

THE BIRMINGHAM MUNICIPAL SCHOOL OF ART AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR
WOMEN'S PAID WORK IN THE ARTS AND CRAFTS MOVEMENT
1885-1914

BY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is the first to examine the lives and careers of professional women who were working within the thriving Arts and Crafts Movement in Birmingham in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It utilises previously unresearched primary and secondary sources in art galleries, the Birmingham School of Art and local studies collections to present a series of case studies of professional women working in the fields of jewellery and metalware, stained glass, painting, book illustration, textiles and illumination. This thesis demonstrates that women made an important, although currently unacknowledged, professional contribution to the Arts and Crafts Movement in the region. It argues that the Executed Design training that the women received at the Birmingham Municipal School of Art (BMSA) was crucial to their success in obtaining highly-skilled paid employment or setting up and running their own business enterprises. The thesis makes an important new contribution to the historiography of The Arts and Crafts Movement; women's work in Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; the history of education and the industrial and artistic history of Birmingham.

THIS THESIS IS DEDICATED TO
DR FRANCESCA CARNEVALI (1964-2013)

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My parents Christine and Keith Hoban have supported me and encouraged me all the way through this research journey. In the process they too have got to know the women presented in this thesis and seen the joys of research. It was my parents that first introduced me to antiques at a young age and in particular the jewellery and metalwork of The Arts and Crafts Movement. As I researched the people who had designed these miniature works of art I found that information was available about male designers but very little had been written about the lives and work of the women jewellers, stained glass designers and metalworkers of The Arts and Crafts Movement. This inspired me to begin the research that culminated in this PhD, with a focus on Birmingham and the West Midlands.

Finally, I would like to thank my Supervisor, Dr Francesca Carnevali. Without her, this thesis would not have been written and I hope that it is a fitting tribute to her.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BA&H

Birmingham Archives and Heritage

BMAG

Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery

BMAG CA

Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery Camm Archive

BMAG CSB

Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery Camm Scrapbook

BMSA

Birmingham Municipal School of Art

BMSA Man-Sub-Comm Mins

Birmingham Municipal School of Art Management Sub-Committee Minutes

BMTS

Birmingham Municipal Technical School

GRO

General Records Office

RBSA

Royal Birmingham Society of Artists

The Studio

The Studio Magazine

UCE

University of Central England

V&A

Victoria and Albert Museum, London

TBGH

The Birmingham Guild of Handicraft

INTRODUCTION

“The general trend of the school training bids fair to make Birmingham the Mecca of art teachers and students from all parts of the kingdom.”

So wrote the critic A.S. Wainwright in 1905 in a glowing editorial about Birmingham’s Vittoria Street School for Jewellers in *The Studio*, the international magazine for the contemporary applied and decorative arts.¹ Both the jewellery school and its parent institution, the Birmingham Municipal School of Art in Margaret Street (hereafter the BMSA), held a privileged position in the decorative arts of the last decade of the nineteenth and the first decade of the twentieth centuries. Throughout this period, the BMSA was the largest art school in Britain and it was generally considered to be the best equipped. In terms of examination and competition results, it was also the most successful.²

The work of students and staff from the Birmingham schools was regularly highlighted in *The Studio* and other decorative arts magazines, not only in terms of stylistic achievements but also in the context of the successful and innovative teaching methods of headmaster Edward Richard Taylor at the Central School in Margaret Street.³

But the Birmingham Municipal School of Art, and Birmingham’s contribution to the Arts and Crafts Movement as a whole, has been largely overlooked by history. There can of course be no single reason why, but a paucity of published research on the School and its pupils and a lingering, negative, perception of nineteenth century art and design in Birmingham based around the stereotypical idea of ‘inferior’ quality ‘Brummagem’ goods

¹ A. S. Wainwright in *The Studio*, vol. 34, (1905), reproduced in T. Hunt, *Finely Taught, Finely Wrought, The Birmingham School of Jewellery and Silversmithing*, (Birmingham, 1990).

² J. Swift, ‘Women and Art Education at Birmingham’s Art Schools, 1880-1920: Social Class, Opportunity and Aspiration’, in M. Romans (ed.) *Histories of Art and Design Education: Collected Essays*, (Bristol, 2005), p.92; J. Swift, *Changing Fortunes – the Birmingham School of Art Building 1880-1995*, (Birmingham, 1996), p.14.

³ Taylor was appointed in 1887. A detailed discussion of his teaching methods and their importance can be found in Chapter Two of this thesis.

have certainly been contributing factors. A general decline in interest amongst decorative arts historians in late Victorian art and design in the mid twentieth century gave way to a re-evaluation of the subject in the 1960s and 1970s, which cast English Arts and Crafts pieces (particularly jewellery and illustrated books) as reactionary and outdated. However, by the 1990s, critical and popular attention had embraced The Arts and Crafts Movement once more.

Birmingham's lasting contribution to The Arts and Crafts Movement, and its importance in the dissemination of the style and its philosophy, has never taken a central position in the extensive historiography of the Movement. Instead, designers from other cities, guilds and schools of art have been given prominence in twentieth century critical accounts, particularly Charles Ashbee's Guild of Handicraft in the Cotswolds and The Glasgow School of Art. This omission is in itself of interest, and the Birmingham Municipal School of Art should certainly be given a much higher status in the literature and history of the movement and some of its key (but currently little known) artists, designers and teachers should be recognised alongside their more critically acclaimed peers such as Charles Rennie Mackintosh and his wife Margaret Macdonald in Glasgow.

However, many of these currently unknown designers in Birmingham were women and it is these women, their training at the BMSA and how this education enabled them to work professionally in The Arts and Crafts Movement, that will be the focus of this thesis.

Through my interdisciplinary research (which links the history of art and design with education, employment, economic and social history), I will focus on reconstructing the lives and contributions of the women artists and designers who helped to create Birmingham's original reputation as an outstanding centre of Arts and Crafts practice. Their lives and careers give us fresh insights into women's employment in the West Midlands in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, provide a new contribution to the historiography of

women's work as a whole in Britain and begin to tell the much wider story of professional women designers and painters working in The Arts and Crafts Movement nationally and internationally.

There is also a need to position the Birmingham Municipal School of Art as the first successful example of pedagogic learning based on the teachings of The Arts and Crafts Movement. The rallying calls of John Ruskin, and later William Morris, for truth to materials and design and a sense of satisfaction in work, were taken up by Edward Taylor and played out in Birmingham in a highly successful model whereby students were given the opportunity to produce their designs using actual materials, rather than simply making design drawings. I will argue in this thesis that 'Executed Design', as Taylor's innovative process was known, was of vital importance to women's education and professional prospects.

The first chapter of this thesis provides a survey of the current historiography of The Arts and Crafts Movement and discusses how authors have viewed the Movement in Birmingham - where the city's contribution has been recognised at all. The chapter also provides a critical evaluation of existing studies of women's work. It provides an outline of my research methodology and the largely unexplored primary source material consulted during my investigations. These sources include the partly-catalogued BMSA archive at the Birmingham Institute of Art and Design (now part of Birmingham City University), particularly its Management Sub-Committee Minute Books; the Camm Studio archive at Sandwell Archives and Heritage; the archives and collections at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (BMAG) and the local history archives and collections at Birmingham Archives and Heritage (BA&H).

Chapter Two provides an overview of the Birmingham Municipal School of Art and its teaching methods, specifically in relation to its female students. It begins the central argument of my thesis, namely that the Executed Design education women received at the

school was a vital contributing factor to their success in gaining paid employment as professional designers or enabling them to work on their own account as jewellers, metalworkers, stained glass designers and enamellers within The Arts and Crafts Movement.

Chapter Three extends and contextualises this discussion through an examination of the different types of women's work in Birmingham in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including the levels of wages paid by occupation. In addition, the chapter discusses how women who trained at the BMSA went on to work professionally and how this fits into the existing employment history of the city.

Chapter Four provides an analysis of professional opportunities for women producing jewellery and metalware in the Arts and Crafts style. The first in a series of case studies of women who trained at the BMSA and went on to work professionally begin in this chapter, including Effie Downes Ward (1874-1960), who was the studio assistant to the jewellers Arthur and Georgie Gaskin (1866-1934). Georgie's reputation as a jewellery and book designer is often eclipsed by that of her husband Arthur, and Effie Ward's work as a designer in silver and enamel is virtually unknown today. The two women worked closely together at the Gaskin's studio in Acocks Green in Birmingham and received commercial commissions from private clients and churches across the UK. The work of Florence Sarah Stern (born 1869) will also be presented in this chapter. Stern's parents were of German Jewish origin and emigrated to Britain in around 1860. She worked as a successful self-employed silver designer in Edmund Street in Birmingham for most of her life, exhibited at industrial exhibitions and also formed working collaborations with other women designers who trained at the BMSA.

Chapter Five focuses on women who worked professionally as stained glass designers. Principal case studies presented in this chapter include Florence Camm (1874-1960), who along with her brothers Robert and Walter ran a successful family stained glass enterprise in

Smethwick in the West Midlands between 1912 and 1960. Examples of Camm glass can be found in houses, churches, schools and other institutions across the world yet Florence Camm is little known today. The work of Mary Jane Newill (1860-1947) who was a critically acclaimed stained-glass designer and textile artist working from a professional studio in Birmingham city centre, will also be presented in this chapter.

Chapter Six focuses on textiles, book illustration and painting and examines the lives and work of women including Kate Bunce (1856-1927), a critically respected painter in the Pre-Raphaelite style, Georgie Gaskin and Celia Levetus (born 1874), who became a successful commercial book illustrator and designer.

Professional women made a serious, important and currently unacknowledged contribution to the design, jewellery and metal industries in Birmingham and beyond in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I hope that my research will begin an ongoing process of reconstructing their work and lives, and that this will in turn provide historians with a richer picture of these industries as a whole, and women's professional work in Birmingham and by extension in Britain during this time. To my knowledge, this thesis is the only study to examine the contribution of women working across design disciplines in The Arts and Crafts Movement since the publication of Anthea Callen's pioneering book *Angels in the Studio: Women in the Arts Crafts Movement 1870-1914* in 1979, republished as *Women In The Arts and Crafts Movement 1870-1914* in 1980.⁴ I hope that my research will extend and develop Callen's seminal work, and by extension the historiography of The Arts and Crafts Movement as a whole, through its rediscovery of the lives and work of these Birmingham women.

⁴ A. Callen, *Angels in the Studio: Women In The Arts and Crafts Movement 1870-1914*, (London, 1979), republished as A. Callen, *Women in the Arts and Crafts Movement*, (London, 1980).

CHAPTER ONE:

ACCOMPLISHED LADIES OR PROFESSIONAL WOMEN?

‘some extremely clever lady students at our School of Art fritter their time away on painting ... because it is THE THING to patronise Art ... and so fair Edgbastonia takes her neat little paint box and palette of an afternoon, spoils good canvases or daubs terracotta plaques.’

An anonymous correspondent to *The Dart*, Birmingham in 1893.

‘...many of her best designs for jewellery, etc., have been bought by a leading design firm here, and she is at present busy learning technicalities before entering the services of the firm as one of their head designers.’

Helen ‘Nellie’ Brightwell’s work discussed in ‘The Birmingham School of Art’, *The Artist*, London, September 1900.

These two polarised viewpoints of female art students in late nineteenth century Birmingham are taken firstly from a provincial magazine and secondly from a respected international art journal.⁵ Together, they epitomise two of the main debates around late nineteenth century art education for middle-class women. Some critics saw artistic education for women as nothing more than a female ‘accomplishment’, whilst others perceived professional art education as integral to the need or desire for some middle-class women to undertake paid artistic employment.

The viewpoint of the unidentified but most likely male writer in *The Dart* reflects the stereotypical and generalised view of ‘accomplished’ lady painters which was widespread in the Victorian periodical press, suggesting that female students attended the BMSA as a hobby

⁵An anonymous correspondent to *The Dart*, (Birmingham 1893), no page number, and *The Artist*, London, 29, (September 1900), p.442. Edgbaston was and is an affluent middle-class suburb of Birmingham near to the city centre.

and little else. But, in fact, it was the female, middle-class students at the School who won the most prizes for their work (in 1899-1900 for example, 74% of school prizes for design work were won by female pupils),⁶ which would most likely have been a contributing factor to the BMSA's reputation for innovative, high quality art and design work and pedagogic practice that was discussed in critical international journals such as *The Studio Magazine*.⁷

Prize winning in itself is of course no indication of commercial success, but these female students were also generating commercial commissions, particularly in the areas of book design and illustration. Georgina (commonly known as Georgie) Gaskin, a national prize-winning student at the School and later professional jeweller and enameller, produced illustrations for books including *Divine and Moral Songs for Children*, which was published in 1896 by Elkin Matthews in London and L. C. Page in Boston, and *The Travellers and Other Stories*, which was published by James Bowden in 1898. *A Book of Pictured Carols*, first published by George Allen in London in 1893, contained commercial illustrations executed by female students at the BMSA including Mary Newill, Agnes Manley, Mildred Peacock and Florence Rudland. Surprisingly, the story of these and other women's successes has not yet been told. Their lives and commercial work will be presented in this thesis.

The Birmingham Municipal School of Art, as it was originally known, became the first municipal school of art in England in 1885 and student numbers grew steadily. A network of smaller Branch Schools across the city, including a specialised Jewellery School in Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter, supported the teaching at the Central School, which forms the basis of this study. In February 1890, 2,646 students were registered overall, with 813 students at the Central School in Margaret Street. By December 1897, student numbers had

⁶ J. Swift, 'Birmingham Art School: Its Branch Schools and Female Students 1880-1900' in B. Tilson, (ed.) *Made in Birmingham, Design and Industry 1889-1989*, (Warwickshire, 1989), p.56.

⁷ For an in-depth discussion about work at the School see 'Studio-Talk', *The Studio*, XXIII, (1901); 'Modern Jewellery and Fans' Special Winter Number, *The Studio*, (1901-2); 'The Wall Paintings by Art Students in the Town Hall, Birmingham', *The Studio*, Vol I, (1893), pp. 237-240; 'Studio Talk Birmingham', *The Studio*, vol. LII (1911), pp. 58-59; 'The Birmingham Municipal School of Art with Illustrations of its Students Work', *The Studio*, vol. II, (1893), pp. 171-174.

risen to 3,872 overall, including 1,140 in the Central School. However, an actual breakdown of the ratio of male to female students at the BMSA is virtually impossible to ascertain due to the fact that registers for the Central School only survive only from 1898 onwards and none at all have survived from the Branch Schools.⁸

Edward Richard Taylor (1838-1912) was Headmaster of the Central School between 1877 and 1904,⁹ and he introduced unique 'Art Laboratories' into the BMSA with the specific intention of providing practical training for students in enamelling, metalwork, stained-glass design manufacture and jewellery that could potentially be applied to designing for a trade. The precise reasons for his original appointment at Birmingham in 1877 and the development of his radical educational pedagogy through Executed Design are no clear and require further scholarly investigation.

Taylor's somewhat progressive approach to teaching art moved away from the rigid National Public Course of Instruction, which directed art and design education with minor modifications from 1853 to 1913. In this, pupils progressed through a series of distinct stages at increasing levels of difficulty, beginning with drawing and progressing through painting, modelling and elementary and advanced design.

⁸ J. Swift, *Birmingham Art School*, p.49; M. B. Huish, 'Whence Comes This Great Multitude of Painters', *Nineteenth Century: A Monthly Review*, vol. 32, 89, (November, 1892), p.725; BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins 25th February, 1890; *Ibid.*, 14th February 1897. The network of branch schools, which predominantly offered evening classes, included Balsall Heath, Ladywood, Harborne, and Moseley Road.

⁹ Taylor was appointed in 1877 and retired in 1904. He was born on June 16th, 1838 in Shelton, Staffordshire and trained as an artist at the Burslem School of Art before qualifying as an art teacher at the South Kensington art school. He was appointed Headmaster of The Government School of Art in Lincoln in 1862. See S. Wildman, *The Birmingham School*, (Birmingham, 1990), p60 and *A Notable Art Master, An Appreciation of Edward R. Taylor*, Birmingham Municipal School of Art, L78.1 TAY, 502220, B&AH. Wildman suggests that during Taylor's time in Lincoln he improved the quality of elementary level art teaching, but further scholarly research needs to be undertaken on this period in Taylor's career. The 1871 census RG10/3374 states that Taylor was an artist and oil painter. He was living with his wife, Mary, four daughters and one servant at 20, The Park, Lincoln. For a detailed discussion of his life and teaching methods see R. Hartnell, *E.R. Taylor*, unpublished MA Thesis, (Royal College of Art, 1976). Taylor was succeeded at the BMSA by Robert Catterson-Smith, who was appointed in 1904 after being Headmaster of the Vittoria Street School from 1901. See BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins July 16th, 1901 and A. Crawford, 'The Birmingham Setting', in *By Hammer and Hand*, (Birmingham, 1984), pp. 29-30. Upon his retirement Taylor began experimenting with high-fired pottery glazing techniques and set up The Ruskin Pottery in Smethwick, named after the art critic John Ruskin. The 1911 census lists Taylor as a manufacturer of earthenware. He died on January 14th, 1912, and was buried at St. George's Church, Edgbaston. See *A Notable Art Master*, BA&H, p.7.

The National Scheme stemmed from an 1835 House of Commons Select Committee Report on the general state of art and design in England and how it related to manufacturing. It found design lacking in quality, which was perceived as putting England at a competitive disadvantage with European countries such as France. The Government Schools of Design were formed in an effort to combat these perceived low standards, and were led by Henry Cole who became Director of the South Kensington School in 1852. Cole also instigated the National Instruction scheme.¹⁰

Edward Taylor called for a system of art instruction based on observation from nature, less emphasis on repetitive drawing and copying from the antique and more individuality of expression in the student's response to drawing tasks during instruction. He also gave students at the BMSA the opportunity to actually construct the designs that they had created, so giving them tangible objects to show potential employers or commercial clients upon graduation. In his book *Drawing and Design for Beginners*, which was published in 1893, Taylor argued that students must have 'knowledge of the properties of the material, of the process of execution and of the purpose or use to which the object is to be put.'¹¹ an idea embedded in the teachings and practice of The Arts and Crafts Movement. The BMSA continued to follow the National Syllabus for examinations but Taylor reacted against its

¹⁰ Cole was instrumental in the foundation and development of The South Kensington Museum in London, later the V&A. Visiting museums so that students could observe, study and emulate existing objects and designs was a central tenet of the National Instruction Scheme. See M. Baker and B. Richardson (eds.), *A Grand Design: The Art of the Victoria and Albert Museum*, (London, 1997) for a history of the museum and its formation. The art historian Tim Barringer views the consolidation of the Victorian Empire as playing a central role in the formation of the South Kensington Museum. This debate is outside the scope of this thesis but see T. Barringer 'The South Kensington Museum and the Mid-Victorian Moment', in *Victorian: The Style of Empire*, H. C. Collinson (ed.), (Canada, 1994), pp. 23–47 and T. Barringer and T. Flynn (eds.) 'The South Kensington Museum and the Colonial Project' in *Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture*, (London, 1998), pp. 11–27 for a detailed analysis of this theme.

¹¹ E. R. Taylor, *Drawing and Design for Beginners*, (London, 1893), p.101. For a detailed history of English art and design education from 1800 onwards see section one of R. Hartnell, *The Contribution of Art and of Design To The Emergence And Establishment Of A Civic Culture In Birmingham In The Late Nineteenth Century*, unpublished PhD thesis, (University of Central England, 1992).

rigidity by allowing both male and female students to work with real materials and execute their designs rather than simply working on paper. The importance of this innovation for women's education, aspirations and professional practice will be discussed in Chapter Two.

Taylor also gave women students access to life-drawing classes, which was relatively unheard of in late nineteenth century art education. This innovation was crucial to the women's success in draughtsmanship and practical employment such as stained-glass manufacture, which required accurate descriptions of human physiognomy.

Women students embraced the opportunities available to them at the BMSA to learn a practical trade (for example in metalwork and enamelling) as well as life drawing and fine art. However, the girls' achievements in local and national competitions appears to have unsettled William Lethaby, one of the School's external examiners and a high-profile figure in the national Arts and Crafts Movement. He called for the type of classes available to women students to be limited to painting (which was perceived as an approved, middle-class 'accomplishment' for women in popular culture) rather than Executed Design, which was practical training for professional employment. Lethaby's directive to remove female students from Executed Design classes would have seriously curtailed their prospects if they wanted to enter paid employment in local trades or become self-employed in non-traditional areas such as enamelling or metalwork. His patriarchal attitude suggests that in the late nineteenth century, the position of women in relation to employment opportunities in art and design was still problematic. Lethaby's call to possibly restrict women's access to practical classes was, however, ignored. Surviving photographs in the BMSA archive show young women working alongside men in practical workshops such as metalworking as well as more

traditional embroidery and drawing classes, and the limited registers that have survived also confirm this pattern.¹²

The extant student registers from the BMSA and prize lists contained in its minute books¹³ yield a high proportion of female students. To give just a few examples at this point in this thesis, Georgie Gaskin and Mary Newill, who also taught at the School, became professional designers, as did Florence Camm who was working in the family business, won national prizes and also received high profile civic commissions. In 1899, Camm designed a silver casket with fellow student Violet Holden which was to be presented to John Thackray Bunce, Editor of the Birmingham Daily Post newspaper and a Member of the BMSA's Management Sub-Committee, containing the Freedom of the City of Birmingham.¹⁴ What is less known today is that Florence Camm exhibited at the Royal Academy twenty-eight times between 1905 and 1953.¹⁵ Her commercial commissions included stained glass for churches and private homes across the world. A fuller discussion of her work will follow in Chapter Five of this thesis. Bunce's daughters Kate and Myra were artists from the School who exhibited nationally at the Royal Academy in 1891 and 1893¹⁶ and also received commissions for decorative mural painting and metalworking from churches across England.

¹² J. Swift, *Birmingham Art School*, p.58. William Lethaby was an external examiner at the BMSA. He was a prominent architect, designer and critic in the national Arts and Crafts Movement. One of his most important buildings, the Grade One listed Eagle Star Insurance Building, is situated at 122-124 Colmore Row in Birmingham. Swift suggests that Lethaby was disturbed by the visible success of female students at the BMSA, particularly the fact that these 'amateurs' (as he called them) were winning so many prizes across disciplines, not just in the more socially-acceptable classes for women such as embroidery and drawing. Lethaby suggested that every teaching class at the BMSA should be trade-related, that is specifically directed towards an occupation, which he thought would have the effect of removing almost all the female students from the Executed Design classes. Edward Taylor ignored Lethaby's suggestion regarding the classes at the School. However, Swift suggests that Taylor's attitude may have been more to do with the School not wanting to lose the women's valuable fees than with emancipation, but this is debatable.

¹³ Registers survive from 1896 onwards. Minute books of relevance to this study begin from 1885 and each contains a list of annual prizes. All are held in the BMSA archive.

¹⁴ Illustrated in 'Studio Talk', *The Studio*, 1901, XXIII, p.122, and now in the silver and plate collection at BMAG.

¹⁵ Listed in A. Graves, *A Dictionary of Artists and their Work in the Summer Exhibition of the Royal Academy 1905-1970*, vol. 1, (EP Publishing, 1973).

¹⁶ J. Marsh and P. Gerrish Nunn, *Women Artists and the Pre-Raphaelite Movement*, (London, 1989), pp. 121-122.

Mary Elizabeth Hall from Paradise Street in Birmingham combined self-employment as an art teacher with studying and winning medals at the BMSA.¹⁷

The mention of Helen ‘Nellie’ Brightwell¹⁸ in *The Artist* that introduced this chapter provides an atypical description of a female art student in contemporary Victorian literature. The author of this editorial about the BMSA informs readers that not only will Helen enter paid employment when she leaves the School but that she will begin work in a commercial firm as a head jewellery designer, making her a perfect example of the ‘New Woman’ popularised in the press, novels and artworks of the 1890s. Brightwell is far from the image of the frivolous and ‘accomplished’ ladies suggested to readers of *The Dart*.

However, it is important to look beyond these two opposing stereotypes of Victorian women. The accomplished, domesticated ladies of Edgbaston may have given way to the ‘New Woman’ by the end of the 1880s and early 1890s but we must not forget that women students at the BMSA were individual agents negotiating these images, stereotypes and dominant ideologies in their everyday lives. The importance of agency and subjective choice in relation to historical systems and ideologies and the possible tensions created as women negotiated these ideologies is a theme that will run throughout this thesis. Individuals act within history as well as history acting upon individuals, and both men and women are agents in history. Katrina Honeyman recognises this in an analysis of the Industrial Revolution, and

¹⁷Mary Elizabeth Hall, a prizewinning student from the BMSA who lived in Paradise Street, Birmingham. She was the daughter of a butcher and later married John Wakefield, a grocer, and moved to the village of Brewood in Staffordshire, where the couple ran the Post Office. Hall’s diaries and letters from circa 1891 to 1895 and photographs of her and John Wakefield (MS 596 and MS 1753, Wakefield Family Papers) are held at Birmingham Archives and Heritage (BA&H). Hall’s diary and letters from her fiancé John from the time that she was a student at the BMSA offer descriptions of her studies at the School of Art, refer to her as being in employment as an art teacher alongside her studies and suggest that her fiancé supported her in her ambition to become a professional artist. The diary is eloquently written and Hall became an author of local history books later in life. Contrary to the information currently held on Mary Hall at BA&H, which states that little is known about her and that she probably died at a young age, my research has shown that she died in 1968 at the age of eighty-nine. For confirmation of Mary’s birth date see certified copy of her birth certificate FD 565672, and for death date see Parishes of Brewood and Bishop’s Hall, Staffordshire, Graveyard Database, Parish of Brewood, Wakefield family, C143.

¹⁸Helen (Nellie) Brightwell trained at the School and became a designer/enameller (originally referred to only as ‘Nellie’ in contemporary magazines) but my census research has confirmed her identity as Helen Brightwell, living in Gillott Road, Edgbaston (1901 census, RG13/3827, p. 87) and 1911 census, (RG14PN18018, no page number given), listed as working on her own account as an artist in metalwork.

although debates around this period of history are outside the scope of this study, her assertion that: ‘women should be seen not as separate, nor as passive, nor as simple victims, but as vital and essential to the making of industrialisation,’ and her call for ‘an integrated history’ of the time¹⁹ is certainly of relevance for other historical periods.²⁰

We must also not forget that there can be no single, definitive viewpoint of a particular point in history. As Sally Alexander succinctly reminds us: ‘we know that the temporalities of class and mode of production are only some of the many composite times that make up the present.’²¹ Case studies of women such as Nellie Brightwell contest conventional and stereotypical narratives of late nineteenth and early twentieth century women. They provide us with examples of how individual women countered their supposedly prescribed roles in society, giving us a more nuanced picture of women’s lives in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This makes the achievements of the women students at the BMSA relevant to us today and is of central importance in this thesis.

As a starting point, what is already known about the BMSA, its pupils and its relationship to the national Arts and Crafts Movement? A limited amount of original and unarguably invaluable research has been carried out about the School and Arts and Crafts designers in Birmingham as a whole, most of which was authored by academic researchers and professional curators from the city or with a connection to it. However, this work is limited and there is certainly scope for more.²²

¹⁹ K. Honeyman, *Women, Gender and Industrialisation in England, 1700-1870*, (London, 2000), p. 37.

²⁰ For further work on women and the Industrial Revolution see M. Berg, ‘What Difference did Women’s Work Make to the Industrial Revolution’, *History Workshop Journal*, 35, 1993, pp. 22-44; J. Rendall, *Women in an Industrialising Society: England 1750-1880*, (Cambridge, 1990).

²¹ S. Alexander, *Becoming a Woman and other essays in nineteenth and twentieth century feminist history*, (London, 1994), p.xii.

²² See for example A. Crawford, (ed.), *By Hammer and Hand: The Arts and Crafts Movement in Birmingham*, (Birmingham, 1984); G. Wild, *Arthur and Georgie Gaskin, The Gaskins as Craftsmen*, exhibition catalogue, (BMAG, 1981); R. Hartnell, *Pre-Raphaelite Birmingham*, (Studley, 1996); T. Hunt, *Finely Taught*, 1990; D. Hanson, ‘The Art Masters’, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, vol. 19, 1, (February, 1971), pp. 40-50; *Birmingham School of Art Archives 1880-1900, An Exhibition To Celebrate The Centenary Of Birmingham*, (Birmingham, 1989).

I am currently aware of three unpublished Masters and Doctoral theses about the BMSA and its relationship to the Arts and Crafts Movement in the region. Roy Hartnell situates the School and its opportunities for students in debates around civic culture and also focuses on the School's pedagogic successes through the teaching methods of headmaster E. R. Taylor, whilst Shelagh Wilson discusses the BMSA in the context of attempts to integrate art into industry in Birmingham.²³

There has been scant research on the work of the women who trained at the BMSA and its branch schools, with the notable exception of John Swift's pioneering and invaluable studies which argue that the achievements of the middle-class female students in the national competitions was a key factor in the School's success. Swift does not, however, examine their commercial work as an indicator or result of that success,²⁴ so my study will extend his initial work. There has been little research into young, female Birmingham artist/designers such as Georgie Gaskin, who became commercially successful after studying at the School. An exhibition catalogue on the work of Georgie and her husband Arthur published by Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery in 1981 is the only full-length monograph on their work, but does not focus on Georgie as a working woman.²⁵ My thesis examines the social backgrounds, lives and work of these women in relation to the Executed Design training that

²³ R. Hartnell, *E. R. Taylor and R. Hartnell, Contribution of Art and of Design*; S. Wilson, *Art Into Industry The Birmingham Experiment: The Attempt To Unify Art With Manufacturing In The Birmingham Jewellery Trade 1860-1914*; unpublished Masters Thesis, (Royal College of Art, 1991).

²⁴ J. Swift, *An Illustrated History of Moseley School of Art: Art Education in Birmingham 1800-1975*, (An Machair Press, 2004); J. Swift, *Birmingham Art School*; J. Swift, *Women and Art Education*. The fact that some of the best work from the School was created by women is arguably a contributing factor in the School's low profile in the historiography of The Arts and Crafts Movement. There has not been an individual critical work about women artists or designers at the School, apart from a small pamphlet on the flower painter Edith Payne (1875-1959), published by Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery in 1979 and a short exhibition catalogue by G. Andrews and G. Breeze on Margaret Gere (1878-1965), published by Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museums in 1984. *The Country Diary of an Edwardian Lady* by Evelyn Holden, who was a student at the School, became a best-selling book when it was published in 1977. A related biography of Holden by Ina Taylor was published in 1980.

²⁵ G. Wild, *Arthur and Georgie Gaskin, The Gaskins as Craftsmen*, (BMAG, 1981).

they received at the BMSA and will analyse if and how this affected their employment prospects in Birmingham and elsewhere.

I also explore how these case studies of women relate to the discourses that constructed and naturalised ideas about women as artists, designers and workers in Birmingham at this time and set these findings into wider historiographical debates. As Louise Tilly states: 'The best women's history ... does not study women's lives in isolation; it endeavours to relate those lives to other historical themes ... in order to go beyond simple acceptance of their findings as 'historical facts', women's historians need to ... show how their results contribute to the explanation of other, more general problems already on the historical agenda or easily understandable in terms of central historical concepts.'²⁶

Inevitably, my study is in some ways a subjective account, given my own position as a contemporary female historian who was born and lives in Birmingham (one of the hardest aspects of writing history is writing yourself out of it), but I hope that my conclusions will have wider relevance to current historiographical debates on women's work.

Late nineteenth and early twentieth century women's design work as a whole has essentially been ignored in wider narratives about The Arts and Crafts Movement until relatively recently and is still rarely discussed.²⁷ The exception is Anthea Callen's pioneering

²⁶ L. Tilly, 'Gender, Womens' History and Social History', *Social Science History*, Vol. 13, 4, (1989), pp. 439-462; p.447.

²⁷ For general surveys of The Arts and Crafts Movement and Art Nouveau jewellery design see I. Anscombe, *Arts and Crafts Style*, (London, 1991); I. Anscombe and C. Gere, *Arts and Crafts in Britain and America* (London, 1978); V. Becker, *Art Nouveau Jewellery*, (London, 1985); R. P. Blakesley, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, (London, 2009); S. Bury, *Jewellery 1789-1910 The International Era Vol II, 1802-1910*, (Antique Collectors Club, 1991); S. Bury, 'Rossetti and his Jewellery', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 118, 875, (1976), p. 94 and pp. 96-102; A. Crawford, 'Ideas and Objects: The Arts and Crafts Movement in Britain', *Design Issues*, vol. 13, 1, (1997); E. Cumming and W. Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, (London, 1991); P. Garner (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of Decorative Arts 1890-1940*, (London, 1978); C. Gere, *Victorian Jewellery Design*, (London, 1972); C. Gere and G. Munn, *Pre-Raphaelite to Arts and Crafts Jewellery*, (Antique Collectors' Club, 1996); A. Krekel-Aalberse, *Art Nouveau and Art Deco Silver*, (London, 1989); L. Lambourne, *The Arts and Crafts Movement from the Cotswolds to Chicago*, (New York, 1982); K. Livingstone and L. Parry (eds.) *International Arts and Crafts*, (London, 2005); G. Naylor, *The Arts and Crafts Movement, Study of its Sources, Ideals and Influence on Design Theory*, (Second Edition, London, 1990); C. Phillips, *Jewels and Jewellery*, (London, 2000).

and original study *Women in the Arts & Crafts Movement*²⁸ which was first published as *Angels In The Studio* in 1979 and remains the single book on this theme. Callen provides case studies of a number of women designers in Glasgow and acknowledges the work of a small number of female designers from Birmingham, but provides no in-depth narrative of their work or biographical information. Toni-Lesser Wolf has published a succinct general survey of women jewellers in *The Arts and Crafts Movement*²⁹ and limited, but exemplary, regional re-evaluation work can be found in *Glasgow Girls' – Women in Art and Design 1880-1920*, edited by Jude Burkhauser and originally published in 1990.³⁰

Callen categorises Victorian women involved in design into those who were working class or peasants and engaged in traditional rural crafts; upper or middle-class women of means who were engaged in The Arts and Crafts Movement for philanthropic purposes in rural craft revivals; destitute gentlewomen forced by circumstance to make an independent livelihood, usually in embroidery; and the elite 'inner circle' of educated, middle-class women who were related to the main male figures in the national Arts and Crafts Movement, for example William's wife Jane Morris.³¹ These categories are certainly still useful in classifying the types of women who worked in design during The Arts and Crafts period but the women artists and designers who trained and worked at the BMSA offer an extension to Callen's four categories. I would like to propose a fifth category of women in The Arts and Crafts Movement, illustrated through the lives of young women such as Florence Camm and Georgie Gaskin who trained at the BMSA in the 1890s and early 1900s. They became successful paid artists, teachers, designers and in some cases independent businesswomen and achieved considerable critical success in the UK and abroad. These lives provide a new

²⁸ A. Callen, *Women in the Arts and Crafts Movement*.

²⁹ T. L. Wolf, 'Women Jewellers of the British Arts and Crafts Movement', *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*, vol. 14, (1989), pp. 28-45.

³⁰ J. Burkhauser, *Glasgow Girls: Women in Art and Design 1880-1920*, (Edinburgh, 1990).

³¹ A. Callen, *Women in the Arts and Crafts Movement*.

critical perspective on women's art and design work in Birmingham which could also feed into current debates in the historiography of women's professional employment.

My approach is interdisciplinary in that it fuses social and women's history with the history of art and design. I will discuss the aims and objectives of my research in more detail shortly, but will first provide a brief survey and analysis of the key debates and issues in the historiography of women's work and a discussion of how my research could contribute to these debates.

Over the last thirty years, the historiography of women's work has included discussions around class, age, married women's work, gender, single women and the workplace, locality, and economic and political issues. Some of these themes will be of relevance to my work whilst others will not. For example, in the 1980s, socialist, radical and liberal feminism came under attack from black and lesbian feminists who asked why their experiences as women were not represented in feminist debate. These newer race and sexuality debates are outside the scope of this study, as are newer studies of masculinity.³²

Debates around women's perceived primary role of motherhood and the family do, however, have relevance to my work. Many of the female students at the BMSA were single. This could have been because they had not yet married because of their age, or were 'surplus' women unable to find husbands (a decidedly stereotypical concept that I will return to later in this chapter). Alternatively, they could have been actively choosing to react against their perceived primary roles as wives and mothers in society and develop professional lives instead. Many women must certainly have faced this choice. As the *English Woman's Journal* commented: 'none but a working woman herself can estimate the thousand

³² For a useful summary of the changing debates in women's history and historiography see B. Melman, 'Changing the Subject, Women's History and Historiography 1900-2000' in I. Zweinieger-Bargielowska (ed.), *Women in Twentieth Century Britain*, (London, 2001). For a review of debates and literature in masculine studies see K. Harvey and A. Shepard, 'What Have Historians Done with Masculinity? Reflections on Five Centuries of British History, circa 1500-1950', *Journal of British Studies*, vol 44, 2, (April, 2005), pp 274-280.

hindrances placed in her path by domestic life as at present constituted and by the customs of society as at present imposed.’³³

Feminist historians have also undertaken research on the hidden investment of women’s unpaid domestic work in the economy but as my research will focus on women’s paid design work I will not discuss debates around housework and other unpaid activities as part of this study.³⁴ There has also been extensive debate around women’s work and its relationship with industrial trade unions, which again is outside the scope of this study because the women that I have researched tended to work for small and medium sized enterprises, in partnerships with their husbands or each other, or be self-employed.³⁵

Patriarchy, which has been defined as ‘a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate and exploit women’,³⁶ is a contentious topic in feminist history and one that has been debated in depth.³⁷ Based on the primary and secondary sources that I have examined so far at the BMSA there is little direct evidence that the women were working in a rigid patriarchal environment, although as I have already discussed, external examiner William Lethaby was quick to voice his concerns on several occasions that Executed Design classes were full of lady ‘amateurs’ rather than young men in training for careers in local trades, and his was probably not the only male voice debating this issue at the time. However, I do believe that patriarchy can be a constraining concept in historical analysis that can blind

³³Quoted in D. Cherry, *Victorian Women Artists*, exhibition catalogue, (Rochdale Art Gallery, 1987), p.8. For a classic text on married women’s work and the family see L.A. Tilly and J. W. Scott, *Women, Work and Family*, (Second Edition, London, 1989).

³⁴One of the earliest studies attempting to ‘recover’ the housewife from history was Catherine Hall’s ‘History of the Housewife’, originally published in E. Malos (ed.), *The Politics of Housework*, (London, 1980) and reprinted in C. Hall, *White, Male and Middle-class, Explorations in Feminism and History*, (Polity Press, 1992), pp. 43-71. Another useful paper on this theme is J. Bourke, ‘Housewifery in working-class England 1860-1914’, *Past and Present: A Journal of Historical Studies*, 143, (1994), pp. 167-97, reprinted in P. Sharpe, *Women’s Work, The English Experience 1650-1914*, (Arnold, 1998), pp. 332-358.

³⁵For an introduction to this theme see ‘Women Organising, Trade Unions and other Industrial Associations’, in G. Holloway, *Women and Work in Britain Since 1840*, (London, 2005), pp. 57-74.

³⁶G. Holloway, *Women and Work*, p.8.

³⁷One of the most vociferous advocates of patriarchy at work is Sylvia Walby. In Walby’s gender inequality theory, she argues that patriarchy is not a cohesive form of male domination over women but that it is present in six forms of social structures: in the household, in paid labour, the state, violence against women, sexual relations and cultural institutions. These intersect and change over time but are still constant in an underlying way. See S. Walby, *Patriarchy at Work*, (Minnesota, 1986).

us to the fact that women were and are individual agents who are able to negotiate particular ideological positions and constraints within society. As Sally Alexander reminds us ‘sexism and patriarchy ... while retaining a polemical conviction, I believe, have to be transcended ... in any full history of women or feminism.’³⁸

I do not intend to apply more recent postmodernist critical approaches such as post-structuralism to my work. Post-structuralism argues that there is no experience in society outside the way in which that experience is constructed by language and that this process can be investigated through the analysis of texts.³⁹ Whilst I recognise and accept that Victorian periodicals and magazines may have had a role in helping to construct women as gendered beings, I do not believe that their actual lived experiences were related directly to these texts with no space for negotiation. Post-structuralism has been contested for reasons such as over intellectualisation and abstracting the inequalities between the sexes. But the material situations that actually shaped women’s lives receive little attention in this approach and this is my chief concern with it as an analytical tool. Where postmodernism is useful, however, is that it reminds us that each historical viewpoint is relative and so by extension there can never be a definitive version of an historical event. The starting point for my work is the rediscovery of women’s lives, utilising local case studies from hitherto unexamined primary archive material and situating these lives in current debates around women’s work and feminist history of art. It is enough to rediscover and write about these women’s lives in this thesis before trying to impose a fixed ideological analysis or perspective such as post-structuralism upon these lives. Professor Ruth Watts has noted that: ‘historians of gender and

³⁸ S. Alexander, ‘Women, Class and Sexual Difference in the 1830s and 1840s’, in *Becoming a Woman*, pp. 97-125, p.101.

³⁹For an accessible summary of the different viewpoints around post-structuralism see ‘From ‘women worthies’ to post-structuralism? Debate and controversy in women’s history in Britain’ in J. Purvis, *Women’s History: Britain 1850-1945, An Introduction*, (Second Edition, London, 2002) and B. Melman, ‘Changing the Subject, Women’s History and Historiography 1900-2000’ in I. Zweinieger-Bargielowska, *Women in Twentieth Century Britain*. The two key feminist texts here are J. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (Columbia, 1988) and D. Riley, *Am I That Name? Feminism and the category of women in history*, (Minnesota, 2003).

women's history have had to find or restore women in the first place and have sought fresh sources and methods to enable them ... to justify their altering or challenging of the historical record,'⁴⁰ and Jane Martin and Joyce Goodman have pointed out that: 'The value of a biographical approach lies precisely in its potential to expand our understanding of the way in which people dealt with their dissonance.'⁴¹ I intend to not only recover and describe individual women's lives, but also demonstrate how the opportunities offered to them through their education at the BMSA enabled them to break new ground and negotiate existing social structures, perhaps by becoming self-employed or working in a higher position in a company.

The historiography of women's work has so far tended to focus on the pre-industrial and industrial revolution eras. The two classic texts were authored by Ivy Pinchbeck and Alice Clark.⁴² Having a basis in economic and social history, these books marked the starting point of an ongoing debate around continuity and change in women's work. Gerry Holloway, for example, has argued that historians should look more at how women have dealt with the interplay between continuity and change⁴³ rather than analysing women's work through one or the other perspectives.

Clark saw capitalism as limiting the economic position of women in the seventeenth century whilst Pinchbeck saw the industrial revolution bringing a change to the position of working-class women which benefitted their economic status by allowing them to work outside the home. Later historians began to question this position given the lack of original primary research material to substantiate Pinchbeck's claims for labouring women's history

⁴⁰ R. Watts, 'Gendering the Story: Change in the History of Education', *History of Education*, vol. 34, 3, (2005), p.232.

⁴¹ J. Martin and J. Goodman, *Women and Education 1800-1900*, (London, 2004), p.11.

⁴² I. Pinchbeck, *Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution 1750-1850*, (first published 1930, reprinted London, 1981); A. Clark, *Working Life of Women in the 17th Century*, (first published London, 1919; third edition, London, 1992).

⁴³ G. Holloway, *Women and Work*, p.2. For more on this theme see B. Hill, 'Women's History: A Study in Change, Continuity or Standing Still?', *Women's History Review*, 2, (1993), pp. 5-22.

and, as Judith Bennett and others have argued, women's work in general remained as low-skilled and low-status in the nineteenth century as it always had been.⁴⁴

In the late 1960s and 1970s, mainly as a result of the 'second wave' of feminism, some historians in the UK began reclaiming women's history from what they saw as a male-centred historiographical narrative, particularly working-class women's history as affected by the capitalist mode of production.⁴⁵ They discussed how women's lives had been obscured and marginalised in history, working from a position of woman as 'other' in a male society, to 'recover' female experience from a realm of unwritten history.

The histories of women's work written at this time tended to be underpinned by Marxist/capitalist class analysis. As Sheila Rowbotham stated in the classic *Hidden from History* women's silence 'is the silence of class and oppression'.⁴⁶ This text typifies this early, feminist, class-based, consciousness-raising approach to writing women's history. It is still useful today, however, because Rowbotham introduced key themes that recur in the historiography of women's work, namely how it is associated with low pay⁴⁷ and how the capitalist organisation of labour transformed the relations between the classes and the sexes,⁴⁸ so introducing the concept of gendered differences in work and how these could be subject to historical analysis. Here, I use the definition of gender originally postulated by Ann Oakley.⁴⁹ She argued that sex constitutes the biological differences between male and female and that gender is the social classification in culture of what constitutes male and female. Gender is of course contingent and contested, and whilst not disputing the usefulness of gender as an

⁴⁴ J. Bennett, 'History That Stands Still: Women's Work in the European Past', *Feminist Studies*, XIV, (1988), pp. 269-283 and K. Honeyman and J. Goodman, 'Women's Work, Gender Conflicts and Labour Markets in Europe 1500-1900', *Economic History Review*, XLIV, (1991), pp. 608-28.

⁴⁵ These early socialist feminist women were reacting against paradigms constructed by male socialist historians such as E. P. Thompson who wished to write a 'history from below' rather than a history of the elite. See Thompson's classic *Making of the Working Class*, first published in 1963 and reprinted by Penguin in 1991.

⁴⁶ S. Rowbotham, *Hidden from History, 300 Years of Women's Oppression and the Fight Against It*, (first published Pluto Press, 1973; third edition 1977).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.15.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.29.

⁴⁹ A. Oakley, *Sex, Gender and Society*, (New York, 1972).

analytical tool, we may ask why the focus in history today is still to a large extent based on the apparent dichotomies between male and female. Instead, we should endeavour to see beyond these somewhat rigid categorisations into non-gendered experiences to capture a richer, more nuanced picture of reality – however contingent that picture may be.

Other critics who were interested in gender as an analytical tool argued that as industrialisation developed, so too did gendered practices through the interaction of the state, employers and the labour movement. Sonya L. Rose explored what she perceived as a social process of gendered training and gendered work, whereby women's work was constructed as being different to men's in terms of what was suitable employment for women. This process helped to naturalise low pay for women. It also tended to be unskilled and less valued than work carried out by men.⁵⁰ This is perhaps epitomised in the high proportion of nineteenth-century women who worked in domestic service - a clear reflection of the dominant Victorian ideology of women's place in the home and a naturalisation of women's work in the domestic sphere.

Honeyman continued this theme more recently when she argued that gender was created in a unique way during industrialisation, and that men and women continue to live with its consequences today. She discussed the extent to which the association of women with domestic activities and with a subordinate working position was constructed and confirmed in the process of industrial change, such that 'industrialisation could be seen to have developed as a gendered set of industrial practices' which were contested and negotiated with the outcome of 'a gendered workplace and a gendered home which appeared to be complementary and mutually reinforcing'.⁵¹

In the late eighteenth to mid nineteenth centuries, the middle-class emerged as the dominant political and social force in Great Britain as traditional, aristocratic and mercantile

⁵⁰ S. Rose, *Limited Livelihoods, Gender and Class in Nineteenth Century England*, (London, 1992).

⁵¹ K. Honeyman, *Gender and Industrialisation in England, 1700-1870*, (London, 2000), pp. 141-142.

capitalism evolved into industrial capitalism. The term 'middle-class' is, of course, problematic, suggesting a cohesive group of people linked by income level, possessions and social values, whereas the reality of people's lives was infinitely more subtle. Nevertheless, as many critics have argued, the rise of the middle-class required a new set of values and behaviour codes, leading to an eventual delineation of male and female roles which culminated with the ideology of the 'separate spheres', whereby women were relegated to the position of domestic, passive moral guardians of the home and men became active outside it in the professional, capitalist public sphere. Patricia Branca, for example, has argued that these codes were primarily disseminated through didactic novels, sermons, periodicals and popular prints.⁵²

In an early paper, Catherine Hall links religious (specifically Evangelical) Victorian domestic ideology with class and gender formation. She argues that this model provided the framework for the emergence of the Victorian bourgeoisie and culminated in the ideology of the public and private 'separate spheres' by the 1830s and 1840s.⁵³ Hall is probably right to assert that this didactic ideology gave the new middle-classes a social model to work and aspire to in a rapidly changing world, but it is important to remember that it was a model and as with all models, open to personal negotiation. Hall does recognise that these ideas did not simply reflect and represent the interests of the new capitalist class but were 'understood selectively and taken up in part',⁵⁴ so accepting the potential for individual agency.

⁵² P. Branca, *Silent Sisterhood: Middle-class Women in the Victorian Home*, (London, 1975). Also see M. Vicinus (ed.), *Suffer and Be Still, Women in the Victorian Age*, (London, 1980), which is a classic early work on the stereotypical perception of the Victorian woman as vulnerable, morally blessed and crinoline trussed, and widely presented in nineteenth century literature and works of art.

⁵³ C. Hall, 'The Early Formation of Victorian Domestic Ideology', in S. Burman (ed.), *Fit Work for Women*, (London, 1979), pp. 15-31, reprinted in C. Hall, *White, Male and Middle-class, Explorations in Feminism and History*, (Polity Press, 1992).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.21.

Amanda Vickery describes Hall's work as one of the most 'undiluted' statements on 'capitalism, class formation and female marginalisation hitherto published.'⁵⁵

It is impossible to discuss women's work in Birmingham and the 'separate spheres' ideology without recognising the combined work of Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, specifically their joint book *Family Fortunes*⁵⁶ as well as Hall's earlier work on gender formation in early Victorian domestic ideology discussed earlier.

Davidoff and Hall's central argument in *Family Fortunes*, which is illustrated by rich personal material from a number of provincial middle-class families in Birmingham and elsewhere, is that a new sexual division of labour underpinned the rise and success of the capitalist enterprise amongst the middle-class. The authors also remind us of the hidden investment made by wives and mothers in these families through their unpaid labour as the ideals of the separate male and female spheres played out around them.

But the 'separate spheres' paradigm has provided a definition of women's experiences that is as constraining as the actuality it is meant to be describing, even though it has been a focal point in feminist criticism of the last thirty years. More recent critical voices contest its usefulness. To Amanda Vickery it is just too simplistic to be a truly effective analytical tool. As she stringently states 'this rough division between private and public could be applied to almost any century or any culture – a fact which robs the distinction of its analytical purchase.'⁵⁷ Moreover, it does not sufficiently take into account women's individual agency and choice in terms of their ability to negotiate the domestic, passive roles that were suggested to them (or their husbands and families) through the pages of magazines and religious tracts.

⁵⁵ A. Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 36, 2, (1993), pp. 383-414 and p.387.

⁵⁶ L. Davidoff and C. Hall, *Family Fortunes, Men and Women of the English Middle-Class 1780-1850*, (London, 1987).

⁵⁷ A. Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter, Women's Lives in Georgian England*, (Yale University Press, 1998, reprinted in paperback, 1999), p.7.

Whilst taking as beyond argument that Victorian women were disadvantaged in terms of their legal, institutional and biological positions in society, Vickery rightly states that ‘the metaphor of the separate spheres fails to capture the texture of female subordination and the complex interplay of emotion and power in family life ...’ and that ‘our preoccupation with the ideology of separate spheres may have blinded us to other languages in play in the Victorian period.’⁵⁸ She also reminds us that ‘the history of ideas tells us that in every era alternative ‘ideologies’ are usually on offer’⁵⁹ and argues that a close examination of individual lives at the macroscopic level through local case studies, rather than a focus on prescriptive literature, can undermine the notion to which men and women really operated in these delineated spheres. As she says: ‘The burden of this piece has not been to argue that the discourses of femininity and masculinity, space and authority, found in printed literature are not important. Yet their power to shape female language and behaviour needs to be demonstrated not taken as read ... In short, ‘intertextuality’ must be researched, not simply asserted in the abstract. Case studies are needed of the economic roles, social lives, institutional opportunities and personal preoccupations of women from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries.’⁶⁰

I hope that my micro-historical research into the women artists and designers at the BMSA will indeed show that their lives were not as prescriptive as the constraining ‘separate spheres’ ideology might suggest and that they played much more active roles in the development of their own lives and careers. Recent scholarship by the critic Patricia Zakresi has emphasised ‘the active role taken by creative women in developing their professional careers and their public identities.’⁶¹ Likewise, in the historiography of women’s work as a whole, recent scholarship has suggested that a significant number of women in the late

⁵⁸ A. Vickery, *Golden Age to Separate Spheres?*, pp. 383-414 and p.401.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.390.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.413.

⁶¹ P. Zakresi, *Representing Female Artistic Labour, 1848-1890, Refining Work for the Middle-class Woman*, (London, 2006), p.18.

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were exhibiting entrepreneurial qualities through setting up, operating and marketing their own successful business enterprises. Authors including Nicola Phillips, Alison Kay and Jennifer Aston have written persuasive regional studies of London, Birmingham and Leeds on this theme.⁶²

Finally, the ‘separate spheres’ ideology could not in reality have applied to the lives of many working-class women in Birmingham and elsewhere. These women could not afford not to work and instead contributed to the family economy as a matter of survival.⁶³ As Honeyman reminds us ‘the idea that working-class women accepted a notion of a separate female sphere that did not include paid work should be vigorously challenged.’⁶⁴

The issue of paid employment for women in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and what sort of work was considered ‘fit’ for them to do continues to be a key debate in the historiography of women’s work.

There have been a number of critical studies of nineteenth century women’s employment. Peter Earle’s comparative study of female employment in London in 1700 and 1851 demonstrates that domestic service, laundry, nursing and sewing were the most common occupations for women at both these times.⁶⁵ Sally Alexander’s analysis of nineteenth-century women’s work between the years 1820 to the 1860s highlights women’s involvement

⁶² N. Phillips, *Women In Business 1700-1850*, (Suffolk, 2006); A. C. Kay, *The Foundations of Female Entrepreneurship Enterprise, Home and Household in London c.1800-1870*, (Oxford, 2009); J. Aston, *Female Business Owners in Britain, 1849-1901*, unpublished PhD thesis, (The University of Birmingham, 2012); J. Aston, ‘Female Business Ownership in Birmingham 1849-1901’, *Midland History*, vol. 37, 2, pp. 187-206.

⁶³ Social historian Professor Carl Chinn champions the matriarchs of Birmingham in *They Worked All Their Lives, Women of the Urban Poor in England, 1880-1939*, (Manchester, 1988). Birmingham author Kathleen Dayus confirms, as we might expect, that life in the city’s back to back housing was hard and that ‘the menfolk were mostly out of work and the women had to earn a living by taking in washing, or carding linen buttons, or sewing on hooks and eyes by the light of a piece of candle.’ K. Dayus, *The Girl from Hockley*, (London, 2006), p.2. Dayus (1903-2003) provides a first-hand account of starting work as a young girl in Birmingham’s Jewellery Quarter aged fourteen when she worked on a press before learning how to enamel badges. She eventually set up her own small business. See also A. August, ‘How Separate a Sphere? Poor Women and Paid Work in Late Victorian England’, *Journal of Family History*, 19, (1994), pp. 285-309.

⁶⁴ K. Honeyman, *Women, Gender and Industrialisation*, p.92.

⁶⁵ P. Earle, ‘The female labour market in London in the late 17th and early 18th centuries’, *Economic History Review*, Second Series, XLII, (1989), pp. 328-52.

in the sweated trades such as laundressing, charring, and needlework.⁶⁶ Both these studies confirm that as employment in agriculture for women declined during the Industrial Revolution and into the early nineteenth century, the main types of employment for women were low-paid domestic service, textiles, needlework and governessing, which was considered one of the only acceptable occupations for middle-class women who needed to work and who sought to retain their 'genteel' status in society.

Anthea Callen's interest in the sexual division of labour in *The Arts and Crafts Movement*⁶⁷ discusses two further themes around 'fit' work for women – the loss in social status for middle-class women undertaking paid work which stemmed from public anxiety about both middle and working class women in employment, and that men and women in design undertook different jobs, the women for generally less pay. She cites an editorial in *The Art Journal* from 1872, which stated: 'We do not, on the whole, find that great opposition is offered by manufacturers to the wider employment of women. Indeed, even with the existing low estimate of the value of women's work, their assistance may be expected. 'There is no reason', says one of them, 'why we should object to employ women. They work for lower wages than men.'⁶⁸ Thus, female workers became naturalised as a cheap labour force and were paid lower wages than men for comparable work or were confined to less skilled work that paid lower wages. As Jane Lewis states: 'on the whole, regardless of their occupation, women workers were found in low status jobs that paid wages barely adequate for the maintenance of a respectable lifestyle.'⁶⁹

But by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the type of employment open to women had begun to change. Jobs in the new 'service sector' such as teaching, shop work

⁶⁶ S. Alexander, *Becoming a Woman*, pp. 3-55. For an authoritative work on laundressing see P. Malcolmson, 'Laundresses and the Laundry Trade in Victorian England', *Victorian Studies*, vol. 24, 4, (1981), pp. 439-462.

⁶⁷ A. Callen, 'Sexual Division of Labour in the Arts and Crafts Movement', *Oxford Art Journal*, Vol. 3, 1, (1980), pp. 22-27.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* p.22.

⁶⁹ J. Lewis, *Women in England 1870-1950, Sexual Divisions and Social Change*, (Sussex, 1984), p.158.

and nursing, were deemed to be suitable for women. These required some education but were non-industrial and did not require significant amounts of manual work. As Jane Lewis suggests, for middle-class women ‘the shift to white blouse work was the major feature of the change in the occupational distribution of women during the period.’⁷⁰

Mary Poovey employs the conceptual phrase ‘border cases’ for women working in jobs such as nursing because these occupations demonstrated a conjunction of the domestic (normal) and abnormal (working) woman, providing a legitimacy to working women employed in these new occupations and enabling them to cross-over into the professional sphere.⁷¹ Zakresi has argued that ‘these representations are seen to be working in what Anne Digby has termed ‘gender borderlands’ ... spaces in which middle-class women could safely enter and manipulate the public world without overstepping the bounds of their ‘domestic territory’.⁷² This of course echoes Poovey’s concept of ‘border cases’ and provides a useful extension to the ‘separate spheres’ analysis when considering how middle-class women negotiated the dominant ideologies around their position in society and helped to legitimise their employment in ‘respectable’ jobs outside the domestic environment. Judy Lown extends the list of ‘respectable’ jobs for women to include art and design, which in common with teaching, nursing and clerical work was seen to retain some of the more traditional ideas around what constituted ‘feminine qualities’.⁷³

Art was considered an acceptable solution to the problem of women who needed or wanted to work. As Callen states: ‘among the few occupations considered suitable for middle-

⁷⁰Ibid. Also see L. Holcombe, *Victorian Ladies at Work*, (London, 1973) which focuses on teaching, nursing, shopkeeping and distributive trades, and clerical and civil service occupations. Although dated, this book is still useful today as an introductory study. More recent studies have included G. Anderson, (ed.), *The White Blouse Revolution, Female Office Workers since 1870*, (Manchester, 1988) and J. Rendall, *Women in an Industrialising Society: England 1750-1880*, (Oxford, 1990).

⁷¹ M. Poovey, ‘Uneven Developments’: *The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian Britain*, (London, 1989).

⁷² A. Digby, ‘Victorian Values and Women in Public and Private’, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 78, (1992), p.210, quoted in P. Zakresi, *Representing Female Artistic Labour*, p.7.

⁷³ J. Lown, *Women and Industrialisation: Gender at Work in Nineteenth Century England*, (Cambridge, 1990), p.7.

class women in the Victorian period, art-work rapidly came to be recognised as one area in which women's participation could be safely encouraged; here was a field of employment that could be seen as an extension of traditional feminine accomplishment, which would enhance rather than erode the role designated as natural for Victorian womanhood.⁷⁴

Callen proceeds to state that the crafts most commonly practised by women echoed the traditional patterns of sexual labour divisions, for example embroidery, lace making, jewellery, bookbinding and illustration, because these branches of design could all be executed within the home.⁷⁵

This thesis will consider to what extent women students at the BMSA who worked professionally were confined to these traditional 'feminine' crafts – whether they were executed inside or outside the home. Zakresi argues that women's work in the 'art industries' (in which she includes silk and ribbon work, etching, pottery and painting) was deemed acceptable partly because this type of work was suitable for women but also because their professional output in this type of work was linked to the improvement of England's 'national character'. 'Public industry,' she suggests, 'could be seen to be compatible with private femininity.'⁷⁶ So social responsibility and commercial prosperity were shown to mitigate women's presence in the public and degrading industrial sphere. Zakresi develops this argument to suggest that a refined image of women's industrial work through their work in the art industries helped to legitimise their position in the workplace.

The majority of women under consideration in this thesis were single. In an article written in 1862, W.R. Greg introduced the derogatory idea of the 'surplus' or redundant woman into already stereotypical contemporary Victorian debates around women, society and

⁷⁴ A. Callen, *Sexual Division of Labour in the Arts and Crafts Movement*, p.23.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p.26. For a further discussion on this theme see R. Parker and G. Pollock, 'Crafty Women and the Hierarchy of the Arts', in *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology*, (London, 1981), pp. 50-81.

⁷⁶ P. Zakresi, *Representing Female Artistic Labour*, p.18.

employment. These women needed to work to support themselves⁷⁷ because they did not marry out of circumstance or active personal choice. But the voices of women who chose to earn their own living and be self-supporting rather than defining their lives by marriage and motherhood are not so easy to hear in history. Critics such as Martha Vicinus explored these women's lives by offering positive examples of single, independent women who forged strong friendships and communities.⁷⁸ This is a useful perspective as evidence suggests that some female students at the BMSA formed close friendships and professional working relationships at the School and were able to negotiate the male-centred networks of The Arts and Crafts Movement. This issue is discussed in greater depth in Chapter Two of this thesis.⁷⁹

A further theme in the historiography of women's work is education and training for women. This of course is crucial to this study. The history and importance of the Female School of Design in London as an institution has been recognised by critics,⁸⁰ but as Whitney Chadwick rightly states: 'The complex issue of art training for women deserves its own study, for in demanding access to art training and life classes women were not only challenging codes of feminine propriety and sexual conduct; they were also claiming the right to see and represent actively the world around them, and to command genius as their own. As women began to press for the training that would enable them to compete as professional artists, their struggle became part of the larger one for educational reform.'⁸¹ I hope that this thesis will form the basis of wider studies in the history of women's art and design education and how this impacted on their professional employment prospects.

⁷⁷ W. R. Greg, 'Why are Women Redundant', *National Review*, 14, (1862), pp. 434-60.

⁷⁸ M. Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women 1850-1920*, (London, 1985).

⁷⁹ Mary Elizabeth Hall's diary for 1891-95 details a close friendship with a fellow female student at the School (see MS 596, BA&H) and the BMSA provided a dedicated common room for its female students (see photographs and plans of the room in the BMSA archive). Other female designers worked together on collaborative professional projects, for example Florence Camm and Violet Holden's joint civic commission for a silver casket for John Thackray Bunce, now in the permanent collection at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.

⁸⁰ This opened in 1842. See G. Chalmers, *Women in the Nineteenth Century Art World: Schools of Art and Design for Women in London and Philadelphia*, (Greenwood Press, 1998).

⁸¹ W. Chadwick, *Women, Art and Society*, (first published London, 1990, fourth edition, 2007), p.178.

Women's voices are seldom heard in the history of technical education in the twentieth century⁸² whereas considerable debate around women and technical education can be found in the Victorian periodical press. The BMSA did not cater for technical education after 1895 when the Birmingham Municipal Technical School (BMTS) opened in Suffolk Street and offered classes for domestic service and housekeeping which were aimed at working-class girls.⁸³ An analysis of surviving prospectuses for the BMTS between 1901-1902 and 1904-5 to 1915 shows clear differences between the curriculum at the two schools. Four women were employed at the BMTS to teach dedicated women's classes in the afternoon and evening in 'traditional' women's skills such as cookery, dressmaking, laundry work and hygiene. No such subjects were offered at the BMSA, so a domestic bias in women's education is the key difference between the type of classes offered to women at the BMSA and its accompanying technical school.

This thesis focuses on Victorian and Edwardian working women as professional artists and designers, so an awareness of feminist history of art theory and criticism is as vital to its context as an awareness of the historiography of women's work.

In brief, history of art developed as an academic discipline from the fifteenth century onwards. In its traditional form, it can be defined as the description and classification of art objects through stylistic analysis that have been created by individual artists. Works make up an art historical 'canon' according to their style, authenticity, and date of creation. But as Chadwick states, by 'revering the individual artist as hero ... it has maintained a conception of art as individual expression or as a reflection of reality, often divorced from the

⁸²The classic text is M. Argles, *South Kensington to Robbins, An Account of English Technical and Scientific Education since 1851*, (London, 1964), but it contains scant reference to women and technical education. For a more recent work that discusses women's technical education see J. Goodman, 'Social Investigation and Economic Empowerment: The Women's Industrial Council and the LCC Trade Schools for Girls, 1892-1914', *History of Education*, vol. 27, 3, (1998), pp. 297-314.

⁸³The Birmingham Municipal Technical School was located in Suffolk Street. Its surviving records are now part of Aston University's archive, which is currently uncatalogued. Surviving prospectuses for the years 1890-1896 list the classes open to women. These included cookery, dressmaking, millinery and laundressing.

contemporary social conditions of production and circulation'.⁸⁴ It is this 'divorce' that I am interested in when examining women's works of art and design from the BMSA and the Arts and Crafts Movement in Birmingham. Chadwick later suggests that 'artistic intention can now be seen more clearly as just one of many overlapping strands – ideological, economic, social and political – that make up the work of art, whether ... painting or sculpture.'⁸⁵ This perspective is crucial to a full understanding of the work produced by women artists and designers associated with the BMSA.

Feminist history of art scholarship, in common with feminist women's history, began with attempts to rediscover, assess and publicise women artists⁸⁶ and move them from their marginal status to the established, accepted and heroic art historical 'canon' that primarily contains works that were produced and consumed by men. Whilst admirable, these initial feminist attempts to highlight and position women's artworks in the context of the existing male-centred canon could be seen to conflict with the 'need to critique and deconstruct those same discourses in order to expose ideological assumptions based in systems of domination and difference'.⁸⁷

Despite this inescapable criticism, feminist art historians such as Deborah Cherry, Linda Nochlin and Jan Marsh have written useful and pioneering surveys of Victorian women artists that situate the lives and work of these women in the established art historical canon of their time and introduce feminist centred methodologies for analysing their work.⁸⁸ However, little, if any detailed research has been carried out at a regional level for Birmingham.

Addressing this omission is important for both regional and national decorative arts history.

⁸⁴ W. Chadwick, *Women, Art and Society*, p.9.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.11.

⁸⁶ See for example G. Pollock, *Vision and Difference, Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art*, (first published London 1988, reprinted 1990), G. Greer, *The Obstacle Race: The Fortunes of Women Painters and Their Work*, (New York, 1979); L. Nochlin, *Representing Women*, (London, 1999).

⁸⁷ W. Chadwick, *Women, Art and Society*, p.11.

⁸⁸ S. P. Casteras and L. H. Peterson, *A Struggle for Fame, Victorian Women Artists and Authors*, exhibition catalogue, (Yale Center for British Art, 1994); D. Cherry, *Beyond the Frame, Feminism and Visual Culture, Britain 1850-1900*, (London, 2000); P. Gerrish-Nunn and J. Marsh, *Women Artists in the Pre-Raphaelite Movement*; P. Gerrish-Nunn, *Victorian Women Artists*, 1987.

By rediscovering these designers' and artists' lives and presenting them in their social context, particularly utilising information gleaned from primary sources, it is possible to question existing stereotypes of women producing art and design. The examples presented in this thesis show women exercising individual agency and choice in their lives, which builds a more balanced picture of women working in art and design in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries alongside what is already known about fine artists such as Rosa Bonheur, Mary Cassatt, and Anna Lea Merritt.⁸⁹

Little published research has been undertaken that focuses on professional women designers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Cheryl Buckley's pioneering research on professional female designers in the 1920s is an exception as is Suzette Worden and Jill Seddon's work on women designers in the 1920s and 1930s.⁹⁰ Their joint paper examines the relationship between women and design in a professional context during the inter-war years and offers case studies of particular designers. The authors explore the social context of women working in design at this time and recognise them as both consumers of and creators of design products at a time when, as they argue, the industrial designer was first recognised as a professional.

A key debate in feminist art historical research that is of particular interest in this study is what constitutes acceptable artistic styles and subjects for women artists and to what extent these differences were constructed or naturalised on gendered grounds. In the nineteenth century, women artists were generally denied access to the life class and were discouraged from producing history paintings (generally considered to be the apotheosis of masculine

⁸⁹See G. Pollock, *Vision and Difference* and D. Cherry *Beyond the Frame*, for detailed discussions of these artists and their work.

⁹⁰C. Buckley, 'Made in Patriarchy: Toward a Feminist Analysis of Women and Design,' *Design Issues*, vol. 3, 2, (1986), pp. 3-14 and S. Worden and J. Seddon 'Women Designers in Britain in the 1920s and 1930s: Defining the Professional and Redefining Design', *Journal of Design History*, vol. 8, 3, (1995) pp. 177-193. Their methodology was to record the names of as many women as possible working as professional designers in the UK who were mentioned in periodicals such as *The Studio* but they did not employ qualitative evaluation on these results. My work follows a similar methodology for female designers in Birmingham but a larger, national survey of professional women designers in the twentieth century utilising local records and sources elsewhere in the United Kingdom would be a fruitful project for further study.

intellectual high art, requiring a knowledge of acceptable subjects drawn from classical antiquity and scripture). Instead, women were confined in the main to the lesser genres of decorative flower painting, landscape and domestic genre scenes. Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock introduced the idea of the detrimental effects of acceptable styles on women's art and this continues to be debated today.⁹¹ My investigation in this thesis into the types of objects and subjects painted by women students at the BMSA and professional women artists and designers in Birmingham during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries could confirm or repudiate some of these assumptions around Victorian women artists and the type of works they produced.

To summarise, in this initial chapter I have analysed the most relevant debates in the current historiography of women's work, introduced appropriate debates in feminist history of art and presented the existing scholarly work on the BMSA and The Arts and Crafts Movement in Birmingham. I will now present my methodology and introduce the key primary sources utilised in my research.

The research presented in this thesis about the BMSA and its relation to women's work and The Arts and Crafts Movement is based upon qualitative and quantitative analysis and focuses on the years 1885 (when the BMSA became the first municipal art school in England) to 1914.

No detailed records connecting women students with particular employers have survived in the BMSA archive.⁹² As a consequence of this paucity of records from within the School itself, my research utilises analyses of the 1871 to 1911 censuses of England and Wales for occupational and demographic information on working women, whilst recognising some of

⁹¹ R. Parker and G. Pollock, *Old Mistresses*.

⁹²Records linking any students from the BMSA, whether male or female, to particular employers are extremely rare.

the inherent problems of such data.⁹³ As a starting point, I analysed the extant local and national prize lists in the BMSA archive and compared these with contemporary periodical reports in *The Studio*, *The Artist*, *The Art Journal* and other national art magazines to discover students such as Helen ‘Nellie’ Brightwell who may have been noticed by employers or who possessed the advanced practical skills that would have enabled them to become self-employed or take senior design jobs. I have also utilised regional trade directories to identify women who were advertising themselves as self-employed, and wage books and employers records, exhibition catalogues, personal diaries and letters, probate records, interviews with surviving family members and research on women’s work from published sources written by contemporary social commentators.⁹⁴

The key social explorer text for Birmingham during my time period is *Women’s Work and Wages* by Cadbury, Matheson and Shann, which was first published in 1906.⁹⁵ This study was produced in the midst of somewhat misplaced Social Darwinist contemporary debates about women’s health and the risks of working outside the home given women’s position as ‘the future mothers of our race’.⁹⁶ Predictably, and in common with much social explorer literature from this time, it contains somewhat hyperbolic descriptions of women’s working conditions, for example in jewellery quarter workshops where the lack of ventilation

⁹³ For a discussion of some of the problems inherent in census research see R. E. Bailey and T. J. Hatton ‘Women’s Work in Census and Survey, 1911-1931’, *Economic History Review*, vol. 54, 1, (2001), pp. 87-107.

⁹⁴ The late nineteenth and early twentieth century ‘social explorer’ literature offers much to historians of women’s work. For example Clara Collett in *Report on the Statistics of Employment of Women and Girls* (London, 1894), studied married women working in the cotton and wool trade in mills and their wages and the occupations of women and girls living in different ‘urban sanitary districts’ with over 50,000 inhabitants. Her investigations demonstrated an increase in women working in teaching, sick nursing, tailoring, millinery and dressmaking, grocery and allied trades based on her analysis of the 1891 census (p.3). Also see B. L. Hutchins, *Women in Modern Industry*, (first published London, 1915, republished 1978). For working class women’s employment see M. Pember Reeves, *Round About a Pound A Week*, (first published 1913, reprinted 1979); M. L. Davies, *Life As We Have Known It by Co-operative Working Women*, (first published 1931, republished London, 1977); and for a concise summary of ‘social explorer’ literature, including Robert Sherard’s work on Black Country women chain makers, see *Into Unknown England 1866-1913, Selections from the Social Explorers*, P. Keating (ed.), (Manchester 1976), which includes extracts from reports by Charles Booth, B. S. Rowntree, Robert Sherard and Lady Bell.

⁹⁵ E. Cadbury, M. Cecile Matheson and G. Shann, *Women’s Work and Wages, A Phase of Life In An Industrial City*, (London, 1906).

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* p.12.

has made the environment ‘oppressive and stifling, and the operatives of pallid, unhealthy aspect’.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, this study offers unarguably useful and illuminating information about the type of work women were engaged in Birmingham at the time, the wages they were paid, and relevant legislation and attitudes towards the type of work that was considered suitable for women. The Cadbury study is utilised primarily in Chapter Three of this thesis.

To conclude, my research is an interdisciplinary synthesis of the history of art and design and social and women’s history that links evidence from a variety of sources to create its argument. However, it does not take a radical feminist standpoint, because I agree with Sally Alexander when she said: ‘Ironically, radical feminism writes women’s subjectivity and active agency out of history as effectively as any Marxism.’⁹⁸ Academic theories are certainly useful as interpretative paradigms of historical reality, as long as these paradigms do not mask the rich reality of individual experience and human agency within that history.

⁹⁷Ibid. p.30.

⁹⁸ S. Alexander, *Becoming a Woman*, p.101.

CHAPTER TWO:

‘RECOGNISING THEIR RIGHT TO A FREE, OPEN AND EQUAL CAREER’: WOMEN’S EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AT THE BIRMINGHAM MUNICIPAL SCHOOL OF ART.

In 1882, an anonymous writer on women’s suffrage contributed an editorial on ‘The Education of Women’ to the journal *Reynold’s Miscellany*. In it, the author stated: ‘the great misfortune of woman has been, that only one avenue to an eligible position was open to her; and that was by marriage to a prosperous or distinguished man, from whom she could derive ‘reflected lustre’’. The writer continued:

‘The old and still prevailing idea that woman is a mere appendage of man is the root of that defect in education of which we complain ... woman can never attain her full spiritual stature till laws and social customs cease to treat her as an appendage to man, and treat her as an independent individual ... we wish to see women educated with distinct and various aims in life, leaving marriage to be but one object of interest among many others with them, as it is with men. Women ... have a right to do whatever they can do well. If a woman can take such observations of the heavenly bodies as render valuable assistance to science, she proves herself to be an astronomer ... if she can plan houses with good taste and judgement, she proves her right to be an architect ... it is a cheering sign of the times that women are becoming more and more self-reliant, and that men are learning more and more to respect them for decided indications of enterprise and energy.’¹

At the same time that this proto-feminist text was written, the BMSA School of Art was preparing to become the first municipal school of art in the UK. Headmaster Edward Richard Taylor, who was briefly introduced in Chapter One and will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, had begun to put in place educational changes at the School that would have a direct and emancipatory impact on some of its female students. This chapter will

¹ ‘The Education of Women’, *Reynold’s Miscellany*, (May 2nd, 1882).

explore how ‘self-reliant’ women who wanted more than ‘reflected lustre’ from a husband could take advantage of these new educational opportunities. It will also present my initial evidence to suggest that this education was a critical factor in driving some of these women towards independent careers and lives as ‘new women’, professionally trained and independent of a husband’s support.

In 1892, ten years after the writer in *Reynold’s Miscellany* called for an education for women that would enable them to become independent from men, John Thackray Bunce, who was Chair of the Management Sub-Committee of the BMSA, gave a speech at the School’s annual prizegiving. This was the most prestigious event in the School year, and was attended by several hundred students, their teachers, external examiners, and the professional and social elite of Birmingham, including the Lord Mayor, councillors and business leaders. A complete list of prizes awarded and highlights of speeches given was published in the local press each year.² In his 1892 speech, Bunce proclaimed that: ‘We have trained a large number of women in our schools; we find, by experience, that they are capable of giving intelligent and effective teaching in drawing; and therefore, recognising their right to a free, open and equal career, we are giving them opportunities of doing the work for which they are showing themselves to be thoroughly fitted’.³ Through this speech, Bunce publically affirmed the BMSA’s commitment to art education for women that could lead to a professional career utilising the skills that they had learnt at the School. Although he was discussing paid employment for women as teachers of drawing, so to some extent reflecting stereotypical nineteenth century ideas of fine art as a ‘fit’ occupation for women, the professionally-oriented training available at the BMSA could also prepare women students to enter employment in silversmithing and other metalwork, enamelling, stained glass design

² See for example ‘The Birmingham School of Art’, *Birmingham Daily Post*, (August 28th, 1894).

³ J. Bunce, *Prize Address Birmingham School of Art 1892*, Birmingham Archives and Heritage, L54.1/240041, also in *Addresses, Municipal School of Art, Birmingham 1892-1924*, (Birmingham School of Printing, 1942).

and manufacture, commercial book illustration, highly-skilled artistic jewellery production and metalwork.

By acknowledging women's right to 'free, open and equal' careers in art and design, Bunce's speech represents an enlightened perspective about women's professional employment. I will adopt a multi-causal approach to explain the possible reasons why he held this view. There can of course be no single reason why, and as the process of writing history itself is contingent, another scholar seeking explanatory reasons in the future will possibly find different explanations to mine.

To begin to find out why the BMSA was exceptional, it is necessary to know more about art education in Birmingham in the early nineteenth century in order to compare this against later developments at the Municipal School. As discussed in Chapter One, young, middle-class women who did not have to work to support themselves or their family were most likely to have been taught art as a leisure activity. Middle-class women seeking a vocational art education may have been attempting to improve their prospects in gaining a position as a governess or paid private art teacher. In Birmingham, such women seeking an artistic education could receive private tuition, or enrol for a course of study at Joseph Barber and Samuel Lines' fee-paying art schools.⁴

Young male designers and commercial artists in Birmingham most likely trained as apprentices or in family firms, with occasional supplementary professional tuition. Birmingham trades included silver, gold, glass, enamelling, engraving, gunsmithing and jewellery.⁵ By the mid-nineteenth century, the city was an important centre for mass-

⁴ Barber and Hollins taught drawing at an academy in Great Charles Street from 1801, Samuel Lines held drawing classes in Newhall Street from 1807. See S. Lines, *A Few Incidents of the Life of Samuel Lines*, (Birmingham, 1862) and C. Wan, *Samuel Lines and Sons: Rediscovering Birmingham's Artistic Dynasty 1794-1898 Through Works on Paper at The Royal Birmingham Society of Artists*, unpublished PhD thesis (University of Birmingham, 2012).

⁵ *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, (March 1st, 1872), p.285. For the evolution of the gun trade see M. J. Wise, 'On the Evolution of the Gun and Jewellery Quarters in Birmingham', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 15, 1950.

produced jewellery production which combined the existing craft skills of artisans with a growing use of machinery. Birmingham provided a fertile environment for skilled independent artisans who wanted to set up in business in the town's thriving Jewellery Quarter or as a private painter, etcher or printmaker.

Individual enterprises or small-scale, family businesses proliferated in the city, which may have provided women with the opportunity to work alongside their husbands and fathers and gain business skills as well as technical and artistic skills, so alleviating the need for a formal, fee-paying artistic education. However, independent women workers may have suffered from a lack of trade skills unless they had worked in such a family enterprise, and many women had to manage the conflicting demands of professional work and childcare. Widowed women may have continued to run family businesses after the death of their husband, and some single and married women ran their own businesses, but this tended to be in areas of employment considered to be more suitable for women such as laundressing or millinery.⁶

Art and design education in Birmingham became more formalised in 1843 with the opening of the Birmingham Government School of Design, which was renamed as the Birmingham Government School of (Ornamental/Practical) Art in 1852, and supported by Government grants from the Department of Science and Art in London, private subscriptions and student fees. The new School began to teach the National Syllabus which was devised and disseminated by the Government Department of Science and Art at South Kensington, as discussed in Chapter One. Issues around art and design instruction in the context of the erosion of Britain's competitiveness and Empire have dominated the literature around Cole

⁶ For example, an analysis of the 1895 *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham*, Trades Section, shows that out of fifty-eight laundry businesses, thirty-four were run by women, and of the 1,014 millinery businesses listed, seventy-one were run by women or were unidentifiable by sex from the business name. In a related occupational area, nine out of the twelve straw bonnet hat makers listed were women.

and national art instruction.⁷ However, it is the way in which the National Scheme of Instruction was taught, not its possible economic or empire-reinforcing effects, that is of most relevance to my study. Taylor made changes to the scheme at the BMSA and these developments affected the type of art education available to women who attended the School.

John Swift has identified three strands in British art teaching after 1852. Instruction in drawing was paramount, but there were at least three approaches to teaching it – the geometric, where measurement, proportion and ratio were paramount; the humanist, where knowledge of the art of the past was conveyed through copying casts and decorative ornament; and the empiricist, where drawing from nature allowed individual interpretation to inform artistic knowledge.⁸ It is this latter approach, which gave students more scope for individual expression and creativity, that would eventually define art teaching at the BMSA.

However, the system of national art teaching instruction was dominated by the geometric and humanist approaches and by the 1870s there was tension between some provincial schools of art, including Birmingham, about the extent to which teaching and examinations were centrally directed from London and the rigidity of the National Syllabus, which depended in the main on copying plaster casts and decorative drawings.⁹

At the same time as these growing tensions between province and state, student numbers at the Birmingham School were increasing. In 1843, there were eighty-four students, some as young as ten years of age, and by 1883, two years before municipalisation, numbers had grown over fifteen times to give a total of 1,306 students in the Central and Branch Schools,¹⁰ although as stated in Chapter One, a lack of registers in the School's archive from this time makes it impossible to calculate the overall ratio of male and female students and whether students were full or part-time. This rise in student numbers was possibly the result of

⁷ S. Macdonald, *The History and Philosophy of Art Education*, (New Edition, Cambridge, 2004).

⁸ J. Swift, *Birmingham School of Art: Origins and Development*, (Birmingham, 1995).

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ J. Swift, *History of Moseley School of Art*, p.20.

growing consumer demand for affordable Birmingham jewellery and similar decorative arts products made in the city, which led to a rise in the number of skilled jobs available in local trades.

Evidence of the attitudes to women's education and employment at the Birmingham School prior to its municipalisation in 1885 is rare. However, *The English Woman's Review* published the following notice about Birmingham in October 1874:

'The autumn session of the School of Design commenced on 1st September. For some time past the committee have had under their consideration the advisability of establishing a class for instructing female artisans in the art of drawing, thinking there must be many girls working in manufactures who, having a taste for drawing, would gladly avail themselves of the opportunity of studying under efficient masters. To this effect, the committee have determined to establish this session an evening class to meet the case ... from seven to nine o'clock on Tuesday and Thursday evenings each week ... it is to be hoped that a good many will attend, and thus gain instruction which to many may be found of great value in their daily occupation. It rests with the artisans themselves whether the class be continued, and the committee hope that their efforts will be appreciated and the class well supported.'¹¹

The results of the effort are not recorded, but if successful, the initiative would have specifically linked women with artistic ability working in the trades in Birmingham with an opportunity to extend their formal practical education in relation to those trades, so giving them more marketable professional skills.

By 1893, *The Studio Magazine* stated that 'by comparing the various branches of South Kensington, we recognise at once that the Birmingham Art School must be considered by

¹¹*The English Woman's Review*, (October 1st, 1874), p.302.

itself, for it is no way a typical specimen of our provincial schools. Special circumstances have resulted in permitting it peculiar independence of action.’¹²

These special circumstances included, at a basic level, the move to primary funding by the city’s rate payers rather than Department of Science and Art grants from South Kensington, which inevitably meant that the BMSA could have more freedom. The teachers and committee members at the School would have been subject to external pressures from and conflicting loyalties to South Kensington whilst at the same time being in a position to transgress prescribed types of behaviour. In his introduction to the first issue of *The Art Student*, the School’s professionally printed and retailed magazine, Headmaster Edward Taylor commented how the school was entering ‘a new epoch in art education. For some years past the nation, through its Parliament ... has given pecuniary and artistic aid to provincial schools which latter have, however, been dependent on voluntary aid. For the first time in the history of our country, a municipality has undertaken a similar work, the direction and maintenance of its Art School. This act ... should give a still higher tone to our school and its work ... it is for us masters and students to work together with a common love of Art and Education, assured that as we so work the result will be in every sense a benefit to our town.’¹³

Edward Taylor’s educational transgressions are arguably the strongest contributing factor to the BMSA’s independence, and also, perhaps, to the School’s attitudes towards progressive education for women. Taylor did not merely push the boundaries of accepted art teaching through the National Syllabus, he over-stepped them. He authored two books on art teaching, and made his feelings about the national scheme and its mechanistic methods clear in the second of these, *Drawing and Design*, a practical textbook for art instruction published

¹²*The Studio Magazine*, vol. II, (1893-4), pp. 90-99.

¹³ E. R. Taylor, ‘The Art Student’, I, in *The Art Student*, I-VIII, (October 1885-1887), L54.19, 80198, BA&H. The reactions at South Kensington to Taylor’s ideas and educational changes to the national syllabus at the BMSA would be a useful future study.

in 1893. As well as stressing that the processes described in his book could be ‘designed and executed by both sexes’,¹⁴ he stated that:

‘Women are showing such special aptitude in design ... it is therefore a matter of wonder that ladies have generally been content to work out the designs of others without possessing even sufficient knowledge of drawing and design as is necessary to the intelligent copying, or the due appreciation and enjoyment of the design they are trying to translate into most beautiful materials.’¹⁵

It is arguable that Taylor’s desire to transgress existing art education at the BMSA and his ability to do so was underpinned by his professional position and close friendships within the network of Birmingham’s liberal municipal elite, particularly those involved in promoting and disseminating the city’s ‘Civic Gospel’. Central to this was the Liberal council’s paternalistic zeal for the welfare and moral and educational improvement of the people of Birmingham through local government.

A full discussion of the ‘Civic Gospel’ and its key figures is outside the scope of this study, but it should certainly be considered as a contributing factor to the success of the BMSA. The Unitarian manufacturer Joseph Chamberlain (1836-1914) became Mayor of Birmingham in 1873. The ensuing municipalisation of gas and water supplies, Chamberlain’s support for the National Education League (which called for universal, compulsory and free schooling) and an improvement scheme in the centre of the town to create Corporation Street (an elegant architectural thoroughfare), provided a municipally sponsored backdrop against which the city’s renaissance in art and design could flourish. This culminated in the BMSA becoming the first municipally funded school of art in the country in 1885. Indeed, the BMSA’s Central School of Art Building in Margaret Street, which was designed by the architect John Henry Chamberlain (1831-1883) in the Neo-Venetian style, can be seen as a

¹⁴ E. R. Taylor, *Drawing and Design for Beginners*, (London, 1893), p.110.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

symbol of Birmingham's late-nineteenth century artistic renaissance, a physical manifestation of the ideals of the 'Civic Gospel' made possible through the links between art and industry in the city.¹⁶

The industrialist William Kenrick sat on the Management Sub-Committee of the School of Art and later the BMSA for over twenty years, together with Edward Taylor; John Thackray Bunce; members of the City Council and prominent representatives from local trades such as the manufacturing jeweller John Bragg. The group met once a month at the School or at specially arranged meetings and was responsible for its overall direction and administration. Kenrick received public approbation for his work at the School in 1900:

The Birmingham School of Art has triumphed... and its success is due to the skilful and untiring efforts of the Right Hon William Kenrick ... the 1,439 students of 14 years ago have risen to 4,136, the thirty-four teachers to 110, and the seven branches to 15, while the charge on the rates for last year was £9,167, or less than a penny in the pound.¹⁷

¹⁶ See P. Marsh, 'Joseph Chamberlain', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxyd.bham.ac.uk/view/article/32350?docPos=2>, accessed 10th March, 2014 and for a discussion on the 'Civic Gospel' see E. Hopkins, 'The Civic Gospel, and After', in *Birmingham The Making Of The Second City 1850-1939*, (Stroud, 2001), pp. 49-68. Joseph Chamberlain was not the only prominent figure in Birmingham associated with the 'Civic Gospel'. Others included George Dawson (1821-1876), radical preacher and political activist, and hardware manufacturer and bibliophile Samuel Timmins (1826-1902), who can both be seen as precursors to Chamberlain's municipal reform programme through their contributions to the public library movement in Birmingham. See I. Sellers, 'George Dawson', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxyd.bham.ac.uk/view/article/7347?docPos=3ODNB>, accessed 10th March, 2014 and S. Roberts, 'Samuel Timmins', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxyd.bham.ac.uk/view/article/104869>, accessed 10th March, 2014. As well as the BMSA Central School building, John Henry Chamberlain (no relation to Joseph Chamberlain), also designed Highbury, in Moseley, Birmingham, as a private residence for Chamberlain in 1878, two years after he became Member of Parliament for Birmingham. R. Hartnell, in *The Contribution of Art and of Design to the Emergence and Establishment of a Civic Culture in Birmingham in the late nineteenth Century*, unpublished PhD thesis, (UCE, 1992), argues that the city's nineteenth century 'Civic Gospel' made it pride of place in the arts nationally and that the city was a model for other cities to aspire to in terms of its Municipal School. Hartnell is right to suggest this in terms of initial conditions and we must certainly consider it in any explanation of the BMSA's contemporary profile. He later argues that the decline of the School and its subsequent invisibility was caused primarily by the decline of the Civic Gospel in Birmingham. This is too simplistic a view, as other factors must surely have been involved.

¹⁷ *Birmingham Pictorial and Dart*, 1221, (March 16th, 1900).

These prominent figures from Birmingham industry and governance did not merely support the BMSA out of a desire to improve the artistic and cultural lives of Birmingham's citizens in the spirit of the 'Civic Gospel'. There were sound economic reasons for their involvement. As Birmingham's manufacturing firms faced increasing competition from businesses in Europe, high-standards of design within the city's trades became increasingly important. Birmingham firms were not only competing against foreign manufacturers in existing markets, they also had the opportunity to expand into new markets through the commercialisation of The Arts and Crafts Movement – the style that was disseminated to students through the teaching at the BMSA. Therefore, a relationship with the BMSA and access to its highly-skilled graduates could certainly have been of commercial benefit to Birmingham manufacturers.¹⁸

The School's links with Birmingham's municipal elite culminated in a professional commission for students to design a series of painted canvases for Birmingham Town Hall, one of the City's primary civic buildings. Selected students, including two women (Kate Bunce and Janette Bayliss), were commissioned to design and execute a series of large scale mural paintings to decorate wall recesses at the Hall showing scenes from the history of Birmingham.¹⁹

The changes to the national instruction scheme implemented by Taylor were critical in relation to women's education and employment opportunities. Taylor gave students more opportunities to draw directly from nature, so bringing to the fore the empirical strand of art teaching. He introduced living plants into classrooms and provided the School with a

¹⁸See R. Hartnell, *The Contribution of Art and Design to the Emergence and Establishment of a Civic Culture in Birmingham*, (UCE, 1992), p.24, for a discussion on this theme.

¹⁹ For a full discussion and review of this project see 'The Wall Paintings by Art Students in the Town Hall, Birmingham', *The Studio*, Vol. I, (1893), pp. 237-240. The commission was not completed in its entirety and the murals that were completed were removed from the walls in the late 1920s and disappeared completely in around 1940 (see A. Crawford, *By Hammer and Hand*, p.65) for further information). Their whereabouts are currently unknown, however, a preparatory cartoon for one of the murals by Charles March Gere depicting the *Escape of Priestley* is held in the BMSA archive. A certain amount of inspiration for the project must surely have derived from Ford Madox Brown's painted murals depicting aspects of the history of Manchester in the Great Hall of Manchester Town Hall which were executed between 1879 and 1893.

menagerie, which included parrots, sheep, goats, cats and other small animals. But his major innovation, which he introduced from the late 1880s onwards, was Executed Design. Taylor himself stated: ‘We were the first school to link the processes with design – that is we allowed students an opportunity of working in other materials than paper or clay.’²⁰ This enabled students at the BMSA to construct the object that they had designed during their classes, so giving them practical as well as drawing and design skills. It is difficult to grasp just how revolutionary this practical pedagogy was today. Before the introduction of Executed Design, students’ paper based designs were sent out of the School to be made up by local craftsmen, so separating the designer from the maker. Taylor’s new approach reunified this process, bringing benefits to individual students but also to local trades by giving them the chance to employ technically proficient designers.

Executed Design was crucial to the educational and employment prospects of women at the BMSA who wanted to become professional designers, although it is problematic to ascertain the exact number of women who took these practical courses due to the paucity of surviving registers. As discussed earlier in this chapter, girls may have struggled to gain training and experience in practical design processes unless they were employed or apprenticed in a workshop environment, or came from an artistic family. Executed Design gave women the chance to gain these skills while studying, in preparation for entering particular trades. It is this that made Taylor’s innovation crucial to the employment prospects of women students. Drawing classes were permissible within the accepted realms of middle-class women’s education, but Executed Design, which was specifically an education geared towards artistic and design employment in a particular trade, was not. This is a key tension

²⁰*Birmingham Daily Mail*, 17th February, 1903, quoted in S. Wildman, *The Birmingham School*, (Birmingham, 1990), p.9. Practical metalworking skills were practiced within the classes at the BMSA in 1887-8. See J. Swift, ‘Birmingham and its Art School: Changing Views 1900-1921’, in M. Romans (ed) *Histories of Art and Design Education*, (Bristol, 2005), p.78. Any discussion of Taylor’s teaching methods, and that of Robert Catterson-Smith, who succeeded him as headmaster, must mention their strong interest in memory drawing but I will not focus on this in this study. See R. Hartnell, *E. R. Taylor*, (1976) for a discussion of memory drawing.

between women's education at the BMSA and late nineteenth and early twentieth century prescribed forms of feminine behaviour.

A woman who had not received a practical training at the BMSA may have faced similar problems to this designer, who was discussed in a magazine editorial in 1898. The anonymous lady was working as an independent furniture designer and exhibiting in Berlin and the feature highlighted the problem of women who were able to create design drawings but lacked the practical and technical skills to make the items they were designing, leading to increased costs in their business as they had to work alongside craftsmen. As the author of the piece, Emily Hill, stated: 'there is one considerable difficulty to surmount, that of getting the furniture made.'²¹ The ability to construct their own designs would have enabled women to reduce their production costs by becoming self-sufficient from design stage through to finished object.

In order to introduce Executed Design at the BMSA, Taylor needed additional space and new facilities. Plans for an extension to the School in the early 1890s incorporated two 'art laboratories' in the basement to provide students with spacious spaces for modelling and casting.²² The extension of the School was completed in 1892/3 and the introduction of Executed Design was announced immediately. The Programme for the 1893-4 session, commencing in September, 1893, stated that:

The enlargement of the building has enabled the Committee to make further and adequate arrangements for qualified students to carry out their designs and to receive the necessary technical instruction in the processes described ... (drawing, design, painting, modelling ... repoussé and kindred processes – chasing, etching and engraving on metal, enamelling etc) ... designers ... thus have the opportunity not

²¹ 'Woman as a Furniture Designer', *Signal*, 210, (January 6th, 1898), p.8.

²² A copy of the plans is contained in BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 25th February, 1890.

only of studying design, but of actual practice in executing their designs in the respective materials.²³

Training in Executed Design enabled both male and female BMSA graduates to take advantage of the growing, middle-class consumer demand for reasonably priced ‘art’ metal ware, jewellery and enamels in the Arts and Crafts style. Writing about Municipal Schools of Art in the BMSA’s magazine *The Art Student* in 1886, James Cond stated:

The demand for Art works is rapidly spreading among the public. Even manufactures affect a penchant for art; for now the cabinet maker dubs his work ‘Art Furniture’, the goldsmith calls himself ‘Art Jeweller’ and the brass founder rejoices in the title of ‘Art Metalworker’. In other words, Art has become fashionable, and now consequently designers are in demand... how far our schools will assist in supplying the demand will depend very much upon the kind of teaching they give.²⁴

These new ‘artistic’ products were promoted and marketed by national periodicals such as *The Studio Magazine* and *The Artist*. *The Studio* discussed and recognised its own potential as a marketing tool, stating that:

When an illustrated magazine deals fairly and well with the arts of the present day, it serves a more useful purpose than any exhibition of modern work, for it is open all the year, and the international contents change month by month. It is at once a book and a permanent exhibition ... the arts may now be brought to the notice of the general public in magazines which cost less than a two mile drive in a London cab.²⁵

²³ Programme for 1893-4 session beginning 11th September, 1893, inserted into BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 12th September, 1893.

²⁴ *The Art Student*, VI, 1886, pp. 101-104, p.102.

²⁵ *The Studio Magazine*, vol. XXVIII, p.249.

I will argue throughout this thesis that women designers producing goods in the Arts and Crafts style recognised the marketing potential of having their work featured in *The Studio* and the arts press.

The new market for Arts and Crafts inspired goods was thriving in Birmingham. An analysis of the City's trade directories published between 1886 and 1915 reveals that the number of art metalworking companies in Birmingham increased from sixteen in 1886 to fifty-four in 1915, so reflecting the new middle-class demand for 'art' metalwork. These firms may well have provided employment and freelance design opportunities for women, including the Liberty & Co. (Cymric) venture at 8 Hylton Street from 1903, the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft (Ltd.) from 1898 onwards, and the Art Jewellery Company at 27 Soho Street.²⁶

However, the emphasis on handcraftsmanship through Executed Design at the BMSA had to be balanced with the requirements of local trades, who were using a certain amount of machinery to mass-produce inexpensive jewellery. This tension was probably never fully resolved.²⁷ There were certainly links between the trade and the School. Members of the BMSA's Management Sub-Committee included representatives from local industry, and the Birmingham Jewellers and Silversmiths Association was instrumental in founding the BMSA's sister school for jewellers in Vittoria Street, but there is little evidence of direct employer engagement with the Central School.

²⁶*Kelly's Directories of Birmingham* list Liberty & Co. (Cymric) at 8 Hylton Street from 1903 onwards. My analysis of the surviving Liberty archive material has not yielded links between the company and women designers in Birmingham and the company operated an anonymity policy for most of its designers, making any attribution problematic. It is certainly possible that some of the women presented in this thesis, particularly those working in silver and enamelling, may have worked freelance for William Haseler (the company in Birmingham who manufactured much of the Cymric jewellery range for Liberty) from their home studios. However, a paucity of records means that any discussions around women and Liberty & Co. must remain conjectural in the absence of evidence. The Birmingham Guild of Handicraft was listed as a limited company from 1898 onwards; Jesson, Birkett & Co, Limited was at 7 Mary Ann Street from 1905; the Midland Guild of Applied Arts was at 94 Vyse Street and 6/8 Hockley Street from 1907; St Kenelm's Guild of Craftsmen was at 3 New Street in 1909; the Art Jewellery Company was at 27 Soho Street from 1911 and in 1913, the Midland Art Metal and Brass Foundry Co. was listed in Barbury Street; the Tudor Art Company was in High Street, Deritend; and the Star Art Metal Company was at the Rosebery Buildings in John Bright Street.

²⁷ For an initial discussion on this issue, see S. Wilson, *Art Into Industry*.

As a rare example, in 1892, the metalworkers Hukin and Heath at the Imperial Works in Great Charles Street offered a £5 prize for repoussé at the School, with the aim to encourage design quality that would be of ‘great benefit to the metal workers of the town.’ Edith Biddle won first prize in 1892, with special mentions given to Emma Jessie Phipps, Florence Stern, Lilian Walker and Clara Mills. In 1894, Eleanor Lily Ward won third prize for a hammered and decorated rosewater dish and Florence Stern received an honorary mention. Stern received the same accolade the following year for her design for an elliptical tray.²⁸ The prize continued for four years until 1896, when the company wrote to the School wishing to withdraw its funding because they thought ‘it has answered a very useful purpose in starting the repoussé work’, and hoped that another company would continue to support it.²⁹ However, it may have been the women’s continuing success in this competition that contributed to its early demise. The ‘metalworkers of the town’ were still predominantly male. Perhaps, in common with William Lethaby who was introduced in Chapter One of this study, the owners of Hukin and Heath were unsettled by women possessing advanced practical skills. Prizewinning, highly skilled female students who were able to work professionally in the trade may have led to competition for male jobs.

Taylor’s system of Executed Design was quick to receive praise and accolades. At a national and international level, the work of students and staff from the BMSA was lauded in editorials in *The Studio*, *The Artist* and other decorative arts magazines, not only in terms of its technical achievements but also in the context of Taylor’s teaching. In 1894, the Museum and School of Art Committee’s Report for the quarterly meeting of Birmingham City Council boldly stated that ‘... the school is the best and most complete School of Art in the

²⁸ Transcribed letter to School Secretary, BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, January 12th, 1892; 1892 Prize List, BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins 26th January, 1892; 1894 Prize List, BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins 13th February, 1894; 1895 Prize List, BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 12th February, 1895.

²⁹ Transcribed letter to School Secretary, BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 10th March, 1896.

UK.’³⁰ Regular open days were held at the School to enable people from Birmingham, and not just potential students, to visit the building and observe the high standard of work being produced. Official representatives from other art schools including Manchester, Nottingham and Glasgow visited the School, and in 1896, Mr. Oscar Pyfferoen from the Belgian Government visited the BMSA to see an outstanding example of an English art school.³¹ By 1900, Lethaby stated in his annual Examiner’s Report that: ‘the school stands so high as compared with other Art Schools known to me that, if my report were to be mostly comparative, I could say nothing more than that Birmingham stood first, or amongst the very first, in the kingdom.’³² Examples such as these of successful and sustained public and community relations activities and local and national press/periodical coverage were vital in transmitting the successes of the BMSA to a wider audience, including potential patrons. These activities also played a key role in women’s employment opportunities, as I will explain later in this chapter.

Another factor that gave the School a unique position in terms of opportunities for women was its strong links with the national Arts and Crafts movement and its attendant professional networks. I will now discuss the ways in which BMSA staff and students benefited from and negotiated these networks. This is a theme that will be discussed throughout this thesis.

³⁰ Report prepared for the 1894 quarterly meeting of Birmingham City Council, BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 26th June 1894. By the mid-1890s, Taylor’s Executed Design method was being disseminated nationally and taken up in other art schools, thereby having a direct affect on the course of art education itself in the early twentieth century. For example, in 1896, Lethaby was invited to become the first principal of the Central School of Arts in Crafts in London, which was funded by London County Council. The School’s Preliminary Prospectus outlined its teaching philosophy, which owes a clear debt to Taylor at the BMSA. It stated: ‘The Central School of Arts and Crafts ... provides for apprentices, pupils and workmen engaged in, or connected with, artistic handicrafts the best instruction in art and design as applied to their particular industries (original italics). No attempt is made to ... do the work of the teacher of figure and landscape drawing and painting ... The special business of the School is the industrial application of decorative design, and students are expected to concentrate their studies on the several branches of the industries in which they are engaged ... Building trades, architects, designers (especially in textiles, wallpapers, furniture and metal work), workers in brass, bronze and lead, enamellers and the various branches of the gold and silver trades.’ *Preliminary Report of the Central School of Arts and Crafts*, London County Council, Technical Education Board, (1896), pp. 1-2.

³¹ BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 14th January, 1896.

³² Private proof of Examiner’s Report 1900, prepared for members of the Management Sub-Committee, BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 13th February, 1900.

There is clear evidence throughout the BMSA Sub-Committee minute books and other archival sources of professional links between Edward Taylor, the School and national Arts and Crafts practitioners including Sir Edward Burne-Jones, William Morris, and the Pre-Raphaelite painter Ford Madox Brown.³³

Taylor and the Sub-Committee appointed some of the best Arts and Crafts practitioners as teachers at the School, and with them came networks of professional influence. Robert Catterson Smith took over the Central School in Margaret Street when Taylor retired in 1904, after having been Headmaster at the Vittoria Street School since 1901. Smith had collaborated with Morris and Burne-Jones at the Kelmscott Press in January 1893 when they were working on Morris's *Chaucer, Earthly Paradise*³⁴ and the frontispiece for *News from Nowhere*, Morris' fictional socialist utopia. After an invitation from the Sub-Committee, May Morris, William's daughter, lectured at the BMSA on a part-time basis over a period of around ten years. She also acted as an external examiner of embroidery and needlework for the School's local prizes.³⁵ A more detailed discussion of May Morris' contribution to the pedagogic development of the BMSA and its female students can be found in Chapter Six of this study.

³³ In 1885, the Chairman of the BMSA reported 'that on his occasion of his recent visit to Birmingham, Mr Edward Burne-Jones had kindly attended at the School and conferred with several of the advanced students in regard to their work.' (BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 27th October, 1885). In 1886, just a year after municipalisation, forty-one photographs of Burne-Jones work were purchased for use by students in class (BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 11th May, 1886). Burne-Jones also became an examiner of the antique and life categories of the local examinations at the School in 1887 and a letter from Morris & Co. sent to the Secretary in May of the same year offered to send a selection of designs in wallpaper for students to use in class (BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 13th December, 1887; 4th May, 1887). In 1894, the committee for the presentation of works by Ford Madox Brown offered 'the School of Art one or two of the fine charcoal designs made by him for stained glass'. (BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 25th September, 1894). Madox Brown is better known today as a Pre-Raphaelite painter, but in 1863 he was a founding member of Morris & Co., the commercial design company set up by William Morris, Burne-Jones, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Philip Webb to make and sell furniture, textiles and stained glass in the Arts and Crafts style. Also see W. Morris, *An Address Delivered at the Distribution of Prizes to Students of the Birmingham Municipal School of Art on February 21st 1894*, (London, 1898).

³⁴ Catterson-Smith's letter of application for the Vittoria Street Headmastership, contained in BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 16th July, 1901. In the selection process for this job, the Sub-Committee utilised their professional network of Arts and Crafts practitioners to suggest candidates, with Richard Rathbone in Liverpool and John Paul Cooper, both well respected Arts and Crafts metalworkers, two of the suggested designers as well as Catterson-Smith.

³⁵ The BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins record letters from May Morris and examiner's reports that document this relationship. For detailed references, see Chapter Six of this thesis.

These links benefited women students at the BMSA in several ways. Firstly, having access to a network of national professional practitioners who were well-known and successful designers in their field as well as teachers must surely have been inspirational to students of both sexes. Secondly, it is possible that the teachers may have provided professional and business advice to women students who wished to become self-employed, and this is an issue that requires further research. Thirdly, several women were invited to work as professional assistants to members of this Arts and Crafts network, for example Effie Ward, who is presented in detail in Chapter Four of this thesis.

So, to summarise the issues discussed so far, I have argued that it was potentially the combination of Edward Taylor's introduction of Executed Design at the BMSA (underpinned by a sympathetic committee of Birmingham's liberal, municipal elite); a programme of effective and sustained public relations activities; and the School's links with the national Arts and Crafts professional network that had a direct impact on women's ability to gain artistic employment or become successfully self-employed after studying at the BMSA.

I will now discuss the subjects taught at the school, examine how they may have been relevant to female employment and analyse what opportunities were available for women in terms of scholarships and what this can tell us about equal opportunities at the BMSA.

I have chosen to focus on the middle-class female students at the Central School, because it is these women that gave the School much of its external recognition.³⁶ Many were in the advanced level classes, so had some of the most developed practical skills in the School, and this makes them highly visible in extant prize lists and contemporary periodical articles. Based on the primary research conducted for this thesis, it was also predominantly the middle-class women students who worked on their account or set up in business during or after studying at the BMSA. I will discuss this issue in greater depth in later chapters.

³⁶ J. Swift, *Women and Art Education*, (1995), p.92.

By focusing primarily on middle-class female students, I am developing existing scholarship that examines middle-class women and the opportunities available to them during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As Martha Vicinus has highlighted:

For the first time in history a small group of middle-class women could afford to live, however poorly, on their own earnings outside heterosexual domesticity or church governance... middle-class women had the education, economic opportunities, and personal confidence to take advantage of larger social changes. Perhaps most importantly of all, like their male counterparts, they believed passionately in the morally redeeming power of work; paid public work would give them dignity and independence. These women pioneered new occupations, new living conditions, and new public roles that have had important implications for the twentieth century woman, single or married.³⁷

What subjects were taught at the BMSA, which ones were women studying, and how might these choices have facilitated opportunities for women to work as professional artists, designers and jewellers?

Teaching at the BMSA was organised into two terms per year, which ran from September to January and February to June. The School was open five days week, with teaching organised into three sessions each day and evening.³⁸ Students were grouped into six classes. Class One pupils studied the complete school course, which enabled them to attend the School five days a week for the morning, afternoon and evening sessions as well as attending lectures by visiting speakers. These pupils were known as the advanced students and they tended to be middle-class, primarily due to the cost of the course, which was 90s. per term. To put this into context, in 1906 Cadbury, Matheson and Shann found that women over

³⁷M. Vicinus, *Independent Women, Work and Community for Single Women 1850-1920*, (London, 1985), p.6.

³⁸BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 21st August, 1895; 1893-1894 programme, contained in BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 12th September, 1893, p.14. Classes ran between 10.30am-1pm, 3pm-4.30pm and 7.30pm-9.15pm.

eighteen years of age working in the jewellery trade in Birmingham as gold polishers earned an average of 12s. 8d. per week, whilst girls occupied making medals and working on presses earned an average of 8s. 6d. a week. Overall, they found that for working girls above twenty-one years of age in Birmingham, wages averaged 10s. a week (an unskilled man's wage was 18s. to £1 per week).³⁹ Taking this average female earnings figure, the BMSA's fees for the complete school course equated to over two months' wages per term, making this level of tuition prohibitive for young, unskilled working class women unless they received a scholarship.

Class Two students attended the School on a Monday and Wednesday for the two daytime sessions and paid a reduced fee of 50s. per term. Again, students in this class tended to be predominantly middle-class. Class Three students were learning elementary skills, which required attendance three days a week on a Monday, Wednesday and Friday in the mornings only. These students paid a fee of 40s. per term. Students in Classes Four and Five attended the School on Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoons, to take elementary level and slightly more advanced subjects at a fee of 25s. and 35s. respectively per term. Finally, Class Six students were predominantly working artisans engaged in trades during the daytime and attended the School five evenings a week, paying a fee of 7s. 6d. per term.⁴⁰

The subjects taught were organised into Groups. Group One included drawing, design, painting, modelling, architecture and the execution of designs in enamelling, niello, chasing, embroidery, wood engraving, stone carving, die sinking, leatherwork, working in fresco, the making of decorative cartoons and lithography, while Group Two included drawing and geometry.⁴¹

Students progressed from elementary level which included freehand drawing, outline drawing and shading from casts and models and the elementary painting of ornament, to the

³⁹ Cadbury, Cecile Matheson and Shann, *Women's Work and Wages*, p.121; p.321.

⁴⁰ Programme for Forthcoming Session, contained in BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 21st August, 1895.

⁴¹ Programme information attached to BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 12th February, 1895.

advanced level which involved painting single objects including flowers and decorative objects, colour composition, drawing, painting and modelling the human figure from life, the cast, animals and Executed Design, including enamelling, wood carving, and die sinking.⁴²

The advanced and evening classes were not sex segregated but pupils were taught separately at elementary level. Pupils were categorised by ability, thus examination results not age determined in which class they were taught. The advanced classes contained a mixture of middle-class women students whether leisured or professional who had worked their way up through the different levels of study, the most outstanding younger pupils who were most likely supported by scholarships, and professional teachers studying for improved qualifications and/or salaries. Extant registers and contemporary photographic lantern slides illustrate this mixture of student types, sexes and ages in classes.⁴³ One image of the advanced stained glass class in around 1905 shows twenty-one female and three male students in attendance. Each class was further sub-divided into elementary and advanced students according to ability.

John Swift has analysed the subjects taught at the School between 1880 and 1900 and classified them according to whether they were studied by male and female students.⁴⁴ His results showed that no males were registered for two-dimensional textiles during this period (including embroidery, needlework, linen, silk and lace), possibly reflecting stereotypical ideas that needlework was 'women's work.' Birmingham may, however, be non-representative in this, for example in the national competition in 1900, two gold medals were won at The School of Art at Battersea Polytechnic for designs for printed muslin by Bernard Smithers and John Ray.⁴⁵ William Morris had also popularised traditional textile techniques through the Morris & Co. company, with men in the national Arts and Crafts Movement

⁴² BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 21st August, 1895.

⁴³ Lantern slides, BMSA archive SA/AT027/1/72/1873.

⁴⁴ J. Swift, 'Birmingham Art School', p.61.

⁴⁵ 'The National Competition', *The Artist*, (May 1900), p.77.

working in the field. The highly decorative and applied skills of fan painting and vase painting were also female only at Birmingham, again seeming to confirm stereotypes about what sort of artistic practice, and by extension possible future employment, was suitable for women.⁴⁶

Before 1890, which marked the decade of the growth of Executed Design at the School, only men were involved in three-dimensional metalwork at Birmingham including repoussé and engraving. But from 1890 onwards, women joined them in these areas and also in embossing, etching, carving, piercing and chasing, so expanding the areas of women's artistic practice into atypical areas. Women students did not, however, take foundry work or casting, although they appear in the casting workshop alongside men in later photographs dated circa 1905-10.⁴⁷ In other three-dimensional work, women joined the men in wood-carving, book binding and terracotta after 1894, but did not take stone carving, cabinet making and furniture design, die-sinking and iron work in this period.

Both men and women studied jewellery and casket making from 1894 and 1896 respectively. In two-dimensional print work, book illustration and wood-cuts were practiced by both sexes from 1892, as was wood engraving and lithography from 1894, and poster design from 1896.

Both sexes worked with gesso from 1892 onwards (gesso is an absorbent primer which is used to prepare wooden panels for painting). A surviving student piece in gesso and wood by Florence Camm dating from 1897 in the Camm archive at BMAG confirms this.⁴⁸ Women were taking classes in painted panels from 1890 onwards. Oil painting, mural painting and

⁴⁶ The ceramic industry employed women in the production process. As just one example, Hannah Barlow was a high-profile ceramic designer at the Doulton factory in the late nineteenth century. See P. Rose, *Hannah Barlow: A Pioneer Doulton Artist*, (Somerset, 1985); J. Sarsby, *Misses and Mouldrunners: An Oral History of Women Pottery Workers at Work and Home*, (Open University Press, 1988); L. Gray, *From factory to studio: the changing artistic and cultural contexts of the female potter 1900 – 2000*, unpublished conference paper presented at the West of England & South Wales Women's History Network 16th Annual Conference, Sarum College, Salisbury, (10th July, 2010).

⁴⁷ Lantern slides, BMSA Archive, SA/AT027/1/72/73.

⁴⁸ M306, Gesso Panel *And Thou Shall Call his name Jesus*, signed and dated Florence Camm, 1897, BMAG CA.

decorative cartoons were taken by both sexes from 1890. House painting was male only from 1892, and remained so. Enamelling was taken by both sexes from 1892, stained glass by both from 1894 and leatherwork by both from 1892. Of all these activities, enamelling and stained glass would probably be considered the least traditionally 'ladylike'; as their execution necessitated the designer coming into regular contact with extreme heat in the firing process, fumes, and noxious chemicals during the stages of production.

Swift's analysis does not include a numerical breakdown of the number of women studying each subject as this would be problematic to calculate given the lack of registers at the BMSA archive. So, I have combined his analysis with a basic survey of the extant prize lists in the archive and the coverage women obtained in the arts press to attempt to ascertain how many women were studying which subjects. My results suggest that a large proportion of women students were drawn to enamelling and metalwork, not just the more traditional subjects of painting, leatherwork, or embroidery. In 1901, the School's Management Sub-Committee considered the need for Art Laboratory Two to be increased in size due to the larger numbers of students who wanted to take practical enamelling classes. Many of these students were women, so demonstrating their desire to work in a non-traditional area for women's artistic and design practice.⁴⁹

The contemporary critic George Wade, reporting for *Cassell's Magazine*, visited the School and noted the women enamellers, saying: 'In another room you can observe a group of girls busy with the process of enamelling, using amongst others the far-famed Limoges process.'⁵⁰ Advanced students including Effie Ward, Florence Camm and Helen 'Nellie' Brightwell, who I will discuss in much greater detail in later chapters, went on to execute

⁴⁹ BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 12th February, 1901.

⁵⁰ G. Wade, 'Life at an Art School: How Art is Taught in Birmingham', *Cassell's Magazine*, (no date), bound volume press cuttings concerning BMSA, BCU Library, Margaret Street.

enamel work on metal professionally, with Nellie Brightwell and Effie Ward both listing this as their occupation on census returns in 1901 and 1911 respectively.⁵¹

As well as the opportunity to take part in Executed Design classes, another crucial feature of the teaching and the curriculum at the BMSA for women students was that they had access to male and female life models. This was extremely rare in art teaching at the time and would have given women graduates seeking employment as fine artists, graphic designers and stained glass artists a distinct advantage when seeking professional commissions that involved the accurate representation of the human figure. Their drawing skills would have been much more developed than those of students who had learnt to draw the figure from copying prints and casts alone. In 1893, the Royal Academy provided a partially draped model in the painting school for women but the life class remained men only. At the Slade School of Art in London, women studied in the antique class with the men as they did at the Royal Academy but women students had their own separate life class in a different room.⁵² A parallel arrangement appears to have occurred initially at the BMSA, although the full circumstances are unclear from the evidence available. A Memorial from women students to the School's Management Sub-Committee in April 1901, stated: 'Dear Sir, As a number of girl students, being occupied with business during the day time, are not able to attend any 'life class' now in existence they would like to be permitted to have a class in the evening, even if only for part of the week'. It was signed by twenty-four women students including Gertrude Connolly, who went on to be self-employed as a metalworker and will be discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis, Florence Stern and Nellie Brightwell. The Memorial was resolved, and Edward Taylor authorised a life class for women to meet on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings.⁵³

⁵¹ Helen Brightwell, 1901 census, RG13/3827, p.87, and 1911 census, RG14PN18018, no page number (listed as enameller); Effie Ward, 1911 census, RG14PN18666, (listed as artist and jeweller), no page number.

⁵² D. Cherry, *Victorian Women Artists*, Exhibition Catalogue (Rochdale, 1987), p.6.

⁵³ Recorded in BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 23rd April, 1901.

Based on the surviving drawings I have examined in the School of Art archive, it is unclear whether women were able to draw from fully undraped male models. They certainly had access to partially draped male models and completely undraped female models, as Florence Camm's student work demonstrates. An exquisite and beautifully modelled life drawing of a young woman by Florence that is held in the archive exemplifies the high standards in draughtsmanship that were being achieved by advanced female students at the time.⁵⁴ Camm's pencil and watercolour studies also demonstrate that she was drawing nude male figures from life during her time at the BMSA, although the extant examples in the School's archive are semi-draped when depicting the full male figure.⁵⁵

One female student, Mary Newill, was able to spend a self-development year in Paris to study life drawing after winning the prestigious J. S. Wright Scholarship at the BMSA in 1895. She initially took classes at the Atelier Montparnasse followed by study at the Académie Colarossi under Gustave-Claude-Etienne Courtois and Louis August Giradot.⁵⁶ The Académie was founded in the early nineteenth century as an alternative to the more conservative École des Beaux Arts. It accepted women students and allowed them to draw from the male nude model.

The J.S. Wright scholarship was founded by the Birmingham industrialists Richard and George Tangye and was offered once every six years at the BMSA 'for cases of exceptional merit' and was worth £180, payable quarterly for three years. The winning student was also admitted free to all classes at the Central School. The scholarship was awarded based on the candidates' school work and their performance in the National Science and Art examinations,

⁵⁴ Florence Camm, shaded drawing from life, 1897, for Stage 8C2, National Syllabus, BMSA Archive.

⁵⁵ There are numerous male and female life drawings and sketches by Florence Camm in the archive, not all are catalogued.

⁵⁶ Newill writes in a letter sent c/o Miss Storrs in Paris, transcribed in BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 9th February, 1897: 'At present I am drawing in the morning and evening classes ... everything has been so new that I feel it has really taken me until now to grow accustomed to things, but I look forward to making a great deal of progress during the next three months. With the exception of an occasional week off to study in the galleries, I mean for the present to work on steadily at drawing from the life, which I feel convinced is what I most need ... I am hoping to come to England for a fortnight or so in April, and then to return here for the summer.'

and was judged by BMSA staff and external examiners. Eleven candidates competed in 1895, including Mary Newill and one other female student.⁵⁷

Both Mary Newill's and Florence Camm's outstanding draughtsmanship and figurative work is evident in their later professional commissions and this stems from the opportunities open to them in life drawing whilst studying at the BMSA. Newill was born in 1860 in Wellington, Shropshire,⁵⁸ and had a successful and critically acclaimed professional career as a stained glass designer, artist and teacher after studying at the School, although her work is little known today.⁵⁹ She was commissioned to produce stained glass, needlework and wall paintings for churches and domestic houses throughout the UK and her career will be presented in greater detail later in this thesis.

I have assessed the range of opportunities available for women at the BMSA and the subjects they were studying and will now consider their actual experiences at the School and how these may have affected their education. From a pedagogic perspective, the BMSA appears to have offered a primarily supportive, egalitarian and progressive environment for its female art students. I would also argue that if women did meet resistance to their ambitions, they were in a position to actively negotiate this utilising their own networks and friendships forged at the School, as the following discussion will illustrate.

Plans for the extension of the Central School Building dated February 25th, 1890, show the construction of a dedicated Ladies' Common room on the first floor of the building next to the Headmaster's Studio.⁶⁰ Although this segregated the female students from the Male Common Room, its space provided them with a separate social area in which to foster friendships, networks and future working collaborations with other female students. Florence

⁵⁷ BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 6th September, 1895.

⁵⁸ Certified Copy of Birth Certificate, FD596561. Newill was born on 24th October, 1860 in Admaston to Robert Daniel Newill and Marianne Sarah Newill.

⁵⁹ Mary Newill is listed in Birmingham's Kelly's Trade Directories from 1909 to 1915 as an independent stained glass artist and painter; for teaching references and wages paid to Newill see BMSA Staff Book 1908-1912, SA1AO/19/1 AL6 03, BMSA archive.

⁶⁰ BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 25th February, 1890.

Stern and Gertrude Connolly, for example, worked together professionally for at least a year in a studio at Frederick Street in Birmingham and studied at the BMSA at the same time.⁶¹

Both the Men's and Women's Common Rooms were open between 9.30am-7.15pm five days a week. The fixtures and fittings of the Ladies Common Room were described in some detail in the Committee Minute Books: 'An Ilkley couch with cushions capable of being placed at any reasonable angle ... one rattan cane lounge, eighteen basket chairs, ten wood seated arm chairs stained green and polished, four writing tables in pitch pine.'⁶² A contemporary lantern slide from around 1905 shows a group of seven women in the Ladies Common Room standing and sitting around a table in conversation, reading or working.⁶³

Although the women were provided with a separate formal social space, evidence suggests that students of both sexes were forming networks and socialising in other ways. For example, a committee of men and women students requested a series of mixed social evenings in December 1895 in rooms on the ground floor of the building.⁶⁴ Professionally, the male and female students were working closely together on commercial commissions before they had finished their studies. *The Art Student* magazine was illustrated throughout by male and female students and retailed commercially through Cornish Brothers bookshop in New Street.⁶⁵ Both sexes produced illustrations for commercial commissions, including an entire issue of the literary magazine *The Yellow Book* in 1896. This featured fourteen illustrations from members of the BMSA with six by women including Evelyn Holden, Georgie Gaskin and Mary Newill.⁶⁶ *A Book of Pictured Carols*, which was published by George Allen, London in 1893, was illustrated by students including Charles Gere, Sidney

⁶¹ *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham*, 1907, advertises Gertrude Connolly and Florence Stern working in partnership as metalworkers at premises at 124/6 Frederick Street; for a study on women's communities and work see M. Vicinus, *Independent Women*.

⁶² BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 12th September, 1893.

⁶³ Lantern slides SA/AT027/1/72/73, BMSA archive. For a useful analysis of nineteenth century photographic images of women art students see C. Havice, 'In a Class by Herself: Nineteenth Century Images of the Woman Artist as Student', *Woman's Art Journal*, vol. 2, (Spring-Summer 1981), pp. 35-40.

⁶⁴ BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 26th November, 1895.

⁶⁵ *The Art Student*, I-VIII, (October 1885-1887), L54.19, 80198, BA&H.

⁶⁶ *The Yellow Book*, vol. IX, (London, 1896).

Meteyard, Henry Payne, Mary Newill, Agnes Manley, Mildred Peacock, Georgina Gaskin and Florence Rudland.

First-hand accounts written by women studying at the School about their experiences are extremely rare. A female student contributed a feature about life at the School to *The English Woman's Domestic Magazine* in December 1878, a year after Taylor had taken over the headmastership.⁶⁷ The unidentified author, known only as F.S.C.B, describes how she had entered the School that September, and shows considerable commitment to her studies, practising freehand sketching and drawing at home as well as attending classes. She was possibly studying full-time because she says, perhaps reflecting her own experience: 'About three years is the length of time necessary for a student to study drawing – that is studying five days a week for six hours.' She also writes about the emphasis on drawing from nature and from life at the School, giving us an early insight into how Taylor was adapting the National Syllabus.

Between 1891 and 1895, Mary Elizabeth Hall (1869 – 1968), who lived with her family at 26 Paradise Street in Birmingham,⁶⁸ kept a diary in which she recorded some of her experiences of studying at the BMSA.⁶⁹ She was an advanced student at the School and a part-time private art teacher. Hall writes about how she painted still life groups and landscapes from nature in both oils and watercolours both inside and outside her classes. On February 15th, 1892, she recorded that 'I am painting a group of glass stand, violets, azaleas and cast with transparent drapery. It is a beautiful group.' On February 29th, 1892 she wrote that she had commenced a picture of primroses and kingfishers but was having problems drawing from the cast. 'At School I am struggling with the cast,' she writes. 'It is difficult.'

⁶⁷ 'The Study of Art Practically Considered by an Art Student', *The English Woman's Domestic Magazine*, (December 1st, 1878).

⁶⁸ Mary Elizabeth Hall (1869-1958). For birth date see certified copy of birth certificate FD 565672 and death date see Parishes of Brewood and Bishop's Hall, Staffordshire, graveyard database, Parish of Brewood, Wakefield family, C143.

⁶⁹ Diary of Mary Elizabeth Hall 1891-1895, Wakefield family papers, MS596/1, BA&H.

Hall's diary also suggests she was taking classes in Executed Design, because she was working on an etched design for a door plate. On 19th June, 1892, she recorded that: 'Last Wednesday was a perfect day. I rose early and had a quiet time before breakfast. I went to the School early and worked hard all day at my etching.'

As Hall's diary suggests, students at the BMSA were encouraged to sketch and draw even when not attending classes. Edith Holden's illustrated nature notes for 1906 that were published posthumously as *The Country Diary of an Edwardian Lady* in 1977 were a direct result of her study at the BMSA. A positive educational experience is reflected in the words of Miss Dorothy Frances Hilton from Melden, near Rhyl, who wrote to the Management Sub-Committee of the BMSA in 1899: 'if you the Committee and Mr. Taylor will accept the sketches of animals which I made during the summer vacation and entered for competition, I shall be more than pleased to give them to the School, in remembrance of much kindness received and a most happy time.'⁷⁰

It appears that women students were allowed some flexibility at the School if they needed to respond to familial or other circumstances, which may have affected their study. For example, a letter to the Committee from Emma Jessie Phipps in 1891 contains a request to change her days of study because her father wanted her to help collect rents from tenants because he had gone abroad. She explains that she is in the middle of a piece of work and does not want to give up her study; the Committee accepted her request and she was given the flexibility she needed.⁷¹

Some girls who wished to train at the School and could not afford to pay their own fees were offered free tuition in exchange for a service or job. In 1893, Annie Phillips was admitted without charge to classes at the Central School 'so long as she is employed there as

⁷⁰ Letter dated January 18th, 1899, transcribed in BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 14th February, 1899.

⁷¹ BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 20th June, 1891.

a model.’⁷² In 1895, three women were employed as register monitors in the morning, afternoon and evening to free up teachers’ time. The Committee Minutes tell us that: ‘The students appointed as registrars have for some time past been anxious to attend the day classes; they could not afford to pay the class fees; they are keeping the registers well.’⁷³

As well as support in kind for female students, the BMSA offered an extensive programme of scholarships and free admissions. An analysis of the type of scholarships available at the School can illuminate the educational opportunities open to girls and women of different social classes.

John Thackray Bunce described the demographics of the students at the School in his 1892 prize-giving address:

They are drawn from all ranks in the community – the wealthier and the poorer, the professional, manufacturing, and trading classes, and the artisans’, he said. ‘In one way or another, the schools are easily open to all of these ... a student from an elementary school may obtain a free scholarship to the Central School, and once there may compete for scholarships established in that school, up to the highest and most valuable. In this way the best and fullest Art instruction to be obtained is opened without restriction to all those who desire to benefit from it ... there are open chances for all; and to all there is offered the opportunity of an equal career.’⁷⁴

This is undoubtedly an egalitarian and inclusive vision, but to what extent was it true? All scholarships at the BMSA were awarded by open competition. By 1900, there were around 600 free scholarships in the various departments at the Central School and the Branch Schools. A complete analysis of the number and types of scholarships available to students is beyond the scope of this study, although the scholarships awarded to the women who form

⁷² Ibid., 14th March, 1893.

⁷³ Ibid., 6th September, 1895.

⁷⁴ J. Bunce, *Prize Address Birmingham School of Art 1892*, p13.

my case studies will be discussed in greater detail in relevant chapters. The following examples, however, suggest the type of awards available.⁷⁵

In 1896, Helen ‘Nellie’ Brightwell was awarded an annual scholarship which was open to students under twenty years of age. It was worth £5 per annum and also qualified the student for free admission to the advanced classes.⁷⁶ In 1890, there were 352 free admissions to the branch schools which were open to male and female pupils of elementary schools within the city, plus private bequest scholarships.⁷⁷ In 1895, four, two-year free admissions to the advanced evening classes at the Central School were available, two for males and two for female candidates, with preference being given to ‘children of artisans’.⁷⁸ In 1896, there were twenty free admissions to branch schools for children under sixteen (four girls won) and ten free admissions to all classes at the Central School for candidates under eighteen (also awarded to four girls).⁷⁹

Scholarships also provided an incentive to enter the National Science and Art examinations. In 1896, aged twenty-two, Florence Camm won an award of £20 per annum and free admittance to all classes at the Central School after she received high results in her national exams.⁸⁰

An initial analysis of the scholarship results recorded at the School of Art archive suggest that a large proportion of middle-class female students were actively competing for and winning scholarships, even though they came from more affluent families. There are several possible reasons for this. Firstly, scholarships were awarded through skills-based competition, so the middle-class students tended to be more advanced because they were

⁷⁵ It would be desirable to know the overall percentage of women awarded scholarships, however any attempt at this calculation must remain incomplete given the fragmentary nature of the scholarship records in the BMSA archive.

⁷⁶ BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 24th November, 1896.

⁷⁷ Ibid. 25th February, 1890.

⁷⁸ Ibid. 9th July, 1895.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 24th November, 1896.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

more likely to be attending the School full-time so were in a position to achieve higher results in the scholarship competitions (higher fees were charged for the more advanced classes which took place in the daytime, so working class women in employment were unlikely to be able to attend and were more likely to be found in the evening classes, which offered more elementary subjects). The extent to which working-class girls were able to gain scholarships at the School requires further and more detailed investigation and how they negotiated this position, if at all, in a system which allocated places according to artistic ability.

Secondly, middle-class girls may have been competing for scholarships if their family did not support their decision to train at the BMSA, particularly in terms of learning practical, Executed Design with a view to gaining employment. As discussed in Chapter One of this thesis, the concept of the 'separate spheres' as a defining paradigm for the middle-class Victorian male/female, private/public dichotomy is now rightly contested, but patriarchal power undoubtedly still lay with many fathers at this time. Some could, and undoubtedly did, oppose their daughters receiving professional training as it was seen to be unfeminine and against the stereotypical Victorian ideals of womanhood that were still pervasive in popular culture at this time. Middle-class families with limited financial provision for education may also have chosen to educate their sons rather than their daughters, so scholarship money would be required if a girl expressed an ambition to go to art school. Finally, families may have simply resented paying tuition fees for their daughter's education.

The results of Edward Taylor's innovative teaching methods at the BMSA and the opportunities that this brought to women students were considerable. The BMSA dominated the country's national art competitions for over ten years, coming first in the annual competitions between 1891-1903 under Edward Taylor and again until 1906 under Robert

Catterson-Smith.⁸¹ To put this into context, in the 1899 national competition, a total of 97,335 works were examined from art schools throughout the UK.⁸² Works were completed at Birmingham and sent to London for judging after the local prizes were awarded at the School. A vivid description of the process from 1895 is given in the Sub-Committee Minute Books. The Secretary reported that the year's finished works were dispatched to the Department of Art in South Kensington on 1st April in fifty-seven cases, weighing over six tons.⁸³

Between 1893 and 1897, women's results in the School's local competitions in Executed Design show them gaining eighty-six per-cent of prizes in all seven categories and twenty-five national Department of Science and Art prizes for design.⁸⁴ Of course, this is not in itself an indication of commercial success, because the prize winners could have been gifted amateurs, but we should pay much closer attention to the achievements of women in the local and national competitions and their possible motivation for entering and winning these in relation to opportunities for paid employment, as the following discussion will illustrate.

All of the women that I have identified so far who went on from the BMSA to work professionally, and who will be discussed further later in this study, won national prizes when studying at the Central School. We should attach importance to women's visibility and performance in these competitions because of the benefits this could bring to their careers.

There were financial benefits but they were limited. The most outstanding pieces entered for the National Competition each year were purchased by the Department of Science and Art (DSA). For example, an oil painting of a nude by Kate Bunce was purchased by the DSA for

⁸¹ J. Swift, *Changing Fortunes – the Birmingham School of Art Building 1880-1995*, (Birmingham, 1996), p.14; J. Swift, 'Women and Art Education', p.92. A comparative analysis of the different teaching methods undertaken by Taylor and Catterson-Smith and how that may have affected the development of the BMSA and its women students is outside the scope of this thesis, but the main difference in the men's teaching methods was that Catterson-Smith placed more emphasis on drawing from nature and memory drawing than Taylor.

⁸² *The Artist*, vol. XXVI, (September, 1899), p.47.

⁸³ BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 28th May, 1895.

⁸⁴ J. Swift, *An Illustrated History of Moseley Art School*, p.68.

the sum of £1.10s. after it won a national award.⁸⁵ In October 1901, the Board of Education in South Kensington wrote to Mr. Hytch, the Secretary of the BMSA wishing to purchase Geraldine Morris's five sheet stained glass design entitled 'Winds' for £7 7s., two sheets of designs by Minnie Bolton for £3 and four frames designed by Annie Fellows for £8.⁸⁶

Success in the national competitions could also lead to reductions in fees or free admission to some or all of the classes at the BMSA.

But what is arguably more important is that success in the BMSA's local prize competitions and the National Science and Art competitions gave women who wanted or needed to work professionally public visibility through exhibitions of prize-winning designs. Further research is needed to establish whether the pieces were offered for sale to the public in these exhibitions, but women's work was photographed and reviewed in the local, national and international arts press, including *The Studio Magazine*, at a time when attitudes to female designers and women selling their work for money were still problematic. Potential middle-class patrons for women's design work undoubtedly derived some of their knowledge of Arts and Crafts Movement decorative arts products through these exhibitions, reports in regional newspapers, and editorials and photographs in the national and international art press. Thus, coverage of their work in newspapers and periodicals was therefore a crucial, free, marketing tool for women looking to establish themselves professionally with potential clients, perhaps coupled with paid-for advertisements and listings in local trade directories. There were also opportunities for women to exhibit at local, national and international industrial trade exhibitions to sell their work and examples of this type of marketing and public relations will be discussed further in a later chapter of this thesis.

⁸⁵ BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 12th October, 1886, discusses a letter received from the Department of Science and Art requesting the purchase of Bunce's painting and the fee offered.

⁸⁶ Letter in BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 8th October, 1901.

This publicity was vital. The situation for women working professionally in design was discussed in an editorial in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* in 1909. It outlined the limited opportunities women had to market their work:

The craftswoman of the present day is really a product of the twentieth century and the very last years of the nineteenth. She is generally part artist, part workwoman, and part, it must be admitted, shopwoman. She designs her own work, makes it herself with the aid, perhaps, of a few pupils and apprentices, and sells it herself – either at her own ‘studio’ or through exhibitions and other agencies ... craftsmen and women, like other folks, produce to sell, and some of them (many of them in fact both men and women) would find themselves in a very tight place if they did not dispose of their wares ... except in embroidery, a woman is heavily handicapped. She cannot, as a rule, be taken on, in say, a bookbinder’s, a jeweller’s, or a silversmith’s workshop – and so, whether she has capital or not, she is practically forced to set up a studio of her own, and get along as best she can by giving lessons and working on her own account ...⁸⁷

The BMSA provided the Executed Design training needed for Birmingham craftswomen to set up their own studios and work on their own account.

In the 1899 National Competition, 102 silver medals were awarded nationally, including two to BMSA students Alice Allday for a ‘model of a figure from the Temple of Wingless Victory’ and one for Helen Brightwell for ‘a design for a nursery frieze wallpaper’.⁸⁸ The two girls’ success was reported in the press. In 1900, *The Birmingham Pictorial and Dart* reprinted an article about the ‘rich roll of successes’ from the women students at the BMSA, which was originally published in *The Girls’ Realm*. This article illustrates that far from

⁸⁷ ‘Women and the Artistic Crafts’, *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, vol. LVII, (September 24th, 1909), p.933.

⁸⁸ *The Artist*, vol. XXVI, (September, 1899), p.37.

being confined to embroidery and other textile arts, girls at the BMSA who had studied Executed Design were creating objects that they could sell commercially, in this case Brightwell's wallpaper designs. The piece also stated that:

Miss Nellie Brightwell is among the winners of silver medals at Birmingham in 1899. Her first intention was to take up only book illustration, but the advice of the professors of the school led her to choose metalwork instead ... Miss Brightwell won a silver medal in 1896 for a modelled silver jewel casket, the subject being King Cophetua; two years later she was the winner of an anonymous scholarship of £20, followed it up with two book prizes for colour printing and book illustrations in the national competitions, and in 1899 took a silver medal for a frieze for a wallpaper.

The article continued:

A sister silver medallist is Miss Alice Allday. Educated at King Edward's High School for Girls, Miss Allday showed the bent of her mind towards art while still at school and immediately on proceeding to the Aston Technical School, she gained her art teacher's and subsequently her art master's certificate, besides various prizes for design, needlework and metal work. She then, in 1898, joined the Birmingham School of Art, passing design, antique and life examinations, both for drawing and modelling; while last year in the National Competition she was awarded a silver medal for modelling a figure from the antique.⁸⁹

Praise in the provincial press was undoubtedly useful in attracting the attention of local patrons or potential commercial employers in Birmingham, but coverage in the professional art press might lead to greater exposure among potential national and international domestic

⁸⁹ 'Birmingham School of Art', *The Birmingham Pictorial and Dart*, 1222, (March 23rd, 1900), reprinted from *The Girls' Realm*, no reference to original publication date in the *Realm* provided.

patrons and commercial clients. Women's work at the BMSA featured extensively in the national arts periodicals. Photographs and descriptions of prize-winning work by female students and graduates of the School appeared consistently in leading art periodicals such as *The Studio* and *The Artist* from around 1885 to 1915. This gave women clear visibility to potential clients and patrons who gained their knowledge of new design through these magazines. So the Executed Design training women received at the BMSA led to their success and visibility in local and national competitions, and this in turn led to exposure in the local, national and international press to possible middle-class clients looking to buy Arts and Crafts style metalwork, furniture, stained glass, ceramics and jewellery. An example of this in practice can be seen in November 1904, when Miss Clara Mantle, who had finished studying at the Central School of the BMSA, applied to the Committee for the return of an enamelled panel which had been awarded a Bronze Medal in the National Competition in 1904 and had been exhibited in the annual exhibition of students' work. She had 'undertaken to deliver the enamel to a purchaser,' so the Committee arranged for her enamel to be returned to her in order for her to complete the sale.⁹⁰

Winning local BMSA and national prizes also qualified women students to exhibit at the School's annual fortnightly exhibition at the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists (RBSA), which was accompanied by a printed catalogue and reviewed by the local press.⁹¹ The annual BMSA exhibitions were extremely successful. For example, 9,227 people attended the

⁹⁰ See BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, November 22nd, 1904.

⁹¹ For example, Georgie Gaskin won the Silver John Henry Chamberlain Medal for the best design work in 1892. She also achieved an Honorary Mention for etched metal in the category 'designs executed in the respective materials for which they were intended'. Georgie also won the Messenger Prize of ten pounds for a modelled tobacco jar suitable for execution in metal (see Local Prize List in BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 26th January, 1892). In 1896, Florence Stern won a J. H. Chamberlain Medal for the best work in the section of design, drawn, painted, modelled or executed, for a name-plate executed in repoussé (see Local Prize List in BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 10th March, 1896). In 1897, Helen 'Nellie' Brightwell won the Messenger Prize of £10 for the best design for a metal jewel box and also the J. H. Chamberlain Bronze Medal for a design for a casket (see Local Prize List in BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 9th February, 1897).

exhibition in 1892 and by 1895 there were 11,979 visitors, many of whom had paid an entry fee.⁹²

The BMSA's success in the National Competitions also attracted the attention of professional arts and crafts organisations. In a letter to the School dated 19th May 1893, the committee of the prestigious Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society (whose President was William Morris) requested a 'carefully selected' series of studies to be sent up to its Autumn Exhibition, from which the public could purchase work. The School reacted quickly and favourably to this request. The Design Room was 'exceptionally opened' for the students every day between 10am and 4.30pm over the summer holiday for those who wished to exhibit at the exhibition and could not complete their work elsewhere.⁹³ *The Birmingham Daily Post* reported the event, which was held at the New Gallery in Regent Street in London. Thirty exhibits from the BMSA, including student work and commercial commissions, were on show to possible patrons alongside work by national Arts and Crafts luminaries including Edward Burne-Jones and Walter Crane. The Birmingham exhibits included a stained glass cartoon and embroidered panel by Mary Newill, a table centre and decorative book designs for the Leadenhall Press by Georgie Gaskin, and five sets of commercial book designs by Violet Holden, Florence Rudland and Mary Newill.⁹⁴

National prize-winning work by women students at the BMSA was also requested for large-scale foreign trade exhibitions, potentially providing access to international arts periodical coverage and the opportunity to advertise their work to a wider circle of foreign clients. In 1900, twelve pieces of 'Birmingham School of Art Executed Design Work' were requested and selected for the prestigious Paris International Exposition. The work of nine women designers went on display, including a gesso casket by Florence Camm, a silver,

⁹² BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 8th March, 1892 and 12th March, 1895.

⁹³ BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 13th June, 1893.

⁹⁴ Newspaper clipping inside BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 11th October, 1893, publication unknown but probably the *Birmingham Daily Post*.

copper and enamel casket by Eleanor Lily Ward, and a silver repoussé waist ornament by Florence Stern.⁹⁵ Florence Camm certainly used her international accolades to help market the quality of the Camm stained glass business to potential clients. Surviving advertising material for the firm such as leaflets and trade cards consistently state that her work has been exhibited internationally, including details of each exhibition and which awards were received.⁹⁶

In sum, success in both local and national competitions gave women designers at the BMSA the chance to have their work featured in arts periodicals and local, national and international Arts and Crafts exhibitions, providing a direct and cost-effective link to possible commercial clients. But what evidence is there that links women students or graduates from the BMSA with paid work whilst studying at the School or after graduating? As mentioned earlier in this Chapter, evidence in the BMSA archive linking women directly with paid work is extremely scant, apart from the teaching opportunities for women at the School which will be discussed in Chapter Three. However, BMSA students were certainly in demand from employers and the School advertised opportunities for work to students. The Management Sub-Committee Minutes record that in 1905, the Committee was willing to receive notices from employers to display at the school detailing situations vacant in their workshops and in the same year it was recorded that Catterson-Smith kept a list of students who were 'seeking situations' in the trade.⁹⁷ One contemporary commentator stated that 'forethought for the students' future welfare such as this, probably causes to a considerable degree the keenness and sustained effort observable among the younger students.'⁹⁸

⁹⁵ After pieces were exhibited at the English Education Exhibition, a letter was received at the BMSA on 3rd February, 1900 from the Secretary of the Sub-Committee of the Royal Commission for the Paris Exhibition, detailing the works that had been selected for the Paris exhibition. See BMSA Man Sub-Committee Mins, 13th February, 1900.

⁹⁶ Contained in an uncatalogued scrapbook from the Camm workshop that includes press cuttings, trade cards, advertising material and reviews, undated although entries begin circa 1885, BMAG.

⁹⁷ See BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, March 4th, 1905 and March 13th, 1906.

⁹⁸ BMSA annual report, contained in BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, March 14th, 1905.

A small number of references linking BMSA female students with professional employment occur in the contemporary press and in the BMSA archive. An article concerning the women students at the School in *The Birmingham Pictorial and Dart* in 1900 tells us that:

It is in the direction of design that Miss Allday considers there is a good opening for the girl who, having an aptitude for art, desires to earn a livelihood. She has herself done much of this class of work, inter alia executing a commission for a book plate for the Aston Library, copies of which appeared in various art journals.⁹⁹

Alice Allday, who was presented earlier in this chapter, won a free scholarship to the BMSA, tenable for one year, in 1900. More women than men were awarded free scholarships in this year.¹⁰⁰

The same article also mentions Miss Clara Hill:

a somewhat travelled student who worked for some months in Dresden. She has now been five years at the Birmingham School of Art and concentrated herself recently on design.

Some references to women gaining employment abroad occur in the BMSA's Management Sub-Committee Minute Books. In 1897, an entry records that Miss Margaret E. Harrison had been appointed to a designership at Liege and so had resigned her Assistant Teachership at the Smith Street and Radcliffe Place Branch Schools.¹⁰¹

In Chapter One of this thesis, I discussed external examiner William Lethaby's potentially patriarchal attitude towards the successful women students at the BMSA. In 1900, he commented on his concerns that the number of 'amateurs' in the advanced classes

⁹⁹ 'The Birmingham School of Art', *The Birmingham Pictorial and the Dart*, (March 23rd, 1900).

¹⁰⁰ Fifty-six free scholarships were awarded in 1900, with thirty-two presented to women. 'Birmingham Municipal School of Art List Of Awards: The New Session', *Birmingham Daily Post* (August 27th, 1900).

¹⁰¹ BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 13th October, 1897.

(potentially referring to women students) meant that young local tradesmen were being kept out of these classes. He believed that this would have a detrimental effect on standards in the local creative trades. Lethaby suggested that the women be given their own, segregated drawing class to alleviate this problem. Edward Taylor immediately defended the women students in a special report to the BMSA Sub-Committee. In it, he explained that there was enough room in all classes for both male and female students, and that women students were successfully undertaking vocational professional training:

We have ... special workshop classes at the Central School - hammered work, engraving, enamelling ... into these classes workers from the trades are slowly being drawn and from them workers are going to the trades, continuing their studies in the evening. I have applications from foreign firms, from Edinburgh, London etc. for those who have passed through this work, but, unless they can find no employment in Birmingham, I do not respond. About three years ago I sent one to Belgium who could not obtain any employment in Birmingham and she has since done the designing in stained glass and metalwork for one of the best Belgium firms.¹⁰²

This statement demonstrates Taylor's commitment to educational and employment opportunities for women at the BMSA in the face of potentially patriarchal opposition. Although this currently unidentified girl may not have been able to take advantage of the opportunities open to her after Executed Design training in Birmingham, whether due to a shortage of appropriate jobs or prejudice, she was able to do so in Europe. My research has shown that a number of women left the BMSA and become successfully self-employed in Birmingham, although their lives and professional achievements have until now remained hidden from history. The evidence for this assertion, and an explanation of how these

¹⁰² BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 13th February, 1900.

women's careers fitted into existing patterns of women's employment in Birmingham and elsewhere, will be discussed in the following and subsequent chapters of this thesis.

CHAPTER THREE:
**WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN BIRMINGHAM AND THE BIRMINGHAM
MUNICIPAL SCHOOL OF ART**

The previous chapter in this thesis discussed the education of women at the BMSA, women who, like the character Rhoda Nunn in George Gissing's 1893 novel *The Odd Women*, were 'educating ourselves. There must be a new type of woman, active in every sphere of life; a new worker out in the world ...'¹ This chapter, and the chapters that follow it, will explore how some of these 'new women' who had studied at the BMSA utilised their Executed Design education to benefit from, as Rhoda passionately states in the novel, 'the freedom which economic independence implies ... a right to which every woman willing to work may properly lay claim.'²

This chapter will primarily focus on women's employment and wages in Birmingham but in order to provide some initial context, I will discuss how women's paid employment developed and changed nationally in England between 1850 and 1914.³

Any discussion of women's employment patterns during this period must take account of the demographic changes happening during this time. Crucially, the number of single women in the population increased steadily between 1871 and 1911.⁴ In an analysis carried out in 1915, Barbara Hutchins stated: 'The surplus increased slightly but steadily from 1851 to

¹ G. Gissing, *The Odd Women*, (first published 1893, reprinted London, 1993), p.154.

² *Ibid.*, p.233.

³ It should be stressed that the paucity of primary source information available about working women from this time undoubtedly hinders investigations into their employment, and available secondary source material such as census returns, trade directories and advertisements can obscure women as workers in firms and those who were involved in their own business activity (for example a woman may have been self-employed, but chose not to advertise in a trade directory, or if she was commencing in business may not have had money allocated for marketing and advertising). See K. Jenns, *Female Business Enterprise In And Around Birmingham In The Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, unpublished PhD thesis (University of Birmingham, 1997) and J. Aston, *Female Business Owners in Britain*, unpublished PhD thesis, (The University of Birmingham, 2012), for a discussion of the inherent problems with census and trade directory data and the limitations of working with these sources.

⁴ J. Lewis, *Women in England*, p.4.

1901, and remained almost stationary from 1901 to 1911. In 1901 and 1911 there were in every 1,000 persons 484 males and 516 females.’⁵

The imbalance in the sex ratio during this period meant that more single women needed to work to support themselves as opposed to being financially reliant on a husband or a male member of the family’s income if they were living in the family home. These unmarried, ‘surplus women’ (as they became popularly stereotyped) were portrayed in the contemporary press and periodicals as a social problem, arguably because they had not assumed the normative societal feminine role of marriage and motherhood. As Jane Lewis succinctly states:

For all women, marriage conferred a higher status than spinsterhood, which connoted failure ... marriage remained the normative expectation of women of all classes.⁶

So, by the end of the nineteenth century, both younger and older single women were undertaking paid employment to support themselves. Clara Collet reported that in the richer suburbs of London in 1892, unmarried women aged thirty-five to forty-five outnumbered unmarried men by three to one,⁷ and by 1901, seventy-seven per-cent of working women were aged fifteen to thirty-four.⁸

The patterns and popular perception of women’s work were also changing. Arguably the greatest development was the redefinition of women’s domestic work. Industrialisation led to

⁵ B. L. Hutchins, *Women in Modern Industry*. Writing in 1915 and using an analysis based on the 1911 census, Hutchins calculated that 54.5 per-cent of working women in England were single, 30.1 per-cent were widowed and 10.26 per-cent were married. The greatest number of working women at this time were in the fifteen to thirty-five age groups, with numbers halving among those aged thirty-five and above (most likely due to marriage) and, not surprisingly, declining steadily until the over fifty-five age group. Hutchins concluded that the percentage of women and girls over fifteen years of age who were occupied in 1911 was 35.5 per-cent, representing an increase of 1.0 per-cent since 1901. See Hutchins pp. 81-83 and p.90.

⁶ Lewis, *Women in England*, p.3.

⁷ Ibid. p.4, quoting original report C. Collet, *Educated Working Women*, (London, 1902), p.39.

⁸ Ibid. p.154, quoting C. Hakim, ‘Census Reports as Documentary Evidence: The Census Commentaries 1801-1951’, *Sociological Review*, 28, (1980), p.12.

a greater separation of the workplace and home, and as Jane Lewis reminds us: ‘the perception of the redefinition of work that excluded women’s domestic labour was an important one ... In 1881, for the first time, housewives were classified as ‘unoccupied’, and by 1911, census enumerators ‘were firmly instructed that no entry was to be made for wives or daughters wholly engaged in domestic labour at home ...’.⁹ By the beginning of the twentieth century, the status of housework had become that of naturalised, unpaid work for women and girls.¹⁰

At the same time, the number of paid occupations that were open to women outside the home had increased. The type of paid work open to women during the mid- to late nineteenth century was primarily to be found in the areas of textile manufacture, domestic service, governessing and low-paid, home based jobs such as needlework and other outwork. But as Jane Lewis states:

Middle class Victorian feminists, highly conscious of the surplus woman problem, sought to open up new forms of paid employment to women.¹¹

By the end of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, women’s employment opportunities had expanded to include ‘white blouse’ work such as typing and teaching. The opportunities for women teachers at the BMSA will be discussed later in this chapter.

This gradual move towards ‘white blouse’ work for women is evident through a comparative analysis of the 1881 and 1901 censuses. In 1881, indoor domestic service accounted for thirty-six per-cent of working women, textile goods and dress eighteen per-cent and textile workers seventeen per-cent. Only five per-cent of women were working in

⁹ Ibid. p.146.

¹⁰ For a general discussion on this theme see J. Bourke, ‘Housewifery in Working Class England 1860-1914’, in P. Sharpe (ed.), *Women’s Work: The English Experience*, (London, 1998), pp. 352-358.

¹¹ J. Lewis, *Women in England*, p.194.

professional and technical occupations. These numbers remained fairly consistent up until the 1901 census, when one per-cent of women were working as clerks and typists and seven per-cent in commerce and finance.¹² By 1911, the number of women employed in textiles, clothing and domestic service had declined substantially, and as Jane Lewis suggests, jobs in these occupations were re-absorbed by the new opportunities in clerical work and to a lesser extent in metals, paper, chemicals, and food and drink trades.¹³

Again using census analysis, Barbara Hutchins published a quantitative comparative analysis of the different occupations of women and girls in the decade between the 1901 and 1911. She found a 12.6 per-cent rise in the overall numbers of women aged ten years and above who worked, with a 2.6 per-cent rise in office, domestic and service based occupations. The largest increase came from women who were working in the metal trade and also using machines, at a rise of over sixty per-cent (this is perhaps unsurprising given the continuing move towards mass-production or at the very least semi-automated manufacture in industry).¹⁴ This finding has particular relevance to Birmingham, given the city's longstanding tradition of metalwork and jewellery production.

I will now discuss to what extent these national patterns in women's employment were reflected in Birmingham and the West Midlands, what sort of work Birmingham women were undertaking, what type of skills their work involved and the level of wages that they earned.

In 1901, there were 221,295 women in the Municipal City of Birmingham (which included the parishes of Birmingham, Edgbaston and part of Aston) and 207,295 men.¹⁵

These figures conform to the national pattern of 'surplus' women in the population of the

¹² Ibid., p.156, from E. James, *Women and Work in Twentieth Century Britain*, (Manchester School of Economics and Social Science, September 1962), p. 291.

¹³ Ibid., p.157.

¹⁴ 'Occupations of Women England and Wales 1901-1911', in B.L Hutchins, *Women in Modern Industry*, (London, reprinted 1978), p.85. Hutchins analysed the numbers of women working in domestic work, offices and service; textiles; dressmaking; tailoring; food, drink and lodging; paper, books and stationery; and metals, machines etc.

¹⁵ 1901 census, quoted in *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham*, (1892), p.16.

city. One of the solutions offered was to raise women's ability to earn their own living. As Cadbury, Matheson and Shann wrote in their survey of women's work and wages in Birmingham:

Since there must always be girls who are not members of any family, and widows and others who are sole wage-earners for the family, it is imperative that, if possible, the economic status of women must be raised; for, while their economic inferiority is due to their past subjection, yet in turn the inferiority tends to perpetuate the subjection.¹⁶

According to the Census of 1901, there were 62,370 women above ten years of age engaged in different manufacturing processes in Birmingham and district. This was around twenty per-cent of the 310,312 female inhabitants over ten years of age and fifty-three per-cent of the total number of occupied female inhabitants. The remaining forty-seven per-cent of women were employed in the professions, commercial work, domestic service, charring, laundries, the distributive trades and other occupations. 54,511 women were occupied in work unregulated or partially regulated by the Factory Acts, whilst 62,370 women were occupied in work regulated by the Factory Acts.¹⁷ 116,881 women and girls (which included eighteen per-cent under fifteen years of age) were listed as unoccupied.

¹⁶ Cadbury, Cecile Matheson and Shann, *Women's Work and Wages*, p.144.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45. By 1878, the legal maximum for women working in factories or workshops was sixty hours a week, including no more than three evenings per week by 1895, but only in certain industries such as clothing or bookbinding that were subject to seasonal or occasional pressure or other demands, for example fruit which could spoil. Night work for women was prohibited except for in laundressing. Whilst some benevolent employers would have followed the new restrictions imposed by the Factory Acts, and legislation also led to improved working conditions such as the provision of separate toilet facilities and washing facilities for male and female staff, there would have been no guarantees on working conditions for women working in private workshops and garrets that were not covered by the Factory Acts, particularly in Birmingham which was home to many small enterprises and home/outworkers in the jewellery trade. Many of these enterprises would have been run from private houses, cellars or outbuildings that may have suffered from bad ventilation, inadequate light and lack of space.

Women who were engaged in low-paid charring and laundry work can be classed amongst women homeworkers, who were most likely married and taking in additional work to supplement their husband's income, or widowed and supporting themselves and their family. The Cadbury study classed homeworkers as generating 'all the varieties of income by which women add to the family income without actually entering a place of business.'¹⁸

The Cadbury study also stated that fifty-three per-cent of working women in Birmingham were employed in the manufacturing industries. The authors believed that the introduction of machinery in industry in the city had increased the field of women's work, and suggested that women workers had replaced men in nineteen trades, including brass lathe burnishing, chain making, enamel saucepan production, cycle saddle frame manufacture, harness stitching, inexpensive gold and silver jewellery, and umbrella and frame making,¹⁹ depending on the type of machinery (where men worked the heavy machines and women the lighter ones).

G. C. Allen states the percentage of females engaged in different trades:

TABLE ONE: PERCENTAGE OF FEMALES BY TRADE IN BIRMINGHAM 1861, 1891 AND 1911

	<i>1861</i>	<i>1891</i>	<i>1911</i>
Brass and other non-ferrous	24	22	27
Button	58	63	77
Lock and key	-	6	18
Needle	47	48	63
Saddlery and harness	28	28	33
Other leather goods	-	-	67
Chain and anchor	6	31	32
Pen	94	92	90

¹⁸ Ibid., p.145.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.40.

Tinplate ware	18	22	37
Cycle	-	6	25
Electrical apparatus	-	3	18
Jewellery (incl electroplate)	28	26	35
Brush	22	49	58
Paper bag and box	-	95	94
Bedstead	-	26	25

Source: G.C. Allen, *The Industrial Development of Birmingham and the Black Country 1860-1927*, (reprinted 1966), p.342.

According to this data, in 1911 the greatest numbers of women in the region were working in paper bag and box manufacture (ninety-four per-cent), the pen trade (ninety per-cent), button manufacture (seventy-seven per-cent), other leather goods (sixty-seven per-cent), needle (sixty-three per-cent), brush (fifty-eight per-cent) and jewellery (thirty-five per-cent, which had risen from twenty-six per-cent in 1901 and fallen slightly from twenty-eight per-cent in 1891). Jewellery and metalwork and the opportunities for women's self-employment in Birmingham in these trades will be considered in greater depth in the following chapter of this thesis, including the type of jewellery and metalwork that women manufactured, the environment in which the work was carried out and the conditions of work and wages for women working in these trades.

According to the percentages of women employed in Allen's table, we can conclude that the majority of women working in manufacturing were engaged in work that involved them spending their days performing repetitive tasks, and in jobs that were in the main unskilled. Button manufacturing, for example, involved operating hand or foot presses to stamp out metal button blanks. On average, each woman worker could produce 28,000 blanks a day.²⁰

Early twentieth century social observer literature classified factory work into different types, complete with inherent stereotypical assumptions as to what sort of women performed

²⁰K. Jenns, *Female Business Enterprise*, p.160.

each job. This was partly a question of class, because as one study suggested: ‘rigid class distinctions permeate the rank and file of manual workers,’²¹ and ‘generally speaking, one soon learns that most kinds of work are performed by distinct classes of girls.’²² These work classifications entered popular literature and the press and eventually became naturalised assumptions. In 1915, for example, Barbara Hutchins visited factories and divided women’s work into three types. The first of these, ‘rough hard work’, involved women in the preparation of material and transporting it from one part of the factory to the other, for example rag-cutting in paper mills and sorting soiled clothes in laundries.²³ This type of work, she suggested, was mainly undertaken by married women²⁴ employed ‘out of cheapness’. The second type of factory work, which is most relevant when discussing the local trades in Birmingham, was ‘work done on machines with or without power’ such as ‘machine tending, press work, stamp work, metal cutting, printing, various processes of brass work, and pen-making ... these kinds of work may be very hard, or very easy, they may need skill and afford some measure of technical interest, or they may be merely dull and monotonous, efficiency being measured merely by speed; they may be badly paid, but on the other hand they include some of the best paid of women’s industrial occupations.’ Hutchins’ third type of factory work was finishing and preparing goods for sale and warehouse work, for example packing sweets in confectionary factories and wrapping goods in paper in china and glass works. This type of work, she noted, requires a ‘light touch’ so was suited to women and she stated that ‘the girls who are thus employed are usually of a social grade superior to the two former classes, though they by no means earn better wages. They are very frequently the daughters of artisans earning good wages, and expect to marry in their own

²¹ Cadbury, Cecile Matheson and Shann, *Women’s Work and Wages*, p.47.

²² *Ibid.*, p.48.

²³ B.L. Hutchins, *Women in Modern Industry*, p.65.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.68.

class and leave work.’²⁵ This stereotypical idea of women performing light touch work is also recorded in the Cadbury study in Birmingham: ‘In the jewellery trade, the printing trade, as well as miscellaneous trades such as making swivels, studs, links and medals, women do the lighter and more mechanical jobs.’²⁶

So, we have seen that the majority of working women in Birmingham in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were employed in unskilled trades and factory work. Given that the occupations employing the greatest number of women in the city were unskilled, it could be argued that some women who had to work would have wanted to acquire the education to allow them to access skilled, better paid jobs, those that, according to the Cadbury study had to be ‘properly learnt, whether under a teacher or by long experience; in other words, work in which only mechanical speed and accuracy are needed as contrasted with processes which demand thought and some power of adaptation.’²⁷

A training in Executed Design at the BMSA would have equipped women with the necessary technical skills to compete with men and even each other for skilled jobs in local jewellery firms, or set up in business on their own account producing fashionable Arts and Crafts style metalware, stained glass, textiles or printed books. In the previous chapter I have discussed some of the evidence which suggests that women who were becoming self-employed after studying at the BMSA were single and middle-class and the reasons why their education was a contributing factor enabling them to work for themselves, and stressed that further research after mine could analyse the extent to which working-class women at the BMSA might have benefited from these opportunities.

As well as being repetitive, unskilled jobs were also badly paid. As Jane Lewis concludes: ‘on the whole regardless of their occupation, women workers were found in low status jobs

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Cadbury, Cecile Matheson and Shann, *Women’s Work and Wages*, p.130.

²⁷ Ibid., p.45.

that paid wages barely adequate for the maintenance of a respectable lifestyle.’²⁸ Given this, the opportunity to earn a better living through undertaking skilled jobs or becoming self-employed to earn a higher income after Executed Design training at the BMSA must have been a strong motivating factor for some of the single women students who needed, or chose, to work after graduating from the School.²⁹

J. J. Mallon gave a minimum wage figure of 14s. 6d. to 15s. a week in 1906 for a woman living independently of relatives to support herself ‘in decency and with a meagre degree of comfort.’ A breakdown of what this amount covered is not provided by the author, however he states that this figure ‘assumes that the worker possesses knowledge ... of how best to spend her money and satisfy her wants,’ which points to some level of budgetary awareness. At the very least, this figure would need to cover the cost of lodgings, food, heat and clothing, with additional expenditure on travel and leisure time activities.³⁰ The Cadbury study provided a breakdown of monthly earnings in ten trades for thirteen Birmingham women, with the most useful in the context of this study and the women presented within it being gold polisher and clerk. The young women documented in the study were living within their family units but the authors suggest that women paying for independent lodgings were most likely to be living with extended family or friends so would have had a proportion of their food bills covered within their housing costs each month. During the period of my

²⁸ J. Lewis, *Women in England*, p.158.

²⁹ Some women may of course have finished their studies and decided not to pursue professional employment in an artistic field, or may simply have not acquired the requisite design and practical skills at a high enough standard to enable them to work professionally. Some women chose to work in white blouse employment after graduating from the BMSA, which was a clean, socially acceptable employment for middle-class girls. As an example, Nellie Christine Bytheway was born on 3rd July, 1877 and was a prize-winning student at the BMSA in the 1890s (letter from surviving relative Roy Bytheway to author, dated 6th December, 2008). This correspondence also provides images of an illustrated bookplate design and drawing by Nellie Bytheway, which are held in a family scrapbook originally compiled by Nellie’s brother Percy Bytheway. The 1901 census lists Nellie as working as a commercial clerk (see 1901 census RG 13/2809, p.1) and by 1911, aged thirty-three, she was lodging with Helen ‘Nellie’ Brightwell in the Brightwell family home in Gillot Road in Edgbaston, where Helen has her own metalworking studio. Nellie Bytheway was still working as a clerk. (1911 census, no page reference).

³⁰ J. J. Mallon, ‘Women’s Wages in the Wage Census of 1906’, in B. L. Hutchins, *Women in Modern Industry*, p.227.

study, there is no evidence at the time of writing to suggest that any of the women presented as case studies in this thesis were living alone, independently of a family unit - whether or not a father or husband was head of the family.

The gold polisher in the Cadbury study earned £2 12s. a month or 13s. 6d. a week and paid £1 4s. for housing, 3s. 6d. for extra meals, 12s. 6d. for clothes and boots, 11d. for train and tram fares and 1s. for sweets and fruit. Medicine might cost 1s. a month when required. This wage level placed her just below the minimum 14s. 6d. to 15s. per week recommended by Mallon. The clerk earned £2 8s. a month or 12s. a week and paid a comparable amount to the gold polisher for all the above expenditures. She too earned less than the minimum wage recommended by Mallon.³¹

On average in Birmingham, women were earning less than Mallon's recommended salary, with wages for girls above twenty-one years of age standing at around ten shillings per week, whilst unskilled men's wages were around eighteen shillings to one pound per week.³² This wage inequality seems to have been naturalised in Birmingham:

Employers can usually give no other reason for the actual wage than the fact that such and such a figure is what women usually get in Birmingham ... in the trades where women are replacing men they are always content to do the work at a much lower wage and usually get the wage that is customary in the district ... our conclusion is that women almost invariably earn less than men, and nearly always this low wage is co-existent with an inferior class of work.³³

³¹ Cadbury, Cecile Matheson and Shann, *Women's Work and Wages*, p.243.

³² *Ibid.*, p.121. For a classic study of comparable male wages outside Birmingham see M. Pember Reeves, *Round About A Pound A Week*, (London, 1913, reprinted 1979). The author posits the question: 'How does a working man's wife bring up a family on 20s a week?'

³³ *Ibid.*, p132.

An analysis of different women's factory and workshop occupations in Birmingham and their wages in 1906 can be tabulated as follows and illustrates that the majority of these trades were paying just on or below suggested subsistence level wages:

**TABLE TWO: WORKSHOP AND FACTORY OCCUPATIONS OF WOMEN AND WAGES
1906**

Occupation	Average full time earnings per week
All textiles (cotton, wool, lace, silk etc)	15s. 6d.
All clothing (dress, millinery, tailoring, boot and shoe, factory laundry)	13s. 6d.
All paper, printing trades	12s. 2d.
All pottery, brick, glass, and chemical	11s. 10d.
All food, drink and tobacco	11s. 5d.
Umbrella, parasol and stick making	15s. 7d.
Leather	12s. 8d.
Saddlery, harness and whips	10s. 7d.
Brush and Broom	10s. 6d.

Source: Cadbury, Cecile Matheson and Shann, *Women's Work and Wages*, p.216, p.218 and p.225.

In contrast, specialised, skilled jewellery workers earned higher rates of pay. Shirley Bury described the wages of men working in the jewellery trade in London, utilising statistics published in Charles Booth's *Life and Labour of the People in London* in 1903.³⁴ She stated that Lapidaries (diamond cutters) could earn between £2 10s. a week and £3 a week in good times, but generally between £1 10s. and £2 a week. Setters could earn between £3 and £6 when in full work. Bracelet makers and gold ring makers might earn about £2 5s. weekly,

³⁴ S. Bury, *Jewellery 1789-1910*, vol. II, 1862-1910, (Antique Collectors' Club, 1991), utilising C. Booth, *Life and Labour of the People of London in 1903*, VI, part 1, pp. 4-24.

paid around 11d. per hour. A training in Executed Design at the BMSA would have equipped women in Birmingham with the necessary skills to aspire towards working in these more highly skilled, better paid jewellery jobs.

To summarise this chapter so far, I have argued that two of the motivating factors for women training in Executed Design at the BMSA were firstly the potential ability to move out of unskilled employment involving monotonous, repetitive tasks, and secondly to be in a better position to compete for skilled jobs in artistic trades paying higher wages or to become self-employed in jewellery, metalwork and other decorative arts. However, the BMSA itself also provided opportunities for women graduates of the School to teach alongside men, and the remainder of this chapter will discuss these opportunities in the context of contemporary debates around teaching as a suitable profession for women as a whole.

Teaching as a 'respectable' profession for women had become popular throughout the nineteenth century. In Birmingham, women taught in dame schools and private schools,³⁵ and at elementary level. According to Lee Holcombe, between 1875 and 1914, 'the number of women elementary school teachers increased by 862 per-cent and that of men by 292 per-cent'.³⁶

Generalised assumptions around teaching as a respectable profession and vocation for working women were still pervasive in the 1890s and into the early twentieth century, and these ideas were naturalised and perpetuated by literature as well as through popular media such as magazines and newspapers. For example, two of Gissing's 'Odd Women', the 'old maid' sisters Virginia and Alice Madden, find themselves in a situation where they need to support themselves financially. Their solution is to use the capital left by their father to set up a dame school and realise their vocation as teachers. As Gissing writes: 'Oh my dear,'

³⁵ See chapters three and five of K. Jenks, *Female Business Enterprise*, for a discussion on women working in teaching.

³⁶ L. Holcombe, *Victorian Ladies at Work: Middle Class Working Women in England and Wales*, (Connecticut, 1973), p.34.

interposed Virginia, with sudden dignity, ‘we shall certainly open the school. We have made up our minds; that is to be our life’s work. It is far, far more than a mere means of subsistence.’³⁷ Suitable and refined work for women such as this would enable them to retain their middle-class respectability and status if they needed to earn their own income.

Given the respectability of teaching as a profession for women, what can an analysis of teaching work at the BMSA tell us about the women who remained at the School after studying there, or worked there as teachers without having being pupils? Initial evidence suggests that men and women teachers at the BMSA taught similar classes and alongside each other in some cases. This gives us an example of comparative employment for men and women that, according to the Cadbury study, was a rarity. As the authors stated: ‘In Birmingham, it is very difficult to get instances where the majority of men and women do the same work.’³⁸ They continued: ‘even when the work of men and women is more nearly equal, such as in the case of shop assistants, teachers, clerks etc., it is generally taken for granted both by men and women that a man ought to receive more than a woman.’³⁹ Were male and female teachers at the BMSA paid higher, lower or comparative wages to each other and how does this compare with national trends? As Jane Lewis states: ‘Non-manual women workers generally earned a higher percentage of the average male earnings.’⁴⁰ Was this true at the BMSA?

To begin this discussion of teaching as an occupation for women at the School, we can return to John Thackray Bunce’s 1892 Address to students, that gave the previous chapter of this thesis its title. In this speech, Bunce discussed the: ‘seventy-four assistant masters and mistresses, the largest staff, I believe, under any School of Art Committee in the three kingdoms; and I will venture to say, not the largest only, but also the best. You will observe

³⁷ G. Gissing, *The Odd Women*, p.128.

³⁸ Cadbury, Cecile Matheson and Shann, *Women’s Work and Wages*, p.129.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p137.

⁴⁰ J. Lewis, *Women in England*, p.165.

that I have mentioned mistresses as well as masters. This is one of the marked features of our system. We have trained a large number of women in our schools; we find, by experience, that they are capable of giving intelligent and effective teaching in drawing; and therefore, recognising their right to a free, open and equal career, we are giving them opportunities of doing the work for which they are showing themselves to be thoroughly fitted, and we are giving them such opportunities alike in the morning and afternoon classes in the Central School, and in the evening classes at the Branch Schools.’⁴¹ An analysis of the surviving BMSA staff book and Management Committee Minute books confirms that not only were women teaching art and design in the Central School and in the Branch Schools, but that they appear to have been paid roughly equal wages to the men, and that some were in senior positions within the Schools.

The BMSA’s continuing investment in its staff can be clearly seen from a longitudinal analysis of its minute books. In 1886, for example, there were 792 students at the Central School, with thirteen teachers excluding the headmaster. The salary costs were £1,583 overall.⁴² By 1903, there were 1,467 students and forty-three teachers, with total salary costs of £4,257.⁴³

The majority of women teachers detailed in the BMSA wage and minute books were working at an elementary level within the Central School and the branch schools. However, Mary Newill was employed in a more senior position working as a part-time teacher of

⁴¹ J.T. Bunce, *Prize Address Birmingham School of Art, 1892*.

⁴² BMSA accounts summary, 1886-1903, vol. VIII, p.170.

⁴³ BMSA accounts summary, 1886-1903, vol. VII, March 8th, 1904. A table in the staff book also shows the salary details of non-teaching staff, including twenty-five employees ranging from clerks to a door keeper. Three of these jobs were held by women. Kate Simms was matron, an assistant in the library, and an Assistant Registrar and sorter of drawings, and was paid separate amounts for each job to a total of £82 5s. 4d. per year. Harry Throne, Clerk, received £140 per annum, whilst Mary Powell, who was also employed as an Assistant Registrar and sorter of drawings, received an overall payment of £40 3s.10d. a year.

embroidery, whilst also working for herself as a craftswoman. She was paid a salary of £90 per annum in 1902.⁴⁴

In December 1902, Violet Holden accepted an offer from the BMSA Management Sub-Committee to undertake the teaching of illumination at the Central School after the resignation of the current teacher, Ernest Treglown.⁴⁵ The Committee resolved to employ her at the Central School at a salary of £48 for teaching five hours on Tuesday and Thursday daytimes and two hours on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings, giving a total of sixteen hours per week.⁴⁶ A month later it was recorded that she was not teaching classes on a Monday evening and her salary was reduced to £43.⁴⁷ Holden was combining teaching and working on practical commissions during Spring 1903 when she produced an illuminated resolution detailing the services of Headmaster Edward Taylor which was bound by F.G Garrett at the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft Ltd.⁴⁸ In July 1903, the Committee invested in Holden's skills by sponsoring her on a forty day study trip to learn writing and illumination at the Victoria and Albert Museum and the British Museum in London and take lessons with W. Edward Johnston at the Royal Academy.⁴⁹ However, Holden resigned her teaching position

⁴⁴ See BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, April 24th, 1902.

⁴⁵ A resolution contained in BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, December 9th, 1902 states that Violet replied by letter from her home at Woodside, Dorridge, in a letter dated December 7th. She said: 'Dear Mr Hytch, I must apologise for keeping you waiting such a long time for a decided answer as to whether I could undertake the work we talked about if the Committee do me the honour to offer it to me. But it is only within the last few days that I have been able to make arrangements that will enable me to gain more knowledge of the subject, without which I could not qualify myself for the post. I hope now, however, that I shall be able to do so, and so feel I can, with less hesitation, accept the work should I have the opportunity of doing so.'

⁴⁶ Ibid. Her hours were Tuesday and Thursday 10am-1pm and 2.30pm-4.30pm and Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings between 7.15pm and 9.15pm.

⁴⁷ Ibid., January 13th, 1903.

⁴⁸ BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 9th March, 1903.

⁴⁹ Ibid., July 14th, 1903 states that the Sub-Committee 'recommends that a sum of £20 be voted to Miss Violet M Holden ... towards her expenses on 40 days during the current vacation, in studying writing and illumination at the V&A Museum and the British Museum and in taking lessons from W. Edward Johnston .. at the Royal Academy.' A condition of the financial support was that it would have to be refunded if she resigned from her appointment before June 1904. Violet lodged with Miss Spencer Bate at Roland Gardens, South Kensington during her time in London. See letter in BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, July 23rd, 1903.

in November 1903 as she was suffering from pneumonia.⁵⁰ She was replaced by Ivy Harper, a fellow student who became a self-employed illuminator and artist. Harper's career will be discussed in Chapter Six of this thesis.

In 1891, Miss Elsie Pardoe was appointed an Assistant Teacher at the Moseley Road Branch School on three evenings a week at a salary of £15 per school year and in comparison, Mr Alfred Cox was appointed an Assistant Master on the remaining two evenings at a salary of £10 per school year.⁵¹ By 1897, in the branch schools, there were twenty-three assistant teachers, seven of whom were women.⁵²

By 1897, Miss Annie Steen was appointed to the Central School for three afternoons a week at £18 per school year, Mr Millington for five mornings a week at £30 per school year and Mr John Hard for two afternoons a week at £12 per school year, which meant that he was paid the same pro-rata wage rate as Annie Steen. Mildred Winter, who was an Assistant Teacher at the Ellen Street Branch School, was paid £25 per school year. She received the same wages as Ernest Cotton at the Vittoria Street School, who was also paid £25 per school year. Gertrude Maxwell, who was an Assistant Teacher at the Jenkins Street Branch School, was paid £25, which was the same rate as Mr Percy Squire who was doing the same job at the Moseley Road Branch School. Thus, although the evidence of the teaching wages paid to staff at the Central and Branch schools is limited, it does suggest a general parity of wages between the male and female employees at the BMSA at a junior level. However, earnings of £25 per school year average at 9s. 3d. per week over a calendar year, so a further source of income would have been required for the times in the year when the women were not

⁵⁰ Ibid., an entry on October 13th, 1903, states that on September 29th, a letter was received from Violet Holden from her home in Dorridge stating that she wished to resign at the expiration of the Autumn Term, however the Chair reported that he had consulted her and she wished to stay on until June 1904 – possibly because she did not want to refund the money she received for her vacation stay in London. On November 24th, 1903, the committee reported that Holden was suffering from pneumonia and that Miss Ivy Harper had been appointed to act as her substitute under the general supervision of Ernest Treglown, who was now teaching at the Vittoria Street School for Jewellers.

⁵¹ BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 29th September, 1891.

⁵² Ibid., 13th October, 1897.

teaching to enable them to live independently unless they lived with family or lodged with friends.⁵³ Some women combined practical art work utilising their Executed Design skills with teaching, as will be seen in later chapters of this thesis.

Art teaching in other educational institutions was also open to women who had trained in art and design at the BMSA. One of the most successful art teachers to have studied at the Central School was Eleanor Lily Ward, who taught at King Edward VI Girls School in Birmingham for forty-two years between 1885 and 1927.⁵⁴ Ward taught art and drawing at the School but was also able to utilise her executed design skills as part of her job. In 1923, for example, *The Phoenix Magazine* described ‘the amazing energy and variety of Miss Ward’s kindly activities, and in the Winter Term 1912 she gave demonstrations of making jewellery.’⁵⁵

Eleanor Ward was born in 1861 in Aston, Staffordshire⁵⁶ into a middle-class family. Her father, Arthur John Ward, was born in 1829 and is listed on the 1881 census as a machinist employing six men, one boy and four girls. The family were living in Hazelwood Road, Yardley in Birmingham. Eleanor had five brothers and sisters and the family had one housekeeper, signifying that the family had a reasonable level of disposable income.

An entry in the BMSA Minute Books from January 1886 records that Eleanor Ward was engaged to teach art at King Edward’s High School for Girls after teaching at the Central School of the BMSA.⁵⁷ In June the same year, a letter was received at the BMSA from Miss Creak, the headmistress of King Edward’s School, stating that she would be glad to renew the appointment of Miss Ward as a teacher of drawing.⁵⁸

⁵³ Ibid., 25th August, 1897.

⁵⁴ *King Edward VI School of Girls, Birmingham, Part 1*, (first published 1928, reprinted London 1971), p.109.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p80, from *The Phoenix Magazine* (1923).

⁵⁶ 1881 census, RG11/ 3084, p.11/98.

⁵⁷ BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 12th January, 1886.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 13th July, 1886, letter from Miss Creak dated 30th June, read to the Committee during meeting.

Ward's teaching evidently continued to be a success. A letter to the BMSA Management Sub-Committee dated January 1888 from King Edward's School, expressed the desire to engage Eleanor Ward for an extra one and a half hours per week with an additional payment of £10 per annum, taking her wages to £50 per annum.⁵⁹ In January 1890, she received a pay increase of £12 per annum to devote an additional eight hours per week to the teaching of drawing at King Edward's School, which meant that she was then earning £62 per annum.⁶⁰ It is not clear from the BMSA records exactly what her hours were at King Edward's School, but she was still studying at the BMSA during the early 1890s. Records show that she won the Hukin and Heath repoussé prize for a hammered and decorated rosewater dish in 1894.⁶¹

In 1891, aged twenty-seven, Eleanor was living in Yardley in Birmingham and her occupation on the census was given as an artist and sculptor, so it is possible that she was also undertaking professional commissions as well as teaching.⁶² By January 1898, Ward's salary had been increased to £90 per annum,⁶³ and by 1901, she was living with her father, mother and two sisters at Hazel Dell in Acock's Green and appears on the census as employed as an art teacher.⁶⁴

Eleanor Ward's teaching salary at King Edward's School was comparable to the remuneration received by the all-male head teachers at the BMSA's branch schools. These ranged from £40 to £60 per annum, for example Henry Payne was at the Ellen Street branch school and was paid £40, with an increase to £50 for the 1895/96 session.⁶⁵ However, a

⁵⁹ Ibid., 13th March, 1888, quoting letter dated 26th January, 1888 from King Edward's School.

⁶⁰ BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 14th January, 1890.

⁶¹ Ibid., 13th February, 1894.

⁶² 1891 census, RG12/2463, p.8. Ward's sister Effie is seventeen years of age at this time and is listed as a student of drawing. She was studying at the BMSA and will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter as she became a self-employed enameller and metalworker.

⁶³ BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 14th December, 1897, letter from King Edward's School states: 'it is ordered that the salary of Miss Ward to be increased to £90 per annum from the beginning of the January term 1898.'

⁶⁴ 1901 Census, RG13/2923, no page number.

⁶⁵ BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 15th January, 1895.

number of the male staff in the more senior positions at the Central School were paid more than Ward, for example Arthur Gaskin's salary was increased to £200 from £150 in 1897.⁶⁶

To conclude, this chapter has outlined how women's paid work changed nationally from the middle of the nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. It has examined how these developments related to the number and types of women working in different occupations in Birmingham, with the jobs discussed ranging from unskilled factory work to professional teaching opportunities available to women at the BMSA and in other schools. The practical training provided by the BMSA gave women the potential to access highly skilled jobs and the existence of the BMSA itself also increased women's teaching opportunities. However, it must be stressed that this was still, relatively speaking, a small change in the wider context of male and female employment and the benefits of education for women, for as Jane Lewis reminds us: 'The number of women in jobs that required a good education remained very small ... women comprised only six per-cent of the higher professions in 1911.'⁶⁷

Can it be said with any conviction whether these women from the BMSA, who were predominantly single in the case of those I am researching, were working out of necessity or out of ambition? The question of whether they were working because they were single and needed to bring in their own income or whether they were single because they had chosen not to marry and needed to work cannot be answered here given the lack of primary evidence, although the secondary literature in this field points in the direction of economic necessity. As Barbara Hutchins reminded her readers in 1911: 'the adoption of occupations by women may in a few cases indicate a preference for independence and single blessedness; but it is much more often due to economic necessity ... the women who have evolved a theory of 'economic independence' are few compared with the many who have economic self-

⁶⁶ Ibid., 14th December, 1897.

⁶⁷ J. Lewis, *Women in England*, p.194, utilising G. Routh, *Occupation and Pay 1906-1960*, (Cambridge, 1965), p.16.

dependence forced on them.’⁶⁸ Jane Lewis also states: ‘The large increase in the number of female non-manual workers came in the lower-status jobs of shop assistant, teacher, nurse and clerk and owed more to changes in the demand for white blouse workers than to feminist efforts to expand employment or educational opportunities’.⁶⁹

The following chapter in this thesis will explore how women metalworkers and jewellers were able to take advantage of their Executed Design education at the BMSA and set up in business, become self-employed on their own account or gain better paid, more highly skilled jobs than many of those occupations discussed in this chapter that were open to women. It will include examples of women who counter the following statement from Cadbury, Matheson and Shann at the end of their survey of women’s work and wages in Birmingham: ‘On the whole’, they concluded ‘the comparative want of economic progress and self-assertion on the part of women is due to their general subjection and lack of education, and their consequent narrow outlook.’⁷⁰

⁶⁸ B. L Hutchins, *Women in Modern Industry* p.80.

⁶⁹ J. Lewis, *Women in England*, p.195.

⁷⁰ Cadbury, Cecile Matheson and Shann, *Women’s Work and Wages*, p.138.

CHAPTER FOUR:
‘A PROFESSION OF ‘PRIZE GAINERS’ OR
PROFESSIONALBUSINESSWOMEN?WOMEN IN JEWELLERY AND
METALWORK IN BIRMINGHAM

‘There is not in this world one single normal girl or woman who could not make money, by the exercise of some talent or ability she possesses, if she were only shown how to do it! ‘It is not difficult,’ said a lady to me, ‘to show people how to do handicrafts, but it is difficult to show them how to sell their work.’ And in saying that she hit at the root of a difficulty that keeps many women, who could live in comfort by their own earnings, in a state of penury.¹

This chapter will continue and deepen the analysis of women’s work begun in Chapter Three of this thesis which examined women’s employment in Birmingham as a whole. The focus of this chapter will be on women who were able to use the training in Executed Design that they had received at the BMSA to either gain design jobs or undertake highly skilled employment in a decorative arts based business; set up in business either alone or with a female partner and work from a commercial business premises in Birmingham; or set up on their own account as jewellers and metalworkers and work from a home based studio or from a workshop. As one critic writing in *The Art Journal* stated: ‘Where the workers respond best to skilled training, the enterprise is apt to enlarge into a business organisation.’²

My research has uncovered a number of women who were working professionally in the categories outlined above, and their lives and work will be presented as case studies in the latter half of this chapter. To my knowledge, the lives of these working women, including Helen Brightwell, Gertrude Connoly, Florence Stern, Fanny Bunn, Kate Eadie and Effie Ward have not been critically researched before. They are examples of the ‘steadily

¹ Quiver, How to Turn Your Talents to Account, *The Women’s Work Bureau*, 475:5, (March, 1912), p.528.

² ‘Art Handiwork and Manufacture’, *The Art Journal*, (London, July, 1906), p.210.

increasing'³ ranks of women from 1895-1915 who were earning an independent salary through the means of highly skilled jewellery and metalwork production in England in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The opening quote of this chapter, which was published by the Women's Work Bureau in 1912, reflects two of the key points that will be discussed within it. Firstly, that women who had an aptitude or desire to study art and design with a view to paid employment were given the opportunity to do so at the BMSA, including some who had won merit based competitive financial scholarships. Secondly, that an understanding of the contemporary Arts and Crafts Movement decorative arts market and a knowledge of how to promote themselves and their work utilising exhibitions and design networks was vital for these women.

This chapter will also examine the types of jewellery and metalwork that the women were producing, assess the factors that may have been involved in their setting up in business (including an analysis of the tools and techniques required to become a self-employed enameller and metalworker), and also present examples of how much money they received for their products. Surviving records are extremely rare and the paucity of source information, particularly involving where and how much they sold their products for and whether they were purchased by private clients or businesses and who these people or businesses were, means that my research is a starting point and there is much scope for this research to be continued in the future.

It is possible that women who were working for themselves and wished to be viewed as professionals experienced tensions in a critical culture that saw women students of jewellery and metalworking at the BMSA as 'lady amateurs' and not as women who were at the school to gain the skills that would enable them to become professional jewellers and metalworkers. The evidence and discussion contained within this chapter refutes this perspective.

³MrsHadaway, 'Developments in the Art of Jewellery', *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, (February 7th, 1908).

In Chapter Two of this thesis, I discussed the fact that women students at the BMSA consistently received the most prizes for their work. Contemporary writers, who were invariably male, praised the quality of the work exhibited and entered for competitions at the School or nationally, whilst at the same time pejoratively referring to the women who produced it as amateurs. As an example, in 1900 the Arts and Crafts designer William Lethaby discussed the work presented for The Davis Prize for Design in Chased Metal at the BMSA: ‘A silver cigarette box by Miss F. Stern seemed a competent piece of handling and a pleasant design. Miss Page’s clasp, in steel, also good ... the two ladies named are, I suppose, both amateurs.’⁴ He continues, talking about the Advanced Design work, where the first prize was given to Kathleen Kavanagh. She ‘sent in some designs for lamps in quite good taste,’ and the second and third prizes were awarded to S. Collins and Annie M. Perks for designs for enamel and jewellery, which were ‘fresh and unaffected.’ Lethaby also discusses jewellery made by Annie Stubbs. He wrote: ‘If any attempt is made to specialise from the designing side as well as from the craft side, it is possible that a special class for ladies to study design for jewellery might be successful ... only it should be entered on seriously as a life’s calling, and all that study should be contributing to this one. I sometimes fear that the influence of Art Schools is opposed to concentration and setting down to a vocation, and I do see a danger of a profession of prize gainers being evolved, and little further.’⁵ He suggested that the solution to this problem was to supplement the BMSA’s current art teaching system with special ‘shop classes devoted to the study of definite crafts and immediate reference to the problems of production.’⁶ These ‘should not have a population of floating amateurs learning a bit of this or that ... but should be for those ‘in the trade’’ – perhaps a thinly veiled attempt to suggest that they should be for men.⁷ My research has shown that certainly some of these women were not Lethaby’s ‘amateurs’. Florence Stern was already exhibiting

⁴ The Davis Prize for Design in Chased Metal, report contained in BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 13th February, 1900, report p.6.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., supplement to main report, p.11.

⁷ Ibid.

professionally by 1901 and this will be discussed later in this chapter. Kathleen Kavanagh, who was also cited by Lethaby, was working as an Assistant Teacher of Drawing at the Dudley Road Branch School of the BMSA, working four evenings a week for one hour and forty-five minutes each day at a salary of £45 3s. 2.5d. per annum.⁸ The Headmaster of the BMSA, Edward Taylor, replied to Lethaby, pointing out that women were studying in the hammered work, engraving and enamelling classes. He also offered an example of a girl who he had recommended for a job in one of the best Belgium firms working in stained glass and metalware.⁹ I have argued in the previous chapters in this thesis that I believe that Taylor's perspective was enlightened and that women students who wished to work professionally were encouraged to do so, and I hope that the case studies I will offer in this chapter will go some way towards counteracting Lethaby's concern that women students at the BMSA were merely 'professional prizegainers.'

However, John Swift, writing in 1989, offered an alternative perspective on this open, supportive culture for women students at the BMSA. He doubted that it was the result of enlightenment, instead suggesting that it was due to 'the fear of losing prestige, fees, and the support of the 'art industrialists' whose daughters were part of this group.'¹⁰ I hope that the evidence presented in this chapter will go some way towards counteracting Swift's view that successful women students were tolerated at the BMSA primarily in order to placate their wealthy families who supported the school through philanthropic donations, and only secondarily for any professional ambitions that they might have had. Although predominantly from a middle-class background, the women I will offer as case studies in this chapter were not from families directly associated with Birmingham's affluent and well-connected network of successful industrialists. They were studying at the BMSA in order to gain a profession, make their own living, and not necessarily comply with their perceived roles as wives and mothers.

⁸ 1908 Staff Book, BMSA Archive.

⁹ BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 13th February, 1900.

¹⁰ J. Swift, 'Birmingham Art School', pp. 58-59.

Before beginning a discussion of the women who were either self-employed or working in firms utilising their Executed Design skills, I will discuss the context of the jewellery trade in more detail in Birmingham. This will establish the type of work in the trade that was open to the majority of women workers, that is those who did not benefit from the highly-skilled training in Executed Design offered at the BMSA. I will also consider what conditions these women were working in and how much money they earned. This will underpin my hypothesis that women who were able to train at the BMSA could enter better paid jobs in the local jewellery and metalworking trade, or could set up in business to design and manufacture their own products and earn an independent income.

Birmingham provided a fertile environment for skilled independent craftsmen and women who wanted to set up in business in the Jewellery Quarter or in a similar artistic trade. The absence of a rigid and exclusionary guild system in Birmingham meant that it was easy to set up in business with little more than the required technical skills and a small capital outlay for basic equipment and a supply of raw materials. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Birmingham jewellery and metalwork trade included workers in silver, gold, enamelling, engraving, and jewellery, many of whom were self-employed or working in small to medium-sized enterprises. Writing in 1882 in the *Journal of the Society of Arts*, G. Larkin, who was the Editor of the journal stated:

The industry ... now directly and indirectly affords employment to a larger number of persons than any other trade in Birmingham ... the jewellery trade furnishes a most interesting and important illustration of a speciality which places Birmingham in favourable contrast with every other large town and centre of industry in the kingdom – namely, the large number of small and independent manufacturers it supports. There are comparatively few large manufactories, most of the articles for which it is noted being produced in shops where five to fifty hands are employed (and) ... dealers in the various tools, stones, and materials required are drawn

together, and this affords great facility to manufacturers, especially to those of small capital.¹¹

Thus, women graduating from the BMSA and wanting to become self-employed were entering an established business culture of independent workers.

In their analysis of women's work in Birmingham, Cadbury, Matheson and Shann, writing in 1907, gave a vivid picture of the type of work undertaken by women in the jewellery trade: 'Roughly speaking, the largest part of the work of women metal-workers falls under four heads: press work (utilising both hand and power presses making items such as spoons, knobs, hinges); lathe work (for example soldering and surface processes excluding polishing and burnishing); soldering; and surface processes (including plating, painting, burnishing and enamelling on tin for advertisements).¹²

Jewellery chain making also employed large numbers of women. Writing in 1865, a critic from the *London Reader of Art, Literature, Science, Art and General Information* discussed Birmingham jewellery:

About 1,600 persons, nearly all women and young girls from thirteen to eighteen, are employed in making chains. These girls sit at the bench in rows, each with a gas jet and blowpipe before her, and here you see them placing the links of a chain one by one together with a pair of pliers, the made part of the chain hanging in the left hand. As the end of each new link is put through by the pliers, the ends are closed, and then laying aside the tool, the girl puts a drop of borax and gold fillings upon the joint, and taking her blowpipe in her mouth, cleverly darts the flame across it for a moment, and the joint is fixed. A dip into a basin of water to cool it, and again the process is repeated with another link.¹³

¹¹ G. Larkins, 'On Trinkets and their Manufacture', *Journal of the Society of Arts*, (March 1st, 1882), p.286.

¹² Cadbury, Cecile Matheson and Shann, *Women's Work and Wages*, pp. 50-51, with discussion on these trades pp. 51-72.

¹³ *London Reader of Literature, Science, Art and General Information*, (November, 1865), p.61.

So, at the time that the women I will offer as case studies later in this chapter were graduating from or studying part-time at the BMSA, the vast majority of women working in the jewellery quarter would have been manufacturing workers with no responsibility, carrying out work that required repetitive tasks and certainly not young businesswomen with high levels of practical skills in metalwork and enamelling.

The Cadbury study provides a detailed description of the working conditions within a jewellery factory: 'The jewellers' factories, usually spoken of as the closest workplaces in Birmingham ... (are) amongst the very worst arranged factories in Birmingham ... and very hot when visited early in the forenoon, every aperture for the admission or exit of air, though plentifully provided, being carefully closed, and nearly all the operatives burning gas for the blowpipe; though the most crowded of these (best) shops, containing from 150 to 170 persons, chiefly women and girls, gave on the average upwards of 300 cubical feet of space per head. In another of like kind, and nearly as large, the atmosphere is described as oppressive and stifling, and the operatives of pale, unhealthy aspect, and the ample means of ventilation practically useless, being all closed. Indeed in most of the jewellers' factories inspected the means of ventilation that existed are described as for the most part closed up to prevent draughts, and as a rule all insufficiently ventilated, an evil greatly aggravated by the constant consumption of gas.'¹⁴ These conditions were replicated in the metalware industry, in this example sign enamelling. The Cadbury study continued:

The girl said it was a horrible place to work in, as there was nothing to protect the girls from inhaling the poisonous fumes arising from the burning of the enamel, which was done in the same room where the girls worked. The girls had to pass the material through a fine sieve, which filled the room with dust. This dust contained lead, which caused lead poisoning etc. The result upon the girls was to cause them to often fall down in a fainting condition. She felt her own health giving way, and so

¹⁴ Cadbury, Cecile Matheson and Shann, *Women's Work and Wages*, p.30, data originally taken from Children's Employment Commission, Third Report of the Commissioners, (1862), p.54.

left after working there three weeks. No doctor or inspector visited the place while she was there.¹⁵

Alongside these less than favourable working conditions and repetitive jobs came generally low pay and long hours. The Cadbury study continued: 'At the present time the hours seldom reach 52.5 hours or less per week ... in the brass trade for example the hours vary with different shops from 48 to 54.' In addition, legal overtime was worked in most trades when the need arose.¹⁶

The maximum wages of 25s. per week were paid to jewellers working in a warehouse. 20s. a week went to gold polishers, jewellery polishers, jewellery finishers, gold, silver and other chain makers and silversmiths working in the warehouse. Brooch gilders and ring polishers earned 18s., whilst stud makers and jewellery burnisher earned 17s. Stamping paid 16s., press work 15s., and pearl stringing and gold bead making both paid 12s. The lowest minimum wages were to be found in small workshops with gold chain making at 2s.; and jewellery burnishing and silver and various chain making at 3s. Married women were to be found in five of the trades, jewellery press work, gold chains (the highest paid at up to 16s. per week), chain making in general and silversmiths press work and stampers.¹⁷ A discussion of comparative male and female wages in the jewellery trade, wages in other Birmingham trades open to women and their possible weekly expenditure can be found in the previous chapter of this thesis. In sum, women's wages in Birmingham trades were not high and mass produced jewellery production in Birmingham was an industry that paid poor wages to its women workers.

The market for Birmingham jewellery and metalwork by the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries was healthy. The jewellery trade in England had boomed in the mid-nineteenth century after the discovery of gold in California and Australia, which

¹⁵ Cadbury, Cecile Matheson and Shann, *Women's Work and Wages*, p.42.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.38.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.124-5.

resulted in a growing domestic market for jewellery. However, the trade suffered in the mid-1880s during recession but a successful petition to Queen Victoria encouraged her to wear Birmingham jewellery and this helped revive both the fashion and the business. Steam powered machinery helped to increase production in Birmingham workshops but craft skills were still essential in the jewellery and other craft or toy trades and the small workshop infrastructure remained relatively untouched.¹⁸

From around 1885 onwards, the commercialisation of The Arts and Crafts Movement created a new fashion in jewellery and metalwork. Women graduates of the BMSA were able to take advantage of this new market for fashionable silver and jewellery in the new style which promoted silver and gold jewellery set with semi-precious stones, invariably hand-made or with minimal use of machinery, and metalware such as boxes, plaques and bowls featuring decoration in enamel and semi-precious stones.

A training in Executed Design at the BMSA would have equipped women with the precise technical skills to manufacture these types of products and capitalise on this lucrative market for the new style. Arts and Crafts silver and gold jewellery and metalware was expensive. For example, an eight-inch long silver Liberty & Co. fruit spoon was advertised through its catalogue at £1 10s.; a gold pendant of translucent enamel and opals retailed at £3 18s. 6d.; a large gold necklace designed by Archibald Knox set with pearls sold at £18 18s.; a plain gold brooch without decorative adornments was offered for sale at 12s. 6d. and a gold and enamel brooch set with turquoises cost £2 2s.¹⁹ Silver Arts and Crafts style jewellery was cheaper to buy, for example a plain silver brooch with a gold pin in the Arts and Crafts style was advertised for 6s. 6d., whilst a small silver and enamel brooch retailed at 7s. 6d.²⁰ In

¹⁸ For a comprehensive history and analysis of the Birmingham jewellery trade at this time see S. Mason, *Jewellery Making in Birmingham 1750-1995*, (Hampshire, 1998), for Queen Victoria's support for Birmingham jewellery and a discussion of its impact on the trade see *Journal of the Society of Arts*, (March 1st, 1872), p.285.

¹⁹ Liberty & Co. Catalogue, undated, Birmingham Assay Office Archive and Library.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

other firms, silver waist clasps in the Arts and Crafts style retailed at 12s. 6d. and 30s.²¹ Luxury domestic interior products such as photograph frames and candlesticks were more expensive, for example a Liberty & Co. silver and enamel photograph frame retailed at £2 2s., a four inch high silver mantel clock with enamel dial sold at £5 5s. and a magnificent ten and a half inch high silver and enamel cup and cover by Archibald Knox retailed at £15 15s.²² Finally, a pair of A. E. Jones silver candlesticks decorated with a typical Arts and Crafts Shakespearean motto retailed at £4 15s.²³

Many of the teachers at the BMSA, including Arthur and Georgie Gaskin, Henry Payne, Joseph Southall and May Morris were also professional designers and artists working within The Arts and Crafts Movement and this would have given students exposure to their professional networks and jewellery and metalwork commissions in The Arts and Crafts style. As an editorial in *The Studio Magazine* about the BMSA in 1893 stated:

In jewellery, a subject practically in harmony with local industry, a very genuine attempt is being made to leave the mean device of commerce and infuse into the most degraded of modern art-industry something higher than a glorification of mere money value of the materials, or a rendering in precious substance of feeble conceits. The examples illustrated here show an effort to work metal in metallic ways, to infuse a really artistic interest in the metal artificers work, and to produce individual articles for personal adornment, in place of stock patterns turned out by the gross ... (also) in enamels, lithography and etching.²⁴

By 1906, the effect of The Arts and Crafts Movement on the decorative arts market and art school teaching was recognised in the same journal, highlighting:

²¹ Catalogue for 'A. Edward Jones Designer and Silversmith, Hand-Wrought Silver Ware, Windmill Street, Horse Fair, Birmingham', (November, 1910), Birmingham Assay Office Archive and Library.

²² Liberty & Co Catalogue, Birmingham Assay Office Archive and Library.

²³ A. E. Jones Catalogue, November 1910, Birmingham Assay Office Archive and Library.

²⁴ 'The Birmingham Municipal Art School with Illustrations of its Students Work', *The Studio*, Vol II, 1893, pp. 171-174; p.173.

The success which has followed everywhere in the wake of The Arts and Crafts Movement, and the very remarkable influence which has been exerted over a number of students by the various craft teachers into whose hands the work of producing these young craftsmen has been given. The success of their teaching has had a marked effect upon the various trades which are affected by individual craft, and this has been wholly to the benefit of those trades at large and to the general public, in fostering better taste where the vulgarest forms of commercial ugliness have long held the field.²⁵

The professional designer-makers teaching at the BMSA who had existing contacts and business commissions within The Arts and Crafts Movement network may also have provided business and marketing advice to women wanting to set up on their own account. Alice Gordon, writing about women as students of design in 1894, advocated design instruction for women wanting to work professionally, suggesting that it should include classes taught by practising designers, so that:

Women will be given the opportunity of studying practical art as a profession, and they will have not merely the manual and mental dexterity required to design a pattern for a wallpaper or cretonne, but they will have the great advantage of learning something of the business side of their calling, for they will be brought into contact with manufacturers and employers of labour, so that whenever they leave the school (whatever department of designing they may elect to make their profession), they will have learnt something of simple business ways and customs, which knowledge should prove an invaluable training to women.²⁶

Some critics suggested that the adaptability of the jewellers and metalworkers in Birmingham enabled them to develop their business precisely through capitalising on new

²⁵ 'The Arts and Crafts Exhibition at the Grafton Gallery, First Notice', *The Studio*, vol. XXXVII, (1906), p.56.

²⁶ A. M. Gordon, 'Women as Students in Design', *Fortnightly Review*, (April 1894), p.527.

trends and developments in fashion. G. Larkins wrote in 1882 that: ‘the demand for novelty stimulates the ingenuity of the producer, and, by ensuring a continued supply of new styles, develops trade.’²⁷ Likewise, M. J. Wise suggested in a later paper, published in 1949, that: ‘since 1700 a further secret of Birmingham’s industrial success has lain in the adaptability of its trades to meet the changing demands of both local and world markets.’²⁸ As evidenced in Chapter Two of this thesis, a sharp rise in the number of Art Metal firms in Birmingham occurred between 1885 and 1915, which coincides with the popularity of the fashionable Arts and Crafts Movement and reflects its popularity in middle-class consumption.²⁹

Self-employed or highly-skilled women may have been able to capitalise on these commercial opportunities through selling their own hand manufactured products for domestic and personal consumption. The Arts and Crafts Movement offered professional marketing opportunities through dedicated national and local exhibitions, including those at The Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society in London. These provided a regular networking and marketing opportunity for women designers, whilst the exhibitions themselves helped to drive the market for Arts and Crafts jewellery and metalware amongst middle-class consumers. As a writer in *The Studio Magazine* stated in 1903: ‘A fairly large and intelligent section of the sight-seeing public has now come to regard the Arts and Crafts Exhibitions at the New Gallery as a kind of triennial festival of decorative art, serving at once as a standard of taste and a record of progress in English workmanship and design ... the object of the Society is to enable designers and craftsmen to show a few examples of the kind of work they are doing every day.’³⁰

The BMSA held its own annual exhibition of student work at the headquarters of the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists (RBSA) in New Street, but the RBSA itself organised

²⁷ G. Larkins, ‘On Trinkets and their Manufacture’, p.286.

²⁸ M. J. Wise, ‘Evolution of the Jewellery and Gun Quarters in Birmingham’, Transactions and Papers (*Institute of British Geographers*), 15, (1949), p.60.

²⁹ Although no women are listed as trading independently in the ‘Art Metal’ sections of the local trade directories throughout this time span, these firms may well have provided on-site work and freelance opportunities for women working from their own studios.

³⁰ ‘The Arts and Crafts Exhibition at the New Gallery, First Notice’, *The Studio*, vol. XXVIII, (1903), p.27.

dedicated Arts and Crafts Exhibitions. The preface of its catalogue in 1909 stated that 'for many years past, a number of Artists in Birmingham have been engaged in work the object of which is to inspire vitality, individuality and beauty into articles of every-day use. The Society of Artists, conscious of the value of such efforts, and that pictures are not the only works of art which may claim its consideration, feels that the time has come to hold an Exhibition of Arts and Crafts which will give to the Birmingham public an opportunity of seeing the work which is being carried on in its midst.'³¹ The exhibition included sixty-six pictures and thirty-four cases of objects. Florence Stern and other women designers associated with the BMSA exhibited and offered their work for sale here.

Women were also exhibiting in the provinces. Geraldine Carr, for example, who studied at the BMSA, exhibited a silver and enamel casket set with precious stones at the Thirty-Second Autumn Exhibition of Pictures and Sculpture at the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool in 1902, priced £70.³² At the Baillie Galleries in London in 1906, an exhibition of the works of the painter Simeon Solomon was complemented by paintings and drawings executed by the well-known and commercially successful artists Edward Burne-Jones, Ford Madox Brown, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Edward Poynter, and 'some well painted manuscripts on vellum by Miss Jessie Bayes and enamels by Miss May Hart.' May Hart was a student at the BMSA.³³

The Arts and Crafts exhibitions also provided the potential for women to sell their work in international markets. The Exhibition of Arts and Crafts that was held in July and September 1906 at the Lyceum Club in London consisted of 'a considerable portion of the works which were exhibited last winter in the Wertheim Galleries at Berlin, and which were afterwards transferred to Hamburg, Dusseldorf, Bremen and Cologne. Before being sent to Berlin the exhibits were judged and selected by (amongst others) Charles Ashbee, Edward Taylor, Walter Crane, and Fra Newbury (Headmaster of the Glasgow School of Art). Over

³¹ Arts and Crafts Exhibition Catalogue, RBSA, 1909.

³² Thirty-Second Autumn Exhibition of Pictures and Sculpture Catalogue, Walker Art Gallery, 1902.

³³ 'Studio Talk, London', *The Studio*, vol. XXXVII, (1906), p.68.

£300 worth of these exhibits were sold in Germany, and, though the exhibition in London was open only during the so-called 'dead' season, very large sales nevertheless resulted.'³⁴

Geraldine Carr exhibited a copper and enamel triptych, which was described by a contemporary critic as: 'A striking piece of work ... the three enamelled pictures, giving a rather 'bizarre' history of Cinderella, were of great strength and originality.'³⁵ Carr also exhibited a silver and enamel casket with figural panels.

Little capital and outlay was required by a woman to set up as an independent jeweller or metalworker. For those entering the general jewellery trade: 'Very little capital is needed: two or three pounds ... a little metal, and a shop, with its gas blowpipe and bench often let with it, and the workman can produce scarf-pins, studs, brooches, rings.'³⁶ However, women wishing to capitalise on the fashion for Arts and Crafts jewellery and metalware would have required more capital outlay than this. It is difficult to put a precise value on the amount of finance required to set up in business making jewellery and metalware in the Arts and Crafts style due to a lack of surviving source material, however an indication of the setting up costs for art jewellery was suggested in a debate about contemporary art jewellery that was published in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*. The author stated that 'a certain amount of capital was required by any art whatever could be put into it; and that was still more the case when jewels were used. It was a great drawback to art workers that they must spend £20, £30 or £40 in setting up before they could obtain any sort of return for their art work.'³⁷

For those women who wished to set up on their account, it would most likely be the middle-class art and design students that were discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis who would have a small amount of capital to outlay on a kiln; supplies of metal; and enamelling equipment to establish themselves independently. These students may also have been in a better position to invest in starting up a business and having personal savings or accessible

³⁴ *The Studio*, vol. XXXVI, (1906), pp. 71-72.

³⁵ *Ibid.* p.75.

³⁶ 'Birmingham Jewellery', *London Reader of Literature, Science, Art and General Information*, p.61.

³⁷ H. Stannus, *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, (February 7th, 1908), p.296.

familial income to cover their basic living costs during the waiting time for their enterprise to make a profit. As Vera Brittain suggested in *Women's Work in Modern England*: 'In all artistic professions it cannot be sufficiently emphasised that two or three years usually elapse before even a talented worker can begin to make an income.'³⁸

More detail about the type of equipment needed to set up in art jewellery and metalworking can be discerned by examining the specific case of enamelling, which is the highly-skilled, complicated process of melting powdered, coloured glass in paste form onto metal.³⁹

As discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, enamelling was a popular subject of study for women students at the BMSA, arguably because consumers expected pieces of fashionable Arts and Crafts jewellery and metalwork to have coloured enamelled decoration. Upon visiting the School, the critic George Wade noted that 'you can observe a group of girls busy with the process of enamelling, using, amongst others the far-famed Limoges process. Splendid provision is also made, and opportunities given, for young people who wish to learn the working and engraving of brass and metals. You can stand and see these students making their designs, carrying them out on the metal itself.'⁴⁰ An article in *The Studio Magazine* in 1904 discussed the entries for the National Competition, amongst them two enamelled panels by Kate Eadie, one depicting the Lady of Shalott and the other an angel. 'Birmingham students excel in the crucial subject of enamelling,' stated the author of the piece. 'The central school is the alma mater of that admirable craftswoman Fanny Bunn, whose decorative panel well deserves the gold medal it secures. Following closely in her steps, but with their own gifts clearly marked and wisely cultivated, are her fellow students Kate M.

³⁸ V. Brittain, *Women's Work in Modern England*, (London, 1925), p.88.

³⁹ For an in-depth account of the process see L.F. Day, *Enamelling*, (London, 1907). The colour in enamel is provided by metal oxides, with different oxides producing different colours. Once the enamel paste has been applied to the metal the piece is fired in a kiln at temperatures of at least 1,700 degrees Fahrenheit, with repeated firings required depending on the choice of colours used in the design.

⁴⁰ G. A. Wade, 'Life at An Art School, How Art is Taught in Birmingham', *Cassell's Magazine*, (no date, bound in a collection of articles about the BMSA building and its students dated 1995, School of Art Library, Margaret Street.) The highly-skilled process of Limoges enamelling originated in the town of the same name in Western France at the end of the fifteenth century. The entire surface of the metal is painted with enamel and fired at a high temperature, making it suitable for portraits, landscapes and other painted subject scenes.

Eadie, Agnes I. Pool, and Gertrude Hart, all of whom are well represented in this group. In the exacting and highly detailed designs executed by Fanny Bunn and Kate Eadie, the colouring is surprisingly rich, pure and equable in effect, and the faces, simply and broadly drawn, have the delicacy of miniature painting.⁴¹ One enamel panel by Gertrude Hart was selected for display in the South Kensington exhibit at the St. Louis Exhibition in America.⁴²

Women students at the BMSA were therefore highly-skilled at the enamelling process. But what outlay might have been required for a woman who had graduated from the BMSA and wanted to set up in business as an art enameller? There were four requirements for a self-employed enamellers workshop – materials and tools for preparing the enamel and the metal ground; tools for applying the enamels; equipment for firing the enamelled pieces; and equipment for finishing the enamels.⁴³

This chapter has so far examined the type of jewellery and metal products that women were making at the BMSA, what style they were working in, what they needed to set up in business if they became self-employed, and how they could market their work. I will now introduce case studies of individual women who trained at the BMSA and went on to work professionally using the categories outlined in the introduction to this chapter – namely working in senior jobs or undertaking highly skilled employment in a decorative arts based business; setting up in business either alone or with a female partner and working from a commercial business premises in Birmingham; or setting up on their own account as jewellers and metalworkers and working from a home based studio or workshop. The women were predominantly from middle-class backgrounds - of the ten case studies presented here, only one woman, Caroline Copson, was from a working class background. The majority of

⁴¹ 'The National Competition', *The Studio*, vol. XXXII, (1904), p. 325.

⁴² 'Birmingham Student Exhibition', *The Studio*, vol. XXXII, (1904).

⁴³ See O. Untracht, *Enamelling on Metal*, (New York, 1957, third edition 1962), pp. 21-25. Tools for preparing the metal include copper sheet, metal shears, mallet, jewellers' saw frames, nitric or sulphuric acid, glass dishes, copper tongs, files, steel wool, planishing hammers, raising hammers to form a plate or bowl, and a sand bag. Tools for applying enamels include gum Arabic (to ensure the adhesion of the powdered enamel to the metal), pestle and mortar for grinding enamels, bowl for water, and brushes. Tools for firing enamelled pieces include a kiln, wire or iron mesh spiders (metal stands to place the pieces on during the firing process), trivets and tongs. Tools for finishing enamels include files, emery cloth, steel wool, a burnisher, and jeweller's rouge. In addition, a soldering iron would be required for soldering some pieces.

women competed for the scholarships at the BMSA to help finance their studies. All but one remained single, so it could be argued that they may have chosen to reject traditional forms of feminine identity such as wifehood and motherhood in order to pursue a career, or that they needed to work to support a dependant family. As will be discussed shortly, all the women were exhibiting their work at professional selling exhibitions in Birmingham and throughout England. There are, however, very few remaining records that indicate their income from selling their jewellery and metalware, although it is possible to establish the prices they obtained for selling some individual pieces of jewellery and metalwork.

An analysis of extant Birmingham trade directories has enabled me to ascertain the number and names of women who were working independently as metalworkers in the thirty years between 1885, when the BMSA became a Municipal School, to 1915, focusing on the women linked to the BMSA through archive material.⁴⁴ Of the four women listed in the Art Metal category, three studied at the BMSA, namely Geraldine Morris, Florence Stern and Gertrude Connoly.

Geraldine Morris advertised herself as an independent metalworker from commercial premises at 45 Newhall Street in the 1909, 1910 and 1911 Kelly's Directories. As with the majority of women presented in this thesis, there is a paucity of source material about her commercial commissions. However, Morris illustrated an edition of William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, which was published by John Lane in London and New York in 1902.

⁴⁴ Trade Directories in Birmingham, including Kelly's and Hulley's, were not published annually so can never provide a complete picture of people who chose to advertise as working in different trades. The choice of categories in my initial analysis was based on skilled work in the jewellery and allied trades or those trades that would have enabled women to become self-employed as a result of studying at the BMSA. For example, jewellery case making and chain making were removed from my analysis, as were manufacturers of jewellers' rouge. I was specifically seeking women who were listed as working on their own account, so focused on the categories Art Metal Workers, Goldsmiths, Jewellers, Metalworkers, and Silversmiths as these would be the most likely sections for women to advertise in if they were primarily producing hand made work in the Arts and Crafts style. The Silversmiths and Goldsmiths category contained women who were married, possibly widows of husbands who had died and carried on the business, but these women are unlikely to have studied at the BMSA during my time period. No women were listed as independent silversmiths.

Born in 1871, Morris was enrolled in classes at the BMSA for fourteen years between 1897 and 1911.⁴⁵ She was from a middle-class background, living with her family at Wythall Vicarage in Alvechurch, Worcestershire at the time she enrolled at the School. She paid her own fees throughout her training with the exception of one year.⁴⁶

Morris was taking advantage of local commercial opportunities in Birmingham to market her work. For example, in 1909, she exhibited a case of jewellery at the RBSA's Spring Exhibition in New Street, although specifics about each item are not provided in the catalogue.⁴⁷ Two years later, she exhibited an enamel panel at the Royal Academy of Arts Summer Exhibition in London.⁴⁸

Florence Stern, who was born in 1869,⁴⁹ was a professional metalworker producing jewellery and silver flatware decorated with enamel and semi-precious stones. She also exhibited paintings between 1902 and 1923, showing her works six times at the RBSA and forty-eight times at the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool.⁵⁰

In common with Geraldine Morris, Stern was born into a middle-class family. Her father Moritz was a German Jewish immigrant running a successful merchant business in Birmingham.⁵¹ The family lived in Edgbaston.⁵²

⁴⁵ Register of Students, SA/AD/14/1, BMSA Archive. Geraldine Morris appears in the 1897-1898 session register of the BMSA. She is aged sixteen and is registered for the Autumn and Winter terms at a fee of 50s. per term. Her address is given as Wythall Vicarage, Alvechurch, Worcestershire. By 1900, she is still a student at the School and is now boarding with a Mrs Sheppard at 5 Calthorpe Road in Edgbaston whilst returning to Alvechurch at the weekend. In the 1901-1902 session her address is given as Hollowdene, Meade Vale, Red Hill, Surrey whilst her correspondence address is c/o Miss Eadie, Showell Green Lane, Moseley. In the 1902-3 session she is at 14 Sandford Road, Moseley aged twenty-one, and by the 1903-4 session is registered back in Alvechurch. She remained here until the 1906-7 session when, aged twenty-five, she gave her address as Birchacre, Wingfield, Surrey and studied only in the Autumn Term. The following year she appears as not paying any fees and is living at 242 Franklin Road, Kings Norton.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Forty-Fourth Spring Exhibition Catalogue, RBSA.

⁴⁸ *A Dictionary of Artists and their Work in the Summer Exhibition of the Royal Academy*, catalogue number 1808.

⁴⁹ 1891 Census, RG12/2357, p.14.

⁵⁰ *The Dictionary of British Artists*, (Antique Collectors Club, 1980), p.480.

⁵¹ Z. Josephs, 'Two German Clerks in Victorian Birmingham', *Birmingham Historian*, 16, (October 1998), pp. 13-18 and MS 2524/1/A/2, Papers of Zoe Josephs, Notes relating to research of 'Two German Clerks in Victorian Birmingham', BA&H; Home Office: Registered Papers, Supplementary HO 144/369/B17381, certificate A8188 issued 11th January, 1895. See also Stern, Moritz, *Memoirs*, MS 2524/1/A5/1, BA&H.

⁵² 1881 Census, RG11/2954, p.39.

Stern was educated at Edgbaston High School and King Edward's School before commencing studies at the BMSA.⁵³ She first appears in the earliest extant BMSA Register for the year 1897-8⁵⁴ but an analysis of the Prize Lists places her as a student earlier than this date. Stern's metalwork appears in *The Studio Magazine* as early as 1893 when the magazine published an illustration of a repoussé fire guard that she designed and made.⁵⁵ Stern's last session at the BMSA appears to have been in the 1906-7 academic year, suggesting that she studied at the school part-time whilst also working professionally.⁵⁶ Stern won both national and local prizes for her work whilst a student at the BMSA.⁵⁷ However, she also exhibited commercially. For example, in 1898, she offered a copper repoussé panel entitled 'Ploughing' at the RBSA, which was priced £5 5s.⁵⁸ Her work was also selected for the prestigious 1900 Paris International Exposition, where she exhibited a silver repoussé waist ornament.⁵⁹ This piece had originally been exhibited earlier that year at the English Education Exhibition, where it was purchased for £3 3s. by the Sub-Committee of the Royal Commission for the Paris Exhibition.⁶⁰

In 1901, Florence Stern was living in Bristol Street in Birmingham and was working as a self-employed art craftswoman and sculptor.⁶¹ At around this time, she registered her own maker's mark of 'FS' at The Birmingham Assay Office, so guaranteeing the precious metal quantity within her products to potential customers. This mark appears as part of the

⁵³ Z. Josephs, 'Two German Clerks', pp. 13-18.

⁵⁴ BMSA Register of Students, SA/AD/14/1.

⁵⁵ 'The Birmingham Municipal Art School with Illustrations of its Students Work', II, *The Studio*, vol. II, 1893, pp. 171-174.

⁵⁶ BMSA Register of Students, SA/AD/14/1.

⁵⁷ For example, in 1894, Stern received an honorary mention for a hammered and decorated rosewater dish which was entered for the Hukin and Heath repoussé prize (this was sponsored by the firm of Hukin and Heath with the specific aim of improving the quality of metalwork in the local trades). She won this prize again a year later for an elliptical tray with chased decoration and repoussé border. In 1896, she won a bronze J. H. Chamberlain Medal. These were awarded for the best works in the section of design, (drawn, painted, modelled or executed). She also won the medal for a name-plate executed in repoussé. In 1897, Stern won a Messenger Prize of £10 for the best design for a name plate for a technical art school suitable for execution in copper repoussé and a £2 prize for a cross and a silver clasp executed in the same material.

⁵⁸ Catalogue of the Seventy-Second Autumn Exhibition, RBSA, (1908), p.61.

⁵⁹ BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 13th February, 1900.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ 1901 Census, RG13/2814, p.18.

Hallmark on documented examples of her silverware from 1901 onwards, for example a hand-hammered silver spoon set with a tourmaline dating from 1915 which is now in a private collection. The Birmingham Assay Office purchased two spoons directly from Stern for its silver collection in March 1902 for £1 5s. each.⁶² The cost of individual pieces of Stern's metalware, particularly jewellery, can be established from the catalogue entries of her commercial exhibitions. Brooches, pendants, pins and buckles retailed at between £1 and £3 per item, with silver spoons being offered for under £1. This is comparable to the cost of small items of jewellery retailed by Liberty & Co. as highlighted earlier in this chapter, placing Stern's pricing for her pieces at the same level as some of the most desirable Arts and Crafts Movement metalwork on the market.⁶³

Florence Stern and Gertrude Connoly, who was also a student at the BMSA and will be discussed later in this chapter, worked together from a studio at 124 and 126 Frederick Street in Birmingham from 1907,⁶⁴ however although this was Stern's registered studio, it was housed in the same premises as her father's business, so it must be acknowledged that

⁶² Inventory numbers: spoon F125 is A.0.144 and spoon F126 is A.0.143, see Birmingham Gold and Silver, exhibition catalogue, (Birmingham, 1973).

⁶³ See, for example, the catalogue for the Thirty-Second Autumn Exhibition of Pictures and Sculpture at the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool, 1902. Stern exhibited a case containing a silver buckle with turquoise (priced £2 2s.); a silver pendant with opals (£1 11s. 6d.); Lace Pin, with Opal (17s. 6d.); Silver Brooch, with Opal (£1 5s.); Silver Brooch, with turquoise and opal (£1 5s.); Silver Scarf Pin, with Opal (£1 1s.); and a Silver Spoon (17s 6d.) at the Liverpool exhibition. However, the records do not indicate which pieces, if any were purchased, so it remains problematic to identify which pieces, if any were sold, and who the purchasers were. The catalogue of the Seventy-Seventh Autumn Exhibition of the RBSA in 1903 included a case of objects by Stern, including two pendants, two brooches, a pendant and chain, a buckle, two pins, two silver spoons and a pair of silver links. The prices ranged from 18s. to £3 3s. Stern exhibited five jewellery objects and two caddy spoons at the dedicated Arts and Crafts Exhibition at the RBSA in New Street in 1909. She was a prolific exhibitor and clearly realised the public relations and marketing potential of such events. In 1910, she exhibited at the Birmingham Arts and Crafts Exhibition and Sale, which was held at the Town Hall in September with a public admission cost of 3d. Its purpose was to: 'enhance the sale and exhibition of scientific, artistic, and other useful productions exemplary of the possibilities of true workmanship ... the object of the exhibition is to re-awaken the old idea of the Arts and Crafts and re-unite Art and Utility in the Industries.' She presented a silver buckle set with opals; a pair of silver serviette rings; a gold pendant and chain, set with opals; a silver spoon set with turquoise; a silver caddy spoon, set with turquoise; and a chased silver spoon. See *Arts and Crafts Exhibition and Sale 'Under the Auspices of the Organised Workers of Birmingham and District, Town Hall, Birmingham, 20th-24th September 1910*, catalogue bound in Birmingham Exhibitions c/3 225605, BA&H.

⁶⁴ *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham*, 1907.

although she was earning income from her jewellery and metalware she was probably not completely independent from her family's support.⁶⁵

Stern and Connolly appear to have worked collaboratively before 1907, providing an example of two women who met at the BMSA as students, collaborated on work and went on to work professionally together, demonstrating a network of female friendship and professional support as discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis. At the Leeds Arts and Crafts Exhibition in 1905, a correspondent from *The Studio Magazine* stated that:

Hardly any artist-craftsman of unimportance was unrepresented .. the jewellery exhibited by Miss F. Stern and Miss G. Connolly ... was of a high order ... much jewellery was exhibited, and the prevailing quality of it was high, though certain designers stood out whose names have become established by their output of beauty.⁶⁶

Connolly is only listed in the trade directories as working with Florence for one year, possibly because she gave up commercial metalwork and jewellery design. By 1911, she was living in a boarding house in West Kensington, London and working as an art teacher for London County Council.⁶⁷ Stern, however, continued to work professionally as a craftswoman and advertise herself as a metalworker from the premises in Frederick Street until at least 1921.⁶⁸

Gertrude Connolly was born in 1874 into a middle-class family and lived in Handsworth.⁶⁹ Extant records suggest that she studied at the BMSA in the 1897-98 session,

⁶⁵ Hirsch and Stern General Merchants, 124-126, Edmund Street, *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham*, 1911.

⁶⁶ 'Leeds Arts and Crafts Exhibition', *The Studio*, vol. XXXIII, (1905), p.356.

⁶⁷ The 1911 census lists Gertrude Connolly as a boarder at 75 Edith Road, West Kensington, London.

⁶⁸ On the 1911 census Stern is listed as an Artist Craftswoman working on her own account in metalwork, aged forty-two and single and still living at 241 Bristol Road with her father Moritz, her mother, her sisters Helen and Margaret aged thirty-seven and thirty-five, both single, and two servants. Stern is still listed as working as a metalworker at 124 and 126 Edmund St. *The Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* lists her at the premises in 1921.

⁶⁹ 1881 Census, RG11/2835, p.9 and 1891 census, RG12/2262, p.18. In 1881, she was living at 43, Mayfield Road, Handsworth. Her father Charles was a commercial traveller and her mother Sarah did not have an occupation.

from the age of twenty-three.⁷⁰ Her fees for the Autumn and Winter term were paid by a free scholarship. By the 1900-1901 session, however, she appears to be paying her own fees, but she obtained one further scholarship in the 1904-5 session before ceasing study in the 1906-7 session.⁷¹ In common with the majority of women discussed in this chapter and thesis, Connolly was a prize winning student,⁷² and by 1901, aged twenty-seven, she was working professionally as an artist and craftswoman in enamel.⁷³ Prices for her work appear to be similar to those charged by Florence Stern, ranging from 17s. to over £3 per item, with her output including hat pins, pendants, spoons and brooches.⁷⁴

Another example of a woman designer who trained at the BMSA and was working professionally from commercial premises in Birmingham is Kate Muriel Mason Eadie. However, she differs from the other women in this chapter in that she married fellow designer Sidney Meteyard, who was an artist and craftsman associated with the Birmingham Group, including the Gaskins and Henry Payne. Eadie was born in 1879 in Harborne, Birmingham. Her father ran a business, being a professional engraver employing a small workforce.⁷⁵ In 1902, whilst a student at the BMSA, Eadie won the national Owen Jones prize, which was awarded to ‘Students at the Schools of Art who, in annual competition, produce the best designs for Household Furniture, Carpets, Wall-papers and Hangings, Damask, Chintzes etc.’ Six prizes were offered that year. Eadie won her award for a design for an incised and stained

⁷⁰ BMSA Register of Students, SA/AD/14/1.

⁷¹ Ibid. Fees of 15s. and 10s. for the autumn and winter terms respectively.

⁷² In 1897, she won the first prize of £2 in the Advanced Design Prize for a set of at least four designs, drawn or painted, for jewellery or other metalwork, including enamelling. See prize list in BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 14th December, 1897.

⁷³ 1901 Census, RG13/2713, p.25, living at 58 Heathfield Road, Handsworth. Her occupation is given as an artist and craftswoman in enamel, but she is listed as an employed worker, not working on her own account. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to ascertain which company employed her due to a paucity of source material.

⁷⁴ In 1905, Gertrude exhibited a case of jewellery at the Seventy-Ninth Autumn Exhibition of the RBSA. It included two hat pins, three brooches, a pendant, two silver pins, two silver spoons and a cloak clasp with materials including mother of pearl, opals and turquoise. The prices ranged from 17s. 6d to £3 3s. See RBSA exhibition catalogue for this exhibition.

⁷⁵ 1881 Census, RG11/2958, p.34. Her father Richard was aged thirty and her mother Fanny was aged twenty-four and did not work.

wood screen.⁷⁶ By 1908, she was exhibiting commercially and in common with Florence Stern and Gertrude Connoly, she showed her decorative arts products at the annual selling exhibitions of the RBSA. Her professional output included pendants, bracelets, hat pins, salt cellars, and spoons, in silver and semi-precious stones. Prices ranged from £1 to £7.⁷⁷

By 1912, Eadie was working as a professional artist and jeweller from a studio in New Street. Sidney Meteyard was working from the same building so it is possible that the couple shared studio space.⁷⁸ Rental costs of such prime city centre retail sites would have been high but provided high visibility to potential customers.

In 1914, Eadie was elected a professional Associate Member of the RBSA, and remained a member until 1940.⁷⁹ Examples of her jewellery have survived and are documented. A silver necklace in The Arts and Crafts style, designed and made in around 1900, of intricate intertwining leaf and bud design set with moonstones and mother-of-pearl and with pearl drops, is illustrated in the online archive of the antique jewellery dealers Van Den Bosch.⁸⁰ Eadie continued to work within the decorative arts, listing herself as an artist working from the New Street studio as late as 1939. She retained her maiden name in her professional capacity.⁸¹ She died on 8th November, 1945 in Alcester, Warwickshire. Probate records state that she left effects to the value of £2,529 18s. 5d. to her husband Sidney and her sister Maggie Jane Eadie.⁸²

Women who had trained at the BMSA were also undertaking skilled employment in commercial companies. As outlined in Chapter Two of this thesis, records of women actually

⁷⁶ Journal of The Society of Arts, (August 8th, 1902), p.753.

⁷⁷ RBSA Eighty-Second Autumn Exhibition Catalogue, p.57 and RBSA, Forty-Sixth Spring Exhibition Catalogue, p.61. The case at the Eighty-Second Autumn Exhibition included five objects – two pendants, two bracelets and a hat pin. The materials are given as silver, opal, jade and turquoise. The prices ranged from £1 5s. to £3 3s. Three years later, in 1911, Kate exhibited at the Forty-Sixth Spring Exhibition. Objects included two pendants, a necklet and a pair of salt cellars and spoons, with prices ranging from £4 4s. to £7 7s.

⁷⁸ *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham*, 1912.

⁷⁹ History of the RBSA, p. 51. From Spring 1927 she is listed as ARBSA and she is last listed in Spring 1940.

⁸⁰ See <http://www.vandenbosch.co.uk/Archive/ArchJewellery.htm> accessed 10th October, 2010.

⁸¹ *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham*, 1939, lists Kate M. Eadie as an artist at 3, New Street.

⁸² National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858-1966, database online, accessed through www.ancestry.com, 9th July 2013.

working for firms after or during training at the BMSA, or without attending the BMSA are extremely rare. However, three women - Mary Agnes Massie, Helen Brightwell and Frances Sanderson can be connected with paid, skilled employment. Writing in *The Artist* magazine in 1900, Helen Brightwell's career is described thus: 'Many of her best designs for jewellery etc, have been bought by a leading firm here, and she is at present learning technicalities before entering into the services of the firm as one of their head designers ...'⁸³ This is the only reference to Brightwell that I have found as being employed and I have been unable to ascertain the name of the company that she was working for. However, evidence shows that she went on to become self-employed and her life and work will be discussed later in this chapter in this context.

Mary Agnes Massie was born in 1883 and worked as a designer for the Birmingham jewellers Marples and Beasley. The firm was a silversmithing and regalia manufacturers based in Albion Street in Birmingham between 1906 and 1928.⁸⁴ She is recorded on the 1911 census as a jewellery designer working in a silversmiths. Her father was an unemployed draper and the family lived in Henderson Road, Sparkhill. Her mother was also not in employment, so the income from Mary's job and that of her brother and three sisters who worked as a photographic printer, assistant teacher and typist would have undoubtedly supported the family income. The family employed no servants, suggesting that there was little disposable income within the household.⁸⁵ Based on extant evidence it has not been possible to ascertain whether or not Massie studied at the BMSA. However, she does provide an example of a woman who was working within a commercial firm utilising Executed Design skills. A painted rectangular Arts and Crafts Movement enamel plaque by Massie, enamelled with male and female warriors on galloping horses and dating from 1911 sold at

⁸³ C. Levetus, 'The Birmingham School of Art', *The Artist*, vol. 29, (September 1900), pp. 439-444.

⁸⁴ *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham*, 1900, p.24 and *Birmingham Maker's Marks Directory* www.silvermakersmarks.co.uk/Makers/Birmingham accessed 3rd August 2010.

⁸⁵ See 1911 census. The family lived at 18, Hendon Road, Sparkhill, Birmingham.

auction in 2010.⁸⁶ It is possible that this was a student piece given that it is Limoges enamel, or that she was designing Limoges pieces in this style for commercial sale by the company, demonstrating that they were marketing pieces in the Arts and Crafts style that were designed and produced by women designers.

The Sub-Committee Minute Books of the BMSA contain an entry dated February 28th, 1906,⁸⁷ which records an application from Miss Frances H. E. Sanderson who gained a £20 per annum scholarship in 1904 and free admission to all classes at the Central School, including modelling, design, decorative painting and figure drawing. Sanderson was born in Whitney, Hampshire in 1875, to a middle-class family (her father was a vicar).⁸⁸ The terms and conditions of Sanderson's scholarship stipulated that students must attend classes at the BMSA full time unless 'following a wage earning occupation.' A minute book entry states that Miss Sanderson had 'received an offer of a post as a designer for ecclesiastical work at Messrs. Mowbray and Co. in Oxford on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays.' The Committee stipulated the hours she would have to attend classes at the BMSA to continue to fulfill the obligations of the scholarship, namely Wednesday evening for two hours; three hours in the morning, two hours in the afternoon and two hours in the evening on a Thursday, and either three or four hours on a Friday morning and two hours in the afternoon, totalling either fourteen or fifteen hours a week.'⁸⁹

Caroline or 'Carrie' Copson was born in September, 1883.⁹⁰ Unlike the other women who trained at the BMSA and are discussed in this chapter, Copson was from a working-class background. Her father was a watch-case spring maker and the family lived in Brougham

⁸⁶ Bonhams, Knowle, Sale Catalogue, Lot 115, Decorative Arts and Jewellery, (2nd November, 2010), sold for £576 inclusive of buyer's premium. The reverse of the frame applied with a leather panel faintly annotated in white ink: 'No 1374, Massie, Mary Agnes, Age 28, Designer, 242, 7 (?), 04. Executed in 1911.

⁸⁷ BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, February 28th, 1906.

⁸⁸ Frances Harriet Alice Sanderson was born in Whitney, Hampshire in 1875 (GRO Hamp. vol. 2c, p.173). Her father John Sanderson married Maria Edgworth in 1871 in Cambridge (GRO Col. vol. 3b, p.847). Frances Sanderson's great-grandfather was Richard Lovell Edgworth, who was an associate of Birmingham's famous Lunar Society in the eighteenth century, and her grandmother was the writer Maria Edgworth.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ GRO Aston, vol. 6d, p.373.

Street in Aston.⁹¹ Copson studied at the Vittoria Street School for Jewellers, which was the sister school of the BMSA within Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter, under the tutelage of Arthur Gaskin.⁹² It is probable that Copson was taking practical classes in Executed Design at the Vittoria School on a part-time basis, whilst also working for a local firm as a gold brooch maker.⁹³ By 1901, her mother was a laundress working on her own account from home. It is possible that Carrie's father had died by this time and Carrie was helping to support the family. Gold brooch making would not have been highly paid, so it is possible that wanting to gain a practical design education in order to manufacture desirable and expensive handmade Arts and Crafts jewellery was a personal motivating factor in Copson's education.⁹⁴ Two pieces of Copson's Arts and Crafts work are documented and are held in the permanent collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Both were exhibited in the English section of the Paris International Exhibition in 1914. The first is a cast fruit bowl dating from 1913 depicting figures of children in silver with engraved and enamelled decoration;⁹⁵ the second is a six-footed lamp and shade in cast silver with plique-à-jour enamel decoration with inset plaques representing the four seasons of the moon.⁹⁶ Both these pieces would have required advanced Executed Design skills to make.

⁹¹ 1881 census, RG11/3036, p.15.

⁹² W. T. Whitley, *The Studio*, vol. L, issue 210, p.298. The author discussed Copson's student work in the same article: 'Examples of precocious skill were ... a silver pendant set with forget-me-nots in blue enamel by Carrie Copson. Her work was also mentioned in September 1909 as part of a feature on the National Competition of Schools of Art. It praises her silver hair comb with enamel roses and foliage around a centre opal. See *The Studio*, vol. XLVII, (September 1909), p. 288.

⁹³ I have been unable to ascertain the name of the firm due to a paucity of source material.

⁹⁴ 1901 census, RG13/2839, no page number given. The family were living at Poplar Grove in Birmingham. On the 1911 census, no page number given, Carrie was listed as a jeweller, aged twenty-seven and single, living at 28 Bloomsbury Street, Birmingham.

⁹⁵ Victoria and Albert Museum, inventory record for CIRC.617-1954, see <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item.0180870/fruit-bowl/> accessed 18th February, 2010. This bowl won the National Silver Medal and the Messenger Prize at the BMSA. It was exhibited in London in 1913 and in Paris in 1914. As a consequence, it remained in the vaults at the Louvre throughout the First World War and was returned to London in 1919.

⁹⁶ Victoria and Albert Museum, inventory record CIRC.618-1954. This piece is thought to date from between 1905 and 1912, see <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/0180875/lamp-with-shade/> accessed 18th February, 2010.

Caroline Copson died on 4th May, 1950. At the time of her death she was living with her sister Ellen in Spooner Street, Small Heath, Birmingham. She left effects of £3,437 14s. 9d to her sister.⁹⁷

The final section of this chapter will discuss women who were working professionally as artists and metalworkers from a domestic based workshop.

Effie Downes Ward was an artist and jeweller working on her own account from home.⁹⁸ She was born in 1874.⁹⁹ Her father, Arthur John Ward was a machinist employing six people and the family lived in Yardley, near Acock's Green in Birmingham.¹⁰⁰ Ward's sister Eleanor (who became an art teacher at King Edward's School in Birmingham) was discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis in a comparative analysis of wages between the male and female members of staff at the BMSA. Eleanor also produced metalware and enamels whilst a student at the BMSA.

Effie Ward's silver and enamel ware produced at the BMSA received a special commendation from William Lethaby in his 1900 Examiner's Report. He described a piece of her work as 'a really careful piece of craftsmanship.'¹⁰¹ She exhibited jewellery and enamels professionally at the annual RBSA exhibitions beginning in 1901¹⁰² and by 1903 she was exhibiting at the prestigious national Arts and Crafts Exhibition at the New Gallery in

⁹⁷ The Electoral Register for Small Heath, 1950, p.73, lists Caroline and Ellen Copson at 56 Spooner Street; National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), available online through www.ancestry.com, accessed 7th July, 2013.

⁹⁸ 1911 Census, no page number given. Ward is thirty-seven years of age and unmarried.

⁹⁹ 1881 Census, RG11/3084, p.11/98.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* Ward's mother was Eleanor Elizabeth Ward, who was born in 1830 in Birmingham. Effie was the youngest of six children in the family, her siblings being Hannah (born 1852), Harry (born 1860), Eleanor (born 1861), Elina (born 1866), and Florence (born 1867). In 1881, the Downes family were living in Hazelwood Road in Yardley and employed one housekeeper. Effie was aged seven and listed as a scholar.

¹⁰¹ Prize List entry, Examiner's Report BMSA, 1901, BMSA Archive. In the same year, she won the School's Messenger Prize and a J. H. Chamberlain Award silver medal for a copper plaque covered in Limoges enamel.

¹⁰² Catalogue of the Thirty-Sixth Spring Exhibition of the RBSA, (1901), p. 61; Catalogue of the RBSA Seventy-Sixth Autumn Exhibition, (1902), p.68. Effie Ward exhibited a case of jewellery at the Thirty-Sixth Spring Exhibition of the RBSA in New Street in 1901. The following year, she exhibited a case of enamels at the Seventy-Sixth Autumn Exhibition at the Rooms of the Society in New Street. See catalogues for these exhibitions.

London. *The Studio Magazine* gave particular praise to the ‘beautiful little mirror in copper gilt, set with turquoises ... enamelled by Miss Effie Ward.’¹⁰³

Ward had a close working relationship with Arthur and Georgie Gaskin. As Glennys Wild states: ‘Effie Ward was a star pupil and enameller. The Gaskins lived in Acocks Green and so did she.’¹⁰⁴ A pendant by Georgie Gaskin and enamelled by Effie Ward, dating from 1903, is a fine example of this collaboration. The painted enamel depicts a small girl with her arms outstretched against a background of scrolling leaves.¹⁰⁵ A pendant of identical design but with a stone set chain and a heart shaped drop was exhibited at The Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society in 1903 and illustrated in the European *Arts Journal Der ModerneStil* in the same year. The Arts and Crafts exhibition entry credits Ward with the enamelling of this piece.¹⁰⁶ Ward collaborated with the Gaskins on the Madresfield Court commission in 1903, in which the ‘Birmingham Group’ of designers and craftspeople who worked professionally and taught at the BMSA (including Henry Payne and Arthur and Georgina Gaskin), were commissioned to design and execute a private chapel at Madresfield Court near Malvern. Glennys Wild states that Ward was involved in the execution of the silver and enamel altar cross for this commission.¹⁰⁷

It is difficult to ascertain how long Ward continued to work as a jeweller, silversmith and enameller due to the lack of available records. She did not marry and died on 21st October, 1960 in Aylesbury, leaving effects of £803 4s. 1d to Eleanor Kathleen Silk, spinster.¹⁰⁸

Helen Brightwell (often referred to as ‘Nellie’ in archive material and in periodicals), trained at the BMSA and worked on her own account from home. She was born in Colchester

¹⁰³ ‘The Arts and Crafts Exhibition at the New Gallery in London’, Fourth Notice, *The Studio*, vol. XXIX, pp. 22-33; p.31.

¹⁰⁴ G. Wild, *Arthur and Georgie Gaskin*, p.62.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p.79.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*; *Der ModerneStil*, vol. V, 1903.

¹⁰⁷ The chapel and its contents were commissioned as a wedding gift from Lettice, Countess Beauchamp, to her husband at Madresfield Court near Malvern. See G. Wild, *Arthur and Georgie Gaskin*, p.63 and p.71. The chapel is still extant today.

¹⁰⁸ England and Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations, 1958-1966), online database accessed through www.ancestry.com, 7th July, 2013.

in Essex in 1876.¹⁰⁹ Her father owned a boarding and day school called Linton House in Crouch Street, Colchester.¹¹⁰ In January 1891, The Ipswich Journal reported that William Brightwell had committed suicide due to financial troubles and Helen, her sisters and her mother moved to Edgbaston in Birmingham to live with her father's brother, Daniel Brightwell, who was a journalist for *The Birmingham Daily Post*.¹¹¹ However, Daniel died in Birmingham in 1899, leaving Helen's mother Miriam to support herself and her children. She was fifty-two years of age at this time so would have been unlikely to have found work outside the home, so this may have been a contributing factor as to why Helen Brightwell needed to gain paid employment.¹¹² As one contemporary writer stated, discussing women as students in design: 'The vagaries of an inexorable destiny, in these days of speculative businesses and bank failures, often leave a widow and orphans dependent upon the unselfishness of their relations. It would be invaluable, under these circumstances, for a woman to have a working knowledge of some art or craft, so that she might be able to earn a decent living for herself and her children.'¹¹³ Another contemporary writer stated: 'so far from girl workers being mostly supported at home, it appears that in many cases the earnings of the single daughter or sister living with her family, small as they are, are an important element in the family income.'¹¹⁴

Helen Brightwell enrolled at the BMSA as soon as the family arrived in Birmingham and won a free scholarship.¹¹⁵ As discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, she was one of a

¹⁰⁹ GROCol., Dec Qtr 1876, vol. 4a, p.345.

¹¹⁰ Ipswich Journal (May 20th, 1868). William Brightwell and his brother Daniel had purchased premises in Crouch Street, Colchester, advertising their intention to open a school called Linton House. The 1881 Census reveals that Helen's parents, William and Miriam, were living and working at Linton House School. Helen was aged four and a scholar, her sister Beatrice, also a scholar was aged seven, Dora was aged three, and Winifred was aged one. See 1881 Census, RG11/1789, no page number given.

¹¹¹ 'Suicide of a Schoolmaster', Ipswich Journal, (January 28th, 1891): 'Mr William Brightwell, master of Linton House School ... committed suicide yesterday by shooting himself through the head with a revolver. He was found dead in an armchair, and beside him were a number of letters carefully arranged, relating to money matters.' On the 1891 Census, ref RG12/2360, no page number, their address is given as 112, Gough Road, Edgbaston. Helen was fourteen years old and by this time the family consisted of five children.

¹¹² Died December 1899, aged sixty-five. See GRO Kings Norton, vol 6c., p.272.

¹¹³ A. M. Gordon, 'Women as Students in Design', *Fortnightly Review*, (April 1894), p.527.

¹¹⁴ B. Hutchins, *Women in Modern Industry*, p.234.

¹¹⁵ BMSA Register of Students, SA/AD/14/1.

number of female students competing for and winning free scholarships to the BMSA and given her family's financial circumstances this may have been crucial to her being able to attend the School. She appeared regularly on the lists of local and national prizes, for example in May 1900, she received a Gold Medal for a modelled design for a panel in the National Competition of Schools of Art and Art Classes.¹¹⁶ Brightwell appears in the registers at the BMSA until the 1911-1912 session and in this year she was also working as a teacher at the School in the winter term.¹¹⁷

By 1901, the Brightwells were living in Gillott Road, Edgbaston. All of the elder children were in employment, including the now twenty-four year old Helen who worked from home producing metalware in silver and enamel.¹¹⁸ Helen remained at home for at least the next ten years working as an artist in metal. Extant documentation, including census reports, suggest that she did not marry.¹¹⁹ In common with other women that I have discussed in this chapter, she exhibited a buckle costing £2 12s. 6d., and a pendant priced at 15s. at the 46th Spring Exhibition of the RBSA.¹²⁰

Helen Brightwell died at the Savoy Hotel in Cheltenham on 18th May 1966. She was living in Ipswich at the time of her death and left effects of £27,603 to two of her sisters and Colin Campbell, a retired glass merchant. Whether this considerable sum was amassed through self-employment in silversmithing and enamelling or whether Helen had inherited an amount of money at some point in her life must remain a matter of conjecture.

The final woman to be presented in this chapter as a case study is Fanny Bunn. She was born in 1871 into a middle-class family in West Bromwich.¹²¹ Bunn is recorded in the extant

¹¹⁶ The Artist, (May, 1900), p.74.

¹¹⁷ BMSA Register of Students, SA/AD/14/1.

¹¹⁸ 1901 Census, RG13/2827, p.37.

¹¹⁹ 1911 Census, no page number given. The family were living at 356 Gillott Road in Edgbaston. Miriam Brightwell was aged sixty-eight, Helen was single, aged thirty-four, and her occupation given as an artist in metal, working on her own account at home.

¹²⁰ Catalogue of the RBSA 46th Spring Exhibition, (1910), p.61.

¹²¹ 1871 Census, RG10/2985, p.104. The family lived at 113 Lyndon, West Bromwich with Fanny Bunn's grandfather David, who was a widower aged sixty-two. His occupation was a grocer. Fanny's brother Alfred Hollyook was twenty-three, also a grocer and living at the house. Fanny's father was Levi Bunn, aged thirty-one and a coach smith. Fanny had an older sister called Rebecca. The family had one general servant. By 1881,

registers at the BMSA from the 1897-98 session onwards, continuing until the 1906-7 session although she does not study in each year.¹²² She appears to be working professionally from 1901 onwards, working as an artist and painter.¹²³ However, she was also working in metal, silver and enamel, exhibiting an enamel panel in the Pre-Raphaelite style depicting the *Eve of St Agnes* at The Arts and Crafts Exhibition at the New Gallery in 1903.¹²⁴ In the same year, the work she submitted for the National Competition of Schools of Art was also praised: ‘The name of Fanny Bunn (Birmingham) is already favourably known in connection with enamelling ... the silver medal was taken by Bunn for an enamelled panel and box lid, executed in her rich colouring and imaginative draughtsmanship, on the subject of Christina Rossetti’s *Three Seasons* – ‘a cup for love, a cup for hope, a cup for memory’.¹²⁵ The following year, in 1904, Fanny exhibited at the Royal Academy of Arts Summer Exhibition in London.¹²⁶ She continued to work from home as an artist and painter,¹²⁷ and in 1921 exhibited at the RBSA Autumn Exhibition. Her metalwork included a trinket bowl entitled *Fairies*, and a silver powder box entitled *Memory*.¹²⁸ Fanny Bunn did not marry and lived at the same address in Beeches Road until she died on 30th October, 1950. She left effects of £1,592 to her sister Rebecca Bunn, also a spinster.¹²⁹

To conclude, in this chapter I have introduced the lives and work of ten women from both middle-class and working-class backgrounds who were employed as highly skilled,

Fanny was aged ten and listed as a scholar. Levi and Emma now had their own address, which was 15 Walsall Street, West Bromwich. Levi was forty-two years old and had changed occupation to a brass hinge maker. The family still had a servant. See 1881 Census, RG11/2852, p.14. By 1891, the family had moved again to 47 Beeches Road, West Bromwich. Fanny’s father was now living on his own means, whilst her mother Emma and sister Rebecca were both listed as having no occupation. Fanny was aged twenty and listed as an art student. The family did not have a servant at this time. See 1891 census, RG12/2274, p.23.

¹²² Her fees for the Autumn and Winter Terms were 60s. She was next at the School in the 1899-1900 session, this time in Class One, continuing each year until the 1906-7 session. BMSA Register of Students, SA/AD/14/1.

¹²³ 1901 Census, RG13/2725, p.19.

¹²⁴ ‘The Arts and Crafts Exhibition at the New Gallery’, Third Notice, *The Studio*, vol. XXVIII, (1903), p.182.

¹²⁵ ‘The National Competition of Schools of Art 1903’, *The Studio*, vol. XXIX, (1903), pp. 257-274; p.259.

¹²⁶ A. Graves, *The Royal Academy of Arts: A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and Their Work from Its Foundation in 1769 to 1904*, vol. I: Abbayne to Carrington, (London, 1905).

¹²⁷ 1911 Census, no page number given. The family were living at 63 Beeches Road, West Bromwich. Levi was living by private means, Rebecca was single and no occupation given, and Fanny was now forty years of age. She was single and an artist/painter working from home. The family had one domestic servant.

¹²⁸ Ninety-Fifth Autumn Exhibition of the RBSA (1921), exhibition catalogue, p.25.

¹²⁹ England and Wales National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858-1966, online database accessed through www.ancestry.com, 7th July, 2013.

professional designers and artists in Birmingham within a company or who were working on their own account in commercial premises or from a domestic based workshop. I have indicated the type of jewellery and metalware that these women were producing and indicated how their working lives and the products that they manufactured differed from the lives and output of women working in the general jewellery trade in Birmingham. I have also suggested that these women were actively capitalising on the popularity of items in The Arts and Crafts Movement by both working in this style and exhibiting at local and national selling exhibitions with this market in mind. I have discussed how the Arts and Crafts style was disseminated through periodicals and exhibitions, and how women recognised these avenues as a marketing tool for their work and as a consequence of this exhibited widely. Although to my knowledge records indicating their actual self-employed income or wages have not survived, I have indicated the prices that they were charging for their work. The training in Executed Design, including enamelling and metalwork that the women received at the BMSA, and their ability to capitalise upon the Arts and Crafts network in the city of Birmingham and beyond, were crucial factors in enabling them to set up in business. I would therefore argue that far from the BMSA cultivating a 'profession of prize winners', the women in Birmingham that I have presented as case studies in this chapter, were very much professional women.

CHAPTER FIVE:
THE BIRMINGHAM MUNICIPAL SCHOOL OF ART (BMSA) AND
PROFESSIONAL WOMEN STAINED GLASS DESIGNERS

‘Of coloured or stained windows, as they are more commonly called, many are made, mostly bad, but there amongst us a few who know how to make them well, and these are better than any made elsewhere in Europe at this time.’¹

By 1893, when the opening quote of this chapter was written, design products of The Arts and Crafts Movement had become fashionable amongst the middle classes in the United Kingdom. Individual artisans, commercial companies and crafts guilds were capitalising on the demand for jewellery and metalwork created in the new style and this market also included stained glass and domestic furnishings. This chapter will continue the discussion begun previously in this thesis about how professional craftswomen who trained at the BMSA were able to utilise their Executed Design training to produce fine quality products to capitalise on the market for Arts and Crafts goods, in this case stained glass.²

Extant evidence of women working professionally as stained glass designers either during their training at the BMSA or after leaving is extremely rare. Ida Lillian Kay competed for the BMSA Order of Merit Scholarship in 1906, which was worth £30. An entry in the School’s minute book states that at the time of the competition she was twenty-five years old and her occupation is recorded as a stained glass designer.³ Kay was employed at the Camm Studio in Smethwick, working alongside her fellow BMSA student Florence Camm in her family business whilst studying part-time at the BMSA. Ida Kay is first

¹ C. Somers, *Stained Glass, Arts and Crafts Essays by Members of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society*, (London, 1893), p.105.

² The decision to introduce practical stained glass classes into the BMSA curriculum was not taken until 1900 (BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, July 10th, 1900), including the addition of dedicated workshop space enabling practical skills to be taught, but in the decade proceeding this BMSA students had produced drawn designs for windows for the national competitions, for example Mary Newill in 1897. See M. Harrison, ‘Stained Glass’ in A. Crawford (ed.), *By Hammer and Hand*, pp. 119-128; p.120.

³ Ida Kay came third in the scholarship competition against Richard Stubbington and Bertram Lamplugh, whose occupation is recorded as a stained glass worker. BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, July 10th, 1906.

recorded in the company wage book in July 1905, earning 5s. a week for working twenty-two and a half hours.⁴ Two months later, she received a pay rise to 9d. per hour and continued at this level of pay until 1907.⁵ Little information has survived as to the type of design work that Kay was undertaking in the Camm Studio, however she is recorded as drawing cartoons for stained glass windows, some of which could take a week to complete. This was a skilled job utilising the Executed Design and life drawing skills that Kay had developed during her studies at the BMSA.⁶

In common with the majority of the women metalworkers discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis, Ida Kay came from a middle-class family. She was born in Stafford and her father was a railway auditor. She lived in the affluent suburb of Edgbaston, Birmingham with her family.⁷ By 1911, she was employed as an art teacher at King Edward's Grammar School in Birmingham. Whether Kay left the Camm Studio to move into teaching because the profession was better paid, or whether she simply wished to change career, remains open to conjecture.⁸

Other women trained at the BMSA and worked professionally as stained glass designers throughout their lives. Florence Camm worked within an existing small to medium sized

⁴ Camm Studio Wage Book, BS/C 3/6, Sandwell Archives and Heritage.

⁵ Ibid. See also Camm Wage Book, BS/C 3/7. The new level of pay is recorded from the week ending September 15th, 1905. Florence Camm was earning 9d. an hour when Ida Kay started work at the Studio and in the same week that Kay received 9d. per hour Florence received a pay rise to 1s. per hour. This suggests that as Ida and Florence gained experience, they moved on to work at different jobs in the Studio that attracted a higher rate of pay. Information on the rate of pay for male workers at the Studio is presented later in this chapter. There are periods when Kay does not appear in the wage book, this could be because she was taking classes at the BMSA in the daytime at this time, or the workforce at the Studio was fluctuating according to customer demand.

⁶ Ibid. For example, she spent six days working on a cartoon for job number 1364 and eighteen and a half hours on a drawing.

⁷ The 1881 census lists Ida Lillian Kay aged eight months old, born into a family from Stafford, with her father working as a railway auditor (see 1881 census RG11/2687, no page number given). On the 1901 census, her father is listed as a retired railway worker and her mother does not work. Ida was one of five children. The 1901 census lists her as an art student, aged twenty, living at 12, Melville Road, Edgbaston with her family, who employed one servant (see 1901 census, RG13/2815, p.32). Ida Kay did not marry and died on 2nd April, 1959 in Malvern, Worcestershire. She left effects of £1,820 7s. 4d. to George Ernest Osbourne Kay. See England and Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations) (1858-1966), online database available through www.ancestry.com, accessed 7th July, 2013.

⁸ 1911 census, no page number given. At this time, Ida is aged thirty, is single, and is an art teacher at King Edward's Grammar School.

family business enterprise, whilst Mary Newill (1860-1947),⁹ who trained and taught at the BMSA, worked on her own account in a commercial stained glass studio space, as did Margaret Agnes Rope (1882-1953). In common with Ida Kay, all three women were from a middle-class background.¹⁰

The lives and selected examples of the work of these three women will be presented in this chapter, and my analysis will also consider Florence Camm as an employer of women stained glass designers in the Camm studio through a discussion of the work of Florence 'Eve' Loach and Iris Brooks. However, despite the commercial success of Florence Camm, Mary Newill and Agnes Rope as evidenced by the research undertaken for this thesis, there is a paucity of published critical studies documenting their lives and work, or indeed women stained glass designers as a whole during this period.

Examples of ecclesiastical and domestic stained glass work completed by Florence Camm, Mary Newill and Agnes Rope will be presented in this chapter. During the mid-late nineteenth century an additional business opportunity was open to stained glass designers as well as that of the domestic market for windows in the Arts and Crafts style. A revival of church building and the refitting of ancient churches in the Gothic Revival style had occurred from the mid nineteenth century onwards.¹¹ Between 1840 and 1876, the Church of England

⁹ Mary Jane Newill was born on 24th October 1860 and died in 1947. She was one of twins, however her brother John Robert Newill died just thirty hours after he was born. Her parents Robert Daniel Newill (1826-1866), originally from Shropshire and Marian (1836-1916), originally from London, were married in 1860 in Melton Mowbray, see Melton Mowbray County Marriage Records Vol 7a, p.303. In total, the couple had twelve children, with ten still living by the time of the 1911 census.

¹⁰ On the 1881 census, Florence is listed as a scholar. She attended Summer Hill School, one of the King Edward's Schools in Birmingham. See prize list for the School 'Florence Camm, Botany, 1886', *Birmingham Daily Post*, (July 30th, 1886); Mary Newill's father, Robert Daniel Newill was the County Court Coroner for Shrewsbury. On the 1871 census, Mary Jane Newill is listed as ten years old and the family were living in Wellington, her father is also listed as a farmer of ten acres and landowner. The family had six servants (see 1871 census, RG10 2808, p.132). The 1891 census lists Margaret Agnes Rope's father Henry Rope as a surgeon. The family were living in Shrewsbury. Her parents had six children and employed five servants including a lady's help, cook, groom, housemaid and nurse (see 1891 census, RG12/2109, p.1).

¹¹ From the 1830s, church building and restoration was accelerated by a religious revival called the Oxford Movement, which was led by J.H. Newman, John Keble and Edward Pusey. The movement aimed to revive medieval church architecture, ritual, and belief in the Anglican Church as a divine institution. The designer Augustus Pugin popularised Gothic Revival architecture, whilst the well-known firm of Hardman's in Birmingham was one of the leading business enterprises producing stained glass and church decorations in this style.

built 1,727 churches and rebuilt or refurbished 7,144 at a total cost of over £25 million.¹²

Interior decorations and stained glass windows were an integral part of this building programme, and opportunities for commercial stained glass production as a result of the revival of church building or refurbishment continued into the early twentieth century. A surviving Order Book from the Camm Studio illustrates the number and range of ecclesiastical commissions that the business was producing for clients across the country.¹³

It can be argued that the most influential and certainly the most documented late nineteenth-century Arts and Crafts business enterprise that was manufacturing both ecclesiastical and domestic stained glass was Morris and Company. The firm was originally founded by William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Ford Madox Brown, Philip Webb, Peter Paul Marshall and William Faulkner in 1861.¹⁴ I have argued in previous chapters of this thesis that the close links between the BMSA and national figures in The Arts and Crafts Movement were an influence on students at the School, and as demonstrated in previous chapters, that these links provided access to influential networks which opened up the commercial realm to students who wished to work professionally as designers to capitalise on the Arts and Crafts style. For example, Mary Newill taught alongside William's daughter May Morris when Morris was a visiting lecturer at the BMSA and letters contained in the BMSA archive suggest that the two women were friends, which arguably opened up and facilitated access to the Morris family's professional network to Mary Newill.¹⁵ Morris & Co., which operated as a small to medium sized enterprise, could well have provided an aspirational business model for students at the BMSA who wished to

¹² *William Morris*, Catalogue of Centenary Exhibition, V&A, (1996), p.50.

¹³ Two order books have survived, BS/C/10/1 1888-1891 and BS/C/10/2 1902-1910, Smethwick Archives and Heritage.

¹⁴ The Firm, as it became known, operated from a shop in Red Lion Square in London and moved to premises in Queen Square by 1865. Work for private clients and larger commercial commissions for St James' Palace and the South Kensington Museum led to increased sales for the company. In 1875, The Firm was re-organised under Morris's sole direction and rebranded Morris & Company. In 1881, Morris & Co. moved to Merton Abbey near Wimbledon where a separate stained glass workshop utilising traditional manufacturing techniques was established. For a detailed discussion of Morris & Co. see *William Morris*, Catalogue of Centenary Exhibition, V&A, (1996), p.16 and p.19.

¹⁵ This will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

manufacture stained glass for the commercial market. Additionally, examples of stained-glass cartoons and finished windows by Morris & Co were available at the School for students to refer to during their studies.¹⁶

The Camm family's stained glass studio workshop has been critically situated within the Morris & Co. Arts and Crafts tradition. For example, John Burgin states that it 'reflected the aims and endeavours of William Morris and his successors'¹⁷; whilst Martin Harrison writes that Florence Camm 'brought... an Arts and Crafts influence to the firm'.¹⁸ Surviving photographs of the Camm workshop confirm that it was traditional in structure, utilising long-established equipment, tools and materials for the hand-made production of stained glass.¹⁹ The Camm Studio received commissions from architects and designers in the Midlands and beyond who were working in the Arts and Crafts style, for example William Alexander Harvey for a house in Bournville, Birmingham; the Crouch and Butler Partnership for a house in Edgbaston, Birmingham; and Shapland and Petter Ltd in Barnstaple for a stained glass window.²⁰ Other critics have placed less importance on the Camm Studio, its designers and its production of windows in the Arts and Crafts and Morris & Co. style. Stephen Wildman identifies Richard Stubington, Henry Rushbury and Cyril Lavenstein as stained glass designers of note who had trained at the BMSA, before suggesting that 'there was more opportunity for the less high-fliers to work as designers for industry ... in family

¹⁶ Available works included three Edward Burne-Jones and Morris & Co windows loaned from J. R. Holiday in 1901 (BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, October 18th, 1901).

¹⁷ J. Burgin, *T.W. Camm and His Family, Designers and Makers of Stained Glass at The Studio, Smethwick, 1885-1963*, unpublished MA Thesis, (Birmingham City University, 1984), p.1.

¹⁸ M. Harrison, *Victorian Stained Glass*, (London, 1980), p.87.

¹⁹ Typed descriptions of kilns are contained within the Camm Studio Scrapbook, held at BMAG, uncatalogued, hereafter referred to as BMAG CSB; two undated black and white photographs of the stained glass workshop at the Camm Studio illustrating the range of tools and equipment used are held in the Camm Archive at BMAG, object numbers MS481 and MS482. The BMAG Camm archive consists of over sixty individual items comprising paintings, drawings, stained glass cartoon sketches, certificates and similar paperwork. I inspected and photographed this entire archive as part of the research for this thesis on 6th March 2009. This archive is referred to hereafter as BMAG CA. It is part-catalogued.

²⁰ BS/C/10/2 Camm Studio Order Book 1902-10 contains references to William Alexander Harvey, Crouch and Butler and Shapland and Petter Ltd. Fourteen references to work either quoted for or produced for the Crouch and Butler partnership, who were one of the leading architectural practice producing buildings in the Arts and Crafts style in Birmingham, appear in the order book. For example, record 1367 states: 'Crouch and Butler for a house at Edgbaston designed for Gustave Schorhoff'. The commission included glass for two drawing room door panels, a hall to kitchen window, a hall to morning room window and vestibule and lavatory windows. The work was costed at 2s. 6d. per foot. Shapland and Petter Ltd in Barnstaple was a leading studio/workshop producing furniture and other domestic items in the Arts and Crafts style.

firms like the Camms of Smethwick.²¹ Florence Camm was, as I will argue in this chapter, far from a 'less high-flier'.

Camm exhibited forty-eight times at the Royal Academy in London between 1905 and 1953,²² and worked as a successful professional designer until at least four years before her death aged eighty-six in 1960.²³ However, despite this evidently sustained commercial success, it is important to situate the achievements of Florence Camm within more recent critical debates around the gendered nature of women's work in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Anthea Callen has argued that stained glass production began to be acceptable for women in the late nineteenth century,²⁴ suggesting that by the late 1890s this previously male dominated sector was rapidly opening up to women. She cites the work of Mary Newill in her study, but suggests that even by this date opportunities for women in stained glass were limited and that they were not accepted into large commercial firms but instead found openings in small craft workshops associated with The Arts and Crafts Movement. This is the position of Florence Camm, who would undoubtedly have had an advantage over women born outside an existing and successful stained glass family firm in terms of opportunities to train within the workshop whilst studying and gaining employment upon completion of their professional training.

It is difficult to establish exactly when Florence Camm began working within the family firm of T.W. Camm, however the business had gained an international reputation for the quality of its stained glass manufacture by the time she was studying part-time at the

²¹ S. Wildman, *The Birmingham School, Paintings, Drawings and Prints by Birmingham Artists from the Permanent Collection*, (Birmingham, 1990), p.10.

²² A. Graves, *A Dictionary of Artists and Their Work in The Summer Exhibition of The Royal Academy, Vol. 1, A-CAR*, (London, 1973).

²³ Florence Camm lived at Rookwoods in Harborne Road, Warley, West Midlands for most of her life. 'Miss Camm, who had exhibited at the Royal Academy on many occasions, has been in hospital for about four years before her death. She died at Selly Oak Hospital in Birmingham.' 'Florence Camm', Obituary, *BirminghamPost*, (October 29th, 1960); undated newspaper cutting, BMAG CSB, p.161: 'Miss Florence Camm, who is nearly 80, still sits at a gas-lit table for seven hours a day designing and painting windows that grace churches all over the world.' *The Birmingham Weekly and Midland Pictorial*, (January 4th, 1957) stated that Florence Camm still worked full-time at the age of eighty-one, see clipping in BMAG SB. Also see S. Hoban, *FlorenceCamm*, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezprozye.bham.ac.uk/view/article/100972>, accessed 20th February, 2014.

²⁴ A. Callen, *Women in the Arts and Crafts Movement*, p.175.

BMSA in either 1891 or 1892, which would have provided her with the opportunity to assist with commercial, high-profile commissions whilst training.²⁵

Florence Camm's father, Thomas William Camm, was born in Spon Lane in Smethwick in 1839 and died on 23rd March, 1912.²⁶ He began his career by working as a stained-glass artist and manufacturer at the industrial glass manufacturers Chance Brothers & Co. of Smethwick until 1865, when Chance closed its ornamental glass department.²⁷ In 1866, he set up his own business named Camm Bros. with his two brothers in Brewery Street, Smethwick. At an unknown date, their workshop moved to larger premises in Regent Street, Smethwick and had offices at 41 Frederick Street, Birmingham. In around 1882 the business was sold to R.W. Winfield and Co., later known as Winfields Ltd. By 1888, Thomas William Camm had set up his own business called T. W. Camm.²⁸ Commissions from early in the company's history included a memorial window for St John's Church in Gloucester, depicting 'Christ Blessing the Little Children'. The firm obtained a Gold Medal for windows shown at the Paris International Exhibition in 1878 and a first-class prize at the Sydney International Exhibition in 1880.²⁹

Apart from the design and manufacture of stained glass windows, the extent to which Florence Camm was involved in the administration, sales and marketing activities of the business remains unclear, however wage books show that in the 1890s her sister Adeline was paid to sporadically undertake office and clerking duties within the firm.³⁰ Robert Camm

²⁵ The 1891 census lists Florence aged sixteen as an art student; according to the exhibition catalogue, *Art of Birmingham*, (Birmingham, 2007), Florence Camm studied at the School of Art between 1892-1910.

²⁶ C. Harrington, *The Stained Glass Business of T. W. Camm*, unpublished paper, (Sandwell Community Archives and History Service, September 1995).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ See 'Designs for Domestic Stained Glass by Camm Brothers', *The British Architect*, (November 12th, 1875) for further information; *The British Architect* (July 16th, 1880, p.27) and 'Advertisement for Camm Brothers', *The British Architect*, (January 23rd, 1880), address sheet, p.vi.

³⁰ BS/C/3/5 Wages Book 1890-1903, demonstrates that in March 1891, Adeline received 4s. an hour to undertake office work, earning a total of 14s. 8d. in the week, whereas at the same time Florence was paid 2s. an hour for design work.

received a fixed wage of £2 per week from 1903 to undertake office work.³¹ An anonymous newspaper cutting about Florence Camm that probably dates from the 1950s states that:

When she joined her father and brothers in the family business, she became what her brothers Robert and Walter describe as ‘the best man in the whole affair ... the designs in delicate watercolours for the windows of great churches are hers. The large-scale drawings or ‘cartoons’ are hers. And she also paints the glass ... Mr Robert Camm, now aged 75, is responsible for the administration side of the business. His brother Walter, who is 72, attends to the cutting and firing.’³²

By 1903, T.W. Camm’s Studio workforce consisted of eighteen people, with eight employed to carry out the design and painting of windows, including Thomas William Camm, Florence and her brothers Walter and Robert. A further ten men were working as leaders and fixers for the glass.³³ The workforce fluctuated – at busy times over the period examined in this thesis the workforce increased to over twenty staff - predominantly men.

Surviving Camm Studio wage books indicate that Florence worked for the same pay for periods of several years or more without a rise. She received an initial salary rate of 2s. per hour in 1891³⁴ rising to 9s. per hour in 1903.³⁵ Her maximum wage level during the period represented in this study was £1 3s. a week, initially paid in 1911 and still paid at this level in 1913.³⁶ Her hours of work varied considerably at different times of the year, presumably relating to her classes at the BMSA or periodic fluctuations in demand and production. The surviving Camm wage books also record that there are some periods, particularly early on in her career, when Florence did not draw a wage from the business over a particular time. The reasons for this are unclear, but because this was a family enterprise, she did not have to

³¹ BS/C/3/6 Wage Book states that £2 was his allocated wage but sometimes he did not draw the full amount he was entitled to each week.

³² BMAG CSB, p.161; see also BMAG CSB, p.151, an undated newspaper clipping states that Robert and Walter were responsible for the administration side of the business.

³³ BS/C/3/5 Camm Studio Wages Book, 1890-1903.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ BS/C/3/8 Camm Studio Wage Book, 1911-1925.

individually budget for accommodation as the family lived together and basic living expenses such as food and heat were covered automatically even if she was not receiving a personal salary.

As a comparison, in March, 1903, Walter Camm received a £2 fixed salary per week and remained on this rate for drawing and design during the period of this study, although in common with Florence there are periods when he did not draw his wage from the business. The two were certainly undertaking similar design and craft work but his wage does represent a slightly higher rate of pay than Florence received. Robert Camm also drew a wage of £2 per week for undertaking office and administration work. Junior members of production staff, listed as 'boys' in the wage book received rates of pay ranging from 4s. a week at age fourteen to fifteen years of age to 14s. a week aged twenty to twenty-one.³⁷ All of these represent lower rates of pay than Florence was paid at the time.

Florence, Walter and Robert Camm studied at the BMSA,³⁸ with Florence spending the longest recorded period of the three as a student between 1898 and 1909.³⁹ She was no exception to the successful prize-winning female students that have been discussed in previous chapters of this thesis. She regularly received school prizes, for example in 1897 she won a prize of £1 for a drawing of the figure from life and £2 for a drawing from the antique.⁴⁰

She also participated in local, national and international exhibitions. For example, a gesso casket decorated with figures and floral forms designed and executed by Florence

³⁷ BS/C/3/8 Camm Studio Wage Book, 1911-1925.

³⁸ See BMSA Registers of Students.

³⁹ The extant registers of the School document her attending in the 1898-99 session, followed by an extended period of study between 1902-3, 1903-4, 1904-5, 1905-6, 1906-7, 1907-8, and 1908-1909. Florence attended a range of classes, but it is difficult to assess her patterns of study in terms of part-time and full-time attendance. There appears to be a gap in her studies in the academic session 1900-1901, however the 1901 census records her as an art student and teacher. See 1901 census, RG 13/2822, p.9.

⁴⁰ Documented in BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 11th January, 1898.

Camm was selected for the English Education section at the 1900 Paris Exhibition and offered for sale at £10.⁴¹

Surviving evidence demonstrates that Florence was competing for scholarships at the BMSA. For example, in 1896 she won a £20 scholarship for free admittance to all classes at the Central School to follow a course in modelling, design, decorative painting, architecture or figure drawing,⁴² and in 1901 she came second in the competition for the prestigious J. S. Wright Scholarship which was entered by seven students. This competition had previously been won by fellow BMSA stained glass and textiles designer Mary Newill as discussed in Chapter Two.⁴³

Florence Camm received a comprehensive Executed Design education at the BMSA and access to the life class enabled her to develop advanced drawing skills in the depiction of realistic physiognomy. These skills would be crucial to Florence in her professional career, as by 1897, the Camm Studio was advertising a range of decorative arts products for sale including stained glass, mosaic, tapestry and fresco paintings.⁴⁴ A number of life drawings of men and women executed during her training at the BMSA have survived and illustrate her outstanding drawing ability.⁴⁵ The realism of the figures in Florence Camm's windows was praised by contemporary newspaper critics. For example, in 1910, she exhibited at the Royal Academy and her cartoon of St Ethelreda was praised for its naturalistic quality, having none 'of the mechanism unavoidable in drawings executed by firms; (they) have an artists originality.'⁴⁶

⁴¹ BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 13th February, 1900, and she exhibited a casket at the Thirty-Sixth Spring Exhibition of the RBSA in 1901, see catalogue of the exhibition.

⁴² BMSA Man Sub Comm Mins, 24th November, 1896.

⁴³ BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, July 9th 1901, J. S. Wright scholarship, won by student Alfred Watson. Florence achieved 204 marks in all sections of the competition whilst Watson achieved 252.

⁴⁴ Advertising leaflet, undated but annotated in pencil February 17th, 1897, BMAG CSB, p.33.

⁴⁵ See for example 'Figure Study – Seated Female Nude', 1897, 'Life drawings of a man' SA/AT/10/2/7/D229 and SA/AT/10/12/93, BMSA archive.

⁴⁶ 'The fascinating St Ethelreda no. 1, 603, by Miss Florence Camm' in 'The Royal Academy, First Notice', *Morning Post*, (April 30th, 1910), BMAG CSB, p.91 and in 1926, an article in the *Daily Express* newspaper highlighted that her windows had 'none of the customary woodenness or monotony about the faces' that stained glass works created by other firms and designers could exhibit. See *Daily Express*, (March 22nd, 1926), BMAG CSB.

Stained Glass was an integral part of the Executed Design curriculum at the BMSA by 1900. The process of making stained, or painted glass is highly skilled and time consuming, involving the preparation of an initial cartoon design on paper, followed by cutting the glass, painting, firing and leading.⁴⁷ A particular skill in the production of large-scale stained glass windows involves judging where in the composition to place the soldered lead that holds the pieces of glass together, which has to be planned from the earliest cartoon drawings. Two early watercolour designs for stained glass windows by Florence Camm, one in a private collection depicting a Pre-Raphaelite inspired maiden and the other a silver prize-winning national competition entry dating from 1903 depicting Saint Nicholas, illustrate her developing competency in this area.⁴⁸

Florence Camm was taught by Henry Payne (1868-1939) at the BMSA.⁴⁹ Stephen Wildman describes Payne as one of the School's most influential teachers alongside Arthur Gaskin and Sidney Meteyard.⁵⁰ Payne was working as a professional stained glass designer at the same time as teaching at the BMSA and was well connected to the national Arts and Crafts design network. His notable commissions include the East Window at St Agatha's Church in Sparkbrook, Birmingham in 1901,⁵¹ a painted mural illustrating Tudor History for the Houses of Parliament in 1908,⁵² and the commission for Madresfield Court in Malvern, Worcestershire as discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis in relation to women

⁴⁷ Painted windows utilise a plate of translucent glass, with the design and colouring applied using vitrifiable colours. The process is similar to enamelling, whereby metallic oxides are combined with vitreous compounds called fluxes. The glass is fired in a kiln, which fixes the colours on the glass. Another process in stained glass production, known as 'Flashed Glass', utilises a piece of clear glass with a 'skin' of coloured glass on one side. White lines and areas can be etched away if the piece of glass is painted with an acid resistant solution except where the etching is required. The glass sheet is immersed in hydrofluoric acid until the coloured 'skin' is eaten through, leaving only the clear areas or lines remaining. For a useful summary of stained glass techniques see J. Piper, *Stained Glass: Art or Anti-Art*, (London, 1968), pp. 92-94. See also C. Somers, *Stained Glass, Arts and Crafts Essays by Members of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society*, p.104, for a detailed description of stained glass techniques.

⁴⁸ See watercolour sketches in BMAG CA that document Florence's early attempts at deciding where to place the lead in the composition.

⁴⁹ Payne joined the BMSA as a teacher in 1889 (see M. Harrison in *By Hammer and Hand*, p.120) and by 1898 he was paid a salary of £200 per year (see BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 11th August 1898. He taught at the BMSA until 1908 (see *Art of Birmingham* exhibition catalogue).

⁵⁰ S. Wildman, *The Birmingham School*, p.10.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, watercolour design, p.2.

⁵² See <http://www.parliament.uk/worksofart/collection-highlights/british-history/tudor-history> accessed 31st May 2012.

metalworkers. By 1904, he was working from studio space at 19 and 20 Great Western Buildings in Livery Street in Birmingham.

After the decision was taken to commence teaching practical stained glass classes at the BMSA, Payne was sent to London to work for three months at the studios of Lowndes and Dury with the stained glass designer Christopher Whall (1849-1924), who had an established reputation in the field. Lowndes and Dury was co-founded in around 1897 by the stained glass designer Mary Lowndes.⁵³ Upon Payne's return from London, a kiln was installed in the stained glass room at the BMSA and the Management Sub-Committee allocated finances for the purchase of stained glass raw materials including lead, glass and paint, which the students in turn purchased themselves from the School for use in class.⁵⁴

Henry Payne's stained glass is notable for its highly naturalistic observation from nature, Pre-Raphaelite, medieval styled subject matter, closely packed and minutely observed decoration and realistic facial features on the figures in his compositions, all of which can be seen in the work of Florence Camm. A box of stained-glass designs held in the BMSA archive illustrate her progress in developing her style as she studied, including compositions of medieval style maidens and sketches for small, non-figurative windows that are highly decorative and more domestic than secular in style, signifying that Payne was training his students to produce both domestic and ecclesiastical glass, so providing them with greater opportunities in the commercial market.⁵⁵

By 1903, when Payne had been teaching stained glass at the BMSA for two years, Florence Camm won the Stained Glass Completed From Original Cartoons prize at the School which was worth £1 5s.,⁵⁶ and in the same year, William Lethaby's examiners report

⁵³ A. Callen, *Women in The Arts and Crafts Movement*, p.177.

⁵⁴ M. Harrison, in *By Hammer and Hand*, p.122.

⁵⁵ SA/AT/20/1/29, BMSA Archive.

⁵⁶ BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, February 10th, 1903, prize £1 5s.

on stained glass noted: ‘Miss Camm and Miss Geraldine Morris show the best original work, and the former is placed first because of good additional cartoons.’⁵⁷

According to surviving evidence, by 1909, Florence Camm was publicly advertising that she was a part of the family business.⁵⁸ Two years later, in 1911, she appears on the census as an artist in stained glass, specifically as ‘Assistant to TW Camm and art teacher’. The precise details of where and when she was paid to teach have not survived, however an undated press cutting in the Camm Scrap Book at BMAG states that she taught part-time at Smethwick Technical College for twenty-four years.⁵⁹

Also in 1911, Florence Camm completed what become a landmark commission for the firm and arguably the most accomplished piece of her career, a series of windows specifically designed for the English House at the 1911 Turin International Exhibition.⁶⁰ Illustrating scenes from Dante’s epic poem *La Vita Nuova*, the windows were awarded the Grand Prix in three classes against competition from designers across Europe⁶¹ and also the Diploma of Honour for the entire exhibition. The Turin windows received widespread coverage in the trade and decorative arts press.⁶²

Although the Turin windows were not produced for commercial sale, evidence suggests that they became invaluable for the Camm Studio in terms of its advertising and marketing. Florence Camm’s Turin windows were used repeatedly in the Studio’s advertising material and were on show in the window of the visitor and customer space at the Studio. Prospective

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ ‘Thomas William Camm, The Studio, Smethwick, Mr Camm is assisted by Florence, Walter and Robert’, advertisement, *The British Architect*, vol. 72, 27, (December 31st, 1909).

⁵⁹ ‘For 24 years she taught in the Smethwick Technical College’, undated press cutting, BMAG CSB, p.161.

⁶⁰ See *Esposizione Internazionale d’Industria e de Laboro Turin*, 1911, British Official Catalogue, (London 1911).

⁶¹ ‘Secured thrice the highest award of Grand Prix, and were the only Stained Glass Artistes, English or Foreign, to obtain the award.’ Minutes of the Uniting Conference, stamped 21st October, 1932, Turin, BMAG CSB p.106.

⁶² The windows are now in the permanent collection at BMAG after being transferred from Staffordshire County Museum in 1988, accession numbers 1988M58.1, 1988M58.3, 1988M58.2. For press coverage see ‘Six Light Window in The English House, Turin, designed by Florence Camm of T.W. Camm’s Studio, Smethwick’, BMAG CSB, p.81 ; two–page supplement to the *Architects and Builders Journal*, (August 3rd, 1911); A. Melani, ‘Some Notes on the Turin International Exhibition’, *The Studio*, vol. LIII (London, 1911), pp. 286-293.

clients were encouraged to visit the premises in person to see examples of the glass produced.⁶³

I will now discuss examples of Florence Camm's domestic and ecclesiastical commercial windows, initially focusing on domestic glass.

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the market for domestic windows in the Arts and Crafts style was well established by the time Florence began to work in the family business, and the Studio continued to advertise to prospective middle and upper class patrons throughout the time it was in operation.⁶⁴ An advertisement dating from 1897 for 'Mr T W Camm assisted by Florence Camm, Walter Camm and Robert Camm, outlined that the Studio 'makes a speciality of quaint and simple glazing and casements complete, for country mansions and other purposes.' This advertisement included an illustration of a stained glass window in three parts by Florence Camm depicting the legend of Sintram and Undine.⁶⁵

It is outside the scope of this chapter, and indeed this thesis, to provide extensive art historical stylistic discussion about the individual designs for domestic windows executed by Florence Camm either working individually or with her brothers, and given the lack of archival evidence this would be problematic. However, domestic designs of note within the Midlands in the context of her early commissions include a three light window depicting Saint Margaret of Antioch and Saint Cecilia for a private house at St Margaret's Well in Halesowen, near Birmingham⁶⁶ and a scene from the life of St Kenelm for a staircase window in a church warden's house at St Kenelm's Church near Romsley in Worcestershire depicting the same subject. The dates of each of these commissions are unknown, however a

⁶³ Turin windows 'Grand Prix in Three Classes Turin 1911', advertising leaflet, BMAG CSB, p.34; BMAG CSB, p.60, 'visitors interested in stained glass are welcomed at The Studio if they will make an appointment previously.' See also BMAG CSB, p.99, 'prospective clients can be interviewed at the Studio, or in any part of the country.'

⁶⁴ See, for example, an advertisement for The Camm Studio published in *Debrett's Peerage and Baronetage*, 1917, BMAG CSB, p.34 and p.99.

⁶⁵ BMAG CSB, p.33.

⁶⁶ Illustrated at <http://www.leicestergalleries.com/19th-20th-century-paintings/d/a-stained-glass-window-representing-st-margaret-of-antioch-and-st-cecilia/21401> accessed 20th August, 2010.

preparatory sketch for the St Kenelm commission has survived in the BMAG Camm Archive.⁶⁷

In 1908, Florence Camm completed designs for stained glass windows for a house at an unknown location in Westmoreland, Cumbria. According to an editorial published in the contemporary trade press: ‘These designs represent two alternative treatments for a staircase for a house in Westmoreland. The upper design represents the legend of ‘The Luck of Eden Hall’ as treated in a poem by J.H. Wiffen and at the bottom ‘The Legend of Fair Rosamund’, ‘Desdemona and Rosalind’, with plainer, domestic panels at the top, middle and bottom.’⁶⁸

Outside the Midlands, and potentially demonstrating business links with the network associated with the national Arts and Crafts Movement, one of Florence Camm’s most high-profile domestic commissions is undoubtedly that for a window depicting Saint Cecilia, which was executed for the White Cottage, Harrow on Hill.⁶⁹ A contemporary account describes that the commission was secured ‘through M. H. Baillie Scott, architect’ and comprised one window by Walter Camm, and another of St Cecilia by Florence Camm.⁷⁰ Mackay Hugh Baillie Scott (1865-1945) was one of the leading architects of The Arts and Crafts Movement alongside Charles Annesley Voysey.⁷¹ The commission for the White Cottage suggests that Baillie Scott was aware of the quality of stained glass being produced at the Camm Studio, which arguably led to the commission. Evidence suggests that the Camms did not enter into competition against other designers for commercial work. For example, an advertising leaflet dating from 1897 states that: ‘Special designs are made for definite commissions only ... special designs cannot be prepared in cases of competition, but folios of

⁶⁷ M358, BMAG CA.

⁶⁸ *The Builder*, (October 10th 1908), p.375, in BMAG CSB, p.37.

⁶⁹ The house is extant: see www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/en-202178-the-white-cottage-harrow accessed 2nd December, 2012.

⁷⁰ See undated and unidentified newspaper cutting, BMAG CSB, p.86.

⁷¹ Baillie Scott began his career in the Isle of Man, where he met Archibald Knox, one of the most prolific designers of Liberty & Company Cymric silverware. The two designers collaborated on the design of stained glass and metalwork. Baillie Scott is best known today for his commission from the Grand Duke of Hesse to decorate rooms in the palace at Darmstadt in 1898 and for his ‘House for an Art Lover’ competition entry in 1901 in the European Innen-Dekoration competition, which was also entered by the Scottish architect and designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Baillie Scott moved to Bedford in 1901, and from there he conducted a successful architectural practice in suburban homes in partnership with A. Edgar Beresford.

designs of works already executed will be submitted with approximate cost, if the rough dimensions of windows to be treated are given ...'⁷² In the case of direct commissions to the Studio, the measurements and drawing were conducted free of charge, with costs of half a guinea per foot for ornamental glass work, and domestic windows charged at 1/6 to 2/6 per foot depending on the complexity of the design.⁷³

As well as stained glass windows for private houses, Florence Camm produced glass for major business organisations. For example, the BMAG archive contains a small-scale watercolour design for a three-light staircase window commissioned by the Iron and Steel Company. This was exhibited at the Royal Academy.⁷⁴

Florence Camm was also producing domestic stained-glass windows for the American market. An advertisement illustrated with one of her windows depicting 'The Ancient Mariner' stated that windows were available from \$15 to \$25 per foot,⁷⁵ whilst Florence's designs produced for Princeton University depicting subjects from Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* were exhibited at the Royal Academy.⁷⁶ Several examples of these cartoons survive in the BMAG Camm Archive, whilst the cartoon for the Sir Percivale panel is held in the permanent collection at the Cleveland Museum in the USA.⁷⁷ In addition to the Sir Percivale panel, two cartoons for glass depicting an owl and birds executed by Florence, Walter and Robert Camm were purchased by the Cleveland Museum for its permanent collection as examples of modern stained glass.⁷⁸

⁷² Advertising leaflet, undated but annotated in pencil February 17th, 1897, BMAG CSB, p.33.

⁷³ Advertising leaflet, undated but annotated in pencil February 17th, 1897, contained loose in BMAG CSB.

⁷⁴ M288, BMAG CA. The design is signed Florence Camm on a label on the reverse and also bears a Royal Academy exhibition label for 1943.

⁷⁵ Advertising leaflet in BMAG CSB, p.53.

⁷⁶ Catalogue number 1315, 1919, A. Graves, *Dictionary of Artists and their work in the Summer Exhibition of the RA*, (E.P. Publishing, 1973).

⁷⁷ BMAG CA, M426; 'Miss F. Camm's cartoon for St Perceval – panel for permanent collection in the Cleveland Museum, USA,' *Morning Post*, (April 30th, 1910), BMAG CSB, p.98; the cartoon was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1920, catalogue number 1222, see A. Graves, *Dictionary of Artists and their work in the Summer Exhibition of the RA*, (E.P. Publishing, 1973).

⁷⁸ Illustrated in an advertising leaflet, BMAG CSB, p.99.

It is arguable that the majority of work produced by Florence Camm at The Studio was for the ecclesiastical market⁷⁹ and this crucial and potentially lucrative target market was carefully cultivated through the Studio's advertising. For example, the Camm Scrapbook contains a range of advertisements that appeared in the *Church Congress Guide* and *The Clergy Directory*.⁸⁰

As with the domestic market, a full analysis of extant church windows by Florence Camm and her known surviving drawings contained in archives is beyond the scope of this chapter and thesis, but notable commissions in the Midlands include an integrated project for stained-glass windows and mural painting in Old Church, Smethwick and a memorial window for St John's in the Square in Wolverhampton. This church was built in 1760 and during the mid-late nineteenth century church revival restoration programme, the twenty-four plain glass windows within it were replaced with thirteen coloured glass examples between 1852 and 1911. The Camm Studio designed and produced a window entitled *I am the Good Shepherd*, which was executed by Florence and Robert Camm as a memorial to a local industrialist called Job Evans, who died in 1912.⁸¹

Florence Camm worked on an integrated ecclesiastical commission for Christ Church, Coseley in the West Midlands, which consisted of a stained-glass window depicting *The Resurrection*, which was executed in conjunction with her father Thomas William Camm and Walter Camm, and a highly accomplished mural painting on one wall of the church depicting *The Ascension* which was exclusively the work of Florence. This commission was featured in an editorial in *The Architects and Builders' Journal*.⁸² Florence Camm developed an interest in fresco painting whilst studying at the BMSA. One from a set of two, small scale surviving watercolours by Florence depicting frescoes by the artist John Dixon Batten in

⁷⁹ A newspaper article depicting Florence Camm at work states that Miss Camm was 'the artist principally responsible for drawings designs of the memorial window', commissioned by the Regimental Church, St Mary's, Warwick, *Birmingham Post*, (May 22nd, 1952), p.99, contained in BMAG CSB.

⁸⁰ Advert in *Church Congress Guide* (21st September, 1921) in BMAG CSB, p.100; *The Clergy Directory* (1926), BMAG CSB, p.103.

⁸¹ P. Hickman, *St John's in the Square*, (revised edition, Wolverhampton, 2007).

⁸² For the Coseley windows see BMAG CSB, p.74 and for the wall painting *Architects and Builders Journal* (10th December, 1910), in BMAG CSB, p.74.

Christ Church, Lichfield, were illustrated in *The Studio Magazine*.⁸³ Ian Williams' history of the church, published in 2006, incorrectly identifies these watercolours as by a 'Miss Cram'.⁸⁴ The fee that Florence was paid for the fresco painting commission at Christ Church in Coseley is not known, neither is the fee for the window, although this part of the job is recorded in the Camm Studio's order book.⁸⁵ However general evidence has survived concerning the Camm Studio's charges for stained glass windows. A semi-circular window with two figures and an ornamental surround cost 420 guineas, whilst a more complicated window consisting of a depiction of six small subjects and a depiction of Christ on the Cross cost 570 guineas. Memorial windows cost from one to four and five guineas per foot.⁸⁶

The Camm Studio also produced work for the international ecclesiastical market in stained-glass windows. In 1915, the American architect Ralph Adams Cram observed the Studio's St Kenelm window at the church in Romsley, Clent, West Midlands. He wrote: 'At the present moment a large number of artists in England are producing work of most singular beauty and perfection. Amongst these I have no hesitation in placing Mr Camm (as) easily the first.'⁸⁷

One of Florence Camm's most notable international designs produced for the Camm Studio was executed for a commission originating from Mr Pierpont Morgan's Church of St John in Lattingtown, Long Island, USA. The work consisted of six large windows for the Baptistry, depicting the Baptism of Christ, St John the Baptist and Christ. The architect for the project was Sir Robert Lorimer of Edinburgh, and a contemporary press cutting describes how: 'The windows have been made to his instructions from designs by Miss Florence

⁸³ 'Studio Talk', London, *The Studio Magazine*, vol. XXXVIII, (1906), pp. 64-65.

⁸⁴ The paintings were discovered in a dilapidated condition in 1981 and restored by TM Huguenin, Conservator of Prints and Drawings at BMAG, and are now in good condition. I inspected them as part of the research for this thesis in February, 2009.

⁸⁵ Record 2264. The order for the Resurrection window for Coseley Church was taken on July 5th, 1909, from architect A.T. Butler who had a practice in Cradley Heath. The Camm Studio order book does not record the fees paid for commissions, only the details of the job and who ordered the work.

⁸⁶ Typed letter signed T.W. Camm and Walter Camm, undated, BMAG CSB; see also undated advertisement but annotated in pencil February 17th, 1897, BMAG CSB.

⁸⁷ 'The Revival in Stained Glass', *Bulletin of the Clevedon Museum of Art*, (1918).

Camm, and executed by Messrs. R and W Camm.’⁸⁸ A second editorial describes how: ‘the reward of this patient and highly skilled labour is to be found in part in the beautiful results obtained.’⁸⁹ The watercolour designs for the side windows for this commission have survived in the BMAG archive.⁹⁰

In addition to the American market, the Camm Studio produced a design for a rose window in 1927 for a hospital chapel in South Africa and single figure subjects were produced for a private chapel in Bilbao, in Spain and exhibited at The Royal Academy in 1917.⁹¹ The Order Book for 1902-1910 records work produced for clients in Wales, Ireland and India.⁹²

In the pages above, I have presented examples of Florence Camm’s windows that were produced for the domestic and ecclesiastical market. They illustrate the range and breadth of the professional work that she was undertaking as a stained glass designer and maker. The Executed Design skills that she received during her training at the BMSA, coupled with the additional expertise she developed as she worked in her family’s stained glass studio, enabled her to produce decorative art work in The Arts and Crafts style that was sold to clients across the UK and internationally.

I will now discuss the employment opportunities for women designers that were available at the Camm Studio. According to John Burgin, Florence Camm was instrumental in introducing women stained glass designers into the Camm Studio’s workforce, reflecting the opinion outlined in *The Art Journal* as early as 1872 that: ‘What seems greatly to be

⁸⁸ See press cutting, no date or source, BMAG CSB, p.108; also cuttings from the International Press Cuttings Bureau, *Evening News and Daily Mail*, (7th December, 1925), BMAG CSB, p.112.

⁸⁹ *The World*, (February 21st, 1926), p.3, in BMAG CSB, p.116.

⁹⁰ Design for side windows St John’s Church, Lattingtown, New York, dated March 1927, M435, BMAG CA. A selection of the designs for the Lattingtown commission were exhibited at The Royal Academy, see ‘Local Designs at Royal Academy’ no date or publication details, BMAG CSB, p.152. The Camm Studio exhibited six designs, including Florence’s Pierpont windows. See also BS-C/GN/334, Sandwell Archives, photograph of three windows showing baptism of Christ, St. Christopher and St. John the Baptist, negative number: 4516, photograph number (T34):300, print no:5/11, box number 41.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, See also A. Graves, *A Dictionary of Artists and Their Work in The Summer Exhibition of The Royal Academy*, Vol. 1, A-CAR, (London, 1973), catalogue numbers 1330 and 1346.

⁹² BS/C/10/2 Camm Studio Order Book, 1902-1910, Sandwell Archives. Two Order Books have survived, this one and BS/C/10/1 Order Book 1888-1891.

desired is that some women, having first fully qualified themselves by earnest study, should, either alone or in combination, set up in business, on strict business principles, making arrangements for female apprentices, and fairly trying the question of women's work on its own merits.'⁹³ A photograph of the glass-painting room in the Camm Studio dating from around 1922 shows Robert Camm, Walter Camm and two female stained glass workers named Iris Brookes and Florence 'Eve' Fell (nee Loach).⁹⁴

Eve Loach was working at the Camm Studio by 1916. An entry in the Camm Studio's Wage Book for week ending November 4th, 1916 states that she was employed to undertake stained glass painting and was paid 8d. per hour.⁹⁵ John Burgin suggests that because the workforce at The Camm Studio was reduced during World War One, Florence Camm introduced girls into the studio at this time, which he describes as 'an innovation.'⁹⁶ However, a reference to a Royal Academy exhibit from 1910 suggests that Eve Loach may have been employed at the Studio before this date as the work, a stained glass design called *The Forest Lovers*, was documented as the work of Miss Eve Loach, a pupil of the Camms.⁹⁷

Florence Eveline Loach was born in 1900.⁹⁸ Scant evidence about her background has survived, however at the time she may have started work at the Camm Studio, she lived in West Smethwick with her family. Florence Loach was from a working-class background as her father worked as a toolmaker in the screw trade.⁹⁹ This means that the Camm Studio employed women from both working and middle class backgrounds, as shown at the beginning of this chapter through the example of Ida Kay. Burgin states that 'Loach met Florence when she was teaching classes at Smethwick Technical Art School and that

⁹³ *The Art Journal*, (May 1st, 1872), p.130.

⁹⁴ J. Burgin, *T.W. Camm and His Family*, illustration XII. Burgin states that he sourced this image from Eve Fell and also interviewed her as part of the research for his thesis. He also states that she was known as Eve Fell in the Studio in case of any confusion with Florence (Camm).

⁹⁵ BS/C/3/8, Camm Studio Wage Book.

⁹⁶ J. Burgin, *T.W. Camm and His Family*, p.8.

⁹⁷ 'The Camm family of Smethwick is prominent in the section reserved for design for stained glass windows. Three members of the family contribute five designs between them, while Miss Eve Loach, a pupil of theirs, has one of the favourite subject of 'The Forest Lovers'.' *Morning Post*, (April 30th, 1910), in BMAG CSB.

⁹⁸ 1911 census, no page number given.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*.

Florence Camm insisted as a condition of Loach's appointment that when she started employment at the Camm Studio she would also be required to attend classes at the BMSA.' He continues: 'When Eve started, Florence told her that she would be expected to attend evening classes at the School of Art and she did, four nights a week after work and paying her own fees, including life drawing, which would be repaid if she passed.'¹⁰⁰

Florence Loach's role within the Camm Studio appears to have been that of an assistant to Florence Camm and Walter. Burgin writes that Walter and Florence's cartoons were given to her to trace onto linen or paper, and that these designs were cut out by another employee called Albert Fell and arranged onto wooden trays before the designs were painted. Later on in her career, he states that: 'Eve's activities as a tracer were then extended to include some 'aciding of faces' and that Walter taught her the art of gradation of tone by the use of acid flash.'¹⁰¹ In addition to Burgin's evidence describing the type of work executed by Eve at the Camm Studio, an article contained in the BMAG Camm scrapbook states that 'Mrs. Eve Fell, who has been working at The Studio for many years... is largely responsible for the floral detail and lettering in a great number of windows.'¹⁰² A window in Holy Trinity Church, Stafford designed and executed by Florence and Walter Camm bears the name of Eve Fell as Assistant.¹⁰³

In December 1924, Florence Loach married Albert Fell, who worked at the Factory operating the kilns.¹⁰⁴ According to Burgin, Florence 'Eve' Loach gave up her job on June 28th, 1923 in order to get married, but commenced working at the Camm Studio again after the Second World War, returning to the Studio as an employee in June 1946, and continuing in employment until November 10th, 1960.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ J. Burgin, *T. W. Camm and His Family*, p.11; Burgin interview with Florence Loach documented p.22.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.21.

¹⁰² 'Bees, Myth and Glass', undated press cutting, BMAG CSB, p.159.

¹⁰³ The church is located on Baswich Lane, Stafford. The window is one of two by the Camms in the church, both are signed but undated.

¹⁰⁴ Birmingham South Marriage Records, vol. 6d, p.326. Albert Fell worked as the Camm's kiln man, see J. Burgin, *T. W. Camm and His Family*, p.1.

¹⁰⁵ J. Burgin, *T. W. Camm and His Family*, p.2 and p.23. She returned to the Firm in June 1946 and remained working until November 10th, 1960.

At the time of writing, little evidence is available about the work of employee Iris Brookes. An editorial from 1926 recorded that the Camm Studio exhibited six designs at the Royal Academy that year, including a design for a nursery window depicting *The Neverland* from J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* by Iris Brookes and that she was a pupil of Florence Camm.¹⁰⁶ The Camm Studio wage book documents that Iris was working at the studio in 1925, earning £2 2s. 0d. a week. As a comparison, at the same time Florence Camm was earning £6 13s. 19d. per week, so Brookes is clearly in a more junior role. According to Burgin, Iris Brookes emigrated to Australia and ceased employment with the Studio.¹⁰⁷

Mary Jane Newill has been discussed in the context of teaching employment opportunities at the BMSA in Chapter Three of this thesis, however she was also a successful self-employed stained glass artist, professional embroiderer and book illustrator. In 1911, she was mentioned in an exhibition review in a prominent Birmingham yearbook, along with male artists and designers of 'The Birmingham Group'. The review stated that: 'Sir Edward Burne-Jones and Morris were very much interested in and hopeful of these young artists. To name only a few ... Arthur Gaskin ... Charles Gere ... Henry Payne, a stained glass painter... Miss Mary Newill embroiderer and stained glass painter.'¹⁰⁸ A discussion of Mary Newill's professional needlework and book illustration commissions will follow in the next chapter of this thesis.

Mary Newill has received critical acclaim in the existing but limited literature on the Arts and Crafts Movement in Birmingham. For example, Martin Harrison identifies Newill as 'one of the most accomplished of the less well-known Birmingham artists.'¹⁰⁹ He suggests that she mainly worked on domestic commissions, which given their lack of documentation and public visibility may be a contributing factor to her virtual anonymity in the historiography of Arts and Crafts Movement design today. Harrison notes commissions by Newill including

¹⁰⁶ See press cutting 'Local Designs at Royal Academy', no date or publication, BMAG SB, p.152; *The Daily Sketch*, (March 25th, 1926).

¹⁰⁷ J. Burgin, *T. W. Camm and His Family*, p.24.

¹⁰⁸ *Birmingham Institutions*, (1911), p.294.

¹⁰⁹ M. Harrison, 'Stained Glass', in A. Crawford (ed.), *By Hammer and Hand*, (Birmingham, 1984), p.123.

cartoons of Watt Tyler and John Ball at the architect Joseph Crouch's house in Sutton Coldfield. As with Florence Camm, a full discussion of Mary Newill's extant stained glass windows and known cartoons is outside the scope of this thesis, however Harrison correctly highlights Newill's East Window in the Lady Chapel in the Church of Saints Mary and Ambrose, Pershore Road, Birmingham and her two-light window for Wrockwardine Church in Salop as being noteworthy examples of her stained glass production.¹¹⁰

Mary Newill appears on the 1881 census as an art student living in Ludlow and travelling to classes in Birmingham.¹¹¹ By 1891, her father Robert had died and her mother Marian was living in Birmingham in Priory Road in Edgbaston. Mary was lodging with a family in Ludlow at this time.¹¹²

In 1892, Mary Newill began teaching at the BMSA¹¹³ and in the same year she won a National Silver Medal for a design for a stained glass window.¹¹⁴ In 1893, she was documented as exhibiting a cartoon for stained glass called *The Babes in the Wood* and an embroidered panel and a book illustration at the national Arts and Crafts Exhibition at the New Gallery in London, where fellow exhibitors included William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones, Walter Crane, Holman Hunt and Madox Brown.¹¹⁵

By 1895, Newill's public profile as a designer of note was growing. She received a dedicated eight page editorial about her work in *The Studio Magazine*.¹¹⁶ In the same year, she was awarded the prestigious John Skirrow Wright Scholarship. As discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, this scholarship enabled Mary to spend a year living in Paris studying art and arguably provided additional finance over the three year period allowing her to earn an

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p.123; see also *The Studio*, (vol. XVIII), p.132.

¹¹¹ 1881 census, RG11/2678, p.36.

¹¹² 1891 census, RG12/2080, p.26. Robert Daniel Newill died in 1886 at the age of sixty. Mary was staying with the Marsden family in Ludlow on the evening of the census.

¹¹³ *Art of Birmingham*, Exhibition Catalogue, (Birmingham, 2007).

¹¹⁴ *Hearth and Home*, (August 4th, 1892).

¹¹⁵ *Birmingham Daily Post*, October 3rd, 1893.

¹¹⁶ *The Studio*, vol. V, (London, 1895), pp. 56-63.

independent wage and develop her professional career, supplemented by her income from teaching at the BMSA, which has also been discussed earlier in this thesis.¹¹⁷

By 1901, Mary was living in Edgbaston with her mother and family and receiving a salary of £75 per school year for teaching two day classes each week and supervising the evening class in needlework.¹¹⁸ However, a letter written to the Management Sub-Committee of the BMSA in January 1903 suggests that she was dissatisfied with her level of income from her needlework teaching. The contents of the letter demonstrate that she was probably using her growing reputation as a stained glass designer as a bargaining tool in wage negotiations with her employers at the School. Believing herself worthy of a higher level of pay, she wrote: 'If I am not, it seems to me it would be better to concentrate on my glass work, which is increasing.'¹¹⁹ The matter was resolved and Mary was paid a higher salary of £100 per year for teaching needlework and design on a Wednesday and Friday between 10am-1pm and 2.30pm-3.30pm and for general supervision of the Wednesday evening class at the Central School.

In November 1907, Mary Newill joined fellow Birmingham Group artists including Arthur Gaskin, Joseph Southall, Charles Gere, Sidney Meteyard and Violet Holden in a selling exhibition at the Fine Art Society entitled *An Exhibition of Works By A Group of Birmingham Painters and Craftsmen*. She exhibited two landscape paintings depicting *Llanfrothen* and *Cynicht*.¹²⁰ Although a selling exhibition, the catalogue did not include prices for the pieces on show, which were supplied to prospective purchasers on application.

Mary Newill was elected a Professional Associate Member of the RBSA in 1909¹²¹ and in the same year began advertising in *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* as a stained glass artist. Her studio was adjacent to that of Henry Payne at 21, Great Western Buildings in

¹¹⁷ *Birmingham Daily Post*, (7th September, 1895).

¹¹⁸ 46 Wheeley's Road, Edgbaston, 1901 census, RG13/2816, p.6. Mary is listed as a designer and stained glass worker on own account; BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 26th January, 1901.

¹¹⁹ Letter from Mary Newill requesting a wage increase for teaching embroidery dated 6th January, 1903. Transcribed in BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, January 13th, 1903.

¹²⁰ Catalogue bound in *Birmingham Exhibitions*, C/3 205080, BA&H.

¹²¹ Catalogue of the Forty-Fourth Spring Exhibition of the RBSA, (1909), p.3.

Birmingham city centre. She continued to advertise in Kelly's directories as a stained glass artist in 1909, 1910 and 1911, with her occupation on the 1911 census given as a self-employed stained glass artist.¹²²

Between 1912 and 1915, Mary Newill was listed as an artist in the Kelly's directories, working from a studio at 3, Newhall Street in 1912, 1913 and 1914. Of the little critical commentary that has been written about Newill the focus is usually on her embroidery, so it is interesting to note that she chose to advertise herself commercially as a stained glass artist and an artist. This may be because she was receiving more commercial commissions in stained glass by this time. Newill continued to work professionally after this date and there is much potential for future research on her career. She died in January 1947 in Painswick, Gloucestershire. She did not marry and left a considerable estate of £19,081 12s. 1d. to her brother Edward.¹²³

Margaret Agnes Rope (1882-1953), studied at the BMSA for ten years between 1899 and 1909 and worked as a stained glass designer for most of her life.¹²⁴

Despite her relatively affluent family background (her father was a surgeon),¹²⁵ Margaret Rope received one of ten free admissions to the Central School for all classes in the academic session 1900-1901.¹²⁶ In 1903, she was awarded the only £40 annual scholarship to the Central School that was open to a qualifying student aged under twenty-two years for all day classes at the School and in March 1905, the Management Sub-Committee minutes document an application made to Shropshire County Council for the continued attendance of Margaret

¹²² At 21 Great Western Buildings, next to Henry Payne whose studio was at 19 and 20 Great Western Buildings in 1909. See *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* 1909, 1910, and 1911. On the 1911 census she is aged forty and her occupation is given as a stained glass worker, working on her own account.

¹²³ See National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858-1966, database available online, accessed through www.ancestry.com, 9th July, 2013.

¹²⁴ See *Art of Birmingham* exhibition catalogue; on the 1901 census, Margaret is listed as an art student living in Shrewsbury with her mother, three sisters and a brother. Her father was deceased and her mother is listed as living on her own means. The family had two servants. See 1901 census, RG13/2540, p.120.

¹²⁵ The 1891 census lists Margaret Agnes Rope's father Henry Rope as a surgeon, with the family living in Shrewsbury. Her parents had six children and employed five servants including a lady's help, cook, groom, housemaid and nurse. 1891 census, RG12/2109, p.1.

¹²⁶ BMSA Man Sub-Comm Minutes, July 25th, 1900.

Agnes Rope of The Priory, Shrewsbury, as a Government Local Scholar at the BMSA.¹²⁷

These repeated applications for financial scholarships may suggest that Margaret was training to work commercially to support her mother and family given their reduced means after the death of her father. No further details of scholarships awarded to Margaret are provided in the BMSA records, but she was competing for prizes, for example she won a special prize from the Birmingham Heraldic Society in 1908 for a design in stained glass, which was worth two guineas.¹²⁸

After Margaret Rope finished studying at the BMSA, she took studio space at Lowndes and Drury's stained glass company in London for approximately a decade between 1911 and 1922. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the BMSA had existing connections with Lowndes and Drury after Henry Payne had trained there in 1900. In 1923, Margaret Rope entered the Carmelite Monastery at Woodbridge, Suffolk where she continued to make stained glass, by designing, cutting and painting the glass in the Monastery and sending it to be fired at Lowndes and Drury's. Much of Margaret Rope's stained glass remains undocumented, however Martin Harrison cites a series of seven windows at Shrewsbury Roman Catholic Cathedral as amongst her best work.¹²⁹

Finally, the BMSA did not just produce women stained glass designers who were born and working within the period 1885-1915, which is the time span of the discussion in this thesis. A second generation of women were training at the school in the 1920s and working

¹²⁷ Free Admissions List 1903 in BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, July 14th, 1903; BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins March 14th, 1905.

¹²⁸ BMSA Man Sub Comm Mins, December 8th, 1908.

¹²⁹ M. Harrison, 'Stained Glass', in A. Crawford (ed.), *By Hammer and Hand*, p.126.

professionally in this decade and into the 1930s and beyond. Their lives and work would be a fruitful future study.¹³⁰

To conclude, in common with enamelling on metal as an occupation discussed in Chapter Four, the manufacture of stained glass was a non-traditional means of employment for women, requiring production techniques that were highly skilled and required practical training to learn in detail. Florence Camm, Ida Kay, Florence ‘Eve’ Fell, Mary Newill and Margaret Agnes Rope were working as stained glass designers within a traditionally male dominated industry, in a commercial company and on a self-employed basis. Surviving evidence suggests that opportunities for working women within a stained glass studio were also being created at the Camm Studio, although it is problematic to ascertain the extent to which Florence Camm was actively creating these opportunities for Eve Loach and other female employees such as Iris Brookes.

I have argued in previous chapters of this thesis that the Executed Design training available at the BMSA was crucial to the success of single women in the commercial employment market, because it equipped them with the practical skills to enable them to earn their own independent wage, and in this chapter I have demonstrated that in the case of stained-glass design and production this was no exception.

In common with the women metalworkers featured as case studies in this thesis, all of the women except one discussed in this chapter were from a middle-class background.

¹³⁰ Alice Nora Yoxall (1892-1998) and Elsie Whitford (1897-1992) met at the BMSA in around 1915 and designed and made stained glass together for the rest of their lives. An archive of original stained glass designs by Yoxall and Whitford comprising 150 pieces of artwork executed in oils, pencil, and pen and ink, which was catalogued as the remaining contents of their studio, was sold at auction by Fielding’s Auctioneers in Stourbridge, West Midlands in November 2010. I inspected it before it was offered for sale. In common with the other women designers discussed in this chapter, both Whitford and Yoxall were born into middle-class families and remained unmarried whilst working professionally. Elsie Whitford’s father was a grocer and shopkeeper (see 1911 census, no page number given), with her mother assisting in the business. The family lived in Warwick Road, Acock’s Green in Birmingham and employed one general servant. According to the 1911 census, Alice Nora Yoxall’s father was a cycle factory manager and her mother did not work. The family lived in Birchfield Road, Handsworth and employed one cook/domestic servant (see 1911 census, no page number given). The women’s first professional commission was for Grove Lane Church in Handsworth, Birmingham, in 1927, and later commissions included windows in St. Francis Church in Bournville. From 1949, the women worked together from a small studio in Blockley, near Chipping Campden in the Cotswolds. One of their last joint commissions was in the 1970s for the porch of the church in Brackley in the Cotswolds. See ‘Nora Yoxall, Exhibition of Designs at the Birmingham School of Art’, *Birmingham Post*, (March 31st, 1998).

Florence Camm, Mary Newill and Margaret Rope did not marry, again suggesting that they either chose not to marry in order to work professionally, or, in the case of Margaret Rope, may have needed to work commercially to support herself before joining the closed community of the Carmelite Monastery in 1923.

My research on women stained glass designers in The Arts and Crafts Movement is a starting point and much work remains to be done on the professional careers of the women introduced in this chapter; a comprehensive gazetteer of their works produced; and further investigation undertaken using new, currently unknown sources analysing the level of wages they earned and the fees they charged for their commissions. At the very least, the existing literature on Arts and Crafts Movement stained glass in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries should be expanded to include the commercial design work of the women introduced in this chapter.

CHAPTER SIX: PAINTING, BOOK ILLUSTRATION, ILLUMINATION AND TEXTILES

‘The Church is once again demanding, and to come extent receiving, the services of skilled needlewomen. But secular employment abounds; and the finely-furnished house offers large and generous opportunities for good and artistic work. The question to be solved is that of supply. Where is right training to be obtained?’¹

In 1905, Edward Strange, the author of the opening quote of this chapter, was discussing the joint commercial demands from the Church and secular clients for decorative art needlework in an article in *The Studio Magazine*. Needlework such as this required technical skill to make, hence his call for the right training for practitioners in the medium in order to satisfy the demands of these markets.

The previous chapters of this thesis have discussed the commercial opportunities available to women designers who trained at the BMSA in jewellery and metalwork and stained glass. This final chapter will provide a narrative that focuses on the domestic and ecclesiastical opportunities that were open to women during and after training at the BMSA in textiles (including embroidery, applique and tapestry); painting (including traditional easel painting and decorative interior murals); book illustration and illumination.²

A central argument of this thesis is that the Executed Design training that women were able to obtain at the BMSA was a crucial factor in their commercial success, and this hypothesis will be explored further in this chapter. Painting is included in the discussion, however it must be acknowledged that the historiography of women artists within the history

¹Strange’s focus in the article was the Liverpool School of Art but his discussion is also pertinent to the BMSA. See E. F. Strange, ‘Needlework at the Liverpool School of Art’, *The Studio*, vol. XLIV, (1905), p.147.

² Illumination is the art of applying written text in ink on vellum (prepared mammal skin) or high quality paper, which is supplemented with decorative additions such as initials, borders (known as marginalia), and small illustrations in the style of medieval manuscripts.

of art as a discipline is outside the scope of this thesis, but feminist art historical gender analysis will be employed as a critical tool in this chapter.

In 1892, John Thackray Bunce described the market for future student work after graduation from the BMSA as a 'wide and varied field: such as the production of designs capable of being produced by manufacturers; engraving, on wood or metal, whether for book illustration or upon articles of ornament; surface decoration on wallpapers, textile hangings, or embroideries; and the direct personal application of Decorative Art in regard to houses and public buildings. Here there is ample scope for the reduction to practice and the exemplification of the principles and methods taught in the schools.'³ Thus, given the correct training in practical skills, the market was potentially ripe for the work of multi-skilled craftswomen within The Arts and Crafts Movement, whether producing decorative paintings for the interior of a building or embroidered hangings to adorn its walls.

Bunce went on to suggest that 'especially in the better-class suburbs, there are now a great many house owners ... many of these who are persons of instructed taste, (they) must be weary of the ordinary, monotonous, commonplace treatment of the rooms in which they pass so great a portion of their homelife. Will not some of them give our best students a chance, and so not only help the School of Art in its work, but procure for themselves new sources of permanent enjoyment?'⁴ An example of one of these 'persons of instructed taste' in the 'better-class suburbs' of Birmingham is the owner of a house in Edgbaston designed by the architects Buckland and Farmer that included Arts and Crafts furniture, paintings, textiles and light fittings in its internal decorative scheme.⁵

As previous chapters in this thesis have highlighted, the 'persons of instructed taste' in Birmingham who provided a ready market for Arts and Crafts Movement interior goods were the educated, liberal, non-sectarian, middle-class patrons of the city's civic elite. They

³ J. T. Bunce, *Prize Address Birmingham School of Art 1892*, p.23.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.24.

⁵ See 'House at Edgbaston', *The Studio*, vol. XLIV, (1905), pp.307-308 for external photographs of the house and internal photographs of the dining room and drawing room. It was built 'at a cost not exceeding £1,200.'

received their instruction in the Arts and Crafts style, including what to buy and how to display it in their homes, through decorative arts exhibitions, magazines and public lectures given by well-known members of the Arts and Crafts Movement such as William Morris.⁶ Designers received business support, built professional networks and achieved sales through pseudo-mediaeval professional crafts guilds such as The Birmingham Guild and the Bromsgrove Guild of Applied Arts.⁷

This interplay between production, marketing, professional networking and consumption was certainly appreciated in Birmingham by women designers. For example, we have seen in the previous chapter of this thesis that Florence Camm worked with the nationally renowned Arts and Crafts designer Mackay Hugh Baillie Scott on a domestic house commission and Sophia Pumphrey, a commercial artist and illustrator employed by Cadbury at its factory in Bournville, Birmingham, was an active member of the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft. Her life and work will be discussed in this chapter.⁸ Both Kate Bunce, a professional painter and designer from the BMSA, and Georgie Gaskin, were exhibiting members of The Women's Guild of Arts, which was founded in 1907 by William Morris's daughter May as a professional organisation for women working in the decorative arts in reaction to the fact that female membership of the all male Art Workers Guild was prohibited.

⁶ For a critical discussion on the strategies employed in displaying decorative arts objects at international exhibitions see M. O'Neill, 'Rhetorics of Display: Arts and Crafts and Art Nouveau at the Turin Exhibition of 1902', *Journal of Design History*, vol. 2, 3, pp. 205-225.

⁷ The Minutes for The Birmingham Guild of Handicraft (TBGH) on 12th January, 1891, stated that there were eight working members and thirty-seven associate members. See The Birmingham Guild of Handicraft Minutes of Committee Meetings 1890-99, BA&H, 11R29 450350, p.90 and Register of Members Archives, 11R29 450349 (two volumes bound as one). The focus of TBGH was very much on commercialism. By 1892, the Minutes record that orders from the public were being taken (see p.73) and in an entry from April, 1893, Arthur Dixon, the founder of TBGH stated that through their exhibit at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society the aim was to 'increase our reputation ... (and) obtain, it is hoped, a considerable number of orders.' (p.83).

⁸ See Register of Members, TBGH.

Membership to the Women's Guild was by election according to the standard of work produced.⁹

This chapter is arranged by artistic discipline; each section will present a series of case studies of women who demonstrated active business enterprise by working professionally in different contexts within painting, book illustration, illumination and textiles, including evidence where possible of the fees they were paid for their work and their understanding of the importance of education, networks of business and domestic patrons and of marketing their work through exhibitions to ensure their success.¹⁰

PAINTING

A thriving group of professional artists worked in the Arts and Crafts style in Birmingham in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries including Joseph Southall and Charles March Gere. Both were associated with the BMSA, Southall in an informal advisory teaching capacity and Charles Gere as a pupil. Stephen Wildman employs the term 'The Birmingham School' to describe this group of artists. They exhibited in Birmingham and nationally to critical acclaim.¹¹ However, just a small number of women artists are mentioned by Wildman and in contemporary published documents such as exhibition catalogues, namely Kate Bunce, Edith Payne, Margaret Gere, Violet Holden and Mary

⁹ Both Kate Bunce and Georgie Gaskin were elected to membership in 1908. The Women's Guild of Arts had over 100 members. The annual membership fee for women living in the regions of the country was 5s. Its archive is held by the William Morris Society and is currently being catalogued. See H. Elletson, 'The Women's Guild of Arts,' *The William Morris Society Newsletter*, (Spring, 2012), pp. 16-18. Kate Bunce exhibited 'S. Cecilia' and 'S. Ursula' at the Women's Guild of Arts exhibition, no date given; see also *The William Morris Society Newsletter*, (Autumn, 2012), for details of Georgie Gaskin's membership and exhibition.

¹⁰ Industrial trade exhibition catalogues have proved to be a fruitful source of evidence in this study for women who were exhibiting their work and the potential income obtained from these exhibitions, for example Clara Underhill of 22 Park Road, Moseley, Birmingham exhibited a nude figure at the 1901 Birmingham Industrial Polytechnic Exhibition priced at £2 10s. See *Catalogue for the Birmingham Industrial Polytechnic Exhibition*, August 26th to November 2nd 1901, bound in Birmingham Exhibitions C13 225605, BA&H.

¹¹ S. Wildman, *The Birmingham School*, p.5; *An Exhibition of Works by a Group of Birmingham Painters and Craftsmen*, Exhibition Catalogue, (The Fine Art Society, 1907), bound in Birmingham Exhibitions C/3 205080, BA&H; *Birmingham Group* RBSA Exhibition Catalogue, (1919).

Newill, who all trained at the BMSA.¹² In the field of painting and illustration, women such as these made a much larger contribution to The Arts and Crafts Movement in Birmingham than is currently acknowledged.

This chapter's analysis of women painters, book illustrators and illuminators associated with the BMSA focuses on those women where evidence exists that they were advertising their work for sale, where documentation has survived stating that their work was sold and the payment they received, or the remuneration they received from an employer. As discussed in previous chapters of this thesis, some women who wanted or needed to work taught art and design as a socially 'respectable' profession¹³ and the concept of the married, amateur woman artist or painting as a middle class accomplishment in the marriage market and as a pastime after marriage was reflected within arts circles and society as a whole.

Birmingham was no exception to this trend. Edith Payne (1875-1959), who studied at the BMSA¹⁴ gained a reputation based on her flower paintings, which Wildman states remained 'a pleasure and an occupation (rather than a source of income) throughout her life, after she had married the stained glass designer Henry Payne and moved to the Cotswolds in 1909.'¹⁵ Prevailing attitudes reflected the belief that it was acceptable for women to earn a living professionally as an artist, but only if economically necessary. As George Gissing succinctly wrote in the 1893 novel *Odd Women*: 'The middle girl, dear Grace – she is thought very clever in watercolours, and I am quite sure, if it were necessary, she could pursue the arts in a professional spirit.'¹⁶

As highlighted in previous chapters, the progressive, egalitarian atmosphere at the BMSA meant that educational opportunities were available for women who wished to take up

¹² Ibid., painting of Perranporth by Mary Newill, priced £6; *Birmingham Painters and Craftsmen*, exhibition catalogue, (The Fine Art Society, 1907), states that Violet Holden, Mary Newill and Margaret Gere exhibited and that prices in guineas were available for their work on application.

¹³ See for example an advertisement for 'L. Smythe, Camp Hill Studio, 34 Camp Hill, Birmingham, Teacher of Painting', in Arts and Crafts Exhibition and Sale 'under the auspices of the organised workers of Birmingham and District', Town Hall, Birmingham, 20th -24th September 1910, exhibition catalogue, bound in Birmingham Exhibitions C13 225605, BA&H.

¹⁴ S. Wildman, *The Birmingham School*, p.79.

¹⁵ Ibid. See also *Edith Payne*, exhibition catalogue, (Birmingham, 1979).

¹⁶ G. Gissing, *Odd Women*, p.193.

employment in the decorative arts. In 1906, student Mildred Brown, aged thirty, was awarded a Louisa Ann Ryland Scholarship of £20. Her application stated that her intended occupation was to be a painter of portraits and miniatures. The advertising material for these scholarships specifically stated that they were open to people who were working professionally and that a condition of the scholarships was the proposed occupation of the person intending to study.¹⁷ Another scholarship student at the BMSA, Hilda Mary Harvey, forged a professional career as a painter of portraits, miniatures and as a printmaker. She received one of five, £10 exhibitions at the School in July 1906. Harvey was a student at the BMSA from around 1905 to 1911 and first exhibited at the Royal Academy in London in 1918. She continued painting in France and England until the 1950s.¹⁸

A year-by-year analysis of Birmingham trade directories during the thirty-year period between 1885 and 1915 shows a rise in the numbers of self-employed women artists in Birmingham during this time. Of course, a set of general data of this type gleaned from trade directories will not by its nature demonstrate the full breadth of women's employment as painters and illustrators in Birmingham (for example women who did not advertise in trade directories but who were undertaking freelance artistic work for commercial clients are particularly difficult to identify), but an analysis of trade directories does provide some general points of note.

One female artist is listed in 1886 out of a total of sixty-two and this number increases to fifteen women out of fifty-four artists listed in 1915.¹⁹ The number of women advertising

¹⁷ See BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, June 26th, 1906. Louisa Ann Ryland Scholarship awarded to Mildred Brown, aged thirty, intended occupation painter of portraits and miniatures, the entry states that her father was a draughtsman. Other applications were received from Kathleen Kavanagh aged thirty-five, who was working as an art teacher and metalworker and Ida L. Kay. Mabel E. Bendall, aged twenty-two, intended occupation metalworker and jeweller, stated that her father was a traveller but refused the scholarship as her 'father's circumstance did not justify an award.' Also awarded £20 was Christine Stockdale, aged twenty-five, who gave her intended occupation as a modeller. Her father was a farmer in South Africa.

¹⁸ BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, July 10th, 1906. See also www.christies.com/lotFinder/lot_details.aspx?intObjectID=4708751; <http://cornwallartists.org/cornwall-artists/hilda-mary-harvey>, accessed 10th November, 2012; J. Swift, *Birmingham School of Art Archives 1880-1900*, p.34.

¹⁹ See available Birmingham Trade Directories for this period. Women artists within this analysis advertising themselves professionally in Birmingham were categorised as general artists, for example Miss A. Russell, who was advertising in *Bennett's Business Directory* at 53 St. Paul's Square in 1902 as a 'flower painter in oils etc',

themselves as artists was at its highest at seventeen in 1908 (which coincides with the peak of the BMSA's popularity) and sixteen in 1912. The women are distributed throughout the city and its environs ranging from Moseley in the south to Smethwick in the east but the majority are located in Birmingham city centre and appear to be unmarried, with just four women artists across this time span being married or widowed according to their titles.

The rise in the advertised number of women artists listed as working in the city during this time can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, women may have worked as artists before the end of the nineteenth century but simply not advertised their services in trade directories for reasons of social propriety. Both Kate and Myra Bunce for example, although working as professional artists throughout the period of analysis, are listed only in the residential section of the trade directories as the 'Misses Bunce' at 24 Priory Road, Edgbaston.²⁰ Secondly, the rise in women advertising themselves as artists in the trade directories coincides with the rise in respectable 'white blouse' work for women who, driven by personal desire or economic necessity, worked outside the home. Thirdly, as discussed in previous chapters of this thesis, women were able to take advantage of the practical, Executed Design training that was open to them at the BMSA and it was this training that enabled them to work professionally. Fanny Bunn, who trained at the BMSA and is discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis in the context of her metalwork, is listed as an artist at 3, Newhall Street between 1908 and 1911;²¹ Kate Muriel Eadie is listed as an artist at 3, New Street in 1911 and 1915, sharing a studio with her husband, the painter Sidney Meteyard,²² and Mary Newill advertised herself as an artist in 1912, 1913 and 1915 at 3, Newhall Street.²³

All of the women apart from one discussed in this chapter who were working professionally as artists and/or illustrators appear to be from a middle-class background and

so conforming to the socially acceptable genre of flower painting for women; a fashion illustrator, Miss Mabel Just, who advertised her service in *Kelly's Directory* 1915 and Miss Kate W. Trickett, who advertised herself in *Kelly's Directory* 1911 as a miniature painting teacher at 78 Gough Road in Edgbaston.

²⁰ See *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham*, 1910.

²¹ *Kelly's Directories of Birmingham* 1908, 1909, 1910, 1911.

²² *Kelly's Directories of Birmingham* 1911, 1915.

²³ *Kelly's Directories of Birmingham* 1912, 1913, 1915. Fanny Bunn was also at 3, Newhall Street.

although the available evidence is scant, it appears that some were earning money from their work as early as the time they were students at the BMSA, through income generated from prizes and sales. As just one example, Kate Bunce (1858-1927)²⁴ received a payment of £1 10s. for an oil painting of a figure from the nude in 1887 from the National Science and Art Department in London.²⁵ A year later she was elected an Associate Member of the RBSA.²⁶ Bunce became a self-employed artist and designer working on her own account from home, producing easel paintings and decorative work for public and ecclesiastical buildings, including interior work for the church of Saints Mary and Ambrose in Pershore Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham in 1906. This commission consisted of four wall paintings set in pairs in the angle of the outer walls and the chancel.²⁷ Edward Harper, a teacher at the BMSA, recorded that Kate Bunce's 'principal works, showing strongly the influence of

²⁴ Kate Bunce was the daughter of John Thackray Bunce and his wife Rebecca Cheesewright. The family lived in Edgbaston. Rebecca Ann Cheesewright married John Thackray Bunce in 1849, see GRO Aston District, vol. 16, Sept. qtr. 1849, p.272. According to the 1881 census, (RG11/2954, p.25), the Bunce family were living at Longworth, Priory Road, Edgbaston with two servants and neither Myra (aged twenty-seven) or Kate (aged twenty-four) were listed as having an occupation.

²⁵ See BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins 22nd March, 1887, which state that the Management Sub-Committee accepted an offer of £1.10s. from the Science and Art Department for an award-winning oil painting of a figure from the nude, submitted by Bunce for stage 17c of the National Competition.

²⁶ J. Hill and W. Midgeley, *The History of the RBSA*, p.50.

²⁷ See G. Breeze 'Decorative Painting' in A. Crawford, *By Hammer and Hand*, p.78 and Faculty Record at the Church dated 22nd March, 1906, which suggests that two of the panels were completed prior to the Faculty application and two after the application. Rebecca Ann Bunce died in 1891 aged sixty-six, see GRO King's Norton District, vol. 6c, p.216 and John Thackray Bunce died on 28th June, 1899 (see obituary in *The Bookman*, August 1899, p.128) and S. Hoban, 'John Thackray Bunce', *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxye.bham.ac.uk/view/article/104428>, accessed 20th February, 2014. On the 1901 census, (RG13/2814, p.19) after the death of their parents, Myra is listed as the head of the household living on her own means and Kate is listed as an artist and author working on her own account at home. The sisters employed a cook and a domestic servant. A small body of Kate Bunce's oeuvre is extant, including the painting *How many I, when he shall ask, etc*, the first painting that she exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1887 (the subject matter was taken from a quotation from a poem by Rossetti, see S. Wildman, *The Birmingham School*, p.64); *Melody or Musica*, painted in around 1895-7; and *The Keepsake*, painted in 1901 (ibid.). This painting won Picture of the Year in 1901 in the *Pall Mall Gazette* (See J. Marsh, 'Kate Elizabeth Bunce', *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxye.bham.ac.uk/view/article/64730>, accessed 10th November, 2012). Other surviving works that are currently documented include an oil on canvas entitled *The Chance Meeting, Dante and Beatrice*, (see *Women's Art Show 1550-1970*, exhibition catalogue, (Nottingham Castle Museum, 1982); and *The Lady of Shallot*, see J. Hill and W. Midgeley, *The History of the RBSA*, p.50, plate 56. Kate Bunce died on 24th December, 1927 and was living at 10, Holly Road, Edgbaston at the time of her death. Probate records state that she left effects of £15,528 4s. 5d. to Lloyds Bank Limited and Charles Ekin, Solicitor. See National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), online database accessed through www.ancestry.com, 7th July, 2013.

Rossetti, are to be seen in several churches in the city; two are in the Art Gallery, and one of the latest examples I saw upon her easel was destined for a church in Canada.’²⁸

A further business opportunity for women artists came from the fashionable Arts and Crafts Movement application of decorative painting and gesso onto interior domestic furniture such as cupboards, pianos, chairs and over-mantles. An example of this type of product executed by Kate Eadie featured in *The Studio Magazine* in 1903, where it was praised for its decorative qualities: ‘Several careful and meritorious decorations, such as the piano-front, with coloured gesso, inlaid by Kate Eadie ... a fine sense of design was exercised in harmonious colouring.’²⁹ It is certainly possible that Kate Eadie continued to produce gesso work and decorative painted furniture during the time she was working from her studio in New Street as well as working in enamel, metalwork and jewellery as previously discussed in this thesis.

BOOK ILLUSTRATION

Growing literacy rates in the nineteenth century precipitated a rise in the market for illustrated books. By extension, book illustration (whether creating an original drawing and engraving it by hand onto a wooden block for printing, or cutting out an existing artists’ drawing from a wooden block to reproduce the original image for printing), became a fruitful area of artistic employment. By the 1890s, illustrators such as Aubrey Beardsley, Walter Crane and Charles Ricketts were producing commissions for specialist publishers including Charles Lane at The Bodley Head³⁰ and yet in the current historiography of nineteenth century illustration, Kate Greenaway (1846-1901) is the only female book illustrator accorded prominence, despite this field being a potentially socially acceptable field of

²⁸ J. Hill and W. Midgeley, *The History of the RBSA*, p.59.

²⁹ ‘The National Competition’, *The Studio*, vol. 29, (1903), p.259, Eadie’s work is illustrated on p.270. The piano front design features floral borders, a motto and figures in the style of Edward Burne-Jones.

³⁰ B. Waters, ‘Book Illustration, Vision with Design’, in A. Crawford (ed.), *By Hammer and Hand*, pp. 85-96; p.91.

commercial employment for women given that it could be conducted in the domestic environment as well as in a commercial studio.³¹

Birmingham was acknowledged as a centre for Arts and Crafts book illustration and production, thanks to a thriving book illustration department at the BMSA. As Bill Waters has argued: ‘Birmingham School of Art rightly was described and thought of as the home of the very best in Arts and Crafts book illustration.’³² Contemporary nineteenth century critical perspectives confirm this reputation. In 1896, Walter Crane published *Of the Decorative Illustration of Books Old and New* and emphasised the importance of the ‘Birmingham School’ of illustrators including Arthur Gaskin, Charles Gere, Gertrude Bradley, Mary Newill and Celia Levetus.³³ Waters argues that the work of at least six designers from the BMSA equalled the work of famous national illustrators, naming Arthur Gaskin, E.H. New, Bernard Sleigh, Charles Gere, Sidney Meteyard and Joseph Southall – all men.³⁴ However, evidence obtained during this study suggests that women who trained at the BMSA made an important contribution to the industry. Indeed, in a published survey of Birmingham illustrators working in the Arts and Crafts style and their published works, twenty-two illustrators appear, ten of whom were women – Harriet Isabel Adams, Gertrude M. Bradley, Kate Bunce, Georgie Cave Gaskin, Winifred Green nee Smith, Evelyn Holden, Celia Levetus, Geraldine Morris, Florence Rudland and Mary Newill.³⁵ In 1895, *The Studio Magazine* devoted an entire feature to Mary Newill, stating that her black and white drawings were: ‘quite remarkable for their vigour of line and complete mastery of a convention which by its apparent simplicity tempts many to disaster.’³⁶ Gertrude Bradley and Winifred Smith won gold medals for book illustrations³⁷ and published professionally. *Lily and Water Lily* by Winifred Smith was published by Innes & Co. and Gertrude Bradley decorated and illustrated

³¹ See A. Callen, *Women in the Arts and Crafts Movement*, pp. 179-211, for an extended discussion on women working in these artistic fields.

³² B. Waters, in *By Hammer and Hand*, pp. 85-96, p.91.

³³ Cited in R. Hartnell, *Pre-Raphaelite Birmingham*, p.92.

³⁴ B. Waters, in *By Hammer and Hand*, p.91.

³⁵ A. Crawford, *By Hammer and Hand*, pp. 157-160.

³⁶ ‘Some Aspects of the Work of Mary L (Sic) Newill’, *The Studio*, vol. V, (1895), p.56.

³⁷ See BMSA Prize List 1893, in BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 14th February, 1893.

a book of poems and a volume entitled *New Pictures and Old Frames*, which was written and illustrated by Bradley in collaboration with fellow BMSA student Amy Mark. Both works were published by David Nutt.³⁸ Gertrude May Bradley (born 1869) was from a middle class background and lived in Edgbaston.³⁹

The revival of manufacturing fine quality, hand-printed illustrated books using traditional techniques and materials was driven by The Arts and Crafts Movement. As Callen has argued, by the 1860s wood engraved illustrations could be re-produced mechanically using photographic techniques which led to lower quality, mass-produced illustrated books, so the revival in hand production by commercial ventures such as William Morris's Kelmscott Press led to a demand for higher quality in book production.⁴⁰ This is not to say, however, that women illustrators did not produce work for larger, more commercially run

³⁸ See 'The Birmingham Municipal School of Art with Many Illustrations of its Students' Work, Part 1', *The Studio*, vol. II, (1893-4), pp. 138-147. The article states that Bradley's book of poems was possibly called *Songs for Somebody* and that she also published *New Pictures and Old Frames* with Amy Mark.

³⁹ Gertrude Bradley was born in 1869. According to the 1871 census, (reference RG10/3084, p.58), she was two years old. She was one of five children, her father John Bradley was a graduate of London University and an Assistant Master at Birmingham Grammar School. The family employed one servant and lived at 34 Charlotte Road, in Edgbaston. On the 1881 census, the family were living in Windsor Road, Ealing. Gertrude was twelve years old and a scholar, her brother Charles was nineteen and an artist and engraver. According to the 1891 census, the family had returned to Birmingham and were living in Elvetham Road, Edgbaston. Gertrude was twenty-two years old and an art student. She does not appear on the 1901 or 1911 censuses, so she may have married and changed her name.

⁴⁰ See A. Callen, *Women in the Arts and Crafts Movement*, p.200. William Morris's Kelmscott Press had an undoubted influence on artistic practice at the BMSA. Charles March Gere, who studied at the BMSA, designed the frontispiece to Morris's *News from Nowhere* which was published at the Kelmscott Press in 1892, see B. Waters, in *By Hammer and Hand*, p.86. William Morris gave a lecture at the BMSA on book illustration, specifically wood cuts, at a prize-giving ceremony on February 21st, 1894, see BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 13th February 1894 for details. In 1885, Morris lent a complete set of Kelmscott Press books to the School, see B. Waters, in *By Hammer and Hand*, p.86 and in 1897, a copy of the *Well at the World's End* printed by the Kelmscott Press was donated to the BMSA's library, see BMSA Man Sub Comm Mins, 14th December, 1897. A direct link to the Kelmscott Press came with the appointment of Robert Catterson-Smith as Headmaster of the BMSA upon Edward Taylor's retirement in 1904. Catterson-Smith worked as an illustrator for Morris and Edward Burne-Jones at the Kelmscott Press. His letter of application to the Vittoria Street School, recorded in the BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins 16th July, 1901, stated: 'I entered the service of William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones to assist in the production of drawings for the Kelmscott Press and carried out the whole of the *Chaucer* drawings with the exception of six, as well as nearly all the other drawings made from the designs of Burne-Jones for that press, to their satisfaction. I also designed three of the borders for the *Earthly Paradise*.' He was appointed from 13th August, 1901 at a salary of £500 per annum. Arthur Gaskin provided book illustrations for the Kelmscott Press, including twelve illustrations for *The Shepheardes Calendar* in 1896, see B. Waters, in *By Hammer and Hand*, p.86, and S. Everitt, *The Art of Birmingham*. Documentary evidence is scant as to the exact involvement of women in commercial printing at the Kelmscott Press, although Callen states that May Morris often helped her father, see A. Callen, *Women In the Arts and Crafts Movement*, p.181, so reflecting traditional employment practices of wives and children assisting in the family enterprise. Women were associated with Charles Ashbee's Guild of Handicraft Essex House press, for example Florence Kingsford contributed hand-coloured illustrations for books, see A. Callen, *Women In The Arts and Crafts Movement*, p.183 and Ashbee's wife Janet was involved as an editor.

printing companies utilising mechanical printing technology, because the market for hand-printed books from small, private presses, most notably the Kelmscott Press and Charles Ashbee's Guild of Handicraft's Essex House Press, would always be small given the high retail costs of such books. Of the books that were commercially illustrated by women associated with the BMSA, the majority were produced in conjunction with small to medium sized publishing enterprises including The Leadenhall Press and Methuen and Co., not through Guilds or small presses. Publishers such as these were manufacturing books in the Arts and Crafts style utilising some mass production techniques in their production so that they could be made, marketed and retailed at less cost than the completely hand made products of The Arts and Crafts Movement, enabling them to be purchased by a wider middle-class market.

Despite these commercial opportunities in book illustration, the subject matter of the published work by women connected with the BMSA appears to be consistent with late nineteenth century gender bias, being predominantly nursery and fairy tales and illustrations for infant books, so aligning women with their perceived and culturally naturalised domestic roles as wives and mothers in society. For example, in 1901, Helen 'Nellie' Brightwell exhibited a design for colour printed fairy tales at the Birmingham Industrial Polytechnic Exhibition;⁴¹ contemporary critical praise for Georgie Gaskin's illustrations highlighted that: 'Mrs Gaskin's speciality is a wonderful gift for the delineation of child form in ornament ...';⁴² and Gertrude Bradley's illustration work appeared in a special edition of *The Studio* in 1897-8 that was dedicated to children's books and their illustrators.⁴³ Winifred Smith's *Poetry for Children* by Charles and Mary Lamb was published in 1898 by J M Dent & Co.⁴⁴ and *A Book of Nursery Songs and Rhymes*, edited by Sabine Baring-Gould and published in

⁴¹Catalogue of the *Birmingham Industrial Polytechnic Exhibition*, August 26th to November 2nd 1901, bound in C13 225605, BA&H.

⁴²'The Arts and Crafts Exhibition Part Three', *The Studio*, vol. XVIII, p.66.

⁴³ Bradley's work for *Just Forty Winks* was described as 'one of Messrs. Blackie's happiest volumes this year ...' See *The Studio Special Edition*, vol. V, (1897-8), p.57, discussed by A. Callen in *Women In The Arts and Crafts Movement*, p.204. Blackie was a company noted for its picture books, fine decorative book bindings and working relationships with Arts and Crafts designers including Charles Rennie Mackintosh.

⁴⁴ B. Waters, in *By Hammer and Hand*, p.94.

London in 1895 by Methuen and Company, was illustrated by students at the BMSA under the direction of Arthur Gaskin. Six of the eighteen designs were by women, namely Georgie Cave Gaskin, Celia Levetus, Agnes Manley, Mary Newill, Florence Rudland and Winifred Smith. Georgie Gaskin also designed the page borders for the book. Waters discusses the work of these women designers in the context of this book and nursery illustration, in which he says 'they found their strength and formed a distinct style.'⁴⁵

Despite the apparent gender bias in the illustration work that women were producing, two women who will be discussed later in this chapter – Florence Rudland and Celia Levetus – did illustrate adult books, in Rudland's case a volume of *Undine* and in Levetus' case *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* by William Blake. Women also contributed illustrations to the books that brought widespread critical acclaim to the book illustration department at the BMSA. *A Book of Pictured Carols Designed by Members of The Birmingham Art School* was produced under the direction of Arthur Gaskin and published by George Allen in London in 1893. The book contained twelve illustrations, of which six were designed by women including Georgie Evelyn Cave France, Mary Newill, Violet Holden, Florence Rudland, Agnes Manley and Mildred Peacock alongside Charles Gere, Bernard Sleigh, Arthur Gaskin and Sidney Meteyard. In addition, Mildred Peacock produced the woodblock for one of the illustrations as well as the design and woodblock for the tailpiece.⁴⁶

Opportunities also existed within The Arts and Crafts Movement for the production of illustrations for periodicals and magazines. Both male and female students and staff at the BMSA illustrated *The Quest*, a fine quality magazine that was printed by hand by The Birmingham Guild of Handicrafts and published by Cornish Brothers in New Street between November 1894 and July 1896. Six issues were published in a limited number of 300 copies,

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ According to Waters, the wood blocks for this book were completely cut by hand at the BMSA but it is not clear how many of the male and female illustrators cut their own woodblocks. See B. Waters in *By Hammer and Hand*, p.90.

priced at half a crown each.⁴⁷ *The Quest* was as much a vehicle for the illustration work of students at the BMSA and members of the Birmingham Guild as it was a magazine of essays, reviews and poetry. It contained hand-cut wood block illustrations by eighteen artists connected with the BMSA of which five were women – Georgie Gaskin, Evelyn Holden, Violet Holden, Celia Levetus and Mary Newill. The advertisement designs were also hand cut, including one for Stickphast paste by Georgie Gaskin which was repeated in a different design for each issue. Women illustrators associated with the BMSA were also involved with Volume Nine of the national periodical *The Yellow Book*, which was published in April 1896, priced 5s.⁴⁸ This special edition contained seventeen illustrations from Birmingham artists of which six were executed by women including Georgie Gaskin (as Mrs A. J. Gaskin, a book plate), Evelyn Holden (*Binnorie O' Binnorie*), Celia Levetus (*A Reading from Herrick*), Mary Newill (*Study of Trees*), Florence Rudland (*The Lady of Shalott*) and H. Isabel Adams (*Come Unto These Yellow Sands*).⁴⁹ *The English Illustrated Magazine*, which was prized for its black and white illustrations, was a further potential outlet for women's work.⁵⁰ According to an article about the BMSA's book illustration in *The Studio Magazine*, students designed 'various pages of the *English Illustrated* and other popular magazines' but details were not provided as to whether these students were male or female.⁵¹

I will now discuss the lives and work of five women who trained at the BMSA and produced commercial book illustrations. Celia Levetus worked as an illustrator but from the available evidence appears to have given up publishing commercial work after marriage.

⁴⁷ See S. Wildman, *The Birmingham School*, p.63. Original copies of *The Quest* are contained in the permanent collection at BMAG.

⁴⁸ *The Yellow Book* was a quarterly illustrated periodical published by Elkin Matthews and John Lane between 1894 and 1897. It featured illustrations by avant-garde artists associated with the Aesthetic Movement in England, particularly Aubrey Beardsley, alongside writing by H.G. Wells, Henry James, and William Butler Yeats.

⁴⁹ *The Yellow Book*, vol. IX, (London, April 1896); see also S. Houfe, *The Dictionary of British Book Illustrators and Caricaturists 1800-1914*, (Antique Collectors' Club, 1978).

⁵⁰ *The English Illustrated Magazine* was edited by Comyns Carr, Co-Director of the progressive Grosvenor Gallery in London from 1883. Illustrators associated with the magazine included Walter Crane, George du Maurier and Randolph Caldecott. See B. Waters, in *By Hammer and Hand*, p.87.

⁵¹ *The Studio Magazine*, vol. II, (1893-4), pp. 138-147, *The Birmingham Municipal School of Art With Many Illustrations of Its Students' Work, Part 1*, p.145.

Georgie Gaskin continued to work professionally in the decorative arts, including book illustration, after her marriage to Arthur Gaskin. Florence Rudland was a single woman who was self-employed as an illustrator and designer. Sophia Pumphrey was a single woman who worked for an employer as an illustrator. Finally, Ivy Harper was a single woman with a joint income drawn from art teaching and illustration, specifically illumination.

In his influential book *The Decorative Illustration of Books Old and New*, published in 1896, Walter Crane described Celia Levetus as ‘one of the leading artists of the Birmingham School.’⁵² Yet she has received nominal critical attention in the historiography of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Callen described her in brief as a prolific illustrator educated at the Birmingham School of Art,⁵³ whilst Waters takes a negative view of her work, describing her illustrations for William Blake’s poems as ‘crude.’⁵⁴ However, in the context of The Arts and Crafts Movement in Britain and in Birmingham, Celia Levetus’s oeuvre merits further investigation.

Celia Anna Levetus was born in Canada in 1874. Her family lived in London before moving to Edgbaston in Birmingham.⁵⁵ She was from a middle-class family - her father Edward Moses Levetus was a jewellery manufacturer in Navigation Street, Birmingham.⁵⁶

Records from the BMSA indicate that in March 1896, Celia Levetus received a 10s. prize for a design for a square book plate⁵⁷ and in the same year her illustration work featured in *History of the Hornbook*, which was published in two volumes in 1896 for Andrew Tuer. Five artists worked on this publishing project of which three were women – Celia Levetus, Georgie Cave Gaskin and Eunice Bloxcidge.

Celia Levetus illustrated two volumes of William Blake’s poetry for David Nutt, Long Acre, London. *Songs of Innocence* was published in 1899 and *Songs of Experience* in 1902.

⁵² W. Crane, *The Decorative Illustration of Books Old and New*, (London, 1896), p.207.

⁵³ A. Callen, *Women in the Arts and Crafts Movement*, p.204 and p.206.

⁵⁴ B. Waters, in *By Hammer and Hand*, p.95.

⁵⁵ 1881 census, (RG11/7, p.28).

⁵⁶ See *Kelly’s Directory of Birmingham* (1905), Levetus E., and A.& Co., 36 and 38 Guildhall Buildings, Navigation Street, Birmingham. According to the 1891 census (reference RG 12/2360, no page number given), the family were living at 23 Carpenter Road, Edgbaston and Celia is listed as a scholar.

⁵⁷ BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 10th March, 1896.

Turkish Fairy Tales and Folk Tales by IgnaczKunos with illustrations by Celia Levetus was published by A.H Bullen in London in 1901.

In the same year, Celia Levetus was listed on the census as a ‘black and white artist’ working from home in Moseley, Birmingham on her own account.⁵⁸ However, she married Eric Pearson Nicholson in 1902⁵⁹ and no further examples of her published illustration appear after this time. The 1911 census records that Celia and Eric were living in Devon and both were listed as living on private means – presumably supported by Eric Nicholson’s personal wealth, although the scarcity of surviving information about the couple cannot confirm this supposition.

Although having a professional reputation as a jewellery designer in partnership with her husband Arthur Gaskin, Georgie Gaskin (1864-1934) was also an illustrator of commercially produced children’s books.

Georgie Cave France was born on 8th December, 1866 in Shrewsbury to William Hanmer France, a contractor's agent, and Frances Emily Cave-Brown-Cave.⁶⁰ In 1881, the family were living in King’s Norton in Birmingham⁶¹ and by the 1891 census the family were living in Rushey Lane, Yardley, with Georgie listed an art student.⁶²

Georgie and Arthur Gaskin were married on 21st March, 1894.⁶³ Colleagues from the BMSA produced a book of pen and ink illustrations for the couple to commemorate the occasion. *The Life of King Arthur Depicted in Certain Designs* featured a total of twenty-five

⁵⁸ 1901 census (RG 13/2807, p.54). Celia’s mother Sarah, presumably now a widow, was living with her five children and her sister at 33 Park Hill, St Anne’s, Moseley. It is possible that the family may have been in pecuniary difficulty after the death of Edward Levetus which is why the children were working, or they may have chosen to work to earn their own income. Celia’s twenty-nine year old brother Edward was an Eastern Export Merchant, her sister Florence, aged twenty-seven, was employed as a Correspondence Clerk and her sister Daisy, aged twenty, was a Pianoforte Teacher working on her own account. A younger brother aged fifteen has no occupation and the family employed two domestic servants, a housemaid and a kitchen maid.

⁵⁹ GRO King’s Norton District, December Quarter 1902, vol. 6c, p.928.

⁶⁰ A. Crawford, ‘Georgie Gaskin’, *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxye.bham.ac.uk/view/article/66046>, accessed 7th September, 2013.

⁶¹ 1881 census (RG11/2947, p.29), William and Frances were living in Sandford Road in the parish of King’s Norton with two sons, two daughters and a domestic servant. Georgie is listed as a scholar, aged fourteen.

⁶² 1891 census (RG12/2462, p.5). Her father William was now a Manager of a Charity Institute.

⁶³ A. Crawford, ‘Georgie Gaskin’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

illustrations, with sixteen by women including Gertrude Bradley, Evelyn and Violet Holden, Celia Levetus, Agnes Manley, Mary Newill, Florence Rudland and Mildred Peacock.⁶⁴

Georgie Gaskin developed a reputation as an illustrator of children's books, which began when she was a student at the BMSA. As well as winning local and national prizes for her work, in 1893 a series of her decorative designs produced for the Leadenhall Press featured in a newspaper article about the BMSA's contribution to The Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society in London.⁶⁵

Georgie designed the frontispiece for Arthur Gaskin's book *Good King Wenceslas* in 1895,⁶⁶ and in the same year she produced illustrations for *ABC: An Alphabet*, which was published by Elkin Matthews in London.

Divine and Moral Songs for Children by the Reverend Isaac Watts, 'pictured in colours by Mrs. Arthur Gaskin', was published by Elkin Matthews in London and L.C. Page and Company in Boston in 1896. Georgie created the front cover illustration for the book, plus fourteen coloured plates. The original contract between Georgie and Elkin Matthews for *Divine and Moral Songs for Children*, dated 20th August 1896, has survived and reveals that she was paid a fee of £10 by the publishers on the publication date⁶⁷ and assigned to the publisher a half share of the net proceeds once all production costs had been met. Georgie retained the original illustrations for this book.⁶⁸ A second, undated contract between Georgie and Elkin Matthews for *An ABC Book Rhymed and Pictured by Mrs Georgie Gaskin* shows

⁶⁴ S. Wildman, *The Birmingham School*, p.60.

⁶⁵ The clipping is possibly from *The Birmingham Daily Post* and is contained within the BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 11th October, 1893.

⁶⁶ This book was published by hand by Arthur Gaskin at the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft with a foreword contributed by William Morris. Georgie's original design for the frontispiece for this book is preserved in BMAG 1986 P104-5.

⁶⁷ BMAG 1986 P104-5. The contract states: 'Upon the day of publication the sum of £10 shall be paid to the author and this amount shall be added to the costs of production including paper blocks, printing the blocks, composition, prospectuses, advertisements and other needful outgoings which shall be defrayed by the publishers and no profits shall be computed until these various charges have been repaid to the publisher from the profits of the book.' The production, advertising and reprinting of the book was the responsibility of Elkin Matthews and payments were made to Georgie by the publisher on a half-yearly basis.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* A series of annotated sketches for this book are in BMAG 1906 P104-5. Twelve ink drawings, the possible set of outline proofs for *Divine and Moral Songs* are housed in the Cotsen Children's Library at Princeton University, CTSN 4737, Voyager Bib ID: 4719854. The Princeton drawings were exhibited at the V&A in 1900 in an exhibition of modern illustration.

that this book was produced on the same financial and production terms as *Divine and Moral Songs for Children*, except that Elkin Matthews retained the original illustrations for the book.⁶⁹

Hornbook Jingles was published by the Leadenhall Press in London in 1896 and featured both verse and illustrations by Georgie Gaskin.⁷⁰ The advertising prospectus for this seventy-two page book, which retailed at 3s. 6d., described the product as ‘a thick volume of talking jingles, pictorial throughout, (with) special paper, pretty binding, top gilt, designed by Mrs Arthur Gaskin.’ The language used in this description of the book places it firmly in the Victorian luxury books market by highlighting its special paper and attractive binding.⁷¹

In 1896, Georgie won first prize in a competition organised by the publishers Marcus Ward for a series of four illustrations to poetry by Norman Gale entitled *Calendar of the Seasons*. Her entry was published by Ward in 1897.⁷² Based on her success in this competition, Marcus Ward commissioned her to produce *Holy Christmas* in 1896, which was aimed at the quality Christmas gift book market. This was published in a luxury, deluxe edition on hand-made paper bound in Japanese vellum and a secondary, less expensive edition.⁷³ Georgie created the black and white line illustrations for this book as well as the design for the binding.⁷⁴ It has not been possible to establish the rates of pay for these commissions given the lack of surviving evidence but as a general guide to remuneration in this field, the payment for a single illustration in the mid-Victorian luxury, illustrated book market varied between £15 and £25.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ BMAG 1906 P104-5, individual items within this archive entry at BMAG are not catalogued.

⁷⁰ See M. M. Young, *The Leadenhall Press: A Checklist*, (Oak Knoll Press and The British Library, 2010).

⁷¹ Georgie Gaskin’s artist’s proofs for this book are in the Princeton University Cotsen Children’s Library (CTSN) 151848, Bib ID: 6181254 and consist of seventy-three pieces of artwork in hand-rendered ink designs, some with paste-over or white-out corrections. Provenance: Bibliotheca Lindesiana, collection of Edgar S. Oppenheimer.

⁷² See G. Breeze, ‘The Gaskins as Illustrators’ in *Arthur & Georgie Gaskin*, p.27.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.27.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.29.

⁷⁵ See S. Cooke, ‘Outsiders on the Inside: The Pre-Raphaelites and the Mid-Victorian Gift Book’, *The Review of the Pre-Raphaelite Society*, vol XX, 1, (Spring 2012), p.12.

Georgie's *The Travellers and Other Stories* was published in 1898 by James Bowden and part of this book was republished as *A Tale of Six Little Travellers* by H. R. Allenson in 1905.⁷⁶ According to Breeze, Georgie's last published illustrative work was an alphabet book of children's names entitled *Little Girls and Little Boys*, which was commissioned by Dent in 1898.⁷⁷ If this was indeed her last professionally published work, she had continued to work professionally as an illustrator for four years after marriage. Georgie Gaskin's jewellery design became prominent in her creative output from around 1900 onwards, so she may have chosen to specialise in jewellery rather than professional illustration from this point onwards.

In 1901, Arthur and Georgie Gaskin were living in the parish of Yardley in Birmingham.⁷⁸ Joscelyne, their first child, was born in 1903 and Margaret, their second, was born in 1907.⁷⁹ Georgie was elected a member of the RBSA in 1917, suggesting that she continued to draw, paint and exhibit artwork other than jewellery after ceasing to publish illustration professionally.⁸⁰ The family moved to Chipping Campden in the Cotswolds in 1925 upon Arthur's retirement from the Vittoria Street School for Jewellers. Arthur Gaskin died in June 1928 in Chipping Campden. Shortly after his death, Georgie moved to West Malling in Kent, where she died at her home, the White Cottage, on 29th October, 1934.⁸¹

Florence Rudland was born in 1873,⁸² and illustrated at least two full length books before her untimely death at the age of thirty in November 1903.⁸³ Bill Waters refers to her

⁷⁶ See N. Rathbone, 'The Gaskins as Illustrators' in *Arthur & Georgie Gaskin*, p.29. Georgie's original pencil and watercolour designs for this book have survived in the permanent collection at BMAG, catalogue number BMAG 1986-P91. A copy of this book was exhibited in *Girls and Boys in Fairyland, An exhibition of Children's Books from 1800 to 1910*, 3rd April to 31st May 2012, Exeter Central Library and University of Exeter; G. Breeze in *Arthur and Georgie Gaskin*, p.29; a copy is held in the Cotsen Children's Library, Princeton University, (CTSN) 8242, Voyager Bib ID: 4764664.

⁷⁷ G. Breeze, *Arthur and Georgie Gaskin*, p.29.

⁷⁸ 1901 census, RG13/2923, p.19. The couple were living in Victoria Road, Yardley. Arthur's occupation was given as an artist painter, with no occupation listed for Georgie, now aged thirty-three. The couple employed a cook and a housemaid.

⁷⁹ G. Breeze, *Arthur & Georgie Gaskin*, p.5.

⁸⁰ J. Hill and W. Midgeley, *The History of the RBSA*, p.50.

⁸¹ G. Breeze, in *Arthur & Georgie Gaskin*, p.5; A. Crawford, 'Georgie Gaskin', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

⁸² B. Waters in *By Hammer and Hand*, p.94.

⁸³ A note concerning the death of Florence Rudland occurs in the BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, November 24th 1903.

work exhibiting a 'naïve charm'⁸⁴ but she won a silver medal in 1893 for a series of illustrations to La Motte Fouqué's *Undine*. These images were published as a book in 1897 by Lawrence and Bullen Ltd. with Rudland providing twenty-nine woodcut illustrations, many of them whole page works. The book retailed at 3s. 6d. As has been discussed elsewhere in this thesis, prize winning in itself is no indication of professional employment, but as in the case of Georgie Gaskin already discussed in this chapter, Florence Rudland received book commissions directly from her national prize winning student entries, so competitions represented an affordable and socially acceptable way for women to advertise their skills to prospective national publishers and paying commercial clients.

Florence Rudland differs from the other women discussed in this chapter in that she appears to have been from a less well-off background. According to the 1891 census, her father William Rudland was a furnishing warehouseman and her mother Ellen did not have an occupation. Florence was one of nine children. The family had no servants and two of the children were working – Ernest, aged fifteen, as an Accounts Clerk and William, aged seventeen, as a Furnishing Assistant. Florence was listed as an art student and given the size of the family and the potential limited income of her father, it is reasonable to conjecture that she may have needed to supplement the family income by utilising her design skills.⁸⁵

By 1893, Florence Rudland was exhibiting book illustration, including five sets of book designs at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society in London⁸⁶ and in 1901 she exhibited fairy tale designs in black and white for book illustrations at the Birmingham Industrial Polytechnic exhibition.⁸⁷

Florence was working as a part-time art teacher as well as studying at the BMSA and potentially producing commercial book illustration in 1895. The BMSA Minutes from 21st

⁸⁴ B. Waters, in *By Hammer and Hand*, p.94.

⁸⁵ 1891 census (RG12/2360, p.21). William Rudland was fifty-three in 1891 and Ellen was forty-one. The family lived at 19 Cambridge Crescent, Edgbaston. The children ranged in age from four to eighteen years of age with Florence the oldest child.

⁸⁶ Newspaper clipping about the BMSA student work at The Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, possibly *The Birmingham Daily Post*, in BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 11th October, 1893.

⁸⁷ Catalogue for the Birmingham Industrial Polytechnic Exhibition, August 26th to November 2nd 1901, bound in Birmingham exhibitions C13 225605, BA&H.

August 1895 identify her as one of several assistant female teachers in branch schools working under Sidney Meteyard.⁸⁸ Although her wages are not documented in this entry, the salary for Assistant Teachers in 1899 was £25 per annum.⁸⁹

As well as the illustrations for *Undine*, which was published in 1897, Florence Rudland illustrated *The Fairchild Family* by Mrs Sherwood, which was published in 1902 by Wells, Gardner Darton in London and Frederick A. Stokes and Company in New York. This included numerous illustrations, including forty that were full-page in size. Sadly, Florence Rudland died a year after this book was published.

ILLUMINATION

Chapter Two of this thesis highlighted the opportunities that existed for women teaching illumination at the BMSA through a discussion of the employment of Violet Holden and Ivy Harper. However, opportunities were also available for women who wished to design, execute and sell illuminated works of art in the commercial market.

Working in illumination professionally required little capital outlay, with a supply of vellum or good quality paper, pens and inks being the basic requisites. Illumination was considered to be suitable work for women given its affinity with book illustration and contemporary perceptions of it as a delicate artform. Indeed, as Callan stated ‘illumination seems to have been an art in which women predominated ... the patience, and the very smallness of detail and format ... create the image of an art which contemporary notions of women would appear to have rendered perfectly appropriate for women artists. Furthermore, the fact that it was work which could easily be done in the home, perhaps even without a

⁸⁸ Programme for the BMSA Session 1895-6.

⁸⁹ BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 10th January, 1999.

special studio being necessary, must have reinforced its attraction to middle-class women artists.’⁹⁰

There is some evidence to suggest that women who trained at the BMSA included illumination in their professional repertoire, for example Kate Eadie exhibited an illuminated page on vellum depicting *The Defence of Guinevere* at the RBSA.⁹¹

Ivy Emily Harper (1880-1932),⁹² was a prolific professional illuminator and artist working from her home in Harborne, Birmingham. She produced illumination for private and civic clients in Birmingham after training at the BMSA.⁹³ Harper won a two year scholarship to the School between 1901 and 1903 and also deputised for Edward Treglown, who was instructor of writing and illumination at the BMSA, when he was absent from teaching.⁹⁴

Ivy Harper’s father Edward was a professional artist and drawing teacher at the BMSA. Ivy was born at the family home in Lodge Road, Birmingham on 14th March 1880.⁹⁵ Throughout her life she lived in City Road, Edgbaston; Wentworth Road, Harborne and Douglas Road, Handsworth, all relatively affluent areas of the city.

Harper did not marry⁹⁶ and her income derived from executing illuminated works, teaching private art lessons⁹⁷ and from employment as an art teacher at King Edward’s School, Camp Hill, which was her main source of income.⁹⁸

Evidence has survived giving details of a range of illuminated commissions that Harper produced in the early twentieth century. Her clients included Birmingham City Council, a Lord Mayor of Birmingham and local professional businesses such as solicitors. In

⁹⁰ A. Callen, *Women in the Arts and Crafts Movement*, p.186.

⁹¹ See J. Hill and W. Midgeley, *The History of the RBSA*, plate 110, no date given for when the piece was exhibited.

⁹² S. Wildman, *The Birmingham School*, p.73; MS760/44, BA&H, states that she died on 28th November, 1932. MS760, BA&H, contains letters, diaries, original artwork and book illustrations, papers and invoices relating to the work of Ivy Harper and her father Edward.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ MS760/44, BA&H.

⁹⁵ See *Life and Work of Ivy Emily Harper*, unpublished handwritten notebook recording her illumination commissions and the payments she received, MS760/44, BA&H.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ MS760/44 records that in 1905 she was teaching a Miss Whitley at a fee of £2.10s.0d. but it is not clear whether this was per lesson, term, or year.

⁹⁸ The 1911 census listed her as an Art Teacher, King Edward’s School and a contract of employment from the School dated 17th March, 1927, MS 760/38, BA&H, shows that she earned £380 per calendar year.

1904, Harper produced an illuminated address to the Lord Mayor, for which she was paid £3 3s. Two years later she produced an address to the politician Joseph Chamberlain, and in 1907 an illumination illustrating the work of Omar Khayyam which sold to a Mr Bladen for £2 2s. In the same year she produced illuminations for a Mr Harday with a fee of £1 and Mr Adams, for which she was paid £5. In 1914, Harper produced an illuminated address for Cadbury's at £3; a Pearson address at £5 5s, an address for the Honorable William Kenrick commissioned by Birmingham City Art Gallery for which she was paid £10, and an address commissioned by Birmingham City Council at £7 7s. A letter from Howard Sharp of Botteley & Sharp Solicitors in Colmore Row, Birmingham dated August 1st, 1919, thanks Harper for the illuminated testimonial to Mr Lakin Smith and confirms payment to her of £8 7s.⁹⁹ It is probable that she received other paid commissions that were not recorded, however it can be argued from these examples that although Ivy Harper was in receipt of piecemeal payments from prestigious clients for her illumination, the income received from her practical design work was not sufficient to maintain her independently without additional pay from teaching. She died on 28th November, 1932, at the General Hospital in Birmingham. Probate records state that she left effects of £4,154 8s. 8d. to her brother Edward Samuel Harper, who was an artist.¹⁰⁰

Sophia Pumphrey, who studied at the BMSA,¹⁰¹ was professionally employed as a commercial artist and designer at the Cadbury Factory in Bournville, Birmingham. She was the first artist to join the staff in 1896¹⁰² 'to design box lids, labels, and the like.'¹⁰³ In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Cadbury developed a coherent and consistent visual corporate identity including integrated branding and artwork, with the in-house art

⁹⁹ MS760/44, BA&H, no fee is stated for the illumination to Joseph Chamberlain. Letter dated August 1st, 1919, MS 760/22, BA&H, confirms payment by cheque enclosed with the letter.

¹⁰⁰ England and Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858-1966, online database accessed through www.ancestry.com, 8th July 2013.

¹⁰¹ Pumphrey appears on the 1894 BMSA prize list, published in *The Birmingham Daily Post*, Tuesday, 28th August, 1894.

¹⁰² G. Parker, *Cadbury Ltd. at Bournville: Design and Packaging An Outline*, in B. Tilson, (ed.) *Made in Birmingham, Design and Industry 1889-1989*, (Warwickshire, 1989), p.238.

¹⁰³ I. Williams, 'Bournville, 1899-1918', in *The Firm of Cadbury 1831-1931*, (London, 1931).

department managing the majority of work for the firm's marketing campaigns. Processes undertaken within this department included colour printing, photography and line illustration.¹⁰⁴

In common with the Cadbury family in Birmingham, Sophia Pumphrey was from a middle-class Quaker background. Her father Alfred was born in Birmingham and was a photographic manufacturer and brass founder in Edgbaston at the time of his marriage in 1863. He originated new processes in photographic printing and built up his business to employ thirty staff.¹⁰⁵

By 1891, the family were living in Moseley. Sophia was twenty-eight years old and her occupation was given on the census as a teacher of arts and handicraft and a painter.¹⁰⁶ Evidence shows that she was teaching leatherwork in classes organised by the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft at the Kyrle Society's workshop in Lawrence Street, Birmingham. These philanthropic classes were primarily aimed at young working-class boys and members of

¹⁰⁴ See J. A. Curtis, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery,

<http://www.suburbanbirmingham.org.uk/spaces/cadburys-essay.htm>, accessed December 1st, 2012.

¹⁰⁵ See B. S. Beck, <http://www.benbeck.co.uk/dissertation/6photographicportraiture.htm> accessed November 15th, 2012. Beck states that Alfred Pumphrey was a photographer in Edgbaston at the time of his marriage in 1863. His father Josiah Pumphrey was a Brass Founder and was a pupil at the Quaker Ackworth School between 1839-43. Sophia Pumphrey was a pupil at Ackworth School before she trained at the BMSA (see http://www.archive.org/stream/supplementaryli00ackgoog/supplementaryli00ackgoog_djvu.txt accessed 1st September, 2013). The 1871 census, (RG10/377, p.4), states that Alfred Pumphrey was the manager of a photographic department employing ten men and ten women, living at 23 Row Heath Road, in Kings Norton, Birmingham. Sophia Pumphrey was six years old and one of three children. The family employed a cook, a domestic servant and a nurse. The 1881 census (RG11/2157, p.82), stated that Alfred Pumphrey was a photographic publisher employing twenty women and ten men. Alfred Pumphrey was the originator of a permanent ink process in photographic publishing, see G. Tissandier, 'The Permanent Ink Process of Mr Alfred Pumphrey of Birmingham', *A History and Handbook of Photography*, (1878), pp. 342-344.

¹⁰⁶ The 1891 census (RG12/2351, p.6) stated that the family were living at 34 Woodstock Road, Moseley. Alfred's occupation was given as a photographic publisher and manufacturing optician; <http://www.hunimex.com/warwick/photogs.html> accessed 15th December, 2012, lists Pumphrey Brothers at 21 Paradise Street in the 1890s. Sophia Pumphrey's brother Spencer was eighteen years of age in 1891 and his occupation was given as an art metal worker's apprentice. He became a freelance designer in the Arts and Crafts style producing metal designs for silversmiths including Albert Edward Jones.

local boys and girls clubs and were taught by practising artists and designers who were members of the Guild.¹⁰⁷

On the 1901 census, Sophia's occupation is given as a manufactures artistic advisor, presumably at the Cadbury works¹⁰⁸ and in 1903, she became Head Forewoman of the Women's departments in the Cadbury works under the managerial direction of Edward Cadbury.¹⁰⁹

Sophia Pumphrey retired at the end of 1918.¹¹⁰ She died unmarried on 6th July, 1923 whilst living at 5, Maple Road, Bournville. She left effects valued at £5,943 8s. 4d. to Robert Waddington Pumphrey, a manufacturer, and Hilda Pumphrey, spinster.¹¹¹

TEXTILES

The Arts and Crafts Movement provided women with a range of employment and business enterprise opportunities in the field of textiles.¹¹² A discussion and analysis of these

¹⁰⁷ See TBGH Comm Mins 1890-99, BA&H, 11R29 450350; Register of Members Archives 11R29 450349 (two volumes bound as one). The Minutes of TBGH Sub-Committee dated 15th July, 1890, state that classes were to be held at the Kyrle Society's workshop in Lawrence Street, Birmingham with subjects including chip carving, iron work and 'Miss (S) Pumphrey teaching leatherwork', see p.73. TBGH Comm Mins also record that 'Miss Pumphrey and Mr Bidlake' (William Bidlake, the renowned Arts and Crafts architect) were asked to prepare designs suitable for a stamp or die to mark the work of TBGH, presumably to give it a consistent and recognisable visual identity amongst potential patrons (p.33). Miss Pumphrey's address for the year 1894-5 was given in the register of TBGH members as Woodhurst, Woodstock Road, Moseley.

¹⁰⁸ On the 1901 census (RG13/2710, no page number given), Sophia was thirty-five years old and at the home of David Pulley, an iron founder's manufacturer at 138 Murdock Road, Handsworth. She may have been visiting or lodging at this address on the evening of the census. The remainder of the family are at 44 Farm Road, Bordesley Green. Her father was retired, but the business seemed to have continued in his name. The 1915 *Kelly's Trade Directory for Birmingham* lists Pumphrey and Day, photographic printers, in Emily Street, Birmingham.

¹⁰⁹ I. A. Williams, 'Bournville, 1899-1918' in *The Firm of Cadbury*, p.95. Williams states that forewoman Mary Brown retired in 1903 and was succeeded by Pumphrey, assisted by Fanny E. Price and Esther Simner. During the early twentieth century women accounted for over half the workforce at Cadbury but the firm did not employ married women. See J. A. Curtis, <http://www.suburbanbirmingham.org.uk/spaces/cadburys-essay.htm> accessed 28th August, 2013. Male and female workers were segregated with separate entrances, refreshment areas and recreational facilities.

¹¹⁰ Sophia Pumphrey was photographed in 1918 as one of three Cadbury employees, and the image is most likely to be a retirement commemoration. The photograph is dated 1918 and is held in MS 466/41/3A/96, 1918, BA&H. Other images in the series depict male workers W. Davis and C.H. Brown.

¹¹¹ Probate 25th September, 1923, to Robert Waddington Pumphrey, Manufacturer, and Hilda Pumphrey, Spinster, effects £5,943 8s.4d. See National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), online database accessed through www.ancestry.com, 7th July, 2013.

opportunities will follow in the remainder of this chapter, with the emphasis upon the production of highly skilled needlework that required technical training and expertise to create and business acumen to sell.¹¹³

An Executed Design training at the BMSA would have provided women with the necessary technical skills to produce and sell expensive, high-quality textiles which were in demand from an artistically educated and discerning customer base. A 1914 volume dedicated to women's employment in Birmingham acknowledged that: 'Very few Birmingham firms train girls as embroideresses ... original work, such as is taught in the School of Art, is as yet only made for sale by one or two people working on their own account.'¹¹⁴ As a possible illustration of one of these people, in 1910, Miss Florence Tangye of The Studio, 354 Franklin Road, King's Norton, exhibited a cushion cover with Jacobean Embroidery, a Carrick-Macross lace collar and a collar with Danish Embroidery at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition and Sale at Birmingham Town Hall, suggesting that she was actively producing fine quality needlework for commercial sale.¹¹⁵ Similarly, in the 1910 *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham*, a Miss S. J. Morris at 100 Watford Road, King's Norton,

¹¹² Given the predominantly domestic nature of needlework as an occupation for women, it is extremely difficult to locate surviving documented business evidence of women who were selling their work so many must continue to remain anonymous.

¹¹³ Low-skilled sewing and needlework contributed to the sweated, cash-based economy in the nineteenth century, particularly in times of family crisis when women might have taken in needlework to supplement a husband or male family member's wage. Women's employment in the textile industry as a whole, including embroidery, tapestry and sewing related to the clothing and fashion industry, has been extensively analysed and debated within the historiography of women's work. In brief, needlework was considered to be a socially acceptable employment for women outside the home as well as an accomplishment within the domestic realm. For example, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries young girls would advertise their prowess with the needle through embroidering samplers, whether to demonstrate an accomplished leisure activity to potential spouses or to prove their skills with a needle to potential employers if economic necessity meant that they needed to work. In the late nineteenth century, needlework was an acceptable means of earning a living for the stereotypical distressed gentlewoman in economic difficulty. Philanthropic agencies existed in order to help these middle-class women market and sell their work, with pecuniary difficulty a qualification for entry to membership of these employment 'depots'. For example, Mrs Geyselman's Depot for Ladies' Work in Torquay charged a subscription of 10s. 6d. annually with commission charged at 2d. per shilling for all work sold or orders received. Women could send six articles at a time to the depot which had to be low priced to encourage a quick sale and all work had to be 'hand sewn', 'well executed' and demonstrate 'useful patterns'. See A. Callan, *Women In The Arts and Crafts Movement*, p.115 and pp. 95-135 for an extended discussion on this theme.

¹¹⁴ *Birmingham Trades for Women and Girls, Embroidery*, City of Birmingham Education Committee, Central Care Committee, (Birmingham, 1914), p.22.

¹¹⁵ Catalogue of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition and Sale 'Under the Auspices of the Organised Workers of Birmingham and District', Town Hall, Birmingham, (20th-24th September, 1910).

Birmingham was advertising herself as a dealer in needlework and embroidery, demonstrating an awareness of the market for fashionable, hand-made textiles.

In common with the resurgence of commercial stained-glass production discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis, the roots of the embroidery and tapestry revival within The Arts and Crafts Movement lay in the resumption of church building and its attendant demand for ecclesiastical furnishings and decorations in the late nineteenth century. This market diversified into the domestic realm, leading to a consumer demand for luxury household goods and commodities for personal adornment in the Arts and Crafts style including embroidered curtains, wall hangings, cushions, book covers, gloves, purses, handbags, dresses and menu cases. An Arts and Crafts technical manual edited by William Lethaby dating from 1906 provided a list of objects suitable for embroidery that encompassed both these potential markets including: ‘hangings of various kinds, quilts, screens, furniture coverings, altar frontals, church vestments ... bags, boxes, book-covers, gloves or mittens, bell-pulls, cushions, mirror frames, all kinds of household linen, infants’ robes ... for church use alms bags, book markers, stoles, pulpit and lectern frontals ... a panel may be worked with the deliberate intention of framing it to hang on a wall ... a piece of embroidered work might well fill a pane over a mantelpiece.’¹¹⁶

Thus, as this text illustrates, the commercial potential for embroidery in the interior decorative schemes of Arts and Crafts style houses was considerable. As the prominent architect and designer Baillie Scott stated: ‘let our aim be to enrol the services of the needle in the great task of the adornment of the house, and so we shall find its first and most important use in the decoration of the walls of the rooms we live in; and here the use of broad applique will at once suggest itself. Or certain portions of the wall may be reserved for such decoration, notably over the fireplace, where the desirability of a rich background for ornaments may be noted. Next may be considered the advisability of embroidery on curtains,

¹¹⁶ Mrs. H. Archibald, ‘Embroidery and Tapestry Weaving’ in W. Lethaby (ed.) *The Artistic Crafts Technical Handbook*, (London, 1906), illustrated with an example of an embroidered altar frontal designed by Philip Webb and executed by May Morris, plate XIII.

portieres or screens ... in the bedroom embroidery may be used in the hangings and coverlet of the bed, and many smaller objects of household use may be adorned with needlework ... table covers, table centres ... and the like.'¹¹⁷

Initial capital outlay for a domestic-based textiles business was likely to be relatively small. A 1906 list of equipment required stated that no 'special studio' was required because 'most work can be done in any well-lighted room'.¹¹⁸ For embroidery, requirements included needles, scissors, thimbles, frames, a stand, tambour frame, cordmaking appliance, requisites for transferring patterns (including Indian ink, a small sable brush, turpentine, powdered turpentine or white chalk, tracing paper, drawing pins), pricker, knife, spindle, piercer, suitable materials for embroidering upon, threads of all kinds, stones beads etc.' For tapestry weaving a loom, mirror, bobbins and needles, a comb, warp, wools, silk and silver thread were required.¹¹⁹

From the 1890s onwards, the syllabus for needlework at the BMSA included embroidery, the use of colour, technique and lace design.¹²⁰ A distinction was made between students who wished to produce and execute their own designs for needlework and students who wanted to receive instruction in stitching and the use of colour alone. The syllabus also included ecclesiastical needlework design.¹²¹ Students and staff worked on joint projects – in 1902, plans were made for a large scale textile commission 'owing to the energies of Miss Newill and of some of the students who are willingly seconding her'. Techniques utilised in

¹¹⁷ 'Some Experiments in Embroidery', *The Studio*, vol. 28, (1903), p.284.

¹¹⁸ Mrs H. Archibald, 'Embroidery and Tapestry Weaving', p.33 and p.42.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. p.34 and p.315.

¹²⁰ Programme session 1895-6 in BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 21st August, 1895.

¹²¹ Promotional leaflet for needlework classes issued by the BMSA, stating that classes were available for 'a) students who are making a serious study of art and who choose embroidery as craft in which they may work out designs of their own making ... they make drawings of birds, flowers and other natural objects with the view of introducing them into their embroidery ...' and 'b) students who have not time or inclination for designing but who wish for instruction in stitching and the arrangement of colours. For these students the study of fine periods of needlework and the copying of actual specimens constantly on loan from the V&A South Kensington are suggested. The syllabus also included ecclesiastical work, 'with the teacher fully trained in the embroidery school of the convent at Wantage'. In 1906, Miss A. Bridget Simpson was appointed to attend at the BMSA, without salary, on one day a week, from 10am to 1pm and from 2.30pm to 4.30pm 'to assist Miss Newill in the teachership of ecclesiastical embroidery'. See BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, June 13th, 1906. A year later in 1907, Miss Simpson was engaged at a salary of £20 per school year to teach ecclesiastical embroidery, with her employment commencing on May 1st, 1907. See BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, May 13th, 1907.

this commission would include lace, cross stitch and frame work with the design copied from a fifteenth century example.¹²²

The BMSA minute books record that in the 1905-6 session there were fourteen day students studying needlework, one student who attended both the day and evening classes and eleven evening students, giving a total of twenty-six students overall.¹²³ Numbers increased slightly the following year in the 1906-7 session to thirty students overall, including seventeen day students and thirteen in the evening. In 1902, the fees for needlework training at the BMSA were 50s. per term for twice weekly day classes in needlework taking place between 10am - 4.30pm on a Wednesday and Friday.¹²⁴ In 1906-08, the fees were 50s. per term of around twenty weeks for similar day classes, with a reduction to 15s. per term for employees who were already working in needlework, demonstrating a commitment from the BMSA to attract professionally employed students into the School to improve their skills. The evening class in needlework took place on Wednesday evenings between 7 - 9pm at a fee of 7s. 6d per term or 5s. for those pupils under eighteen years of age.¹²⁵

As discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, Mary Newill taught embroidery and managed the teaching provision for the subject at the BMSA, with assistance from other teachers working in a day and evening capacity.¹²⁶ But May Morris, a professional embroiderer and the youngest daughter of William Morris, also made an important and as yet unexplored contribution to the teaching of textiles and embroidery at the School. Her experience was considerable - at the age of twenty-three she had been given complete charge

¹²² BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, February 11th, 1902.

¹²³ Ibid., December 1st, 1906.

¹²⁴ Ibid., July 8th, 1902.

¹²⁵ Ibid., February 12th, 1907.

¹²⁶ BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 26th January, 1901, recorded that Mary Newill was asked to accept a salary of £75 per school year for teaching two day classes and generally supervising evening classes in needlework. In 1895, Mary Newill asked if she could be released from some of her teaching due to pressure of other work. She was teaching at the Central School for thirteen hours per week, eleven in the day time session and two in the evening at a salary of £70 per school year. The committee supported her request and Eunice Bloxcidge was employed to teach Mary's needlework for thirteen hours a week at a salary of £40 per school year whilst 'Miss Newill be appointed to devote four hours a week to generally supervising these classes'. As a comparison of women's teaching wages, the BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins April 7th, 1908 recorded that the salary of Mrs Moore, teacher of the evening embroidery class, be increased from £10 to £15 per school session.

of the Morris & Co. embroidery workshop and also produced many of its designs after 1881.¹²⁷ Surviving records at the BMSA show that May Morris's teaching relationship with the School appears to have lasted for almost a decade, from 1895 to 1904.¹²⁸ Being taught practical skills by May Morris and potentially being able to benefit from producing and selling work through her national network of Arts and Crafts Movement contacts must surely have had a positive affect on the work and professional prospects of young women training in embroidery and textiles at the BMSA.

Critical voices were favourable to the work produced by BMSA needlework students, for example in 1903 William Lethaby stated in his examiners report that the 'embroidery shown this year is very interesting, combining tradition with freshness and boldness of design with delicacy of detail.'¹²⁹

Students exhibited their work extensively at local, national and international exhibitions. For example, in 1893, The Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society exhibited a table centre design designed by Georgie Gaskin and executed by Alice Russell of the

¹²⁷ May Morris joined in the collective embroidery work in the Morris household together with her mother and older sister from a young age, so replicating the family-based medieval system of decorative arts work that her father admired and emulated. According to Anthea Callen, several women worked under the supervision of Morris or his wife Jane at Morris & Co. See A. Callen, *Women in the Arts and Crafts Movement*, p.106 and p.109.

¹²⁸ On the 9th July, 1895, May Morris was invited to give an illustrated lecture on medieval embroidery to selected students at the BMSA on a Thursday evening in the Autumn term of that year at a fee 'not exceeding £8 8 shillings'. The lecture was given on 10th October, 1895. See BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins 9th July, 1895 and 2nd August, 1895. Her professional relationship with the BMSA had become more formalised by 1899, when she was asked to provide six visits of two days each as a special teacher of needlework and to act as the examiner for the subject for the award of local prizes with a proposed payment of £18. 8s. See BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins July, 1899. In her reply to the School, she offered to give a lecture or class demonstration with blackboard and other illustrations and with museum specimens 'to do full justice to the subject, to the advantage of the students', at a cost of no more than £50. However, she eventually charged a fee of £75. See BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 11th August, 1899 and 10th October, 1899. In December 1899, it was announced that William Lethaby would be appointed alongside May Morris to examine the students' work in other advanced subjects, see BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, December 12th, 1899. May Morris also contributed to the pedagogic delivery of embroidery teaching at the BMSA by suggesting how the embroidery room could be improved by the addition of historical illustrations, including utilising photographs of fine historic embroidery held in the collection at the V&A. See letter dated 26th May, 1900 recorded in BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, June 14th, 1900. The formal teaching relationship with May Morris appears to have continued until the end of 1902, when a letter written by her from Orkney stated that 'being under Miss Newill's care the classes should need no further inspiration ... and at any time and as often as need be, if Miss Newill cares to consult me by letter at any point, I should be at her service.' She also offered to informally visit the school when in Birmingham. See BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, September 29th, 1902. May Morris visited the needlework classes in February 1904 and 'thoroughly inspected the students' work in conference with Miss Newill.' See BMSA Man Sub Comm Mins, February 9th, 1904.

¹²⁹ Proof copy of examiner's report for 1903 prize list, in BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, February 10th, 1903.

LangdaleLinen Industry - a philanthropic, professional collective established in 1885 in the Lake District that employed working class women to work in spinning, embroidery and lace making.¹³⁰ In 1904, two pieces of needlework executed by women students at the BMSA were requested through the Royal Commission to be shown at the St Louis International Exposition, where they won a Bronze Medal.¹³¹

Success in the National Competition in 1899 for student Mary Offlow Scattergood (known only as Offlow Scattergood in published references to her work in international journals such as *The Studio* and *The Artist*), led to a series of her designs for panels to be worked in embroidery being selected for international exhibition in Budapest.¹³² In the following year, a panel by Offlow Scattergood for a screen executed in needlework was selected for the Paris Exhibition of 1900, priced £2, whilst another female student, Mary Low, exhibited two panels executed in embroidery priced at £5.¹³³ In 1901, Mary Offlow Scattergood exhibited panel designs for embroidered three fold screens at the Birmingham Industrial Polytechnic Exhibition.¹³⁴

In common with the majority of women discussed in this thesis, Mary Offlow Scattergood was from a middle-class background. She was born in 1873 to James Scattergood, a manager of an iron works, and his wife Mary. In 1881, the family were living in West Bromwich where they remained whilst Mary was a student at the BMSA.¹³⁵ Given the limited evidence available, it is not possible to ascertain whether Mary Offlow

¹³⁰ Newspaper clipping (possibly from *The Birmingham Daily Post*) in BMSA Man Sub-Com Mins, 11th October, 1893; for a discussion of the Langdale Linen Industry see A. Callen, *Women in the Arts and Crafts Movement*, pp. 116-118.

¹³¹ Letter recorded in BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, November 22nd, 1904 from Colonel C.M. Watson, Commissioner General for Great Britain. The letter states that: 'the International Jury of Awards have awarded your exhibit a Bronze Medal in Group 58.'

¹³² BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 22nd September, 1899.

¹³³ Ibid. and BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 13th February 1900.

¹³⁴ The exhibition took place between August 26th and November 2nd 1901, see Catalogue of the Birmingham Industrial Polytechnic Exhibition, (August 26th to November 2nd, 1901).

¹³⁵ 1881 census (RG11/2852, p.60). Her father James Scattergood was a manager of an iron works, married to Mary Scattergood. Mary was listed as a scholar aged eight, the family were living at Beeches Road, West Bromwich. The 1891 census (RG12/2274, p.18), stated that James Scattergood was now a Justice of the Peace and his occupation was given as a manager of a nut and bolt works. Mary was eighteen years old and an art student. The family do not appear to have had servants. On the 1901 census (RG13/2725, p.18), Mary was aged twenty-eight and an art student. Her father was retired.

Scattergood continued to produce work professionally or whether she married, however she is documented as exhibiting eight works at the Birmingham Society of Artists between 1899 and 1908.¹³⁶

Mary Newill's professional stained-glass production and teaching at the BMSA has been discussed in previous chapters of this thesis, but she was working professionally and exhibiting in needlework concurrently with crafting commercial stained glass. Newill exhibited an embroidered panel at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society in 1893¹³⁷ and her work was praised alongside that of Anne MacBeth of Glasgow a decade later in 1903 at the Chester Arts and Crafts Exhibition.¹³⁸

Newill's documented needlework includes a decoration for an overmantle depicting Gareth and Lyonors which was produced with the assistance of Violet and Evelyn Holden. This piece was described by a contemporary critic as an 'arras like panel in needlework ... the scheme of the work is ambitious and scholarly, and involves a great deal of patient labour which has been conscientiously and intelligently done.'¹³⁹ In 1897, *Top o' the Hill*, the house of architect Edmund Butler (one half of the partnership Crouch and Butler, who were prominent Midlands Arts and Crafts architects associated with The Bromsgrove Guild) in Sutton Coldfield in Birmingham featured a set of large-scale embroideries designed by Mary Newill and executed by Newill and Eunice Bloxcidge, who was also trained at the BMSA. Entitled *The House of Holiness* and *The Wandering Wood*, with subjects taken from Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, these panels were worked in applique on linen using coloured silks.¹⁴⁰ A second set of these commissioned panels was displayed in a room featuring work

¹³⁶ J. Johnson and A. Greutzner, *The Dictionary of British Artists, 1880-1914*, (Antique Collectors Club, 1980), p.448. She also exhibited a casket at the Spring Exhibition at Leeds City Art Gallery in 1907, see exhibition catalogue (23rd February to 1st June 1907), and a casket at the Autumn Exhibition at the RBSA, 1906-1907.

¹³⁷ Newspaper clipping, possibly *The Birmingham Daily Post*, in BMSA Man Sub-Com Minutes, 11th October, 1893.

¹³⁸ 900 works were on show at the Exhibition. See 'Studio Talk, Liverpool', *The Studio*, vol. 29, (1903), p. 66.

¹³⁹ W. G. Townsend, 'Woven and Printed Fabrics, Wallpapers, Lace and Embroideries', *Modern Decorative Art in England Its Development and Characteristics*, vol. I, (London, 1922), p.27, illustrated p.180.

¹⁴⁰ Each panel measured seventy inches by thirty-six inches. Shown in situ in L. Parry, *Textiles of the Arts and Crafts Movement*, (London, 1988), p.78; also illustrated in A. Crawford, *By Hammer and Hand*, p.30 and p.33.

of The Bromsgrove Guild at the Paris Exhibition in 1900.¹⁴¹ This confirms that Mary Newill was producing fine quality, highly skilled domestic interior textile work for prominent and well-connected local members of The Arts and Crafts Movement in Birmingham. It also demonstrates her professional links with The Bromsgrove Guild through the exhibition of a set of the panels at such a prestigious international selling exhibition. Patrons purchased directly from these exhibitions – a selection of pieces in The Bromsgrove Guild’s room were the first pieces to be sold after the exhibition opened.¹⁴²

Information is extremely scarce about the rates of pay obtained by textile designers and makers in Birmingham such as Mary Newill and Mary Offlow Scattergood, however it is reasonable to assume that they charged on piece rates according to the individual commissions they produced. At a national level, and for basic information about piece rate charges for Arts and Crafts needlework, premium embroidery such as silk hangings retailed at Morris and Co. cost £50 per square yard. Morris also produced designs for Catherine Holliday (the wife of a life-long friend) on a commercial basis, whereby he produced the design and she executed the embroidery and chose the colours of the silks. Such textiles, which included coverlets, were labour-intensive and retailed for as much as £120. This part of the Morris & Co. textile enterprise also included cushion covers, which were cheaper.¹⁴³ The remuneration rates for women’s work at Morris & Co. were at similar levels. An ‘Orchard’ portiere designed by May Morris took around fourteen weeks work to complete and cost £48 when finished. For a ‘Kelmescott’ hanging with the embroidery alone taking twenty-four and a

¹⁴¹ See *Catalogue of the Paris Exhibition 1900*, p.136 and *The Studio Yearbook*, (1899-1900), pp. 186-188, illustrated p.190. In November 2012, one of the sets was offered for sale at www.hill-house.co.uk, reference SIMN8001. The Paris Exhibition of 1900 contained work by members of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, The Bromsgrove Guild and the British Royal Pavilion, which was organised by the chairman of the Royal Commission, Sir Isidore Spielman. Exhibits included interiors by Morris & Co. and stained glass by Burne-Jones in a Jacobean style Manor House designed by Edward Lutyens. See P. Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Exposition Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World’s Fairs, 1851-1939*, (Manchester, 1988), pp. 121-23.

¹⁴² An article in *The Birmingham Post*, May 23rd, 1900, stated that: ‘The Bromsgrove Guild exhibitors and furnishers in the Royal Pavilion of Great Britain, are informed by the secretary of the Royal Commission that they have the unique distinction of making the first sale in the Exhibition, the Director of the National Art Museum at Vienna purchasing the candelabra and electric fittings in the South-East bedroom.’

¹⁴³ A. Callen, *Women in the Arts and Crafts Movement*, p.109, quoting B. Morris, *Victorian Embroidery*, (London, 1962), p.100.

half weeks, a worker known only as 'L.Y.' received £3.7s. 6d. for two and a half weeks work; 'E.W.' received £7. 8s. for eight weeks work and 'M.D.' £12. 5s. for fourteen weeks work.¹⁴⁴ These were above average salaries given that the average weekly wage for working class women in 1891-92 was 11s. 5d. and as a comparison to other trades discussed in this thesis, jewellery and watchmaking, which paid 12s. 2d. a week.¹⁴⁵ The demographic background of the women working at Morris and Co. is unclear, but the nature of their work necessitated highly developed technical skills regardless of their social class.

As a guide to remuneration rates for women who worked freelance as textile designers/makers for companies and clients rather than charging piece rates per item, staff at the Royal School of Art Needlework in London who taught and worked at the school were paid wages that 'varied from tenpence an hour for the most skilled work to fourpence an hour for the least skilled.'¹⁴⁶ Thus, Callen states, 'wages for a seven hour, five day week would have amounted to £3 10s. for the most skilled, down to £1 8s. for the least skilled, making their income greatly above the national average and above even the highly-paid Morris and Co. embroiderers.'¹⁴⁷

In the final chapter of this thesis, I have examined the opportunities that were available to women who had undertaken Executed Design training at the BMSA in the fields of painting, book illustration, illumination and textiles and who wanted or needed to sell their work. The women discussed in this chapter had clearly recognised the need for professional training in order to attain higher level design and technical skills, which enabled them to create fine quality, desirable products in the Arts and Crafts style. As one critic commented: 'Another great handicap to advancement in these crafts is the remarkable difficulty in making

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p101; recorded in the embroidery section of the firm's day book in the V&A, for a discussion see *ibid.*, p110.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, quoting G. H. Wood, 'The Course of Women's Wages During The Nineteenth Century', in A. Harrison and B. Hutchins, *History of Factory Legislation*, (London, 1893), appendix, p.65.

¹⁴⁶ *The Magazine of Art*, 1882, in *ibid.*, p.101 from B. Morris, *Victorian Embroidery*, (London, 1962), p.115.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p101.

women fully realise the absolute necessity for a thorough training in drawing and design if they intend to take up the work as a permanent means of earning a living.’¹⁴⁸

The examples of work created by the women presented in the chapter also confirm a point made by Charles Ashbee, one of the great luminaries of The Arts and Crafts Movement, when he stated in Birmingham in 1890 that ‘there was no doubt that with the increasing wealth of the community there was a large demand for handmade articles ... not only was there pleasure in cultivating the tastes of those who were engaged in the work, but there was an outlet for the work itself.’¹⁴⁹ However, a perspective that women were freely producing handmade Arts and Crafts Movement textiles and book illustration in subject matters of their choice for enlightened middle class patrons and commercial publishers is too simplistic. The work of the women presented in this chapter has raised several problematic issues.

The first concerns women who were producing needlework. This was arguably the most widespread professional craft opportunity for women working in the Arts and Crafts style given its socially acceptable status as ‘women’s work’, its minimal start-up costs for a small business and the fact that it could be undertaken from home. As evidenced in this chapter, there was a rise in the numbers of women in Birmingham who were advertising themselves as professional art needlewomen during the period 1885-1915. The Arts and Crafts Movement had raised the status of needlework as a profession through the work of William Morris and May Morris at Morris and Co., so the work that Mary Newill and her colleagues were producing at the BMSA would arguably have been considered high status work. These textile products, along with hand printed books, paintings and hand decorated furniture undoubtedly became desirable and luxurious commodities within the proliferation and dissemination of the Arts and Crafts style in middle-class households in Birmingham. However, as Callen pertinently reminds us: ‘while artistic embroidery provided large

¹⁴⁸ W. G. Townsend, *Modern Decorative Art in England*, p.10.

¹⁴⁹ Charles Ashbee address at an early meeting of TBGH, reported in *The Birmingham Daily Post*, (September 27th, 1890), contained in TBGH Comm Mins; Register of Members Archives 11R29 450349, (two volumes bound as one).

numbers of ladies with a means to independence, laudable in itself, nevertheless the nature and practice of the work reinforced traditional, oppressive notions about women, channelling them into socially acceptable and therefore narrow and conservative patterns of work and so of self-identity.’¹⁵⁰

The second issue is that in the fields of book illustration, painting and illumination, women were in the main remaining at home, so in a socially acceptable space, to undertake paid work. Creating book illustration, painting and illumination from home rather than working from commercial premises may have been considered more acceptable to some women and the male members of their families.

Thirdly, this chapter has shown that women in Birmingham were working as miniature painters (which was perceived as requiring a delicate, dainty touch); were seemingly confined with few exceptions to producing illustrations of fairy tale and nursery subjects for published books, so reflecting popular stereotypes of women’s primary role as wives and mothers; and were painting landscapes and subjects from literature and medieval legends as opposed to grand narrative history paintings, traditionally the preserve of professional male artists. As the feminist art historian Deborah Cherry has stated: ‘shaped in and by the social formation of sexual difference women forged feminine professional identities and differentiated ways of working.’¹⁵¹ As an example of this within this study, despite her success in illustrated book publishing, Georgie Gaskin’s books were published in the name of Mrs Arthur Gaskin – clearly identifying her as a married woman. As Callen pertinently states: ‘As with so many instances of women in this period involved in husband and wife craft production teams, it is impossible to assess how and in what direction a particular woman’s creativity would have developed had she been working for herself.’¹⁵²

The social and personal tensions that professional women artists and designers in

¹⁵⁰ A. Callen, *Women in the Arts and Crafts Movement*, p.127.

¹⁵¹ D. Cherry, *Painting Women*, London, p.9.

¹⁵² A. Callen, *Women in the Arts and Crafts Movement*, p.183.

Birmingham may have encountered when negotiating the public and private worlds of the city is worthy of further investigation.

Finally, the evidence presented in this chapter, although limited due to a lack of surviving source material, has also pointed to the fact that some single women without a private or inherited income who wanted or needed to work to support themselves required two or more sources of employment. Ivy Harper for example supplemented her earnings from teaching art and design with a second income from practical art and/or design. Women without a private income who were able to fully support themselves in a self-employed capacity in painting, textiles, book illustration or illumination remain elusive.

CONCLUSION

‘We are unanimous in deploring that we have given to masses of men and women an art education of which the majority are unable to make any practical use.’

Walter Sickert, 'Mural Decoration', *The English Review*, 1912.

In 1912, the prominent British artist and designer Walter Sickert lamented the fact that in his opinion, a great number of men and women receiving an art education had been unable to make practical use of their skills.¹ Throughout this thesis, I have argued that a number of women students at the BMSA were able to utilise their Executed Design training to run their own businesses producing decorative arts products in the Arts and Crafts style, to work self-employed from home producing a range of artistic goods, or in some cases to move out of unskilled employment involving monotonous, repetitive tasks to gain highly-skilled jobs in industry. The importance of Executed Design training at the BMSA as a crucial factor in their success should take its rightful place within the wider historiography of The Arts and Crafts Movement and in the history of education as a whole, and I hope that this thesis has gone some way towards achieving this.

My primary research aim in this thesis was to rediscover the lives of women working in The Arts and Crafts Movement in Birmingham and the West Midlands, utilising a range of unresearched primary sources and relevant contemporary secondary sources such as trade directories, decorative arts magazines and newspapers. The primary resources have included records in art galleries and museums, Birmingham and Sandwell local archives, direct correspondence with surviving family members and the BMSA archive itself. I have also utilised the Census of England Wales between 1871 and 1911; births, marriages and deaths records and probate records.

¹ W. Sickert, 'Mural Decoration', *The English Review*, (July 1912), p.645.

When I commenced my research, the names of Fanny Bunn, Gertrude Connoly, Helen Brightwell, Florence Rudland, Frances Sanderson and their colleagues who trained at the BMSA were nothing more than names attached to images of fine quality Arts and Crafts jewellery, enamels, stained glass, textiles and book illustrations in the pages of contemporary nineteenth and early twentieth century periodicals and newspapers. By the end of my study, the lives, education, working practices and professional output of these women had emerged from surviving primary and secondary sources. I hope that these rediscovered women's lives will provide a new perspective on the history of the decorative arts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Britain.

I believe that this interdisciplinary thesis has made a considerable contribution to five areas of history. The first is to the industrial and artistic history of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Birmingham. The second is to the historiography of business women in Britain in the same period. The third is to the art and design historiography of The Arts and Crafts Movement as whole, where, as I have argued previously in this thesis, women have remained largely invisible. The fourth is to the history of education. This thesis has also made a contribution to the broader historiography of nineteenth and early twentieth century economic history by providing a more nuanced picture of women workers and their rates of pay in British art and design industries.

What conclusions can be drawn about my research in each of these five areas? Whilst it is possible to summarise my key findings, my research has raised a number of questions that require further investigation.

Firstly, what contribution has my work made to the industrial and artistic history of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Birmingham? The work of the 'Birmingham Group' of artists and painters in the city has been recognised through a small number of scholarly publications and exhibitions over the last thirty years, but these have mainly drawn attention to the work of male artists and designers such as Joseph Southall and Arthur Gaskin. My

research has shown that women made a considerable contribution to art and design in Birmingham during the time period. At the same time, through focusing on the BMSA, a municipally funded institution that was at the heart of cultural life in the city, I have shown that women were able to utilise the unique training at the School to obtain skilled, professional employment in art and design or set up in business on their own account.

One of the most interesting questions that has recurred during the course of this research, and which is not yet answered in full, is whether Birmingham throughout the time period was unique in offering such opportunities to women. The value of skilled work for women was recognised by Birmingham City Council in 1914, in a publication outlining trades for women and girls in the city. It openly acknowledged that:

‘The value of an occupation both from the pecuniary and the educational point of view, depends largely on the amount of skill it entails ... the more girls wish for skilled work, and are ready to be trained, the more skilled trades are likely to flourish in the City ... we want to teach our girls to like responsibility, and to prefer work involving skill, and then the way will be open for the free development of many of our more highly skilled trades.’²

The interplay between opportunities for women to undertake skilled work or set up in business in art and design, Birmingham's artistic and cultural life, the BMSA's municipal funding and Birmingham's liberal status as a city, requires further investigation.

A further issue that has been raised in this thesis and that requires more detailed research is the contribution of regional philanthropy to the BMSA's success. Many of the women I have presented in this thesis received scholarships to assist with their fees at the School or fund their education completely for periods of time. The majority of the scholarships at the BMSA were funded through donations from representatives of local industry or wealthy Birmingham industrialists, and their contribution to the success of the women presented in this thesis through supporting their education in Executed Design would be a useful future

²*Birmingham Trades for Women and Girls*, City of Birmingham Education Committee, Central Care Committee, (1914), pp. 5-6.

study. Likewise, more detailed research combining the extant registers at the BMSA, scholarship lists and census research could reveal more working-class women who were able to attend the BMSA or the Vittoria Street School for Jewellers through scholarships and become successful professional designers, as in the case of Caroline 'Carrie' Copson.

What contribution has my research made to the existing historiography of business women in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Britain? As demonstrated in Chapter One of this thesis, women's work in the nineteenth century has been an increasing field of historical investigation over the last thirty years. However, the contribution of women working professionally in art and design in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has remained virtually unexamined, apart from through the small number of studies discussed in this thesis. My work has therefore contributed to and deepened the history of women working professionally in art and design.

The majority of the women I have presented in this thesis were middle-class, so my study has demonstrated that middle-class status could be compatible with female economic activity in The Arts and Crafts Movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and by extension, women's business activity as a whole. The evidence, although limited, suggests that these women in Birmingham were economically astute in understanding the value of their work in the decorative arts market. I have also provided evidence to show that these women had the marketing acumen to sell their products. Through the case studies presented in this thesis, I have demonstrated that they were applying the same advertising and marketing strategies as male designers and artisans to make customers aware of their work. These women were also able to negotiate their position in the public sphere, for example through exhibiting extensively at local, national and international Arts and Crafts Movement exhibitions, regardless of their gender. I have argued throughout this thesis that presenting their work at these exhibitions was crucial to their success in marketing their products to artistically aware, middle-class patrons. As *The Magazine of Art* stated in 1890: 'The

exhibition at the New Gallery is just as much a commercial institution as is Mr Liberty's over the way. It makes no appeal to the 'worker' it merely hopes to attract the attention of the middle class plutocrat.'³

My research has also provided details of the locations where women were carrying out their professional art and design practice. Mary Newill, Florence Stern and Kate Eadie for example were working from business premises in the commercial centre of Birmingham. However, women such as Helen Brightwell who were working independently in workshops attached to their homes should not necessarily be viewed as working within an extended domestic environment, so confirming existing stereotypes of late nineteenth century women's work. Economic factors may have been involved in their choice to work from home. Male Arts and Crafts Movement jewellers such as George Hunt in Harborne in Birmingham also worked from home-based workshops. Such enterprises reflected the tradition of Birmingham's jewellery industry as a whole, whereby family businesses operated from workshops attached to the home. This gave small enterprises low start-up and running costs by alleviating the necessity to rent commercial spaces.

The research undertaken for this thesis has provided glimpses of larger business history narratives that require further research, for example the career of Gertrude M. Hart, who left her scholarship at the BMSA in January 1906 to establish a design studio in London.⁴ Given greater surviving records, the relationship between women working professionally in a business partnership such as GertudeConnoly and Florence Stern could also be analysed in greater depth.

I believe that this thesis has made a substantial contribution to the historiography of the British Arts and Crafts Movement. The substantial amount of new data on women's economic activity and output within The Movement in this thesis has demonstrated that they made an important contribution to it both locally and nationally, and that they did this across several

³ 'Review of the third exhibition of the Arts and Crafts Society', *The Magazine of Art*, (October 1890), p.5.

⁴ BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, January 9th, 1906.

highly-skilled design mediums and with a publically visible presence. Florence Camm and Mary Newill in particular have emerged as key figures in The Arts and Crafts Movement through my work, and there is much potential for future research on the individual careers and professional output of these two women.

This thesis has also uncovered previously unknown connections between the BMSA and key figures in the national Arts and Crafts Movement, including William Morris, Sir Edward Burne-Jones, Robert Catterson-Smith, and William Lethaby. In the context of women in The Arts and Crafts Movement, however, the most important of these connections is that of May Morris and the BMSA. I have demonstrated her professional links with the BMSA and its women students through her longstanding connection to the school as a teacher of embroidery, and by extension opened up a further potential area of new scholarship - that of the Arts and Crafts Movement and education.

Another glimpse of a larger, currently hidden, narrative within the Arts and Crafts Movement that has emerged from this thesis is the possibility that women such as Helen Brightwell who were working independently in home-based workshops, were providing enamelling for William Haseler's Liberty & Co. jewellery and metalwork venture. Pending further research however, this hypothesis must remain a tantalising possibility.

This thesis has also contributed to the history of education, through highlighting the importance of Edward Taylor's unique Executed Design method. Taylor has emerged as an important, innovative and in some ways provocative figure in nineteenth and early twentieth century art education and The Arts and Crafts Movement. Other than Roy Hartnell's thesis on Taylor in 1976,⁵ little scholarship has been produced about his life, work and pedagogic practice and there is certainly scope for more detailed research about his pioneering educational system which has been largely forgotten today.

⁵ R. Hartnell, *E.R. Taylor*, unpublished MA Thesis, (Royal College of Art, 1976).

This thesis is a local study, and is thus limited by its regional sources as well as the limited time span of my research. However, my investigations have provided a glimpse of a potentially rich picture of women who trained at other provincial art schools that followed the example of Taylor's Executed Design training and who were able to use these skills to work professionally. Editorials, reviews and photographs of work featured in the pages of *The Studio Magazine* throughout the time span of my study suggest that women in cities including Manchester, Nottingham, Glasgow, and Sheffield were also producing fine quality decorative arts products in the Arts and Crafts style and offering them for sale. Further regional research could confirm, therefore, whether Birmingham was an anomaly, or whether much larger numbers of women were working professionally in The Arts and Crafts Movement in cities across the United Kingdom.

In addition, a larger, gender neutral study could examine the work of both male and female designers receiving an Executed Design training at the BMSA, which could lead to an even richer picture of The Arts and Crafts Movement on a regional level and by extension as a whole.

To conclude, ultimately, I believe that the identity of the Birmingham women as Arts and Crafts practitioners superseded their identity as women. They succeeded in their careers not because they were exceptional in following masculine business behaviours but because they had the right practical skills, business acumen and market insight and the opportunity and desire to utilise these skills in professional employment or in their own business enterprises. Their ability to do so was underpinned by the training in Executed Design that they received at the BMSA, the first municipal school of art in Britain. George Frampton, an Associate of the Royal Academy, wrote to the Management Sub-Committee in December, 1898. He said: (I am) 'congratulating you as well as the city of Birmingham on the unique achievements of your School under the able guidance of Mr Taylor, it is the School that has done more for the Decorative Arts than any other in the country and those that have studied there have turned

out to be some of the most serious workers of my acquaintance in the art world'.⁶ This thesis has begun to tell the previously untold story of the serious women workers who trained at The Birmingham Municipal School of Art.

⁶ Letter from George Frampton, A.R.A., 13th December, 1898, contained in BMSA Man Sub-Comm Mins, 13th December, 1898.

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