with Mr. Magnússon, and, apart from my pleasure in seeing that romantic desert, I learned one lesson there, thoroughly I hope, that the most grinding poverty is a trifling evil compared with the inequality of classes.[87]

In the same letter, Morris speaks of translations from Old Norse literature as a "good corrective to the maundering side of mediaevalism."[88] According to Fiona MacCarthy's account in her 2011 biography of Burne-Jones, Morris returned from his 1873 trip to Iceland full of Nordic enthusiasm, an attitude that led to Burne-Jones's prescient remark, "I quarrel now with Morris about Art. He journeys to Iceland and I to Italy."[89]

To Morris, Iceland became the "other," dazzled as he was by its scenery, its people, the noble suffering he had witnessed, and its literary tradition. This perspective would make Morris stand out as an English poet consumed with these traditions. It would also serve to put him at odds with those citizens of New England invested in Viking lore as a means of justifying the longevity of their own history as perhaps the oldest explored region in North America.

As we know, the presence of the much vaunted stone tower or mill in Touro Park, popularly believed to be a remnant of Viking habitation, fostered the proliferation of such myths. And the writings of the Danish antiquarian Carl Christian Rafn served to promote the

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[87] William Morris to Andreas Scheu, September 3, 1883, cited in Morris, *The Letters of William Morris to His Family and Friends*, 187.

[88] Ibid., 186.

[89] MacCarthy, *The Last Pre-Praphaelite*, 236.

notion that these legends about Newport were based on verifiable facts.[90] Newport citizens who would continue to uphold this view into the latter decades of the nineteenth century were less interested in Iceland and in facts about Viking history than they were about how such traditions might have contributed to a local heritage predating the Puritan landings.

Regardless of whether Wolfe actually believed in the historical validity of the tower's identity as a Viking relic, she had immersed herself in the collecting of cultural products and ephemera that were generated by this New England myth, as the previous chapter demonstrates. Ultimately, Wolfe appropriated Newport's Viking past as the theme for Vinland's architecture and interior décor and, in so doing, she linked herself to this aspect of the resort's cultural heritage. In choosing to align herself with Morris to spearhead the decoration of Vinland, Wolfe may well not have foreseen an underlying difference in the narratives she and Morris would wish to illuminate: his stemming from a focus on Iceland, the place, its grandeur, and its literary traditions, and hers from the more limited perspective of Viking exploits on Newport's shores.

Art for Vinland

> No room of the richest man should look grand enough to make a simple man shrink in it, or luxurious enough to make a thoughtful man feel ashamed in it; it will not do so if art be at home there. ….Art was not born in the palace; rather she fell

[90] Excerpts of Rafn's 1827 *Antiquitates Americanae* in which he identified areas of Rhode Island and Massachusetts as sites where the Vikings landed, and in which he declared the Newport tower as a relic of Viking construction, were published in an English translation the following year, in Rafn, *America Discovered in the Tenth Century* (New York: W. Jackson, 1838).

> sick there, and it will take more bracing air than that of rich man's houses to heal her again.[91]

Whatever their differences may have been, Morris's ideas about the role of art in a domestic setting, reprinted in an American journal, would seem to coincide, at least in theory, with Wolfe's concept for the interior of Vinland. The artistic space she envisioned would not merely be a sign of her wealth, but would speak directly to the New England site, to its location overlooking the Cliff Walk at the edge of the Atlantic Ocean, and to the architecture that framed it.

The original footprint of the first floor at Vinland (fig. 55) reveals an elongated sequence of rooms allowing for an ideal series of spaces for artistic projects to become part of an integrated whole. Entering Vinland at the porte-cochere on the western side of the house (fig. 71), not facing the sea, one would reach a hall that appeared to be more a passageway than a designated space for the occupant and her guests to congregate (fig. 55). Beyond the hall was a drawing room overlooking one of Vinland's two covered piazzas, this one facing the Atlantic Ocean. Views of the ocean dominated the experience of being at Vinland. George Sheldon, in his 1887 *Artistic Country-Seats*, characterizes the rooms in the house as providing "one of the most perfect vistas that a seaside resort could offer."[92] On either side of the drawing room were two seemingly identical, octagonally shaped spaces, both with prominent bay windows facing east, providing direct views of the sea. The room to the south of the drawing room was a library and to the north, a dining room. To the far left and on the north end of the main hall, just outside the dining room, was a prominent staircase with a single

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[91] Morris, "Hints on Household Decoration III," 43.

[92] Sheldon, *Artistic Country-Seats*, vol. 2, 185.

landing that would have been visible from both the upstairs and downstairs main hall.[93] To the north side of these stairs, on the ground floor, were the servants' hall and the kitchen. The final decision about the designated functions of any of the rooms at Vinland fell either to Wolfe, to Peabody, or possibly to Richard Codman. Nonetheless, it would seem appropriate that the dining room would be placed near the kitchen and servants' hall, leaving the other space overlooking the ocean on the south side to become the library.

As indicated earlier, Vinland's rooms were filled with art, furnishings, tapestries, embroideries, wall-paper, and other decorative objects, for the most part the work of Morris & Co. and its affiliates. At Vinland's opening reception in September 1883, one observer remarked, "[It] was more an opportunity for gazing, wondering, and admiring than any social enjoyment. People scarcely noticed each other, but wandered from room to room…and lost themselves in the mazes of beauty and luxury, which good taste, backed and aided by unlimited means has produced."[94] As one would turn from the reception room toward the dining room, one encountered a variety of works by British designers, most of which reinforced the themes introduced on the house's exterior. These included hand-crafted wooden furnishings (figs. 72, 73), whose geometric, vegetal and floral motifs mirrored some of the Norse and runic designs on the house's exterior walls (figs. 74, 75). One may infer that such a wallpaper pattern as *Acanthus*, with its strong dense undulating leaves, which Morris created in the 1870s at about the same time that he was writing *Sigurd the Volsung*, might

[93] I am grateful to Professor James Yarnall of Salve Regina University for helping me to verify the location of Vinland's original staircase; e-mail to author, June 7, 2012.

[94] Untitled and undated clipping about September 1883 opening of Vinland, "Vinland Scrapbook."

have been on the walls of Vinland.[95] Vinland's rooms were further embellished with artifacts acquired by agents from destinations as far away as Scandinavia and imperial Russia. In a letter written from St. Petersburg, Nevin discusses possible acquisitions for Vinland: "Mr. Werts and I go over to Sweden this evening, where I hope to get you some old silver and Norse curiosities."[96]

Three distinct spaces on the ground floor became the locus of projects particularly germane to the site-specific themes that Wolfe and Peabody had determined for Vinland: the stairway landing, the dining room, and the library. The stairway landing became the site of stained-glass panels of Viking figures created by William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones. For the dining room, Walter Crane painted a frieze based on the Longfellow ballad about the discovery of Newport. In the library—which we believe would later be decorated with stained-glass panels, these also the work of Crane, albeit not on a Viking subject, Wolfe chose to display the dramatic Winslow Homer marine painting, *The Life Line*, which she had purchased in New York in 1884. An analysis of the dynamics of the creation and placement of the art conceived for these three spaces provides crucial insight into the continuum of the aesthetic program of the whole.

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[95] See Caroline Arscott, *William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones: Interlacings* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2008), 34, 95. Although Arscott does not discuss the Vinland commission, she does provide a context for our understanding of Morris's use of *Acanthus*.

[96] Wolfe's friend and advisor Nevin, the rector of St. Paul's Within the Walls, was among those who collected objects for her. Robert J. Nevin to Catharine Lorillard Wolfe, September 4, 1884, "Vinland Scrapbook," 107.

Viking Windows on the Stairway Landing

An ensemble of nine-stained-glass panels, prominently mounted on the first-floor landing of Vinland's original staircase, were renditions of Viking gods and Viking heroes. This was Morris & Co.'s earliest project in this medium for an American home, as opposed to an ecclesiastical building. The ultimate placement of the panels must have been guided by the desire on the parts of Wolfe and Morris to illuminate the hall and stairway as one entered the house on the west through the porte-cochere. An undated elevation (fig. 76) prepared by Peabody & Stearns indicates that the architects were experimenting with possible installations of the windows at the stairway landing.[97]

The completed panels with their brightly colored lights became the most striking project in the house. The solar orientation of the panels would have been to the north providing what is commonly known as painter's light. The sun would have been especially bright during the summer months when Wolfe was in residence, highlighting the brilliance of the colors of the glass, although it would not have shown through the windows. In writing about the stained-glass windows shortly after Wolfe's death, when Vinland was the property of her cousin, George Sheldon stated, "The splendor of these color triumphs is a lasting joy in the Louis L. Lorillard villa." [98] In their arrangement on Vinland's staircase, the panels became a singular realization of Morris's desire that function and design forge a union between what is "useful" and what is "beautiful."[99]

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[97] This drawing is reproduced in Salve Regina University, *Campus Heritage Preservation Plan: McAuley Hall (formerly Vinland Estate)* 14, in Salve Regina University Archives, McKillop Library, Salve Regina University, Newport, RI.

[98] Sheldon, *Artistic Country-Seats*, vol. 2, 187.

[99] Morris, "The Beauty of Life" (1880), reprinted in Morris, *Hopes and Fears for Art*, 108.

The panels were the joint work of Morris, who was responsible for the selection of the subject matter and the entire conception, including decisions about the placement of the figures, and Burne-Jones, who designed and executed the studies and cartoons preparatory to the fabrication of the glass by glaziers designated by Morris.[100] A study in color of a revised later version of Vinland's Viking panels, created for another client by the firm in 1913 (fig. 77), reveals that the nine panels were configured in three registers of three panels each, leading us to infer that they would have been similarly installed at Vinland.[101] Their projected placement at Vinland in the single rendering by Peabody, cited above (fig. 76), does not, however, support this configuration, perhaps because it was a preliminary elevation by the architects, and did not include all nine panels. Therefore, the final placement of the panels at Vinland is still open to some speculation since we do not have photographs of their original installation *in situ*. For the purposes of this discussion, we can assume that the nine panel vertical installation was what Wolfe received from Morris & Co.

The panels depicted the chief gods of Scandinavian mythology and human Viking explorers believed to have journeyed to American shores in the tenth and early eleventh centuries. Among them, Leif the Lucky (a.k.a. Leif Erikson) was credited with naming the land he discovered and cultivated as "Vinland," cited in Rafn's interpretation of the Viking sagas.[102] A small panel of a ship sailing to the New World, the *Viking Ship* (fig. 78) has been thought to be the only known extant original section of glass from Vinland, and is now in the

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[100] Morris & Co.'s working procedures with stained glass is discussed in Edward Liddall Armitage, *Stained Glass: History, Technology and Practice* (Newton, MA: Charles T. Branford Co., 1959), 60.

[101] Sewter, *Stained Glass of William Morris and His Circle*, vol. 2, 224; and Waggoner, ed., *Beauty of Life*, 140–41.

[102] Rafn, *America Discovered in the Tenth Century*, 6–8.

collection of the Delaware Art Museum.[103] In the original installation, the *Viking Ship* panel was bordered on both sides with lights depicting scrolls with Norse aphorisms on their surface, which were selected and translated by Morris from the *Hávamál*, part of the Eddas he had studied. Morris and Burne-Jones's stained-glass ensemble provided a crucial fusion of representations of personages of some possible historical validity, connected to the local Newport folklore embraced by Wolfe, with deities who were protagonists in the Viking sagas and Eddas revered by Morris. The completed windows would signal an eventual accommodation between artist and patron, despite their widely divergent approaches to Norse culture.

A series of letters dating from 1883 to 1885, written by Morris, or by members of the firm, to Wolfe or to Codman, help us to chart the fabrication of the windows. We do not know of the existence of any letters from Wolfe to the artists, though one must conclude that the letters to her served as responses to queries or claims Wolfe or her advisors had put forth.[104] There must also have been some interchange between Morris & Co. and Robert Peabody, since Morris and Burne-Jones would have had to have been apprised of crucial spatial

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[103] See Rowland Elzea, "The Viking Ship Window from 'Vinland,'" *Tiller* 2, 4 (March–April 1984): 60–63, and Stephen Wildman, *Waking Dreams: The Art of the Pre-Raphaelites from the Delaware Art Museum* (Alexandria, VA: Art Services International, 2004), 293–95. The stained-glass windows from Vinland's original stairway were replaced with clear glass in 1934 and then transferred to the Louis C. Tiffany Studios for storage and possible sale; see Herbert O. Bingham, New-York Historical Society, to Miss Marion Witt, August 6, 1958; in Salve Regina University Archives, McKillop Library, RG 19: University properties, Box 3.1.14, Folder 7, Salve Regina University, Newport, RI. In recent decades, another panel from the original Vinland windows, depicting the Viking adventurer Thorfinn Karlsefne, was found installed in the main staircase of a private residence in Maryland; its current location is unknown. I am grateful to decorative arts scholar Marilyn Ibach of the Library of Congress for sharing her research about this panel; e-mail to author, February 8, 2013.

[104] Various resources in England, including The British Library and the William Morris Museum at Walthamstow, produced records of Morris's letters to Wolfe, none from Wolfe to Morris.

configurations and dimensions in order to conceive of the layout for the project on the stairway landing.

As noted earlier, the first piece of correspondence linking Morris & Co. to the commission at Vinland is a letter of April 3, 1883 from Morris, addressed to "Dear Sir," presumably to Codman.[105] The tenor of the letter reveals that the subject and placement of the figures for the stained-glass commission had consumed a good deal of Morris's creative energy:

> I have been talking over the matter of Miss Wolfes [sic] window with Mr. Burne-Jones, and he quite agrees to the sort of subjects. On reading over the sagas again, I find…[of] all the people who had to do with Vinland Thofinn Karlsefne seemed to be closest connected with it: I should suggest the representing of him and his wife Gudridr instead of the old man and Freydis: which latter was a horrible wretch according to the Leif's Saga whereas Gudridr has something pleasing and womanly about her…I propose Odin Thor and Frey the 3 great Gods above the adventurers of Vinland; & in the small lights, a ship the middle, & on each side a scroll, with the passages from Hávamál (Edda) about undying fame on it: proper enough on this occasion since the poor fisher men [sic] & sheep farmers of Greenland & Iceland have so curiously found a place among the worthies connected with the great Modern Commonwealth.[106]

The language of the letter points to the possibility that earlier correspondence or other exchanges between Wolfe and Morris had left decisions about the appropriate figures for the panels unresolved. The fact that she had engaged in dialogue with Morris about translations and sagas demonstrated a level of involvement and determination on the part of Wolfe. In the

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[105] Here, Codman most likely acted as an intermediary between the key players, thereby fulfilling his self-proclaimed role as a substitute for the architect in capacities, which might be deemed too time-consuming for the latter; Codman, *Reminiscences of Richard Codman*, 31.

[106] William Morris to "Dear Sir," April 3, 1883, "Vinland Scrapbook," 96; and Morris, *Collected Letters*, vol. 2 (1881–1884), 182–83. Morris goes on to ask if the window can be considered ordered, so that any delay would not be considered a neglect on part of the firm.

letter cited above, Morris reveals that despite his lack of connection with the site, and his apparent disdain for Wolfe, which he would later articulate in a letter to his daughter Jenny, he had attempted to accommodate Wolfe's desire to illustrate figures associated with possible Viking exploits in the New World. In so doing, he who had experienced Iceland directly and had invested years in the study, translation, and recreation of its sagas, felt the need to choose those whom he would consider plausible figures for a "history" to which he himself did not subscribe. His sarcastic remark at the end of the letter about "worthies connected with the great Modern Commonwealth" underscores the divide between his own affinity with Iceland and its people and, Newport's—especially Wolfe's—interest in Viking legends.[107]

We do not know the exact date when the finished windows arrived at Vinland, but they were installed at some point before Wolfe's death in April 1887. At the time of Vinland's opening to Newport society in September 1883, there were references to the anticipated completion of the stained-glass lights.[108] That Wolfe remained an active partner in the project is evident in a letter of April 15, 1885, from Burne-Jones to Wolfe, cited earlier in this chapter, in which the artist agrees to discuss the windows with her on the occasion of Wolfe's upcoming visit to his London studio.[109] In what may have been a final letter from Morris to Wolfe, also dated April 15, 1885, Morris provides a translation of the words on the scrolls placed on either side of the *Viking Ship*, and acknowledges that the translations are his and

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[107] Ibid.

[108] "A Viking's Successor," *Philadelphia Ledger and Transcript*, September 26, 1883: "Burne-Jones, the famous aesthetic painter, is hard at work on a great glass window, in which the heroes and heroines of the old Norse legend of Vinland, and their ship, are to stand in glowing colors."

[109] Burne-Jones to Wolfe, April 15, 1885, "Vinland Scrapbook," 91.

"necessarily a little free."[110] In this letter Morris expresses pleasure at Wolfe's approval of the stained-glass project and at the same time turns down what must have been an invitation from her to come to America and visit Vinland.[111] A month later, the firm sent Wolfe photographs of cartoons Burne-Jones had prepared for the staircase (fig. 79), which Wolfe probably saw when she was in London.[112]

In her 2008 *William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones: Interlacings*, Caroline Arscott claimed that "Morris offered a route from the salon de thé and drawing room to the epic and primal."[113] Perhaps nowhere is this assessment more apposite than when it is applied as a judgment about the effect produced by the completed stained-glass windows. While scholars have debated the extent of Burne-Jones's enthusiasm for Iceland and the North, as against his self-professed partiality for Italy and the South, his designs for Vinland, fully complement Morris's strong epic vision.[114] In an essay on Burne-Jones's stained-glass windows in

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[110] William Morris to Catharine Lorillard Wolfe, April 15, 1885, "Vinland Scrapbook," 97; and Morris, *Collected Letters*, vol. 2 (1881–1884), 422. Morris writes: "The two inscriptions on the scrolls are translations from the passages in Hávámal….[This stanza reads in English: Cattle die, kinsfolk die, even to us ourselves will death come. But the good fame which a man has won for himself will never die.]"

[111] Ibid.

[112] Morris & Co. to Catharine Lorillard Wolfe, May 28, 1885, "Vinland Scrapbook," 102. The original cartoons for the six figures of Viking gods and heroes are preserved today at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery in Birmingham, UK. The cartoon for the *Viking Ship*, called *Voyage to Vinland the Good*, is at the Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery, Carlisle, Cumbria, UK.

[113] Arscott, *William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones: Interlacings*, 148.

[114] The issue of Burne-Jones's divided feeling about the Vinland windows, and possible frustration with the fees he was to receive from Morris & Co. for his cartoons is revealed in an entry in his account book for January 1884: "To six Norsemen—gods & heroes—price not originally fixed, but left to a shifting principle termed honour—this combined with sudden outburst on social views on subject of property has made of this contract something I would sooner not dwell upon now. After a scene of great pain to me price fixed at £25 each…for

America, written in 1970, A.C. Sewter comments: "He [Burne-Jones] had an excellent understanding of the limitations imposed by the medium, which prevented him from indulgence in the over-finished elaboration which…seems to mar many of his later pictures, and which encouraged a reliance upon expressive linear pattern, for which he expressed a remarkable natural gift."[115] Burne-Jones's use of linear patterns in the Vinland stained glass, along with what was the luminosity of their colors, was essential to their strong dramatic impact.

The six stained-glass figures in the two bottom registers, the human adventurers and the gods, occupy their own delineated rectangular spaces; they do not interact with one other. The explorers in the lowest register are all greater than life-size, and stand on pedestals of rock, with the swirling waves of the ocean surrounding them. It is noteworthy that Morris included one female figure, Gudridr (a.k.a. Gudrid), whom he characterizes in his letter to Wolfe as "pleasing and womanly."[116] She stands calmly in her own discrete space, holding a staff.[117] In a photograph of the original cartoons (fig. 80), we see Gudridr next to her husband, Thorfinn Karlsefne. He and Leif the Lucky, who was on Gudridr's other side, are both armed with shields and weapons for battle.

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same set, a smaller design of Ship—Norse heroes on the sea making for other peoples property.£15." Burne-Jones's account book with Morris & Co., Book 2, 1883–1897, fols. 7–8. Burne-Jones Papers, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

[115] A. C. Sewter,"Notes on Some Burne-Jones Designs for Stained Glass in American Collections." *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 5 (1970): 81.

[116] Morris to Wolfe, April 15, 1885, "Vinland Scrapbook," 97; and Morris, *Collected Letters*, vol. 2 (1881–1884), 422. Gudridr has been credited as the mother of the first child of European descent born in America.

[117] Ibid. Morris notes that she holds a "rime-staff" because she was believed to have been "wise in ancient lore and incantation."

The three life-size Viking gods, the cartoons for which are shown in another photograph (fig. 81), although not in the order in which they appeared on the panels, occupy the middle register and are revealed enthroned above the earth in architectural niches, against the backdrop of Asgard, the abode of the gods, rendered as medieval towers and fortresses. The gods are represented with the attributes connected to their identity and role. Thor, the thunderer and giant killer, shown here on the right holding a mallet, is surrounded by thunderbolts and the goat who helps draw his heavenly chariot; on the left is Odin, the All-Father (the Wanderer in Wagner's Ring Cycle), accompanied by two wolves and ravens, and holding the magic spear, which Sigurd would shatter; in the center is Frey, the god of the harvest and fertility, with the boar, Gullinbursti, at his feet.[118]

The panels of the uppermost register were smaller in size than the others, but the central image of the *Viking Ship* (fig. 78), less than three feet in height and width, moving across a perilous ocean would have resonated with the patron and viewers already invested in the idea of Viking journeys to Newport. The original cartoon for this light was *Voyage to Vinland the Good* (fig. 82) for which Burne-Jones may have used a model of a triple-masted wooden boat (fig. 83) as the basis for the ship's design.[119] The strong narrative conveyed by the wooden ship traveling on a roiling sea, revealed within the confines of the small glass panel of the *Viking Ship* (fig. 78), is intensified by the contrast between the dark lines of the grid and the intense colors of the boat and the sea. The image was free of the mythic Norse

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[118] The attributes of these gods are identified in Malcolm Bell, *Sir Edward Burne-Jones: A Record and Review* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1899), 82.

[119] The photograph of the model ship, which the artist later used for his 1891–98 painting *The Sirens*, is reproduced in Sir Philip Burne-Jones, "Notes on Some Unfinished Works of Sir Edward Burne-Jones, BT, *Magazine of Art* (1900): 162. The connection with the Vinland project is put forth in Constantin Ramantanin, "W.A.S. Benson and Sir Edward Burne-Jones: A Working Friendship" (Master's thesis, Bard Graduate Center, 1999), 32–33.

iconography one would need to decode, save for the representation on the ship's sail of the boar, Gullinbursti, as a talisman ensuring a safe passage.[120] However, the sagas on which these images were based did not make any reference to the pagan imagery of a magic boar, possibly because the rovers were themselves recent converts to Christianity.[121] The inclusion of the boar on the ship's sail granting supernatural power, then, must have been part of the dramatic effect Morris and Burne-Jones wanted. The figurehead of an open-mouthed beast on the ship in this glass panel calls to mind the stone figurehead in the form of an open-mouthed bestial creature that Peabody had had carved and placed on the northeast corner of Vinland's facade (fig. 64).

Years later, Morris & Co. created miniature reproductions of the panels from the Vinland windows and included them in their *Catalogue of Designs* (figs. 84, 85); they would then be available as models to potential clients in England interested in commissioning stained-glass projects.[122] As noted earlier, the stained-glass assemblage at Vinland served as a prototype for a window that the firm installed in a house in Folkestone, Kent, in 1913, long after Morris, Burne-Jones, and Wolfe herself had died (fig. 77). There is one significant change in this later version of the panels: however, the lights with the two scrolls Morris designed with translations of Viking aphorisms written on them were replaced by images of the Sun and Moon on either side of the *Viking Ship*. This change of imagery reinforces the

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[120] Wildman, *Waking Dreams*, 292.

[121] I wish to thank literary scholar Paul Acker for bringing this point to my attention; e-mail to author, November 29, 2012.

[122] Copies of their *Catalogue of Designs* are preserved today in such repositories as the Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery; photographic reproductions of individual images from the Morris & Co. catalogues are in the Sanford and Helen Berger Collection files at the Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, San Marino, CA.

idea that Morris's original design of the lights with the two scrolls was conceived for the site-specific space of Vinland.

It is difficult to imagine the extent to which Wolfe or her visitors would have been able to identify the attributes of individual gods, or would have been aware of details of the exploits of the Viking explorers delineated on the stained glass. Yet if Vinland was meant to allude to the Touro Park tower and to the fictive history of Newport, to which not everyone subscribed, the impact of the monumental figures in stained glass, takes the narrative of these legends to a new level of storytelling. The panels would have brought the viewer literally face-to-face with the heroes who may have made it all happen. The drama that Morris and Wolfe each wanted was expressed in this rendering, in the size of the figures and their location on the stairway landing, and in the brilliant colors of the glass, which operated as a stage light at Vinland.

The Skeleton in Armor in the Dining Room

In her 1944 recollections of the intellectual and social mores of Newport, Maude Howe Elliott speaks of changes that took place in the resort in the early 1880s, following the completion of McKim, Mead & White's Newport Casino. Among these developments was a shift in the rituals of entertaining whereby "The old high teas faded out of the picture and late elaborate dinners took their place."[123] In the decades of America's Gilded Age, dining rooms often served as more than spaces dedicated to meals and socialization: Frequently elaborately designed and decorated, they became quasi-public spaces within private interiors, reinforcing

[123] Howe Elliott, *This Was My Newport*, 157.

the elite status of their owners.[124] Cases in point: the dining rooms in Newport's Chateau-sur-Mer (1871) and Kingscote (1882), and in London, the Peacock Room at 49 Prince's Gate (1876–77).

In its original incarnation, the room that served as Vinland's dining room was situated on the east side of the house with bay windows overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. It had as its aesthetic centerpiece Walter's Crane monumental frieze, *The Skeleton in Armor*.[125] It was a work which was to link its patron with the resort's mythic past, as much as did the stained-glass Viking windows on the stairway landing nearby. The frieze, three feet in height, extended around the circumference of the dining room above its wood paneling. It incorporated verses from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's ballad of the same title in the form of runic lettering running along the top and bottom registers of each scene (fig. 86). In wealthy homes it was not uncommon to embellish the walls of dining rooms with paneling and works of art, including decorative friezes, to engage the sensibilities of the host and guests. In Vinland's dining room, the images and text of the frieze created the effect of a continuous narrative (figs. 87), dramatizing scenes about the origins of Newport.

While the stained-glass panels in the stairway landing cast a dramatic focus on a Eurocentric interpretation of the sagas of Norse adventurers and on the deities of their Viking heritage, the Crane frieze recounted Newport's legend from a different source. The frieze was again the work of a British artist creating décor for Vinland at a remove from the site of the

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[124] Mark Girouard (*Victorian Country House*, 203–4) characterizes the dining rooms of English country houses, an architectural type with which Vinland has been frequently compared, as often some of the most expensively decorated and most imposing of rooms.

[125] See Anthony Crane, "Walter Crane's *Skeleton in Armour*," *Nineteenth Century* 12, no. 1 (1993): 18–23.

commission. Crane began painting the work in Rome, and completed it in London. However, the subject of the commission was one firmly rooted in the landscape of New England, having originated in Longfellow's 1841 ballad.[126]

In contrast to the medieval Norse sagas Rafn interpreted and Morris later translated, Longfellow's ballad, "The Skeleton in Armor," was a nineteenth-century American iteration of the myth of the Viking discovery of New England and the building of the tower. As such, it was consistent with Longfellow's pattern of composing verse generally concerned, to a substantial degree, with New England's history. In the first edition of the poem, Longfellow commented on Rafn's assertions about the lineage of the tower in Touro Park: "I will not enter into a discussion of the point. It [the legend of the tower] is sufficiently well established for the purpose of a ballad."[127] In the ballad, a Viking warrior sets sail to the unknown land that became Newport after gaining the affection of his princess lady love, despite the firm rejection he suffers at the hands of her father, Hildebrand:

> She was a Prince's child
> I but a Viking wild,
> And though she blushed and smiled,
> I was discarded![128]

They embark on a perilous journey across the sea, pursued by Hildebrand and his warriors; yet the two were able to escape the clutches of their pursuers and land in the New World:

> Three weeks we westward bore,
> And when was o'er,
> Cloud-like we saw the shore
> Stretching to leeward;

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[126] Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "The Skeleton in Armor," *Ballads and Other Poems* (Cambridge, MA: John Owen, 1842), 29–41.

[127] Introduction to ibid., 29–31.

[128] Ibid., 37.

> There for my lady's bower
> Built I the lofty tower,
> Which, to this very hour,
> Stands looking seaward.[129]

The last four lines of this stanza and one line near the end of the ballad commemorating the princess's death, "Under that tower she lies," are Longfellow's only references to the tower with which the action of the entire ballad would become conflated.[130] The poet's primary focus is instead on the romance between the Viking warrior and the princess for whom he erects the tower, and on the grief that would eventually drive him to fall on his spear following her death, years after they had settled in what became part of New England.

As noted in the last chapter, Longfellow's poem was widely circulated and became identified not only with the proliferating legends about the tower, but also with Newport's cultural patrimony. The ballad's impact would extend to the early decades of the twentieth century and, as we have noted, inspire the staging of local processions and other festivals based on Longfellow's narrative of the not-soon-forgotten Viking warrior.[131] In addition to the copy of the ballad with a frontispiece of the tower that Wolfe preserved in her personal scrapbook, she may well have been one of the purchasers of an elaborate illustrated edition of "The Skeleton in Armor" that was released with much fanfare in 1877, several years before Wolfe embarked on building Vinland.[132] The author of a review of this new edition of the

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[129] Ibid., 39.

[130] Ibid., 40.

[131] See "'The Viking' Fine Newport Pageant," *New York Times*, August 30, 1922, and Howe Elliott, *This Was My Newport*, 80: "The Legend inspired one of the finest musical and dramatic fetes that Newport ever saw—the pageant of 'The Viking,' arranged and set to music by members of the art association and presented on their grounds a few years ago."

[132] The new edition was Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *The Skeleton in Armor...With Illustrations* (Boston: James R. Osgood & Co., 1877). We have no evidence that Wolfe

ballad stated, "We may regard this as a formal investiture of the ballad in its title to be thought the only acceptable legend attached to its subject."[133] Wolfe's attraction to Longfellow's ballad embraced a popular interest in collecting traditional ballads at this time and also an investment in the notion that Newport had a history earlier than that recorded by its colonial forebears.[134] All of this must have contributed to the impetus for Crane's commission.

In his memoirs, Crane acknowledges that Wolfe provided him with a photograph of the tower to use as a model, and describes how he worked with the four lengths of the frieze of about twenty-four feet each, thus making the work portable for eventual installation at Vinland:

> I schemed a continuous sort of decorative picture, the incidents succeeding one another without formal break or division into panels, and then painted the frieze … in flat oil colour, each length being on a continuous roll of canvas worked upon wooden rollers around which it was looped, and could be run forward or backwards by handles affixed to the same.[135]

What Crane neglects to mention is the crucial fact that he took some liberties with Longfellow's narrative in his representation of some of the scenes he painted.

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owned it, but it certainly would have been available to her. James R. Osgood's connection to New England's architectural culture, including his publishing of the illustrated weekly *The American Architect and Building News* beginning in the centennial year of 1876, is documented in Kevin D. Murphy's introduction to William E. Barry, *Pen Sketches of Old Houses*, ed. Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr. (1874; repr., Portland, ME: Maine Preservation, 2002), i–xv.

[133] "Recent Literature," *Atlantic Monthly* 39, no. 231 (January 1877): 114.

[134] For literature on the collecting and its literary and social implications, see Sigrid Reiuwerts, "'The Genuine Ballads of the People': F. J. Childs and the Ballad Cause," *Journal of Folklore Research* 13, nos. 1–3 (1994): 1–34.

[135] Crane, *An Artist's Reminiscences*, 240.

One most significant change was Crane's decision to incorporate depictions of a series of towers as a prelude to the crucial one that the lone warrior in Longfellow's ballad constructs for his bride. The presence of additional images of towers such as in the Old World (figs. 87), before the two protagonists embark on their voyage to the New, serves to obfuscate the line of narrative originally created by the poet. If one had been seated at dinner in the dining room at Vinland during Wolfe's lifetime, it might have been possible to assume that any of the towers depicted on the frieze was the Newport tower. For the observer, the ritual of witnessing an ongoing depiction of towers remained central, even if the warrior's construction of one tower may have been something the artist was trying to undermine in the imagery he created. In her 2010 essay on Crane's *The Skeleton in Armor*, Morna O'Neill points to the depiction of Phrygian bonnets or caps of liberty, worn by laborers building the Newport tower (fig. 88), figures whom Crane has inserted into the action of Longfellow's narrative, in effect equating symbols of revolution with his socialism.[136] O'Neill's thesis is that Crane's engagement in this decorative project extended far beyond a desire to satisfy a wealthy Newport patron or to depict an American legend about the origins of its past. Rather, it may have served to "exploit the status of the dining room" as a place of the social elevation and engagement of the wealthy.[137] Another possible hypothesis about Crane's changes in the narrative structure of the ballad and his inclusion of a series of towers might have been an attempt on the part of the artist to create what he perceived as a more visually compelling series of images than he felt was provided by the stanzas in Longfellow's verse.

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[136] O'Neill, "Paintings from Nowhere," 151–54. See also O'Neill, *Walter Crane,* 135.

[137] O'Neill, "Paintings from Nowhere," 150.

Whatever his underlying motives were, Crane received much celebrity for this, his first American commission. He exhibited segments of the frieze at the 1883 Summer Exhibition of the Grosvenor Gallery in London, before he sent them to Newport and, later, displayed related studies at the first exhibition of the Arts & Craft Society at London's New Gallery in 1888.[138] In the November 1883 issue of *Art Amateur*, Crane also published reproductions of some of his preparatory line drawings (fig. 89) for the frieze intended for Wolfe's dining room, prior to his sending the actual painted rolls to Newport. The fact of the publication of these images in *Art Amateur* was reportedly much to the dismay of his patron, who nonetheless kept copies of these pages from the magazine in her private album.[139] One must infer that Wolfe's objection to Crane's promoting his designs for Vinland stemmed from the fact that she intended them to be viewed exclusively or at least first in the space of her dining room for which they had been commissioned. In a conciliatory letter to Wolfe of October 1883, Crane wrote: "I am glad that you have been able to re-consider your objection to the sketches of the frieze appearing….The editor of 'Art Amateur' whom I met at Sir Fred[k] Leighton's here in London….was desirous of obtaining sketches of the frieze I have executed for you & as not only being an important work in itself, but interesting also as being destined

[138] A reviewer of the exhibition at the Grosvenor Gallery called the segments of the frieze "admirable decoration, full of romantic pathos"; see "The Grosvenor Gallery, Second and Concluding Notice," *Athenaeum* (May 12, 1883): 609. The studies that Crane exhibited are now in the repositories of the Delaware Art Museum and the Beinecke Library at Yale University.

[139] The drawings were reproduced in a supplement to *Art Amateur* 9, no. 6 (November 1883).

for an American home."[140] In 1885, Crane also designed four stained-glass panels, possibly for the library, including images of Adam and Eve and the Tree of Knowledge.[141]

Crane had met Wolfe in London when she visited his studio, although he would not visit Vinland until 1891, four years after her death. He would be accompanied on this visit by Robert Peabody and later commented that he found the frieze appearing to be what he perceived as "lower in tone" than it had in Europe, although he acknowledged that it was very suitably placed over the plain oak paneling.[142] (Perhaps his reaction was a response to the reflection of natural light in the dining room at Vinland, which must have differed from the light in his studio in Rome.) Crane also noted in his memoirs that while he did not believe in the legend of the tower, "the States were not wealthy in antiquities, and it seems cruel to deprive Newport of the interest of such a promising relic."[143]

It is open to debate as to whether Wolfe herself was aware of Crane's socialist motives in painting the scenes of the frieze as he did. From what one knows of her life and her decisions, one may infer that Wolfe may well have been cognizant of Crane's efforts at subversion, but approved of the massive canvas in the dining room and its fundamental performative function of storytelling. When Vinland was renovated and enlarged at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, the room that was Wolfe's dining room remained intact with the frieze, but was moved to the western side of the house facing the main

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[140] Walter Crane to Catharine Lorillard Wolfe, October 10, 1883, "Vinland Scrapbook," 37.

[141] Walter Crane to Catharine Lorillard Wolfe, March 21, 1885, "Vinland Scrapbook," 93. In this letter, Crane also asks Wolfe to photograph what must have been the completed frieze in the dining room and send it to him.

[142] Crane, *An Artist's Reminiscences,* 375.

[143] Ibid., 240.

entrance. Its function changed at that point from that of a dining room to a study, and later to a library (fig. 90). Crane's frieze remained in its designated space for more than a century, until it was dismantled in 1987 and sold at auction to unidentified buyers.[144]

In its original space in Wolfe's dining room, the drama unfolding on the frieze would have played an integral part in the ritual of dining at Vinland. It would have provided for the social interplay and interchange that the patron must have envisioned at the time she commissioned the frieze, inevitably eliciting dinner table conversation about Newport's claims to a Viking past. Thus the presence of the frieze would have served to connect the experience of the guests to the voyages depicted on the panels that encircled the room.

The Life Line in the Library

Unlike Wolfe's dining room, which would be moved to the eastern side of the house when the building was enlarged by subsequent owners, the original library at Vinland—one of the two rooms with bay windows facing the ocean on either side of the drawing room, according to the plan published in 1887 (fig. 55)—no longer exists. Our knowledge that Wolfe brought Winslow Homer's 1884 *The Life Line* (fig. 16) to her Newport house and placed it in in the library derives from George Sheldon's 1887 reference to it as "the most conspicuous painting" in that room.[145] Although we are not sure of the exact location of *The Life Line*'s initial installation in Vinland's library, it probably hung above a mantel facing a view of the ocean. This hypothesis seems the most compelling because the bay window at the far eastern end of the room would not have accommodated any painting. The picture, then, would have

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[144] Sale cat., *Nineteenth Century European Paintings, Drawings and Watercolors*, Christie's East, New York, October 28, 1987, lot 236, 249–52.

[145] Sheldon, *Artistic Country-Seats*, vol. 2, 186.

had to have been placed on another wall of the room. A viewer looking at Homer's painting would then presumably have his or her back at least partially turned away from the ocean.

As we have noted earlier, it was in April 1884 that Wolfe embarked on what became the high profile acquisition of this painting in New York.[146] In many ways, Wolfe would not have appeared to fit the profile of a typical buyer of such a picture. As Sarah Burns noted in *Inventing the Modern Artist* (1996), Homer's stormy seas paintings customarily appealed to financial speculators and businessmen; and Wolfe, the female tobacco heiress, philanthropist, and collector of the works of European Salon painters, was "neither wrecker nor rescuer."[147] In making this claim about Wolfe's not being the usual fit for such a purchase, Burns relies on her larger premise that "Homer's pictures were about nature, and—paradoxically, it may seem—this was precisely what constituted the ground they shared with the world of money and money-making.…Homer's paintings, which concerned themselves with nature's rhythms and forces, enacted the same drama of natural law as that which for better or worse dictated rise, fall, and change in the often tumultuous arena of American commerce."[148]

The final chapter of this dissertation will consider how *The Life Line*, perhaps among Homer's stormy seas pictures, would have been appealing to this female patron. What is important in the context of *this* chapter, however, is the fact of the presence of this marine painting in her library at Vinland, where it would have been on display not far from representations of Viking gods and human sea rovers. In Wolfe's house, it served to forge a

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[146] "Fine Arts. The Exhibition at the National Academy Which Opens To-Day," *New York Herald*, April 7, 1884, 8.

[147] Sarah Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 199.

[148] Ibid., 191–92.

connection between the Norse protagonists and the imperiled Americans, a man and a woman, who were the central figures of Homer's painting along with the raging sea. Unlike the Morris/Burne-Jones Viking windows and the Crane frieze, Homer's *The Life Line* was not a scene offering an interpretation of a long gone era in Newport's past. Instead, it depicted an incident of a rescue at sea that could and often did take place in the world which the painter and the patron both inhabited. Winslow Homer began work on the conceptualization of *The Life Line* while staying in Atlantic City on the New Jersey shore.[149] It is significant that Wolfe brought to Vinland—a picture that connected the drama of the sea's power—to the locale of a watering place.

The Homer painting elaborated on the threat of the danger of the sea, a theme central to the action of the narratives of Viking warriors and explorers, which helped form Vinland's interior program. In a substantive way, then, Wolfe's decision to place *The Life Line* in her house changed and extended Vinland's thematic aspect, connecting medieval deities and personages to present-day New Englanders. The painting's narrative, whatever its time frame, functioned in relation to the representations of Newport's possible Viking past, which the house commemorated. Winslow Homer's male hero whose identity we do not know can be linked to the intrepid seamen who journeyed across perilous seas to the land that became Newport, represented on Morris and Burne-Jone's stained-glass windows. Homer's seaman and his brave striving against great odds illustrated in the painting can be also be considered as thematically connected to the career of the tragic sea warrior who rescued his princess and discovered Newport, the dominant figure in Crane's *The Skeleton in Armor*.

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[149] Nicolai Cikovsky, Jr., and Franklin Kelly, *Winslow Homer* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 123.

As we will explore further, Wolfe's decision to hang this picture there was the right fit for Vinland's interior, even if its aesthetic appeared to differ from much of the décor of the house. *The Life Line* was a highly ambitious work which, in its placement at Vinland, was able to reference and amplify the dynamics of scenes articulated both in its rooms, on its staircase, and on its massive stone facade facing the ocean. In tandem with the projects created for Wolfe by Morris, Burne-Jones, and Crane, the Homer painting helped to form a visual counterpart to the architecture that Peabody & Stearns designed, resulting in what was unquestionably for the patron, a complete work of art. These spaces—the stair hall, the dining room, and the library—each had major works, dramatic narratives that were thematically interconnected, aesthetically ambitious, and contributed to Catharine Lorillard Wolfe's claim for status on both artistic and historical grounds.

CHAPTER FOUR

Case Studies: Pierre-Auguste Cot and Winslow Homer, Site-Specific Aesthetics in the City and the Resort

Among Catharine Lorillard Wolfe's holdings were two paintings: *The Storm* (1880; fig. 23), a work by the French painter Pierre-Auguste Cot; and *The Life Line* (1884; fig. 16), by the American artist Winslow Homer. Both pictures were completed in the same decade, but otherwise there would seem to be little reason to consider them together other than the fact that they were owned by the same collector. However, despite the narrative and stylistic differences that mark the two pictures, each reveals a male and female provocatively engaged with the other while facing a challenge from the natural world and suggests Wolfe's deep interest in the theme. Whereas *The Storm* is an academic rendition of a scene situated outside the parameters of a recognizable place and time, *The Life Line* is a gripping, realistic rendition of a disaster the artist might have witnessed. Cot's figures seek refuge in the wake of a possible storm; Homer's protagonists are struggling to survive in the aftermath of a disaster at sea. As scholars have suggested, underlying the imagery of each painting was the artist's attempt to address issues of sexuality and, in the case of the Homer, issues of social class as well. One was unquestionably a safe purchase for Wolfe, the other a bold daring acquisition.

Wolfe bought these two works—as was the case with all of the objects of her patronage—with designated settings in mind for their display, using each as a component of her articulation of self. *The Storm* hung on the walls of her New York brownstone along with her other academic and genre paintings and, at Wolfe's death, was transferred with the rest of her New York collection to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where it remains on view and a

popular favorite. *The Life Line* became an integral part of Wolfe's assemblage of art and design at Vinland, where she intended it to remain *in situ*; however, it is now a highly valued work in the collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

This dissertation has sought to demonstrate that Wolfe was able to embrace specific aesthetics, methods of patronage, and project a persona appropriate to each community she inhabited, whether the urban environment of her primary residence, or in the thriving watering place where she would build Vinland and hope to operate with greater freedom. Thus far, this study has been anchored to the larger significance of the urban and resort sites of Wolfe's activities as patron to construct an interpretative framework for understanding decisions she made about pictures, architecture, and decorative arts. Despite the relatively paucity of archival documentation—the fact that her New York property no longer stands, and Vinland's architecture and interior have undergone significant alteration—each of the previous chapters re-created (where possible) and contextualized the spaces that marked her artistic preferences.

This culminating chapter provides an in-depth study of *The Storm* and *The Life Line*, to bring to the fore the circumstances of Wolfe's acquisitions and to understand how each work functioned for her, as well as assess how they did or did not deal with issues of gender and class. One must keep in mind that the overt theme in each, especially in Homer's painting, is the need for rescue. Nonetheless, this focus on a single woman's ownership of two sexually entangled couples will help frame a further consideration of Wolfe's use of art and design as a means of positioning herself in the two different places and spaces she occupied.

Case Study: Cot's *The Storm*

Wolfe bought the first of the two pictures we are considering, Pierre-Auguste Cot's *The Storm*, in 1880, directly from the artist, although we lack details about the transaction. Two young people, each simply and scantily clothed, are the focus of the painting. They are surrounded by an undefined natural setting removed from any traces of the civilized world, or from any recognizable temporal or geographic indicators, save for uncultivated bushes and shrubs in the foreground of the picture. Signs of ominous lightning and thunder are visible in the upper-right register of the canvas. The male and female figures, running in step with one another, are shielded by the girl's free-flowing petticoat, a garment inadequate to protect them from the full force of the wind and rain heralding an impending storm. Their visible comfort with one other mitigates the fright each might otherwise be experiencing.

Cot, a Salon painter, highly regarded among admirers of French Academic art, had been a student of both William Bouguereau and Alexandre Cabanel, Salon painters whom Wolfe had patronized earlier. Well-known as a portraitist by the time of Wolfe's engagement with him, Cot had made his official debut nearly two decades before, in 1863, exhibiting at the Salon in the same year as the groundbreaking Salon de Refusés.[1] Wolfe probably bought *The Storm* at the Salon of 1880 or lent it for exhibition to the Salon that year, before having the picture transported from Paris to New York, where it was placed with the rest of her collection.

Her decision to purchase *The Storm* has been continuously linked to the influence of her cousin John Wolfe, another of Cot's patrons. In 1873, he acquired the artist's *Springtime*

[I] See James F. Peck, ed., *In the Studios of Paris: William Bouguereau and His American Students* (New Haven: Philbrook Museum of Art, in association with Yale University Press, 2006), 124, and James Henry Rubin, "Who Was Pierre-Auguste Cot?" *Nineteenth Century* 6, no. 1 (Spring 1980): 36–39.

(fig. 91), a picture of a pair of lovers cavorting on a swing, in a similarly unidentifiable natural setting. The actions of the two in *Springtime* are far more coyly provocative than those of the pair running away from the storm in the later painting. *Springtime* was in John Wolfe's collection in New York at the time of Wolfe's purchase of the *Storm*; he would sell his Cot two years later, in 1882.[2] Critics at the time of Wolfe's acquisition of *The Storm* went so far as to claim that although her picture had been painted seven years after *Springtime*, it was designed to serve as a "pendant" to the earlier work.[3] Writing a century later, in 1979, James Henry Rubin argues that the fact the two pictures were not conceived at the same time precludes their serving as pendants to each, although Rubin labels them "spiritual pendants," since "the success of the earlier picture led to the creation of the later one."[4]

Viewing *Springtime* in John Wolfe's house, among an assemblage of large-scale works by such artists as Bouguereau and Léon Bonnat, the writer Earl Shinn remarked that the "effect is like that of some cornerstone of the Luxembourg Gallery."[5] Shinn went on to describe the Cot:

> It is a life-size boy and girl, in the most dangerous and inflammable of the teens, dangling in a swing among the trees of some Greek garden. A bold plunge into antiquity and primitive idyl [sic], combined with a truly modern French consciousness of the philosophy of voluptuousness, have made

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[2] *Springtime* is listed as no. 50 in *Catalogue of John Wolfe's Gallery of Valuable Paintings* (New York: George A. Leavitt, 1882), 17.

[3] For a representation of the view that the works were to be seen as "pendants," see the announcement of Wolfe's acquisition in Montezuma, "My Notebook," *Art Amateur* 4, no. 1 (December 1880): 2.

[4] James Henry Rubin, "Pierre Auguste Cot's 'The Storm,'" *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 14 (1979): 193–94.

[5] Earl Shinn, *The Art Treasures of America: Being the Choicest Works of Art in the Public and Private Collections of North America* (Philadelphia: George Barrie, 1879–80), vol. 1, 54.

> the fortunes of paintings such as this….The cunning eagerness with which the maid looks right into the boy's eye is modern in meaning and antique in dress; hence the acceptability of this Arcadian idyl, peppered with French spice.[6]

This engagement of the sexes, and the arch forwardness on the part of the girl on Cot's canvas is made acceptable for Shinn by virtue of the fact that the scene appears cast in antiquity or in some unidentified Arcadia, as it would have been for many collectors of the time. Wolfe may have been influenced by him in the decision to acquire the picture; but with *The Storm*, as we have seen with several of her New York pictures, there were allusions in the painting to literary sources not fully clarified by the artist.

In the case of *The Storm*, from the time of its display at the Salon in 1880 there have been a series of unresolved assertions about the literary source of the picture. Some have declared Cot's model for the young couple as stemming from the romance of *Daphnis and Chloe*, the circa AD 200 work of the Greek writer Longus. Others claimed it was inspired by Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's 1788 novel *Paul et Virginie* (*Paul and Virginia*).[7] Alternatively, the picture could have been the result of a conflation of both sources on the part of the artist. The Greek and French works had become cult novels by the nineteenth century and were translated into many languages, including English. It is likely that Wolfe herself was familiar with both stories and very possibly had read Saint-Pierre's novel, which was circulated in hundreds of editions in France and was translated into English multiple times,

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[6] Ibid.

[7] See Longus, "Daphnis and Chloe," in *Greek Fiction: Callirhoe, Daphnis and Chloe, Letters of Chion*, ed. Helen Morales, 125–210 (London: Penguin Books, 2011), and Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Paul and Virginia*, trans. John Donovan (1982; repr., Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1989).

including sixty printings in England and twenty-five in America before 1900.[8] Images of the story of the two innocent lovers also appeared in many guises in America, from engravings to illustrations on lamps to wallpaper to decorative arts and porcelain, some of which must have been accessible to Wolfe herself.

Longus's *Daphnis and Chloe* is a pagan pastoral idyll about two innocent foundlings, Daphnis, who becomes a shepherd and Chloe, a goatherd. Living in the bucolic countryside outside Lesbos on the Aegean Sea, they grow up from childhood "inseparable and did everything together, tending their flocks side by side."[9] The work constitutes a rite of passage charting the development of the purity as well as the sexual reality of the love between the two protagonists. Longus declares, "There is no remedy, no cure, for Love, drink, no food, no spells to chant, nothing—only kisses and embraces and lying down naked together."[10]

In *Paul and Virginia*, Saint-Pierre writes his own pastoral idyll with a narrative that initially pays a debt to Longus, but includes an underlying message of the danger of corrupt European values spoiling the pastoral world. One cannot but agree with literary scholar, Angelica Goodden, writing in 1982, "That tradition presented by eighteenth-century paintings, with Boucher-like doings in a Watteau-like setting, has no place in his novel."[11] Moreover, Longus's pagan setting would become a Christian one, and the Arcadian Lesbos would become Mauritius, a bucolic tropical island in the Indian Ocean, known during Saint-Pierre's life as the Île de France. Early in the work, Saint-Pierre's narrator describes the

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[8] See John Donovan, introduction, in Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Paul and Virginia,* 9.

[9] Longus, "Daphnis and Chloe," 141.

[10] Ibid., 159.

[11] Angelica Goodden, "Tradition and Innovation in 'Paul et Virginie': A Thematic Study," *Modern Language Review* 77, no. 3 (July 1982): 559.

innocence of the still uncorrupted twosome, who grow up within the secure confines of the natural world, far from the customs of mainland Europe:

> You Europeans…cannot conceive that such understanding and such pleasure can be given by Nature….Paul and Virginia had no clocks or almanacks, no books of chronology, history or philosophy. They regulated their lives according to the cycles of Nature. They knew the hours of the day by the shadows of the trees, the seasons by the times when they flower or fruit, and the years by the number of their crops.[12]

The scene in Cot's painting appears to be an illustration of the following passage in *Paul and Virginia*:

> One day, as I coming down from the top of this mount, I noticed Virginia running from the end of the garden towards the house, the back of her petticoat thrown up over her head as protection against a sudden shower. From a distance I thought she was alone, but as I came forward to give her my arm I saw she was holding Paul's—he was entirely covered by the same canopy—and that they were laughing, both of them, to be sheltering together under an umbrella of their own invention.[13]

However, this moment in Saint-Pierre's novel takes place when the two central figures are young children, not the lovers they became in Cot's painting; nor is the "sudden shower" described in this passage anywhere near as ominous as the impending storm in the painting appears to be. This was a strategic shift on the part of artist, allowing him to sexualize the scene while justifying doing so on literary grounds as with *Springtime*, where Cot used a vague allusion to the pastoral idyll to sanitize the interchange between the two figures on the swing.

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[12] Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Paul and Virginia*, 69–70.

[13] Ibid., 47.

Saint-Pierre's novel *Paul and Virginia* would culminate in the tragedy of Virginia's death in a storm at sea, when she returns from France to be reunited with Paul. Her modesty in refusing to remove her clothing prevents her from allowing herself to be rescued. With the doleful event of her drowning, leading to Paul's subsequent death from grief, Saint-Pierre departs from the mechanism of the classical pastoral to reveal a strong overriding gravitas. Nevertheless, Cot's picture remains within the traditional pastoral genre, for there is no apparent foreshadowing in *The Storm* of the tragic death of the two protagonists.

The extent of Wolfe's involvement in the conceptualization of Cot's painting and its reference to elements of the novels of either Longus or Saint-Pierre depends upon whether or not she did actually commission the painting. Even if she had purchased a completed canvas and had had no input in the choice of theme, Wolfe would have been savvy enough to understand what the artist accomplished in painting the pastoral scenes *Springtime* (fig. 91) and, seven years later, *The Storm* (fig. 23), and she would have perceived the difference between them. Yet whatever its literary roots, the sentimental subject of *The Storm* and its controlled eroticism, especially when compared to her cousin's more slyly provocative painting, would have fit in with the type of parlor work popular among her peers in New York. As in many academic paintings, *The Storm*'s high-gloss finish serves to offset the eroticism of two barely clad young people escaping a projected cloud burst.

Even at the time of its completion, there were critics who perceived the painting as pandering to bourgeois taste.[14] In the century that followed, *The Storm* would fall victim to a good deal of critical disdain. One such volley was directed at the imagery of the lovers: "For all the signposts such as billowing drapery and bodily attitudes pointing out that the figures

[14] See Peck, *In the Studios of Paris*, 126.

are supposed to be running, there is no expression of flight. The lovers remain frozen forever on tiptoe."[15] Another critic comments, "Whereas *Springtime* is coquettish, *The Storm* is more titillating. The female figure in each painting is exquisitely enticing, yet exists in an eternal limbo between reality and fantasy."[16] There is a disparity between these two reviewers—one sees the picture as static, the other as titillating—attesting to the fact that Wolfe had chosen a picture that could be alternatively read as inert or sexual. However retrograde its aesthetic may now appear to be, Wolfe's acquisition of Cot's *The Storm* provided her with a thin rendition of a somewhat sexual theme fitting into the larger taste she had for eroticized but acceptable imagery.

Case Study: Winslow Homer's *The Life Line*

Wolfe's interest in the genre of marine painting, particularly of Newport subjects, must have motivated her purchase in 1877 of *A Rocky Coast* (fig. 92), a watercolor she acquired directly from the artist, William Trost Richards (1833–1905), who was then painting local scenes in Newport and in nearby resorts. Earlier in the decade, Richards had confined himself to painting small watercolors, few larger than 9 by 14 inches, which were overshadowed by the larger scale of the watercolors of such artists as Louis Comfort Tiffany.[17] After the 1876 Centennial, Richards became increasingly drawn to coastal subjects and began to enlarge the scale of his work; he also changed the material on which he painted to highly textured and

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[15] John Canaday, *The Artist [as a Social Critic]*, Metropolitan Seminars in Art, Portfolio 11 (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1959), 25.

[16] Peck, *In the Studios of Paris*, 126.

[17] Kevin J. Avery et al, *American Drawings and Watercolors in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; London: Yale University Press, 2002), 269.

warm toned paper, thus producing more marketable watercolors.[18] *A Rocky Coast* shows waves breaking against the formidable rocks that erupt at the edge of what could have been Newport's shoreline, but was identified by the artist's friend and frequent patron, George Whitney, as a scene depicting "The Pulpit," presumably Pulpit Rock at Nahant, Massachusetts.[19] There are no human figures in the watercolor. It measures 28 1/8 inches by 36 1/4 inches, making it only slightly smaller in size than Homer's painting, which measures 28 5/ 8 by 44 3/4 inches and which Wolfe would purchase seven years later.

At the time of Wolfe's purchase of *A Rocky Coast*, the artist wrote to Whitney that "Principal events of the week have been another visit from Mrs. Astor and a visit from Miss Wolfe of New York, and they each bought a drawing! Hurray!"[20] The fact that he sold pictures to such prominent citizens as Mrs. Astor or Wolfe herself is indicative of Richard's growing reputation in the resort. Owning *A Rocky Coast*, the work of an artist who was building a reputation for painting scenes of the Newport coast, would no doubt have been a safe and site-appropriate choice for any collector there. This seascape eventually became part of the New York holdings Wolfe left to the Metropolitan Museum of Art; however, we do not know whether she ever displayed it in her first Newport house near Touro Park; nor is there any record that it was ever hung at Vinland.[21] Nonetheless, this earlier acquisition must be

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid., 270. Avery points out that William Trost Richards was known to paint similar scenes in Newport.

[20] William Trost Richards to George Whitney, October 1, 1877, cited in Linda Ferber, *William Trost Richards: American Landscape & Marine Painter, 1833–1905* (Brooklyn: Brooklyn Museum of Art, 1973), 82.

[21] It is worth noting that *A Rocky Coast* is not listed in Earl Shinn's inventory of Wolfe's New York holdings in *Art Treasures of America* (1878–80). One may infer that Richards's

considered as a small, easy step in the direction of what was her later bolder decision to invest in a major seascape of far greater power, topicality and drama.

Winslow Homer's *The Life Line* is considered today an iconic work of American art. While the painting is cited in nearly every survey of American art, and in the Homer literature, few scholars acknowledge the identity of the picture's first owner, Wolfe. If they do reference Wolfe, they do not speak of the work's original installation at Vinland. Moreover, the few critics who discuss Wolfe's accomplishments as a prominent Gilded Age patron, or those who reference the innovations of Vinland's architecture and interior, do not mention that *The Life Line* had ever belonged to her.

In part this latter omission stems from the fact that Wolfe did not already own the picture when Vinland first opened its doors and was the subject of local publicity in the resort in September 1883. However, Wolfe's ownership of *The Life Line* played a profoundly significant role for her, in the city where she purchased it, and in the resort where she chose to hang it. Her ownership of Homer's painting serves to straddle both of her personas: her identity as a formidable cultural arbiter and player in New York and as an adventurous and creative patron in Newport.

Unlike the protagonists in Cot's painting who romp together against a pastoral backdrop, the two protagonists in Homer's painting are very much part of the nineteenth-century working-class world. The canvas reveals a member of a life brigade and the woman he is trying to save linked together in a visceral and intimate embrace over a raging sea. Only a fragile modern apparatus, the recently developed ship-to-shore breeches buoy, whose rope spans the width of the picture plane, prevents them from otherwise falling into the dangerous

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watercolor was on view in Newport—possibly in her first house and then at Vinland—before being transported to New York after Wolfe bought *The Life Line*.

waves crashing below and drowning. In the distance, we see traces of the shipwreck that sent this woman, who lies supine with her drenched clothing clinging to her body, dangling over the sea into the strong arms of the brave seaman who attempts to rescue her. She is identified only as a woman in need, and his face is covered by her windblown red scarf. As we see in an 1883 study for this painting (fig. 93), now in the collection of the Cooper Hewitt Museum in New York, Homer had originally planned to reveal the profile of the young strong male figure turning away from the imperiled unconscious woman he was striving to rescue. That it was not just his identity but his face as well that was obscured by the scarf serves to heighten the drama of the seaman as an anonymous hero in the final painting.

The mystery surrounding both figures, in addition to the setting of the raging ocean that threatens to engulf them, must have contributed to what amounted to Wolfe's impulsive decision to acquire the picture on the opening day of the annual exhibition of the National Academy of Design in April 1884. Another exhibition entry that received considerable praise for its dramatic content, a picture that Wolfe would not choose to buy, was Charles F. Ulrich's *In the Land of Promise* (1884).[22] Set in Castle Garden, later Battery Park, Ulrich's picture depicted a crowded room of newly arrived immigrants. One may infer that a painting whose subject was the promise of the New World for the stoically waiting immigrants would have been a work presumably easier to respond to than *The Life Line*.

Wolfe's purchase of Homer's marine painting was by every measure a bold move. From the outset, it was evident that *The Life Line* elicited a strong response from those who first saw it, leading one observer to remark: "A powerful Winslow Homer should not be forgotten, showing two people suspended above enormous waves on a rope. The visitor in the

[22] "Fine Arts. The Exhibition at the National Academy of Design," *New York Herald*, April 6, 1884, 10.

Academy exhibition will be well rewarded for his trouble."[23] A writer from the *New York Times* commented, "Mr. Winslow Homer has by no means exhausted his quiver at the Water-colors, but reserved for the Academy a large-sized arrow."[24] A few days after the exhibition's opening, a critic from Baltimore noted the painting's originality, power of execution, and vigor.[25] Another critic, this one from Chicago, wrote:

> Entering the north gallery one sees the picture that seems to many the gem of the entire collection, Homer Winslow's [sic] "The Life Line," which Miss Catherine Woolfe [sic], the distinguished art collector, purchased yesterday for $2,500….The subject is profoundly dramatic….It is seldom that such action in water is seen as is shown under the magic of Mr. Homer's brush.[26]

Not only did Wolfe's decision to buy this work by an American artist signify a dramatic shift in patronage from the European works she customarily favored, but the sum she paid, $2,500, was the most anyone had ever paid for a painting by Homer and remained a benchmark for more than a decade. We do know that Homer himself was very cognizant of the commercial aspect of his career as an artist, and worked assiduously to develop his own marketing strategies.[27] For nearly two decades prior to Wolfe's purchase of *The Life Line*, Homer's most admired oil was believed to have been the Civil War painting *Prisoners from*

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[23] "Best Works of Famous Artists. The Annual Exhibition of the National Archives of Design," *New York Journal* [?] (April 5[?], 1884), cited in Archives of the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

[24] "The Spring Academy," *New York Times*, April 5, 1884, 4.

[25] "Art and Artist in New York. Annual Exhibition of the Academy of Design—Baltimore Artists Represented," *The Sun* (Baltimore), April 8, 1884, 1.

[26] "Varnishing Day," *Daily Inter-Ocean* (Chicago), April 12, 1884, 16.

[27] See Kevin M. Murphy "Painting for Money: Winslow Homer as Entrepreneur," *Winterthur Portfolio* 37, no. 2/3 (Summer–Autumn 2002): 147–60.

the Front (1866). Although he had other successes in the intervening years and was greatly admired for his work in the medium of watercolor, he is known to have remarked about *Prisoners from the Front*, "I am sick of hearing about that picture."[28] His receipt from Wolfe of such an unexpected sum for *The Life Line*, and the nationwide publicity the transaction elicited, no doubt elevated the artist's standing.

Homer's decision in 1881 to travel to England and settle in Cullercoats, a fishing village, holiday resort, and colony for artists near where the River Tyne meets the North Sea, had sparked his appreciation of the struggle of the men in fishing boats as they constantly put themselves at risk. The poor reception of several of his paintings depicting the struggles of seamen and their anxious wives, particularly of a painting called *The Gale* (earlier, *The Coming Away of the Gale*), which he painted in 1883, the year before *The Life Line*, and did not sell, deeply disappointed him.[29] As a result, he began working in watercolor again on scenes of the rocks of Prouts Neck, Maine, in the summer of 1883, living in the Homer family's vacation cottage, The Ark. His compositions were based on the heroic and primordial confrontation with the sea on the part of fisherman and their families, which he had witnessed during his time in Cullercoats.[30] *The Life Line* was an effort to reestablish himself in an important composition in oil after the disappointment with the reception of *The Gale*; he began work on it in the summer or autumn of 1883.[31]

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[28] Winslow Homer cited in Nicolai Cikovsky, Jr., and Franklin Kelly, *Winslow Homer* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 223.

[29] Kathleen Foster, *Shipwreck!: Winslow Homer and* The Life Line (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2012), 58–60.

[30] Ibid., 60.

[31] Ibid., 63.

Wolfe's acquisition did not merely place a spotlight on Winslow Homer. She was news as well. The fact of her patronage at the start of the exhibition created a stir about her as one who would, it was hoped, foster a market for the work of American artists on the part of other elite American collectors. As noted previously, the *New York Herald* commented that "The Homer is well fitted to rank with the foreign paintings in Miss Wolfe's superb collection."[32] It also praised her "for this spontaneous recognition of the great talents of one of the strongest and most thoroughly American figure painters."[33] That the paper expressed the wish that Wolfe would display *The Life Line* alongside the European holdings known to be on view in her Madison Square brownstone reinforces the fact that her New York collection, by this time, must have been somewhat accessible to those in the know in the art world. This knowledge about her collection may also have been fostered by the records of Wolfe's loans to large-scale exhibitions, including those held at the National Academy of Design. Although it would not be a matter of public notice at the time, Wolfe had already written her will, delineating the terms of her bequests, in February 1884, two months prior to her purchase of Homer's painting. Had she chosen to display it in New York, *The Life Line* would then have been designated as part of her future gift to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. But that was not her plan.

This painting was a daring acquisition on Wolfe's part for a number of reasons. Although *The Life Line* is now accepted as one of the artist's masterworks, it was, in the mid-1880s, due to its particular subject matter and style of execution, a controversial picture by nearly anyone's standards—even among those who responded to it favorably—as indicated

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[32] "Fine Arts. The Exhibition at the National Academy Which Opens To-Day." *New York Herald*, April 7, 1884, 8.

[33] Ibid.

by the wide range of reactions to the painting on the part of critics and reviewers who saw it at the exhibition and then wrote about it. One Boston critic commented, "There is something dramatic in the situation, but no thanks are due to Mr. Homer, who is seen at his worst here. The water is of slate and the figures are putty." However, this critic allowed as how an argument in the picture's favor was that it had been sold.[34] A writer for the *New York Evening Post* remarked:

> Winslow Homer, in his sole contribution, "The Life Line," seems to be giving himself up to the downward drift of art, which abandons all struggles with difficulties….[One] must imagine he had to do with people who never saw a storm at sea.[35]

Of course this critic's comment did not allow for the fact that, as someone who had seen the sea in its various moods in the Caribbean, in Gloucester, Massachusetts, at Cullercoats, and at Prout's Neck, Maine, Homer would have been more than familiar with such storms. This writer goes on to describe what he sees:

> The half-drooping head, the hand clinging to the cord, the graceful combination of nether limbs, and the tranquil abandon to the situation betray entire consciousness of the romantic position; neither insensibility nor terror is in her case to be predicted. The woman must be shamming….She seems to recognize that there is no danger in such a sea….When a man who has done the good work Winslow Homer has shown, sinks into such bathos in paint as this, one must wonder if his case is not hopeless."[36]

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[34] "Notes from New York. The Fifty-ninth Annual Academy of Design Exhibition," *Boston Journal,* April 8, 1884, 2.

[35] "The National Academy of Design Exhibition. Fourth Notice," *New York Evening Post*, April 21, 1884, reprinted in "The Academy Exhibition II," *The Nation* 38, no. 982 (April 24, 1884): 370–72.

[36] Ibid.

In referring to "bathos in paint," the reviewer seems not to understand that the painter was deliberately avoiding the melodrama to which such a scene might be subject. The critic's expectations for such a scene were not met by Homer's painting.

In a seminal essay pointedly titled "Winslow Homer in His Art" (1987), Jules D. Prown discusses Homer's psyche as a motivating force underlying the narrative of many of the artist's major paintings. Prown links the imagery of *The Life Line* and one of the artist's later works, *Undertow*, to what he perceives as Homer's deeply personal view of women as creatures seeming to emanate from the sea in mythic fashion, as figurations of Venus.[37] In *Undertow* (fig. 94) of 1886, now at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, we see two sturdy women, clad in bathing costumes, who seem also to emerge from the waves of the sea as they are being rescued by two brawny men. Of the protagonists in *The Life Line*, Prown observes:

> And, yet, despite their peril, despite their isolation, despite their limited perceptions, the clasped couple exudes an unexpected aura of sensuality and perhaps even a sense of physical pleasure as they rock to and fro together on their dangerous passage.[38]

Such a highly charged contemporary scene fueled with erotic overtones would seem to fall outside the parameters typically governing choices Wolfe made about pictures with sensual or sexual imagery. As we have seen, in New York Wolfe revealed a penchant for pictures of sensual women represented alone, without their protectors or the objects of their desire. The women in those pictures bore loose connections to literary works, albeit not always identifiable without one's knowledge of the implications of their titles. Their

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[37] Jules D. Prown, "Winslow Homer in His Art," in *Smithsonian Studies in American Art* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1987): 43.

[38] Ibid., 37.

narratives provided a rationale for Wolfe's having them in her New York collection. The female figure in *The Life Line*, however, bears little resemblance to the type of femininity depicted in such pictures as Cabanel's *The Shulamite* or Merle's *Allegory of Autumn.* She is far differently revealed in her unconscious eroticism and in the overt manner of her depiction than either Chloe or Virginia in Cot's *The Storm.*

On another level, it is possible that Wolfe's earlier purchase of Cot's painting, with its implied connection to the Saint-Pierre narrative in its denouement of a disaster at sea, may have helped to fuel Wolfe's interest in the Winslow Homer depiction of a sea rescue a few years later, as we have noted Foster suggests.[39] Additionally, Wolfe's attraction to *The Life Line* may have been sparked by a familiarity with popular romantic narratives of the period, highlighting a heroine as a shipwrecked female displaced from her comfortable domestic setting, suddenly facing the onslaught of the natural world at its most powerful.[40] The reader of such stories would be able to identify with the female protagonist, often a figure of gentility who has been suddenly thrust into a situation with unbearable odds. Homer's heroine is not elite, and not totally visible and available to us.

In the case of Wolfe and the narrative of *The Life Line*, one needs to remember that although Wolfe must have sympathized with the plight of the woman in such imminent danger, she might not have had a sentimental feeling of identification with her, even if the bravery of the male hero excited her imagination. Wolfe may well have reacted to the intense drama of the rescue and the grave possibility of its failure. However, Wolfe also would have been intensely aware that the female protagonist in *The Life Line* was of a social stratum

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[39] For speculation on this possible connection, see Foster, *Shipwreck!*, 112, n. 232.

[40] See Robin Miskolecze, "Transatlantic Touchstone: The Shipwrecked Woman in British and Early American Literature," *Prose Studies* 22, no. 3 (1999): 42.

different from her own. An article in the *Ladies Home Journal*, written a few years after her death, documents what was already the strong division among the classes in the resort: "It is no longer fashionable to bathe in the surf at Newport. Madame Haut Ton discovered that it was possible to meet her neighbor's maid in the water."[41] In all likelihood the woman and the seaman in Homer's painting would have been akin to members of New England's fishing communities, similar to those whom Wolfe and other elite Newport residents would have been banned from the Cliff Walk had they been able to do so. In the case of Homer, Joseph E. Baker his longtime friend since their time together as young lithography apprentices in Boston, had the authority to remark that when Winslow Homer painted at Gloucester, before he went to Cullercoats, "He knew plenty of nice people, but he associated with two fishermen, and preferred their company."[42] Thus, the artist had a direct familiarity with the characters in *The Life Line* that Wolfe would not have had, whatever her attraction to the painting might have been.

This dissertation has argued that Wolfe's decisions about purchasing or commissioning art were made with a firm purpose and a specific location in mind. For Vinland, the house she and Peabody & Stearns created in Newport, Wolfe deliberately selected Homer's daring marine painting of a rescue in the aftermath of a shipwreck. It would be on view just prior to the first full summer season she was able to enjoy at Vinland, even if not at the time of the first opening of the house in September 1883. Although *The Life Line* was not commissioned specifically for Vinland, it became an integral part of Vinland's

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[41] "Where Life Is Like a Story: Fashionable Summer Life at Gay Newport," *Ladies Home Journal* 7 (August 1890): 2, quoted in Jon Sterngass, *First Resorts: Pursuing Pleasure at Saratoga Springs, Newport, and Coney Island* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 193.

[42] Cikovsky and Kelly, *Winslow Homer*, 391-396.

interior display during Wolfe's residence there, alongside the Arts & Crafts décor she commissioned from the British firm of Morris & Co.

The action in the scene evoked on Homer's canvas would have been out of sync with many of the subjects of the pictures in Wolfe's New York collection, where the paintings often masked sexual content with their ostensible literary associations. However, at Vinland, Wolfe did nothing to disguise the coming together of working-class bodies, albeit in a situation of distress; in fact, she displayed the painting center stage. *The Life Line* was daring and unusual both in terms of its execution, the artist's use of paint, and the fact that the viewer is left suspended in limbo with the figures in the painting, unsure of the outcome. The element of danger is reinforced by the uncertainty of the protagonists' fate, a connecting link with the predicament of some of the lone women in Wolfe's New York pictures who are waiting and unsure of their own futures.

Wolfe's probable placement of *The Life Line* in Vinland's library on a wall above a mantel facing east toward a view of the cliffs and the Atlantic Ocean, resulted in what must have functioned as an ideal site-specific installation of the picture. In Newport, she highlighted her advanced artistic taste in hiring avant-garde designers to work for her, and in buying and displaying this Winslow Homer painting. The Morris & Co. décor and the contemporary American picture were eminently suitable for her Newport house. She chose to hang this picture at Vinland instead of an insipid landscape, or a marine painting that matched critical expectations in a way this one did not. Had her goal been to build an innocuous Newport cottage, she certainly could have done so. Wolfe's ability to envision and execute

the scheme she chose underscores how smart she was about all of this art and design, despite whatever personal reservations William Morris might have had about her.[43]

Summation

The overarching reach of what Wolfe accomplished there was only possible at the time she created Vinland, when the resort was not yet as rigid and stratified as it would become later in the century. Initially, Newport had been a place where creative ideas could take root and where someone like Catharine Lorillard Wolfe would be able to enact a personal creative vision. As we have seen, Wolfe's personal style and aesthetic were specifically tailored to the character of each of the two sites, New York and Newport, which were initially not only geographically removed from each other, but psychologically distant as well. While Wolfe responded to these locations in a singularly canny way, the differences between the two places soon began to blur.

Accompanying New York's economic ascendancy and consequent cultural hegemony, during the years Wolfe sought to attain cultural prestige there through her art patronage and participation in important civic institutions, there began a growing stratification and tightening of social ranks, which would reach even greater proportions by the century's close. Sven Beckert suggests in the *Monied Metropolis* (2001), that the links between cities resulting from the changing form of the use of capital served to narrow what had been an underlying

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[43] See William Morris to Jenny Morris, July 21, 1883, cited in William Morris, *The Collected Letters of William Morris*, 4 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), vol. 2 (1881–1884), 208.

divide between merchants and manufacturers that characterized the antebellum elite.[44] Writing from the perspective of the early twentieth century about changes in the character of New York's elite in the decades following the Civil War, one critic commented: "Social prominence as the city understood the term, was to be expressed henceforth in terms of millions rather than of lineage."[45] The old guard was challenged by the new; yet they had a common interest in protecting their eminence and lifestyle.

The new formed plutocracy announced itself in acquiring works of art and in supporting the city's burgeoning cultural institutions, as did Wolfe herself. However, it also did so by building sumptuous residences in order to showcase its acquisitions as trappings of wealth and success. As we have seen earlier, it was a case of the newly moneyed Stewarts competing with old guard Astors by building a new residence on 34th and Fifth Avenue; and, later, members of the Vanderbilt clan, among them William Henry Vanderbilt, vying for social prominence through the extravagant nature of the houses they built farther uptown. Wolfe, whose personal fortune had been passed on to her by the two branches of her family, each of which had had firm roots in the history of the city, did not feel the need to engage in this public battle for real estate eminence in an effort to call attention to herself. Nor did she need to climb from one rung of the city's social ladder to reach another. Her ultimate statement of self-fashioning in New York would be articulated not only in her mode of

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[44] Sven Beckert, *The Monied Metropolis: New York City and the Consolidation of the American Bourgeoisie, 1850–1896* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 239–42.

[45] May (Mrs. John King) Van Rensselaer, *The Social Ladder* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1924), 59. In referring to Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt's 1874 "Bouncer's Ball" at Delmonico, she remarks, "The dance music that played that night was a dirge for the Society that was passing, a triumphal march for the Society that was coming in." Ibid.

domesticity, but through her activities as an art collector, culminating in the unprecedented bequest in her will.

By contrast, pre–Civil War Newport had been informal and relaxed, and welcomed a variety of visitors—academics, artists, intellectuals, ordinary folks, who stayed in the large hotels and inhabited the modest cottages made of wood and shingle. Even the social arbiter and confidante of the highest echelons of the old guard society, Ward McAllister, reminisced in his 1904 memoirs about the more informal Newport that had existed in 1850s, when he bought his farm there: "The most charming people of the country had formed a select little community there….The charm of the place then was the simple way of entertaining: there were no large balls; all the dining and dancing were done by daylight and in the country."[46] However, in describing these events, McAllister does allude to a new encroaching social element: "I did not hesitate to ask the very *crème de la crème* of New York society to lunch and dine at my farm….these little parties were then and now the stepping stones to our best New York society."[47] Wolfe would certainly have been able to tap into what was the earlier informality that had characterized Newport when, in the early 1870s, she acquired her first property across from Touro Park. Possibly this was still true, a decade later, when she first embarked on the process of planning what would become the far more elaborate Vinland, through her purchase of the most desirable land and the hiring a leading architectural firm then working in the resort.

Paradoxically, however, it was at the very moment of Wolfe's most significant involvement in Newport in the 1880s, when she began to collaborate with Peabody & Stearns

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[46] Ward McAllister, *Society As I Have Found It* (1890; repr. New York: Arno Press, 1975), 110–11.

[47] Ibid., 111, 118.

and traveled to England to meet with William Morris and other artists of his design firm, that distinctions between the urban center and the resort, especially as revealed in architecture and design, would start to collapse. The construction of more and more ostentatious "cottages" in the resort would provide a marker of this change; and the notion of leisure in the resort as a function of detachment from the pressures and demands of the metropolis would be profoundly challenged. By the end of the nineteenth century, but even beginning in the years of Wolfe's residency there, resorts such as Newport and others in New England, became mirrors of the very mores and dictums of the urban environment from which their inhabitants initially had sought escape.[48]

Henry James's 1878–79 novella *An International Episode* provides a telling barometer of changes in the resort already underway. Its earlier relaxed social character is represented by the viewpoint of James's thoughtful young protagonist, Bessie Alden. In a telling statement of her view of Newport's charms, she says: "We have nothing made. It's pure nature."[49] The more seasoned perspective of her sister, Mrs. Westgate, is revealed in the latter's justification of the importance of the financial underpinnings of Newport's identity. Mrs. Westgate reminds her aristocratic English visitors, "Of course we haven't your country life, and your old ruins, and your great estates, and your leisure class, and all that…we haven't any leisure class."[50] Even as Henry James upholds the American ideal of natural simplicity in the character of Bessie Alden, he is profoundly cognizant of the threat to its innocence from the

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[48] See Kevin D. Murphy, "'Secure from All Intrusion': Heterotopia, Queer Space, and the Turn-of-the-Century American Resort," *Winterthur Portfolio* 43, no. 2/3 (Summer–Autumn 2009): 185–228.

[49] Henry James, "An International Episode," in *New York Stories of Henry James*, ed. Colm Tóibín (New York: New York Review Books, 2006), 143.

[50] Ibid., 138–39.

growing power of money and rank in Newport. Twenty-five years later, when Henry James returns to America and the sites and scenes of places he had valued earlier, he revisits Newport and remarks about its changed ambience in a tone of bitter irony:

> thanks to the 'pilers-on' of gold, the fortune, the history of its beauty: that it now bristles with the villas and palaces into which the cottages have all turned, and that these monuments of pecuniary power rise thick and close, precisely, in order that their occupants may constantly remark to each other, from the windows to the 'grounds,' and from house to house, that it *is* beautiful, that it *is* solitary and sympathetic.[51]

It would be during the same decades of New York on the rise that the social and architectural configuration of Newport began to take on recognizable qualities of formality and stratification typically associated with the urban mecca. Writing about his 1893 visit to Newport, which took place six years after Wolfe's death, the French novelist and critic Paul Bourget observed that "The same outbreak of individuality which reared the palaces of Fifth Avenue in New York, almost as if by Aladdin's lamp, created in a flash of miracle this town of cottages."[52] Bourget here likens the rush to build great houses in Newport to a similar spate of construction of New York City mansions.

In his 2001 *The Making of American Resorts*, Theodore Corbett comments that in the 1880s, as a result of their search for exclusivity, some old-money New Yorkers established summer residences in Newport, "the ideal place to continue their studied aloofness."[53] Furthermore, as Newport became more opulent, those same rich, fancy people who formed

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[51] Henry James, *The American Scene*, introduction and notes by Leon Edel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968), 212.

[52] Paul Bourget, *Outre-Mer: Impressions of America* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895), 45.

[53] Theodore Corbett, *The Making of American Resorts: Saratoga Springs, Ballston Spa, Lake George* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 239.

the new plutocracy in New York also moved to Newport for their summer rituals. Montgomery Schuyler's 1900 essay, "A Newport Palace," is in part a jeremiad for the loss of what he remembers as the "fair sea-port town of Longfellow's poem with its colonial reminiscences and suggestions" of a generation earlier.[54] In the essay, Schuyler speaks also of what had become a different scene, both architecturally and socially, by the end of the century:

> It is the huddle of palaces, testifying to the queer gregariousness of the plutocrats who occupy them, and who are so devoted to the society of one another that, having enjoyed it in New York in winter, they must welter in it in Newport all summer.[55]

The full-burst of extravagance and stratification that would characterize the Newport that Montgomery Schuyler witnessed at the turn of the century would continue to grow by quantum leaps after Wolfe's death in 1887. Nonetheless, these developments were already germinating during her time there. She did, after all, choose to build her house out of stone and in one of the most prominent resort neighborhoods in Newport for what was considered a huge sum. Although Vinland would later be dwarfed by palaces surrounding it (a fact that must have led to its enlargement in the 1890s), the scale, the building material, and the original design of the house with its unusual thematic narrative did serve to signal the onset of a new idiom of architectural splendor and grandiosity in Newport.

What makes Wolfe unique is that she preserved her distinct mode of self-fashioning in each locale, even as the very same affluent people from the city migrated to Newport for what became a short summer spell. We have records of signatures in the scrapbook she preserved

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[54] Montgomery Schuyler, "A Newport Palace," *Cosmopolitan* 29 (August 1900): 361. Schuyler's reference in this passage is to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's 1850 poem "The Jewish Cemetery at Newport."

[55] Ibid., 371.

attesting to the fact that at Vinland Wolfe entertained members of some of the very same New York families—old money and new—that dominated the social scene in New York, among them Astors and Vanderbilts. One of the Vanderbilts became her neighbor when Pierre Lorillard sold the original Breakers to Cornelius Vanderbilt II in 1885 for the sum of $400,000, a price that elevated property values at Ochre Point to an even greater extent.[56]

Wolfe had the freedom to use her great fortune to conform to societal mores or to be as oppositional in this regard as she desired. She did not reject the society that surrounded her in the mold of female historical society types who lived on the fringes of New England resorts, opted out of high society and traditional match-making rituals as they integrated an expression of their personal lifestyle with their interest in historic preservation, domestic architecture, design and decoration.[57] Ultimately what distinguished Wolfe in Newport was not her mode of entertaining, nor the cost of the materials at Vinland, nor the size of the house and its dramatic setting. Rather, it was her realization of an ambition to create a house rich in historicism and local themes, by virtue of the unique character of its architecture and design.

Despite the fact that the city and the resort were both evolving and becoming, in effect, more similar, Wolfe preserved an unyielding sense of self and articulated it in both settings. While we have few documents of her life apart from the objects she amassed, her intervention in New York and Newport's cultural life was decisive in her time, as a result of

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[56] "The Lorillard Sale," *Newport Mercury*, September 26, 1885, 1. In the weeks after Wolfe's death in April 1887, William Kissam Vanderbilt, the brother of Cornelius Vanderbilt II, offered what was a rejected bid to purchase Vinland from Wolfe's Newport heir Louis Lorillard. Vanderbilt had a desire to own Vinland, for he believed it was a more attractive estate than this brother's adjacent property, and offered $600,000 for it to outshine his brother's earlier purchase of the Breakers. See "The Wolfe Newport Villa: W.K. Vanderbilt's Vain Offer For It," *New York Tribune*, April 23, 1887, 5. After his bid to purchase Vinland was rejected, Vanderbilt hired the architect Richard Morris Hunt to create a far more extravagant Marble House than the Vinland property he could not acquire.

[57] See Murphy, "'Secure From All Intrusion,'" 185–89.

the progressive choices she made at transformative moments in Gilded-Age New York and Newport. In the end, what Wolfe offers is a view of how a single woman of great means used the products of her cultural capital to position herself in two different places at a very particular moment in the histories of each.

Nowhere do Wolfe's accomplishments fit in more closely with her underlying strategy in each site, than in her patronage of two works of art, the Cot and the Homer, each an emblem of her site-specific vision, and each an indicator of her own values. The Cot painting reflects her participation in the dominant collecting patterns of her time in New York, and her foresight in recognizing that *The Storm* was a work that would continue to garner popular appeal, despite the criticism it was already attracting at the time in which it was first displayed. For Wolfe, the power of the Homer painting is not only rooted in its subject, but also in its notoriety and riskiness and, to some degree, in its earlier mixed critical reception. In a primarily laudatory discussion of Newport, written a decade after Wolfe's purchase of *The Life Line*, W. C. Brownell acknowledges that "the future of Newport is, one must admit, considerably complicated by the peril of snobbishness….The English snob, according to an acute observer, meanly admires what is above him, the American meanly despises what is beneath him."[58] Was it not pretty daring, then, for Catharine Lorillard Wolfe not only to put on display this rather risqué picture, but also one with monumentalized working-class figures who would be viewed by the members of Newport's high society at Vinland? If we accept the view that Walter Crane subverted the theme of *The Skeleton in Armor* and made it a working-class statement, which evidently did not trouble Wolfe, we can see connections between Crane's frieze and Homer's painting in terms of the way in each artist depicted a working-

[58] W. C. Brownell, "Newport," *Scribner's Magazine* 16, no. 2 (August 1894): 151.

class subject. The presence of a thematic correlation between these two projects makes Wolfe's impulse to commission one and purchase the other more startling and dramatic. In a sense Wolfe creates a tension between her own class identity and her support of these works which, to a degree, repudiates that identity. However, one must remember that such courage was only possible on the part of the very rich.

Her acquisition of *The Life Line* was a daring and unusual shift to the support of American art. To be sure, Wolfe would have been guaranteed a more certain audience for Homer's painting in New York, but it would not have fit in with her safer choices there—witness the Cot, which relates thematically to the Homer but is so much more tame. The Homer painting fit in with the more daring path Wolfe took at Newport, where, as this dissertation has established, she sought an important spot, and, with her massive stone house, contributed to the eventual escalation in scale and monumentality of Newport's houses. However, at the same time, Catharine Lorillard Wolfe's drive took her to a more independent, personal, and aesthetically adventurous approach there.

CONCLUSION

In her 2009 study *Biography: A Very Short Introduction*, Hermione Lee observes some of the challenges writers of life histories face in crafting narratives about their subjects:

> Since biography tells the story of a person, it requires, or assumes, a way of thinking about identity and selfhood….Any biographer must give some thought, even if not explicitly, to the relation of nature and nurture in the formation of a self, and to the negotiation between interior existence and the self's public performance.[1]

Lee is speaking from the perspective of having written her 2007 biography of Edith Wharton, who left a plethora of novels, stories, letters, journals, and poems that Lee used as a foundation for her analysis of Wharton's interior and exterior selves.[2] From this all-encompassing strategy, Lee can speak with authority about Wharton's literary output, including *The Age of Innocence*: "The novel invokes Wharton's own loneliness: 'lonely' and 'alone' are key words. The hollow mockery of Newland's marriage recalls her [Wharton's] own past; the conflict between an upbringing in America and a life in Europe is hers….The picture of New York is 'drawn from the life.'"[3] Lee's view of biographical writing quoted above could never apply to a treatment of Catharine Lorillard Wolfe's life. Unlike Wharton, Wolfe left us relatively little evidence about herself, apart from the objects she amassed, making it a challenge to reconstruct even her external life, let alone her inner one.

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[1] Hermione Lee, *Biography: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 14–15. I wish to thank Garry Giddins and the organizers of the Leon Levy Biography's Center's inaugural workshop at CUNY Graduate Center in January 2013, for recommending this text.

[2] Hermione Lee, *Edith Wharton* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf), 2007.

[3] Ibid., 568.

If one turns to David Nasaw's 2000 monumental biography of William Randolph Hearst, one sees another approach on the part of a biographer to constructing a picture of the totality of a larger-than-life figure.[4] Using the vast quantity of documentation available to him, Nasaw is able to comment on all facets of Hearst's interests, including his early activity as an art collector and patron at the end of the Gilded Age during his time at the Clarendon on Riverside Drive in New York, before he conceived of San Simeon, the ultimate West Coast repository for his monumental art holdings. Of Hearst's motivations for acquiring art, Nasaw speaks with authority:

> Hearst collected art not for investment purposes, or because he felt any great need to show off for others or because, like J. Pierpont Morgan, he believed in a 'gospel of wealth' and wanted to assemble an art collection to share with the less fortunate. Hearst collected because he took an enormous pleasure in possessing, accumulating and living among things of beauty. The money he earned from his newspapers and magazines he regarded as his to spend as he saw fit.[5]

Nasaw dissects every fact about Hearst's life and career to contextualize his art patronage, among a multitude of other overriding issues. Another scholar, Mary L. Levkoff, in her 2008, *Hearst the Collector*, which accompanied an exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, deals directly with the objects Hearst amassed. Levkoff strives to extricate the art Hearst collected from the more public negative aspects of his reputation, which she believes may have clouded or "probably spilled over onto" aspects of the reception of his art. "[6] However, Levkoff does concede that there exists a tension between Hearst's "need for

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[4] David Nasaw, *The Chief: The Life of William Randolph Hearst* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000).

[5] Ibid., 233.

[6] Mary L. Levkoff, *Hearst the Collector* (New York: Abrams; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2008), 12–14.

quantity and [his] desire for quality."[7] The issue of interpreting collectors and collecting, as demonstrated by the approaches of these two scholars, Nasaw and Levkoff, brings to the fore the need to strike a balance between an analysis of the individual and of the art or material culture he or she amassed. In the case of Wolfe, it is only by attempting to evaluate her collecting and patronage in its original context that we can begin to understand the complex ways in which she created her public persona through the use of material culture.

In a very different kind of biography, this one focusing on the coming together of three architects—Charles Follen McKim, William Rutherford Mead, and Stanford White—who formed the firm McKim, Mead & White, Mosette Broderick states upfront that while it was her initial desire to provide a "building-by-building" account of their careers, she chose not to do so.[8] Rather, her goal in *Triumverate: McKim, Mead & White* (2010) was to study "the path of the architects."[9] Their architectural commissions serve as part of their biographical record in Broderick's study. Witness the Newport Casino (1879–81):

> McKim had a difficult job. His idea was to design a new building type based on the casinos of seaside Normandy, those socially centered places to see and be seen. Gambling, other than friendly wagering on a game of cards, played no part in the Norman casino, nor in the American version; entertainment was the aim….The awarding of the job to McKim, probably agreed on in the late summer of 1879, may have been a factor in McKim and Mead's decision to bring White into the firm.[10]

Broderick delineates the lives, personas, activities, and evolving reputations of the three partners to provide an interpretative framework to reveal how they functioned as architects,

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[7] Ibid., 14.

[8] Mosette Broderick, *Triumverate: McKim, Mead & White: Art, Architecture, Scandal, and Class in America's Gilded Age* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), xx.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid., 152–53.

husbands, lovers, citizens, and as cultural leaders in the Gilded-Age world in which they operated.

The discrepancy between the abundance of written records relating to the subjects cited above and the dearth relating to my subject is vast. My research on Catharine Lorillard Wolfe as a collector and patron in Gilded-Age New York and Newport has involved a continuous hunt for evidence of her habits, her psyche, her will to succeed, and the manner in which she executed her artistic vision. While not conceived of as a conventional biography, this dissertation has sought to pioneer a new brand of historical and biographical analysis that relies almost exclusively on a diagnosis of how one subject used the acquisition and display of art and material culture to announce and establish herself in a distinct fashion in two venues. In the absence of significant testimony in the subject's own voice—other than her devising the parameters of her bequest and the memorabilia in the scrapbook she compiled in Newport—I relied primarily on the physical and textual traces of the objects and buildings of her patronage.

Moreover, while the issue of Wolfe's gender and status as a single woman remained a crucial factor throughout this study, it was never the dominant consideration by which her decisions were measured. In many of the feminist-based studies of art patrons and collectors, especially those with a deliberate focus on "matronage"—for example, in the work of scholars Kathleen D. McCarthy, Wanda Corn, Dianne Sachko Macleod—the accomplishments of the women in question are compared almost exclusively in relation to each other and to those of other women.[11] The subjects are united by their gender, sometimes despite their distinctive

[11] See Kathleen D. McCarthy, *Women's Culture: American Philanthropy And Art, 1830-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Dianne Sachko Macleod, *Enchanted Objects, Enchanted Lives: American Women Art Collectors and the Making of Culture, 1800-1940*

individual aesthetic concerns and motivations. By attempting to situate Wolfe firmly in the locations in which she navigated, I have sought to call upon frames of reference that both signaled and were unrelated to her gender, or to the myth about her as the richest unmarried woman in America.

Wolfe transcended many of the boundaries typically applied to women of her generation; her vast financial resources gave her the freedom and the means to acquire art, as well as the choice to remain single. Her activities as patron and collector reinforced her independence. Because Wolfe's collection and her named gallery in the Metropolitan Museum of Art are no longer intact, and because Vinland is vastly changed, it has been possible to overlook her.

As this dissertation has established, the enigmatic but strong Catharine Lorillard Wolfe was a major cultural player in New York, culminating in her gift to the Museum. It has also demonstrated the prominent role she played as both as an architectural patron and initiator of the creation of unique decorative spaces in Newport. As noted earlier, collecting and patronage in their most rudimentary forms are both about the acquisition and consumption of art. However, in each instance, the collector or patron is too often viewed as a passive vessel, disconnected from playing a role in the artistic process. Wolfe, whether as purchaser of art, collaborator in architecture or design, or as donor and patron to cultural institutions, was, to varying degrees, an active participant in what Howard S. Becker labeled, in his 1982 study, the "art worlds" of her time.[12]

(Berkeley: University of California Press, with the assistance of the Getty Foundation, 2008); and Wanda Corn, "Art Matronage in Post-Victorian America," in *Cultural Leadership in America: Art Matronage and Patronage* (Boston: Trustees of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 1997), 9–23.

[12] Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 196–98.

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Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, Birmingham, UK (cartoons and designs by Edward Burne-Jones)

Boston Architectural College, Memorial Library (Peabody & Stearns Collection)

British Library, London (William Morris Papers)

Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington

Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, UK (Edward Burne-Jones Papers, including account books with Morris & Co. [1861–97])

Frick Art Reference Library, New York

Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, CA (collector files)

Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, San Marino, CA (Sanford and Helen Berger Collection files;William Morris Papers; Morris & Co. files)

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Library of Congress, Washington, DC

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ILLUSTRATIONS