REFRAMING ANNA ANCHER:
DANISH SYMBOLIST, MODERNIST
AND INDEPENDENT ARTIST

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation reframes the Danish artist Anna Ancher (1859-1935) by expanding the context in which the artist has been considered, to position her as a Symbolist, modernist and independent artist. A revered and familiar artist in Denmark, most scholars discuss her paintings in association with the development of the art colony in Skagen, an important site of Denmark's Modern Breakthrough in the 1880s. The represented image of Ancher in paintings by male colonists during this period indicated her centrality within the group, depicted her as a fashionable bourgeois wife and respectable mother, but simultaneously neglected to reference the development of her professional practice. By 1889, Ancher had sold major paintings and gained national and international recognition. Michael Ancher's portrait of his wife in reform dress in *Coming Home from Market* (1902) signifies her freedom from conventional gender roles.

Despite her affiliation with the Skagen colony, Ancher matured as a painter during the 1890s after its heyday. At this time Danish Symbolism and Vitalism came to eclipse the Naturalist orientation of the prior decade. The painter's study in Paris in 1889 and her contacts in cosmopolitan Copenhagen forged an avant-garde network that in many ways referenced, but also resisted, movements from the urban French center. An aesthetic that draws from the ostensibly contradictory and divergent ideas of Charles Baudelaire, Hans Christian Andersen and Friedrich Nietzsche can be found in Ancher's painting, positioning her alongside other Danish Symbolists. Ancher was also a native of the Jutland peninsula, which experienced the growth of pietist movements and major shifts impacting agricultural labor. Ancher's paintings of religion and harvest at the

beginning of the twentieth century challenged contemporary French primitivist images of Breton peasants, especially those of Paul Gauguin. After 1900, Ancher's increasingly abstract paintings of unoccupied interiors reflect the complex modernist shift in valuation of the dwelling and a new emphasis on minimal decoration and strong planar surfaces in the home as conducive to physical and psychological health. In her paintings of her own studio, Ancher challenged normative gendered divisions in the organization of the home and asserted her identity as an autonomous artist.

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, William A. Price,

with thanksgiving for his encouragement and patience.

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INTRODUCTION: THE FRAME

Despite the differences between her early and late work, scholarly assessment of Danish painter Anna Brøndum Ancher (1859-1935) focuses narrowly between the years 1880 when she was twenty-one and 1900, just after she turned forty. This narrow lens distorts her artistic development and masks the ways in which her painting participated in the emergence of modernism, her relationship to avant-garde movements and the relevance of regional sociopolitical issues that were at odds with abstraction. Through shifts in emphasis and manipulations of composition, color and material, her initial verisimilitude yielded to a remarkable manifestation of mood. By World War I Ancher's paintings represent an alternate haven, protected from modern stresses and stripped of bourgeois signifiers. Her paintings of Skagen convey faith, labor, health and vitality as attributes of a vanishing rural existence, from a uniquely proximate and indigenous female perspective. These works suggest her resistance to primitivist visual appropriations by outsiders. This dissertation argues that like her contemporaries, Ancher sought to express universal and enduring ideals, and did so by drawing on local sources and asserting independence in her style.

As Chapter One demonstrates, even painted representations of Ancher between her professional debut in 1880 and the beginning of the twentieth century, indicate that the painter challenged expectations for married women of her class as she successfully negotiated a career as an artist. Chapter Two details Ancher's professional stay in Paris in 1889, an experience which supplemented her exposure to avant-garde discourse and art-making in Copenhagen, and which connected the painter to other Scandinavians, both Symbolists and women artists. Although Ancher never returned to Paris, French

Symbolism and the writings of Charles Baudelaire figured prominently in Danish periodicals and exhibitions in the early 1890s. As Chapter Three indicates, Ancher's paintings of the 1890s showed leanings toward this avant-garde movement, but were more inflected with the ideals of the Danish author Hans Christian Andersen and with Vitalism, associated with Friedrich Nietzsche. Chapter Four addresses primitivism in her paintings at the turn of the century in relation to Symbolists Paul Gauguin (1848-1903), Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) and the Danish painters Laurits Andersen Ring (1854-1933) and Harald Slott-Møller (1864-1937). Finally, Ancher's empty interiors have important parallels to the ostensibly unrelated increase in activist agitation for women's rights activism and the functionalist architecture during the period prior to World War I.

Skagen Art Colony

Skagen is located at the northern tip of the Jutland Peninsula at a confluence of currents in the Denmark Straits where the waters from the North Sea meet the Baltic Sea. Skagen's economy of independent fishermen, who supplemented their income through shipwreck rescue operations, experienced the dislocation from commercial fishing by 1900. Despite a maritime economy, Skagen was more closely linked with the rest of the Jutland Peninsula than urban Copenhagen. Geographic differences in the late nineteenth century significantly divided agricultural Jutland from mercantile Copenhagen, which had a distinct imperial naval history and greater industrialization than the rest of Denmark.[1] In the 1890s, however, Skagen experienced further dramatic change with the

[1] Kenneth R. Olwig, "Danish Landscapes" in *Nordic Landscapes: Region and Belonging on the Northern Edge of Europe,* by Michael Jones and Kenneth R. Olwig (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 4-5Olwig, "Danish Landscapes," 4-5.

rise of tourism; new hotels, international urban, bourgeois visitors, and bathers transformed its beaches and character.[2]

Anna Brøndum, Peder Severin Krøyer (1851-1909) and Michael Ancher (1849-1927) were founding and central members of the Skagen Art Colony that emerged in the mid-1870s and peaked in the 1880s. Brøndum (later Ancher) was the only native resident to also be considered a colonist and her family owned and operated the group's unofficial headquarters, the Brøndum Inn. Her brother Degn became innkeeper following her father's death in 1874, and her mother and two unmarried sisters prepared meals and oversaw hospitality services for guests, including the artists. At its heyday, the fluctuating colony of Scandinavian artists and writers included most prominently Norwegian Christian Krohg (1852-1925), Holger Drachmann (1846-1908) and critic and curator Karl Madsen (1855-1938).

Anna Brøndum met her future husband, Michael Ancher, when she was only fourteen and he was a twenty-four year-old art student on a trip to the Jutland coast to find picturesque motifs. She married him on the day she turned twenty-one. After settling in Skagen, Michael's reputation and income came from his paintings of local fishermen dressed in oilcloth and hip waders, and other "authentic" representations of rural life on the coast. His representations of Skagen residents, painted on the heroic scale of history paintings, became a sort of early trademark for the art colony in the 1880s. This genre lingered as part of Denmark's cultural heritage, long after modern fishing techniques, railroads and harbors rendered beach fishing and rowboat rescue operations obsolete.

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[2] See for instance, Patricia G Berman, "Skagen: A Tale of a Beach." *Scandinavian Review* 91, no. 2 (2003): 30-41.

Mette Bøgh Jensen's *At male sit privatliv* [To Paint One's Private Life] situates Skagen within the art colony movement.[3] By 1900, Skagen grew as an important art center hosting a number of auctions and exhibits. Plans to create the Skagens Museum began before 1920, largely promoted by artists like Michael Ancher who were part of the colonial origins. Newcomers, however, participated in competing avant-garde cultural movements from Copenhagen and actively explored Symbolism and Vitalism in music and art. Painter Jens Ferdinand Willumsen (1863-1958) was among Skagen's summer visitors, while holiday residents included Ancher's friend, sculptor Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen (1863-1945), a member of the art opposition and an activist to promote professional opportunities and education for women artists, along with her husband, composer Carl Nielsen (1865-1931). These artists, who traveled, performed and exhibited internationally and in Copenhagen, are part of the wider context in which Anna Ancher must be considered.

Art in Denmark: Women, Exhibition and Opposition

Ancher stands out for the respect she earned as a female artist during her lifetime. Only a handful of women could be designated "Skagen painters" and of those Ancher alone continued to produce, exhibit and sell her canvases throughout her life. Denmark was further behind Paris as women were not accepted to the Academy until 1888 and

[3]See for example, Mette Bøgh Jensen, *At male sit privatliv: Skagensmalernes selviscenesættelse* (Skagen: Skagens Museum, 2005). Both Brian Dudley Barrett and Nina Lübbren identified parallel responses to shared stimuli and a fair amount of intersection between art colonies through associations, collegial visits and tourism. Brian Dudley Barrett, *Artists on the Edge: The Rise of Coastal Artists' Colonies, 1880-1920* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010) and Nina Lübbren, *Rural Artists' Colonies in Europe, 1870-1910* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001).

even then had considerable restrictions on their studies and exhibition.[4] Ancher's earliest instruction came from the male art students who visited Skagen in the 1870s, Madsen and Michael Ancher.

The most important Danish galleries and exhibition venues were located in Copenhagen, especially the Kunstakademiet (Royal Academy), the Kunstforeningen (Art Society), a private dealer, Kleis Kunsthandel, and after 1891, Den Frie Udstilling (The Free Exhibition), discussed in Chapter Two. The Royal Academy operated on a French model, hosting official juried exhibitions, controlling access to art education, credentialing artists and offering stipends for study in Rome. Anna Ancher entered its prestigious annual spring salon at Charlottenborg for the first time in 1880, earning acclaim for *Old Man*. Ancher's contemporaries of the Skagen art colony, including Madsen, Krøyer and Viggo Johansen (1851-1935), led the challenge against the Academy's grip on art training and exhibition.

The Art Society brought together professors, artists with a general audience interested in art in order to promote education and public awareness.[5] From its founding

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[4] John Milner, *The Studios of Paris: The Capital of Art in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 153-7; Barbara Sjoholm, "What We Want: The Art of Marie Luplau and Emilie Mundt," *Feminist Studies* 35, no. 3 (Fall 2009), 565, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40608391. John Milner based his assessment of Paris's inequalities on the reminiscences of Shirley Fox, *An Art Student's Reminiscences of Paris in the Eighties* (London, 1909). He also claims that Ancher's Ukrainian born contemporary, Marie Bashkirtseff (1860-1884) noted the lack of influence and opportunity of women in the 1870s and 1880s in the Salon and the Academy in Paris. In Denmark, according to Sjoholm, "The women didn't get the same preparatory classes as the male students, so they had to come with the basics already in hand. Their classes were taught by two teachers, painter Viggo Johansson [sic] and sculptor Augustus Saabye, both of whom were paid less than they would have been if they'd been teaching in the Art Academy, and who remained untitled- no "professor of art" for them. The school had the use of three rooms in the part of the large building on Amaliegade, which also housed the Charlottenborg Exhibition, a large annual juried show that ran for some months in the spring. That meant that the Women's Art School was only able to offer classes from the first of October to mid-March—or only about four months out of the year, given the Christmas break-because their rooms were needed for the Charlottenborg Exhibition."

[5] Helle Berhrndt, foreword to *Det gode selskab: Kunstforeningens historier 1825-2000* by Flemming Friborg (Denmark: Gyldendal, 2000),8, in English, 193.

in 1825, it mounted between three and five exhibitions a year. The Art Society's board and juries at the end of the nineteenth century balanced Academy leaders and opposition painters. In contrast to the Academy, the Art Society more frequently promoted new trends, whether the Skagen painters in the 1880s or later, the more expressionist and abstract paintings of Edvard Weie (1879-1943).[6] The society also offered forums, competitions, and commissions, in order to facilitate and expand the network of art distribution.[7] By 1900, male painters in Anna Ancher's generation and circle held its key critical and administrative positions and even former Symbolist radicals by 1910 regularly served executive functions. No women served on the jury or board during Anna Ancher's lifetime.[8]

Michael Ancher's Authoritative Voice

The historical record for Anna Ancher and the Skagen colony derives from Michael Ancher's written diaries and notebooks.[9] He and Krøyer were also prolific correspondents who additionally represented Anna and the colonists in widely reproduced paintings. Their words and images have eclipsed Anna Ancher's own voice in defining her history for subsequent generations of chroniclers and scholars. The public has only limited access to her correspondence. The Ancher's unmarried daughter, the painter Helga Ancher (1883-1964), willed to Denmark the contents of her parent's house

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[6] Berhrndt, foreword to *Det gode selskab: Kunstforeningens historier 1825-2000*, 8-9.

[7] Flemming Friborg, *Det gode selskab: Kunstforeningens historier 1825-2000* (Denmark: Gyldendal, 2000), 195.

[8] Friborg, *Det gode selskab: Kunstforeningens historier 1825-2000*, 195, 350-61. Examples Ludvig Find (1869-1945) and Gad F. Clement (1867-1933).

[9] Thesis of Mette Bøgh Jensen, *At male sit privatliv: Skagensmalernes selviscenesættelse* (Skagen: Skagens Museum, 2005). This idea is discussed below.

including furniture, sketches, and fifty-six volumes of documents and letters. Her restrictive legacy conditions, unfortunately, still impede independent scholarly review of both Anna's own responses to the events and ideas of her day. The forthcoming editions of the Michael and Anna Ancher letters in 2014 by Elisabeth Fabritius, who has custodial privileges for the collection, should prompt a revision of scholarship. The issue of access is significant. Even the Michael and Anna Ancher House museum, for which Fabritius sits on the board, indicated in its 2010 guide that researchers were *still* in the process of cataloguing over fifty years after the execution of the will.[10]

Two chapters in Bøgh Jensen's 2005 book, *To Paint One's Private Life*, hinge on the role of Michael Ancher and P. S. Krøyer in fabricating myths and stereotypes and how their anecdotes have formed the basis for the storytelling that has been a large part of the Skagen painters' history. Michael Ancher's notebooks and papers constitute the most important primary source, according to Bøgh Jensen, for all subsequent narratives about the Skagen art colony. [11] Historical reliance on Michael's accounts creates a similar methodological problem to what Griselda Pollock and Deborah Cherry identified for the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, whereby disproportionate and distorted influence is accorded to the writings of William Michael Rossetti, the brother-in-law of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The texts are, "historically mediated," yet scholars confer on them authoritative status as primary source documents. Pollock and Cherry explain that "several

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[10] Helga Ancher's gift restrictions require written permission from the guardian, Elisabeth Fabritus to use the volumes of letters housed at the Royal Library in Copenhagen, according to email from Yvonne Bang, 13 September 2013. Most of Ancher's drawings are also part of this legacy and due to the timing of a planned expansion of Skagens Museum and Fabritius' personal publication deadline I was unable to get access to their archival holdings and relied on published materials.

[11] Jensen, "Kunstnermyter og kunstnerstereotyper" and "Storytelling: Anekdotens rolle I skagensmalernes historie," in *At male sit privatliv,* 37-63.

interlocking claims" allow W. M. Rossetti to assert his "authority": "As author he claims the power to speak truth, because he was there; he positions himself as a participant and an eye-witness who provides direct, personal knowledge of people and events."[12] Jensen has exhaustively documented that Michael Ancher's notebooks operated equivalently. Jensen likewise raises similar issues about validity from the overreliance on Ancher's text in subsequent scholarship. She does not, however, point out that Anna Ancher's art and role as a cultural commentator have been generally inflected and interpreted by biased male sources.

Michael's judgments also bind the Michael and Anna Ancher House museum. Although paintings that hang there offer a glimpse into the collecting practices and the taste of the artist couple, one gleans from the catalogue Michael's decisive role in the decoration. One reads of his foraging practices in repurposing doors and trim found in an old house in the district. *Michael Ancher* obtained the doors, *he* installed them, and *he* "decorated the panels of the doors with paintings of birds he had brought home from his shooting excursions."[13] The guide makes little attempt to glean evidence of difference between the occupants. Michael Ancher even dominates the portrait matrix in the entry room, having executed thirteen of the fifteen testaments to friendship. Curator Jan Zibrandtsen suggests that the museum collection as an ensemble on display is a permanent, fixed record immortalizing the family's life together. He describes the Skagen

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[12] Deborah Cherry and Griselda Pollock, "Women as Sign in Pre-Raphaelite Literature: the Representation of Elizabeth Siddall." Reprinted in Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 1988), 99. Cherry and Pollock challenge the evidentiary reliability of these documents on p. 100 and also situate this type of writing within the genre of artist biography that was popular in the nineteenth century. They find that the reality of Elisabeth Siddall (1829-1862) as an individual and producer is obscured in W. M. Rossetti-based texts on the Pre-Raphaelites.

[13] Inge Mejer Antonsen, "Michael and Anna Ancher's House," in *Michael and Anna Ancher's House* (Skagen: Helga Anchers Fond, 2010), 10. Emphasis added.

house museum as a "richly faceted casket that is unaffected by the swirl of time, has been preserved and has now been opened to the public. In fact it seems as if one were calling on the famous couple while they were still alive."[14] He calls us to accept the display as unchanged and authoritative. Yet there is little effort to discern in the physical evidence discrete traces of a partnership between two unique individuals. The unit is presented as inviolable.

The two male artists Krøyer and Ancher have exerted disproportionate control over the gaze and therefore in constructing the frame for Anna, a distortion that is also impacted by cultural shifts. Culture, gender, age and a narrow definition of modernism have slanted our view. Chapter One of this dissertation examines the framework constructed by Krøyer and Michael Ancher's visual representations of Anna Ancher, a project that complements and complicates Jensen's scholarship pointing to the bias resulting from overreliance on Michael's papers. Michael Ancher's dominant voice in the scholarship obscures Anna Ancher's complex painterly development subsequent to the period of the 1890s and her significant contextual relations beyond Skagen and the artists of the Modern Breakthrough. For instance, even knowledgeable and thoughtful scholars minimize the degree and importance of Anna Ancher's association with Copenhagen and international publications, movements, artists and exhibitions. Fabritius and Annette Johansen assert that the Anchers lived "only a few short years" in their winter residence in the capital, but according to their chronology, the couple purchased the apartment at

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[14] Jan Zibrandtsen, "Michael and Anna Ancher and their Art Collection," in *Michael and Anna Ancher's House* (Skagen: Helga Anchers Fond, 2010), 18.

Amalievej No. 6 (later No. 10) in 1899 and retained ownership through 1913.[15] Photographs at the Royal Library provide a small glimpse of their life in the city. Letters to their friend Ida Suhr show that even when Michael Ancher became ill with attacks of arthritis, they continued to spend a considerable part of the year in the capital. As Vibeke Sandby observes, "Copenhagen was for Anna and Michael Ancher not only a city of celebrations. They also came to keep current with the art exhibitions and in the actual discussions about the modern art, which bred many opinions in the years around 1900."[16] Chapter Two explores the multiple intersecting networks forged in both Copenhagen and Paris to give more depth and breadth to the contextual setting of Ancher's art.

Naturalism: The Modern Breakthrough

Nearly all historians subsume individual qualities of Anna Ancher's work into the overall achievement of the Skagen art colony as part of the Modern Breakthrough. The Modern Breakthrough of the 1880s refers to a Naturalist and Realist countercurrent in the arts that challenged Denmark's cultural establishment. Its importance cannot be disputed. Almost all Skagen artists in the early 1880s shared its Naturalist goals and depicted the lowest classes. Michael Ancher's fishermen came from the margins of Danish society. Patricia G. Berman describes the depictions by Krohg from his several summers in

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[15] Elisabeth Fabritius and Annette Johansen, ed., *Maler i Skagen: Michael Ancher, 1849-1999* (Skagen: Helga Anchers Fond, 1999), 7 and 13, exh. cat.

[16] Vibeke Sandby, *Skagens trofaste veninde: breve fra 30 års venskab mellem Anna og Michael Ancher og godsejer frk. Ida Marie Suhr* ([S.I.]: Agerholm, 2000), 34.

Skagen as “unembellished representations…focusing on the complex ways in which the town’s inhabitants scratched out a living under difficult circumstances.”[17]

This generation of painters and authors that came of age in the 1870s rejected the art of the Danish establishment and its idealization, formal conventions, and Biedermeier genre scenes. The academics still clung to past glory dating to the early nineteenth century, earned by Danish Golden Age painters such as Christian Købke (1810-1848). He romanticized views of both historically significant locations in Denmark’s history as well as local, prosaic landscapes within his preferred radius of his home in Copenhagen. His *View from Dosseringen at Lake Sortedam toward Nørrebro* (1838) exemplified a strategic choice of a local subject while the centrality of the red and white flag proclaimed patriotism. Technically, the work characterizes his style through balanced use of color, uniform tonality and glistening light. His method adhered to academic conventions that built on a series of carefully executed sketches and compositional studies. The final work, however always bore a high degree of finish.

Figure 0-1: Christen Dalsgaard. *Peasant Girl Writing a Letter* (1871)

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[17] Patricia G. Berman, *In Another Light: Danish Painting in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Vendome Press, 2007), 145.

Forty years later the Academy still clung to its success from the 1830s. In 1878 French critics, including Charles Blanc (1813-1882), scoffed at the vapid reiteration of the Golden Age in Denmark's painting at the World's Fair, averring that art in the northern country was stagnant.[18] Denmark's entries included both history paintings and genre scenes favored by the Academy. Blanc characterized *Christian II Imprisoned in the Tower at Sønderborg Castle* (1871) by Carl Bloch (1834-1890) as a big, somewhat empty page.[19] *Peasant Girl Writing* (1871, Fig. 0-1) by Christian Dalsgaard typified popular, moralizing genre scenes. Such paintings conveyed the values of the dominant class, while domesticating and prettifying the reality of rural Denmark.

Modern Breakthrough artists and authors, in contrast, aspired to remove all filters in depicting the harsh conditions and grueling labor experienced by fishermen and peasants. In contrast to Dalsgaard's pretty peasant girl who writes a letter in a neat and tidy room, Krohg's *Sleeping Mother with Child* (1883) portrayed a local Skagen woman, who had collapsed exhausted while rocking her infant. The young woman's mouth hangs open, her collar is soiled, bedclothes lie in disarray, and flies have landed on the baby. Krohg's canvas forces the contemporary beholder to face the unsanitary conditions and difficult existence of the lower class. Krohg, like others of the Modern Breakthrough, valued authenticity above all. "Realism acknowledged only a visible, present reality, and art was no longer to be a bearer of ideas," Torsten Gunnarsson writes.[20] This desire to portray an authentic record of what could be seen at the same time prompted a surge in

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[18]Charles Blanc, *Les beaux-arts à l'Exposition universelle de 1878* (Paris: Librairie Renaud, 1878), 368.

[19]Blanc, *Les beaux-arts à l'Exposition universelle de 1878*, 342.

[20] Torsten Gunnarsson introduction to *A Mirror of Nature: Nordic Landscape Painting 1840-1910* (Copenhagen: Statens Museum for Kunst, 2006), 21, exh. cat.

plein-air painting. In order to replicate observable conditions, the most avant-garde Modern Breakthrough painters like the French Impressionists, emphasized the shifting qualities of light. Loose brushwork, painterly color modeling and a lesser degree of finish characterized the style of many *plein-air* painters of the Modern Breakthrough including Krohg.[21]

Figure 0-2: Christian Krohg. *Sleeping Mother* (1883)

The Modern Breakthrough was closely linked to late French Realism and Naturalism from the 1860s and 1870s. Most of the Skagen colonists studied in or traveled to Paris between 1870 and 1889. Author Herman Bang (1857-1912) directed artists to go out and "mix with the crowd," while Christian Krohg demanded "a picture of the time."[22] Paris provided a model for the Scandinavians according to art historian Francis Beckett.[23] These artists sought to convey "modern life" as truthfully as possible. Nonetheless, an observer of modern life in Denmark found totally different conditions than the *flâneur* of

[21] Gunnarsson introduction to *A Mirror of Nature: Nordic Landscape Painting 1840-1910*, 21-2.

[22] Herman Bang, "Realisme og Realister" (1879) quoted in Peter Michael Hornung and Kasper Monrad, *The Modern Breakthrough in Danish Painting 1870-1890*, trans. W. Glyn Jones (Copenhagen: Golden Days, 2002), 2. Christian Krohg quoted in Hornung and Monrad, *The Modern Breakthrough in Danish Painting 1870-1890*, 7.

[23] Francis Beckett, "Vor Tids Malerkunst." In *Kunstens Historie i Danmark*, by Karl. Ed. Madsen, (Copenhagen: Alfred Jacobsen, 1901-1907), 359-362. For more on the editor, Karl Madsen, see below.

Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867); honest subjects came from rural provinces and all classes. In order to validate their images, artists needed to be eyewitnesses, to become intimate with their subjects, and to paint in the temporal instant of the present.

Krøyer and Michael Ancher played pivotal roles in Denmark's Modern Breakthrough in the 1880s. After the national embarrassment in 1878, Krøyer, the most famous Danish painter of the Skagen Art Colony, led the commission to choose the works that would be exhibited by Denmark at the 1889 Centennial in Paris. His selection earned critical acclaim from French critics. This period also marks Michael Ancher's apex in popularity and importance as a revolutionary painter whose depictions of heroic fishermen resonated with both a cultural imperative to paint authentic subjects from contemporary life and with a nation that struggled to establish position and relevance in the shifting currents of Western Europe at the end of the nineteenth century.

Impressionism in Denmark

Although important arbiters of avant-garde painting such as Krøyer and Madsen had been to Impressionist exhibitions in Paris during the 1870s, the style had minor influence in Denmark until about 1910, well after Symbolism which developed there in the 1890s. In the 1880s and 1890s Danish artists and critics applied the term "Impressionism" in reference to the bright palette of French painters including at times such diverse artists as Gauguin, Claude Monet (1840-1926) and Jules Bastien-Lepage (1848-1884). When Impressionism finally became an important movement, Dane Johannes V. Jensen (1773-1950) emphasized open-air as its defining attribute, although that had also been practiced by Modern Breakthrough painters. In 1912, Jensen linked the movement to nationalism: "A Danish Impressionist is obliged to paint Danish objects in

Danish air, using Danish colours."[24] Danish art historians seem to apply "Impressionism" in response to particular painterly qualities.[25] In contrast "Naturalism" often indicates a populist subject matter realistically rendered. Nonetheless, the terms are used somewhat indiscriminately. Krohg, the most radical advocate for social justice in Skagen, edited the journal *Impressionisten* in Norway. Overall, art historians concur that Impressionism had less impact than Realism and Symbolism on the course of Danish, and in fact, Scandinavian avant-garde painting.[26]

Danish Symbolism

"Symbolism" was a complex phenomenon as it manifested in Denmark at the end of the 1880s, with a strong correlation to scientific developments in biology and physics. Scientists from Denmark pioneered advances that challenged positivist explanations of intangible and invisible forces.[27] Public studies of phenomena that could not be visually recorded, quantifiably measured or weighed on a scale included late-nineteenth century research into synesthesia; hysteria, dreams, and the realm of the unconscious; and the molecular, atomic and particular composition of matter extended what people understood

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[24] Quoted in Peter Nørgaard Larsen, "Painterly Perception and Images of the Soul," in *Impressionism and the North: Late 19th Century French Avant-Garde Art and the Art of the Nordic Countries 1870-1920,* ed. Torsten Gunnarsson and Hans Henrik Brummer, trans. Carina Frykland (Stockholm: Nationalmuseum, 2003), 165, exh. cat.

[25] In describing the influence of Impressionism on P. S. Krøyer's *Summer Day at the South Beach of Skagen* (1884) Hornung and Monrad describe Impressionist influences: "The picture, characterized by the momentary flickering light, is built up on the diagonal of foam, which creates a dynamic effect and therefore reinforces the impression of a momentary glimpse," in *The Modern Breakthrough in Danish Painting 1870-1890*, caption, 11.

[26] Gunnarsson introduction to *A Mirror of Nature: Nordic Landscape Painting 1840-1910*, 25.

[27] John Fellows, Preface, *Carl Nielsen and the idea of Modernism*, by Daniel M. Grimley (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2010), 4-5. Fellows provides a summary of the technological and scientific changes in Denmark during this time.

as real. Kirk Varnedoe explained that contemporary medical and psychological research likewise contributed to the development of French Symbolism:

> Seeing and thinking …were held to depend less on perception and more on conception. The mind was newly portrayed not as the passive receptacle of received impressions from nature but instead as an active organizing agent that from the beginning imposed its order on the chaos of sensations. Artistic image making involved an active, creative organizing response, a construction rather than imitation.[28]

Painters understood themselves to be synthesizers of visible and invisible stimuli rather than objective transmitters of perception.

Symbolists aspired to go beyond the observable, moving away from ocular-centric art and refuting the instantaneity of photography. Their artistic means emphasized immovability and avoided destabilizing visual elements such as accidental cropping. Their distortions of visible reality included compositions with more complex and ambiguous pictorial space. In *The Drunkard* (1890), for instance, Ring countered the illusion of receding space from tracks in the dirt with cubic house forms that maintain equivalent clarity and scale in the near ground and distance. Symbolists also did not practice mimetic color.[29] Willumsen employed startling opposites of orange and cobalt blue for the adults depicted in his *Family Vase* (1891), in contrast to the baby's naturalistic flesh tones. At the other extreme, Vilhelm Hammershøi (1864-1916) eliminated nearly all color from his paintings, restricting his palette to a range of neutral greys, blacks, browns and whites. In Symbolist painting, the eternal took precedence over

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[28] Kirk Varnedoe, "Gauguin," in *"Primitivism" in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern,* ed. William Rubin (New York: Museum of Modern Art with New York Graphic Society Books and Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1984), I:182-3.

[29] Sharon L. Hirsh, *Symbolism and Modern Urban Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 4-6. Hirsh lucidly summarizes the use of color and pictorial space by Symbolists that generate widely divergent results.

the instantaneous, “the photographic momentary glimpse was abandoned.”[30] Ejnar Nielsen (1872-1956) represented a bright light akin to photographic flash low to the side of the painted subject in *And in his Eyes I Saw Death* (1897), away from the focal point, and removed all visual clutter in the stark room. In her paintings, Ancher generated visual interest and demonstrated goals beyond Naturalism through such manipulations of color or light and through complex or distorted pictorial space. Like other Symbolists, the narrow range of ocular perception became too restrictive for image-making, as they aspired to expand the artist’s imaginative or conceptual role in composing their works.

Symbolists aspired to different ends than the Modern Breakthrough. As Peter Nørgaard Larsen summarizes, “The Symbolists …sought truth in the depths of the individual human soul and in many cases in an ideal beauty that was not of this world but could be realized through art.”[31] The groundbreaking 2000 Symbolism exhibition at Copenhagen’s Statens Museum for Kunst organized the visually dissimilar works around five tendencies that challenged the materialism and positivism of the age: a dominant and widespread exploration of “existential vulnerability;” a fringe group whose extroverted quest for beauty celebrated a “Vitalistic cult of the body and nature;” expressions of absence and stillness in interiors and landscapes; a small group who looked to literary and mythological sources, and finally those who aligned with the French Nabis.[32] Many of these painters, including Ring, had at one time been associated with Naturalism and Social Realism, but by the late 1880s pursued mood and emotional atmosphere.

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[30] See Hornung and Monrad, The Modern Breakthrough in Danish Painting 1870-1890, 30.

[31] Peter Nørgaard Larsen, *Symbolism in Danish and European Painting 1870-1910,* transl. W. Glyn Jones (Copenhagen: Statens Museum for Kunst, 2000), 11, exh. cat.

[32] Larsen, *Symbolism in Danish and European Painting 1870-1910,* 17, 57, 73, 93.

Scandinavian curators in 2003 launched the term "Evocative Landscapes" to describe a particularly Nordic tendency of verisimilitude in describing reality combined with "an emotional, atmospheric tension."[33] Several Norwegians, who provided the first clear examples of this tendency after a summer together at Fleskum farm, became part of Anna Ancher's peer group in Paris during the summer of 1889 as discussed in the second chapter.

Symbolists shared a core conviction that the work of art was a constructed image, organized in the mind of the painter to convey an idea. As the Statens Museum show makes clear, Denmark's Symbolists differed widely, however, in almost every traditional classification category used by art historians, including their choice of subjects, the degree of verisimilitude, and the use of natural phenomenon as a stimulus. Ancher's paintings at the end of the nineteenth century shared characteristics of a particular variant of Danish Symbolism identified by curator Larsen. Ring, Nielsen and Hammershøi employed an ostensibly Realist style to depict local subjects, but radically transformed these elements that had been associated with the Modern Breakthrough in order to create a symbolic representation of a mood or idea. Larsen summarizes this element of Danish Symbolism: "Somewhere in the course of the creative process—from the world to the work—the picture becomes a personal screen on which the artist's faith and doubt, interpretation of life and understanding of the surrounding world are projected and given symbolical form."[34] Nielsen, for example, painted local people of his immediate region in canvases that grapple with the concept of fate including *The Blind* (1896/1898) or in

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[33] Torsten Gunnarsson introduction to *A Mirror of Nature: Nordic Landscape Painting 1840-1910,* 28. Statens Museum Head of Collections and Research Peter Nørgaard Larsen pointed out the collective curatorial effort at arriving to new nomenclature in a personal interview on 18 September 2013.

[34] Larsen, *Symbolism in Danish and European Painting 1870-1910,* 74.

Symbolist landscapes such as *Landscape from Gjern* (1897-8, Vejen Kunstmuseum). Sharon L. Hirsh provides a more nuanced discussion of the evolution of Symbolism, whose "commitment to know and to communicate the mystery of life that lay beyond this world" not only made them as a group "react against the new metropolitan order," but also to find a "mitigator, if not the cure" in art.[35] As developed in the third and fourth chapters, in the 1890s Anna Ancher similarly translated recognizable and real subjects to express an intensely personal reaction against modernity, but also created paintings that affirmed the anti-modern religion and labor movements in and around Skagen.

Author Johannes Jørgensen (1866-1956) developed a distinctive trajectory of Symbolism during the 1890s. He drew on French sources to add a more literary and religious dimension. Jørgensen believed that the true artist was necessarily Symbolist and sought to convey eternal truths through symbols.[36] His overt religiosity and conversion to Catholicism eventually made him an outlier in Lutheran Denmark, yet his closest associates were also the Danish artists who gravitated toward Gauguin.[37] Despite his eventual position at the fringe, Jørgensen introduced many French authors and Symbolist ideas to Danish readers in the 1890s. Artists like Harald Slott-Møller and his wife Agnes Rambusch Slott-Møller (1862-1937), who clung to his sort of literary and idealist artistic vision, found themselves increasingly isolated from other visual artists.[38] In his 2000

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[35] Hirsh, *Symbolism and Modern Urban Society,* 24.

[36] Johannes Jørgensen, "Symbolisme" in *Taarnet: Illustreret maanedsskrift for kunst og litteratur* (November 1893), 55. PDF e-book.

[37] Larsen, *Symbolism in Danish and European Painting 1870-1910,* 12. The other artists connected to Gauguin during the 1890s were Mogens Ballin (1871-1914) and Gad F. Clement (1867-1933) who in the early 1900s became part of the Skagen painters and part of the organizing team for the Skagens Museum formation in the 1920s.

[38] Larsen, *Symbolism in Danish and European Painting 1870-1910,* 113.

catalog, Larsen warns that giving too much emphasis to Jørgensen and his circle obscures the wider range of artists who participated in the Symbolist context.[39]

Vitalism

Not part of the French modernist legacy, Vitalism was yet another formal and philosophical tendency which emerged in Denmark, overlapping to some degree with both Danish Symbolism and German Expressionism. This movement was strongly influenced by the philosopher Frederick Nietzsche (1844-1900). Chapter Three compares Nietzsche's writing to the aesthetics of Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875), foundational to Danish modernism, and Baudelaire, who had wide currency among Symbolists. Ancher's friends and associates, including author Jensen, composer Nielsen and artist Willumsen and even Georg Brandes (1842-1927, see Chapter Two) had strong connections to the Vitalist movement. They believed that the animated natural world represented in their art offered redemptive and restorative energy, an organic substitute for their lack of traditional religious belief. Larsen summarizes the Vitalist principle: "The road to spiritual liberation and growth could no longer be made easier and travelled by Divine interference, but was irretrievably linked to…sensuality and natural growth."[40] Many in Danish art circles after 1900 sought life forces that could counter the inward-oriented decadence of some modern writers and the malaise of contemporary cities. "'Life' was elevated to an important watchword, charged with modernity, rebelliousness

[39] Larsen, *Symbolism in Danish and European Painting 1870-1910,* 12.

[40] Larsen, *Symbolism in Danish and European Painting 1870-1910,* 101.

and faith in the future of mankind," according to literary scholar Sven Halse.[41] The movement retained its currency through the remainder of Ancher's career, and informs her canvases of the twentieth century. In the Conclusion to this thesis, Ancher's portraits of her mother are used as evidence of Ancher's dialogue with this Nordic tendency in a way that weaves together many of the findings from other chapters.

For the purposes of this thesis, the term "Naturalism" and the "Modern Breakthrough" will be used interchangeably to describe Danish paintings from the 1870s and 1880s aligning with the French painter Jules Bastien-Lepage (1848-1884) in terms of verisimilitude and style. "Impressionism" differed from Naturalist art primarily in its brighter color palette, evidence of brushwork, and in the goal of trying to convey fleeting temporal qualities observed in nature, including the transient properties of light. Symbolism describes the group of artists and poets in Scandinavia at the turn of the twentieth century who sought to convey the subjective sensation of an idea and to make art in which representation transcended the material boundaries of optical perception to convey a redemptive spiritual truth or ideal. Vitalism also tried to make visible imperceptible ideas, but was more focused on both the body and organic sources of energy, especially the sun. Vitalism paralleled Symbolism and many painters like Willumsen combined elements of both movements.

Historiography

On the whole, exhibitions and scholarship on Anna Ancher are insufficiently critical in their analyses. Although Heide Grape-Alpers' 1995 major exhibition in

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[41] Sven Halse, "Wide-ranging Vitalism" in *The Spirit of Vitalism: Health, Beauty and Strength in Danish Art, 1890-1914,* ed. Gertrud Hvidberg-Hansen and Gertrud Oelsner (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 2011), 47, exh. cat.

Hannover and Copenhagen revived international interest and attention to Ancher and considered intersections of her art with French Impressionism and Naturalism, critics complained similarly that curators juxtaposed sketches with finished works without adequate and substantive differentiation.[42] Although she did not explore the comparison, Grape-Albers observed that Ancher's modern and expressive use of color brought to mind van Gogh and Edvard Munch (1863-1944). Despite this observation, Grape-Albers returned to the Skagen art colony and the "intensive artistic contact" with Krohg as influential to the development of Ancher's composition and handling of color instead of looking at a wider variety of sources.[43]

Two recent exhibitions including "I am Anna" at Skagens Museum (2009) and the "A World Apart" in Washington, D. C. (2013) have arranged Ancher's work thematically and thus mitigated chronological differences.[44] This useful organization facilitates audience access and engagement, but does not consider Ancher's maturation or development. Her art generally loses the context of significant national and international cultural developments after 1891. Nonetheless, the extensive, brightly lit Skagens Museum exhibition made significant strides in reorienting viewers away from the Modern Breakthrough by juxtaposing Ancher's work with provocative comparandi including her contemporary Hammershøi, as well as current painters such as David Hockney (b. 1937). The National Museum of Women in the Arts staged a beautiful

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[42] Poul Borum, "Skær af politisk korrekthed over udstilling på Den Hirschsprungske Samling," *Øjeblikket,* vol. 23, no. 4 (Spring 1995), 24-6.

[43] Heide Grape-Albers,"Die Malerei Anna Anchers Einblicke in das Alltägliche," in *Anna Ancher 1859-1935: Malerin in Skagen* ed. Heide Grape-Albers and Christine Refflinghaus (Hannover: Niedersächs. Landesmuseum [u.a.], 1994), 71, exh. cat.

[44]*A World Apart: Anna Ancher and the Skagen Art Colony,* an exhibition held at the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C. (February 15 through May 12, 2013).

introduction to Ancher's work for American audiences and identified important innovations made by the artist, but unfortunately failed to distinguish between compositional sketches and finished paintings for at least two of her major paintings. There were also so many major works from male Skagen colonists that in some rooms, Ancher's paintings were again lost in the context of Naturalism, even though the curatorial centerpoint of the exhibition was her breakthroughs.[45]

Anachronism is a major problem in Ancher scholarship. Art historians continue to apply the stylistic criteria of Danish Naturalism and French Impressionism, and therefore emphasize Ancher's faithfulness to visual reality. To justify a designation as Impressionist, historians point to her representation of sunlight, active brushwork, and bright palette. Alternatively as a Naturalist, they indicate the rural and local subject matter from her native Skagen. In both cases, commentators anchor the painter to the Skagen art colony's pivotal role beginning in the late 1870s. Ancher's style, however, matured in the 1890s, when Symbolism permeated Copenhagen's avant-garde.[46]

As noted above, Jensen observes that most of the major authorities on the Skagen painters relied on Michael Ancher's fourteen small notebooks of records and

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[45] Alice M. Rudy Price, review of "A World Apart: Anna Ancher and the Skagen Art Colony," *19th Century Art Worldwide,* vol. 12 no. 2 (Autumn 2013), http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/index.php/autumn13/price-reviews-a-world-apart-anna-ancher-and-the-skagen-art-colony.

[46] *I am Anna: A homage to Anna Ancher* (2 May-31 August 2009), Skagens Museum, Skagen, DK; *I am Anna: A Homage to Anna Ancher,* ed. Mette Bøgh Jensen, trans. Walton Glyn Jones (Skagen: Skagens Museum, 2009), exh. cat. The anachronistic characterization persisted in both the 2009 exhibition "I am Anna" at the Skagens Museum, despite insightful catalogue essays to the contrary, and in Berman's 2009 book on Danish painting in the nineteenth century, *In Another Light*. In essays in the catalogue of the Skagen exhibition, Guénola Stork suggests instead that Ancher and Vilhelm Hammershøi "liberated themselves from tradition and reinforced the enigmatic dimensions of [their] interiors by omitting the human figure. Their pictures rest on a strange paradox: an apparent simplicity which in reality makes the reading more complex" (52). Peter Nørgaard Larsen invites reconsideration of Ancher's art as a seed in artistic transformations occurring in Denmark. Stork, "The Reconquest of Space in Anna Ancher and Vilhelm Hammershøi—On the Verge of a Void," 40-53 and Larsen, "Why Can't Anna be Modern?" 38-53; Berman, *In Another Light: Danish Painting in the Nineteenth Century,* 148-154.

reminiscences of collegiality in Skagen. Her first chapter of *At male sit privatliv* substantiates in impeccable detail commonalities in the historical accounts rooted in Ancher's notes, despite differences in perspective and methodology.[47] Based on their importance as key sources on Anna Ancher, there remain, however, some important additional observations to make about two of the Danish authors noted by Jensen and a need to extend and update her discussion with current American scholarship.

Madsen was, as Jensen notes, Michael Ancher's peer and is often included as one of the founding members of the Skagen Colony from the 1870s and one of the students lauded as the teacher of young Anna Brøndum. He also was married briefly to Anna Ancher's cousin, Henriette Møller, although she died in childbirth. After a short career as a painter, Madsen shifted to criticism and connoisseurship. He became the director of Denmark's Statens Museum for Kunst from 1911 to 1925, before culminating his career in Skagen as the first director of Skagens Museum. That remotely situated collection continues to be the main repository of Skagen colonist canvases, including those by Anna Ancher, and was created with impetus from the artists of its heyday, including Michael Ancher, who died before it opened in 1928. Anna Ancher held his position on the board until her death in 1935.

Madsen was one of the earliest advocates for Anna Ancher in the Danish press in the 1880s. Nonetheless in 1907, *Kunstens historie i Danmark* [Art History in Denmark] an important early compendium of Danish art, edited by Madsen, barely noted her importance. Francis Beckett, the author of the relevant chapter "In Our Time" in

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[47] Jensen, *At male sit privatliv*, 11-33. Jensen first considers the pioneering volume on Skagen from 1913 by Alba Schwartz (1857-1942) written in collaboration with Ancher and ends with Lise Svanholm's *Malerne på Skagen* [*Painters of Skagen*] published in 2001.Alba Schwartz's first publication was a two volume work that came out between 1912 and 1913, entitled *Skagen før og nu* [*Skagen Before and Now*]. Lise Svanholm, *Malerne på Skagen* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2005).

Madsen's book, centered his description of the Skagen artists on Michael Ancher's monumental canvases portraying the heroics of Skagen's fishermen, such as *Will He Round the Point?* (1879, Figure 0-3). Beckett noted Michael Ancher's interest in documentation of the individual and group characteristics of these men, his sharp contrasts between light and dark, and a sense of color derived from Bastien-Lepage.[48] Beckett also mentioned the internationally renowned Krøyer. In Krøyer's work, Beckett emphasized the strength of his light and shadow in *plein-air* paintings such as his 1902 *Self-Portrait* and the social commentary of the *Italian Village Hatters* of 1880. Beckett mentioned Anna Ancher only in the shadow of her husband, noting that she preferred to paint indoors and near the house, and allotting her only a paragraph of mention. One illustration by Anna Ancher accompanied the brief notice, an etching of an old woman reading from 1882. Maybe the lack of mention was only editorial oversight and primarily Beckett's decision, but Madsen later in 1913, bypassed her as a representative of Denmark in an important United States tour of Scandinavian art. This omission is surprising given that he had both a close personal relationship with the artist and that she won the prestigious royal award *Ingenio et Arti* that year.

Figure 0-3: Michael Ancher. *Will He Round the Point?* (1879).

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[48] Beckett, "Vor Tids Malerkunst," 363.

In his chapter on Anna Ancher in *Skagens malere og Skagens museum* [*Skagen Painters and Skagens Museum*] (1929), Madsen did distinguish Anna Ancher from Krøyer and the *plein-air* painters, asserting that she did not copy nature directly, yet was the first Danish painter to really understand how to make a sunbeam.[49] Madsen noted the high degree of feeling that stemmed from her woman's "eyes and soul," enabling her to make poetry out of every day objects. It was her femininity, according to Madsen, that informed her successful handling of soft pastel colors.[50] He affirmed Anna Ancher's merits as a painter, based on her "unmistakable talent" and noted in particular the development of a richer palette and more grace and lightness in her touch. Furthermore, Madsen thought that Ancher's intimate depictions of her mother exemplified the esteemed scholar Julius Lange's valuation of relationship between painter and the painted subject.[51]

Since he had spent most of his career in Copenhagen, Madsen also relied almost exclusively on Michael Ancher's records, as Jensen notes, to reconstruct his account of the Skagen colony. Michael's views permeate Madsen's 1929 book. For instance, he quoted from Michael Ancher's 1882 letter as evidence of camaraderie in the marriage. Michael wrote how happy they were to work together on the famous double portrait,

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[49] Karl Madsen, *Skagens malere og Skagens museum* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1929), 45 and 48.

[50] Madsen, *Skagens malere og Skagens museum*, 47 and 49.

[51] Madsen, *Skagens malere og Skagens museum*, 62. Julius Lange (1838-1896) was the preeminent Danish art historian of the late nineteenth century, with an international reputation.

Assessing the Day's Work (1883, Fig. 0-4).[52] In her own letter, Anna also welcomed the time to work together, relieved at the reprieve from Michael's fishermen.[53]

The double portrait is indeed an interesting introduction to the couple's life together. Each painted the portrait of the other, and Michael painted all of the furniture and decorative objects. They were married only two years when they began on the painting, Michael was thirty-three, Anna twenty-three. In the portrait he sits erect, behind and slightly inclining over her. She reclines in the foreground, clothed in an elegant red dress; both look at and allegedly critique an unidentifiable work on the easel. To surround the couple, Michael painted in finished art works, sketches, prints, in short, a still life of a

Figure 0-4: Michael and Anna Ancher. *Assessing the Day's Work* (1883)

nineteenth century bourgeois artist's living room. Although his letter suggested a happy collaboration, the body language immortalized in the painting is more ambiguous. In a painting where Michael executed the majority of the canvas and all of the assembled

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[52] Madsen, *Skagens malere og Skagens museum*, 51.

[53] Anna Ancher to Martha Møller Johansen (27 November 1882), in *Breve fra Anna Ancher,* ed. Lise Svanholm (Denmark: Gyldendal, 2005), 68.

objects, one has to wonder why Anna depicted her husband in such rigid, authoritarian posture, whereas she is portrayed lounging in a vulnerable position, fashionably dressed for the evening.

Michael Ancher's views entered Madsen's account in other ways. The author offered Michael's paintings as evidence of Anna's conformity to Danish middle class leisure pursuits and maternal attentions.[54] In fact, one-third of the twenty-one reproduced paintings in Madsen's chapter on Anna Ancher are Michael Ancher's painted representations of his wife and daughter. Furthermore, all but one of the remaining illustrations, a painting of her mother, date from before 1904. The visuals skew the reader's assessment of Ancher toward her early work, while the whole history bears the heavy imprint of her husband's interpretation. Madsen actually made the point that he found less merit in her recent work in that she lost finesse in the application of color and accuracy of drawing. Nonetheless he valued the persistence of her independence and her "woman's vision."[55]

Lise Svanholm continues to be one of the most widely read chroniclers of Skagen and also edited the most recent published edition of Anna Ancher's letters. In *Painters of Skagen,* Svanholm only endeavors to describe Ancher's work as it fits into Skagen. Her approach, like others, distorts Ancher's mature career. Her painting serves primarily to illustrate life and society in Skagen, especially the world inhabited by women and children, with only limited analysis of its formal or stylistic properties. Unlike Madsen, Svanholm tentatively links Ancher to the psychological paintings of Symbolism.

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[54] Madsen, *Skagens malere og Skagens museum*, 51-2.

[55] Madsen, *Skagens malere og Skagens museum*, 65.

Unfortunately, brief segues into more provocative analyses of *Grief* (1902) and Ancher's paintings of her mother lack development, either in the compendium or in her edition of Ancher's letters. Svanholm buries provocative insight within a collective biography of the Skagen colony framed largely through the words and canvases of Michael Ancher and Krøyer.

American Kirk Varnedoe (1946-2003) revived United States interest in Scandinavian art with his blockbuster exhibition *Northern Light* in 1982, mounted in Brooklyn, Washington, D.C. and Minneapolis. This exhibition combined innovative scholarship with engaging display, and served for many Americans as a first introduction to Scandinavian painters, including several artists of the Skagen colony. In 1984, Varnedoe also contributed to William Rubin's provocative *Primitivism* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art. His insightful essay on Gauguin for this catalogue was among

Figure 0-5: Anna Brøndum (Ancher). *Old Man Whittling* (1880).

the first to situate the provincial appeal of rural Brittany within the nineteenth-century phenomenon of primitivism.

Despite the achievements of *Northern Light*, only a single painting, her debut work, represented Anna Ancher. Executed when Ancher was only twenty-one, however, *Old Man Whittling* (1880, Fig. 0-5) is hardly indicative of the range of her work. It was so early in her oeuvre that it is the only canvas exhibited during her lifetime that was signed with her maiden name. The limited sample is perhaps understandable given the geographic scope of the show, covering artists from all five Scandinavian countries, with ninety-four paintings, but it reinforces the restricted consideration of Ancher. Varnedoe's show presented two different streams of avant-garde painting within Denmark. In addition to Ancher's *Old Man Whittling,* Krøyer's *In the Store* (1882) and Krohg's *Sleeping Mother* exemplified the Modern Breakthrough in Danish art. These socially conscious, Realist canvases link the place Skagen to the Naturalist style. Both Krohg and Krøyer signed their paintings with the place marker "Skagen." The two canvases bracket Ancher's contribution as a small, non-representative sample of her painting. The catalogue also reproduced a black-and-white version of another early Ancher painting, *Maid in the Kitchen* (1883, discussed in Chapter One) in a short essay about Georg Brandes, which elaborated on the author's relationship to Skagen and his importance to the Modern Breakthrough. In sum, therefore, the exhibition and catalogue directed the critical gaze to the artist's debut rather than her mature painting. *Old Man Whittling* encourages little comparison or connection to the work of other Danish artists in the *Northern Lights* exhibition, especially Ring, Nielsen, and Hammershøi, despite important links between their painting and Ancher's canvases done in the same period.

Danish curators and academics laud Berman's achievement, *In Another Light: Danish Painting in the Nineteenth Century* (2007), available in museum shops and academic bookstores throughout Denmark. Berman cut her teeth on Scandinavian art as a research assistant for Varnedoe's 1982 show. In addition to writing on Danish art, she has published extensively on Munch and on other aspects of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Norwegian art. Berman most recently co-curated with Thor J. Mednick "Danish Paintings From the Golden Age to the Modern Breakthrough," displaying the private collection of Ambassador John Loeb at Scandinavia House in New York City that opened in November, 2013. Berman devotes three chapters, nearly half the book, to the period from 1870 through 1915 in her survey: "Skagen and the Modern Breakthrough," "The Free Exhibition and the Psychological Breakthrough" and "Hammershøi and Urban Places." She considers Anna Ancher only in the first of these chapters. While assigning Ancher a significantly greater importance than Madsen's or especially Varnedoe's work would suggest and sensitively analyzing her paintings, Berman views the artist as still bound largely within artistic objectives that were outdated during Ancher's most productive decades. Berman's visuals are again instructive of the problem. The chapter illustrations include five paintings by Ancher dating from 1880 to 1891 and the double portrait *Assessing the Day's Work*. Berman's book reiterates Varnedoe's frame as both images and text on Anna Ancher are inserted between Krohg's *Sleeping Mother* and Krøyer's *In the Store*. While the range of Ancher's paintings reproduced in Berman's book is much greater, the layout of the chapter bookends her work with the 1882 Skagen paintings by Krøyer and Krohg and thereby eclipses the very innovations Berman identifies in Ancher's 1891 canvases. Berman mentions the Impressionist qualities of

Sunshine in the Blue Room (1891, see Chapter Two) in her text, but attributes more importance to a family narrative in discussing the painting. Her discussion of *A Funeral* (1891, Fig. 0-6) insightfully notes that the painting of the funeral began in real experience and "became an austere and yet coloristically charged rendering of loss, individual and collective" remarking especially on the compressed space and the deep pink walls in achieving this end.[56] This important assessment demonstrates that Ancher was evolving outside of the frame of the Skagen painters and should also therefore have been considered, or at least referenced, in the next chapter of the book. In that chapter, about a "psychological breakthrough," the author discusses the development of "emotional realism" in the 1880s and 1890s by "a new generation of Danish artists." These "younger painters" the same age as Anna Ancher, "shared a commitment to communicate the individual's emotional and visual sensations." In this chapter Berman introduces Ring, Nielsen and Niels Bjerre (1864-1942), explaining that "In the 1890s, these emerging subjectivist tendencies were termed Symbolism."[57] Because Ancher's paintings of the same period and ilk are not mentioned here, the text leads to the misguided assumption that Ancher did not participate in the psychological breakthrough.

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[56] Berman, *In Another Light: Danish Painting in the Nineteenth Century*, 154.

[57]. Berman, *In Another Light: Danish Painting in the Nineteenth Century,* 179.

Figure 0-6: Anna Ancher. *A Funeral* (1891)

Mednick's 2009 dissertation contextualized painted representations of Skagen in relationship to Denmark's political identity. His work helps to explode some of the myths written by and about the Skagen painters of Ancher's generation.[58] Mednick and Nina Lübbren explore Skagen within the concept of "place-myth" first formulated by sociologist Rob Shields in *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity* (1991). Shields sought to elucidate the human tendency to idealize particular settings based on associations with the place and to create a visual vocabulary of identifying images for such locations.[59] Mednick observes in relationship to Skagen:

> While it is now accepted that the Skagen that was generally promulgated in the art of the colony was somehow a myth – a place where the trials of nature's power could be admired rather than feared, and where the hardships of modern life could be flouted in an attitude of playful repose – it is not yet altogether clear what this myth consisted of, or how it was constructed.[60]

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[58] Thor J. Mednick, "Skagen: Art and National Romanticism in Nineteenth-Century Denmark," Ph.D. Dissertation, Indiana University (December 2009).

[59] For place-myth, see pp.115-143 in Lübbren, *Rural artists' colonies in Europe, 1870-1910*; Mednick, "Skagen: Art and National Romanticism in Nineteenth-Century Denmark," 9-12.

[60] Mednick, "Skagen: Art and National Romanticism in Nineteenth-Century Denmark," 11.

In his dissertation's final chapter, Mednick explores the role of Krøyer in constructing the Skagen place-myth and its distinctive relationship to the national political agenda. In addition to shifting the focus away from Michael Ancher's narrative, Mednick relates assessment of Skagen painters to external events and issues occurring in Denmark.

Fabritius and Jensen play a dominant role in exhibitions consistent with their professional links to the two main repositories of Ancher's paintings, the Michael and Anna Ancher House and the Skagens Museum. Fabritius has written a host of catalogue essays on Ancher, Skagen, and the artist couple. Fabritius' book on Anna Ancher's pastels includes excellent technical detail from conservation reports that is not available for her oil canvases. In a note to a 2009 essay, Fabritius indicated that her forthcoming monograph would develop her ideas on how Ancher related to the French avant-garde.[61] Jensen curated the admirable show on Anna Ancher at the Skagens Museum in 2009 and offered substantive consultant support to the National Museum of Women in the Arts for their exhibition in 2013. She has also written several catalogue essays on Anna Ancher, although her primary focus has been the Skagen art colony as a whole. Whereas both authors emphasize Ancher's subjects and the biographical context local to Skagen, they do not adequately address how her paintings relate to broader artistic and cultural developments.

Although not directly related to Anna Ancher, Griselda Pollock's methodology has guided many of the arguments in this dissertation. Her integrated approach to art history considers the practice of art-making as part of a whole nexus of interrelated

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[61] Elisabeth Fabritius, "Anna Ancher and the French Avant-Garde," in *Anna Ancher,* ed. Christian Gether, Stine Høholt and Andrea Rygg Karberg, trans. Viggo Hjørnager Pedersen and Marlene Edelstein (Ishøj: ARKEN Museum of Modern Art, 2011), 57 note 3 ,exh. cat. In my September 2013 interview Fabritius did not mention this project, but was focused on the edited letters of Michael and Anna Ancher.

economic, social and historical factors. Her conclusion in 1988 that “sexual difference is produced” directed art historians to analyze the visual arts within a “double frame,” scrutinizing an individual woman’s practice in all aspects while also considering its cultural context. Anna Ancher’s art practice must be examined in terms of “materials, resources, conditions, constituencies, modes of training, competence, expertise, forms of consumption and related discourses, as well as its own codes and rhetorics.” However, Pollock reminds scholars that women artists, like Ancher, did not create art in a vacuum, but were received within and interpreted by a complex culture.[62] Ancher’s paintings performed as cultural agents, but were was also affected by the conditions in which they were created.[63] Pollock emphasizes furthermore, “that the practice of painting is itself a site for the inscription of sexual difference.”[64] Assessment of Ancher’s painting on the whole has been devoid not only of examination of her practice as encoding sexual difference, but also of situating her art in reference to competing issues emerging from her marriage, as well as local, regional and cosmopolitan contexts.

Anna Ancher is clearly a beloved artist in Denmark. Short monographs as well as retrospective museum exhibits continue to attract audiences. Nonetheless, KVINFO director Elisabeth Møller Jensen chafes that Ancher did not earn a place in the new canon of Danish art for public school students in recent education reforms.[65] While Møller Jensen did not feel credentialed to argue whether Anna Ancher specifically merited

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[62] Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art*, 9.

[63] Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art*, 10.

[64] Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art*, 81.

[65] KVINFO is the Danish Center for Gender, Equality and Ethnicity. Elisabeth Møller Jensen brought up the canon debate in an interview 19 September 2013 at the research facility in Copenhagen.

inclusion in the canon debate, the director of KVINFO opined in an editorial to *Politiken* that representations of both genders by female as well as male artists must be included as representative of humanity.[66] The committee included in the official list only one woman, sculptor Astrid Noack (1888-1954), omitting a whole range of important female Danish artists. Pollock warns against this skewed result as essentializing gender. "The individual woman's particular strategies and practices are reduced to generalization of a sex—i.e. become non-specific and homogenous."[67] Although Noack may have been commissioned with the official sculpture of Anna Ancher at the Skagens Museum (1939), her individual practice did not present the same circumstances or choices as other significant artists from a pioneer generation of women artists, whether Ancher, Carl-Nielsen or Susette Skovgaard Holten (1863-1937).

Guénola Stork and Larsen have suggested corrections to the scholarship on Anna Ancher over the last decade. Stork is a new scholar who completed her dissertation on Anna Ancher in 2005. Larsen, the Head of Collections and Research at the Statens Museum for Kunst, has published extensively and curated a number of important exhibitions on Danish and Scandinavian modernism. Both consider her as an artist who kept abreast of cosmopolitan developments in Symbolism. Larsen and Stork compare Ancher to Hammershøi. Larsen even asserts how her art anticipates modernist developments in international painting of the twentieth century. Stork also identifies avant-garde elements of Ancher's work. She finds intersections between Ancher and not only Impressionists, but also the Intimists Édouard Vuillard (1868-1940) and Pierre

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[66] Elisabeth Møller Jensen, "Kunst og køn [Art and Gender]." *Politiken.dk* (22 April 2007).

[67] Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art*, 29.

Bonnard (1867-1947). However, as Stork qualifies, “One cannot completely attach her to the diverse ‘ism’ movements which flourished at the turn of the last century: she integrated certain aspects of them, interested herself in their quests, in the course of developing her own personality and style.”[68] Stork concludes that in contrast to other Skagen painters, a mood of “positive melancholy” prevails in late works such as *Interior: Brøndum’s Annex* (c. 1918, Fig. 0-7) where human absence imparts “an expression of a harmonious feeling between the painter and her object.”[69] Larsen suggests that failing to consider Ancher’s work in light of international developments of the 1890s and 1900s undermines the historian’s ability to make judgments about “cultural patterns and shifts in mentality.” Citing works like her *Portrait of the Artist’s Mother, Ane Hedvig Brøndum* (c. 1893) as well as *Interior: Brøndum’s Annex*, Larsen offers the thesis, “I find Anna Ancher’s avoidance of narrative, her rejection of the anecdote, fully comparable with the efforts at reduction characteristic of early Danish and international Modernism, in which the artists turn their attention away from the narrative and towards the formal, towards color, surface and form.”[70]

Re-viewing Anna Ancher in a New Frame

The expanded frame for contextualization of Anna Ancher’s painting provokes fascinating lines of inquiry. The widely repeated biographic narrative recounting Anna

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[68] Guénola Stork, "À l'ombre des jeunes filles d'Anna Ancher (1859-1935): Masque ou miroir?" *Gazette Des Beaux-Arts* 135, no. 1575 (April 2000): 256. Stork uses the word *Intimist* to describe the French painters including Edouard Vuillard (1868-1940) and Pierre Bonnard (1867-1947) whose work shifted to psychologically potent interiors in the 1890s.

[69] Stork, "À l'ombre des jeunes filles d'Anna Ancher (1859-1935): Masque ou miroir?" 258; Stork, “The Reconquest of Space,” in *I Am Anna: A Homage to Anna Ancher*, 48.

[70] Larsen, “Why can’t Anna be modern?” in *I Am Anna: A Homage to Anna Ancher*, 25.

Ancher presiding over Skagen painters' evening parties in the 1880s and her friendly, good-humored presence tell us little about her art and its restricted palette, the erasure of human presence from Skagen streets, and the ambiguous, abstracted space in later canvases. Likewise, a nod to her brief training under Pierre Puvis de Chavannes (1824-1898) during her 1889 stay in Paris does not sufficiently explain her innovative paintings of the next three decades. Obviously a more nuanced discussion of her pivotal work in the 1890s comes from a greater understanding of how the works related to important concurrent discussions of Symbolism or relate to later concerns of modernists in the early decades of the twentieth century. Furthermore, instead of fitting her awkwardly into an anachronistic structure that imposes a set of values and objectives important in the 1880s, this revised historic analysis respects Ancher's authority and autonomy in making her own decisions about professional practice and product. Along with artists in her networks she manifested a revolutionary sense of an artist's synthetic practice in creating works of art, and through the application of paint and color she created affirmative visual translations of imperceptible ideas and emotions.

Ancher's later career has been inadequately explored. Chapter Four of the dissertation addresses the overlap between her paintings of rural piety and traditional farm laborers with the international phenomenon of primitivism in avant-garde painting by renowned painters Gauguin and van Gogh. Furthermore her choices and treatment of rural subjects point to specific religious practices and socioeconomic political crises in Denmark. Additionally, most historians fail to adequately investigate how the naked walls and empty spaces in her interiors connect to emerging modernist aesthetics in domestic construction that advocated sparse decoration and a return to planar, white

surface treatment. This critical shift in architecture and interior design indicates a key marker of modernism and parallels a similar push against the overwrought and fussy clothing fashion of the late nineteenth century. Chapter Five explores Ancher's painting in relation to architects and designers with whom she had strong connections and who pushed toward the development of Danish modern. This chapter also explores how her interiors radically inverted bourgeois gender norms.

Anna Ancher's painting participated in all these debates without resting firmly at any one position or tendency. The Conclusion of the thesis considers how the paintings of her mother from around 1905 until her death in 1916 integrate many of the modern artistic movements, especially Symbolism and Vitalism. Her portraits of her mother reveal the complexity of her practice, while also providing an opportunity to examine some of her most innovative technical accomplishments.

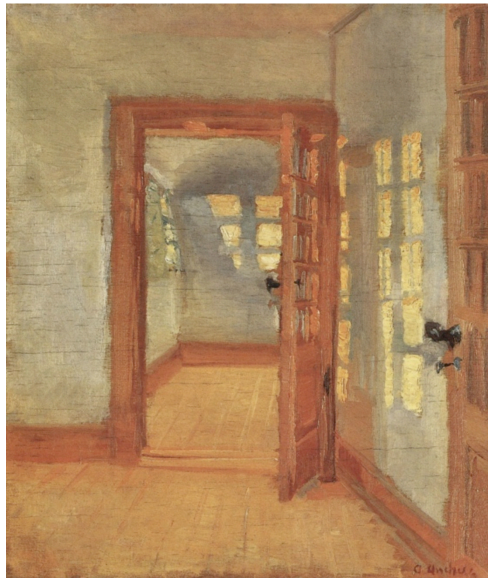

Figure 0-7: Anna Ancher, *Interior, Brøndum's Annex* (c. 1918)

CHAPTER 1

CONTROLLING THE IMAGE:
ASSERTING IDENTITY AND AUTONOMY

In the decade that followed her debut with *Old Man Whittling* (1880), Anna Ancher began to build a career as a professional painter. As a pioneer of Danish female artists, she faced challenges of exhibition and professional recognition. Ancher achieved considerable success in advancing her occupation. Her *Old Couple Plucking Gulls*

Figure 1-1: Anna Ancher. *Old Couple Plucking Gulls.* c. 1883

(c.1883, Fig. 1-1) earned favorable recognition in 1883 when it was first exhibited in Copenhagen and was awarded a silver medal at the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1889.[1] Tobacco merchant and Skagen patron Heinrich Hirschsprung bought the picture in 1888 for his Copenhagen collection. Nonetheless, painted representations of the artist from the 1880s by her husband Michael and by Peder Severin Krøyer neglected her identity as a professional artist, even while she negotiated these first steps of establishing

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[1] *I am Anna: A Homage to Anna Ancher,* ed. Mette Bøgh Jensen (Skagen: Skagens Museum, 2009), 148, exh. cat.

her independent career. Instead, the male artists depicted Anna Ancher as fashionably attired, essentialized in nature, and conforming to bourgeois gender roles. Danish audiences thus associated her image with modernity. By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, Michael Ancher's painted representation of Anna in reform dress reflects her increasingly independent outlook and autonomous practice.

During the 1880s Krøyer and Michael Ancher constructed a visual brand for the new Skagen art colony. In widely disseminated images, their representations of Skagen juxtaposed the grueling labor of fishermen and maritime rescue operations, against the revelry and camaraderie of the young artists who arrived to join the group. These Skagen colonists were well traveled; some with extended stays or annual returns to Paris as well as other European cities. All spent a good part of every year in Copenhagen, which at the time was the urban center of Scandinavian art. Its bourgeois clients such as the

Figure 1-2: Peder Severin Krøyer. *Hip! Hip! Hurra!* (1884-8)

Hirschsprung family, with their new wealth, spent profligately on fashions and paintings informed by their own connections to Paris and London. Krøyer and Ancher, who

marketed to patrons from both Paris and Copenhagen, complicated depictions of Skagen's unindustrialized coastal setting with evidence of leisure and haute couture, elements of urban modernism that appealed to such audiences. By 1890 according to their canvases, more fashionable women strolling than men hauling catch populated Skagen's beaches. The painted image of Michael's wife, artist Anna Ancher, appeared as a key constant in the male artists' early formula defining Skagen's particular colonial identity in the 1880s. She signified Skagen's colonial links with Paris and London through her stylish attire as seen in in Krøyer's *Hip! Hip! Hurra!* (1884-8, Fig. 1-2). Michael Ancher's two large works, *My Wife* (1884, Fig. 1-3) and *A Baptism* (1883-1888, Fig. 1-4), on the other hand, established her role as a mother and a wife, while also situating both he the painter and she the painted subject within the Modern Breakthrough.

Figure 1-3: Michael Ancher. *My Wife* (1883-8)

Neither man conveyed Anna Ancher's occupation as artist. As discussed below, women faced both limited educational opportunities and pressure to conform to

conventional social expectations. Ancher had more financial success and earned greater recognition than most of her female peers. By 1889, she was the recipient of the Hielmstierne-Rosencrone scholarship given to young artists (under forty). Her centrality in the works by Krøyer and Michael Ancher during the 1880s may have provided advantageous publicity for Anna Ancher's professional career by creating association with the French and the Danish avant-garde. Her represented image may have also increased access to the bourgeois patrons of Paris and Copenhagen. Despite the challenges of exhibition, critical acceptance, and gender expectations in Denmark's fluid and changeable art scene in the last decades of the nineteenth century, Anna Ancher emerged as a preeminent and internationally recognized artist affiliated with modernist discourse but also successful within the confines of the officially endorsed exhibition system.

Michael Ancher's Bourgeois Wife of the Modern Breakthrough

Michael Ancher's contemporaneous images of Anna Ancher in *A Baptism* and *My Wife* showed competition with Krøyer, yet also complemented the more internationally renowned artist's project of image making for Skagen. Michael Ancher concerned himself more on the one hand with his wife's reputation and negotiating his unprecedented role as the husband of a professional artist, while simultaneously attempting to secure his own position as an artist of the Modern Breakthrough. Like Krøyer, he accomplished this through portraits of Anna Ancher with similar attention to dress and setting, constructing images that attracted patrons, including the new industrial elite as well as the Danish royal family.

My Wife shocked modern audiences in its straightforward indication of Anna Ancher's pregnancy and implication of sexual intimacy. In the salon scale of the canvas, Ancher reduced the distance between viewer and his pregnant wife. The observer physically sits inside the husband's home, by his entryway, gazing slightly up at his wife's swollen abdomen, suggesting the fruits of their marriage. Gravidity amounted to observable evidence of marital intercourse, not acceptable subject matter for spectacle or display. The master's hunting dog also points its snout at Anna Ancher's pregnant womb.

Figure 1-4: Michael Ancher. *A Baptism* (1883-8)

Svanholm writes,"It was too embarrassing thus to suggest sexuality, which belonged only at home in the private sphere."[2] This representation embroiled Anna Ancher as represented object into a milieu where she as the artist subject also became part of a highly charged Scandinavian controversy about private versus public domain.

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[2] "Det var alt for pinligt at komme så tæt på seksualiteten, den hørte kun hjemme i privatsfæren. " Lise Svanholm, *Malerne på Skagen* (Denmark: Gyldendal, 2001), 82.

Although it is difficult to determine whether Michael Ancher intended to be intentionally provocative, the painting attracted some criticism when it was exhibited at Charlottenborg in 1884. His friend painter Krøyer, however, wrote enthusiastically to Ancher: “The portrait of your wife is particularly beautiful and restrained in a painterly sense, a truly noble and beautiful portrait. It is amusing that it gives offense to the audience, especially the female, offending their 'modesty feeling', is it not great?”[3] Michael Ancher reduced the distance between observer or audience and the realities of private life.

Jens Ferdinand Willumsen a few years later would go further in brazenly displaying fecundity, scandalizing audiences at Den frie’s exhibition in 1892. *Fertility,* his etching of his very pregnant wife, provoked more deliberately (Fig. 1-5). Willumsen

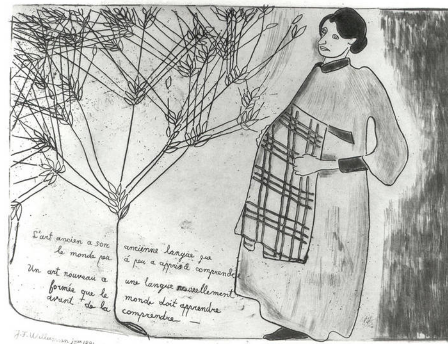

Figure 1-5: Jens Ferdinand Willusen. *Fertility* (1891)

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[3] Den Hirschsprung Samling, “Det Moderne Gennembrud: Portræt Af Min Hustru. Malerinden Anna Ancher,” http://hirschsprung.dk/Image.aspx?id=15andcol=6 accessed 27 December 2012. “Det er vanskeligt at afgøre, om provokationen var tilsigtet, men maleriet vakte en vis opmærksomhed, da det blev udstillet på Charlottenborg i 1884. Malervennen P.S. Krøyer skrev begejstret til Ancher: *”... din Kones Portræt er jo særdeles smukt og behersket i malerisk Henseende, et rigtig nobelt og smukt Portræt. Det er komisk nok, at det vækker Anstød hos Publikum, navnlig det kvindelige, det støder deres ’Blufærdighedsfølelse’, er det ikke herligt?”*

described his objective in his statement for the catalogue, “A pregnant woman and a grain that continuously sprouts as symbol of reproduction.”[4] Willumsen’s form, a crudely drawn etching, explicitly linked the fertility of plants to the reproduction of humans.[5] The artist juxtaposed a ripe ear of corn with a sketch of his own pregnant wife, drawn in peasant apron. Willumsen’s representation of fertility differs in execution and imagery from Ancher’s, but the modern theme of sexuality and gender roles similarly disturbed viewers with its implication of the presence of the male artist’s seed. The public, pregnant body of Ancher’s artist wife entangled her as subject in the controversy.

While pregnant women continued to be active in Danish daily life, they were to be discreet. European fashion catalogues only obliquely referenced maternity garments.[6] Viben Bech notes that in Denmark, the princess style worn by Anna Ancher in *My Wife* was increasingly popular in the 1880s for use at home rather than for visits. Its fuller cut facilitated breathing. Pregnant women could easily alter the seams to accommodate their changing figure.[7] This dress was also popular among working class women, seen in *Seamstress* (1880) in the painting by Christian Krohg (Fig. 1-6). Anna Ancher’s dress might hint at a similar status as a female worker like Krohg’s painted subject. Krohg made the evidence of labor clearly evident with precisely rendered sewing machine and

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[4] Title in Christiania 1892: "En frugtsommelig Kvinde og et af sig selv stadig fremspirende Ax som Symbol paa Formeringen.” Translation by Gry Hedin, “Representing Evolution: Jens Ferdinand Willumsen’s Fertility and the Natural Sciences,” *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide,* vol. 11, no. 3 (Autumn 2012) under the heading “The Sprouting Seed: Fecundity and Irregularity.”

[5] Gry Hedin, “Representing Evolution: Jens Ferdinand Willumsen’s Fertility and the Natural Sciences,” *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide,* vol. 11, no. 3 (Autumn 2012).

6 Alden O’Brien, “Maternity Dress,” The Berg Companion to Fashion, ed. Valerie Steele (New York: Berg, 2010), 502.

[7] Viben Bech. *Moden 1840-1890: Danske Dragter.* Copenhagen: National Museet and Nyt Nordisk Forlag, 1989. P. 154, figure 66.

Figure 1-6: Christian Krohg, *Seamstress* (1885)

unfinished goods. Michael Ancher, however, framed his wife within the doors of their shared domestic space rather than indicating brushes or canvases or any further evidence of his wife's public success with *Old Couple Plucking Gulls*.

Michael Ancher pictured his own artist circle in *A Baptism,* arranging painters Krøyer, Adrian Stokes (1854-1935) and Marianne Preindlsberger Stokes (1855-1927), Eilif Peterssen (1852-1928) and Krohg behind his wife and child. The image is an artificial reconstruction of the celebration. The Stokes were friends of Krøyer's from Pont-Aven who first came to Skagen in 1885, over a year after the actual baptism.[8] In the painting, Anna wears a deep golden-hued dress in heavy fabric. Horizontal pulls of the bodice indicate a tight lacing across the chest. Both women have exaggerated and elaborate bustles, as advertised by the preeminent Charles Worth and other fashion

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[8] Michael Jacobs, *The Good and Simple Life: Artist Colonies in Europe and America* (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1985), 102.

houses in Paris from 1885 through 1887. In the convention for proper married women, both Ancher and Stokes wear their hair pulled tightly and neatly around their heads.

Svanholm claims that the pretense of the constructed image was evident when it was first exhibited. The work received conflicting reviews at the annual Charlottenborg salon in the spring of 1888. Skagener Holger Drachmann harshly condemned the work in the newspaper *Berlingske Tidende*:

> A baptism! Well; no one is entitled to ask whether the action is sacred or profane. But it is a baptism without action - just a dozen model figures, among which one recognizes some portraits - a completely empty set, void of context … no, we have really lowered the level of artistic significance, the depth of feeling, it is contrived to bring the outside observer into the anecdote.[9]

Drachmann criticized the theatricality and the lack of milieu. The scene appeared more as a staged tableau rather than an authentic memento. He used the word "contrived" and complained of its lack of "artistic significance." Drachmann's criticism must have been particularly scathing as it came from a friend and one of the pioneers of the art colony. Furthermore, Drachmann championed the Naturalist approach to art to which Ancher aspired in the image. Svanholm reports, nonetheless, that Drachmann gained enemies with this criticism and not all agreed on his assessment of the artificiality of the scene, and the lack of integration between figure and setting. For instance, Karl Madsen, one of the original artists to "discover" Skagen, and one of Michael Ancher's "harshest critics" a decade later refuted the language of Drachmann's critique and lauded the painting's composition, color handling and solemn mood.[10]

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[9] Holger Drachmann, *Berlingske Tidende,* 15.4 (1887), quoted in Svanholm, *Malerne på Skagen*, 92 and note 52.

[10] Svanholm, *Malerne på Skagen*, 92 referencing an article in *Politiken* (21 October 1893).

Michael Ancher's representations of his wife applied the principles of the Modern Breakthrough: they aspired to authenticity by conveying domestic subjects and thereby creating a sort of historical narrative of private life. A significant portion of his visualizations centered on his own family and pivoted around his wife as a mother and homemaker, a complement and contrast to his own strong masculine image as outdoorsman. In painting their intimate life, Ancher invited viewers into the artists' private family space.

The Modern Breakthrough's goals for accurate depictions of modern life required close scrutiny of the home. Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906), the Norwegian pioneer of Naturalist drama, likewise had drawn the audience into a close and private sphere of families in *The Doll's House,* which premiered in Copenhagen's Royal Playhouse in 1879. Inger-Lise Hjordt-Vetlesen stresses how Ibsen's plays exposed private family life to outside viewers and shrank the physical distance between subject and object:

> The Naturalistic drama narrowed down, quite literally, the point of view. With its fourth wall missing – the one between audience and stage – the stage was meant to represent a drawing room and, exactly as it was in 'real' life, communication was limited to the room and the people present in it, without seeming to address either something divine or the audience. [11]

Michael Ancher painted his family's story that allegedly represented the authoratative account of their private space "exactly as it was in 'real' life." However, whatever his intention, the fourth wall was not entirely missing. In "real life" their home was the site of artmaking by the husband and even more exclusively, by the wife. Although Ancher invited people to view his wife in her role as a bourgeois married woman and mother, he blocked the audience from viewing his wife as artist, a profession located in her home.

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[11] Inger-Lise Hjordt-Vetlesen, "Modernity's Female Text." Transl. Gaye Kynoch. *The History of Nordic Women's Literature* (Copenhagen: KVINFO and Gothenburg: KvinnSam, 2012), 13.

Confronting the Norms

Changes in women's roles and the rise of the feminist movement challenged masculine identity, and may have destabilized the balance of relations between Michael and Anna Ancher. The 1880s saw the formal organization of the feminist movement, an increase in education, and professional opportunities for women in Denmark. Kristina Sjörgen recounts how the formalization of the feminist movement in the 1880s into organized groups simultaneously correlates with an increase in images and texts celebrating masculine virility. This cultural pattern broke in 1915, when women secured the vote, and their rights campaign and feminist discourse retreated from the headlines.[12] Margareta Gynning specifically credited Michael Ancher and Krohg as key fabricators of the strong physical image of the "middle-class male ideal with the muscular, heroic body at the centre."[13] Ancher's representations of middle and working-class men stressed their bravery, strength, and discipline, and fit into the cultural pattern that lasted until the end of the First World War.

Michael Ancher's paradigm emphasized gender differences, and his emphasis on family, marriage and home in paintings of his wife melded easily with capitalist values.[14] At the end of the century, however, economic dislocation contributed to the shift in domestic relations. "The breadwinner – *paterfamilias* – was under threat. His authority, his masculinity, was being challenged by market forces, by the changed management

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[12] Kristina Sjögren, "Transgressive Femininity: Gender in the Scandinavian Modern Breakthrough," Ph.D. Diss., (University College London, 2010), 178.

[13] Margareta Gynning, *Nordic Artist Couples around 1900,* abridged and transl. by Walton Glyn Jones (Denmark: Skagens Museum, 2006), 8, a folder published on the occasion of the exhibition of the same name at the Skagens Museum.

[14] See Ken Montague's description of capitalist emphasis on the family in, "The Aesthetics of Hygiene: Aesthetic Dress, Modernity, and the Body as Sign," *Journal of Design History,* Vol. 7, No. 2 (1994), 97. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1316079 accessed 29 May 2013.

structures in government and society – and by the emerging army of women."[15] Michael Ancher's financial position was more precarious than that of the Brøndum family and his ability to support a family by no means secure. The couple initially lived in an outbuilding on *her* family's property and struggled to finance travel study. The moment of his greatest financial insecurity coincided with the greatest incidence of fishermen paintings, during the 1870s and 1880s.

As an artist couple, Michael and Anna Ancher navigated new ground as they established parallel careers. While Michael ostensibly supported Anna Ancher's success, he repeatedly portrayed her fashionably clothed and in traditional roles. She shares intimate moments with her daughter in the home and garden; she reads with Helga or plays the piano, and does needlework according to the undated *Feminine Occupation* (Fig. 1-7).[16] In such works the painted Anna Ancher conforms to expectations for a middle-class wife and therefore fails to undermine her husband's masculinity. While he frequently painted many images of *her* between 1880 and 1900, comparably few examples exist of Anna Ancher painting her husband during this period. In his practice, therefore, Michael Ancher conformed to the accepted norm that males molded women.[17]

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[15] Hjordt-Vetlesen, "Modernity's Female Text," 8.

[16] In *Julenissen star model* (*The Christmas Nisse as Model*,1888) while Anna Ancher might be holding a pen in her hand to draw, the focus of the canvas is clearly on the bond between mother and child. Other examples of paintings featuring Anna Ancher in bourgeois female roles include *Anna og Helga i haven* (*Anna and Helga in Garden, c*. 1889) and *Anna ved klaveret i veststuen i Anchers Hus i Skagen*,(Anna at the Piano in the West Room in Ancher's House, n.d.)

[17] Sjögren, "Transgressive Femininity: Gender in the Scandinavian Modern Breakthrough," 165. She quotes Strindberg's *Le Plaidoyer* "Cette femme s'était inoculée dans mon sang, nos courants de fluide nerveuse s'étaient mis en tension, ses germes femelles demandaient la force motrice de mes germes mâles, son âme avait soif de mes faculties intellectuelles, et mon esprit aspirait à se verser dans ce vase subtile." Sjögren explains "The passage is a representation of men as creators of women, typical of this time."

When her husband exhibited representations of Anna Ancher performing these accepted domestic roles he counterbalanced her visibility in the art market. Quite likely her autonomy threatened her husband. His wife allegedly "did not have time to pose in her fine golden silk dress" for *A Baptism*, and her rising acclaim had begun to eclipse his own reputation.[18] As Inger-Lise Hjordt-Vetlesen writes, "The new female profile – the woman who went out and made herself visible and audible – touched directly on a mental vulnerability in the men."[19] The "new woman's" activities in exterior and public spaces contrasted to the pregnant Anna Ancher's confinement within the doorframe of the domestic space in *My Wife*. While she looks outdoors, her husband's dog blocks her exit from the home. The represented situation suggests Michael's ambivalence and parallels the protagonist in *Le Plaidoyer d'un fou* (*The Defense of a Fool*, 1887) by Swede August Strindberg (1849-1912), who announced that pregnancy would actually "cure" his wife from her unconventional and undesirable aspirations to pursue her career in the theater.[20]

Figure 1-7: Michael Ancher. *Feminine Occupation* (undated)

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[18]Svanholm, *Malerne på Skagen*, 89.

[19]Hjordt-Vetlesen, "Modernity's Female Text," 8.

[20] Sjögren, "Transgressive Femininity," 175, 177.

Strindberg was notoriously misogynous, unlike Michael Ancher, who did attempt to reconcile more sympathetically with his wife's public image. By using the large-scale format of history painting for both *My Wife* and *A Baptism* instead of a conventionally sized genre painting, the artist indicated that the paintings of his wife were designed for public exhibition. Despite Michael's depictions of normative roles, the scale and visibility of *My Wife* and *A Baptism* actually functioned to make his wife a public figure.

Nonetheless, despite many accounts about the harmonious working relationship between the Anchers, Anna Ancher's independence contributed to subtle tensions in the pair evident from the time of their courtship forward. As seen in her letters to her cousin, Anna complained about Michael's narrow choice of fishermen as his favorite subject, and she delighted when the unfavorable weather forced him to paint a different subject or when they took a break and worked on the double portrait.[21] Michael Ancher travelled more freely than Anna for both professional purposes and medical treatments in Wiesbaden. Anna Ancher was the primary caretaker for daughter Helga, and had some responsibilities to her mother and at the family inn. In fact, Svanholm suggests that Michael Ancher often upbraided his wife in his letters from abroad for assorted shortcomings. In June of 1890, Anna retorted with spirit and strength:

> I received the letter today from Wiesbaden, but I must have faith you are not crazy, I was both saddened and angry at once, and you must come up with a proper explanation about what it is you meant, whether you really have become so completely silly, i d i o t i c down there, in tedious Wiesbaden.[22]

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[21] Anna Ancher to Martha Møller Johansen (9 March 1881) and (27 November 1882), in *Breve fra Anna Ancher,* ed. Lise Svanholm, (Denmark: Gyldendal, 2005), 66 and 68. Lise Svanholm also discussed this in editorial comments, 67.

[22] Anna Ancher to Michael Ancher (9 June 1890) in *Breve fra Anna Ancher,* ed. Svanholm, 99. Stretched spacing is Svanholm's editorial decision added to approximate the handwritten emphasis.

Michael Ancher's reproaches from abroad while his wife was home with their daughter brought about an uncharacteristically venomous rejoinder. She complained of problems of miscommunication, of the uncertainty of knowing where he was or what he was doing.[23]

Michael's paintings *A Baptism* and *My Wife* portrayed traditional milestones in nineteenth-century Danish families: the arrival of the first child and its baptism. Nonetheless, he seemed overly eager to provide assurances of accepted gender roles. Furthermore, both *A Baptism* and *My Wife* differ from the common portrayal of the liberated and professional women as overtly masculine with neglected homes and emasculated spouses. His paintings counter portrayals in even the left-wing press in Copenhagen remarking on mannish hair cuts of non-conformist women. As one example,

Figure 1-8: Anna Ancher. *Maid in the Kitchen* (1883/1886)

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[23] Anna Ancher to Michael Ancher (June 1890) in *Breve fra Anna Ancher,* ed. Svanholm, 100.

a visual of Sofie Christensen's cropped hair is reiterated in the text of *Politiken's* 1893 announcement that she was the first female carpenter to advance her status to journeyman.[24] In contrast, in Michael Ancher's paintings good posture, coiffed hair, acceptable fit, and dignified accessories convey his wife's propriety and femininity.

As early as 1883 Anna Ancher elevated representations of women's labor to a principal motif in her oeuvre. *Maid in the Kitchen* (Fig. 1-8), an entry to the 1889 Paris Exposition Universelle, dignified the manual efforts of a female domestic worker. The painting drew many stylistic elements from seventeenth-century Dutch art, a favorite of Modern Breakthrough painters. Ancher referenced the tools and products of female labor; the meal's raw ingredients together with preparation utensils create a still-life that balances the figure. The shift in the maid's hip position suggests muscle strain from unrelieved standing. The contrast to the strong sunny backlight entering from the window exaggerates the claustrophobic interior while also suggesting escape, an effect amplified by the second window off to one side as well as the open door. This early example of Ancher's painting in many ways conforms to the tenets of authenticity and social realism of the Modern Breakthrough. *Maid in the Kitchen* also testifies to the artist's growing commercial success. It was in tobacconist Heinrich Hirschsprung's important collection of modern Danish painting by 1907.

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[24] "Frøken og Snedkersvend,"*Politiken* (28 April 1893), 2.

Figure 1-9: Viggo Johansen. *The Artist's Wife Arranging Flowers* (1884)

Ancher's references to class, work, and interior diverged from a similar composition by Johansen of 1884, *The Artist's Wife Arranging Flowers* (Figure 1-9). The differences suggest a visual dialogue between the two artists, both of whom were members of the Skagen Art Colony, but derive from a different and gendered perspective of viewing. As a nineteenth-century European woman, Ancher would conventionally share domestic space with servants and children; the kitchen was within the sphere of her homemaking as represented by Michael. Hers is an intimate painting of a maid in the kitchen, despite the difference in class between the painted subject and the artist.[25] The labor of a woman artist represents the labor of a woman preparing a meal, thus establishing an equivalence between painter and model. In contrast, Johansen is a male

[25] Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 1988), 88-9. Pollock observes a fundamental difference in the representations by Mary Cassatt and Edgar Degas of working-class women.

observer, who like Michael Ancher depicts his wife confined within a feminine space, performing tasks associated with the bourgeois home.

In *Maid in the Kitchen,* Anna Ancher handled her painted subject with respect and dignity as someone who to some degree shared the "spaces of femininity" and, within these, formed different relationships than males who entered a woman's space.[26] Hilary Fraser argues, furthermore, that some women of Ancher's generation were quite aware that their vision and differing perspectives had been excluded from the historical account. According to Fraser, although women were the central focus of modernity's "spectacle," most often represented as muses or the objects of desire, they aspired to claim authoritive positions of agency as spectators, artists, historians or critics.[27] In the paintings by Michael and by Krøyer, Anna's clothing, features and actions made her an appealing object for the male gaze, but not an artist or image-maker, someone with her own perspective. Krohg assumed a different but equally dominant and intrusive position toward the rural poor in *Sleeping Mother* and the working woman in *Seamstress,* where the act of painting and viewing is an intrusion on the sleeping women, whose mouths hang open exposing their vulnerability. Johansen, like Anna Ancher, shows the back of his subject, concealing her face. However, Ancher's backlighting more radically removed nearly every individual trait from the representation of the maid, and her body remained relatively formless in the functional workclothes and heavy shoes. In contrast, Johansen highlighted the porcelain skin, rosy complexion and long neck of his wife, whose

[26] Pollock, *Vision and Difference,* 50-90. The term comes from Chapter Three, "Modernity and the Spaces of Feminity."

[27] Hilary Fraser, "Women and the ends of art history: Vision and Corporeality in Nineteenth-century Critical Discourse," *Victorian Studies* 42, no. 1 (Oct. 1, 1998): 81, 88, 94. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3829127.

silhouette reveals gentle, feminine curves subtly replicated in the shadow. The female artist looking at a female subject instead removed her from the male gaze, whereas the male artist portrayed his desired female object. Similar to the painted Anna, Martha Møller Johansen (her cousin) was fashionably dressed in *Artist's Wife Arranging Flowers*, but not performing an essential or productive task like food preparation. Her black ensemble with its tasteful trim, combined with the display of brass and porcelain on the shelves, indicated a comfortable middle-class setting. The artist's wife becomes a part of the home's decorative scheme. Even her activity is presumably to prettify the shared domestic space. Johansen even suggested abundance, as some of the stems have fallen to the floor. His lighting from an ambiguous source implies an intrinsic radiation from the home independent of external sources. In fact there is no easy egress from the space as the door is clearly closed.

Marketing Skagen

Krøyer's iconic representation of Skagen Art Colony, *Hip, Hip, Hurra!* (1884-1887) remains one of the key constructed images of the colony, purchased by an important Swedish collector, widely reproduced in publications both at the time and now, and circulated by the artists themselves. He ensured the painting had a place of honor at the Exposition Universelle in 1889. Its display of camaraderie reportedly prompted two English artists who saw the painting in Paris 1889, to go to Skagen, where they recounted their delight in being among the artists who they had seen depicted.[28] Most of the key principals identified with Skagen colony including the painters Krøyer, Krohg, both

[28] Mette Bøgh Jensen, *At male sit privatliv: Skagensmalernes selviscenesættelse* (Skagen: Skagens Museum, 2005), 94-5.

Anchers, Johansen and Oscar Björck (1860-1929) gather around the table in a summer afternoon. Anna Ancher's youthful face and fashionably attired figure are key figures in the painting.

Commercial considerations and market taste made it imperative for Krøyer to connect his art circle in Skagen to both the Parisian avant-garde and the most forward-thinking painters in Scandinavia. "Skagen painters belonged to a generation of artists, who no longer worked for the king or the fatherland, but were a part of the free marketplace."[29] It also testified to his artistic status and connections within an established Scandinavian network. He created at least four similar canvases (which placed him, for instance, in 1884 at a plein-air gathering at Grez-sur-Loing in France with Swedes Carl Larsson, his future wife Karin Bergöö, and Björck). Later in 1890, he represented himself in a tavern in Cività d'Antino, of the Abruzzo region of Italy with fellow Dane Kristian Zahrtmann, Krøyer's colleague at the Artist's Studio School. Images of convivial artist gatherings indeed affiliated Krøyer with the contemporary practice of Parisian Impressionists. Mednick explains that the exhibition of these images brought important publicity to Skagen artists because they were suitable for and appealing to both Danish and international markets.[30]

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[29] Jensen, *At male sit privatliv,* 54.

[30] Thor J. Mednick, "Skagen: Art and National Romanticism in Nineteenth-Century Denmark." Ph.D. Dissertation, Indiana University. (December 2009), 115-6.

Griselda Pollock's concept of the avant-garde gambit is instructive in reading Krøyer's canvas as a marketed commodity. He stood to profit from the painting's alignment with the painter Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919), who sold the *comparandus, Luncheon of the Boating Party* (1880-1, Fig. 1-10) to the Parisian dealer Durand Ruel for 6,000 francs, increasing publicity for the painting.[31] Pollock suggests three requisite components of a modern artist's capitalist practice in relation to recognized leaders: reference, deference and difference.[32] Krøyer, whose practice was supported through sales and commissions, necessarily practiced these strategies as can be seen in aligning *Hip! Hip! Hurra!* with Renoir. The jovial, friendly and seemingly spontaneous gathering in the sunlight of *Luncheon of the Boating Party* (1880-1), are reiterated by the Danish painter in reference and deference to the style and type of an acknowledged Parisian painter. Krøyer could have seen *Boating Party* in Paris in 1881, where it was exhibited in the spring at the public annual exhibition of the Cercle des Arts

Figure 1-10: Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Luncheon of the Boating Party* (1880)

[31] Anne Distel, *Renoir* (New York: Abbeville Press Publishers, 2010), 194.

[32] Griselda Pollock, *Avant-Garde Gambits 1888-1893: Gender and the Color of Art History,* 1992 Walter Neurath Memorial Lecture, (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1993), 29.

libéraux or in subsequent hangings at Durand-Ruel.[33] Krøyer differentiated himself from Renoir through identification with the particulars of the Skagen Colony.

Hip! Hip! Hurra! referenced Renoir's *Luncheon of the Boating Party* on multiple levels. Krøyer derived the scene from a summer luncheon party held in 1884 in the garden of the Ancher's new home. The colonist painters posed as models to reconstruct the gathering for Krøyer's ambitious canvas.[34] Renoir's colleagues and acquaintances had gathered in the village of Chatou, a prime location for leisure boating, in sunshine and fresh air. A Parisian critic at that time made note of Renoir's table full of bottles, the strange reflections and the lack of idealization in the figures, elements repeated in Krøyer's Skagen painting.[35] In 1881 and again when shown in 1882, only a few Parisian observers recognized the specific identities of Renoir's models; audiences were clear, however, that it was a gathering of individuals from many different occupations and social classes.[36] In contrast, Danish audiences easily identified the portraits in Krøyer's painting as the core members of the Skagen art colony, recognition that seems to have been of critical importance to the artist. Even visitors felt that the canvas invited familiarity with the Skagen painters. The British painter Thomas Gotch described the

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[33] This dating is from "The Earliest Public Exhibition of Renoir's *Luncheon of the Boating Party*" by Marc Simpson, *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 139, No. 1129 (April 1997), 261. http://www.jstor.org/stable/887434 accessed 22 May 20, 2013.

[34] Jacobs, *The Good and Simple Life*, 102.

[35] 'Un vieux Parisien': 'Exposition du Cercle des Arts libéraux,' *Le Musée artistique et littéraire,* V [1881], p. 331. Cited by Simpson, "The Earliest Public Exhibition of Renoir's *Luncheon of the Boating Party*," 261.

[36] Eliza E. Rathbone, "*Renoir's Luncheon of the Boating Party*: Tradition and the New," in *Impressionists on the Seine: A Celebration of Renoir's* Luncheon of the Boating Party, by Katherine Rothkopf, Richard R. Brettell, and Charles S. Moffett; ed. Eliza E. Rathbone (Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint and the Phillips Collection, 1997), 40-1, exh. cat.

elation when his traveling companions arrived in the Danish town and found themselves "suddenly being among the people, who they had seen depicted in Krøyer's painting."[37]

Krøyer also referenced the elements of fashion, youth and leisure evident in the French exemplar. Renoir portrayed a group of young friends in contemporary dress. Both French and Danish artists provided sufficient markers to locate precisely the gathering on the terrace of the Restaurant Fournaise or in the Skagen garden. [38] Eliza Rathbone's description of the French painting can be equally applied to the Danish: a still life of wine bottles and fruit set on a "white tablecloth, which, with its folds still visible from pressing, is alive with the blues and greens of reflected light."[39] There are even formal and structural similarities as Renoir and Kroyer each divided the composition on a diagonal and identified focal points through the play of sunlight.

Scandinavian bourgeois customers would have recognized their own class in the painting. For instance, Krøyer emphasized the importance of the aspiring Brøndum family as hosts to the colony. He highlighted the smartly dressed Degn Brøndum, who was a socially astute and integral part of the artist society.[40] Krøyer linked him to his sister Anna along an axis created through contrasting color, the Brøndums in the lightest colors with the highest degree of dappled sunlight on their faces and hands. The status and occupation of the Brøndum brother and sister contrasted markedly with the general poverty of the fishermen and farm laborers in the region. Nina Lübbren points out that

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[37] Jensen, *At male sit privatliv,* 94.

[38] Robert L. Herbert, *Impressionism: Art, Leisure, and Parisian Society* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 248.

[39] Rathbone, "*Renoir's Luncheon of the Boating Party*: Tradition and the New," 52.

[40] Jensen, *At male sit privatliv*, 71.

“The Brøndum-Møller family was upwardly mobile: the millwrights and shopkeepers of [one] generation became the parents and parents-in-law of company owners, textile merchants, school teachers, painters, art critics and of Denmark’s first political scientist.”[41] Brøndum’s Hotel benefited financially from both the artists’ patronage of the hotel in the 1880s and from the increase in tourist trade in the 1890s. The painting linked artists, innkeepers and setting for its audiences.

In addition to its role as an important identifier of the group to customers and markets, Kroyer employed this image like a luxury trademark for the Skagen colony. He sketched the scene in reverse as a New Year’s card sent in either 1884 or 1885 to Oscar Björck in Sweden (Fig. 1-11). The image on the card shifted the standing men to the foreground and caricatured Anna seated at the back of the table. Five of the depicted individuals signed the card, suggesting that it functioned as an emblem of their collective identity. On the card, the artist renders both the subject and the object of Skagen art-making. The spirited colonists toast around the table, while in the margins, a sketch of a

Figure 1-11: Peder Severin Krøyer. *Card to Oscar Björck* (c. 1884/1885)

[41] Lübbren, *Rural Artists’ Colonies in Europe, 1870-1910*, 72.

long, horizontal Skagen house, a suggestion of the beach, and a contour drawing of a fisherman reference the images the colonists made.

In his references to the French capital Krøyer showed a completely different side of Skagen than seen in Michael Ancher's paintings. Krøyer centered on the collegial artistic life as opposed to the heroic rescues and impoverished living conditions of the coastal town. In Krøyer's painting, the party seems to have been going on for some time. There are four opened and apparently emptied bottles of champagne on the table along with other brightly colored flasks and decanters. There is nearly one bottle of alcohol per adult at the table, consistent with the mythic party atmosphere in Skagen. Although the gesture of the toast creates an illusion of spontaneity, Krøyer has in fact manipulated the figures in a carefully arranged composition. Subtle shifts from a small original sketch in the Skagens Museum emphasized merrymaking in the final version and asserted his own importance to the group. Krøyer positioned himself at one of the focal points of the composition as a sort of artistic center. Therese A. Dolan pointed out that there is an implied line connecting Krøyer's toasting arm to Anna Ancher's raised glass that quotes Michelangelo's *Creation of Man* at the center of the Sistine Chapel. Krøyer in this self-portrait becomes like God reaching to his created image of Ancher.[42]

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[42] Tamar Garb, "Gender and Representation," in *Modernity and Modernism: French Painting in the Nineteenth Century,* by Francis Frascina, Nigel Blake, Briony Fer, Tamar Garb and Charles Harrison, Modern Art Practices and Debates (New Haven: Yale University Press in conjunction with the Open University, 1993), 230. Garb identifies this as a normal linking in the period. "As the masculine God created the universe from the feminized earth, so the artist creates art from the materials at his disposal. And in this context, the mystery of creation is still conceived of in terms of traditional gender relationships."

Natural Female

Krøyer painted *Hip! Hip! Hurra* at a time of heated debate over women's fashion, health, and gender roles in his Scandinavian and French target markets. The artist conveyed specific gender roles in the image. Framed within a dense canopy of foliage, the women sit; the men stand and toast. Despite Anna Ancher's unique status as the only professional painter among the women represented, in the final painting Krøyer instead focused on her role as a fashionable bourgeois mother. Furthermore, his manipulations of sunlight, and the contrast of bright clothing of both mother and daughter against the darker jackets of the male artists foregrounded Ancher's arm in embrace of her daughter, thereby emphasizing the artist's conforming role as mother rather than her occupation as artist.

The organic bond established by Krøyer between woman and child, Anna Ancher and her daughter Helga, again referenced Renoir while establishing some difference from the French center. Renoir's subjects gathered on the terrace of a public café. In contrast, Krøyer's intimate Skagen garden setting may have conferred a measure of respectability on the gathering and therefore marketability to bourgeois audiences. Women might linger, socialize and drink with their male friends in privacy, whereas Renoir's setting might have been too risqué for the Danish middle-class. In both French Impressionist and Skagen paintings, a garden functioned as private domestic space, where gatherers were protected by the canopy of foliage. Friends and family could be admitted to the garden, while tourists and clients had no access except through their gaze at the garden's re-creation in the painting.[43] Furthermore, as Richard Brettell asserts, conventional urban

[43] Jensen, *At male sit privatliv,* 89.

bourgeois viewers would have been additionally affronted by the absence of children in an informal setting of mixed genders in *Luncheon of the Boating Party*. By extension, Krøyer's inclusion of Helga Ancher with her mother was one way to make the canvas more amenable to this market.[44]

The mainstream view in industrialized Europe affirmed that a woman's natural and penultimate duty should be to cultivate a close physical relationship with her child, and that occupations and other distractions of contemporary life violated a woman's essence. Krøyer's attractive cameo of the mother embracing her daughter pulled subtly away from the male painters and within the lush foliage of the small clearing adhered to established Western European norms. Dazzling sunlight anoints the heads of mother and child, while warmth reddens their cheeks to a healthy rose. This painted image of Anna Ancher in the garden, bonded lovingly to her daughter, privileged her natural role and concealed evidence of her creative career. Krøyer's painterly emphasis might be seen as part of a gendered philosophical history described by Sharon Hirsh, "The image of the woman as natural, or even nature, had been a powerful metaphor throughout the nineteenth century, crystallized in encyclopedia and dictionary definitions that stereotyped aspects of the opposing 'character of the sexes.'"[45] Hirsh traces the nineteenth century view from the writings of Enlightenment thinkers and especially Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) who divided human experience into male and female,

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[44] Richard R. Brettell, "The River Seine: Subject and Symbol in Nineteenth-Century French Art and Literature," in *Impressionists on the Seine,* ed. Rathbone and others, 127-128.

[45] Sharon L. Hirsh, *Symbolism and Modern Urban Society* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 172.

identified respectively with "culture" and "nature."[46] Danish theologian Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) similarly established a binary that posited women in the realm of nature. In *Either/Or* (1837), he likened women to plants as undifferentiated from nature and underscored their sensual relationship to the environment through reference to Genesis, in which Eve is made from Adam's rib, and not his brain. [47] Kierkegaard accorded creativity and intellect only to the masculine.

By the end of the century, both cultural and philosophical currents amplified the rhetoric associating women with nature, at the same time challenging the validity of its basic premises. In Denmark philosophical debate intertwined gender and science, spawned by translations into Danish by Georg Brandes of John Stuart Mill's *On Subjection of Women* in 1869 and the translation of Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species* between 1871-1873. Neither Darwin nor Mill challenged the underlying assumption that there was an essential and biological difference between males and females, but instead examined the role of social institutions in preventing women from achieving their full "natural" potential.[48]

The idea that women were associated with nature permeated Scandinavian society in the last decades of the nineteenth century. At this time, Sjögren identifies a binary pattern in bourgeois gender construction ascribing male dominance in civilized culture to

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[46] For a discussion of this opposition in Rousseau, see Elisabeth Badinter, *Mother Love: Myth and Reality: Motherhood in Modern History,* trans. (New York: MacMillan Publishing, 1981), 210-11. Badinter argues that Rousseau's polarity of the sexes informed his assessment that women belong indoors, confined to the interior.

[47] Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or,* (1843), Vol. 1, p. 430, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton, University Press, 1987), quoted in Leslie A. Howe, "Kierkegaard and the Feminine Self," *Hypatia*, Vol. 9, No. 4, Feminist Philosophy of Religion (Autumn, 1994), 138-9.

[48] See for instance Janet Garton, *Nordic Women's Writing, 1850-1990,* vol. 1 (London: Athlone Press, 1993; Continuum Publishing, 2002), 8-9.

masculine rationality, and the subjugation of women to their association with nature and emotional reactivity.[49] Ibsen's *The Doll's House* offers evidence of this binary during the Modern Breakthrough. The heroine Nora radically chose to abandon her children and to break free of a domineering husband, Torvald. Ibsen caricaturized Torvald's derogatory and possessive interactions with his wife, who he alternately called a songbird or a squirrel, patronizingly chiding her "My little song-bird must never do that again. A song-bird must have a clean beak to chirp with—no false notes (Act II)." Torvald also referred to his wife as "helpless" and her thoughts as "silly and insignificant (Act III)." The playwright utilized the familiar identification of women with nature in order to reveal Torvald's bigoted attitudes and to therefore justify Nora's unconventional behavior. Ibsen's feminist drama both "exploits and challenges" the association between females and nature.[50]

In contrast, the Swedish Strindberg employed references to nature to an opposite end. In his Preface to *Miss Julie* (1888), he blamed the female protagonist's "unhappy fate" in part on her upbringing, lack of character, impressionability, but also on her "degenerate brain." Her improper socialization in the family compounded a natural feminine predisposition to weakness. Strindberg assigned fault for every adversity as arising from her proximity to primal nature rooted in biological gender that one could witness in the "the festive atmosphere of Midsummer Night." Miss Julie found herself in trouble without proper masculine chaperone to regulate the bewitching and sensuous

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[49] Sjögren, "Transgressive Femininity: Gender in the Scandinavian Modern Breakthrough," 60.

[50] Sjögren "Transgressive Femininity: Gender in the Scandinavian Modern Breakthrough," 37. She uses the terminology "exploit and challenge" in reference to Herman Bang, explaining: "Gender conceptions such as these, reaching their peak during the Modern Breakthrough, are both exploited and challenged in *Haabløse Slægter.*"

power of the summer solstice. Her woes came about due to "her father's absence; her menstruation; her association with animals; the intoxicating effect of the dance; the midsummer twilight; the powerfully aphrodisiac influence of the flowers."[51] In *Defense of a Fool,* originally written in French and intended for a French audience, Strindberg's misogynist main character Axel used similar language to describe his wife as Torvald did in Ibsen's drama, calling her a "conceited little featherbrain."[52] Strindberg, furthermore, repeatedly emphasized what he construed to be biological difference: "Men have intellect and intelligence, women are vessels to be filled with what men have to give them, whether it is intellectual stimuli or babies."[53] He also employed botanical imagery to suggest transference of the nutrients essential for the male hero's creativity, which the female unnaturally usurped in her efforts to empower herself.[54]

Krøyer reinforced Anna Ancher's biological role as mother and neglected her professional gains in *Hip! Hip! Hurra!*. The artist of *Maid in the Kitchen* cannot be found in his painting. Did her pursuit of a career pose a threat to male productivity? Anna Ancher's quest to operate as an autonomous agent in a cultural domain should be seen as analogous to both Nora's assertion of independence in *The Doll House* and Strindberg's actress wife in *The Defense of a Fool.* Perhaps unwittingly, Krøyer's masterful handling of the sunlight and the prominence he gave to the maternal gesture undermined the

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[51] August Strindberg, From Preface to *Miss Julie* (1888), in *Modernism: An Anthology of Sources and Documents,* ed. Vassiliki Kolocotroni, Jane Goldman and Olga Taxidou (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 115.

[52] Sjögren, "Transgressive Femininity: Gender in the Scandinavian Modern Breakthrough," 161.

[53] Sjögren, "Transgressive Femininity: Gender in the Scandinavian Modern Breakthrough," 161.

[54] Sjögren, "Transgressive Femininity: Gender in the Scandinavian Modern Breakthrough," 165.

artist's attempts to operate in a sphere reserved for men. Krøyer certainly portrayed her more flatteringly than the caricature for the greeting card.

Renoir in his painting *The Two Sisters [On the Terrace]* (1887, Fig. 1-12) offers additional elements of contrast with Krøyer. Renoir disrupted his Arcadian setting with a wrought iron rail that unnaturally divides the female subjects from the greenery. A young and therefore presumably, fertile woman sits without escort in a public, suburban setting (the same restaurant terrace depicted in *The Boating Party*), inattentive to either the productive task of making something from wool or her "natural" inclination as caregiver.[55] The child stands stiffly at her side, clutching the basket rather than the skirt or sleeve of her "sister" and looks directly at the viewer. As a sororal or maternal substitute, the older woman makes no gesture of embrace and looks off in an entirely different direction from the little girl. The colors of the ornamental flowers that trim the hats echo the dyed balls of wool instead of the blossoming foliage along the riverbank.

Figure 1-12: Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *The Two Sisters [On the Terrace]* (1887)

[55] Garb, "Gender and Representation," 237. Garb identifies the limited sphere that was appropriate for bourgeois women as restricted to "the arcade, the suburban park, the private garden."

The hats and wool establish a triangle of bright blues, greens and pinks that emphasize the pictorial center, the woman's breast, targeted with the corsage. Likewise, the synthetic blue of her flannel boating dress and the little girl's oversized bonnet do not integrate into the surroundings. These women do not conform to the view of woman and child linked with nature.

Krøyer, on the other hand, created an idyll in a Skagen garden. The influential historian Jules Michelet argued for just this sort of setting, where man could master nature and both protect and subjugate women. Michelet selected a similar garden refuge in Brittany where he went to live with his wife, blessed by the winds of the sea, enriched by fertile soil and abounding with fruits and vegetation.[56] In contrast to the little girl in Renoir's painting, the young Helga leans into the protection of her mother's bosom, but her legs move freely. Krøyer's painterly dabs of sunlight strike at Anna Ancher's breast, the site of physical nourishment and biological attachment between mother and child, untainted by the garish corsage. The child's freedom and safety showed that Krøyer had established distance from the suburbs along the Seine painted by Renoir. He made a geographical shift to rural Skagen. His gambit was successful for his own career and likely helped connect Anna Ancher to potential clients. Krøyer's status and financial resources continued to climb after 1889 and clients like the Hirschsprungs can be seen photographed with the Krøyers and the Anchers in their own al fresco parties in the Skagen garden. The intersection of unspoiled beaches and oceans with safe conditions for

[56] Lionel Gossman, "Michelet and Natural History: The Alibi of Nature," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society,* vol. 145, no. 3 (September 2001), 307-9; 327-8, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1558110.

urban tourists turned Skagen into a popular destination for wealthy urbanites and patrons of the arts in the last decade of the 1900s.

Kunstlerin à la mode: Anna Ancher, Parisienne

Krøyer used source photographs taken while Helga Ancher was a baby in making *Hip! Hip! Hurra!* These pictures make clear that Ancher actually wore a dark utilitarian dress to the garden party. With or without Ancher's complicity, Krøyer substituted a more fashionable outfit in the final painting. It appears to be cut out of a relatively impractical pale yellow, summer-weight fabric, adorned with ribbons at the ends of the three-quarter sleeves and a touch of lace at the collar. Subtle stripes embellish the skirt. The dress would have been more appropriate to urban gatherings in Paris or even in Copenhagen than to an al fresco party in the northern coastal climate of the relatively impoverished, religiously conservative and notoriously remote Skagen.

Again Krøyer referenced Parisian modern practices in his attention to the details of the dress. Renoir, for instance, hoped to devote a page of *La Vie Moderne* to the latest styles and accessories.[57] The Danish painter's attention to fashion demonstrates what Elizabeth Wilson describes as the international importance of costume in creating image at the turn of the century, whether of bourgeois class superiority or group affiliation. "Dressing up nevertheless proclaimed the triumph of the pleasure principle. It was both play and performance. It…suggested the creation of one's own life as a work of art."[58] Although Wilson specifically addressed artistic preference for alternative dress as part of

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[57] Rathbone, "*Renoir's Luncheon of the Boating Party*: Tradition and the New," 48.

[58] Elizabeth Wilson, "Bohemian Dress and the Heroism of Everyday Life," *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture* 2, no. 3 (1998): 225-44. doi:10.2752/136270498779476226.

a bohemian counter-culture, in titivating Ancher's attire, Krøyer made her part of the pleasurable associations with Skagen for his fashionable clientele.

Permutations of Ancher's yellow dress appeared in several of Michael Ancher's painted representations of her in the 1880s. Her actual darker dress was typical for her class and occupation according to visual evidence provided by cartes de visites, publicity photographs and portraits from Denmark during this time period. Modern Breakthrough author Herman Bang lamented Danish fashion in an 1880 article "In the Fashion Salon." He contrasted the typical murky dress to the bright and contrasting colors of the fashion houses. Bang described black woolen clothes as emitting an odor that caused one to think of "corpses" or "downtrodden streets."[59]

Color and suitability were also important indicators of good taste. Krøyer posed Ancher in *Hip! Hip! Hurra!* as a well-dressed woman who avoided the garish synthetic dyes popular from the 1860s to the 1870s in favor of a subtler palette, endowing her with a pedigree of taste sought after by Britain's wealthy industrial and professional class. The pale colors counter the gaudy colors of popular manufactured garments being lambasted by the press.[60] A London *Daily News* description of a well-dressed woman in 1884 lauded her ensemble's "soft and harmonious" colors.[61] Likewise, *Queen,* a British publication claimed in 1883, "The lighter the tint, the more elegant the gown."[62]

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[59] Herman Bang, ""I Modesalonen," *Nationaltidende* (19 December 1880), repr. in *Sentura* (2001), www.sentura.dk accessed 29 May 2013.

[60] Stella Mary Newton, *Health, Art and Reason: Dress Reformers of the 19th Century* (London: John Murray, 1974), 74.

[61] *Daily News* (5 July 1884), quoted in Newton, *Health, Art and Reason*, 86.

[62]Quoted in Anne M. Buck, *Victorian Costume and Costume Accessories* (New York: Universe Books, 1970), 72.

Not only does Ancher wear the proper colors, her garment cut and style indicate both refinement and self-control. Her dress conformed to Victorian codes of fashion; as British style adviser Mrs. Haweis recommended, the character of the skirt matched that of the bodice. The tolerably fitted waist and the full skirt amplifying her hips conformed to fashionable silhouettes of the first half of the 1880s.[63] In the oil painting, the clarity of both Ancher's narrow waist and that of her cousin positioned to her left augments the gendered contrast of the standing, active males and the sitting passive females. Most likely, Ancher wore a corset to achieve her shaped waist. Valerie Steele observes, "Most people believed that the corset exaggerated a 'natural' difference between men and women, that is, women's more pronounced waistline."[64] Some saw the corset as evidence of high moral fiber and lauded its benefits to posture and good health.[65] Wearing of the corset crossed class lines. The working class seized and adopted the fitted undergarment "as a sign of gentility and respectability."[66] In Denmark, advertisements from the 1880s and 1890s indicate that the French corset in particular was highly coveted. For the intended 1880s viewer with taste and money, or wishing to convey that impression, Anna Ancher was suitably clothed.

Paris played a more central role for Denmark than London in dictating women's fashions. Bang asserted the importance of Paris fashion houses as places not only of beauty, but also as social ritual. From the time of Louis XIV forward, Bang criticized the

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[63] Kristina Harris, *Victorian and Edwardian Fashions for Women 1840-1919*, rev. 2nd Ed. (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing, 2002), 85. According to Newton, a new S shape had been introduced into Paris and London by 1881. *Health, Art and Reason,* 71.

[64] Valerie Steele, *The Corset: A Cultural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 53. See also Montague, "The Aesthetics of Hygiene: Aesthetic Dress, Modernity, and the Body as Sign," 91.

[65] Steele, *The Corset: A Cultural History,* 40-3.

[66] Steele, *The Corset: A Cultural History,* 49.

rest of Europe for mimicking Parisian fashions, especially the designer Charles Worth. The finishing detail, sleeve-length and silhouette on Ancher's two-piece ensemble in *Hip! Hip! Hurra!* conform to exemplars by Worth and other designers found on the pages of *La Mode Illustrée* during the period.

Bang also felt the need to assert the competitiveness of Danish fashion houses.[67] Copenhagen department stores such as Magasin du Nord purchased pattern drawings directly from Paris fashion houses, especially Worth, to customize for their clients with accouterments acquired from itinerant specialty merchants. In provincial areas, local tailors and seamstresses or women at home with sewing machines also tried to imitate the latest styles as ready-to-wear could not be purchased in Copenhagen before the beginning of the twentieth century. In a photograph of Anna Ancher from around 1889, one can see the difficulties in the provinces as a woman from the periphery tried to translate fashion plates into finished garments with inferior fabrics (Fig. 1-13). The traveling dress she

Figure 1-13: Undated photograph of Helga, Michael and Anna Ancher.
Lokalsamlingen Skagen

[67] Bang, "I Modesalonen."

wore fit poorly at the bodice and arms. The fabric bulged unflatteringly around the hips, and the pleats of the skirt did not fall or lie gracefully. In contrast, Krøyer's representation in *Hip! Hip! Hurra!* although set in rural Skagen seems to have more successfully imitated continental chic through embellishment of a coveted dress pattern.

Dressed for Success

In the 1880s, when Michael Ancher and Krøyer painted these images, Anna Ancher attempted to balance her status as new mother with negotiating the business side of her occupation through professional promotions including subscription invitations. Krøyer's painting linked the Anchers to Paris. The text to an 1883 Copenhagen advertisement (where Anna Ancher was the only living female artist represented) reflected the potential validation offered through association with French markets; the promoters offered supplemental pages from Paris's Goupil publishing house as a bonus to subscribers (Fig. 1-14).[68] Krøyer and Michael Ancher's visual brand featuring the aspiring painter gave her visibility that could have helped to increase her market in Denmark through association with fashion and pleasure in Paris, while maintaining conventional respectability.

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[68] *Subskriptionsindbydelse til Nyere dansk Malerkunst* (1884), Det Kongelige Bibliotek, ke016973.tif accessed 13 October 2013.

Women artists practiced their occupation and limited their production within tight boundaries circumscribed by the bourgeois values of family, patrons and art establishments. For Anna Ancher's efforts at negotiating a career not only as an artist from rural Skagen, but as one of the pioneer females in Denmark, her represented status as mother by Michael Ancher and Krøyer may have conferred pedigree for bourgeois audiences. Her clients from Copenhagen's middle class and her husband's royal patrons valued a good reputation. The images created by Krøyer and Michael Ancher conformed to distinct gender roles and social norms inherent in respectable Biedermeier culture of the nineteenth century. At this historical moment, decorum and order proved paramount

SUBSKRIPTIONSINDBYDELSE

NYERE DANSK MALERKUNST

Figure 1-14: Subscription invitation to *Nyere dansk Malerkunst* [*New Danish Painting*] (1884). Anna Ancher is at the center of the bottom row.

concerns for patrons in Copenhagen, which like Stockholm, had been "transformed into collecting points and hothouses – not just for goods, money, and ideas from the world beyond the Nordic countries, but also for all sorts of human flotsam: those who were

unemployed, were prostitutes, were social outcasts."[69] The portrayal of Ancher and the division of genders in *Hip! Hip! Hurra!* offered Skagen as a wholesome, clean, respectable, fun and continentally fashionable antidote to the revolutionary changes. The rapid industrialization and urbanization in the Scandinavian cities fragmented social interactions and assaulted the senses.[70] By maintaining a strict hierarchical division of gender, Krøyer erased tensions caused as middle class women negotiated new roles and silenced the "feverish female activity" agitating for increased rights in the family and the workplace and greater opportunities for employment during the 1880s.[71]

Ancher faced many challenges as a woman artist in Denmark during this period. There were few educational venues open to her. From 1875 to 1878 Anna Brøndum lived with her aunt in Copenhagen and studied at Vilhelm Kyhn's drawing and painting school for women, in operation from 1863 to 1895. Kyhn cultivated good drawing and painting

Figure 1-15: Ludovica Thornam. *Self-Portrait* (1885).

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[69] Hjordt-Vetlesen, "Modernity's Female Text," 2.

[70] Hjordt-Vetlesen, "Modernity's Female Text," 2.

[71] Hjordt-Vetlesen, "Modernity's Female Text," 4.

technique in his female students, but denigrated the seriousness of their aspirations and questioned their intrinsic strengths to succeed as artists. In his book on design instruction he summarized, "I think that one may find artistic abilities in many women, though I indeed doubt that there are many who have the necessary qualities to develop as an artist."[72] Anna Ancher's biographers commonly cite his advice to her to give up her art when she wed. Kyhn's reservations about the pupils that offered his main financial support exemplify some of the obstacles such women faced. Inadequate instruction and an overreliance on copying from plaster casts, limited the types of genres attempted by women. "Male teachers who taught women privately wouldn't have dared to set up tableaux where models of either sex disrobed to be studied by female students." [73] Female artists generally kept to safe subjects such as flowers and still life. Some ventured to landscape painting, although Kyhn's school offered minimal practice and guidance, "Occasionally they went out into Kyhn's back garden to do a little landscape painting or make sketches of the chickens that ran around underfoot."[74]

Kyhn's curriculum afforded few opportunities and little acceptance for radical artists such as Emilie Mundt (1842-1922) and Marie Luplau (1848-1925). Mundt had already pursued a career in teaching when she entered Kyhn's school and her partner, Luplau, came from a more liberal and social-activist background. They found the situation at Kyhn's stifling and a lack of acceptance in Denmark. According to Barbara Sjoholm, their decision to live as lesbian partners and leave the school, joining other

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[72] Vilhelm Kyhn, *Om Tegneundervisning.* (København, 1885), 3-5. Quoted in Anne Lie Stokbro, *Anna Ancher and Co., de malende damer: Elever fra Vilhelm Kyhns tegne-og maleskole for kvinder 1863-1895* (Denmark: Ribe Kunstmuseum, Sophienholm og Johannes Larsen Museet, 2007), 10.

[73] Sjoholm, "What We Want: The Art of Marie Luplau and Emilie Mundt," 552.

[74] Sjoholm, "What We Want: The Art of Marie Luplau and Emilie Mundt," 552.

Nordic artists in Munich in 1877, provoked rupture and isolation.[75] Uncertain conditions may have impacted their choice of genres. Sjoholm speculates that Luplau primarily produced highly marketable small oils of beloved and familiar Danish landscapes.[76]

The majority of Anna Brøndum's classmates at Kyhn's atelier came from bourgeois family backgrounds. Their stories and canvases reflect a negotiation between profession and reputation. Most aspiring women artists dressed and acted more conservatively than Mundt and Luplau. Ludovica Thornam (1853-1896) colleague of Anna Brøndum at Vilhelm Kyhn's school, represented herself in self-portrait with brush and palette, but also the conservative costume of her class (Fig. 1-15). As Anne Lie Stokbro notes "Ludovica Thornam's self-portrait expresses the female artist's position in the field of bourgeois norms and desire for freedom and self-realization."[77] Ancher appeared similarly dressed in the subscription invitation for new art in Denmark mentioned above. Her hair was carefully drawn back, the color of her dress was utilitarian black, adorned at the neck with a more ornate lace collar. A sketch by Mundt of 1879 indicates that even in class, the women seem to be dressed in relatively plain middle-class dresses with hair pulled away from the face.

Stokbro asserts that Ancher's eventual renown was unmatched by her fellow students, despite many having significant talent. [78] Most of the paintings of her breakthrough generation of women artists at the end of the nineteenth century in Denmark landed in private collections or small provincial museums rather than in the

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[75] Sjoholm, "What We Want: The Art of Marie Luplau and Emilie Mundt," 561.

[76] Sjoholm, "What We Want: The Art of Marie Luplau and Emilie Mundt," 561.

[77] Stokbro, *Anna Ancher and Co., de malende damer*, 103.

[78] Stokbro, *Anna Ancher and Co., de malende damer*, 10.

large central collections of Copenhagen. The public strongly identified the most successful female artists with a particular place rather than in national or international contexts. "In the same way Ancher is identified with the town of Skagen, Christine Swane with Kerteminde, and Emilie Demant Hatt with Skive. Women artists who lived in Copenhagen or abroad were less likely to have their work gathered into any one spot."[79] Many women who did not realize adequate professional success taught their own classes, earned a living painting portraits of women and children, or remained financially supported in their father's home. The promotional strategies of Ancher's contemporaries at Kyhn's school paralleled those employed by Anna Ancher, but also hint that her status in Krøyer's and Michael Ancher's Skagen image-making of the mid 1880s gave her greater celebrity and recognition facilitating her development as a professional. At the same time, one should not minimize Ancher's personal difficulties finding balance

Figure 1-16: Michael Ancher. *Coming Home From Market* (1902)

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[79] Sjoholm, "What We Want: The Art of Marie Luplau and Emilie Mundt," 563.

between work and motherhood as she weighed decisions about necessary or desirable professional travel encumbered by an infant.[80] By 1900, however, Ancher had emerged as probably the most widely celebrated female painter in Denmark with an international reputation.

Stepping Out into the Twentieth Century

Michael's 1902 portrait of Anna Ancher in artistic dress, *Anna Ancher Coming Home from Market* is a testament to the subject's modernity, but a different generation of modernism than marked the Modern Breakthrough (Fig. 1-16). The painting reflects striking changes in Anna Ancher as painting subject. She strides confidently toward the viewer. The low angle of the observer and the repetition of the long vertical draping extend her height and add weight to her petite frame. She wears a wide-brimmed straw hat that purposefully shields her eyes and face from the sun.[81]

Ancher's outfit denoted her awareness of contemporary design debates associated with Art Nouveau, Symbolism and Secessionist exhibitions, although such comparisons have been historically minimized in scholarship. The international movement promoting design reform was not evident in Krøyer's and Michael Ancher's images of Anna Ancher from the 1880s. American, British and German artists and reformers pioneered a shift in clothing design in the later part of the nineteenth century. Advocates eschewed the heavy fabrics, corsets and structured garments of haute couture.[82] Denmark's reform movement

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[80] Anna Ancher to Martha Møller Johansen (1 April 1884) in *Breve fra Anna Ancher,* ed. Svanholm, 78.

81 Montague,"The Aesthetics of Hygiene: Aesthetic Dress, Modernity, and the Body as Sign," 95.

82 For early discussion of the parallel shifts in women's place in society and changes in fashion see Newton as well as Jan Thompson, "The Role of Woman in the Iconography of Art Nouveau." *Art*

coincided with a deliberate reorientation away from French urban aesthetics in many Scandinavian countries in the 1890s (see Chapter Two). In 1883, British painter and reformer George Frederick Watts (1817-1904) equated the strong silhouette of extreme corseting to the barbaric practices of "savages" who stretched lips or elongated earlobes.[83] William Morris (1834-1896), later the founder of *Studio* magazine, whose ideas were well known and respected among the Danish avant-garde, argued for "liberty of choice" and naturalness in women's dress.[84]

In Denmark reform focused on fitness, health and the empowerment of females. As early as 1880, scientific illustrations circulated in Danish papers illustrating the deformities resultant from the forced contours of tight lacing.[85] Copenhagen activist Fanny Tuxen complained about tight lacing and its potential damage to internal organs, its role in causing female diseases and compromising a family's vitality.[86] She championed American reformers' quest for better hygiene and also assigned blame to French fashions.[87] By 1887 practical reform dress could be purchased in Copenhagen department stores. Magasin du Nord advertised a day dress in *Illustreret Tidende* with a loosely fitted bodice and exaggerated hipline, freed from the deleterious effects of overly

Journal, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Winter, 1971-1972), 158-167. http://www.jstor.org/stable/775570 accessed 3 June 2013.

83 George Frederick Watts, "On Taste in Dress." In *His Writings* compiled by Mary S. [Fraser-Tytler] Watts (N.p.: Macmillan, 1912), 205. PDF e-book.

[84] William Morris, "The Lesser Arts." (1882). http://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1882/life1.htm 13 August 2013.

[85] See for example Johannes Frisch's illustrated essay "Regarding Health and Women's Clothes" (1887). See also Hjordt-Vetlesen, "Modernity's Female Text," 5.

[86] Fanny Tuxen, "En Dansk Reformdragt," *Illustreret Tidende*, No. 23 (May 1886), 280.

[87] Tuxen, "En Dansk Reformdragt," 280.

zealous lacing.[88] The undergarments shown promoted "hygiene," as they permitted free movement of the arms and legs and support for breasts and back, without impinging on lung function or placing stress on the reproductive organs or kidneys. The simple cut and dark color, furthermore, aligned with appropriate common dress for Danish middle class women.

By the end of the century, however, a concern for hygiene in fashion in "health dresses" converged with a line of fashionable "art dresses" that signified the modernity of the wearer. A collaboration of medical professionals, social reformers and artists promoted fashion dictated by functional rather than formal considerations. The architectural historian Mark Wigley pithily encapsulates the shift in the phrase "from 'mode' to 'modern'." Wigley explains that while superficially new clothing styles aspired to meet demands for utility they importantly also created "an *image* of modernity that was actually understood as the very possibility of a modern life, rather than an adjustment to it or representation of it."[89] Scandinavian "modern" at times referenced the graceful

Figure 1-17: Maurice Denis. *April* (1892)

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[88] Hjordt-Vetlesen, "Modernity's Female Text," 4.

[89] Mark Wigley, "White-out: Fashioning the Modern [Part 2]," *Assemblage,* No. 22 (Dec. 1993), 10. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3171168 accessed 24 October 2013.

arabesque of Mrs. Leyland's artistic dress in James McNeill Whistler's portrait, *Symphony in Flesh Color and Pink* (1871-4). Krøyer's wife Marie favored similar lines in loose, flowing dresses often made out of Liberty fabrics imported from London. Krøyer in fact seemed to directly reference Whistler's aesthetic dress in his portrait of Marie on the beach in 1892, *Summer Evening at Skagen*. Art Nouveau designers and Symbolists also emphasized woman's organic connection to nature as part of modernity. In *April* 1892 Belgian Symbolist Maurice Denis represents women in a field picking flowers in reform dresses nearly identical to that worn by Ancher in the portrait (Fig. 1-17).

While *Coming Home from Market* shows stylistic similarity, Ancher is depicted as more active than the languorously posed figures of Denis. Her right leg pushes energetically out of the frame conquering the landscape's slope.[90] Her stance accentuated functionalism in the dress's structure, its conduciveness to cleanliness, hygiene and exercise. The represented image of Ancher thereby moves beyond what some designers were criticizing as the decorative qualities of Symbolist painting and Art Nouveau fashion. The lack of ornamentation of her dress, an object of daily use, frees it from what Baudelaire called "the transitory" and accorded permanence, a hallmark of good design according to Adolf Loos (1870-1903).[91]

Ancher's dress shares a looseness of cut and plain form with posters championing rights for woman such as Symbolist Jan Toroop's 1898 *Arbeid voor de Vrouw (Work for*

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[90] Jan Thompson, "The Role of Woman in the Iconography of Art Nouveau," *Art Journal*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Winter, 1971-1972), 165. http://www.jstor.org/stable/775570 accessed 3 June 2013.

[91] Adolf Loos, "Men's Hats" (1898), reprinted in *The Rise of Fashion: A Reader,* ed. Daniel Leonhard Purdy (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 100.

Women).[92] Photographs of women's demonstrations in Copenhagen in 1901 strengthen the link between the simple dress cut and feminist activism. In the painted dress, Ancher is a "new woman," emancipated from the vagaries of fashion and physically fit and active. The portrait asserted her stance at the cutting edge of "the modern," rather than secreting her within past decades of art production in a style that was no longer new or breakthrough.

Michael Ancher's portrait directly followed a watershed in fashion reform in the German speaking countries, witnessed by many Danish authors and artists living in Berlin. During 1902 in Krefeld, the center of the German textile industry, a pivotal exhibition of dress design was held. The exhibition included many designs by Henry van de Velde (1863-1957), who also informed audiences there on his program for dress reform. Within a few months, the publication of van de Velde's book *Damenkleider nach Künstlerentwürfen* (*Women's Dresses Designed by Artists*) articulated his efforts to "storm the barricades of the reigning fashion."[93] Further south, a whole issue of the Viennese feminist publication, *Dokumente der Frauen,* was devoted to dress reform, directed by women connected to the Viennese Secession. The issue included lengthy articles by designer and professor Alfred Roller as well as Loos. Loos argued for the need

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[92] Hirsh, *Symbolism and Modern Urban Society,* 4; Michelle Facos, *Nationalism and the Nordic Imagination: Swedish Art of the 1890s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 186-7; *Art Nouveau 1890-1914,* ed. Paul Greenhalgh (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2000), exh. cat; Norbert Lynton, "Wider Horizons: Scandinavian Modernism," *Modern Painters,* vol. 14, no. 2 (Summer 2001), 58, Wilson Web 0119601632020. Although Toroop is often associated with Art Nouveau there is significant intersection between these two movements. After connecting them through Les XX, Hirsh writes "Toroop's use of line as symbol linking tangible imagery with intangible concepts is…only one of its several uses in Symbolist drawing." Facos finds that Swedish artists often blended Synthetist pictorial strategies with Art Nouveau ideals. Furthermore, curator Paul Greenhalgh made the integration with Symbolism a central theme at the 2000 Victoria and Albert Museum exhibition *Art Nouveau 1890-1914*, extending the embrace of Art Nouveau as part of both Symbolism and Post-Impressionism that was pioneered by the Royal Academy in its "Post-Impressionism" exhibition of 1979-1980.

[93] Quoted in Wigley, "White-out: Fashioning the Modern [Part 2]," 12.

to liberate women from the artifice of costumes designed to attract men, fashions that increasingly turned women into children and masked their mature form.[94] Roller, on the other hand, sought dress reform to accommodate professional women.[95] Van de Velde, Loos and Roller agreed that the new artistic dress signified modernity. Wigley summarizes, "To be modern was to be mobile and to have this mobility registered in one's dress."[96]

Returning to Pollock's identifications of necessary strategies to survive in the capitalist marketplace, we find that Anna Ancher would also progress through the stages of reference, deference and difference. Her particular avant-garde gambit required these elements in relation to the acknowledged artistic leader, Krøyer, but also her mentor, husband and elder, Michael, while she succeeded in differentiation from them by 1902. In the decade following the extended trip she took with Michael and other Scandinavian artists to Paris in 1889 for the Exposition Universelle, discussed in the next chapter, her work moved increasingly away from the conventions established by these earlier male leaders and the frame of their images of her in the 1880s. She continued to reference the specific place of common artmaking, Skagen, and even deferred to Krøyer's methods of paint application. During the 1890s, Ancher investigated light and composition along a trajectory that was widely associated with Krøyer.

At the same time she broke with both male artists, especially by challenging the authenticity of their essentially touristic or peripatetic gaze in relation to local subjects.

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[94] Adolf Loos, "Damenmode," *Dokumente der Frauen,* ed. Marie Lang, vol. 6, no. 23 (1902), 660-4.

[95] Alfred Roller, "Gedanken über Frauenkleidung. Ein Brief," *Dokumente der Frauen,* ed. Marie Lang, vol. 6, no. 23 (1902), 649-54.

[96] Wigley, "White-out: Fashioning the Modern [Part 2]," 10.

While Ancher's paintings appealed to the eye, they required the observer to engage with the subjects from multiple viewpoints and engage in enigmatic encounters with contemporary rural subjects. These attributes distanced her practice from Krøyer and weakened her husband's artistic influence. Between *Old Couple Plucking Gulls* (c. 1883, Fig. 1-1), contemporaneous with *Hip! Hip! Hurra!* and *My Wife,* and *Plucking the Christmas Goose* (1904, Fig. 1-18) painted around the time of *Coming Home From Market,* Anna Ancher began to explore a deeper dimension in representing interiority and challenged any claim by artist or observer to a position of privileged viewing. She granted a distance to her subjects that would continue to characterize her mature work.

Old Couple Plucking Gulls depicted two local Skageners engaged in a routine task, part of the rhythm of rural life. Anna's handling of the subject was consistent with the realism favored by the Modern Breakthrough and employed in the many canvases of fisherman through which Michael earned recognition. Somber coloring, attention to the evidence of aging and hard labor in the hands, the facial wrinkles and the man's unkempt hair and bald crown refer to the Naturalism favored by Michael. Her subject is similar to a painting by Krohg of 1882 and could indicate her knowledge of Max Liebermann, whose painting *Women Plucking Geese* (1872) Krohg knew and admired.[97] Ancher brought the viewer close to the face of the sitter and individualized the physiognomy. While the subjects' look down at their work, concealing their eyes and expression, the painter used lighter tones to emphasize the irregularities of the nose, expressive mouths and the soil on the hands.

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[97] *I am Anna: Homage to Anna Ancher,* ed. Jensen, 148.

Ancher's later 1904 canvas took on a subject similar in class and task. *Plucking the Christmas Goose* maintains some realism in depicting local Skagen residents with key

Figure 1-18: Anna Ancher. *Plucking the Christmas Goose* (1904)

differences. First and foremost, the viewer is pushed back away from the scene. In the foreground, the man's curved back, the open wings of the geese, and the plucked birds along the bench combine to block access to the focus of the scene. Only one face registers clearly for the viewer. This woman manifests concentration, hard physical exertion, and yet the particulars of her visage remain unclear. From a preparatory study held in the Fyns Kunstmuseum it is clear that Ancher blocked the composition first as a closed grouping and pushed the two women in the center further back into obscurity and out of the light. There is respectful emphasis on the shared labor, on the muscle strength required of male and female alike to perform the operation. The title indicates preparation for a Skagen celebration, yet the grit and strength represent a polar opposite to the jovial scene of leisure in Krøyer's *Hip! Hip! Hurra!* The artist makes her own presence known only through the rosy light in the window, the sunbeams a signature element of her

painting. The physicality of the composition refuted attempts at anecdote and narration prominent in Michael's compositions illustrating the heroic life of the Skagen fishermen.

The confident and independent image that emerged through the revised silhouette and purposeful stride in *Coming Home from Market* resonates with the physically strong, working rural females who populated paintings like *Plucking the Christmas Goose*. Ancher's image in reform dress also indicated contemporary cultural developments exploring the unity of decorative and fine arts, abstraction and Vitalism. The artist in this portrait commands us to examine her individual output, extricated from the frames represented by earlier canvases by Krøyer and Michael.

CHAPTER 2

EXTENDING THE FRAME: FORGING NETWORKS BETWEEN PERIPHERY AND CENTERS

Figure 2-1: Anna Ancher. *A Funeral* (1891)

Anna Ancher's developing artistic independence can already be sensed during the 1880s and became clearly evident over the next decade. *A Funeral* is significantly larger than *Old Couple Plucking Gulls* and demonstrates that Ancher employs a more free, individualized use of color in the later painting. The dominant indigo at the center combined with the lack of finish shocked Danish contemporary critics.[1] Ancher introduced compositional choices in *A Funeral* that increasingly characterized her oeuvre. For instance, she blocked the spectator's gaze with the backs of the nearest

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[1] Svanholm recounts that critic Erik Bøgh furthermore complained in *Dagbladet* that the purchase of *A Funeral* by the Statens Museum demonstrated a double standard that held women to lesser standards than men. Lise Svanholm, *Breve fra Anna Ancher* ([Denmark]: Gyldendal, 2005), 111.

figures and averted direct eye contact from the figures who face the front. In the very crowded room, diagonal floorboards rise from the forward edge of the canvas and exaggerate a sense of compression, a similar treatment of the floor to *Maid in the Kitchen*. Heavy horizontal beams, which Ancher edged in an undulating violet band, iterate the lack of open space. In conceiving the work, Heide Grape-Albers hypothesized that Ancher may have been impressed by Gustave Courbet's *Burial at Ornans* on view in Paris, where she spent six months in 1889.[2] At the same time, however, in 1885 the Norwegian Erik Werenskiold (1855-1938) completed *A Peasant Funeral*, which is a closer comparison, executed only a few years prior to his extended acquaintance with Ancher in Paris. Paris provided an opportunity to view avant-garde paintings and to forge close connections with Scandinavian modernists, but it was not the only urban center that fed Ancher's art. Copenhagen was also a vibrant cultural center with which Ancher regularly had extended contact.This chapter probes Ancher's artistic, cultural and practical experience of Paris and other urban centers in order to provide the framework for her painting practice of subsequent decades.

The Danish avant-garde negotiated a distinct modernism mapped through the prolific writings of the Brandes brothers, Georg and Edvard. Pacesetters in Copenhagen engaged in an ongoing critical cultural dialogue with Paris, perpetuated through many venues of access to originals and reproductions of James Abbot McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), Paul Gauguin (1848-1903) and Vincent Van Gogh (1853-1890). The creation of modernist networks remains the most important legacy of Ancher's Parisian forays as it

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[2] Heide Grape-Albers, "Die Malerei Anna Anchers Einblicke in das Alltägliche," in *Anna Ancher 1859-1935: Malerin in Skagen,* ed. Heide Grape-Albers and Christine Refflinghaus (Hannover: Niedersächs. Landesmuseum [u.a.], 1994), 69.

was for other Scandinavian literati and artists between 1870 and 1900. However, even the newest scholarship on Ancher only superficially addresses her Parisian experience and neglects the importance of connections developed there and the quality of the encounter. In France, Ancher extended associations initially fostered during artist gatherings in the remote Skagen art colony. Professional women artists and trendsetters formed her new Scandinavian artist circle and her aesthetic fulcrum shifted away from Skagen's Naturalism. Intriguingly, Ancher's canvases after 1889 demonstrated modernist tension caused by increased formal vigor and experimentation juxtaposed against a heightened awareness of Danish subjects and audience. In the short run, Ancher's painting in the 1890s and across the turn of the century exhibited Symbolist tendencies in alignment with ideas and practices cultivated in Paris and circulated in contemporary Scandinavian commentaries.

Development of Denmark's Avant-Garde in Copenhagen

Although Paris operated as the international cultural center, Ancher established close primary ties with the parallel regional center in Denmark's capital. Copenhagen was the intellectual capital of Scandinavia, a much larger city than Stockholm, Oslo or Helsinki, with a major university, established academies in all of the arts, and thriving exhibition, publishing and performance venues. Many Scandinavians who converged in Paris in 1889 for the Exposition Universelle built on ties initiated in Copenhagen beginning in the 1870s. During this period many Norwegian artists compensated for the

lack of academic training in their homeland with study in Denmark.[3] Copenhagen had many more public and commercial venues for art exhibition and sale than the next largest Scandinavian city, Stockholm. Additionally, the Royal Theater and the Tivoli gardens offered high caliber theatrical and musical performances. The importance of Copenhagen as a center of the avant-garde continued across the turn of the century as a central meeting point for artists, musicians, scientists and authors.

Denmark's capital city became an epicenter of avant-garde opposition. Young radical painters and sculptors led protests against the exclusive, archaic practices of the Royal Academy of Art in Copenhagen. The methods and goals of the Academy remained consistent from the Golden Age of Danish painting (see Introduction) through the end of the century. Pupils were taught a formal perspective system and encouraged to depict all objects with pristine clarity. Male students studied anatomy by copying from plaster casts and live nude models. Instructors encouraged moderate tonalities, stable compositions and high degrees of finish.[4] The methods of instruction largely paralleled those of France's École des Beaux-Arts. As a result of considerable agitation against their teaching philosophy, Denmark enacted significant reforms in the 1880s that facilitated alternative opportunities for artistic training and the public exhibition of art. For instance, the state sponsored a second venue for art training that employed new training methods learned in Parisian private academies, especially at the studio of Léon Bonnat (1833-1922), where Krøyer and many other Scandinavians had taken instruction in the 1870s.

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[3]Per Hedström, "Internationalism and Nationalism, Nordic Painters on the European Stage," in *Nordic Art : The Modern Breakthrough, 1860-1920,* ed. David Jackson (Munich : Hirmer Verlag, 2012), 187.

[4] Thor J. Mednick, "Danish Internationalism: Peder Severin Krøyer in Copenhagen and Paris," *19th Century Art Worldwide,* vol. 10, issue 1 (Spring 2011), http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/spring11/danish-internationalism-peder-severin-kroyer-in-copenhagen-and-paris.

Krøyer, Kristian Zahrtmann (1843-1917) and others formed and became the principal instructors affiliated with the new state subsidized Artists' Study School established in 1882. Most of the important painters in early Danish modernism studied at this school.[5] In the late 1880s these opposition artists also recognized the importance of French Impressionist and Naturalist innovations and attempted to publicize the two movements to a skeptical public in Copenhagen.

The Gauguins, Art Collecting and Art Reception in Denmark

Undoubtedly Paul Gauguin both directly and indirectly impacted the Danish avant-garde's exposure to and reception of Impressionist and postImpressionist painting in Copenhagen. His personal connections made Copenhagen an important site for viewing his work. In 1872, Gauguin married Copenhagen native Mette Gad (1850-1920) in Paris. Her influential family included sister Ingeborg (1852-1908), who married first the Norwegian painter Frits Thaulow (1847-1906) and then the Danish critic Edvard

Figure 2-2: Photograph of Anna Ancher (center rear), Vilhelm Hammershøi (third from left, rear) with Mette Gauguin (seated center front).

[5] Caption in Flemming Friborg, *Det gode selskab: Kunstforeningens historier 1825-2000* (Denmark: Gyldendal, 2000), 80. This is also sometimes called the Artists' Free School.

Brandes. The Gad family permeated the cultural avant-garde in Copenhagen; it also included the feminist playwright and author Emma Halkier Gad (1852-1921) and her son, film director Urban Gad (1879-1947). Gauguin lived in Copenhagen during the spring of 1885, following nearly a year of unemployment, where he took a position as a salesman of horse blankets and tarpaulins. Gauguin complained about nearly every aspect of his life in Denmark, including the deplorable German paints he was forced to use.[6] Anne-Birgitte Fonsmark reads *Still Life, Interior, Copenhagen* as a record of Gauguin's depressed and suicidal mental state in Denmark, exacerbated by the dark winter and physical and cultural isolation.[7] Despite his despair, his "larger than life" personality and his grandiose ambitions, extraordinary art objects and unusual theories about art caused a stir in the art community.[8] While he was in Copenhagen, Gauguin worked on his *Synthetic Notes*, articulating his view that paintings should be divorced from narrative. Furthermore, he believed painting was superior to other art forms in facilitating a synthesis of impressions at the instant of viewing.[9] In Skagen, as in Copenhagen, artists "violently [debated] the merits of this painter."[10]

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[6] Anne-Birgitte Fonsmark, "*Représentant de Commerce* in Copenhagen," in *Gauguin and Impressionism* by Richard R. and Anne-Birgitte Fonsmark (New Haven: Yale University Press in association with Forth Worth: Kimbell Art Museum, 2005), 241, exh. cat.

[7] Fonsmark, "*Représentant de Commerce* in Copenhagen," 241.

[8] Flemming Friborg, "Before and After: Paul Gauguin in Copenhagen 1884-85," in *In Impressionism and the North: Late 19th Century French Avant-Garde Art and the Art of the Nordic Countries 1870-1920,* ed. Torsten Gunnarsson and Hans Henrik Brummer, transl. Carina Frykland (Stockholm: Nationalmuseum, 2003), 148, exh. cat.

[9] Anne-Birgitte Fonsmark, "A Painter-Philosopher Develops" in *Gauguin and Impressionism,* 224, 226-7. These ideas can also be seen in Gauguin's "Notes on Painting" from his sketchbooks c. 1889-1890 published in *Art in Theory, 1815-1900: An Anthology of Changing Ideas,* ed. Charles Harrison, Paul Wood and Jason Gaiger (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1998), 1022-24.

[10] Michael Jacobs, *The Good and Simple Life: Artist Colonies in Europe and America* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1985), 104.

While he was in Copenhagen, Gauguin developed important long-term relationships with a few Danish painters close to Ancher. Theodor Philipsen (1840-1920) spoke fluent French and became a welcome conversation partner, discussing practical matters and color theory, during the French painter's unhappy residence in Denmark.[11] Gauguin also met with Philipsen while in Paris for the 1889 World Exhibition.[12] Although he poked fun at Krøyer, Gauguin esteemed this Skagen painter more highly than the Danes in general, and in 1886 he met Krøyer and two others on Paris to attend the Impressionists' show.[13] Krøyer also probably brokered the Artist Society exhibition of Gauguin's works in 1885.[14] Karl Madsen made Gauguin's acquaintance even before the French painter moved to Copenhagen. He first visited Gauguin at home in Paris in 1877, and more than a decade later organized another Copenhagen display of Gauguin's work.[15] More radical artists also associated with Gauguin. The young Symbolists Mogens Ballin and Jens Ferdinand Willumsen attended Gauguin's going away party in Paris before his departure to Tahiti, and worked with him for a time in Pont-Aven along with Gad F. Clement.[16] Although mostly ignored by critics, Copenhagen offered more

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[11] Peter Nørgaard Larsen, "Painterly Perception and Images of the Soul: Impressionism and Post-Impressionism in Denmark," in *Impressionism and the North,* 161.

[12]*Gauguin and van Gogh in Copenhagen in 1893,* ed. Merete Bodelsen (Copenhagen: Ordrupgaard, 1984) 17, exh. cat.

[13] Jacobs, *The Good and Simple Life: Artist Colonies in Europe and America*, 104.

[14] Merete Bodelsen, ed. *Gauguin og Impressionisterne* (Copenhagen: Kunstforeningen, 1968), 40-3. According to Bodelsen, Madsen claimed that among the Danish artists, Krøyer became Gauguin's "bête noir" (43). Despite Gauguin's vehement protests of maltreatment by the Kunstforeningen, the solo show matched the format and publicity of its typical offering and in truth amounted to an unprecedented honor for a relatively unfamiliar foreign artist.

[15] Bodelsen, ed. *Gauguin og Impressionisterne*, 41, gives the dating for Madsen's acquaintance with Gauguin. Madsen's show including Gauguin was in the fall of 1889 after the Exposition Universelle.

[16] *Gauguin and van Gogh in Copenhagen in 1893,* ed. Bodelsen, 17.

exhibitions of Gauguin's work during the 1880s than the rest of northern Europe. However, only the pivotal 1893 exhibition (see below) could be considered successful based on its enthusiastic buyers, considerable press, and its provocation of extensive parallel cultural debates on Symbolism.[17]

Mette Gauguin perpetuated the link between Copenhagen artists and the French avant-garde after her husband departed for Tahiti. She continued to give French lessons to those who wanted to travel to Paris or read the French journals. Her letter of introduction permitted Ballin to gain access to Paris venues, including the household of Theo van Gogh.[18] A 1901 photograph in the Danish Royal Library, for instance, depicts Anna and Michael Ancher along with Hammershøi and other artists gathered around Madame Gauguin (Fig 2-2). She hosted such gatherings in her apartment located just above their popular bohemian meeting spot at the Café Bernina, managed Gauguin's shipments from Polynesia to Paris, and lent works for Impressionist and postImpressionist exhibitions.[19] Through her management, her husband's collection of avant-garde paintings proved to be one of his most important legacies in Copenhagen, infusing examples of French art that reflected Gauguin's close connection to Camille Pissarro (1830-1903) prior to the 1890s.[20]

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[17] Torsten Gunnarsson, "Impressionism and the North," in *Impressionism and the North,* 25.

[18] *Gauguin and van Gogh in Copenhagen in 1893,* ed. Merete Bodelsen, 19.

[19] Friborg, "Before and After: Paul Gauguin in Copenhagen 1884-85," in *Impressionism and the North* 149; *Gauguin og van Gogh i København 1893,* ed. Bodelsen, 20.

[20] Richard R. Brettell, "Gauguin the Collector, Gauguin the Impressionist," in *Gauguin and Impressionism* ed. Richard R. Brettell and Anne-Birgitte Fonsmark, 44-66.

Georg and Edvard Brandes

The Brandes brothers wielded considerable intellectual clout in Denmark at the turn of the century. The internationally acclaimed and well-connected Georg Brandes published extensively on philosophy, politics and literature. His columns appeared regularly in the daily newspaper *Politiken* and he was a popular lecturer at the University of Copenhagen.[21] Jewish by birth and atheist in his proclamations, the leadership of both the established church and the Grundtvigian dissenters loathed him.[22] He spent a considerable period in Paris in the 1860s, traveled to London regularly, and fled to Berlin in 1876 to escape censorship and discrimination in his home country. In Berlin, Brandes came to embrace many contemporary realist and positivist painters including Christian Krohg, Edouard Manet, Claude Monet, and Max Liebermann. He possessed some expertise in the arts, having read at Copenhagen University in aesthetics and philosophy, with supplemental tutelage in Greek, Latin and Art History under the art historian Julius Lange. Generally credited as a founder of the Modern Breakthrough in Scandinavia, Brandes introduced French Naturalist authors including Émile Zola, Guy de Maupassant and the Goncourt brothers through his widely translated *Creative Spirits of the Nineteenth*

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[21] "Max Klinger og Georg Brandes," transl. Ulrike Brinkmann, in *Max Klinger "...der moderne Künstler schlechthin,"* Schriften des Freundenkreises Max Klinger E. V., vol. 2 (Berlin-München: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2010). Translation reprinted at *Henrik Pontoppidan,* ed. Flemming Behrendt, Henrik Loft Nielsen and Jon Helt Haarder (24 August 2012). http://www.henrikpontoppidan.dk/text/seclit/secartikler/christensen_charlotte/klinger_brandes.html. Christensen provides an extensive list of correspondents, including Ernst Renan, Jules Michelet, and Georges Clemenceau; testimonials and drawings by his international friends were compiled in a 397-page book offered to his daughter after her birth in 1879. These included: politicians; the musicians Edvard Grieg, Igor Stravinsky and Maurice Ravel; artists Claude Monet, Auguste Rodin; scientists Albert Einstein; authors Henrik Ibsen, Henry James, Thomas Mann, John Stuart Mill, Theodore Dreiser , Rainer Maria Rilke, August Strindberg, Leo Tolstoy, H. G. Wells, and Emile Zola. Many of his letters to these people have been translated and published in English.

[22] Neil Kent, *The Soul of the North: A Social, Architectural and Cultural History of the Nordic Countries, 1700-1940* (London: Reaktion, 2000), 61.

Century. Additionally, he has also earned an international reputation as the "man who 'discovered' Friedrich Nietzsche."[23]

The disjunction between Georg Brandes' international renown and the skeptical mainstream reception at home is also seen within his assessment of his Denmark's contribution to literature and art. Brandes was on the far left in politics and his views challenged Danish upper class, conservative and Protestant moral codes.[24] He advocated radical social reforms, including women's emancipation and civil marriage, and criticized hypocritical double standards on sexuality. Julie K. Allen observes that he enjoyed more positive acclaim elsewhere in Europe than he did in his own country. He grappled with what he perceived to be a crippling Danish propensity toward cultural insularity, combined with a directive that authors look toward local sources for the richest subjects and forms. In his 1899 essay "World Literature" he warned writers against submitting to an artificial overarching global schematic. He determined: 'World literature of the future will be more captivating the stronger its local origin is marked and the more diversified it is, provided it as art and science has a general human dimension.'"[25] At the same time, however, he feared that art lacked staying power if it was too rooted in current events and cosmopolitan fashions.[26] Nonetheless, Brandes consistently condemned Danish literature,

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[23] Julie K. Allen, "Denmark's Ugly Ducklings: Georg Brandes and Asta Nielsen's Metacultural Contributions to Constructions of Danish National Identity," *Scandinavian Studies* (Spring 2011): 66, Proquest 60988667. See also Jacobs, *The Good and Simple Life*, 90.

[24] Allen, "Denmark's Ugly Ducklings," 82.

[25] Svend Erik Larsen, "Euro-American Modernism as Local Refraction," *European Review,* vol. 19, no. 2 (May 2011), 305, doi:10.1017/S1062798710000566. Larsen paraphrases and cites from Georg Brandes, "World Literature" (1899) reprinted in M. R. Thomsen, *Mapping World Literature* (London: Continuum, 2008), 143-147.

[26] Georg Brandes, "Hans Christian Andersen" (1891) in *Creative Spirits of the Nineteenth Century* (1923), essay index reprint series (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1967), 14.

calling it "stagnant" and "uninspired" in 1871, and three decades later excoriated the regional direction taken by the Danes, which instead of being "captivating," was "ineffectual, soft, placid, crude and too receptive to the 'wrong' religious message."[27] Brandes believed that constant, aggressive, and escalating activism would improve literature and art, but more importantly, could "shift social values toward an awareness of the need for change through the arousal of social indignation."[28]

His brother Edvard Brandes was a popular playwright and theater critic and the influential editor-in-chief and financier of *Politiken.* He became active in politics in the last decades of the nineteenth century as a parliamentary representative to Folktinget (equivalent to the House of Commons) from the Venstre (Left) Party. A decade later he was one of the driving forces in the establishment of the Radical Venstre Party and a representative to the upper legislative house between 1906 and 1927. Edvard Brandes also served for nearly a dozen years as minister of finance, and articulated Denmark's position of neutrality during World War I.

Edvard Brandes felt that in the modern theater, acting must be "a melting together of art and science." He required that dramatists and actors observe society and manners of their own age and was unflagging in his disdain for contemporary taste for virtuoso performance that disregarded current context. "The poet is expected to understand the important topics of the day and let his poetry be saturated by them, yet the actor, who

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[27] Allen, "Denmark's Ugly Ducklings," 65; 1910 criticism quoted by Timo Huusko, "National Art and the Nation of Artists in the Nordic Countries," in *Nordic Art : The Modern Breakthrough, 1860-1920*, 204.

[28] Kent, *The Soul of the North,* 61.

must be the interpreter of the poet, is not even expected to possess ordinary culture."[29] This sort of symbiotic relationship between art and current events manifested in the coverage and layout of *Politiken,* a newspaper that during his leadership, gave nearly equal press to art exhibitions and ideas as it did to national and international political affairs. He developed into a "spokesman for the political and artistic opposition," characterized by his "fierce campaign against all forms of moral hypocrisy and in his insistence that nothing in poetry is immoral except that which is untrue."[30] Edvard Brandes was not only influential in shaping the intellectual discourse of Danish modernism, he also purchased a significant portion of Paul Gauguin's substantial collection of modern paintings from his sister-in-law Mette Gad Gauguin at an estimated value of over 15,000 francs in 1896.[31]

The Brandes brothers each espoused an aesthetic that required careful observation and sensory engagement, but also demanded that an artist transform impressions through new forms, a unique technique and innovative style. Georg Brandes may have been more influential than Edvard for the Skagen artists in part because he was in Skagen the epochal summer of 1883 of *Hip! Hip! Hurra!,* where "Everyone, Brandes included, was ceaselessly drinking, eating, discussing and condemning."[32] He and his wife continued to associate and correspond with the Anchers through the end of World War I. Georg Brandes received *Sunshine in the Blind Woman's Room* (1883, Fig. 2-3) as a gift from

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[29] Quoted in Frederick J. Marker, "Negation in the Blond Kingdom: The Theatre Criticism of Edvard Brandes,' *Educational Theatre Journal,* Vol. 20, No. 4 (Dec., 1968), 509, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3204995.

[30] Marker, "Negation in the Blond Kingdom: The Theatre Criticism of Edvard Brandes,' 513, 515.

[31] For the valuation see Merete Bodelsen, "Gauguin the Collector," *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 112, no. 810 (Sep., 1970): 601, http://www.jstor.org/stable/876423.

[32] Jacobs, *The Good and Simple Life*, 99.

Anna, discussed below and again in Chapter Three. In return, he gave her the manuscript of his book on Søren Kierkegaard, which along with others of Brandes' books remained on a shelf in Anna Ancher's studio during her lifetime.[33] His note of thanks to her in 1883 reflects his Naturalist orientation in the beginning of that decade: "The good in art and literature is running water, which either continues despite opposition, despite hostile criticism, seeming not beautiful, but reality."[34] Georg Brandes' letter to Ancher encapsulated the realist treatment of subject associated with the Modern Breakthrough. Brandes maintained a somewhat positivist approach to nature and enthusiasm for the new sciences of psychology as well as all natural sciences. He also asserted, however, that science must be subordinate in the arts to the "free purposes or determination of the individual. In his *Creative Spirits*, Brandes offered diverse examples of international authors with both the "gift of observation" and the "power of investing with form," ranging from Hans Christian Andersen to Algernon Swinburne.[35]

Brandes admired Gustave Flaubert, for instance, because of the veracity of his characters' experience. He explained that Flaubert was "willing to represent real psychological events alone, and to shun all effects of poetic eloquence, all pathetic or dramatic situations which appeared beautiful or interesting at the expense of truth."[36] Flaubert's verisimilitude in subject matched his innovative technique. Brandes praised the "richly colored expression" and "harmonized theme and tone" and the "music of its

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[33] Ole Wivel, *Anna Ancher: 1859-1935,* transl. Peter Ditlevsen (Denmark: Herluf Stokholms Forlag, 1987), 33.

[34] Georg Brandes to Anna Ancher, November 13, 1883, published in *Breve fra Anna Ancher,* ed. Svanholm, 76-7.

[35] Quoted in Seidlin, "Georg Brandes 1842-1927," 435.

[36] Georg Brandes, "Gustave Flaubert," (1881), in *Creative Sprits of the Nineteenth Century,* 224.

prose" in *Madame Bovary.*[37] The author's descriptive powers set him above his contemporaries, "He has consecrated his life to the calling of describing illusions" while at the same time, removing himself from any "sympathy," presenting an "icy coldness."[38]

In *Sunshine in the Blind Woman's Room,* the painting given to Brandes by the artist, Ancher's technique paralleled Brandes' terms for Flaubert. The painter objectively conveyed "richly colored" expression and tone. Ancher increased the viewer's sense of heat, treating the walls with a warm palette of roses and yellows. Sunbeams enliven the otherwise dark and sparse interior. Texture from the artist's brush invigorates the plaster surface of the wall behind the sitter. Ancher transformed the sensation of warmth from

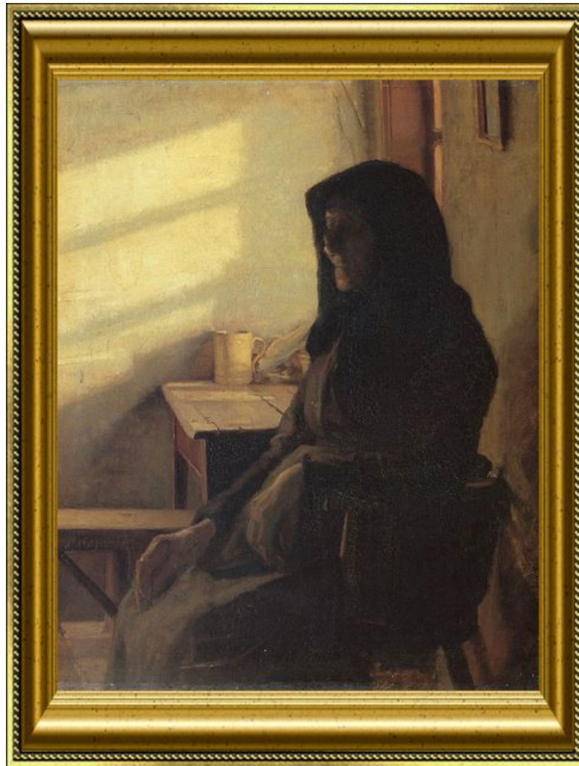

Figure 2-3: Anna Ancher. *Sunshine in the Blind Woman's Room* (1883)

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[37] G. Brandes, "Gustave Flaubert," 224, 227, 228.

[38] G. Brandes, "Gustave Flaubert," 236.

sunlight as experienced by the blind subject into a visual phenomenon, created through a halo of bright pigment outlining the face and hands. Ancher's image is descriptive of a humble Skagen room and its earthenware on the crude wooden table occupied by a lone elderly woman. However, the artist is also intimately present in her signature reflections on the wall and the gentle mark of the brush across her face. Unlike Brandes' criticism about Flaubert, there is no "icy coldness" in Ancher's depiction. This painting is discussed in more depth in Chapter Three.

Scholarship often neglects that like many others, both Ancher and Brandes evolved in their embrace of modern tendencies, moving toward Symbolism. Despite his importance for the Modern Breakthrough, Brandes' artistic judgments show an almost contradictory embrace of proto-Symbolist painters and authors. Peter Nørgaard Larsen credits Brandes with development of interest in Arnold Böcklin in Copenhagen.[39] Brandes also introduced, promoted and interpreted the complex artist Max Klinger (1857-1920), which led to essay collections published in 1897 and 1900. Brandes especially admired Klinger's glove etching series (1878). He marveled at the "deep and baroque originality" of the etchings; their unusual qualities prevented visitors from passing unaffected.[40] Brandes regarded Klinger as a neurasthenic, a malaise attributed to the stresses of modernity in the late nineteenth century.[41] Poul Vad explains the diagnosis: "By neurasthenia was meant a kind of hypersensitivity of the nervous system as a

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[39] Peter Nørgaard Larsen, "Evocative Landscape: Pictures to Dream By," in *A Mirror of Nature: Nordic Landscape Painting 1840-1910,* ed. Torsten Gunnarsson (Copenhagen: Statens Museum for Kunst, 2006), 133, exh. cat.

[40] Georg Brandes, *Moderne Geister,* Vol. 2 (1887), p. 51, qtd in Charlotte Christensen, "Max Klinger og Georg Brandes."

[41] Christensen, "Max Klinger og Georg Brandes."

consequence of the hectic hurly-burly and perpetual state of social tension which was supposed to characterize modern urban living. 'True neurasthenics,' Karl Madsen asserted, 'only tolerate colors in very small doses.'" [42] Klinger's *Glove Series* and sculptures responded to the excess of stimuli with restricted palette and smoother modulated surface treatment. Charlotte Christensen observes that Klinger's innovative prints combined detailed observation of contemporary fashion and manners with psychologically poignant and often bizarre dream sequences. She also documents that Brandes and Klinger continued their association through the years of the Vienna Secession, giving evidence of a strong link between Copenhagen and the avant-garde of Eastern Europe. The Danish government even commissioned Klinger to carve a marble portrait bust of Brandes (completed 1905).[43]

Copenhagen may have been a minor art center in comparison with Paris or London, but it offered a rich and complex cultural backdrop beyond the Skagen art colony for Ancher's development as an artist. Her exposure to ideas, sources and debates in the Danish capital provide a more nuanced context for consideration. Additionally, Ancher's painting during the last decades of the nineteenth century referenced the discourse and networks formed through extended travel to Paris from the close of 1888 until the summer of 1889.

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[42] Poul Vad, *Vilhelm Hammershøi and Danish Art at the Turn of the Century,* trans. Kenneth Tindall (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 72. Vad quotes Karl Madsen, Review of the spring exhibition at Charlottenborg, *Politiken* 4 June 1886.

[43] Christensen, "Max Klinger og Georg Brandes."

International Exposure and Reception

The Parisian Center: A Nexus Created at the Exposition Universelle

The cosmopolitanism, modernity and vibrancy of nineteenth-century Paris pulled visitors to the polis. Relatively limited training and small markets in Scandinavian cities likewise prompted artists and authors to seek opportunities and education abroad. Many found that a triumph in the official Salon or at alternate venues such as publishing houses and galleries in Paris validated artistic status and increased an artist's marketability.[44] In the French capital one could establish important entrepreneurial connections such as dealers and editors. Even the exciting attractions of the Exposition Universelle in 1889 were less important than its function as an international exhibition venue.[45] Artists who flocked to the international cultural capital for the great fair also took advantage of superior opportunities to receive instruction. Edvard Munch (1863-1944), for instance, subscribed to three months of instruction at Bonnat's studio to compensate for the lack of formal training he could obtain in Oslo.[46]

Once in Paris, however, socioeconomic and linguistic differences generally marginalized Scandinavians, as did their inexperience with the size and density of France's capital city. Scandinavian visitors formed a discrete group marked by distinctive residential and socializing patterns. The resultant peripheral identity within the foreign metropolis erased pedigrees conferred in their home countries and leveled status. The

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[44] Michelle Facos, *Nationalism and the Nordic Imagination: Swedish Art of the 1890s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 15.

[45] Letter from L. A. Ring to Johanne Wilde, June 4, 1889, published at http://www.henrikpontoppidan.dk/text/seclit/secbreve/ring_l_a/1889_06_04.html

[46] Erik Mørstad, "Munch's Impact on Europe" in *A Cultural History of the Avant-Garde in the Nordic Countries 1900-1925*. Ed. Hubert van den Berg et al. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2012), 85.

expatriate enclave provided access for aspiring artists to established Scandinavian masters, during outings or at evening soirees at the apartments of longer-term residents.[47]

A broad swath of young Danish artists made the trek to Paris for the great 1889 fair. Vilhelm Hammershøi and his wife were there in the summer. The Finnish and Swedish painter Hanna Rönnberg (1862-1946) described herself as part of the Skagen colony who traveled together from Denmark to Paris and met every Thursday at the Café de la Régence. She identified the others in her group as including, the Anchers, Willumsen, Kitty Kielland (1843-1914), and occasionally the Norwegian Werenskiold.[48]

Both the Paris bustle and the fantastic displays at the Exposition Universelle impressed the Scandinavian artists. The Ancher's friend Laurits Andersen Ring (1854-1933) wrote excitedly about his impressions when he first entered the grounds of the fair. Above all, the Eiffel Tower impressed him first with its magnificent beauty and which form he saw replicated in many store windows, emblazoned on all sorts of merchandise and signage for accommodations.[49] Ring additionally raved about the expansive Gallerie des Machines, and specifically Edison's phonograph and the electric fountain with its instantaneous color changes. He described his peregrinations through the displays as approximating a global journey from China, through Persia, and continuing to

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[47] Sylvain Briens, *Paris: Laboratoire de la littérature scandinave moderne 1880-1905* (Paris: Harmattan, 2010), 51. Google E-book.

[48] Hanna Rönnberg, *Konstnärsliv I slutet av 1800-talet,* transl. by Claus Olsen (Helsingfors, 1931), reprinted by Svanholm in *Breve fra Anna Ancher,* 92.

[49] Letters from L. A. Ring to Johanne Wilde, June 4, 1889 and Ring to Johanne Wilde, 6 June 1889, http://www.henrikpontoppidan.dk/text/seclit/secbreve/ring_l_a/1889_06_06.html.

performances by Javanese dancers, Vietnamese theater groups. At the end of these exotic displays, Ring relished a cup of Egyptian coffee served by an old Arab.[50]

Nonetheless, the city overwhelmed the newcomers. Ring describes wandering for the first time on his own through the streets and boulevards. The June heat was oppressive to the northerner. Finally, he was so tired he had to sit at a café and have a cup of black coffee and a carafe of cognac. While he was sitting, he felt the swarm of men and carriages press around him, punctuated by the cries of peddlers with newspapers, books and guides to the Eiffel Tower. According to Ring, red and black figures in Eastern costumes appeared and disappeared in a second, making him feel as if he were living in a fantasy or a dream, in which he could not understand what was being said.[51]

Anna and Michael Ancher had arrived in Paris after Christmas during an economic crisis in France, and well before the opening of the Exposition Universelle that ran from May 5 to Nov 5 of 1889. This was their second trip to the French capital. They had been to Paris before in 1885 on a tour via Belgium and Holland with Krøyer and Viggo Johansen. This time Ancher and her husband rented rooms on Avenue de Wagram in the Batignolles, a few blocks north of the Arc de Triomphe on a secondary axial radiating from Place de l'Étoile. Rönnberg described their lodgings as a small two-family house with two rooms on each floor set back off the avenue. "The rooms were furnished with old, heavy mahogany furnishings from the beginning of the 1800s, but with the addition of a little drapery, carpets and fabrics from Bon Marché, it became quite homey,

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[50]Letters from Ring to Johanne Wilde, 4 June 1889 and 6 June 1889.

[51] Letter from L. A. Ring to Johanne Wilde, 6 June 1889.

and it was always cheerful with good friends who gathered at Anna Ancher's coffee table."[52]

The Batignolles was an area in flux; Haussmann-style apartment buildings had just started to encroach on the area. However, the most significant demolition and development there did not come until the end of the century in time for the 1900 Exposition, when a metro stop was also built nearby. Already by the 1880s, industry developed along the fringes of the Batignolles accessible through omnibus lines, trams and relatively convenient rail stops on the northern lines. It was one of the quarters known pejoratively as the "Paris of Bricks," where an increase in demand for housing between 1871 and 1886 had driven up rents and pushed workers in the area into shantytowns or in cramped apartment buildings. The Ancher's housing seems to have been better than most such rooms that rented on a temporary basis to the young or to people flocking to Paris from the provinces.[53] Many immigrant domestic servants lived in the vicinity prompting the construction of a German Protestant church there by 1886.[54] W. Scott Haine concludes that renters of all nationalities and income brackets placed more value on the proper location in terms of district and neighborhood than they did on the specific amenities or décor of the dwelling.[55] Likewise, the Anchers chose a location within walking distance of the Boulevard de Clichy, the proximate axial center for most

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[52] Hanna Rönnberg, *Konstnärsliv I slutet av 1800-talet,* transl. by Claus Olsen (Helsingfors, 1931), reprinted by Lise Svanholm in *Breve fra Anna Ancher* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2005), 95.

[53] W. Scott Haine, *The World of the Paris Café: Sociability Among the French Working Class, 1789-1914* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 39.

[54] Mareike König, "Femina migrans: German Domestic Servants in Paris, 1870-1914, a Case Study," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 33, no. 3 (2012): 93-115, http://muse.jhu.edu/ accessed July 9, 2013.

[55] Haine, *The World of the Paris Café*, 163.

Scandinavian artists and authors in Paris during the 1880s. Some of the premier international avant-garde painters from Scandinavia had studios nearby. Anders Zorn's studio, an international meeting place for Sweden's avant-garde, was only a moderate walk away.[56]

The Anchers regularly dined in Paris with other Nordic expatriates including Willumsen and Rönnberg, at home or on the sidewalk in front of the Café de la Régence. The café's proximity to museums, theater and shopping made it a convenient gathering point. It became a meeting spot for those who had set up any kind of semi-permanent accommodations in Paris, and also served as an important way station for travellers to and from Scandinavia. For example, Ring collected his mail at la Régence after making his way to the fair from Copenhagen via Amsterdam, while he stayed at the Hôtel du Danemark located on the rue de Seine.[57] The café retained its importance to Scandinavian literati into the early 1890s.[58] Gatherings at the Café de la Régence situated the Scandinavians in close proximity to the Louvre's ancient masters rather than at the doorstep of the Academy across the river. At the same time, the location was convenient to the commercial shopping center in the area around the Opéra and the galleries of the modernist dealers Paul Durand-Ruel and Georges Petit. It aligned with other favorite Scandinavian meeting points along a vector from le café de l'Ermitage to the southernmost bohemian cafés, La Closerie des Lilas, frequented by August Strindberg

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[56] Briens, *Paris: Laboratoire de la littérature scandinave moderne 1880-1905*, 56.

[57] Letter from Ring to Johanne Wilde, 4 June 1889.

[58] Briens, *Paris: Laboratoire de la littérature scandinave moderne 1880-1905*, 71.

and Munch in the secondary center of Montparnasse.[59] In addition to cafés, the artists and authors met in private salons. Norwegian author Jonas Lie, who lived in a nicer part of the quartier de l'Étoile of the Arc de Triomphe with his family from 1882 through 1906, hosted a salon popular with Danish, Norwegian and Swedish authors, painters and musicians. Georg Brandes deemed that the circle created at Lie's gatherings propelled the development of the Modern Breakthrough.[60]

The artists who travelled to Paris in the 1880s generally identified with the opposition to whatever established academic tradition existed in their home countries.[61] Therefore, the Impressionists' alternate exhibition strategies and their radical inversions of academic conventions appealed to their rebel and pioneer personae. They frequented locations that in their imaginations signified rebellion, because it was depicted either in the novels of Emile Zola or in the Impressionist art of the 1870s and 1880s.[62] Their Parisian itineraries avoided tourist destinations. The Anchers' lodgings in the Batignolles were far removed from the areas south of the boulevards Montmartre and des Italiens recommended by guidebooks like Baedekers. On the other hand, their quarters at Avenue de Wagram positioned the Danish couple close to the Café Guerbois and the Nouvelle Athènes where the radical French painters gathered, or near the studios of the next generation of the avant-garde, Edouard Vuillard and Pierre Bonnard, in a neighborhood

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[59] Briens, *Paris: Laboratoire de la littérature scandinave moderne 1880-1905*, 144.

[60] Briens, *Paris: Laboratoire de la littérature scandinave moderne 1880-1905*, 69.

[61] Briens, *Paris: Laboratoire de la littérature scandinave moderne 1880-1905*, 56.

[62] Briens, *Paris: Laboratoire de la littérature scandinave moderne 1880-1905*, 62. The locations of studios and commercial centers comes from identifications made by Gloria Groom in "Spaces of Modernity," 165-85 and "The Social Network of Fashion," 33-43 in *Impressionism, Fashion, and Modernity,* ed. Gloria Groom (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 2012), exh. cat.

that seemed to replicate Zola's *The Belly of Paris* (1873).[63] Ancher testified to the role Zola had played in establishing her sense of Paris. In the only published letter from France in 1889 she noted specifically how the workers she met conformed to the descriptions she had enthusiastically read in *The Earth* (1887).[64] Nonetheless, Ancher did not paint any scenes depicting Parisian workers or urban life during her stay.[65]

These Swedes, Norwegians, Finns and Danes who considered themselves the avant-garde deepened connections in the Parisian café experience at de la Régence. French social writer August Lepage in 1882 described the clientele at this café as predominately and distinctively Scandinavian; the Norwegians, the Swedes and the Danish in particular considered it to be a sort of home and comported themselves accordingly, "sont là comme chez eux." There they could read journals from the capital cities of Copenhagen, Stockholm and Christiana and converse in languages that almost no French person could understand. Lepage noted too that the Scandinavians segregated themselves on the terrace, where their conversation was "noisy" and "animated" in stark contrast to the sedate atmosphere of the famous chess rooms in the café's interior.[66] He identified the Nordic café patrons as outsiders marked by a distinct culture and manner of interacting. The memories of their café experience lingered for Ancher and her peers, but also exaggerated their isolation. As foreigners they did not experience the freedom of the

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[63] Haine, *The World of the Paris Café*, 152 provides designation of the regions considered desirable by Baedekers and tour guides.

[64] Anna Ancher to Viggo Johansen [1889], in Svanholm, *Breve fra Anna Ancher,* 88.

[65] Sharon L. Hirsh, *Symbolism and Modern Urban Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 25-62. Hirsh identified a pattern of Symbolists such as Van Gogh, Ensor and Munch to not represent Paris as part of the urban metropolis, but to withdraw to a safe distance, asserting that Van Gogh's "discomfort with and eventual move away from the city" was part of a larger "social phenomenon in the life and work of Symbolist artists," 27.

[66] Auguste Lepage, *Les cafés artistiques et littéraires de Paris* ([Paris]: M. Boursin, 1882), 126.

streets celebrated by Charles Baudelaire's bourgeois male *flâneur*.[67] Even the French who the Scandinavians encountered were of their own class rather than representative of a cross-section of urban Paris. Over eighty-five percent of café goers in the French capital were native Parisians under the age of fifty; most were skilled, well-paid artisans or petit-bourgeois from a similar socioeconomic bracket as the majority of Scandinavian artists.[68] Ring trained as a house painter because he had neither the means nor the access to the Royal Academy. Michael Ancher's father had lost all his money in bad economic transactions. Anna Ancher's family may have been relatively prosperous within the town of Skagen and even in relationship to the standard of living on the Jutland Peninsula; however, her father and brother were innkeepers, putting them in a rank with "clerks in detachable collars" that comprised the core of café clientele.[69]

In cafés, males and females found a designated social place to meet where one could revert to customary patterns of interaction and conversation styles.[70] An undated watercolor by Severin Segelcke (1867-1940) owned by the Oslo National Museum evokes the equality fostered at the Café de la Régence, if not the joviality one gleans from other sources (Fig. 2-3). Into a compressed setting that echoes Edgar Degas's *Absinthe Drinker* (1876) or Edouard Manet's *Corner of a Café-Concert* (1878-1880),

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[67] Janet Wolff, "Gender and the Haunting of Cities (or, the Retirement of the *Flâneur*)," in *The Invisible Flâneuse? Gender, Public Space and Visual Culture in Nineteenth-Century Paris,* ed. Aruna D'Souza and Tom McDonough (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2006), 18-31.

[68] According to Haine, the café was the terrain of Paris's young workers and shopkeepers, *The World of the Paris Café*, 43-44; 65, 68.

[69] T. J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and his Followers* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 148-58. Clark discusses differences between the haut-bourgeois and the petit-bourgeois.

[70] This pattern parallels that of Russian Jewish immigrants to Paris in the late 19th century described by Haine, *The World of the Paris Café*, 164. The discussion of gender can be found in Haine pages 179-204.

Segelcke squeezed representations of his Scandinavian colleagues, including Michael Ancher and Willumsen (both at the back table). Segelcke's distortions of scale, the strong diagonal forged along the table, and the intimate intensity of those gathered convey a sense of collegiality in a predominantly male group, but also a less than flattering portrait of the women at the table. A man, who looks like Munch, leers disconcertingly at the bosom of a woman, possibly Kielland. Nonetheless, although portrayed with somewhat masculine features, these two women on the near side of the table seem to be significant participants in the artist society and convey an attitude of authority and seriousness.[71] Segelcke conveyed a radically different role for the women in the cafés than Manet or Degas. Degas's reprobate woman slouches into the table in *Absinthe Drinker*; the closely

Figure 2-4: Severin Segelcke, *Café de la Régence* (undated)

related tones used by the painter for the table, drink, blouse and skin deny vitality and strength.[72] In *Corner of a Café-Concert,* only one woman features in Manet's crowded scene and she is a waitress rather than a patron.[73]

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[71] Haine, *The World of the Paris Café*, 201 discusses Zola's depiction of women in the cafés. The particularly helpful comparison with Edouard Manet's *Corner* of a *Café-Concert* was suggested by Dr. Therese Dolan.

[72] Elisabeth Fabritius, "Anna Ancher and the French Avant-Garde," in *Anna Ancher,* ed. Christian Gether, Stine Høholt and Andrea Rygg Karberg, trans. Viggo Hjørnager Pedersen and Marlene Edelstein

Café sociability may have promoted radicalism. For one, the culture encouraged loud and enthusiastic political and economic debate. Many militant workers and activist intellectuals gathered around the café tables becuase the patrons' substandard housing and limited means restricted political discussions in private salons or clubs. Impromptu meetings at the local pubs "laid the social foundations for the labor movement and working-class politics."[74] The Scandinavians participated in Parisian café rituals of celebration and honor such as buying a round of drinks and the clinking of glasses. Such practices fostered a democratic and egalitarian camaraderie among all present, and reflected the working-class patronage.[75] Although café culture reinforced their status as outsiders and fostered a cohesive identity as Nordic "other," the group also absorbed the distinct classless ideals and values that signified the modernity of its members. As Sylvain Briens observes about Scandinavian authors in Paris at the time:

> The struggle against traditional institutions pushed the modern writers to develop a strategy of regrouping centered on Paris: It was about cultivating the image of a community sharing the same aesthetic values, the same literary canon, and the same lifestyle…For these authors, sojourning in Paris, frequenting the same literary cafés and reading the same books, created a capitation of a distinct literary heritage, that of modernity. One could call this a strategy of 'diminution:' the Parisian artistic sojourn is a form of marginalization sought after as a guarantee of modernity…The identity of social marginalization becomes an artistic identity.[76]

(Ishøj, DK: ARKEN Museum of Modern Art, 2011), 77. Fabritius claims that in 1889 Michael and Anna Ancher visited a show of a large collection of Degas'works at the Durand-Ruel Gallery.

[73] David Bomford and Ashok Roy, "Manet's 'The Waitress': An Investigation into its Origin and Development," *National Gallery Technical Bulletin,* vol 7 (1983), 3–19, http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/technical-bulletin/bomford_roy1983. According to the National Gallery (U.K.), Manet's *Corner in a Café Concert* was cut from a larger scene and originally included *Au Café,* now in the Winterthur Collection in Switzerland. Even with the addition of that portion of the painting, women do not play an active role as participants in café culture, but rather as observers or servers.

[74] Haine, *The World of the Paris Café*, 58.

[75] Haine, *The World of the Paris Café*, 101; 154, 158.

[76] Briens, *Paris: Laboratoire de la littérature scandinave moderne 1880-1905*, 75, my translation.

Café culture in Paris became therefore part of the way that the avant-garde in Scandinavia developed their distinctive identity as outsiders. The experience also permitted males and females to interact unguardedly. This aspect of French life at the end of the 1880s also helped the participants to coalesce their definition of radicalism and opposition to the hegemony of the established cultural institutions in their home countries.

Briens observes that through their common experiences in Paris, these artists and authors developed a bond as "modern," even though nearly all of them returned to their original abodes, produced for home audiences and never returned for any significant visit to Paris.[77] Few of them demonstrated any inclination to capture city life in the cafés or on the boulevards in their paintings.[78] Christian Mourier-Petersen (1858-1945) and Willumsen might be considered typical. After leaving Paris they turned to rural and provincial France for their subject matter. At the same time, artists such as Anna Ancher who traveled to and stayed in Paris in 1889 seemed to retain an inextricable link with those comrades. In her new studio built in 1913, a landscape by Willumsen occupied a special place of privilege on the wall of her studio, despite his considerably different aesthetic, a residual reminder of Paris friendship. Her painting of Kielland, executed in Paris, is the only portrait by her hand to hang on the gallery wall of her home's receiving room.

Opportunities for Women in the French Center

Paris presented a special opportunity for Scandinavian women. Many found that they faced fewer social restrictions and without the focus on the home, could develop a

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[77] Briens, *Paris: Laboratoire de la littérature scandinave moderne 1880-1905,* 81-2.

[78] Per Hedström, "Internationalism and Nationalism, Nordic Painters on the European Stage," 190.

professional career.[79] Anna Ancher reported often meeting the more internationally established Norwegian Kielland.[80] Ancher's friendship with Marie Triepcke (1867-1940) who married Krøyer in 1889, began during their study in Paris under Pierre Puvis de Chavannes (1824-1898), who offered classes for female painters in the atelier of Alfred-Philippe Roll (1846-1919). Anna Ancher's prestigious Hielmstierne-Rosencrone prize provided her a stipend and funded the instruction from Puvis de Chavannes. The award represented a professional milestone and helped her to cultivate relationships among Scandinavian women painters. Ancher recollected Puvis' principle teaching to be "Simple! Simple!" and that he encouraged pupils to emulate his own clean and pure lines. Equally vivid in her memory, however, was his theatrical entrance into the studio and his slow and deliberate ritual removal of overcoat and gloves.[81]

Paris offered professional training opportunities for women artists superior to the instruction Ancher had received at Vilhelm Kyhn's studio in Copenhagen in the 1870s. Nonetheless, the classes were not altogether satisfactory. Marie Bashkirtseff reputedly frequented Le Bon Marché department store because she was "not satisfied with her art classes at the Académie Julian."[82] This private academy with its conservative instruction and stress on figure drawing seems to have operated similarly to the classes Ancher took. The proliferation of academies actually was a concern to the Parisian Impressionists. The

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[79] Per Hedström, "Internationalism and Nationalism, Nordic Painters on the European Stage," 188.

[80]Anna Ancher to Viggo Johansen [before April 1889], in Svanholm, *Breve fra Anna*, 89; Claus Olsen in "Anna Ancher: 1889 in Paris," in *Anna Ancher 1859-1935: Malerin in Skagen* ed. by Heide Grape-Albers and Christine Refflinghaus, 119-20. Kielland wrote to Eilif Peterssen in March of 1889 describing Ancher's frustration in making the portrait. Although Kielland had for a long while shared a studio with Harriet Backer, in 1889 Backer was in Oslo opening an art school.

[81] Recounted by Claus Olsen in "Anna Ancher: 1889 in Paris," 119.

[82] Françoise Tétart-Vittu, "Who Creates Fashion?" in *Impressionism, Fashion, and Modernity*, ed. Gloria Groom, 77.

French avant-garde increasingly criticized the growing number of pupils paying for instruction and the consequent mechanistic approach to art making that was "destroying the individual craftwork of good painting."[83]

Regardless of the true quality of their instruction, Puvis de Chavannes' name alone conveyed validation on the professional enterprise of his female students. Ancher's classmates admired him and considered him to be a "prophet."[84] The Danish avant-garde also deeply admired Puvis de Chavannes. Larsen summarizes that not only was Puvis' *Young Women by the Sea* shown at the Exposition Universelle, his monumental decorations at the Panthéon "were among the regular locations on the programme for Danish artists visiting Paris."[85] Many admired the expression of longing for a vanished

Figure 2-5: Anna Ancher, Preparatory study for *A Funeral* (1890)

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[83] Anna Gruetzner Robins, *A Fragile Modernism: Whistler and his Impressionist Followers* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 167.

[84] Claus Olsen quoting Hanna Rönnberg, *Konstnärsliv I slutet av 1800-talet,* (Helsingfors, 1931), in "Anna Ancher: 1889 in Paris," 116.

[85] Peter Nørgaard Larsen, *Symbolism in Danish and European Painting 1870-1910,* transl. W. Glyn Jones (Copenhagen: Statens Museum for Kunst, 2000), 22. According to Larsen, Puvis de Chavannes' Sorbonne decorations were also a popular stop for Scandinavian artists, but they were not unveiled until August 1889. Although Anna Ancher may have been able to see these works in progress, she was back in Denmark by late June of 1889.

paradise; they emulated the formal simplicity in Puvis' monumental compositions and the suggestion in his frescoes of a "religious animation of nature."[86] Soon after returning to Denmark, Madsen lauded Puvis de Chavannes' stylistic purity and hoped that Willumsen and other young avant-garde artists would redirect their painterly experiments to be more in line with the French master.[87]

Informal affiliation may have been more important than formal instruction in conveying current trends and ideas among the female Nordic painters. Through Kielland, Ancher may have developed a novel preparatory method for painting totally different than that espoused in either Académie Julian or in Puvis de Chavannes classroom. Harriet Backer (1845-1932), who shared an apartment with Kielland for many years in both Munich and Paris, had just returned to Norway to open her own school using the "*l'ébauche sur l'ébauche*" method of Léon Pelouse: "The idea was that sketches brought

Figure 2-6: Anna Ancher, Sketch of a woman shearing sheep
(between 1890 and 1910)

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[86] Larsen, *Symbolism in Danish and European Painting 1870-1910*, 20, 31.

[87] Karl Madsen, "Den Frie Udstilling 1891," in *Tilskueren,* vol. 8 (1891), 341.

the painter close to the subject, but that the final work was executed rapidly, relying on the subconscious mind and the deftness acquired from sketching."[88]

In her paintings of the 1890s, Ancher employed a different preparatory method than what she had learned from Kyhn or from her husband. Her quick oil sketches from life captured light patterns filtering through windows, grasped a subject's gesture or attitude or established the spatial relationship between figures. She retained these unfinished paintings for her entire career and they only came to public view as the legated contents of her house were inventoried. Two sketches by Ancher for *A Funeral* (Fig. 2-1) provide evidence that the artist selectively edited descriptive detail in her finished painting. The sketch also offered the artist a way to experiment with different views. Although *A Funeral* depicts an interior, in the preparatory study of 1890 (Fig. 2-5) the mourners gather outdoors. In comparison to the finished canvas, the painter approached the scene from a much lower vantage point. In the study, Ancher pressed a large mass of undifferentiated figures to the front edge of the canvas, already working through the obstructions that she established in the final work. Her sketchy rendering of the priest, distinguishable only through his white contrasting clerical collar, captured the effect of strong backlight that is reiterated in the final painting. Nonetheless, the sketch focused less on the religious leader as central to the grievers. Other sketches, like one of a woman shearing sheep (Fig. 2-6), portrayed the physical energy and exertion of the labor in swift brushstrokes. Many of these unfinished exercises fixed atmosphere or sunlight, often framed in the geometries of windowpanes, onto an otherwise bare surface (Fig. 2-7). In taking this motif of observed phenomenon and transforming it in paintings such as

[88] Leena Ahtola-Moorhouse, "Landscapes of the Mind," in *A Mirror of Nature: Nordic Landscape Painting 1840-1910,* 173.

Sunshine in the Blue Room (1891, Fig. 2-8), Ancher freed the final work from its function as positivist record of observed phenomenon. Her sketch was consistent with Backer's method, a vehicle for Ancher to synthesize her impressions. While several art historians such as Claus Olsen have been frustrated in the lack of direct connections between Anna Ancher's stay in Paris and the style of her subsequent oeuvre, the process she used in moving from sketch to finished work aligned directly with the practice advocated by Backer, which Kielland most certainly shared with Ancher.

The stay in Paris brought Ancher and the other Scandinavians many varied opportunities to view art both in the official exhibitions and Salon, but also in smaller venues. Rönnberg accompanied Ancher to the commercial center of the Parisian art market on rue Laffitte to a display of Impressionist works. Claude Monet's captivating and harmonic color sense impressed Rönnberg the most, although she also admired a

Figure 2-7: Anna Ancher, Sketch of light on the wall of the blue room (c. 1890)

small canvas by Paul-Albert Besnard (1849-1934).[89] Such Impressionist scenes conveyed a mythic idea of Paris as a showcase of urban modernity, as Griselda Pollock summarizes: "A new Paris for recreation, leisure and pleasure, of nature to be enjoyed at weekends in suburbia, of the prostitute taking over and of fluidity of class in the popular spaces of entertainment. The key markers in this mythic territory are leisure, consumption, the spectacle and money."[90] How would Anna Ancher have responded as a "female spectator and a female producer" to these works?[91] In the spring of 1889 she complained that outside of her classes and the times in the café, she made small trips, but otherwise "sat at home and painted her country people."[92] Rönnberg judged that the show at Goupil had a strange or curious appearance, "an underlying alien tone."[93] These Scandinavian women artists also had extremely limited access to either the interior or recreational Parisian spaces represented. Later in the spring the Anchers were photographed with others from the Skagen colony at a picnic in Asnières, but they did not make it as far as to Chatou or other popular boating spots they might have seen in exhibited paintings. The elegant dining-rooms, drawing-rooms, bedrooms with their balconies or verandas and private gardens inhabited and represented by Berthe Morisot or

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[89] Hanna Rönnberg, *Konstnärsliv I slutet av 1800-talet,* transl. by Claus Olsen (Helsingfors, 1931), reprinted by Svanholm in *Breve fra Anna Ancher,* 92-3.

[90] Griselda Pollock summarizes part of T. J. Clark's argument in *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and his Followers* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985). Pollock quotation in *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 1988), 52.

[91] Pollock ponders in reference to Manet's *Olympia* (1863) and *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* (1881-2): "To recognize the gender specific conditions of these paintings' existence one need only imagine a female spectator and a female producer of the works. How can a woman relate to the viewing positions proposed by either of these paintings... Would a woman of Manet's class have a familiarity with either of these spaces and its exchanges which could be evoked so that the painting's modernist job of negation and disruption could be effective?" *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art*, 53.

[92] Anna Ancher to Viggo Johansen [before April 1889], in Svanholm, *Breve fra Anna Ancher*, 90.

[93] Rönnberg, *Konstnärsliv I slutet av 1800-talet,* in Svanholm, *Breve fra Anna Ancher*, 92.

Mary Cassatt and their peers cannot be more different from the tiny house the Anchers had recently purchased in Skagen or the lodgings they rented in the Batignolles.[94] While the painterly effects Ancher encountered at the Impressionist exhibition may have been visually exciting, the modernity represented an urban male outdoor space and luxurious female apartments, both of which were alien in comparison to rural Denmark.

Figure 2-8: Anna Ancher, *Sunshine in the Blue Room* (1891).

Scholars disagree on the importance of this period in Paris on the development of Anna Ancher's art. Annette Johansen belittles the impact of Ancher's trip to Paris in *Krøyer and the Artist's Colony at Skagen,* asserting, "A few trips abroad did not, however make any visible impact on her painting," but introduces a contradictory claim at the end of the same paragraph. Johansen concludes her assessment of Ancher's stylistic development by claiming "it was only in the 1890s," that is just after her return from

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[94] The list of interior spaces represented by Morisot and Cassat is found and illustrated in Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art,* 56, 57-61.

Paris, "that she turned her hand to bigger paintings featuring large groups of figures and ventured out-of-doors to paint the surrounding scenery."[95] Elisabeth Fabritius agrees that her paintings became more complex in this decade.[96] In terms of form, Ancher biographer Ole Wivel claims that light becomes the compositional basis of her paintings, which become flatter, and begin to vibrate with color.[97] However Olsen, the former director of the Skagens Museum, concluded that her trips to Paris were pivotal in terms of color, light and composition, but attributes this change primarily to her study with Puvis de Chavannes in 1889.[98] More recently Fabritius has suggested that the trip to Paris did change Ancher's concept of art, an argument she will develop in a forthcoming monograph on the artist.[99] Ancher's daring color choices in *The Seamstress' Head, Ane* (1890, Fig. 2-9) of blue in the hair, red for the face and the dominant yellow-green surprised Fabritius when she studied Ancher's pastels in 2008. The scholar queried three years later: "How could a female artist in a remote corner of Denmark hit upon a style of painting only practiced at the time by the wildest artists of the Paris avant-garde?"[100] Despite their lack of agreement in their assessment, these historians observed changes in complexity as well as in the role played by color and light in canvases after 1890 that

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[95] Annette Johansen, "Anna Ancher," in *Krøyer and the Artist's Colony at Skagen,* ed. Bente Scavenius (Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland, 1998), 68, exh. cat.

[96] Elisabeth Fabritus, "Das Künstlerehepaar Michael und Anna Ancher," in *Anna Ancher: 1859-1935: malerin in Skagen,* ed. Heide Grape-Albers and Christine Refflinghaus, 44.

[97] Wivel, *Anna Ancher,1859-1935,* 23.

[98] Olsen "Anna Ancher 1889 in Paris,"120.

[99] From the text and note 3 in Fabritius, "Anna Ancher and the French Avant-Garde," 57.

[100] Elisabeth Fabritius, *Anna Ancher: The Pastels,* transl. Walton Glyn Jones (Copenhagen: Vandkunsten; Royal Library, 2008).

signify the shift in Ancher's stylistic development away from Danish Naturalism and that correlate to her experience of the French capital.

Whistlerian Harmonies: A Segue to Scandinavian Symbolism

In many ways, Ancher's sojourn in Paris precipitated a shift toward Symbolism in her art in common with other Danish painters. As noted above, the Scandinavians admired the expression of utopian ideals by Ancher's celebrated instructor, Puvis de Chavannes. A significant group within the Scandinavian subculture believed that paintings should convey a mood or idea, and thereby challenged the positivist Modern Breakthrough. As discussed below, Swedes Prince Eugen (1865-1947) and Richard Bergh (1858-1919), along with the Fleksum group from Norway gravitated towards more evocative landscapes. Important evidence of changing styles also emerged as Scandinavians apprehended the international avant-garde. In Paris in 1889, Whistler's art drew considerable notice and crowds, including Madsen and others, visited the Synthetist exhibition at the Café Volpini.

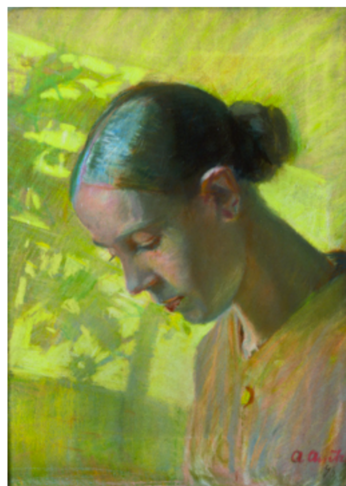

Figure 2-9: Anna Ancher. *The Seamstress' Head, Ane* (1890)

Ancher did not leave written evidence of admiration for Whistler. However, his work and ideas were discussed by Symbolist artists and in the Scandinavian press. Georg Brandes also admired Whistler. In 1896 he compared the splendor of London on a summer evening to the beauty created in a nocturne: "Not with a clear, architectural, plastic beauty, but with a delicate picturesque beauty that perhaps none save Whistler in his nocturnes from the Thames has ever been able to give a true reflection of."[101] Krøyer had admired Whistler's nocturnes during visits to London earlier in the decade.[102]

Whistler's landscapes and prints hold visual affinity with Ancher's paintings. The Danish painter probably observed Whistler's art firsthand on her initial trip to Paris where she visited the May Salon of 1885.[103] Torsten Gunnarsson has singled out Whistler's appeal to Scandinavians who visited that venue: "The most talked-of-ingredients at the Paris Salon included Whistler's dreamy evanescent pictures."[104] Whistler sent two paintings to the 1885 Paris Salon, the *Arrangement in Flesh Colour and Black: Portrait of Théodore Duret* and *Arrangement in Black: The Lady in the Yellow Buskin - Portrait of Lady Archibald Campbell*.[105] In 1889, at the Exposition Universelle, the British exhibited two Whistler paintings, including again *Arrangement in Black: The Lady in the Yellow Buskin - Portrait of Lady Archibald Campbell* as well as

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[101] "Dr. Georg Brandes' Impressions of London: Art, Literature and the Drama," *The Review of Reviews*, ed. William Thomas Stead. Vol. 14, (1896): 238.

[102] Torsten Gunnarsson, *Nordic Landscape Painting in the Nineteenth Century,* transl. Nancy Adler (New Haven: Yale University, 1998), 219.

[103] According to the Salon catalogue, Michael Ancher exhibited two works at this salon, *My Wife* and *Sick Child.* Johansen exhibited *Kitchen Interior* and *Two Friends. Catalogue illustré du Salon* published by F. G. Dumas (Paris: Librairie d'art L. Baschet, 1885), x, xxxii.

[104] Gunnarsson, *Nordic Landscape Painting in the Nineteenth Century,* 204.

[105] While there are conflicting assertions about what Whistler exhibited at the 1885 Salon, my claims for all the works exhibited in 1885 are based on the *Catalogue illustré du Salon* published by F. G. Dumas (Paris: Librairie d'art L. Baschet, 1885), LI.

Variations in Flesh and Green: The Balcony. The artist also contributed at least eight etchings to the British section.[106] Whistler's canvases hung prominently and received critical acclaim in 1889. His gold medal entries would certainly have attracted the attention of the visiting Scandinavians. Furthermore, the Danish avant-garde embraced Whistler's subversion of narrative, dissolution of forms, evidence of *Japonisme* in his work, and his posture of radical opposition to established artists and institutions.[107]

Ancher shared Whistler's view that the artist's role was to manipulate nature. In the pastel *The Seamstress' Head, Ane*, Ancher reorganized the sunlight on the wall into a two dimensional pattern of positive and negative space, an abstract suggestion of a plant's reflection. Whistler wrote in his "Ten O'Clock Lecture" (1885) that "Nature contains the elements of color and form of all pictures—as the keyboard contains the

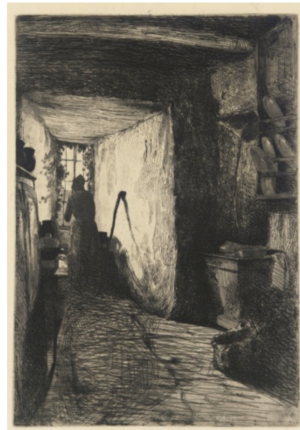

Figure 2-10: James McNeill Whistler. *The Kitchen,* from the *French Set* (c.1858)

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[106] Margaret F. MacDonald and others, *James McNeill Whistler: The Etchings, a catalogue raisonné*, University of Glasgow, 2012, on-line website at http://etchings.arts.gla.ac.uk.

[107] Larsen, *Symbolism in Danish and European Painting 1870-1910*, 24, 84. While I had made this observation in relation to Anna Ancher in a seminar paper submitted to Dr. Suzanne Singletary in the fall of 2008, I later read Peter Nørgaard Larsen's book on Symbolism, which made a nearly identical claim for the Danish avant-garde as a group. Johan Rohde, as one example, saw Whistler's *Nocturnes* on several occasions including at the Champ-de-Mars exhibition in Paris.

notes of all music—but the artist is born to pick, and choose, and group with science, those elements, that the result may be beautiful." Ancher selected sunlight and shadow and arranged them for aesthetic rather than mimetic effect.

Whistler's etching *The Kitchen* (Figure 2-10) issued first in 1858 and then reworked in 1881, offers a compelling example of the visual link between the master's etchings and Ancher's transitional art of the 1880s exemplified by *Maid in the Kitchen* (Figure 1-8). Despite the tighter space in Whistler's print, the composition is similar: a woman seen from the rear, occupied at work, in an interior room distinguished by a strong contrast between light and dark. Both Ancher and Whistler conveyed the scene without sentimentalizing it. Both works reference Dutch art of the seventeenth century. The well-documented importance of Rembrandt to Whistler is evident in his etching; Ancher shared this passion. In 1885, both Ancher and Whistler visited Holland and Belgium. On a later trip in 1891, Rembrandt's *Jewish Bride* stood out as a highlight of Ancher's trip. She described seeing it as akin to "loveliest Schnapps trickling down through us…glorious glorious!"[108]

Paintings such as *Sunshine in the Blue Room* and *Young Woman in Garden with Orange Parasol* (c. 1905, Fig. 2-11) demonstrate Ancher's formal experiments and offer a nod to Whistler subsequent to her sojourn to Paris. Like Whistler, in *Young Woman in Garden* Ancher manipulated nature, embraced *Japonisme*, and made color the dominant artistic element. Ancher's small, signed oil canvas echoed Whistler's use of Japanese prints in modern painting. The raking angle of the tree, the centrality of the orange parasol and the high horizon line were all *Japonisme* elements that show an affinity with

[108] Anna Ancher to Martha Johansen, June 11, 1891 in *Breve fra Anna Ancher,* ed. Svanholm, 103.

Figure 2-11: Anna Ancher. *Young Woman in Garden with Orange Parasol* (c. 1905)

Whistler's painting and prints exhibited in the 1870s and 1880s.[109] Ancher's approach to color seemed to be informed by Whistler's practice. In *Sunshine in the Blue Room*, Ancher divided the composition into juxtaposed flattened patterns of two complementary colors, a deep blue and an orange-gold. Her color-scheme parallels Whistler's *Blue and Orange: Sweetshop* (1884). Like those of the more famous Whistler, her titles also emphasized the centrality of color in both of these canvases.[110]

Sunshine in the Blue Room subordinated narrative to materials and composition. The rays of sunlight entering the window and reflecting on the wall serve as the focal point of the canvas, and seem at a quick glance to record natural phenomenon. Ancher's treatment of the surface, however, counters the descriptive function of the painting. The paint brushstrokes create pattern and tension on the surface to indicate the reflective design, with incised marks between the window and the sunrays. Represented sunlight slashes the stripes on the rug, which climb toward the light at a steep angle. The legs and

[109] It is important to note that Karl Madsen also wrote a book on *Japonisme, Japansk Malerkunst* that was published in Copenhagen in1885 by P. G. Philipsens.

[110] Robins, *A Fragile Modernism: Whistler and his Impressionist Followers*, 27.

the lap of the young girl dissolve into the room furnishings. The broken color dabs of the collar, hair and pinafore reduce the human subject to a mere motif sublimated to the overall design. The suggestion of art on the walls raises more ambiguity. Through her lack of clarity in denoting the particulars of the model, her daughter, and the surprising use of color, Ancher conformed to Whistler's claims about *Harmony in Grey and Gold* in his *Gentle Art of Making Enemies* (1890). Whistler negated the significance of "the past, present, or future of the black figure" which was "placed there because the black was wanted at that spot."[111] Although monographs on Ancher habitually locate this *Sunshine in the Blue Room* within the Brøndum inn and identify the girl as the artist's daughter Helga, the "past, present, or future" of the figure is clearly secondary to the recapitulation of the overall color harmonies. The narrative is not important to the overall painting. Ancher seems to have placed the girl there because gold was "wanted at that spot." Even before she left for Paris in 1889, Ancher already worked at composing paintings entirely through color, as she explained to Johansen in her letter in the spring of 1889.[112] In contrast, she remembered Puvis de Chavannes' instruction as emphasizing line. Like Whistler's nocturnes, Ancher's paintings were arrangements of color and form.

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[111] James Abbott McNeill Whistler, "The Red Rag," reprint of "Mr. Whistler, Cheyne Walk," *The World* (May 22, 1878) in *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies* (1890), new edition (London: William Heinemann, 1892), e-book. http://www.gutenberg.org/files/24650/24650-h/24650-h.htm.

[112] Anna Ancher to Viggo Johansen [1889], in Svanholm, *Breve fra Anna Ancher*, 88.

Figure 2-12: Anna Ancher. *Clear Moonlit Evening at Skagen Lighthouse* (1904)

Additionally, in his nocturnes, Whistler radically reduced the contours of the landscape into broad sweeps of painterly color. In *Clear Moonlit Evening at Skagen Lighthouse* (1904, Fig. 2-12) Ancher rendered Skagen's coastal heather through horizontal bands of greens, with a hint of indigo for the bay and dominated by the deep blue sky. Indeterminate ochre verticals suggest haystacks, red and white geometries the local vernacular architecture, and a cylinder in white impasto the Skagen lighthouse. As in Whistler's painting of Chelsea in the snow, *Nocturne: Grey and Gold—Chelsea Snow* (1876), "It was the arrangement of this color harmony that was the real 'basis of the picture,' not any imagined genre scene."[113] In his nocturne, the glow of the store window transformed the atmosphere of the snowy street, while gas lamps sparkle like jewels. In his "Ten O'Clock Lecture" Whistler referenced such liminal moments when the "evening mist clothes the riverside with poetry…and the poor buildings lose themselves in the dim sky." He likened nature at these times to a singer whose only audience is the artist.

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[113] Deanna Marohn Bendix, *Diabolical Designs: Paintings, Interiors, and Exhibitions of James McNeill Whistler* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 33.

Ancher chose a comparable time of day. Her brilliant moon hovers over the landscape; its luminosity and painted crust overpower the rendering of the night sky. An enigmatic dab of the moon's citrus yellow pops out again along the edge of the canvas, set off by a shift in brush stroke from horizontal to vertical. Whistler and Ancher also took a comparable approach to the finish of the surface. The texture of the canvas, the mark of a rag and the stroke of Whistler's brush energize the surface of works from the 1880s such as *Nocturne: Silver and Opal—Chelsea (1880-84)*.[114] Blotting, wiping, the weave of the canvas and the bristles of assorted brushes create a variegated finish in Ancher's *Clear Moonlit Evening.* Whistler asserted that the appellation "nocturne" divested the work of all "anecdotal meaning."[115] In an 1881 review for the *Gazette des beaux-arts* critic Théodore Duret emphasized the lack of contours and finish of the nocturnes, and concluded that these paintings should be likened to Wagnerian music in the "harmonic combinations of colors."[116] Ancher's landscape musically weaves her impression of the Scandinavian coastline at sunset.

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[114] Observation made by Suzanne Singletary in a lecture, "Music as Magic Architecture: Immersive Environments in Baudelaire and Whistler" made at the College Art Association annual conference 12 February 2011. Anna Gruetzner Robins also points to the textured surface and the horizontality of the brushstrokes in the nocturnes in *A Fragile Modernism: Whistler and his Impressionist Followers* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 21.

[115] Richard Dorment and Margaret F. MacDonald, *James McNeill Whistler* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1995), 122.

[116] Théodore Duret, "English Artists—James Whistler" (March 1881), *Gazette des beaux-arts* transl. and repr. in *Whistler: A Retrospective,* ed. Robin Spencer, (New York: Wings Books, 1989), 182.

While there is a strong visual link between Ancher and Whistler, *Synthétisme* also had important ramifications for Symbolism in Denmark with several painters joining the movement in Pont-Aven at the beginning of the 1890s. An undated interior from after Ancher's trip to Paris references the intense reds and deep greens in Gauguin's canvases of this period (Fig. 2-13). Additionally, the painting is distinctive because Ancher's uncharacteristic black contours flatten the furnishings and objects and distort pictorial space. Nonetheless, for the most part, the exhibition of Breton paintings shocked the sensibilities of Denmark's painters. In 1891, Madsen reflected on "the strange language" of *Synthétisme* he had encountered when he joined the crowds at the Café Volpini exhibit

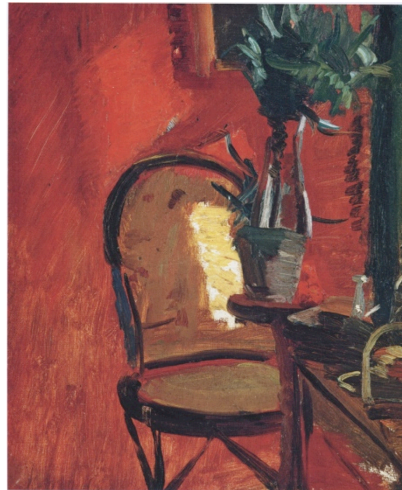

Figure 2-13: Anna Ancher. *Interior with Chair and Plant* (c. 1885-1890).

two years earlier.[117] Madsen reported that his eyes dulled and he judged the exhibit to showcase "nothing but riddles." On the one hand, he admired the painters' radical simplicity as a necessary antidote to the surrounding "pettiness" of Naturalism, the overabundance of "weak, lukewarm dishes," and misguided reverence for finery on

[117] Jacobs, *The Good and Simple Life*, 75, reports that Gauguin was in Paris for the Café Volpini show and may well have joined Madsen for his visit.

display at the Exposition and in the Salon. At the same time, even in the hands of Gauguin, who he identified as the main exhibitor with evidence of “a painterly talent,” he warned that the Synthetists overly decorative and child-like attempts would “wither like dry leaves,” and artists desiring the same revolutionary result should turn instead to prototypes with demonstrated endurance. He offered as exemplars the Egyptians, Assyrians and proto-Renaissance. Madsen feared nihilism as a result of *Synthétisme*. “What does it propose the basis to give us instead of art’s ancient language, that it will eliminate as obsolete?” [118]

Establishing Secondary Networks

Perhaps through increased familiarity consequent to the extended time in Paris in 1889, over the next decade northerners began to value Paris less as the premier seat of radicalism. During the 1880s, “the most turbulent phase in the development of Nordic nineteenth-century art,” artists went to Paris as part of their protests against the hold of the academies.[119] Scandinavians had gleaned the connection between the cultural avant-garde and radical social change through authors such as Zola. The rumblings of the labor movement and the revolutionary and anarchist societies that fomented in the cafés energized the Scandinavian rebels. “In the process of forming their organization, they became increasingly concerned with issues of freedom, equality, and personal fulfillment.”[120] As will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter Four, the artists,

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[118] Madsen, “Den Frie Udstilling 1891,” in *Tilskueren,* 339-40.

[119] Torsten Gunnarsson introduction to *A Mirror of Nature: Nordic Landscape Painting 1840-1910* (Copenhagen: Statens Museum for Kunst, 2006), 21.

[120] Facos, *Nationalism and the Nordic Imagination: Swedish Art of the 1890s*, 25.

however, felt they needed to look outside the cities to pursue their egalitarian goals.[121] These artists believed that the source of change would be found in the sparsely populated Swedish countryside, the fields and beaches of Denmark, or in the evocative landscapes of Norway.[122] During the 1880s, Ancher's associates revered Paris as a laboratory for innovation, the nexus of revolution. However, like many at the fin-de-siècle, while Ancher ultimately rejected the frenetic pace of Parisian urbanism, she continued to reference movements conceived there, albeit with imagery connected to her native land.

Cultural differences compounded practical difficulties for Scandinavians who stayed in Paris for extended periods. For many Scandinavians, Paris was also too expensive.[123] Furthermore, expected sales did not happen despite critical acclaim.[124] Both Michael and Anna Ancher reported homesickness and longing for Denmark.[125] Certainly it must have been difficult to leave their daughter Helga behind in Skagen with the Brøndum relatives. Even intellectual history differed between France and Denmark: The French Enlightenment contrasted with the strong imprint of N. F. S. Grundtvig (1783-1872) on Danish education and culture. Grundtvig's philosophy was premised on a fundamental conflict between the cognitive focus based in the Age of Reason and the soul, which he believed was the core of the Lutheran north. This dichotomy between reason and soul was especially pronounced for artists such as Ancher and Ring, who

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[121] Facos, *Nationalism and the Nordic Imagination: Swedish Art of the 1890s*, 25-6.

[122] Facos, *Nationalism and the Nordic Imagination: Swedish Art of the 1890s*, 7.

[123] Briens, *Paris: Laboratoire de la littérature scandinave moderne 1880-1905,* 74.

[124] Facos ,*Nationalism and the Nordic Imagination: Swedish Art of the 1890s*, 25. The reference is to Swedish artists; I have found no record of sales of Danish paintings from the 1889 exhibition in Paris, whereas some of the Anchers canvases in the next decade were purchased by German collectors.

[125] Anna Ancher to Viggo Johansen [1889], in Svanholm, *Breve fra Anna Ancher*, 88.

came from Jutland farming communities where Grundtvig's schools were the strongest.[126]

A sense of Scandinavian identity contributed to Nordic alienation in Paris, but at the same time promoted continued regional relationships preserved through letter writing, socializing at shows in Gothenburg or Oslo, joint holiday excursions or participation in meetings in Copenhagen. The major part of the 1889 Scandinavian colony in Paris returned to their home country to paint local subjects. Michelle Facos observes that Swedes Carl Larsson and Bergh turned away from both the modern urban Parisian culture and its painterly language of Impressionism. Bergh's painting in the 1890s continued to subscribe to "Naturalism's principle of truth to individual vision," yet he represented visions of the uncorrupted Swedish coast. "Bergh signals a shift away from a fascination with urban, foreign modernity toward a concern for a rural, indigenous tradition; memory and the imagination began to impinge on immediate experience."[127] Ancher reminisced happily about subsequent professional encounters and holiday with Bergh and Prince Eugen in a letter of 27 November 1896 to Martha Johansen. She expressed with uncharacteristic candor fond remembrance of the jovial fellowship, and exclaimed that she had discovered a new landscape ("more French perhaps") in the lake region of Sweden. Furthermore, she respected how Prince Eugen and Bergh seem to have become "more themselves" and to paint with more "courage."[128]

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[126] Briens, *Paris: Laboratoire de la littérature scandinave moderne 1880-1905*, 61.

[127] Facos, *Nationalism and the Nordic Imagination: Swedish Art of the 1890s*, 14, 26.

[128] Anna Ancher to Martha Johansen, November 27, 1896 in *Breve fra Anna ancher,* ed. Svanholm, 122.

Bergh and the Swedes were not alone in overhauling the Impressionist and Naturalist model from Paris, even though those innovative movements had initially drawn them to the city. As noted in the Introduction, Scandinavian curators in 2003 derived the term "Evocative Landscapes" to describe a difference in landscape painting that emerged especially in Norway and Sweden, although with less of an impact in Denmark and Finland. Artists sought to convey emotion and mood through their paintings of landscape and their representation of the distinctive atmosphere and light of Scandinavia.[129] Kielland and Wereskiold had already begun in this genre by 1886, so would have been using this visual language at the time they interacted with the Anchers and their friends. Bergh contrasted the ocularity of French Impressionists to the lyrical landscape painting in the north. "In France a landscape painter may be able to become an artist solely through his eye, such as Sisley. In Scandinavia the landscape painter must be a poet."[130] Bergh implied that the Scandinavians constructed their images through a synthesis of multisensory stimuli rather than as a simple response to stimuli perceived solely in the visual field. For Bergh, the work of art began in reality, yet in order to be considered art it had to move beyond what one could see and instead had to convey the mood, the mental state of the artist in apprehending the scene.[131] In *Clear Moonlit Evening,* Ancher's choices for harmonizing colors and her sculptural application of thick

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[129] Torsten Gunnarsson introduction to *A Mirror of Nature: Nordic Landscape Painting 1840-1910,* 28. I am indebted to Statens Museum Head of Collections and Research, Peter Nørgaard Larsen, for pointing out the collective effort at arriving to new nomenclature in a personal interview on 18 September 2013.

[130] Richard Bergh, *Karl Nordström och det moderna stämningslandskapet* (1896), 118, quoted in Larsen, "Evocative Landscape: Pictures to Dream By," in *A Mirror of Nature*, 129.

[131] Larsen, "Evocative Landscape: Pictures to Dream By," in *A Mirror of Nature*, 129-30.

pigment to render the moon achieved an effect parallel to works such as Richard Bergh's *Landscape from Halland* (1895) or Prince Eugen's *The Cloud* (1895).

Berlin proved to be an alternate cultural magnet for the Scandinavians, although twentieth century Danish art historians have downplayed its significance.[132] Munch's controversial one-man show in November 1892 reflected international efforts there to showcase experimental modern art. Although conservative forces impelled the premature closure of the show, Munch secured a deal the very same day for a second opening in the city in December as well as a travelling exhibition to Düsseldorf and Cologne.[133] Subsequent to his German debut, in May of 1893 the Kleis Gallery in Copenhagen hosted a showing of Munch's work that received a lukewarm review by Emil Hannover in *Politiken.*[134] The importance of Berlin's cultural scene can be seen in a recurring feature submitted to *Politiken* in 1892 by Danish author Holger Drachmann, affiliated with the Skagen colony. By 1893, many of the Scandinavian "bohemian" artists, including Oda and Christian Krohg had settled in the city. Danish Symbolists also found a receptive public for their work in an 1895 Berlin exhibit: Hammershøi, Willumsen, Ludvig Find and Gad F. Clement received enthusiastic reviews as harbingers of entirely new forms of art.[135]

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[132] Briens, *Paris: Laboratoire de la littérature scandinave moderne 1880-1905*, 103. According to P. N. Larsen, Danish historians privileged Denmark's links to France in part as part of anti-German sentiment generated by the Danish German war of 1864 as well as the two world wars of the twentieth century, *Symbolism in Danish and European Painting 1870-1910*, 10.

[133] Mørstad, "Munch's Impact on Europe," in *A Cultural History of the Avant-Garde in the Nordic Countries 1900-1925*, 82-3.

[134] Emil Hannover, "Edv. Munch," *Politiken* (23 Feb 1893), p. 2.

[135] Larsen, *Symbolism in Danish and European Painting 1870-1910,* 116.

Den Frie: Exhibition, Opposition and Risk

Two years after the great exhibition in Paris, Willumsen and other Danish radical artists executed a veritable coup back in Copenhagen with the formation of Den Frie udstilling (Den Frie). Other artists who came to be associated with Danish Symbolism formed the core of this breakaway group, including the Skovgaards (Niels, Joakim and Susette), who had traveled to Paris in 1889, as well as the artist couple Harald and Agnes Slott-Møller. Den Frie organizers created a sensation with their premier in 1891, a week prior to the scheduled Charlottenborg spring salon. They even timed the varnishing day to compete with that established venue. Conservative critics retorted with a comparison of "Willumsen's fanfare" to the "Emperor's New Clothes."[136] The hanging committee arranged the show by artist, also prompting lively debates on the diversity of styles evident. Young painters who had received "a cold shoulder from Charlottenborg" welcomed even the negative publicity surrounding the show, and cheered the total attendance figures of 20,219 visitors across the two-month run.[137]

Michael and Anna Ancher never exhibited as part of Den Frie. One can only speculate why. Bente Scavenius recounts that in 1893 Rohde wanted to invite the Anchers to exhibit along with Ring and Johansen. However, Rohde believed their inclusion would send the Slott-Møllers into an apoplectic fit. Agnes Slott-Møller was a close friend of Marie Krøyer, whose reputation had been publicly maligned by Martha

[136] Erik Bøgh in *Dagbladet* using the signature "Pius" paraphrased by Bente Scavenius in *Den Frie udstilling i 100 år* (Copenhagen Valby: Borgen, 1991), 13.

[137] Vibeke Petersen, "The Avant-Garde and the Danish Art Market," in *A Cultural History of the Avant-Garde in the Nordic Countries 1900-1925*, 14, 26.

Johansen, the painter's wife and Anna Ancher's cousin.[138] There also may have been financial reasons for the Anchers to abstain. Scavenius reports that throughout the 1890s Den Frie struggled to raise money, realized inconsistent revenues, and faced administrative headaches. As late as 1915, the artists continued to squabble about their privileges as voting members or shareholders.[139] This sort of controversy is exactly the kind that Anna Ancher habitually avoided. For instance, she withdrew her name from a petition initiated by Johanne Krebs (1848-1924) to get women better access to training and exhibition in 1893. Despite Ancher's initial sympathy for the cause, she claimed that her base from remote Skagen preempted serious involvement.[140] The controversies in Den Frie may have bristled Ancher.

The formal properties of the art would not necessarily have excluded the Anchers; Den Frie prided itself on its eclecticism including both Krøyer and Willumsen in their shows. However, the Anchers by the middle of the 1890s had worked out a viable financial model through commissions and sales. Michael Ancher also enjoyed a lucrative patronage from the royal family. The Anchers regularly submitted to the official exhibition at Charlottenborg and were featured in joint and solo shows at the Artist's Society. Anna Ancher's paintings exhibited there between 1911 and 1912 received admiring reviews; Michael Ancher had a solo exhibition in 1904, and the society purchased twelve of Anna's and nine of Michael's paintings during their lifetimes.[141] The Artist's Society "had the same caliber as the stamp of approval at Charlottenborg for the

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[138] Bente Scavenius, *Den Frie udstilling i 100 år* (Copenhagen Valby: Borgen, 1991), 19.

[139] Scavenius, *Den Frie udstilling i 100 år*, 134-41.

[140] Anna Ancher to Martha Møller Johansen, 1892 in *Breve fra Anna Ancher,* ed. Svanholm, 113.

[141] Friborg, *Det gode selskab: Kunstforeningens historier 1825-2000,* 116, 207-8, 325.

more academically minded."[142] In contrast, Den Frie might have been too controversial or compromising a venue, as even reference to its building came to be synonymous with a variety of avant-garde movements before World War II.[143]

1893 proved to be a pivotal year for modernism in Denmark, marked by a significant spring exhibition of Paul Gauguin and Vincent van Gogh at Den Frie's new exhibition space designed by Thorvald Bindesbøll (1846-1908). Mette Gauguin assisted Rohde and Philipsen to select the works from Gauguin's collection. The Gauguins faced considerable financial pressure; both she in Copenhagen and the painter in Tahiti needed money from sales at this time.[144] The exhibition of Van Gogh and Gauguin received extensive press coverage across the ideological spectrum, without consensus as to its merits.[145] The Danish newspaper *Dannebrog* reported twelve hundred visitors the first day, despite the fact that the show opened without the Van Gogh paintings, which were delayed en route.[146] Composers, politicians, patrons, and journalists after the opening followed up with discussions about the nature and meaning of art and the differences between Symbolism and Naturalism. Although their subjects were rural and both painters had essentially left Paris, the Danes associated both Gauguin and Van Gogh with the French capital. That city was where for the most part Scandinavian artists first encountered the art of Van Gogh and where many had visited with Gauguin or seen his

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[142] Friborg, *Det gode selskab: Kunstforeningens historier 1825-2000,* 125.

[143] Hubert van den Berg, "The Early Twentieth Century Avant-Garde and the Nordic Countries: An Introductory Tour d'Horizon," in *A Cultural History of the Avant-Garde in the Nordic Countries 1900-1925*, 34.

[144] Bodelsen, ed., *Gauguin og van Gogh i København 1893*, 20.

[145] Friborg, "Before and After: Paul Gauguin in Copenhagen 1884-85," in *Impressionism and the North,* 151.

[146] Bodelsen, ed., *Gauguin og van Gogh i København 1893,* 30.

work at Volpini in 1889. The rural imagery made by the French artists complicated deepening divisions within Denmark's avant-garde over valuation placed on peasant and farm subjects. The Gauguin and Van Gogh show added additional dimensions to tensions discussed in Chapter Four over how art from the rural periphery related to either urban center, Copenhagen or Paris.

Van Gogh's works especially resonated with Danish audiences, who admired his sympathetic representations of subjects, which were "more or less traditional and uncontaminated by a modern culture industry," and which also linked him to the beloved realist painter Jean-François Millet (1814-75).[147] Favorable reviews of Van Gogh appeared in regional newspapers as well as in *Social-Demokraten* where a critic under the pseudonym "Pincenez" on May 25, 1893 likened Van Gogh's paintings to musical works. "These pictures are not just representations of reality: they are poems, fantasias, symphonies where the incidental, diffuse phenomena of nature sound together in a richer, stronger and more beautiful harmony than each possesses singly."[148] Madsen found him to be a lion in comparison with Denmark's sheep.[149] Composer Carl Nielsen returned from his stay in Paris with Willumsen between 1890 and 1891 already predisposed to the French artists Van Gogh and Auguste Rodin, but gave a mixed response to the 1893 Copenhagen exhibit. His opinion mirrored others in the Danish cultural elite. For him,

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[147] Stephen F. Eisenman, "Modern Art and Life," in *Nineteenth Century Art: A Critical History* (1994) ed. Stephen F. Eisenman, 2nd Edition (London: Thames and Hudson, 2002), 342. Fabritius discusses the admiration for Millet in Denmark in "Anna Ancher and the French Avant-Garde," 58-63.

[148] Quoted in Bodelsen, *Gauguin og van Gogh i København 1893,* 30.

[149] Madsen writing in *Tilskueren* (1893) cited by Bodelsen, *Gauguin og van Gogh i København 1893,* 30.

Van Gogh reverberated more positively and profoundly than Gauguin, despite the latter's ostensibly closer connections with the Copenhagen art scene.[150]

Van Gogh's lithograph *Sorrow* (Fig. 2-12), which gained considerable notice at the Copenhagen show clearly needs to be considered in connection with Ancher's *Grief* or *Sorrow, 1902* [*Sorg*]*,* a painting considered in more depth in the next chapter. Rohde tried to purchase Van Gogh's print. Its popularity for Danish audiences extended to the Jutland peninsula where a critic wrote*:* "…But what seems best to me is the lithograph bearing the title 'Sorrow.' It would be difficult to find a more striking expression of profound, consuming sorrow than this young, naked crouching woman with her arms resting on her knees, hiding her face in resigned despair.'"[151]

The empty streetscape with inaccessible houses was another motif in Van Gogh that received positive notice in the Danish press and which aligned with Ancher's paintings of Skagen's streets from the 1910s. Such works introduce the theme of vacancy and emptiness developed in Chapter Five. An Aalborg review from 1893, probably in reference to Van Gogh's painting *Cottages in Saintes-Maries* (1888), held that the work was a "Symbolist" landscape and observed that the close rows of small houses line a narrow street without any human presence. The low hanging of the eaves precludes observation of or entry into the cottages. The viewer's lack of ingress protects the autonomy of the inhabitants, and the reviewer concluded that "The painting can function as a searing, ironic commentary on the people who stand looking at the picture and laugh at it without attempting to gain any understanding of the new and alien spirit which has

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[150] Daniel M. Grimley, *Carl Nielsen and the Idea of Modernism* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2010), 49-50.

[151] Bodelsen, ed., *Gauguin og van Gogh i København 1893,* 102.

created this artistic movement. *It is you,* cries the artist to them, *Yes, you!—who live in these houses."*[152] Merete Bodelsen concluded, however, that for the generation of artists who met in Paris in 1889, the Van Gogh and Gauguin show actually caused a shift away from French influence. A new generation, with different aesthetic aims, would again find their way to Paris after 1905.[153] Around 1893 during one of Ancher's most innovative periods, Danish Symbolism looked instead to different sources, such as the Italian Quattrocento painters. Ancher's encounter with French modern art was bound with deepened connections to the emerging Scandinavian Symbolists and a wider chasm between her work and that of the Modern Breakthrough.

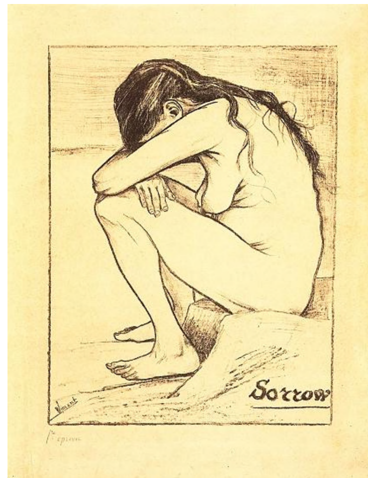

Figure 2-12: Vincent van Gogh. *Sorrow.* 1889

[152] *Aalborg Stiftstidende* cited in Bodelsen, *Gauguin og van Gogh i København 1893*, 113.

[153] Bodelsen, "Gauguin, the Collector," 602.

CHAPTER 3

DANISH MODERNISM WITHIN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT: FORWARD RADICALISM IN RETROGRADE MOTION

Figure 3-1: Anna Ancher. *Grief* (1902)

The bleak Christian graveyard in front of a brilliant sky at sunset serves as the backdrop for Anna Ancher's *Grief* (1902). Gestural brushstrokes indicate an atmospheric contrast to the striations of brilliant oranges and pinks across the violets, greys and blues of the evening sky. The evocative landscape links Ancher to international Symbolists and brings to mind contemporaneous Danish discussions of the poems and writings of Charles Baudelaire, some of which had been translated in the 1890s. The heather, on the other hand, locates the women precisely in Jutland. Despite the specific geographic reference, the figures are not anchored on the ground. The artist used aquamarine pigment as a demarcation separating the flesh from the ground and a thin specter of light color encircles the older woman, removing her from her surroundings. Ancher's tripartite vertical structure presents a traditional Danish cross at the center, flanked by a young

penitent female nude, who is confronting or perhaps confessing to an older woman, bedecked in the clothing of Skagen's pious religious sect. A difference in color and light in the backgrounds reiterates a lack of intersection or interaction of the two figures. The sky behind the older woman is more luminous, the ground darker, and the outlines of the fence rails and the grave markers are more clearly delineated; the inverse is true around the younger woman. The painter draped a black cloak around the pious woman, which conveys an air of sobriety and suggests volume. In juxtaposition, Ancher exposes the pallor and vulnerability of the younger woman. Ancher's loose brushwork on the kneeler's feet proclaim modernity through the handling of paint, which contrasts to the more traditional flat, smooth surface of the black cloak and scarf on the older woman.

In the image, Ancher brought into tension two parallel streams of Danish Symbolism, a poetic avant-garde with French roots coinciding with an ostensibly contradictory regional preference to depict rural and local subjects. Danish culture at the fin-de-siècle might be seen to collapse the philosophical dialectic, to hover at the unstable point where the avant-garde thesis, encountered the rear-guard antithesis and its orientation to traditional societies, oscillating or in counterpoint without synthesis or resolution.[1] The representation of the young, naked woman with loose hair kneeling in a natural landscape paraphrases two important examples of Symbolism for the Danes. Vincent van Gogh's lithograph *Sorrow* (Fig. 2-12), exhibited at the 1893 show in Copenhagen, employed similar stark and expressive contours, although he isolated a lone, pregnant female figure from any recognizable human or physical context. In a pencil, pen

[1] See Svend Erik Larsen, "Euro-American Modernism as Local Refraction," *European Review,* Vol. 19, No. 2 (2011), 299-306, doi:10.1017/S1062798710000566.

and ink version, rather than the lithograph exhibited in Copenhagen, the artist darkened the nipples, blackened the shadows aound the womb, and added a verse from Jules Michelet, "How can it be that there is on earth a woman alone and abandoned?"[2] Van Gogh endowed the simple form with greater meaning. Ancher's contours do not as unequivocally indicate pregnancy, although the gently rounded stomach with the hands folded right above its fullness, could be suggestive of gravidity.

Figure 3-2: Joakim Skovgaard. *Christ in the Realm of the Dead* (1891-4)

Ancher's image also links to a seminal work of Danish Symbolism, Joakim Skovgaard's monumental *Christ in the Realm of Dead* (1891-4, Fig. 3-2). Skovgaard depicted a contrite and naked Eve with long, loose hair, kneeling and seeking redemption through the intercession of the triumphant Christ. There is no suggestion of pregnancy and limited eroticism in Skovgaard's image. The woman's stomach is flat and taut and her breasts somewhat flattened. In contrast to the supplicant posture of Skovgaard's Eve,

[2] Jules Michelet quoted by Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock, "Rooted in the Earth: A Van Gogh Primer," in *Avant-Gardes and Partisans Reviewed* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, distributed in the USA by St. Martin's Press, 1996), 11. The drawing is reproduced on page 12. *Sorrow* (April 1882), pencil, pen and ink, Walsall, Museum and Art Gallery, The Garman Ryan Collection.

Ancher's bowed figure shields her face in her hair as if in contrition. Ancher manipulated the coloration of Skovgaard. The same burnt orange of Eve's hair, including its green accent strokes, illuminates the loose ends of Ancher's tresses. Furthermore she used that same orange to emphasize the posture of grief, expressed in the concave contours of the depicted woman's shoulders. In contrast to Skovgaard, neither skulls nor vipers inhabit Ancher's depicted realm, but only a row of crosses commemorates human loss. The differing imagery between the artists reflects fundamental theological divisions in Denmark discussed in Chapter Four.

This chapter inserts Ancher into Danish Symbolism, highlighting how this movement at the periphery for the most part continued to evolve away from its origins at the French center. Skovgaard's painting specifically referenced literary sources in trying to convey its religious message, a practice that aligned him with the authors of the Symbolist journal *Taarnet* and its coterie of affiliated painters and poets.[3] These artists combined their interest in Baudelaire with a re-examination of foundational Danish religious writings and heroic sagas as subject matter. Jens Ferdinand Willumsen and other artists associated with *Taarnet* were the most closely tied to Paul Gauguin. Somewhat less closely linked to *Taarnet,* Vilhelm Hammershøi, to whom Ancher is frequently compared, painted enigmatic urban spaces in limited tonalities, another variation of Symbolism in Denmark that drew from both nineteenth-century French sources and seventeenth-century Dutch genre artists. In *Grief,* Ancher employed local scenery from Skagen and familiar figures in painting her Symbolist evocation of sorrow.

[3] "Joakim Skovgaard (1856-1933), Christ in the Realm of the Dead, 1891-94" Statens Museum for Kunst, accessed March 10, 2014, http://www.smk.dk/en/explore-the-art/highlights/joakim-skovgaard-christ-in-the-realm-of-the-dead/. Skovgaard's painting is based off N. F. S. Grundtvig's (1783-1872) new version (1837) of Caedmon's Old English poem about the storming of Hell, *I Kvæld blev der banket på Helvedes Port* (*Tonight there was a Knocking at the Gates of Hell*).

Ancher's subject matter and aesthetics more closely quoted a local icon, Hans Christian Andersen than his French contemporary, Baudelaire. Increasingly as the century drew to a close, a pervasive fear of urban decadence also inflected works by the Danish artists surrounding Ancher, which many felt might be ameliorated through the Vitalist ideas of Friedrich Nietzsche.

The chapter begins by exploring the reception of Baudelaire in Denmark and then follows the forces that began to move national art away from all cities, whether French or Danish, toward remote regions on the Jutland peninsula and in Funen. Local, rural and simple subjects consistently populated the cherished writings of Andersen. Despite their different orientation in relation to the modern city, this chapter argues that Andersen and Baudelaire held similar values about the relationship of music to the arts. While both Ancher and Hammershøi attempted to translate the non-referential qualities of music into painting, Ancher also exhibited to a greater degree the vigor and affirmation that Vitalists like composer Carl Nielsen wove into his music.

Baudelaire and the Danish Symbolists

Several of Ancher's contemporaries from the Scandinavian network forged in Paris found aesthetic nourishment in the writings of Baudelaire. His ideas of transformation and symbols contributed to the development of Danish Symbolism in the early 1890s and to some degree resonated with Ancher's evocative painting. The artist was assuredly familiar with at least some of the French poet's ideas and writings, given the scope of the Anchers' personal library, replete with issues of the journal *Tilskueren* and books of fiction, poetry and criticism by international authors. By the end of the 1880s, Baudelaire's writings received extended notice in Danish periodicals. The author

Johannes Marer (1861-1922) translated twenty-one of Baudelaire's prose poems from his posthumous collection for the cutting-edge journal *Ny Jord* in 1889, in an issue that also contained an essay by August Strindberg, "Modern Drama and Modern Theater," and Chapter Seven of Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra*. Two years later Johannes Jørgensen published an essay on Baudelaire in *Tilskueren,* one of the most important periodicals about Danish culture.

An article by the French author Paul Bourget (1852-1935) complicated Baudelaire's introduction to Danish readers through Marer's translations in *Ny jord.* Bourget's essay was placed immediately following Baudelaire's poems. The essay, translated into Danish, expanded on three attributes of Baudelaire that would be problematic to even progressive Danish audiences. Bourget's first point was that "Baudelaire, in his love poetry, is at one and the same time mystical, libertine, and analytical."[4] Bourget linked Baudelaire's mysticism to his Catholicism, a disparaged religious minority in Lutheran Denmark. He furthermore argued that philandering among urban brothels and the street corners of Paris provided fodder for Baudelaire's imagery.[5] The sordid image of the French capital repulsed a country that felt insecure about its own political position and was just dealing with the ills of rapid urbanization. Furthermore, Bourget pointed out as dominant characteristics of Baudelaire's writing, both his pessimistic illumination of human depravity, from all races and nations, and further

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[4] Paul Bourget, "Charles Baudelaire," trans. "Vald K.," in *Ny jord: Nordisk tidsskrift for literature, videnskab og kunst,,* vol. I, no. 2 (March 1889), 238-256. Page numbers reference the Danish edition. For the English, however, I am using Nancy O'Connor's translation of the French original, Paul Bourget, "Baudelaire," *Nouveaux Essais de psychologie contemporaine* (Paris: Lemerre, 1881)., transl. Nancy O'Connor http://cat.middlebury.edu/~nereview/30-2/Bourget.htm accessed 12 March 2014.

[5] Paul Bourget, "Baudelaire," *Ny Jord*, 243.

evidence of decadence in his aestheticizing descriptions of immoral behavior.[6] Bourget's final condemnation held Baudelaire to be symptomatic of the decline of civilization: "He was a man of decadence; he chose to become a theorist of decadence. This is perhaps the most troubling aspect of this troubling being, and the aspect that has proven to be perhaps the most disturbingly seductive for the spirit."[7] As noted below, Baudelaire's reputation as a decadent lingered in the Danish cultural discourse for the rest of Ancher's life.

Nonetheless, Baudelaire's evocative writing did appeal to a group of literary Symbolists led by Jørgensen and Sophus Michaëlis (1865-1932). They published the first issue of their journal *Taarnet* in the fall of 1893. Many sources on Danish Symbolism cite an article by Jørgensen in *Taarnet's* second issue as a sort of manifesto for the movement in Denmark, exemplified by the journal's collection of essays, poems and artwork.[8] Symbolist poetry from the French center occupied a privileged position in their project. Art historian Salme Sarajas-Korte quotes the preface in describing the journal's origins, as the founders gathered "on a moonlit night…in the name of Baudelaire, Poe, and

[6] Paul Bourget, "Baudelaire," *Ny Jord*, 246. Sharon L. Hirsh, *Symbolism in Modern Urban Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 29-30. Hirsh distinguishes Symbolism from decadence. Decadence was more isolated, introspective and personal and began with an object. Symbolist art begins with the idea for which it finds appropriate visual form and developed a "more socially interactive" position.

[7] Paul Bourget, "Baudelaire," *Ny Jord*, 251.

[8] Peter Nørgaard Larsen, "Painterly Perception and Images of the Soul: Impressionism and Post-Impressionism in Denmark," *Impressionism and the North: Late 19th Century French Avant-Garde Art and the Art of the Nordic Countries 1870-1920,* ed. Torsten Gunnarsson and Hans Henrik Brummer.(Stockholm: Nationalmuseum of Stockholm, 2003), 173. exh. cat. Larsen qualifies the importance of Jørgensen. He writes, "The Symbolists' hope for a spiritual breakthrough that would replace Georg Brandes' modern breakthrough became in Jørgensen's interpretation, the claim of a religious breakthrough. Jørgensen's definition of Symbolism is not false, just misleading in relation to the great volume of literature and art that did not live up to his religious demands."

Verlaine."[9] Sarajas-Korte holds that the group's overall escapist romanticism deliberately turned away from the harshness of contemporary industrializing Copenhagen. She posits, "Life itself was ugly, so why not turn to the night: the young loved its mystical darkness."[10] Jørgensen regularly contributed to the monthly journal *Tilskueren* and the daily *Politiken*; consequently, *Taarnet* garnered a lot of media attention. On the last day of October, the influential editor and politician Edvard Brandes critiqued its contents and central premise in his article "Symbolism" on the front page of *Politiken*.

The second issue of *Taarnet* begins with Jørgensen's article "Symbolism," a rejoinder to Brandes' piece. Jørgensen criticized the *Politiken* editor for having claimed that the word "Symbolism," like the word "Naturalism," was a meaningless term.[11] He countered that both terms held import, and predicated that Symbolism evolved out of what Brandes had described as the Naturalist "affinity for … and perspective from within the grip of nature."[12] Jørgensen felt that Symbolists were reaching beyond this positivist orientation pursuant to "a higher truth or existence, which gives life on earth meaning."[13] He defined all true artists as Symbolist, whose "soul recognizes behind temporal things the eternity, from which his soul has sprung."[14] The Taarnet Symbolists contributed essays, reviews, poems, and art to their journal, in addition to the translations of

[9] Quoted by Salme Sarajas-Korte, "Aspects of Scandinavian Symbolism," in *Dreams of a Summer Night: Scandinavian Painting at the Turn of the Centur,* ed. Leena Ahtola-Moorhouse, Carl Tomas Edam and Birgitta Schreiber (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1986), 41, exh. cat.

[10] Sarajas-Korte, "Aspects of Scandinavian Symbolism," 41.

[11] Johannes Jørgensen, "Symbolisme" *Taarnet* (Nov. 1893), 51. http://books.google.com/books?id=Gd8yAAAAIAAJandoe=UTF-8.

[12] Edvard Brandes quoted by Jørgensen in "Symbolisme," *Taarnet,* 51.

[13] Jørgensen, "Symbolisme," *Taarnet,* 55.

[14] Jørgensen, "Symbolisme," *Taarnet,* 55.

Baudelaire and Stéphane Mallarmé, which shared the aspiration to convey “the soul behind all things.”

Jørgensen’s essay “Symbolism” and *Taarnet* extensively referenced Baudelaire. Jørgensen directly quoted the French author’s *Journaux intimes* as the central theme of his essay: "In certain semi-supernatural conditions of the spirit, the whole depths of life are revealed within the scene—no matter how commonplace—which one has before one’s eyes. This becomes its symbol."[15] Jørgensen clarified that the genesis of art happened through awareness of the “earth’s soul” [Verdenssjæl], when the artist comes “to see God” [at se Gud].[16] In the same November 1893 issue as the essay appeared, Michaëlis translated five of Baudelaire’s poems from the 1868 edition of *Les Fleur de Mal*: “La Beauté,” “La Cloche fêlée,” “Élévation,” “À une madone,” and “Les Yeux de Berthe.” Jørgensen translated additional quotations from *Journaux Intimes* for the March 1894 issue. Even though neither author interpreted the excerpts for their readers, the inclusion of Baudelaire poems and fragments indicates the ongoing centrality of his concepts of perception and transcendence for this group within the Danish avant-garde.

[15] « Dans certains états de l’âme presque surnaturels, la profondeur de la vie se révèle toute entière, si ordinaire qu’il soit, qu’on a sous les yeux. *Il en devient le symbole."* Charles Baudelaire, *Journaux intimes.* Baudelaire, *Œuvres complètes* (Paris, 1954), p. 1194. French original and the complete citation provided by Sarajas-Korte, “Aspects of Scandinavian Symbolism,” 41. English Translation: Christopher Isherwood in Charles Baudelaire, *Intimate Journals* trans. Christopher Isherwood (1947; repr., Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2006), 45.

[16] Jørgensen, “Symbolisme,” *Taarnet,* 55.

Figure 3-3: Vilhelm Hammershøi. *Five Portraits* (1901-2)

Vilhelm Hammershøi had close ties to these Symbolists. His circle of intimates in Copenhagen included Jørgensen and other *Taarnet* contributors. Hammershøi's *Five Portraits* (1901-2, Fig. 3-3) depicts artists in evocative shadows at the forefront of related developments in Copenhagen, whose connections to Ancher are also well-established. While scholars regularly cite Hammershøi in connection to the development of Symbolism and modernism in Denmark and Europe, a similar categorization of Ancher often brings derision. Yet the two artists both studied for a time under Vilhelm Kyhn, had close connections to P. S. Krøyer in the late 1880s and early 1890s, both had been in Paris for the 1889 exposition, were photographed together in 1901, and furthermore, Ancher mentioned the Hammershøis several times in her published letters. Neither Ancher nor Hammershøi emerged as leaders of the Symbolist movement in the 1890s, although official censure of Hammershøi's painting was one of the triggers prompting the formation of Den Frie in 1891. Hammershøi fraternized with the founders of *Taarnet*.

Nonetheless, he was not impressed by a Paris exhibit of Impressionists and Symbolists in January 1892. In a letter to Danish painter Johan Rohde, Hammershøi wrote disparagingly, "There is a small exhibition of Impressionists and Symbolists here at the moment, which is a lot of trash. I should hope for the Symbolists that it is a very bad exhibition. Most of the paintings look like jokes."[17] The conditional phrasing, "I should hope," indicates his overall support for the Symbolist project. Hammershøi in fact continued to explore related themes until the end of his life.[18]

Ancher and Hammershøi increasingly used a style that released painting from its descriptive or narrative function. Until World War I, both artists freed their representations of light from the "grip of Nature" to release an essence "behind temporal things." The artists' rendering of light challenged the temporal limitations of a viewer's visual field. The consequent suggestion of an ethereal and redolent domain linked the painters to the ideas of Baudelaire and Jørgensen. Ancher and Hammershøi substantiated light through the materiality of their application of pigment creating tension between the manner of depicting the source and the qualities of luminosity, radiance, and illumination.

In his huge painting, *Five Portraits*¸ Hammershøi depicted an evening gathering of artists at his home. All of the represented figures have ties both to Ancher and to the Symbolists. Three of the artists shown, Willumsen, Thorvald Bindesbøll and Karl Madsen had particularly strong ties to Ancher. As discussed in Chapter Two, Ancher

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[17] Vilhelm Hammershøi to Johan Rohde, January 13, 1892 quoted in Poul Vad, *Vilhelm Hammershøi and Danish Art at the Turn of the Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 105. Vad postulates that the exhibit he references is one held at the dealer Le Barc de Boutteville which included works by J. F. Willumsen, Pierre Bonnard, Henri Toulouse-Lautrec and Vincent van Gogh.

[18] Vad, *Vilhelm Hammershøi and Danish Art at the Turn of the Century*, 234.

knew Willumsen by 1889 when he was part of the weekly gatherings of Scandinavian artists at Café de la Régence. Their acquaintance lasted at least twenty years as he was in Skagen in 1906 and one of his 1905 landscapes hangs prominently in her studio. Willumsen had extensive ties to French Symbolism through Paul Gauguin and lived in Paris for many years. A sculpted bust by Willumsen was also featured in *Taarnet's* December 1893 issue. He and Svend Hammershøi, Vilhelm's brother who is also one of the five portraits, were two of only six visual artists to have major works reproduced in the journal.

Bindesbøll and Madsen figured prominently in the development of Symbolism in Denmark. Bindesbøll, to whom in letters Ancher referred by his nickname "Bølle," designed the original Den Frie pavilion, which was inaugurated as the exhibition venue for the Van Gogh and Gauguin show in 1893. After 1891, Bindesbøll also worked on projects in Skagen for the Brøndum Inn, Skagen church and the harbor that are discussed in Chapter Five. Madsen continued to publish works on major international trends in art as critic for *Politiken* and contributor to *Tilskueren*. These visual associations insert Ancher like Hammershøi into the aesthetic debate over Symbolism in 1893.

Although in published letters, Ancher made little clear about her feelings about art or the avant-garde, she pronounced some affinity for the concept of Symbolism circulating in Danish journals and newspapers in 1893. In response to Edvard Brandes' critique of *Taarnet,* Ancher cautiously claimed that while she still loved nature, it would not hurt to weave in a bit of Symbolism.[19] She also explicitly linked the application of

[19] Anna Ancher to Martha Johanssen, November 1893, in *Breve Fra Anna Ancher,* ed. Lise Svanholm (Denmark: Gyldendal, 2005), 117. In an editorial note, Svanholm explains that although Ancher wrote that E. B. [Erik Bøgh] wrote the article in *Politiken*, that it was in fact written by Jørgensen. Elisabeth Fabritus, however, corrected this editorial note in a personal interview in September 2013, directing me to

paint directly to temper and mood. In the margin of Christian Krohg's book *Norwegian Painters* (1891-2), Ancher noted the appropriateness of transferring a rebellious temper to the canvas, and considered whether one could paint clouds as blood.[20] Symbolist painters received mention in her letters. After she travelled through Europe visiting exhibitions in Berlin and museums in Amsterdam in 1891, she distinguished only Giovanni Segantini (1858-1899) as a contemporary who merited specific, individual acclaim for his individualist and striking canvas.[21] Additionally, as noted in Chapter Two, Ancher wrote enthusiastically about her travels through Sweden with Symbolists Richard Bergh and Prince Eugen.[22] Ancher's reference to the Symbolist debate in 1893 and relationships to the artists of Hammershøi's *Five Portraits* places her within the philosophical discussions in general and presumes her knowledge of Baudelaire in particular.

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the front page article by Edvard Brandes, editor of the paper and who signed most of his theater reviews "E. B." The article "Symbolisme" *Politiken* (October 31, 1893), 1.

[20]Editorial note by Svanholm in *Breve fra Anna Ancher,* ed. Svanholm, 116.

[21] Anna Ancher to Martha Johansen, June 11, 1891 in *Breve fra Anna Ancher,* ed. Svanholm 102.

[22] Anna Ancher to Martha Johansen, 1895, in *Breve fra Anna Ancher,* ed. Svanholm 118-120.

Figure 3-4: Anna Ancher. *Young Girl in front of a Lighted Lamp* (c. 1893)

Symbolist Translations of Skagen rather than Copenhagen

Ancher rooted her Symbolist explorations in the regional certainty of Skagen. In rendering the buildings, people and landscape of the town, Ancher used virtuoso brushwork to embody light, rupture space and translate ocular vision into the idea of a mood or reverie. As a result, she also tentatively secured on canvas what Baudelaire defined as the modern, "the ephemeral, the fugitive and the contingent."[23] Ancher's specificity in representing local subjects, moreover, conformed to Baudelaire's mandate to convey the artist's own time, dress and sensibility, while also offering a regional

[23] Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life* (1864), transl. and ed. Jonathan Mayne, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays,* 2nd ed. (1995; repr. London: Phaidon, 2008), 12.

variation from the urban center. Ancher's practice kept clear, however, of the unseemly, pessimistic, and decadent elements in Baudelaire's poetry described by Bourget and did not devolve into an entirely personal vision. However, Françoise Meltzer observes that Baudelaire's visual poems: "grant to the viewer a single, clear perspective, which can allow him to dream."[24] Jørgensen claimed that "la rêve" was the underlying theme of nearly every page of both *Les Fleurs du Mal* and *Petites poèmes en prose.*[25] Ancher's poetic paintings, likewise, began in her immediate surroundings with its clear focus. In *Grief,* for example, familiar Inner Mission dress (Chapter Four), a conventional cross and the grasses indigenous to Skagen establish a concrete reference. However, Ancher transformed such elements into a numinous state akin to a dream. This move giving form to the idea of grief or immersion is also in total contrast to Skagen's plein-air painters who braved the elements in search of accuracy and authenticity in transcribing the natural setting and atmosphere of their paintings. Ancher's more mundane subject in *Young Girl in front of a Lighted Lamp* (c. 1893, Fig. 3-4), contemporaneous to the introduction of Baudelaire to Danish readers, demonstrates how her formal application of paint could "grant to the viewer a single, clear perspective, which can allow [one] to dream."[26]

In the very close foreground of *Young Girl in front of a Lighted Lamp* Ancher represented from the back a fashionably dressed young woman with elegantly knotted

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[24] Françoise Meltzer, *Seeing Double: Baudelaire's Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 92.

[25] Johannes Jørgensen, "Charles Baudelaire" (1891), *Essays* (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, 1906), 13. http://books.google.com/books?id=G5RBAQAAIAAJanddq accessed 13 March 2014.

[26] Although Skagens Museum dates this painting as 1887, this seems unlikely given the style of the clothing as well as the handling of the paint. The Michael and Anna Ancher House curators date the related sketch to 1893, a much more convincing dating and the reason I have given the date as c. 1893.

hair. Her aesthetic gown intimates an urban party, although the setting is in the north room of the Ancher's small house. The silhouette could be Ancher's own as the dress is similar to the one she is wearing in Krøyer's *Summer Evening on Skagen Beach* (1893). Ancher's handling of the fabric sublimated any decorative pattern to an array of brushmarks using a limited palette of creams and pinks with an occasional accent of turquoise. More striking is the lamp globe that dominates the painting, the crusted paint pressing forward toward the viewer. It hangs like an interior moon against a purplish evening sky. That coloring bleeds into the curtain and across the mullions. Ancher introduced more rose and violet hues in the finished painting, transforming the scene in a sketch to suggest mood and emphasizing the deep blue light of a Scandinavian summer evening (Fig. 3-5).[27] The painter subverted the descriptive function of the painting by eliminating the sketch's references to the intimate domestic setting, including dogs under

Figure 3-5: Anna Ancher. *Young Girl at the Table in the North Room,* sketch (c. 1893).

[27] The Skagens Museum exhibition in the fall of 2013 *Den Blaa Time* [The Blue Hour] included Ancher's painting *Young Girl in front of a Lighted Lamp* and also noted a shift in the production of Anna Ancher and Krøyer and Laurits Tuxen from the Skagen Colony in the 1890s. The introductory wall text explained: "However, in the course of time, [these] painters…moved away from cultural-historical depictions of the period. Insteady they painted moods." This painting was used as an illustration of *The Blue Hour* without further discussion. Although Ancher's name was included on the wall text, Krøyer's paintings dominated the exhibition in arrangement, size and explanatory text.

the table and the woman's hand reaching for the brush. Instead blooming flowers made from dabs of brilliant orange, red and pink enliven the surface. Furthermore, in the final painting, Ancher constrained the gaze of the viewer within a tight space, filled by the entire height of the human subject and flattened through the limited color range of off-whites. The narrowed lens increases the focus on the lamp, an interior moon against the evening sky.

Hammershøi also generally stripped his interiors of all but a few evocative objects—a piano, a porcelain vase, a crystal wineglass, a painting—further precluding legibility. His *Interior with View of the East Asiatic Company Building* (1901, Fig. 3-6) presents a striking urban contrast to Ancher but achieves a comparable fusion of the material and the immaterial, paradoxically reversing the empirical primacy of the eye in

Figure 3-6: Vilhelm Hammershøi. *Interior with View of the East Asiatic Company Building* (1901)

asserting a severe architectural program. As in this interior, Hammershøi's human subjects rarely meet the gaze of the artist or viewer. The depicted figure is but a shadow in the room, and we are not privileged to her thoughts or her gaze. Akin to the theme of

the open window in German Romantic painting, Hammershøi established the focal point at the distant pair of windows.[28] However, instead of encouraging the viewer to share in a romantic dream of a beautiful landscape, like Caspar David Friedrich in *Woman at the*

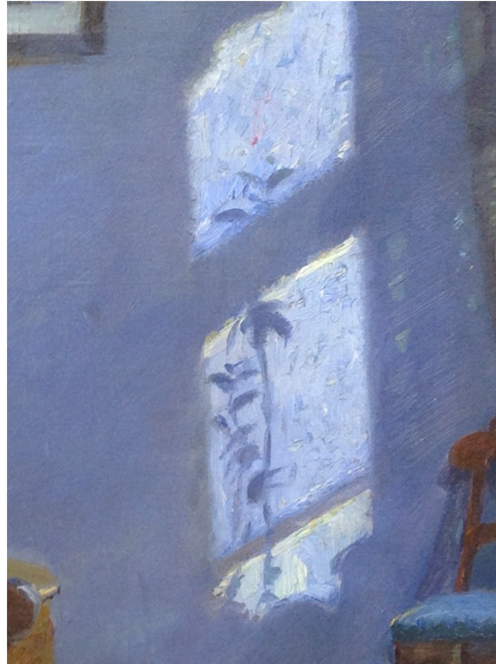

Figure 3-7: Anna Ancher. *Sunshine in the Blue Room,* Detail (1891)

Open Window (1822), Hammershøi created more of an enigma. In the urban setting, the viewer's gaze encounters only a façade of windows from another building. Actually, Ancher's *Young Girl in front of a Lighted Lamp* is more evocative of a dream or the sublime. Ancher propelled the translation of the commonplace Skagen interior to reveal the "whole depths of life" in the mysterious evening sky and lighted lamp.

Although scholars have resisted classifying her as Symbolist, Ancher's references to natural motifs and the performative qualities of represented light in her paintings

[28] The exhibit "Rooms with a View: The Open Window in the 19th Century" held at the Metropolitan Museum, New York in 2011 explored the theme of the open window in German Romantic and Realist painting. Caspar David Friedrich studied at the Royal Academy in Copenhagen and several of the examples in this show were by Danish painters.

leaned toward this movement of the 1890s with its roots in Baudelaire. Ancher definitely sketched motifs from nature and life, but in her finished compositions like *Young Girl*, she reinvented these notations. Her many canvas fragments capture sunlight, a gesture, a pose, or a combination of colors. The author rearranged, and re-harmonized these visual ideas in her finished paintings. Ancher's sketch for light on the wall in the blue room of the Brøndum Inn (Fig. 2-7), for instance, invented the rhythm, angles and surface tension that she varied for *Sunshine in the Blue Room* (Fig. 3-7).

The way that Ancher built up depictions of sunbeams entering interior spaces using thick application of undiluted white pigment in *Sunshine in the Blue Room* totally differed from Impressionist painting, although this work is often hailed as evidence of her flirtation with the Parisian movement's color and fleeting light.[29] The paint rises above the surface plane where the sun enters, receding to flatness in areas outside of the sun's rays. Ancher took translucent sunbeams and made them substantial and permanent. Her textured surface is more solid than the walls or objects in the room. At the same time shadows aggressively strike the walls and curtains, diagonally transecting the planes. Ancher undoubtedly represented the effects of light through the window, sharing one concern of the Impressionists of phenomenological representation. However, her rendering is opposite an *impression*. Richard Shiff analyzes the usage of the word, emphasizing its fleeting, transitory and sketchy qualities: "The trace of the physical interaction that has occurred. The impression is always a surface phenomenon—

[29] Peter Nørgaard Larsen, "Why Can't Anna Be Modern?" in *I am Anna: A Homage to Anna Ancher,* ed. Mette Bøgh Jensen, trans. Walton Glyn Jones, (Skagen: Skagens Museum, 2009), 33, exh. cat.

immediate, primary, undeveloped."[30] Unlike glistening and fleeting sunlight that would indicate an Impressionist moment, Ancher's rendering of sunlight is fixed rather than descriptive of the instant, and is additive instead of undeveloped .

Most Symbolists in Denmark used imagery that was observable and familiar, but moved away from the narrative and descriptive in order to access the ideal. Ancher's setting in *Sunshine in the Blue Room* is identifiable as her mother's blue room in the Brøndum Inn and the model is her daughter intent on her handiwork. However, Ancher refuted the stability of these elements. In another complex and formally experimental gesture, in *Sunshine in the Blue Room* the artist triangulated the compositional elements with the reflection of light on the wall at the apex. The chair on the left and the girl on the right form the legs. The chair lacks sufficient structure to support weight; its leg bows, and the cropping challenges the integrity of its frame. The girl on the right is both fused

Figure 3-8: Vilhelm Hammershøi. *Interior, Strandgade 30* (1908)

[30] Richard Shiff, "The End of Impressionism," *The New Painting, Impressionism 1874-1886,* ed. Charles S. Moffett (San Francisco: The Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco with the National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1986), 70, exh. cat.

with the overall color of the room and yet obscured by the unblended dabs of pure white light. In contrast, the surface texture made by the shadows of the plants against the bright curtain of white stubbornly adheres to walls, clothes and carpet. Unlike the girl and the chair, Ancher's sunbeams have sculpted mass, giving them volume and energy. Both *Young Girl in front of a Lamp* and *Sunshine in the Blue Room* demonstrate that in her painting practice Ancher has moved significantly away from the Modern Breakthrough and toward the Symbolists rather than the Impressionists.

The consistently obstructed vantage point offered by Ancher and Hammershøi denied viewers access to their sitters' thoughts or action. There can be no definitive narrative for Ancher's *Young Girl in front of a Lighted Lamp* or even in the earlier work, *Maid in the Kitchen* (Chapter Two). Hammershøi used the same strategy in *Interior, Strandgade 30* (1908, Fig. 3-8) precluding intimacy by presenting only the back of his familiar model, his wife. Enigmatically, Hammershøi's depicted Copenhagen apartment is also nearly empty. The model's chair, framed within the architecture of the repeated doors, faces an occluded window. Hammershøi's use of the most viscous white pigment at the distant light source repels the gaze even while indicating intense, cold light. In the paintings by Ancher and Hammershøi, the lamp and the far window accrue intensity and importance from the artists' build-up of the medium. The additive layers intimate a timelessness and impenetrability that harkens back to *Taarnet's* quotation of Baudelaire, "The whole depths of life are revealed within the scene—no matter how commonplace—which one has before one's eyes. This becomes its symbol."[31]

[31] Baudelaire, *Intimate Journals*, trans. Isherwood, 45.

Ancher also represented subjective visuality in portraying older women whose sight was compromised through aging or blindness. The painter thereby emphasized what was perceptible to the eye of the mind or the soul rather than what is impressed upon the optical nerve. She conveyed an understanding of vision considerably removed from observed reality. She consistently denied the viewer the privilege of access to the specific

Figure 3-8: Anna Ancher. *An Old Fisherman's Wife* (1892)

visions of her painted subjects. In *An Old Fisherman's Wife* (1892, Fig. 3-9) the painter animated the visage in lively brushstrokes and patches of reds, pinks and peaches. The aged woman's eyes are rimmed with red and clouded by cataracts. Neither the artist nor the viewers might access the woman's thoughts.

The seeing and unseeing eye is a motif of Ancher's paintings from the 1880s that predated her definitive introduction to Baudelaire. In Ancher's depictions of blind women, such as *Sunshine in the Blind Woman's Room* (Fig. 2-3), the eyes served as a

conduit to the interior or ideal world. The painter evoked mystery by cloaking the subject's head in a black scarf, and veiling half of the face in shadow. The beholder cannot determine whether the subject's eyes are opened or closed, although their contours emerge from the darkness as a patch of blended gray, white and bluish pigment. This coloration continues across the tops of the sitter's dangling hands, negating their corporeality. The lighting adds to the illegibility of the space for the viewer. Ancher rendered reflected sunlight in thick, diagonal, citron swaths across the wall, a subtle

Figure 3-10: Anna Ancher. *Sunshine in the Blind Woman's Room* (1885)

darkening of the color to suggest the borders of a window. The beam from outdoors appears to be the only light source that could illuminate the bowed head, defying nature by reflecting off a matte plaster wall. Unlimited by the scopic field, the sitter understands

and knows an interior room through touch and the exterior through the sensation of light's thermal energy.

Ancher's 1885 painting of the same theme, *Sunshine in the Room of the Blind Woman* also contrasted the visual with experienced light (Fig. 3-10). Bright sunbeams delineated shape and volume of the objects on the table and created patterns on the plaster wall. The contrast between cool and warm colors and the pattern of light on the subject's face and hands suggest its warmth. The central image, however, is a woman who does not see. Her eyes are closed and her figure is largely in shadow. Kasper Monrad describes the effect, "The sunlight thus becomes not only a source of light, but a meaning-bearing factor in the picture."[32]

Ancher's concerns with vision are similar to, but not derivative from, the ideas from Baudelaire that circulated among Danish Symbolists. His "La Beauté" was the first poem in the *Taarnet* translations by Michaëlis. In the poem, Baudelaire employed the eye and its active gaze as a conduit to meaning as he did in other writings. In "La Beauté," the eyes of the sculpture fascinate lovers and poets. In the final line, Baudelaire's word repetition and descriptive extension of the word "eyes [yeux]" augmented their power and scope. At first these eyes perceived a limited visual field, but his reiteration imparts their power to discern eternal clarity. He also described the organs as both reflective and performative, "pure mirrors that make all things more beautiful [De purs miroirs qui font toutes choses plus belles]." Meltzer points out that the eyes of "La Beauté" inhabit the realm of the infinite and the inhuman. In contrast, in "Assommons les pauvres" (1861),

[32] Kasper Monrad, *Hammershøi and Europe* (Copenhagen: Statens Museum for Kunst, 2012), 92, exh. cat. Monrad's recent interpretation supports an argument I had previously made in a 2008 seminar paper for Dr. Suzanne Singletary.

translated into Danish in 1889 in *Ny Jord,* Meltzer describes "scopic lapses." The analyst details a sequence structured around and unified by the eyes that see, reflect or conduct images, leading finally into another realm through "the hypnotist's pseudopowerful gaze."[33]

The Importance of Local Subjects for Danish Symbolists

The specificity of Ancher's humble subject in local scarf and dress in *An Old Fisherman's Wife,* reflects the considerable geographic and cultural distance between the French center and the Danish periphery, which extended the significant distance between urban Copenhagen and rural Jutland. Danish Symbolism did not confine itself to Parisian sources. *Ny Jord* not only introduced Baudelaire in 1889, it included articles by Georg Brandes, Nietzsche, Strindberg and Valdemar Vedel (1865-1942) that reflect a very complex discourse about Modernism. Vedel, who would become the editor of *Tilskueren,* reminded his readers in *Ny Jord* of the necessity of even the most idealist art to be "as well-rooted in life as the most realist." Vedel continued, arguing that the difference between realist and idealist art came through conveying the human response or feelings about the meaning of life.[34] Even Jørgensen could only draw incomplete inspiration from Baudelaire or from other modern French authors. The Danish writer who admired Baudelaire also found estimable qualities in national authors such as Skagener, Holger

[33]Françoise Meltzer, *Seeing Double: Baudelaire's Modernity,* 81, 61. The Danish translation of Baudelaire's "Assommons la pauvre" was printed under the title "Slaa de Fattige ned!" in *Ny jord: Nordisk tidsskrift for literature, videnskab og kunst,* vol. II, no. I (March 1889), 219-22, Google e-book.

[34] Valdemar Vedel, "En Replik." *Ny jord: Nordisk tidsskrift for literature, videnskab og kunst,,* Vol. I, no. II (March 1889), 284, Google e-book.

Drachmann.[35] Jørgensen chided his readers to pay more attention to the great authors of their own country, and in a literary sketch from the next decade, offered Hans Christian Andersen as an example, quoting his daughter's childish wisdom in pronouncing: "H. C. Andersen *is* a poet—and is a *great* poet!"[36]

Jørgensen specifically drew attention to Andersen's idealism in his fairy tales and the purity of his feeling. The younger author associated the sun as a symbol of happiness in Andersen's writing: "What is worth anything, is happiness, and the most glorious symbol of happiness is the sun. Therefore, there is nothing that Andersen loves as the Sun and the solar time of the year, the summer."[37] Andersen in many respects provides a more suitable framework for Ancher than Baudelaire. Her specific Skagen settings pushed away from the urban anonymity and pessimism of Baudelaire's poems, fitting more comfortably within one of Andersen's fairy tales. Ancher's old fisherwoman could stand in as a character in any of Andersen's stories. Her rural references, however, likely helped exclude her from classification with the Danish Symbolists in the art historical canon, whereas Hammershøi has held the historiographic place of honor. Hammershøi's paintings more comfortably aligned with cosmopolitan urban traditions than did those of his Skagen contemporary.

Ancher manifested a tension between the modern and the naïve, which emerged from a local and recognizable regional context. Her move toward Symbolism in this aspect oriented away from Baudelaire's immersion in Paris and toward the provincial

[35] Johannes Jørgensen, "Den graa Romantik" (1904), reprinted in *Essays* (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, 1906), 136-139, Google e-book.

[36] Johannes Jørgensen, "H. C. Andersen" (1905), reprinted in *Essays*, 122.

[37] Jørgensen, "H. C. Andersen," 125.

settings in Andersen's stories. Blind women from Jutland, lamps in the twilight and the sun's energy served as Ancher's symbols of the eternal and universal. Baudelaire's writings were urban and haptic rather than rural in their aesthetic. The "perfect *flâneur*" strolled the boulevards of modern Paris or even Copenhagen, moving through its lights and noise, a marked contrast to the quiet lanes of rural Skagen. Baudelaire extolled: "For the perfect *flâneur*, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite."[38] As Bourget observed in his essay in *Ny Jord,* Parisian life was an essential component of Baudelaire's poetic sensitivity.[39] Founder Sophus Claussen was in Paris the year of *Taarnet's* founding, reporting back to Denmark about life in the French capital and his acquaintance with Mallarmé and Verlaine.[40]

The Danish avant-garde in this period appeared to be simultaneously in forward and retrograde motion. Along one orbit modernists rooted their art in local, rural or national traditions that had not been choked by urban, commercial or imperialist tentacles. At the same time, the exhilarating rate of technological change opened up new frontiers, even while it raised uncertaintly about the limitations of perception and positivism. Andersen embraced both the provincial and the forward-looking in his enormously popular stories and nursery tales, providing a local variation on Baudelaire's ideas of *correspondances,* the animation of the natural world, and the translation of musical experience into image and text. His stories and writings were ubiquitous in

[38] Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life (1859)," 9.

[39] Bourget, "Baudelaire," *Ny Jord*, 241.

[40] See for example the feature "Naïve Breve" by Sophus Claussen under the pseudonym "Antonius" that ran in *Politiken* on March 13, 1893.

Denmark and especially important to Ancher. At the same time, increasing interest in Nietzsche's concept of a Dionysian life-force introduced a third thread into the fabric of Danish Symbolism and modernism.

Ancher drew on the same contradictory aesthetic elements as her peers at the turn of the twentieth century. Peter Nørgaard Larsen observes about Laurits Andersen Ring: "Sometimes not wanting to be modern can be more modern than a pursuit of the new."[41] Larsen's evaluation clearly applies as much to Ancher as it does to her friend Ring. As Danish modernists, they continued to reference revolutionary aesthetic ideas and movements emanating from international urban centers, embracing both Nietzsche and Baudelaire. An individual who would be modern at the end of the nineteenth century must be able to apprehend and represent the instabilities and undulations becoming manifest in philosophy, science and politics. Georg Brandes described the nineteenth century in terms of its discovery of the unconscious and the ego.[42] Additionally, advances in thermodynamics; research into quantum mechanics; awareness of both cosmological and microscopic phenomenon; and the exploration of the unconscious fueled anxiety and uncertainty. Ancher's contemporary Georg Simmel (1858-1918) held that the primary challenge of the nineteenth-century person was to resist "being leveled, swallowed up in the social-technological mechanism."[43] Resisting these aggressive impulses of the

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[41] Peter Nørgaard Larsen, *L.A. Ring: On the Edge of the World,* transl. Réné Lauritsen (Copenhagen: Statens Museum for Kunst, 2006), 117, exh. cat.

[42] Georg Brandes, "Hans Christian Andersen" (1869) in *Creative Spirits of the Nineteenth Century* (1923). Essay index reprint series (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1967), 21.

[43] Georg Simmel, "From 'The Metropolis and Mental Life'" (1903) in *Modernism: An Anthology of Sources and Documents,* ed. Vassiliki Kolocotroni, Jane Goldman and Olga Taxidou (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 52.

"social-technological mechanism," Ancher joined many in the Danish avant-garde in representing authentic and truthful subjects from the periphery of regional Denmark, such as populated the writings of Andersen. Ancher's technical accomplishments in innovative composition, color and brushwork were unabashedly modern, incubated in Paris's cultural laboratory, but used to depict local subjects. Larsen believes that different Danish modernists including Ancher, Ring, and Hammershøi: "mediate[d], to varying degrees, between the two extremes, distancing themselves from the modern on one hand, while integrating modernity's artistic strategies on the other."[44] The revolutionary intellectual and psychological frontiers generated creative tension and challenged representational norms, eliciting an exciting dynamism and experimentation in the visual arts.

Literary scholar Svend Erik Larsen also finds a binary of cosmopolitanism and regionalism in the Danish avant-garde. He observes that its origins within a geopolitical context of globalization and industrialization contributed to its heightened awareness of difference, and therefore, self-definition contingent on relations with the "other." He summarizes: "Modernism is a metropolitan movement building on the emerging transnational industrialized urban culture.…But growing out of local languages and cultures, often within clear national boundaries, this globalizing trend is always defined by its contrast to the local conditions."[45] S. E. Larsen asserts that contemporary historiography, generated from a non-western, more universal perspective, has introduced a richer awareness that "modernism as a transnational trend has always worked and still

[44] P. N. Larsen, *L.A. Ring: On the Edge of the World,* 207; Peter Nørgaard Larsen,"With and Against the Modern, Nordic Counter-Images to Modernity," in *Nordic Art : The Modern Breakthrough, 1860-1920,* ed. David Jackson (Munich : Hirmer Verlag, 2012) 208, 212, exh. cat.

[45]S. E. Larsen, "Euro-American Modernism as Local Refraction," 300.

works through local refractions."[46] The Danish avant-garde at the turn of the century was acutely aware of both norms radiating from the center and distinct deviations from peripheral regions. S. E. Larsen employed the apt description of a forward-looking "avant-garde" that pushes boundaries and strives for newness in tension with a complementary "arrière-garde" clinging to an idealized past.[47]

Hans Christian Andersen: *Avant-Garde* and *Arrière-Garde*

In Denmark, "local refractions" played a major role in the development of modernism. The stories and poems of Hans Christian Andersen offer its clearest expression and were foundational texts of Danish culture during Ancher's lifetime. Journalists of all political persuasions punctuated diatribes against sham policy initiatives by whichever party held power with aspersions about the "emperor's new clothes." Georg Brandes described Andersen as intrinsically and quintessentially Danish, evidenced by "the ascendancy [of] heart" in his characters.[48] Nonetheless, Andersen also enjoyed international popularity. For example, there were many popular French and English editions of *The Ugly Duckling* published in the 1870s and 1880s. British artist Kate Greenaway was working on illustrations for Andersen's *The Snow Queen* when she died in 1901. In Denmark, Andersen is also an author expressly linked to Ancher in the mythology of the Skagen painters.[49] She owned multiple editions of his fairy tales. In 1911 she reminisced fondly about an illustrated volume "with thick pages and blue binding" of Andersen's fairy tales read to her when she was young by a colorful seaman home from the West Indies and living in the Brøndum Inn.[50] Ancher's transformation

[46] S. E. Larsen, "Euro-American Modernism as Local Refraction," 301.

[47] S. E. Larsen, "Euro-American Modernism as Local Refraction," 300.

through color and brushwork of local, simple subjects adheres to the aesthetics of this treasured Danish author.

Andersen hovered in oscillations between modernity and anti-modernity. In Brandes' anthology *Creative Spirits of the Nineteenth Century,* the counter-revolutionary, reactionary elements of Andersen's writing ironically earned the storyteller the place of privilege in its first essay. Brandes' publication praised what many of Andersen's contemporaries disdained, language that was "much too colloquial and colored by imagination." Brandes noted that Andersen broke the conventions for written language. "The construction, the position of the words in individual sentences, the entire arrangement, is at variance with the simplest rules of syntax."[51] Michael Ancher had read a serial version of the essay in *Illustreret Tidende* and recounted in an 1890 letter to Brandes that the article had made him "electrified [and] awakened."[52]

Ancher's pastel from 1891, *Helga Cutting Out* (Fig. 3-11)*,* shows this combination of local and familiar subject, innovative technique, while also a psychological intensity and affinity for Symbolism that brought Danish artists to renewed

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[48] G. Brandes, "Hans Christian Andersen" (1869), 33.

[49] Jacobs, *The Good and Simple Life,* 93. "In August 1859 Hans Christian Andersen visited Skagen and was later able to publicize the place through his 'Tale of the Dunes.' He put up at the Village's only inn which had been started in 1840 by Erik Brøndum and his wife {Ana} Hedewig [sic] Moller. This family also owned the main village store. As a treat for the famous writer, Hedewig sent someone down to the store to see if there was any fresh caught plaice. Andersen became impatient for his dinner, and greatly upset Hedewig, who took to her bed and gave birth to a girl, who was to be christened Anna. The unusual circumstances of the birth led Hedewig to believe that her daughter would become an artist."

[50] Anna Ancher, "Barndomsminder fra Skagen," *Mit Hjem* (1911). 1-3: File 959. Skagen Lokal Historiske Forening.

[51] G. Brandes, "Hans Christian Andersen" (1869), 2.

[52] Michael Ancher to Georg Brandes reprinted in Lise Svanholm, *Malerne på Skagen* (Denmark: Gyldendal, 2001), 75.

interest in Andersen. The subject is Ancher's daughter, wearing a child's smock and standing in front of a large open window. Ancher painted surprisingly few images of her daughter and, as discussed above, generally protected her sitters from the viewer's gaze. In contrast, in this image, the artist pulls the viewer toward the intensity of Helga's concentration on the creative task. Ancher frames the materials being transformed by her daughter's imagination at the node created by the intersection of the window trim and the child's two hands. In contrast to anecdotal genre pictures, the artist obscured in shadow the presumed setting within a comfortable home. The indistinct colored fragments that rest on the foreground table seem to magically animate the glass in front of the child as reflections. The artist extracts the scissor creations of the right hand and repeats them on the window pane in a command performance.

Figure 3-11: Anna Ancher. *Helga Cutting Out* (1891)

The child's paper creations have a privileged place in *Helga Cutting Out*; her authentic and untutored art-making is the subject. Helga's disproportionately large left hand is laced with vitality indicated by the red and blue veins. These hands are the painting's focal point, with their tracings of "nerve and sinew." The recognizable shape of a paper doll lies on the table, yet the brightest light and most exciting color erupts

where the tips of the represented scissors touch the paper, before the moment of actual creation. The energy of the bright reds, greens and blues rests as scraps on the wooden surface, but also takes new form across the brilliant sunny window pane.

Children assumed increasing importance for the avant-garde for their imagination and intuitive compassion. Jørgensen reminded his readers in his essay on Andersen: "The sun and happiness belongs to the genius, but only because the genius is a child…for whom a rosebush in a box in front of a window is as valuable as a princely park."[53] Jørgensen revered the centrality in Andersen's writing of a child's ability to transform the commonplace and to imagine a symbolic reality. Similarly, Georg Brandes admired the way in which Andersen's psychological empathy with his audience of children permitted the depicted reality to straddle the realms of the observable and the imaginative. Brandes noted the "childlike faculty" for seamless transference and substitution between animate and inanimate things. More importantly Brandes hailed Andersen's ability to move from subject to subject effortlessly, like a child. Brandes claimed the storyteller had: "A faculty for being swiftly and readily reminded by one thing of another, for regaining one thing in another, for generalizing, for molding an image into a symbol, for exalting a dream into a myth, and through an artistic process, for transforming single fictitious traits into a focus for the whole of life."[54] Brandes identified the transcription of simple, direct images, recognizable in everyday surroundings, transformed through Andersen's mental faculty into an abstract, mythic and timeless result. In Brandes' observations, Andersen closely aligned with the aims of Symbolism.

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[53] Jørgensen, "Hans Christian Andersen" (1905), 126.

[54] G. Brandes, "Hans Christian Andersen" (1869), 6.

Andersen's adoption of the storytelling voice, cadence and punctuation of a child in his stories was as important to Brandes as the plot and characters. He argued that Andersen had invented a new genre, the nursery story, and that he used the narrative voice of the child to recount truth.[55] Brandes indicated that Andersen's choice of format allowed his writing to operate on both a symbolic level and a sensual level:

> The nerve and sinew of the art is the imagination of the child, which invests everything with a soul, and endows everything with personality; thus, a piece of household furniture is as readily animated with life as a plant, a flower as well as a bird or a cat, and the animal in the same manner as the doll, the portrait, the cloud, the sunbeam, the wind, and the seasons.[56]

Andersen's children animated ordinary household objects and pets into supernatural fairies and princes. Brandes emphasized the interactive performance with the childish audience through Andersen's pauses and idiosyncratic cadences.[57] Brandes claimed that an innocent child's natural links to the unconscious made them purer and more attuned to the elementary truths of the universal.[58] In "The Emperor's New Clothes," the "skeptical" and "conservative" child therefore became the arbiters of value of the newly manufactured goods.[59]

More than children, the overwhelming majority of Ancher's subjects, including the blind woman, the old fisherwoman, and the laborers plucking fowl, were drawn from the humble classes of Skagen. Brandes emphasized the "democratic feeling" of Andersen

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[55] G. Brandes, "Hans Christian Andersen" (1869), 2-4.

[56] G. Brandes, "Hans Christian Andersen" (1869), 5.

[57] G. Brandes, "Hans Christian Andersen" (1869), 3-4.

[58] G. Brandes, "Hans Christian Andersen" (1869), 21-2.

[59] Hollis Robbins, "The Emperor's New Critique," *New Literary History,* vol. 34, no. 4, Multicultural Essays (Autumn, 2003) , 671, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20057807.

who like Ancher offered realistic details of the lives of Denmark's rag pickers and peasant houses. He demonstrated both protective sympathy for the poor and impatience with pomposity and pretension among the urban bourgeoisie.[60] In "The Nightingale," the poor fishermen, a kitchen maid and a plain songbird exposed falseness in the court ceremony and in the manufactured bird.

The effect of every stressed story element of "The Nightingale" depended on familiar connections for his Danish audiences. Although Andersen set the tale in imperial China, he described a dysfunctional and officious bureaucratic apparatus equivalent to that of modern Denmark. Andersen's nightingale was in truth *not* a wild bird. The author's primary audience in Denmark, recognized it as local and domesticated.[61] Similarly, the bellowing cow and the croaking frogs, whose calls the courtiers humorously mistook for the nightingale, were also local to rural Denmark rather than to urban China. Such staffage drew Andersen's primary audience into familiar terrain within the setting that was only superficially exotic.

Beyond the Realm of Consciousness and Certainty

In Ancher's undated nocturnal painting, *Boats at Sønderstand by Moonlight* (Fig. 3-12), the evening sun rises as a numinous presence above the landscape and as a reflection over the surface of the water. The local fishing boat and the tracks on the sand pinpoint a timeless setting within Ancher's familiar Skagen. The depicted scene parallels

[60] Frank Hugus, "Hans Christian Andersen: The Storyteller as Social Critic," *Scandinavian Review* 87, no. 2 (Autumn, 1999): 29, 205072804; G. Brandes, "Hans Christian Andersen" (1869) in *Creative Sprits of the Nineteenth Century,"* 24. Hans Christian Andersen, "The Nightingale" (1844) in *The Complete Fairy Tales and Stories,* transl. Christian Haugaard (New York: Anchor Books, Random House, 1983), 203-12. Page numbers for H. C. Andersen stories indicated in parentheses come from this edition. The suggestion to use this tale came from Dr. Suzanne Singletary.

[61] G. Brandes, "Hans Christian Andersen" (1869), 27.

Andersen's own account of his journey to Skagen. In his story "A Visit to the Extreme North Coast of Jutland" (1863) he praised the sights at the intersection of modernity and the primitive where the good road yielded to sands that Andersen likened to African deserts. Without Ancher's title, the time of day in her painting is indeterminate, the sky taking the hues of both early morning and the extended twilight of Scandinavian midsummer. The moon illumines the sky with such intensity that only the violet tinge and the stillness hint at the hour. Although the context conforms to Andersen's description, Ancher's thick application of paint to represent moonlight and reflection is Baudelairean in its materiality. The French poet transformed the idea of beauty into a solid and marble Greco-Roman sculpture in *La Beauté*. The painter sculpted the moon's reflection so that it rises off the canvas against the surface of the water. There are no clear boundaries between the purplish sky, the horizon and the water edge. The tracks of the road disappear into the sand. The boats might either hover on the shoreline or rest in stasis on the sea. The action of the painter's brush is the only disruption to the stillness; markings shift direction at the cloud breaks or spread sand between the beach and the grasses.

Figure 3-12: Anna Ancher. *Boats at Sønderstand by Moonlight* (undated)

The dominant violet tonality of midsummer evening juxtaposed against a thickly painted globe of an artificial lamp in *Young Girl in front of a Window* or the moon in *Boats at Sønderstand by Moonlight* indicates a favorite time of day for Danish Symbolists, as well as for both Baudelaire and Andersen. These writers often oscillated in their writing between different realms of consciousness or blurred boundaries between reality and dream and the material and the supernatural. In the same way that the evocative landscape of Anna Ancher differs from a Modern Breakthrough canvas, the ambiguities in both authors separated them from positivist and Naturalist sensibilities. For them, certain times of day seemed to have magical properties. The central moment in their writing is often the instant in between one state and another. For instance, Andersen explored the transition between waking and sleeping in "The Sandman," from youth to maturity in "The Ugly Duckling," and between life and death in "The Nightingale."

The violet tones of the evening sky blur the distinction between water and sky in Ancher's painting, confounding any sense of ground. Similarly, many of Baudelaire's poems are staged at the "liminal moments" of dawn and dusk.[62] These settings are transitory, the dusk fades into night, the dawn wakens to day. They evoke a continuum in the changes they engender.[63] In "Harmonie du soir," extensively quoted in Bourget's 1889 essay, the flowers are the here and now, but become a memory after the night. Meltzer describes the last line of "Harmonie" as an "afterimage," a break with the present.[64] The sun has gone down and there is a new reality. In "Correspondance," the

[62] Meltzer, *Seeing Double: Baudelaire's Modernity,* 126.

[63] Meltzer, *Seeing Double: Baudelaire's Modernity,* 204.

[64] Meltzer, *Seeing Double: Baudelaire's Modernity*, 237.

poet paired contradictory descriptors linking night with clarity and tenebrae with unity. In these indeterminate lapses between night and day, the distant echoes of reality mix with perfumes, colors and sounds. Whereas Baudelaire's imagery vaporizes, the liminal moment is fixed in the materiality of Ancher's reflections.

Andersen also transformed the dusk into a supernatural time in Brandes' favorite story, "The Bell."[65] The climax of the action occured at the moment just before the sun went down. "The forest became so still that the prince sank down on his knees and said: 'I shall never find what I seek! The sun is setting; soon the night will come—the dark, dark night (279).'" The prince climbed to the summit where he could see the sun once more before it set over a splendid sea:

> Like a shining red altar the sun stood where sea and sky met. All nature became one in the golden sunset: the song of the forest and the song of the sea blended and his heart seemed to be part of their harmony. All nature was a great cathedral: the flowers and the grass were the mosaic floors, the tall trees and swaying clouds were its pillars and heaven itself was the dome. (279)

Andersen employed strikingly close analogies to Baudelaire's language in "Correspondance" and "Harmonie du Soir." Both authors likened nature to a temple. The image of the altar in Andersen's "The Bell" compares to the liturgical references in "Harmonie du soir." At dusk, colors, scent and sound intensify and mingle, permeating the atmosphere. Andersen's language and staging, however, lack the intensity and manifest less of a sinister, threatening undercurrent than Baudelaire's anthology, which has the menacing title, *The Flowers of Evil*. Additionally, Andersen is more

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[65] Hans Christian Andersen, "The Emperor's New Clothes," (1837) in *The Complete Fairy Tales and Stories,* transl. Christian Haugaard (New York: Anchor Books, Random House, 1983), 275-9. Page numbers for the story in parentheses come from this edition. See also Brandes, "Hans Christian Andersen" (1869), 51.

conventionally reverent. He closes his story by invoking a choir of angels singing their hosannas in contrast to the sacrificial blood of "Harmonie du soir."

The representation of the non-referential experience of music in performance or as listener presents another example of how Ancher's painting had Symbolist aspirations, which likewise paraphrased ideas common to Baudelaire and Andersen. In "The Muse of the New Century," Andersen claimed the modern poet required the innocence and willfulness of a child who has "leaped out of her cradle" and "still plays in her great nursery, which is full of art treasures and rococo…and is surrounded by eternal harmonies from the thoughts of Beethoven, Gluck, Mozart and all the Great Masters."[66] Andersen additionally likened a poet to a violin or a cello, whose "rhymed outpourings of feelings and thoughts are merely the movements and vibrations of the nerves," and whose music evoked other lands and ages. [67] In *To Be or Not to Be,* Andersen compared both verbal arguments and memories to music, "whose tones are echoed in our souls (250)." At the end of his life, Andersen advocated a new kind of poetry that integrated different art forms in an all-encompassing project, close to a *Gesamtkunstwerk*.[68] Johan de Mylius identifies many experimental elements in Andersen's stories that borrow music's lyrical elements and anticipated the Symbolist poets' attempts to synthesize the experience of different media.[69]

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[66] Hans Christian Andersen, "The Muse of the New Century." (1861) published at *Visit H. C. Andersen* website ed. Lars Bjørnsten, http://visithcandersen.dk/eng-the-muse-new-century%20.htm.

[67] Hans Christian Andersen, "The Muse of the New Century." (1861).

[68] Johan de Mylius, "'Our Time Is the Time of the Fairy Tale': Hans Christian Andersen between Traditional Craft and Literary Modernism." *Marvels and Tales* 20, no. 2 (2007): 173, doi:10.1353/mat.2007.0014.

[69] de Mylius, ""Our Time Is the Time of the Fairy Tale," 173-4.

Ancher approximated the visual equivalent of music in *John Brøndum Playing the Accordion* (1890, Fig. 3-13). In the painting, the reds and the blacks require the eye to

Figure 3-13: Anna Ancher. *John Brøndum Playing the Accordion* (1890)

dart in a punctuated rhythm. Ancher seems to have allowed the accordion's resonance as it emitted musical chords to collapse the space surrounding the figures. The player's face folds into the sound, his ear inclined in its direction. This organ that perceives sound, however, is framed by a painting on the wall behind his head, referencing sight. The listener is fully consumed in the music. He has dropped his paper, denying visual and temporal distractions of the present. His lack of discernible facial features, in combination with a subtle highlight on his forehead, generates an otherworldly spiritual quality. Even the furnishings subside into the sound, the roundel on the left sinking into an indeterminate pedestal and the large, dark furniture disintegrating into patterns of brushstrokes. The musical performance absorbs the figures, while Ancher's vertical stresses and the dark palette contract the space. The setting is a dim Danish interior during one of the Skagen's dark nights. The red and black palette color choice was

unusual for Ancher and reminiscent of the stained-glass aspirations of the Synthetists. I have found only one other painting with the same tonality, an unsigned and undated *Interior with Chair and Plant* (Fig. 2-13), that achieved through the dominant reds and vertiginous space a similar effect of collapsing reality.[70]

Ancher and Hammershøi both attempted to translate music into painting, an idea that can be linked to Nietzsche, Baudelaire and Andersen. By 1891 the interconnectivity between different art forms permeated criticism in Copenhagen. A review in *Dagens nyheder* of the inaugural Den Frie exhibition of painting and sculpture contrasted the Russian symphony of Kristian Zahrtmann (1843-1917) to Hammershøi who had

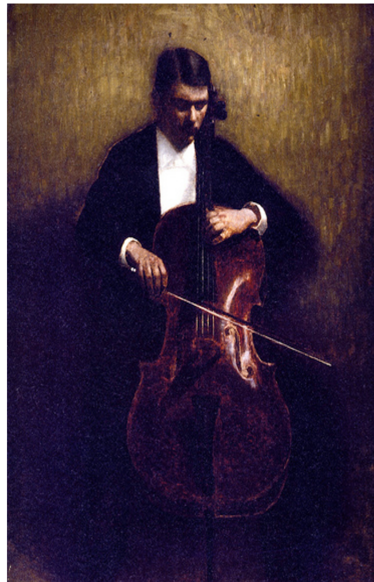

Figure 3-14: Vilhelm Hammershøi. *The Cello Player* (1893

[70] I recently discovered two paintings that are relevant to this discussion and were attributed to Anna Ancher. Both were auctioned by the major Danish firm Bruun Rasmussen. On September 17, 2013 Bruun Rasmussen offered an interior with the same coloration and handling of space seen in *John Brøndum Playing the Accordion. Music Practice* (auctioned September 18, 2012) exhibited at Charlottenborg in 1894 has a fascinating juxtaposition of sculpture and piano that also suggests the Symbolist work of Fernand Khnopff. However, as I have not had the opportunity to see these first hand or to verify either authenticity or see the handling of paint, I have not included these in my discussion. "Some Works of Anna Ancher," *Arcadja Auction Results,* http://www.arcadja.com/auctions/en/ancher_anna/artist/524/ accessed 9 April 2014.

submitted a one-fingered, childish rendition of Mendelssohn.[71] Hammershøi's portrait of cellist Henry Bramsen (Fig. 3-14) evokes music in the atmospheric stippling of the room as the fingers of the musician's left hand press the strings into the fingerboard while the right hand draws the bow. The cello emits musical sound into an arc of reflected sunlight embracing its F-holes.

Friedrich Nietzsche and the Beginnings of Danish Vitalism

So many of Ancher's paintings are inflected with energetic brushwork and movement that the Symbolist label, like the Naturalist or the Impressionist, does not adequately describe the direction of her art at the turn of the century. Paintings such as *Women Plucking Chickens* (1902) contrast with the claustrophobic atmosphere of *John Brøndum Playing the Accordion* through the sturdy posture, thick muscular forearms, and the motion of the labor. The artist's own "labor" is also evident. The canvas background is only thinly painted, allowing the weave to show through, and her strokes of the viscous paint makes her tools apparent.[72] Energy, strength and liveliness suggest that the artist also experimented with another set of modernist ideas associated with Jens Ferdinand Willumsen, the musician and sculptor Carl Nielsen and Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen, as well as the philosopher Nietzsche. Vitalism not only recommended exercising the body and healthier lifestyle for Danes, but also recommended traditional manual work as preferable

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[71]Paraphrased in Bente Scavenius, *Den Frie udstilling i 100 år* (Copenhagen Valby: Borgen, 1991), 14.

[72] Anna Ancher, *Women Plucking Chickens* (1902) from the Skagens Museum was on view at the 2013 show *A World Apart: Anna Ancher and the Skagen Art Colony* held at the National Museum of Women in the Arts. I do not have a good image or reproduction of the painting.

to sedentary and cerebral urban occupations.[73] Vitalism developed parallel to the Symbolist movement in Denmark, closely associated with the scientific breakthroughs before World War I made by Copenhagen's erudite researchers into energetic motion, particle and quantum physics.[74] Vitalists sought to convey energy and life-affirming principles in their art and moved sharply away from the decadence they associated with the Catholic Church, and by the end of the century, with several of the *Taarnet* authors.

Carl Nielsen, for instance, initially embraced the decadent, idiosyncratic and inward tendencies of Jørgensen's brand of Symbolism. However, a few years later, "He could complain to Gustav Wied of 'this Symbolist nonsense!' [Det Symbolistvrøvl!], stressing instead the masculine strength of his own work."[75] Carl Nielsen, along with Willumsen and Svend Hammershøi, came to be principal figures associated with Vitalism. The movement generated an array of cultural, life-style, and hygienic reforms. (Some of these ideas are discussed in Chapter Five.) Its philosophical core drew on Nietzsche, especially the oppositions he established between life-affirming and life-inhibiting impulses.

Denmark played an important role in publicizing the ideas of Nietzsche, largely through the published lectures by Georg Brandes, who after a year of correspondence with the author introduced the philosopher's "An Essay on Aristocratic Radicalism" to Danish audiences. Brandes' entire 1889 review pivoted on Nietzsche's exposition of

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[73] Sven Halse, "Wide-Ranging Vitalism," in *The Spirit of Vitalism: Health, Beauty and Strength in Danish Art, 1890-1914,* ed. Gertrud Hvidberg-Hansen and Gertrud Oelsner; transl. James Manley (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 2011), 15, exh. cat.

[74] Daniel M. Grimley, *Carl Nielsen and the idea of Modernism* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2010), 97-8.

[75] Grimley, *Carl Nielsen and the idea of Modernism*, 48.

unresolved tension between competing forces in history. Nietzsche argued that there were concurrent theoretical thrusts forward and backward. Brandes explored this idea primarily in part four of his series, entitled, "The Nature of Man." Brandes introduced Nietzsche's pessimistic verdict on contemporary greed, a condition rooted in the contractual relations of capitalism, and hence quintessentially modern.[76] As Karl Marx had done in 1848, Nietzsche framed the issue in terms of classes, attributing a restrictive and enfeebling "slave morality" to the lower or middle classes, in contrast to "the atmosphere of healthiness, freedom, frankness and truthfulness in which [the ruling caste] lives."[77] For Nietzsche, the life struggle was about achieving power.[78]

Nietzsche contemporized the struggle in European urban culture. He simultaneously elevated as models classical antiquity or rural idylls that had escaped the intrusions and corruption from industrial Europe. While Nietzsche blamed the bourgeoisie and the upper class for the creation of a guilt-ridden ethic, he optimistically asserted that a restructuring of society could facilitate the redemptive cultivation of genius. Likewise, he claimed that the formulation of a new, *creative* aristocracy offered the possibility for joyful escape as humans found liberation from moral codes that served the interest of those in power and damaged everyone else. Nietzsche thus articulated a radical experiment embraced in part by the Danish avant-garde, even while he nostalgically lamented the disappearance of an ideal, sinless state that had formerly been enjoyed by the lower classes. Nietzschean Vitalism filtered into the twentieth century,

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[76] Georg Brandes, "An Essay on Aristocratic Radicalism" (1889) in *Friedrich Nietzsche,* transl. A. G. Chater. (London: William Heinemann, 1915), 32.

[77] G. Brandes, "An Essay on Aristocratic Radicalism" (1889), 34.

[78] G. Brandes, "An Essay on Aristocratic Radicalism" (1889), 39-40.

where it fueled dissension within the ranks of the avant-garde and deepened the antagonism toward the Academy.

Symbolists in Denmark, including Willumsen and Michaëlis, who at the start of the 1890s led the Symbolist experiments in Denmark, by the turn of the century expressed Vitalism. Their shift demonstrates the fluidity of the Danish avant-garde around 1900. The central pulse moved towards more expressive and Nietzschean art-forms, and began to eclipse the moodier Symbolists of the previous generation. Many Vitalists also believed that Scandinavians could forge a healthier, bolder life.

Theme and Variations:
Musical Decadence and a Vitalist Cure

Vitalism fought against degeneracy that was attributed to Baudelaire and increasingly also to the music of Wagner. Bourget's pronouncement that Baudelaire was associated with decadence held widespread currency in the decade after the essay's Danish publication.[79] Concurrent with the rise in Nietzsche's popularity, Denmark's ubiquitous alarm over decadence stemmed from increasing concerns about urbanization. Even seemingly unrelated debates, such as the representation of the peasant in the art of the 1910s, reflected this fear.[80] Nietzsche lamented finding a sort of degeneration in Wagner's music. Regardless of this negative judgment, a significant portion of Nietzsche's audience in Denmark, which coincided with Ancher's circle in Copenhagen, embraced and experimented with the formal amalgamation of the arts inherent in

[79] Paul Bourget, "Baudelaire," *Ny Jord,* 251-56.

[80] See Flemming Friborg, *Det gode selskab: Kunstforeningens historier 1825-2000* (Denmark: Gyldendal, 2000), 92-95. This debate is discussed in Chapter Four.

Wagner's idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*.[81] Nonetheless only a small circle extolled Wagner's compositions. The German composer's music came to be linked with urban decay and moral collapse, precipitating a variety of antidotal remedies, which often drew on the regional vernacular.

A comparison of the reception of Wagner by Andersen, Baudelaire and Nietzsche establishes their shared belief that all art forms should function to transport the beholder beyond their material surroundings. The Danish cultural avant-garde aspired toward reciprocal and interdisciplinary ideals of musical painting or painterly music. Critics described the visual arts by referencing musical associations, and musicians sought to evoke color and tonal variations in their compositions and performance. Even as they pressed toward Vitalist ideas, the aesthetic aspirations of the Danish modernists aligned with Andersen's writings on Wagner and music, and were inflected by the local rural context and conditions of artistic reception and performance in Copenhagen. Furthermore, Andersen's regionalism offered a Danish foil for some of Baudelaire's more decadent metaphors to describe the experience of listening to Wagner, generated within the bohemian culture of mid-century Paris.

Baudelaire's language to describe his experience of Wagner's *Tannhäuser* invoked the terminology of theater, literature and the plastic arts, devolving into a

[81] Grimley, *Carl Nielsen and the idea of Modernism*, 75; See also Daniel M. Grimley, "'Tonality, Clarity, Strength': Gesture, form, and Nordic Identity in Carl Nielsen's Piano Music," *Music and Letters*, Vol. 86, No. 2 (May, 2005), 206, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3526535. Grimley avers that Carl Nielsen actually disdained Wagner's idea of the Gesamtkunstwerk. His piano music, however, suggests a variation on the synthesis of art forms by combining several musical genres. Many others of the cultural elite drew on notions of the integration of the arts coming from both the British isles and from Vienna.

recollection of an opium-dream.[82] Importantly, however, Baudelaire believed that listening to music, contemplating a poem, and apprehending a painting similarly required the beholder's imagination to complete the experience. [83] While a musical performance is primarily auditory, Baudelaire translated the effect on the listener into the visual field.[84] According to Baudelaire, speed in execution and inexactitude also contributed to the impact on the listener. Therese Dolan draws attention to how Baudelaire contrasted the relative imprecision of music to painting and poetry in imparting mood or representing idea.[85] Ancher's signed *John Brøndum Playing the Accordion* likewise shows the quick, gestural technique of Ancher's studies carried through to the finished painting. The uncharacteristically dense atmosphere and collapsed space in her image convey a sort of intoxication. In place of apparent horizontals and verticals, the red and black artist marks strike the dark wall off kilter. In total contrast to the evening lighting of *Young Girl in front of a Lighted Lamp* where Ancher did not take music as the subject, the lamps of thin diagonal stripes filter most of the light creating a hazy atmosphere. Baudelaire embraced this sort of ambiguity and lack of definition in music suggested in Ancher's canvas.

Andersen valued music for many of the same reasons as Baudelaire. Both believed music was a quickening agent and that performing artists were channels of its

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[82] Charles Baudelaire, "Richard Wagner et Tannhäuser à Paris" (1 April 1861), Part I. Reprinted at *Baudelaire Litteratura* http://baudelaire.litteratura.com/?rub=oeuvreandsrub=criandid=28ands=1 accessed 6 January 2014.

[83] "Baudelaire, "Richard Wagner et Tannhäuser à Paris," (1 April 1861), Part I. http://baudelaire.litteratura.com/?rub=oeuvreandsrub=criandid=28ands=1.

[84] Charles Baudelaire, "Richard Wagner et Tannhäuser à Paris," (1 April 1861), Part I.

[85] Therese Dolan, "Listening to Color and Seeing Sound: Baudelaire, Wagner and Manet," *Manet, Wagner and the Musical Culture of their Time* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), 52.

"mysterious, magical powers."[86] Andersen was initially more reserved in his admiration for Wagner and Liszt than Baudelaire had been in 1863.[87] Anna Harwell Celenza hypothesizes credibly that Andersen learned of the writings of Baudelaire while in Paris for the World Exhibition of 1867, when French Wagnerians embraced the "synesthetic effect created by his operas *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*" as a corrective to positivism.[88] Celenza also draws parallels between Baudelaire and Andersen in the role of imagination and the interaction of sensory stimuli.[89] Celenza concludes that even if Andersen never personally read Baudelaire's writings on Wagner or even *Les Fleurs du mal:* "Nonetheless, the influence of *wagnérisme* on Andersen's work in the 1870s…is more than mere coincidence."[90] Upon returning to Denmark from Paris, Andersen recorded eagerly anticipating the Wagner productions scheduled for Copenhagen's Royal Theater.[91]

For Andersen it was imperative that Wagner's German nationalism be diminished and by 1870 he repatriated the musical genius and created his own fictional Danish prodigy. Andersen's hero in "Lucky Peer" echoed the author's reverence for Wagner as a

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[86] Jens Andersen, *Hans Christian Andersen: A New Life,* transl. Tiina Nunnally (New York: Overlook Press, 2005), 429.

[87] Jens Andersen, *Hans Christian Andersen: A New Life,* 430. Initially, the Danish poet judged the musicians as "too intellectual and contrived in their artistic expression." Later reports claim that he was the only person to applaud the first time he heard *Tannhäuser* performed in Leipzig and that he initiated an ongoing relationship with Liszt during the 1840s.

[88] Anna Harwell Celenza, *Hans Christian Andersen and Music: The Nightingale Revealed* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 201-2. See also Teodor de Wyzewa, "Notes on Wagnerian Painting (1886)" in *Symbolist Art Theories: A Critical Anthology,* ed. Henri Dorra (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 147-9.

[89] Celenza, *Hans Christian Andersen and Music: The Nightingale Revealed*, 201-2.

[90] Celenza, *Hans Christian Andersen and Music: The Nightingale Revealed*, 202.

[91] Celenza, *Hans Christian Andersen and Music: The Nightingale Revealed*, 203.

musical revolutionary who had paved the way of performance in the future.[92] Daniel Grimley attributes the shift in locus away from Wagner's German nationality to Denmark's profound cultural fear of marginalization in the late nineteenth century. Predatory, stronger neighbors such as Germany generated profound anxieties about the health and stability of the Danish musical scene in particular and its cultural health in general. These fears created another binary for the avant-garde, characterized by "tension between inward and outward notions of Danishness, between a narrow conservative provincialism and a more cosmopolitan European impulse."[93] Andersen's musical hero in "Lucky Peer" had to be Danish. Peer realized in his own opera the aspirations of the German Wagner.

Nietzsche's praise for Wagner was qualified and conflicted. He labeled himself and the composer as "decadents." Although the promise for humankind would be in the "life-promoting" philosophies and currents, both of them were to him evidence of social decline. According to Nietzsche in *The Case of Wagner,* the musician remained stuck in a downward spiral of life-inhibiting cultural patterns. However, Nietzsche lauded his personal success at recognizing culpability in furthering cultural deterioration, and the measures he had taken to overcome decadence.[94] In his new affirmative philosophy, he deplored the lack of clarity, "over romanticization, exhaustive details [and] pathos" in

[92] Celenza, *Hans Christian Andersen and Music: The Nightingale Revealed*, 210.

[93] Grimley, *Carl Nielsen and the Idea of Modernism*, 11.

[94] Anders Ehlers Dam, "'Music is Life' Carl Nielsen's Vitalist Musical Philosophy," in *The Spirit of Vitalism: Health, Beauty and Strength in Danish Art, 1890-1914*, 281-2,.

Wagner's music as symptomatic of the composer's depravity.[95] In self-reflection, Nietzsche assessed his personal status in modernity as simultaneously decadent and vital, whereas Wagner was only reactionary, only looking backward.

In his First Symphony (Symphony No. 1 in G minor, 1892), Carl Nielsen (Fig. 3-15), Ancher's associate from Skagen and Copenhagen, offered remediation to the decadence that the Danish identified with Wagner, interpreted by Nietzsche via Brandes. At the same time, Nielsen sought to remedy the excessively regressive and inwardly oriented intellectualism of Symbolism as espoused by Jørgensen. Nielsen's musical prescription generated life-affirming movement by building on familiar folk motifs. In contrast to Wagner, Nielsen's melodies were distinct and often drew on vernacular song. He expected his listeners to experience full sensory immersion, such as that described by Baudelaire. Contemporary audiences at performances of Nielsen's compositions made note of how his music required corporeal engagement by both performer and listener.

Figure 3-15: The Carl Nielsens in front of their house in Skagen, early 1900s.
Det Kongelige Bibliotek.

[95] A. E. Dam, "'Music is Life' Carl Nielsen's Vitalist Musical Philosophy," 282. According to Brandes, "An Essay on Aristocratic Radicalism" (1889), 19, Nietzsche equated pessimism with decadence and saw it as the result of degenerate or enfeebled instincts."

Symphonies and concerti stimulated the senses, creating visceral and primal agitation from both instrumentalists and audience.[96] Involuntary haptic response by someone who listens to a musical performance was evidence of life affirmation.[97] Vitalists concurred that the exercise of muscles was life-affirming, whether in response to Nielsen's music, through sport and dance, or due to the activity of Skagener's plucking fowl or performing other manual labor.

Grimley identifies several additional features in Nielsen's music that connect the Danish folk to Vitalism in Nielsen's First Symphony and show how the composer integrated a rural orientation with a thrust toward more experimental forms. Grimley finds a "self- consciously Nordic tone" that serves "a mirror of its own particular local context," while also an experimental push forward "towards a steelier, harder-edged modernist musical style."[98] In the fourth movement, the strings move in tandem, iterating the melodic structure of repeated intervals. His repetitive phrasings and pulses convey a sense of acceleration, thereby generating increased urgency. The clear and persistent percussion in the allegro reverberates through the players' and listeners' hands and feet. Nielsen brilliantly showcased individual instruments in duets, or trios by section, "writing furiously fast figures, and then passing them from one section to another, relay style" but achieving a crisp clarity owing to the strong percussive pulse.[99] Nielsen and many

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[96] Grimley, *Carl Nielsen and the idea of Modernism*, 9.

[97] Sven Halse describes the links between sport, work, dance, music and Vitalism as the central premise of the 2011 Danish exhibition. Each element was then broken down in to smaller foci in the catalogue essays. See "Wide-Ranging Vitalism" in *The Spirit of Vitalism,* 15 as well as the exhibition catalogue in its entirety.

[98] Grimley, *Carl Nielsen and the idea of Modernism*, 60.

[99] Alex Ross, "Inextinguishable: The fiery rhythms of Carl Nielsen," Review of the concert performance of the Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Alan Gilbert at Verizon Hall, Philadelphia, *The*

Scandinavian contemporaries pushed away from what Nielsen described as the "all that German fat and gravy one finds in Wagner's disciples."[100] In contrast, musicians and commentators looked to achieve a "Nordic character" that promoted health and nature and came to be associated with Skagen's beaches and spas.[101]

In order to be life-affirming, Nietzsche believed that music must elicit bodily movement as in dance music; the feet should tap involuntarily, the arms should move, the pulse should race. Music's advantage over image making in the visual arts was the exigent activity as opposed to passive contemplation.[102] Nielsen created energy in his piano music, "generating dissonance by juxtaposing and intensifying extreme contrasting states of musical material. His variations are based on a fundamental dualism, a tension between musical stability and instability that is set up by the theme itself."[103] Nielsen embraced the idea shared by Baudelaire and Andersen, that a listener engaged actively with a musical performance. But whereas the earlier authors described "rapture" or a hallucinatory experience, both of which were described as passive psychic states, Nielsen's music does not resolve, but instead engaged muscles, senses, nerves and mind in an unmitigated tension.

New Yorker (25 February 2008), http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/musical/2008/02/25/080225crmu_music_ross.

[100] Carl Nielsen to Anne-Marie Carl Nielsen, 1896, published in Grimley, "'Tonality, Clarity, Strength': Gesture, form, and Nordic Identity in Carl Nielsen's Piano Music," 217.

[101] Grimley, "'Tonality, Clarity, Strength': Gesture, form, and Nordic Identity in Carl Nielsen's Piano Music," 217.

[102] Gordon Graham, "Singing a New Song," in *The Re-enchantment of the World: Art versus Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 106. doi: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199265961.003.0005.

[103] Grimley, "'Tonality, Clarity, Strength': Gesture, form, and Nordic Identity in Carl Nielsen's Piano Music," 222.

Despite its Symbolist elements, Ancher's independent practice never aligned firmly with only one movement, but rather drew from several different elements of Vitalist and modern art. Her paintings *Young Girl in front of a Lighted Lamp* and *Grief* demonstrate the artist's ongoing dialogue with Symbolism across the turn of the century. The Danish avant-garde, including Anna Ancher, responded to elements of that movement, especially its idealist quest to paint mood or an idea. At the same time, they believed painting needed firm roots in local subject matter. Chapter Four explores how regional concerns created complexities in her ongoing responses to the centers of Paris and Copenhagen and the modernist predilection for primitivism.

Figure 3-16: Anna Ancher. *Children Playing on Skagen Beach* (1905)

Additionally, Ancher's 1905 depiction of children playing on Skagen beach (Fig. 3-16) is inflected with elements from Vitalism. Her painting overlapped with Vitalist explorations of that theme by Krøyer and others and that culminated in Willumsen's *Bathing Children on Skagen Beach* (1909). Vitalists considered children's active play in the sun as expressing Nietzsche's principle of life affirmation. Youth, cavorting outdoors

on Denmark's pristine beaches denoted energy and animation, in contrast to decadence.[104] Ancher included few details in her very abstracted painting. However, brighter colors suggest a sunlit halo in the children's hair, evidence of the centrality of the sun to Vitalism. Her mottled colors invigorate the textures of the sand and the breaks in the waves with swipes of thick lead white. Skagen's characteristic boats also reflect the sun as they rest tenuously at the surf's edge mediating between beach and sea, between sky and ground and between voyage and return. The painting of children playing, at a liminal moment between dawn and dusk, rendered by the artist in quick suggestive gestures in an abstracted landscape shows Ancher continuing to absorb and adapt as Denmark's avant-garde grappled with changing subjects and the expressive properties of media.

Once Ancher encountered new ideas about art in Copenhagen and Paris, her paintings show evidence of Symbolist experimentation such that her representations of light, vision and beauty seek to convey the etermal rather than to document observable reality. Paintings by both Ancher and her contemporary Hammershøi suggest their affinity with Baudelaire in alignment with ideas that were current in the Danish avant-garde of the 1890s, although differing in their respective rural or urban perspectives. The authors of *Taarnet* continued to reference Parisian developments, especially "Symbolism" and quoted Baudelaire in their journal, although many other prominent Danish modernists criticized the poet's decadence. Some of Baudelaire's ideas paralleled the writings of Denmark's own Andersen, whose more wholesome local and simple subjects, as well as his transformations of form have stronger alliance with Ancher's

[104]Lill-Ann Körber, "Sexuality, Aesthetics and the Healthy Male Body" in *The Spirit of Vitalism,:*225-6; Halse, "Wide-Ranging Vitalism," in *The Spirit of Vitalism,* 15.

paintings. Ancher's predominant subject choices were provincial and echoed Andersen. However, evidence of the body, movement and rural labor in her art also evidenced threads of Danish Vitalism, which was overt in the music of her Skagen friend Nielsen, and which grew out of widely read writings by and about Nietzsche.

This richer context, with the comparison to Hammershøi and the parallel to Nielsen, provides more fruitful lines of inquiry than previous homogenization of Ancher's art based on generalizations about the Skagen painters that were most applicable to her paintings from the early 1880s. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Ancher's work took a different trajectory from the stillness and absorption that linked her with Hammershøi toward a more intense palette, bodily presence in her application of paint and a stronger dissonance between the traditional rural Danish subjects she represented and her avant-garde handling of materials. Her art had its strongest Symbolist connections in the 1890s, although the performative nature of her sculpted surfaces and her translation of perception into a mood or an idea proved to be a constant thread in much of her oeuvre.

CHAPTER 4

PRIMITIVISM AND THE PERIPHERY: REPRESENTING RELIGION AND LABOR IN PROVINCIAL DENMARK

Ancher's art at the turn of the century reflected modernist instability and wove references to a pre-industrial ideal located in Skagen with innovative handling of materials. She altered her artistic technique around 1900 as she began to depict themes of religion and rural labor. Her changes coincided with contemporary explorations of "primitivism" in Denmark and the general development in Symbolism toward a "more socially interactive" orientation.[1] The shift followed Den Frie's 1893 exhibition of Paul Gauguin and Vincent van Gogh in Copenhagen. Their subjects came from provincial France, but also included Gauguin's newest pictures from Tahiti. Gauguin and Van Gogh esteemed both traditional rural European culture and the remote tropics, based on their perceived isolation from cultural contamination by modern industrialization and urbanization. Similarly, Scandinavian artists represented rural lifestyles and folk culture, in ostensible response to the level of modern problems that filtered into their cities and threatened the agricultural base. Although the concern over vanishing mores and traditions pervaded northern Europe, these worries were especially powerful in Denmark. By the 1880s, Danish commentators worried that it may already be too late to preserve the disappearing traces of previous generations.

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[1] Sharon L. Hirsh, *Symbolism and Modern Urban Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 30-1. Hirsh describes a shift in Symbolism to a "more socially interactive" orientation. "This second type of work continued to some degree the intense personal psychological investment in the work's subject, but also stressed evocative statements or comments on society, with deliberate manipulations to make them universal." The local, socially conscious form of Symbolism that Laurits Andersen Ring and Ejnar Nielsen practiced, which was coupled with "intense personal psychological investment in the work's subject" aligned with these types of images by Anna Ancher.

Ancher's conceptual experience of "primitivism" can be located within the intersecting spheres from which she apprehended the discourse. Her specific local context shaped her response to evidence of primitivism in art. Her depictions of the Indremissionen [Inner Mission] between 1896 and 1903, for instance, might be seen as a rejoinder to Gauguin's images from Brittany, based on diametrically different experience of religious revival and schism.[1] Ancher located her artistic practice in hinterlands that shared many socioeconomic attributes with Pont-Aven. However, her insider perspective of that rustic cultural milieu challenged the interloper gaze of Gauguin and countless other artists who painted Brittany at the end of the century.

Although evidence of artistic representation of rural primitivism was familiar to Danish artists who had been in Paris in the late 1870s and early 1880s, its expression by

Figure 4-1: Anna Ancher. *A Field Sermon* (1903)

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[1] Indremissionen can be translated as either Inner Mission or Home Mission. I am using the translation Inner Mission used by Andrew Buckser in his article "Tradition, Power, and Allegory: Constructions of the Past in Two Danish Religious Movements," *Ethnology,* Vol. 34, No. 4 (Autumn, 1995). http://www.jstor.org/stable/377941.

Figure 4-10: Paul Gauguin. *Vision After the Sermon, Jacob Wrestling with an Angel* (1889)

modernists ignited the cultural landscape of Copenhagen in 1893 with the Gauguin and van Gogh exhibition. Of the approximately fifty works by Gauguin, sixteen were paintings of Brittany executed between 1888 and 1890, including several, like *Breton Girl* and *Among the Lilies* (1889) that represented Breton peasant women. Ten brand new paintings from Tahiti debuted at the Copenhagen show, including *Parahi te Marae* (1892) and *Manao Tupapau* (1892). The Tahitian paintings focused mostly on naked women of color depicted at close and intimate range. As a group, Gauguin's works conveyed the idea that primitivism not only revered the pristine rural landscape, but also objectified its female subjects.

Kirk Varnedoe argued that Gauguin's paintings from Pont-Aven shared a form of cultural primitivism with those he made in Tahiti. When Gauguin left Paris (and Copenhagen) for Brittany and then Polynesia, he sought "places where the deep past seemed to survive in the present. The mystery that absorbed him resided in contemporary

nonurban peoples whose lives, however free from modern artificiality, were nonetheless in the thrall of long-standing societal traditions."[2] Elizabeth Childs and others have exposed Gauguin's superficial understanding of these cultures. His mythologizing mined other traditions, making him a sort of cultural imperialist and preventing him from fully integrating into his chosen paradise.[3] Gauguin's Tahitian and the Breton paintings minimize the nuance of changes in these places and compress historical time.

As discussed in Chapter Two, Ancher likely had several opportunities to see first hand Gauguin's paintings. His "exotic pastiches of the sensual, the aesthetic and the mythic" could only have appeared as a distortion of both material and unworldly truth to Anna Ancher.[4] The form of cultural primitivism evident in the paintings by Gauguin and the Pont-Aven school presented intrinsic problems for Ancher who had a more intimate knowledge of rural piety. The Den Frie exhibition would certainly not have been Ancher's first encounter with the foreign artist, but it did make more proximate and more problematic his manner of relating to rural, pious subjects.[5] Ancher's *A Field Sermon* (1903, Figure 4-1) could be read as a radical rejoinder to Gauguin's arrogance in paintings such as *Vision After a Sermon: Jacob Wrestling with an Angel* (1889, Fig. 4-2).

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[2] Kirk Varnedoe, "Gauguin," in *"Primitivism" in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern,* ed. William Rubin (New York: Museum of Modern Art with New York Graphic Society Books and Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1984), 182, exh. cat.

[3] See Elizabeth C. Childs, "The Colonial Lens: Gauguin, Primitivism and Photography in the Fin-de-Siècle," in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, ed. Lynda Jessup (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 50-51.

[4] Childs, "The Colonial Lens: Gauguin, Primitivism and Photography in the Fin-de-Siècle," 51.

[5] Not only was Gauguin well acquainted with Ancher's circle of artists, by 1892, she already mentioned as an acquaintance his wife Mette Gad Gauguin in a November 1892 letter to her cousin Martha Møller Johansen in *Breve fra Anna Ancher* by Lise Svanholm ([Denmark]: Gyldendal, 2005), 113.

Ancher's canvases over the next decade offer a testimonial to artistic difference from the French painter's oeuvre. Whereas Gauguin painted the subject of the sermon in rural Brittany as a fanfare in bold and brilliant color, Ancher gently modeled a soft hymn, a meditation and personal reflection on the local faithful. Nonetheless, both paintings had Symbolist goals in their depictions of religious belief. Ancher's manipulations in her painting refuted Gauguin's primitivist objectification of the other, the pious Breton women, while using simplified forms, altered palette and archaic styles to transcend the painting's descriptive function in conveying the idea of piety.

A Field Sermon presented one of Skagen's outdoor revival meetings offered by the Inner Mission. Ancher's faithful are absorbed in the present act of listening. Some look at the speaker, others look at the grass and a few seem disengaged. Ancher's palette is uncharacteristically muted and naturalistic. The grassy dunes match in terrain, fauna and color the environs of Skagen lighthouse. Ancher rendered the landscape in pale greens, browns and blues with the grasses suggested by mere gestural brushstrokes. Her color choices could refer to Puvis de Chavannes and might reference his Arcadian landscape murals or the soft grasses on the shore of *The Poor Fisherman* (1881). Patricia G. Berman summarizes the formal properties of Puvis' art admired by the Danish avant-garde: "Puvis enhanced the linearity of his forms, drained away sculptural modeling, and created large patches of paint to create flattened, veil-like and entirely static compositions."[6] Other Danish Symbolist paintings, including Vilhelm Hammershøi's *Artemis* (1893-4) and Gad F. Clement's *The Decorative Picture: The Vision of St.*

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[6] Patricia G. Berman, *In Another Light: Danish Painting in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Vendome Press, 2007), 202.

Francis with the Three White Virgins (1892-3), quoted Puvis' muted palette and lack of modelling in paintings to convey Christian or mythological themes.[7]

In Ancher's *A Field Sermon,* the lay preacher occupies a prominent space, framed by the faithful attendees. The direction of their gaze toward the sound source shields their eyes from our contact. At the same time a defensive row of strong male backs blocks the intrusions into worship by interlopers. The artist approached the Inner Mission's pietist rituals from a respectful distance; their faith remains unseen (Hebrews 11:1, NISV). The preacher's hand is raised in oratory. The rows of local Skageners attending the sermon intersect at oblique angles. The artist's use of natural light here seems artificial, another quotation of Puvis. In the distance, at water's edge, sunbeams enliven the heath and brighten the ocean. A peculiar shadow falls across the participants, flattening their bodies into silhouettes. The dimness directs our gaze from the immediate gathering to the distant bright shore. By darkening the portion of the canvas occupied by the faithful, Ancher also inverted the Inner Mission theology of enlightenment. The phrase "rays of light" was used to describe those people who allegedly shed the perceived debauchery of traditional peasant culture, and Inner Mission believers anticipated an "awakening" that would spread through the power of God to the whole world.[8] Ancher has, however, shown these "rays of light" as shrouded in darkness.

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[7] See Berman, *In Another Light,* 202 and Peter Nørgaard Larsen, "Puvis de Chavannes and the North," in *Toward Modern Art: From Puvis de Chavannes to Matisse and Picasso,* ed. Serge Lemoine (New York: Rizzoli, 2002), 253-265, exh. cat.

[8] Buckser,"Tradition, Power, and Allegory," 267. Buckser discusses perceived debauchery as one of the conditions the faithful sought to overcome.

Ancher's disruption of spatial expectations in *A Field Sermon* is also problematic. The compositional center of the canvas is empty; even the coloring of the middle region is especially muddy and nondescript. The painting, like *Communion in Skagen Church* (1899, Fig. 4-3) discussed below*,* forces the viewer to take multiple perspectives, simultaneously from a position above the men, looking up the hill at the women, and additionally straight at the preacher. These confusing angles prevent us from eavesdropping on the spiritual message. The viewer has no ingress into this audience. Ancher deliberately exaggerated the distance from observer to object in the final painting, different from the pastel study (Fig. 4-4). In the final painting, she attenuated the ambiguous grassy center, distorted the relative height of the preacher, and increased the

Figure 4-3: Anna Ancher. *Communion in Skagen Church* (1899)

angle at which the backs of the men in the foreground are cropped. Her depiction of faith brings into question the idea of religious mystery, yet simultaneously suggests the

Figure 4-4: Anna Ancher. Sketch for *A Field Sermon* (c. 1902), detail

remoteness of the spiritual realm from what is visible. Ancher, like Gauguin, constructed the complex image comparable to a visual collage, with groupings that do not integrate into the landscape and seem distant from each other. Through the resultant lack of rootedness, Ancher conveyed a sense of the pious faithful's intangibility of belief. The figures float on a landscape, referencing in tone and color the knoll near the Skagen lighthouse, but lacking the details and substance of terra firma.

Gauguin was more intrusive and inserted himself, truly an outsider, as a pious monk or priest not only in attendance, but also claiming the authority to represent the memories and vision of the religious Breton women.[9] His face and shoulder are also contiguous and hence physically joined to them. He claimed success in painting their simple, rural faith in an 1888 letter to Van Gogh:

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[9] The identification of the monk as self-portrait was made convincingly by Belinda Thomson in her exhibition and catalogue *Gauguin's Vision,* ed. Belinda Thomson, Frances Fowle and Leslie Stevenson (Edinburgh: National Gallery of Scotland, 2005), 55-6, exh. cat. See also Aimée Brown's review in *19th Century Art Worldwide,* vol. 5, no. 1 (Spring 2006), http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/spring06/53-spring06/spring06review/162-gauguins-vision.

> Grouped Breton women, praying, very intense black dress – very luminous yellow white hats. The two hats on the right are like freakish helmets … in the figures I think I've attained great simplicity, rustic and superstitious – all very severe – The cow underneath the tree, tiny compared to reality, is bucking – For me, the landscape and wrestling match in this picture exist only in the minds of the people praying after the sermon, that's why there's a contrast between the natural people and the wrestling match in a non-natural, disproportionate landscape.[10]

Gauguin identified distinctive dress, especially "freakish helmets," as a primary signifier distinguishing the Breton women from the intended audience. He denoted two further attributes: that they were "rustic" and "superstitious." He divided the canvas into an imagined landscape claimed for the other. Part of the canvas "exist[ed] only in the minds of the people praying," while presumably the artist and beholder joined the "natural people" as belonging to the other regions. However, the physical intercession of the painter/monk and his paintbrush joins the natural and the visionary fields.

Ancher's painting of the lay preacher contradicts the presumption that an artist can visualize either an imagined response to a sermon or, moreover, that the artist might be intimately connected to the divine. No supernatural beings disrupt the field of vision of subjects, artist or viewers in *A Field Sermon*. The artist as painter is not represented in attendance with the congregation and the dominant implied line of her vision as painter/beholder is obstructed by the participants. Ancher emphasized the inaccessibility of the modern viewer to the rural scene.

Ancher's palette certainly contrasts with that used by Gauguin. Belinda Thomson comments on Gauguin's invocation of the spectator's emotional response through his use

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[10] Cited in Rodolphe Rapetti, *Symbolism*, trans. Deke Dusinberre (Paris: Flammarion, 2006), 108-9.

of an artistic language derived from the "naivety and directness of drawing and the expressive, dramatic use of primary colors" found in contemporaneous local prints.[11] Instead, Ancher's palette appears deliberately to counteract the emotional, sensual appeal of Gauguin's *Vision.* Her soft color harmonies and the light in the distance pull the spectator away from the moment being represented to another realm or condition that cannot be rendered in paint, but only suggested or implied.

The differences in Ancher's depiction of a specific socioeconomic demographic within the peripheral phenomenon of Danish rural religious revival in the late nineteenth century ironically reinforced her distance from Gauguin as a figure of the French center. The apparitions and devotional cults that characterized the Catholic revival in Brittany were totally alien to the surge in Danish pietism.[12] Debora Silverman explains how the formal elements of Gauguin's *Vision After a Sermon* relate to visions of saints, the decoration of churches, and the importance of relics in local Breton practices. Additionally, Gauguin constructed the painting along the axis of the diagonal apple tree distinguished by types of color. He explained to Van Gogh in his 1888 letter that he used non-representational, jarring pigments, "dark purple, and the foliage is drawn in masses like emerald green clouds with sunny yellow-green interstices," to distinguish spatially the real from the imaginary. On the non-representational vermilion ground the painter claimed to depict what existed "only in the minds of the people praying after the sermon." Gauguin's use of color in *Vision After the Sermon* is essential to his concept of

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[11] Thomson, *Gauguin's Vision,* 45.

[12] Debora Silverman, *Van Gogh and Gauguin: The Search for Sacred Art* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000), 101.

painting a memory or a mental image of the words of the preacher, rather than the actual delivery and reception of the spoken message.

The “vision” of Gauguin’s title is clearly not ocular perception. The eyes of the women are closed, consistent with his claim to Van Gogh that the action of the painting took place in “the mind’s eye.” The Genesis story recounts how Jacob’s fight with a divine being on the banks of the Jabbok profoundly changed his relationship with God (Genesis 32:22-26, NIV). In Gauguin’s painting, the bright gold wings and brilliant blue robe of the angel stand out against the unnatural red field; the angel appears in a position of dominance over the Biblical patriarch. The painter’s own represented form is shown as physically most proximate to this struggle and his face is the only one that interrupts the sector of the canvas where the angel appears. Through this placement of his own image, Gauguin almost presumes the authority to proclaim Jacob’s words, “It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared” (Genesis 32: 30, NIV).

Primitivist Imaging and Imagining of Faith

Gauguin shared the primitivist idea that spirituality was more genuine, prevalent and accessible in remote, unindustrialized locations. In contrast, Ancher’s intimate knowledge of rural pietism gave her a more complex understanding of its precepts and practices. She was raised in a household of devout women, but ostensibly lacked strong religious affiliation. While a child, her mother brought her to church and to evening Bible study. Ancher’s cousin recalled the extreme piety of her aunt, when faced with a tragic fire that destroyed the initial Brøndum Inn:

> Aunt Ane… believed, that all the misfortunes which had struck the Brøndum family were a punishment for her own sins…But after the fire she made God the promise, that as a sign of his forgiveness, if he would help her family get back on their feet again, she would serve God as his most humble servant the rest of her life. That was a promise she kept."[13]

Her family's religious commitments shaped Ancher's daily routine. In the mornings she painted while her family provided childcare, and in the afternoons she worked at the hotel assisting her mother and sisters and preparing the food that they donated to impoverished fishermen. With the exception of the baptism of her daughter in 1883, Ancher herself seems to have mainly a perfunctory church affiliation although she continued to attend services throughout her life.

Ancher's proximity to the specific subject of the Inner Mission distinguishes this painter and painting and indicates an unexplored complexity in her understanding of contemporary discourse. Her composition conveys the religious group's sense of detachment from the mainstream and reinforces the Inner Mission's pride in being apart, their doctrine called "the Separation" (*Skellet)*.[14] *Skellet* required people to distance themselves physically, socially and emotionally from those who had not seen the light, "between inside and outside; one was either converted or unconverted, saved or damned, and moving from one status to the other involved a radical social transformation."[15] Inner Mission members often showed enmity toward neighbors and families on the outside. Andrew Buckser identifies countless Jutlanders who were non-converts offering first-

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[13] Martha Møller Johansen as recounted by her daughter Gerda. Johansen family archive. Quoted in Lise Svanholm, *Malerne på Skagen* (Denmark: Gyldendal, 2001), 163.

[14] Buckser,"Tradition, Power, and Allegory," 267.

[15] Buckser,"Tradition, Power, and Allegory," 267.

hand accounts of "rejection," "anger that was keenly felt," and "hostility," ridicule, scorn and ostracism. [16] Despite such accounts, the Jutland fishing community esteemed Ancher's mother, the Inner Mission member, as a paragon of virtue. "The whole of Skagen admired and honored her for the nobility of her soul and her treatment of the poor."[17]

Ancher's style in both *A Field Sermon* and *Communion in Skagen Church* complicated the realistic treatment of figures with complex space and enigmatic lighting. Her handling of the subject of peasant religiosity differed from familiar examples by both French academic painters, such as Pascal Dagnan-Bouveret's *Breton Pardon* (1889) and Scandinavian Naturalists, as in Finnish painter Albert Edelfeldt's *Women Outside the Church at Ruokolahti* (1887). Ancher's idiosyncratic manipulation of color, light, space and composition deepens the viewer's awareness of their own separation from the other, as represented by the depicted faithful from Skagen.

In *Communion in Skagen Church,* the centrally positioned baptismal font divides the canvas in two nearly equal parts that create visual tension between the representation of the act of contrition on the left and the condition of prayerfulness on the right.[18] The artist represented the font at the center, the symbolic site for the sacrament of baptism, and consistent with Lutheran theology, "between the contrite and the condition of

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[16] Buckser,"Tradition, Power, and Allegory," 266-7.

[17] Martha Møller Johansen as recounted by her daughter Gerda. Johansen family archive. Quoted in Lise Svanholm, *Malerne på Skagen* (Denmark: Gyldendal, 2001), Ibid., 165.

[18] I am indebted to the theological clarifications offered by Dr. Brent J. Eelman and John R. Sall in personal correspondence on the 18 February 2014. Each reminded me to include the font as the center point, an observation that I have made in talks, but had omitted in the paper.

prayerfulness."[19] Ancher distinguished those who beseech from those who are in the act of receiving the host. Those who kneel at the altar rail were presented at a reverent distance, reflecting their posture of humility before God's grace. Those in prayer, seeking divine intervention or guidance, are on the right at close proximity.

Ancher's painting emphasized the mysteries in the acts and condition of piety. Danish Lutherans would have understood that the "Real Presence of Christ is found 'in, with, and under' the elements."[20] Ancher respected this inscrutable essence by concealing the actual administration of the sacrament through a severe diagonal cropping. She also emphasized the separation of the painter and beholder by drawing the eye deep into the interior space toward the illuminated exit, across the backs of those kneeling to receive communion. The resultant visual distance contrasts against the forward thrust from the sober penitents, who wrapped in their dark clothes push as a solid mass forcefully against the viewer. In this group local physiognomies from other Ancher canvases appear familiar. Despite this identification, both the congregants' intensity and solidity reinforce the outsider's sense of not belonging.

Ancher's colorful depiction of the interior physical space intensifies the distinctiveness of this gathered body. Pinks, oranges and purples express the architectural frame and furnishings and offset the gravity of the depicted penitents. On the right, the interplay of the same tones against bright yellow sunlight provides a counterpoint variation to the stiff and dark worshipers. The pale yellow, indicating a column of light,

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[19] Brent J. Eelman, email to author, 18 February 2014.

[20] John R. Sall, email to author, 18 February 2014.

and orange, for the arched door, through the opposition of complementary colors focuses the eye on the lavender bearing column. The luminous atmosphere might reference the spectacle of the communion liturgy. A Danish emigrant recollected special clerical vestments, chalice and candles used during these services, which created a festival atmosphere that appealed especially to the eye. "As grandfather turned to the Altar and intoned the Lord's Prayer and the words of consecration, with the elevation of the host and the chalice, I felt as if God was near. The congregation standing reverentially about those kneeling before the Altar, made me think of Him who, though unseen, was in our midst."[21]

Displacing the Primitivism of the *Arrière Garde*

In his catalogue essay for the Museum of Modern Art exhibition, Kirk Varnedoe suggested that Gauguin's primitivist project was atavistic: "He was attracted to places where the deep past seemed to survive in the present."[22] Varnedoe defined primitivism as "the tendency to admire the virtues of early or less materially developed societies."[23] For Gauguin and like-minded voyeurs and voyagers, key signifiers indicated a primitive culture: agrarian economy, distinct indigenous dress, manifest piety, and archaic or absent political and economic institutions.[24] These Arcadian markers were those same disappearing attributes of rural Denmark, which were succumbing to encroachments of

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[21] J. A. O. Stub, "Vestments and Liturgies," Minneapolis: [bet. 1920 and 1950]. Reprint at http://www.blc.edu/comm/gargy/gargy1/vestments%20and%20liturgies.htm.

[22] Varnedoe, "Gauguin," 182.

[23] Varnedoe, "Gauguin," 180.

[24] Varnedoe, "Gauguin," 181.

urbanization and industrial capitalism. To many, the pristine and unpopulated Scandinavian landscapes qualified as primitive because of their difference from Paris or London, according to Michelle Facos.[25] The very existence of art colonies like Skagen at the end of the nineteenth century has been linked to the drive to find remote locations untainted by modern civilization. For Skagen colonists, the inhospitable climate and the rugged conditions of their journeys to Skagen feature prominently in their travel memoirs and painted representations of the site.[26]

Varnedoe also, however, pointed out that at its root, the concept of primitivism required a fixed concept of social distinctions and hierarchies that was shared by radicals and conservatives. Rural subjects resonated with both the established art academy and the opposition. Many cultural leaders believed that the struggles to subsist in traditional, pre-industrial societies were "permeated with spiritual and aesthetic considerations" and thus, fictionalized a sort of harmony there.[27] Parisian Salon artists like William-Adolphe Bouguereau (1825-1905) painted picturesque images of wholesome peasants, whose good health and peaceful coexistence contrasted with the disease and crime associated

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[25] Michelle Facos, "Educating a Nation of Patriots: Mural Painting in Turn of the Century Swedish Schools," in *Art, Culture and National Identity in Fin-de-Siècle Europe,* ed. Michelle Facos and Sharon L. Hirsh (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 237.

[26] Mette Bøgh Jensen, *At male sit privatliv: Skagensmalernes selviscenesættelese*. (Skagen: Skagens Museum, 2005). This point is made several times in different ways. For instance, on p. 155, Jensen explains how the repetition of the difficult journey served to differentiate the artists from tourists who came in later years. On art colonies and the link to primitivism, see Brian Dudley Barrett, *Artists on the Edge: The Rise of Coastal Artists' Colonies, 1880-1920* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010) and Nina Lübbren, *Rural Artists' Colonies in Europe, 1870-1910* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press), 2001.

[27] Naomi Margolis Maurer, *The Pursuit of Spiritual Wisdom: The Thought and Art of Vincent van Gogh and Paul Gauguin* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University and London: Associated University Presses in association with the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 1998), 12.

with urban poverty and with the ills of industrial factories.[28] Michael Jacobs notes, however, that the peasant ideal was complicated by a concurrent distaste:

> The Breton peasant in his costume…provided these nineteenth-century artists with their principal source of inspiration. Yet many of them found such people on a personal level unattractive, and often for the same reasons that they found them quaint as models. Everyone was agreed that they were all lazy and stupidly credulous, and that they rarely washed and spent much of their time drinking or indulging in crude gossip.[29]

The search for locations deemed primitive was predicated on a cultural identification of social groups or communities that existed as a parallel "other." Only if there was such a divide, could an artist such as Gauguin aspire to bridge the implicit chasm. His primitivist quest was for a privileged position, which further required that he establish points of affinity with groups that appeared profoundly outside the norms and mores of modern industrial and western societies.[30]

Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock have expounded on Breton dress as a conflicting signifier for artist and resident. The Pont-Aven costume, which dominated the paintings and prints of Gauguin and other artists of the 1880s, represented one thing to Bretons but was perceived by the non-Breton artist-tourist as emblematic of "traditionalness and archaicness."[31] In a much-quoted letter to Émile Schuffenecker, Gauguin wrote, "The country life for me. I like Brittany; here I find a savage, primitive quality." Gauguin

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[28] Greg M. Thomas, *Impressionist Children: Childhood, Family, and Modern Identity in French Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 27-8.

[29] Jacobs, *The Good and Simple Life: Artist Colonies in Europe and America*, 44.

[30] Varnedoe, "Gauguin," 185.

[31] Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock, "Les Donnees Bretonnantes: Le Prairie de la Representation," *Art History,* vol. 3, no. 3 (September 1980): 314-44; reprinted in *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology,* ed. Francis Frascina and Charles Harrison (London: Harper and Row, 1982), 293.

signified his immersion into the culture by adopting the clogs worn by local peasants. "When my wooden shoes echo on this granite ground, I hear the dull, muted, powerful, sound I am looking for in painting."[32] Six months later, in his account to his Danish wife Mette, Gauguin described his stay in Pont-Aven, in terms that again could equally be applied to Skagen. "…I am by the seaside in a fishermen's inn near a village that has a hundred and fifty inhabitants; there I live like a peasant, and am known as a savage."[33]

Ancher's respectful attention to the signifying elements and practices of the Inner Mission distinguished her art work from that of Gauguin. The naturalized features and particularized costumes of the Skageners attending the field sermon stand apart from the reductive conventions followed by painters at Pont-Aven. Many of the women that Ancher depicted in the church building in the 1896 painting *Communion at Skagen Church* and at the outdoor meeting shown in *A Field Sermon* wear head coverings that mark them as members of the Inner Mission movement, without caricature as "freakish helmets." Ancher did not employ dress to signify archaic or traditional lifestyles, but as an autonomous expression of essential difference from contemporary society. Of the eighteen women in *A Field Sermon*, all but three wear scarves that conceal their hair, necks and shoulders and partially shield their face in accordance with the scriptural mandate, "But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head." (1 Corinthians 11:6, NIV). They follow Timothy's directive to "dress

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[32] Paul Gauguin to Schuffenecker, February 1888. In Gauguin, Paul, *The Writings of a Savage,* ed. Daniel Guérin, transl. Eleanor Levieux (1974). Paragon House Edition (New York: Paragon House, 1990), 22.

[33] Paul Gauguin to Mette Gad Gauguin, undated, (late June 1889), in *The Writings of a Savage,* 27.

modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God." (1 Timothy 2:9-10, NIV). Ancher's faithful are attired according to their teaching of *Skellet* in a mode that rejected the excess of contemporary fashion. She respected their difference by creating a tension between the realistic handling of the figure and the ambiguity of the space in which the faithful were set. Whereas Gauguin was the artist-tourist, Ancher was an artist-resident and conveyed an understanding of rural dress.

Denmark and Primitivism

Danish artists who identified with the Parisian center found themselves attracted to the same rural models as the French, but also identified to some degree with the represented subjects. They saw themselves in alignment with both the arbiters of power and with the folk. As a nation Denmark did not enjoy a political position concomitant to the major powers, and its economic elite constituted a smaller segment of the population than in France, Britain or Germany. In comparison to the industrial leaders, a much greater percentage of Denmark's population resided in rural districts as fishermen and farmers. The country's diminished global influence at the turn of the century meant its actual power was also closest to struggling nationalist minorities, yet its own aspirations for regained prominence depended on an imperial model.

Locally, the northern and western Jutland peninsula where Skagen is located shared many socioeconomic attributes with Brittany. Whereas establishment ateliers in Paris promoted Pont-Aven as an artistic destination, Danish artist Vilhelm Kyhn

encouraged students in the Danish academy in 1870 to explore the remote areas of the Jutland coast to find suitable subjects to paint.[34] Kyhn likewise travelled throughout Denmark seeking local landscapes, and arrived near Skagen in 1877 where he painted *The Beach at Kandestederne*. Mette Bøgh Jensen has traced similar ambivalence from the Danish painters toward the local Skagen population as Jacobs described above toward the Bretons. On the one hand, Michael Ancher and other newcomers depicted a milieu shielded from and unspoiled by intrusions from the outside and the modern. Their intimate paintings of fishermen's cottages and coastal families coincided with published accounts of their integration into the Skagen community. However, Jensen indicates that these new arrivals inflated their assimilation into the rural community of fishermen in order to validate their reliability as its authentic eyewitnesses.[35] Unlike those of the male colonists, Anna Ancher's paintings of rural religiosity in Skagen are informed by her unique perspective as native to the periphery. Nonetheless, she was not truly a member of either the Inner Mission like her mother or the laboring class that made up most of its membership. She remained an outsider viewing, however, from close proximity.

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[34] *L'Aventure de Pont-Aven et Gauguin,* ed. André Cariou, Mary Anne Stevens and Antoine Terrasse. (Milan: Skira, 2003), 25, exh. cat.

[35] Mette Bøgh Jensen, *At male sit privatliv: Skagensmalernes selviscenesættelese*. (Skagen: Skagens Museum, 2005), 111, 155.

Both *Communion at Skagen Church* and *A Field Sermon* fit superficially into a widespread project of representing rural piety in Denmark.[36] Michael Ancher had two decades earlier attempted a similar subject in *A Lay Preacher Holds a Service at Skagen's Southern Beach* (1877). In comparison, Anna Ancher's *A Field Sermon* has a more textured surface and chalky appearance that inverts her husband's polished finish. While clearly respectful to the appearance of her subject, she employs less realistic detail and rejects the theatrical lighting that characterized his earlier painting. Outside the Skagen colony, another Jutland artist, Niels Bjerre (1864-1942), exhibited a painting at Den Frie of the Home Mission movement at the end of the 1890s. Bjerre depicted a very specific setting in his best-known work, *A Prayer Meeting, Harboøre (Children of God)* (1893-7, Fig. 4-5), representing the human response to a tragedy in the local religious community. In 1893, twenty-six fishermen in Harboøre drowned, leaving behind their

Figure 4-5: Niels Bjerre. *A Prayer Meeting, Harboøre (Children of God)* (1893-7)

[36] Editorial comment by Gabriel P. Weisberg in a personal e-mail to the author 7 April 2013.

widows and orphaned children.[37] Bjerre's cold, raking light articulates a contrast between light and shadow on the faces, which not only serves to emphasize the stricken expressions of the men and women at the table, but also to intensify their personal isolation in the pathos of the moment. The darkness on the right of the picture parallels the mood. Bjerre refuted the sense of congregation found in Anna Ancher's paintings and focused in on the reality of human anguish rather than on the idea of sustaining belief.

Figure 4-6: Anna Ancher. *Double Portrait of the Artist's Mother and Sister* (1895)

Despite her close ties to the Inner Mission movement, Ancher created an ambiguous relationship between the artist as viewer and the subjects that she painted. The people depicted in *Communion at Skagen Church* appear to be both as familiar as neighbors and as distant as strangers. The severe woman at the center shares the rigid posture, hairstyle, profile and expression depicted in the quattrocento-style portraits Ancher made of her mother, Ane Brøndum, with one of her sisters (Fig. 4-6). Similarly,

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[37] Niels Jørgen Vase, "Missionsmaleren Niels Bjerre på Museet for Religiøs Kunst i Lemvig," in *Udfordringen* (July 2009), http://udfordringen.dk/2009/07/missionsmaleren-niels-bjerre-pa-museet-for-religios-kunst-i-lemvig/.

her representations of the older woman in *Grief* (1902), several portraits of her mother from the 1890s and the studies she made of Inner Mission women share severe angles of approach, stressing the contour and flattening distinctive individual features. Ancher's repetition of the profile image, the iamb in both *Communion in Skagen Church* and *A Field Sermon,* devolved into a stock form connoting Inner Mission women. Their strong silhouettes and limited tonalities conveyed conviction and resolve unlike the nearly caricatured representations by Gauguin in *Vision After a Sermon*. While Gauguin represented the Breton women with sensuous lips and youthful color, Ancher conferred the dignity of age and sobriety.

In these paintings, Ancher also referenced stylistic conventions employed by the Danish Symbolists of the period. One such element is the silhouette. Her likenesses became subsumed into linear friezes or groupings of simple forms, like the popular shadow silhouettes or the Classical and Egyptian friezes admired in Denmark. A stylistic profile was even more exaggerated in *Three Women Summer Evening* (1895) by Harald Slott-Møller (1864-1937) or Laurits Andersen Ring's *Six Portraits in profile. Herman Kähler's Children* (1898). In both Slott-Møller's and Ring's paintings, the artists' reiteration of the flattened facial contours generated a formal pattern that overshadowed all physiognomic detail. Although Ancher's figures were less rigid and the pattern more varied than in the canvases of either exemplar, the overall effect generalized the subject and thereby subverted a narrative or naturalist reading of the scene.

According to Robert Goldwater, at the end of the nineteenth century Pre-Raphaelites and other artists employed the "severity and nobility" of Florentine masters

of the early and pre-Renaissance style to express both power and truth of religious sentiments.[38] Admiration for Giotto and Cimabue can be found in many of the Danish avant-garde artists. This period held special importance for Danish Symbolists. One can find both visual and written evidence of such admiration in the work of Agnes and Harald Slott-Møller. Johannes Jørgensen's Danish translation of excerpts of van Gogh's letters published in *Politiken* included a passage from a letter dated August 5, 1888 to Emile Bernard testifying to the artists' mutual admiration for Giotto's generation and social milieu. Van Gogh lamented that few would again have the chance to see such a society, until the distant future when the socialists might prevail.[39] Multiple examples provide visual evidence of Ancher's enduring admiration for the severe Florentine profiles characteristic of quattrocento artists such as Piero della Francesca, including the double portrait of her mother and sister from 1895.

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[38] Robert Goldwater, *Primitivism in Modern Art,* (1938). Vintage Books Revised Edition. (New York: Random House, 1967), 54.

[39] "Breve fra Vincent van Gogh," excerpts transl. Johannes Jørgensen. Original French text available at http://www.vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/let655/letter.html.

In addition to the simplified contours of Italian and vernacular precedents, Ancher's paintings of the Skagen faithful employ a technique of synthesizing fragments to generate the final composition. Gauguin and the Synthetists used this sort of assembly process in their 1880s Brittany paintings, creating a type of pastiche. Gauguin had already experimented with this format before 1885 when he was in Copenhagen. Anne-Birgitte Fonsmark describes Gauguin's process of adding figures to a completed nature study in order to create a new painting, one that did not rely on direct observation but was a synthesis of prior images.[40] Ancher's figure groupings in *A Field Sermon, Communion in Skagen Church* and the later *Preparing for a Royal Visit* (1909) developed through a similar process of "visual" collage, applying figure groupings against the backdrop of a landscape, interior or light study.

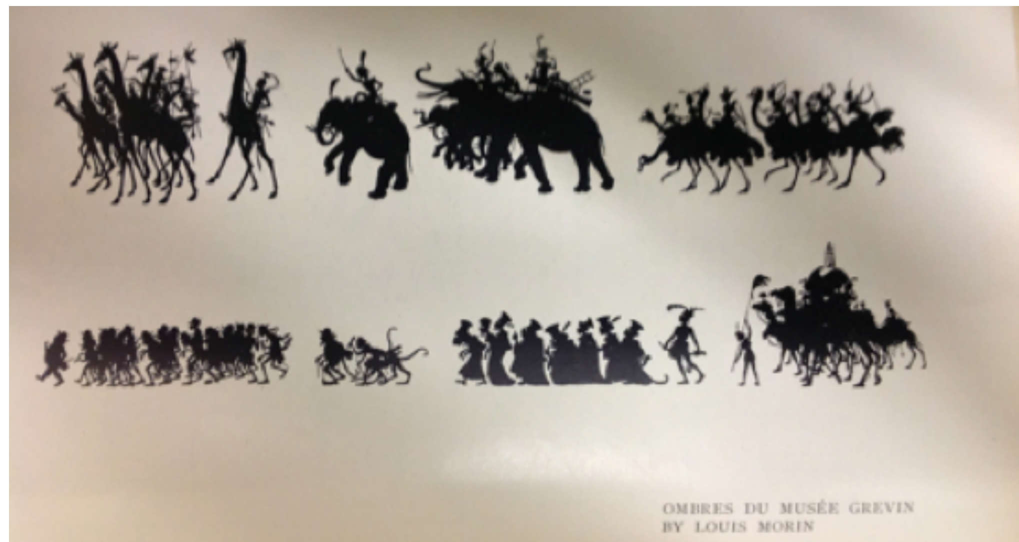

Figure 4-7: Louis Morin. *Ombres du Musée Grevin.* From *The Studio* (1900)

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[40] Anne-Birgitte Fonsmark, "*Représentant de Commerce* in Copenhagen," in *Gauguin and Impressionism* by Richard R. and Anne-Birgitte Fonsmark (New Haven: Yale University Press in association with Forth Worth: Kimbell Art Museum, 2005), 235.

Ancher's "primitivist" canvases *Communion at Skagen Church* and *A Field Sermon* employed archaic silhouettes, chalky palette as well as the collage-like composition. The forms reference techniques associated with local folk art and the Italian quattrocento. Revivification of these sources was also primitivist, and as Colin Rhodes observes, reflected artistic interest in attempting to access "fundamental modes of thinking and seeing" of the subjects. [41] Turning back to earlier styles went counter to current academic conventions, and encouraged instinct and freedom of execution.

In depicting Inner Mission women, Ancher melded together figures shown in strong profile, a modernist compositional tool that was visually related to folk art. In her *Communion at Skagen Church* Ancher blended the garments of the praying group on the right, creating the sense of undifferentiated color characteristic of silhouette or shadow images. This traditional vernacular practice experienced a revival at the end of the

Figure 4-8: Honorable Mention and First Prize in *The Studio,* (1904).

[41] Colin Rhodes, *Primitivsim and Modern Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 7-8.

nineteenth century. For instance, Danish artist Kirsten Wiwel (1885-1961) created both simple and complex silhouettes of the Anchers, Krøyers and others in the Skagen colony, which currently hang in museums there. As evident in issues of *The Studio,* the format increased in international popularity at the beginning of the twentieth century. In Louis Morin's "Ombres du Musée Grevin," (Fig. 4-7) the black against white reduced a procession of African animals, camels, elephants, monkeys and ostriches, to a stereotype. The African people, bearing exotic spears and wearing distinctive headdresses, become more primitive through the visual fusion with wild animals.[42]

During the 1900s *The Studio* also featured prize competitions in silhouette images (Fig. 4-8). In 1904 winning entries boast broad, flat swathes of undifferentiated black, which push back against the forward thrust of the whites of the page. The requirements of the medium necessitated clean, distinctive and legible contours. In these images, the shape of hats or coiffure give the necessary clues in order to identify the subject. Despite

Figure 4-9: Thorvald Bindesbøll. Circular Plate (1901).

[42] "Ombres du Musée Grevin by Louis Morin." *The Studio,* vol. 19 (1900), 248.

its connection to folk traditions, the contrast between void and solid also appeared exceedingly modern. The formal simplification and rhythmic alteration of black and white showed similarities to the *Skønvirke* (Danish Art Nouveau) graphic design and ceramic glazing patterns of Thorvald Bindesbøll (Fig. 4-9) discussed further in Chapter Five. Ancher's use of these strong contours in *A Field Sermon* and *Communion in Skagen Church* aligned with developments in the Danish avant-garde, and its embrace of vernacular forms, Classical prototypes and proto-Renaissance Italian art.

Painting Primitivism

Ancher's position in the Danish art world and her intimacy with perceived local leaders of the Inner Mission in Skagen linked her to primitivist ideas in art and in religion. Both manifestations of primitivism thwarted the model of linear temporal historical development and attempted to locate a distant past within the present moment. These tendencies in art and religion sought withdrawal from the relentless call for material progress, immunity from evolutionary "progress," and adhered to an ideal of apparently purer past.[43]

Anna Ancher used appropriately primitivist means in depicting the religious fundamentalism of the Inner Mission, a religious sect concentrated on Denmark's Jutland Peninsula after 1880. Ancher's widowed mother and two unmarried sisters took seriously their duties as Christian servants and prepared food for the poor in the hotel kitchen. In addition to acts of charity, adherents subscribed to a literal interpretation of the Bible,

[43] Colin Rhodes, *Primitivsim and Modern Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 1-8.

strict Sabbath observances, and rejected entertainments such as dance and theater. They believed themselves to be the "Children of God" as opposed to those who had not converted, or "Children of the Earth."[44] Women comprised the majority of believers. The movement was extremely strong in Skagen. The town built a new meetinghouse in 1885, and expanded with new buildings by 1896. Approximately one third of Skagen's population was members around 1900.[45]

There was a second rival stream of Danish rural pietist revival in the 1800s, the Grundtvigians. They responded differently to contemporary events and church polity. Both movements showed an aversion to individualism, urbanization and secularization, which were seen as foreign evils that had infiltrated the Danish capital. The most radical and devout blamed the corruption of the lower classes on the new industrial magnates who profited from increase in international consumption of alcohol and tobacco. Grundtvigians had a larger popular basis and greater recognition. They worked for radical reorganization of the Danish church and revolutionary institutional, political, economic and social reforms consistent with their theology. This sect sought collective improvements including agricultural cooperation, the creation of the still-important folk schools and the study of history and folklore. Nearly every Dane came to assimilate his

[44] Catalogue entry in *Northern Light: Realism and Symbolism in Scandinavian Painting, 1880-1910* by Kirk Varnedoe (New York: Brooklyn Museum, 1982), 84.

[45] Mette Bøgh. Jensen, "Religious Life," in *I am Anna: A Homage to Anna Ancher,* ed. Mette Bøgh Jensen, trans. Walton Glyn Jones (Skagen: Skagens Museum, 2009), 130, exh. cat.

core values through the integral body of Grundtvigian song and verse in the national educational curriculum.[46]

Ancher's painting *A Field Sermon* emphasized the sense of separation that distinguished Inner Mission from Grundtvigian pietism and embraced a form of religious primitivism predicated on social distinctiveness and countercultural position. The faithful rigidly distinguished who was on the "inside" from who was on the "outside" as an essential task.[47] They were urged to disassociate from those who lived sinful lives, as defined by the tenets and practices of the early Christian church.[48] Inner Mission, therefore, shared the artistic preoccupation with identifying and characterizing the other. Furthermore, the phenomenon of primitivism in culture presumes inherent and systemic inequalities. The "more advanced" cultural arbiter passes judgment on "the backward," even if that judgment is an affirmation. For instance, Rhodes observes that in colonialism "'the savage' was invariably the dominated partner."[49] The struggle at the turn of the century of "the backward," oppressed or marginalized ethnic groups such as Bretons, Celts or Skageners, to preserve their culture and status resonated with the "more

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[46] For information on the Grundtvig sect of pietism see especially Buckser, "Tradition, Power, and Allegory."

[47] Richard T. Hughes, "Preface: The Meaning of the Restoration Vision." In *The Primitive Church in the Modern World,* ed. Richard T. Hughes (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1995), xiii. Martin Marty, "Introduction: Primitivism and Modernization: Assessing the Relationship," in *The Primitive Church in the Modern World,* ed. Richard T. Hughes (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 6.

[48] Hughes, "Preface: The Meaning of the Restoration Vision," xiii. Hughes points out that genuine primitivists differ from modern fundamentalists because of their lack of interest in the political apparatus of the modern world. "Instead, they seek mainly to conform their lives and their religious organizations to the norms of the first age, regardless of the values and interests of the modern world and its politics."

[49] Colin Rhodes, *Primitivsim and Modern Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 7.

advanced" cosmopolitan painters and worldly tourists. In a remarkable inversion, however, the Inner Mission, the "primitives," reversed the paradigm of subordination described by Rhodes, and assumed authority and pronounced judgment on Western society by segregating themselves as the "Holy."[50]

The Racial Other in *A Field Sermon*

American audiences at the "A World Apart: Anna Ancher and the Skagen Art Colony" 2013 show in Washington, D.C. repeatedly brought to curatorial attention the semblance of racial difference in several of Ancher's paintings, most frequently when

Figure 4-10: Anna Ancher. *A Field Sermon* (1903), detail

looking at *A Field Sermon*.[51] Many of the people depicted in Ancher's painting have a relatively dark complexion, hair and features that suggest a Mediterranean or Middle

[50] Buckser,"Tradition, Power, and Allegory," 261.

[51] E-mail from Virginia Treanor, April 3, 2013. Treanor is the Associate Curator of the National Museum of Women in the Arts that hosted the exhibition. She contacted me about the evidence of racial difference in this painting as a sketch of the vaccination clinic. Audiences at a seminar of twenty people in the fall of 2014 agreed that this woman looks to be of mixed Afro-European descent.

Eastern ethnicity. Furthermore, in moving from the pastel compositional preparatory sketch to the finished oil painting, Ancher altered the facial features of the woman in the light pink top. (See details in Figure 4-10 and 4-11). While the skin tone is not markedly different than that of her neighbors, her face shape is rounder, the brow exaggerated and the nose broadened. The subject has a fuller mouth and her coiffure shifts from having the appearance of straight hair pulled into a bun, to a more textured, curled close cut. Additionally, the bosom of the finished subject appears fuller and heavier. These alterations to her appearance give her the physical attributes that were associated with women of African descent. In combination with the subject's tan skin and blond hair, the woman appears to be a mulatto. The evidence is slight and some of the examples surely can be attributed to Ancher's method of painting, from blocking colors with darkest tones working toward light. Nonetheless, on closer examination, viewers from the United States may well be appropriately sensitive to what seems to be racial inflections in the depictions of Ancher's subjects. The painter showed sensitivity to the contextual developments relating to gender and class, but as Griselda Pollock appropriately challenged, an artist's "Eurocentric [and] ethnocentric" production in a country that was "not only bourgeois but [one of the] imperialist, colonizing nations" must also be considered by scholars.[52] Furthermore, Gauguin's Tahitian paintings *Parahi te Marae* and *Manao Tupapau* exhibited in 1893 and more recent Polynesian works sent to his wife to broker or store depicted race and gender as central to his modernist yet primitivist image-making.

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[52] Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 1988), 15.

Historian Christina Petterson identifies reluctance by Danish scholars to address the sociopolitical structural manifestations of racism in the nation's development. They gloss over differences in skin color as a reference to ethnic distinctions rather than race.[53] However, from the eighteenth century through the early twentieth century, the Danes joined other European artists and illustrators in distinguishing people of African descent through focus on skin color, curly hair, "apelike nose and swollen lips."[54] Denmark's

Figure 4-11: Anna Ancher. Preparatory sketch for *A Field Sermon* (c. 1902), detail

authors, politicians, cartoonists and scientists used racial language to differentiate people of northern European ancestry from Africans, but also from Danish colonies. Beginning with a 1782 proclamation regarding Greenland, Denmark officially designated a racial

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[53] Christina Petterson, "Colonialism, Racism, and Exceptionalism," in *Whiteness and Postcolonialism in the Nordic Region: Exceptionalism, Migrant Others and National Identity,* ed. Kristín Loftsdóttir and Lars Jensen. Studies in Migration and Diaspora (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2012), 31.

[54] David Bindman, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Karen C. C. Dalton and Hugh Honour, *The Image of the Black in Western Art,* Vol. IV, Part 1: *From the American Revolution to World War I: Slaves and Liberators* (1989), new ed. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, in collaboration with the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research ; [Houston Tex.] : Menil Collection, 2010), 17.

category for colonized people who had a Danish parent and those who did not, and thereafter regulated marriage and reproduction.[55] Racial language inflected descriptions by the Skagen colonizers from Copenhagen and Christiania of the fishermen, the people native to Skagen. Holger Drachmann and Christian Krohg described the fishermen as a "race," with distinct physical characteristics like toughness. Krohg identified the Skagen population as a unique "race … which differs much in character and appearance from the other Danish."[56]

Imperialism and Ethnography and Image-Making in Denmark

Imperialist propaganda, commercial advertisements and ethnography contributed an increasing number of images, flooding visual culture with pictorial evidence of the other as racially different from the dominant industrialized elite. Goldwater outlined the development of ethnographic museums in relation to Darwin and to imperialism. He noted that while artists may have used these museums as sources, they importantly also functioned to generate market taste for exports well before World War I.[57] Some travel and early anthropologic literature described horrific, yet exotic practices of indigenous peoples. In 1888, van Gogh referenced such a book on the Marquesas Islands in one of

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[55] Petterson, "Colonialism, Racism, and Exceptionalism," 32-3.

[56] "Racen her er god, sej, umiddelbar—endnu." Holger Drachmann, "Skagen" in *Danmark I Skildringer og Billeder af danske Forfattere og* Kunstnere, vol. 1. ed. M. Galschiøt (1887), p. 10; "Skagboerne er en rase for seg, som adskiller seg meget I vesen og utseende fra de øvrige danske." Christian Krohg, "Skagen" (1894), reprint in *Kampen for tilværelsen,* ed. Holger Koefoed and Oscar Thue (Oslo, 1989), p. 154. 1894. Both authors quoted in Mette Bøgh Jensen, *At male sit privatliv: Skagensmalernes selviscenesættelse* (Skagen: Skagens Museum, 2005), 115.

[57] Robert Goldwater, *Primitivism in Modern Art,* (1938). Vintage Books Revised Edition. (New York: Random House, 1967), 9.

the letters to Bernard, translated and published in the international news section of *Politiken* on May 22, 1893. While van Gogh acknowledged reported evidence of cannibalism as "barbarian," he reserved harsher terms for the "Christian Whites" who eradicated indigenous tribes and destroyed the islands. Van Gogh lamented the disappearance of "the tattooed races, Negroes, Indians" at the hands of the white man who contaminated the populations with alcohol, disease and sterility. In contrast he describes the "tattooed races" as "savages," who are "gentle and full of love."[58]

Pejorative representations of the racial other filtered into Skagen through popular reading material such as *The Studio.* H. Ling Roth's 1899 article "Primitive Art from Benin" also pointed to the practice of cannibalism and the exploitation of subject tribes to the court's desire for "human sacrifices."[59] Roth's assessment was more common than that of van Gogh when the ethnologist generalized that "the negro" was more apt than "the European" to lapse into violent rivalries.[60] Roth's ostensibly objective study described barbaric evidence such as "carved tusks which were found supported on equally curious cast iron and brass human heads," smeared with residual "congealed human and animal blood" and "grotesque figures." At the same time, Roth also extolled the virtues of elegant carved decoration from Benin, offering it as evidence of stable rule while trying to ascertain the exact ceremonial use of these objects. There are no fewer than twenty visuals exploring the artifacts from the Benin court, ranging from detailed

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[58] "Breve fra Vincent van Gogh," excerpts transl. Johannes Jørgensen. Original French text available at http://vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/let612/letter.html.

[59] H. Ling Roth, "Primitive Art from Benin," *The Studio,* Vol 15 (1899), 180.

[60] H. Ling Roth, "Primitive Art from Benin," *The Studio,* Vol 15 (1899), 180.

illustrations of the tusks gained made in situ to photographs of statues and jewelry from private and public collections. In the article, a photograph from the British Museum of an iron head reinforces the conventional physical attributes assigned to blacks in the period, emphasizing the cropped hair in stylized bands, the wide nose, and full lips. The visual is not referenced or explained.[61]

Ethnographic representations during the period offered visual evidence of racial difference. The French government financed Gauguin's 1891departure for Tahiti so that he could produce distinctive images of the "country's customs and landscapes."[62] By 1889, European and American audiences purchased admission to world fairs, travelling shows and "human zoos" where they could see not only artifacts, but also whole groups of African and Oceanic people on display. At Tivoli in Copenhagen, a few blocks from the Ancher's apartment, industrialist Herman Lassen "staged a small show of five voluptuous odalisques draped over many-coloured and patterned carpets, pillows and cushions, and guarded by a fez-clad eunuch."[63] In this type of exhibition "the other" was considered exotic, erotic and marketable. In addition to this pavilion, between 1878 and 1903 Tivoli also featured "ethnic" or "folk caravans," putting on display Nubians, Bedouins, Mahdi warriors, a Chinese village and sixty-five people from Malabar. Promoters had elaborate sets and staged processions for the viewers. However, as Martin Zanger reports:

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[61] H. Ling Roth, "Primitive Art from Benin," *The Studio,* Vol 15 (1899), 180.

[62] Bindman, Gates, Dalton and Honour, *The Image of the Black in Western Art,* 230.

[63] Martin Zerlang,"Orientalism and Modernity: Tivoli in Copenhagen." *Nineteenth-Century Contexts: An Interdisciplinary Journal,* Vol 20, no. 1 (1997), 95, DOI: 10.1080/08905499708583441.

> An article in *Politiken* noticed a certain immoral theme in these shows—'whenever Bedouins or Negroes appear in the landscape, a number of young girls are unfaithful to their domestic ideals and abandon themselves enthusiastically to the unknown'—but in spite or because of this the caravans were expected with impatience every year. The displays therefore promoted an image of women of African or Arab descent as licentious; this presentation was reinforced with "elaborate and eye-catching posters" that employed "erotic motifs" employing "alluring female slaves."[64]

The Danes, like other Europeans, perceived women of different races as more promiscuous.

The Racial Other and the Danish Virgin Islands

The figure in Ancher's *A Field Sermon* underwent a transformation making markings of race more evident, at precisely the period of intense Danish debate over the governance of the Virgin Islands. A significant element in the discussions had to do with race. The Danish Virgin Islands appear in the political cartoons of Alfred Schmidt (1858-1938) as childlike simians. Schmidt caricatured the little monkeys happily celebrating the

Figure 4-12: Alfred Schmidt. Caricature of the Danish Virgin Islands Referendum Result (1902)

[64] Zerlang,"Orientalism and Modernity: Tivoli in Copenhagen,"103 and footnote 30, page 108.

referendum outcome that kept the Virgin Islands under Danish control, waving flags in 1902 (Fig. 4-12) and then naively following the conniving Woodrow Wilson, dressed as Uncle Sam, after the United States purchased the islands in 1917 (Fig. 4-13). Schmidt depicted the islands as monkeys, using the same features with which he depicted Africans. In this he drew from the discourse of Social Darwinism. Social Darwinist theories of evolution in the early twentieth century held that people of African descent were less evolved and more like the apes from which they descended. Schmidt employed a limited visual vocabulary for Negroes, their faces dominated by a simian nose and lips; their limbs are dangling, undeveloped appendages. The cartoonist infantilized the primates standing for the Virgin Islands in alignment with stereotypical depictions in the Danish press, which represented Negroes from the West Indies with the features, behavior and common sense of unevolved species. *Politiken's* columnist on May 10, 1902 described "The Blacks" as mistaking an American naval exercise in the Virgin Islands for an earthquake, and in their fright, running for protection to the Danish colonial governor who was calmly sipping his afternoon coffee. News reports generalized the difference between indigenous populations of the Virgin Islands and the Danish colonizers in terms of color, "De sorte" (the blacks) in opposition to "De hvide" (the whites). Although by the turn of the twentieth century, some Europeans more widely challenged theories of racial hegemony, colonialist propaganda discouraged any evidence of miscegenation. Works of art and other forms of visual culture from the period rarely reference families or individuals with mixed parentage.[65]

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[65] Honour publishes an exception, Cornelis Johannes 'Kees' Maks. *Familiegroep,* c. 1905. He

There is evidence of similar Danish prejudice against Greenlanders, who in popular and official culture were represented as “mentally inferior and savage, and

Figure 4-13: Alfred Schmidt. Cover illustration for *Klods-Hans* (January 1918)

blissfully unaware of the state of their own depravity and misery.”[66] Beginning in the eighteenth century, “Greenlanders compared themselves to blacks, internalizing an established hierarchy of ugliness where black people took a lesser place than Greenlanders, with whiteness at the pinnacle of aesthetic pleasure.”[67]

Ancher seemed to emphasize the lowly condition of the woman in the rose outfit in *A Field Sermon* rather than the childlike qualities in Schmidt’s cartoon or the *Politiken.* Possibly Ancher forged a connection between the demeaned Islanders and the rural poor

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identifies as extremely unusual the combination of “the accouterments of a middle class home” with one black parent and one white parent. Bindman, Gates, Dalton and Honour, *The Image of the Black in Western Art: From the American Revolution to World War I: Slaves and Liberators,* 220.

[66] Petterson, “Colonialism, Racism, and Exceptionalism,” 35.

[67] Christina Petterson, “Colonialism, Racism, and Exceptionalism,” in *Whiteness and Postcolonialism in the Nordic Region: Exceptionalism, Migrant Others and National Identity,* ed. Kristín Loftsdóttir and Lars Jensen. Studies in Migration and Diaspora (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2012), 35-6.

served by the Inner Mission. Ancher strengthened the sense of “other” through distinct facial features, dress, head covering and position. She is one of only two women in light colored clothing and one of three without a scarf or hat. She sits at a distance from the inner circle listening to the preacher, embraced by the arm of a young woman to her right. Only one other figure seems further removed from the pious faithful, and in the image this woman is isolated in the back like an outcast. The mulatto resemblance signified the most exploited and lowest rank of Danish society. Her degradation furthermore linked her to the landless laborers in rural Denmark. A comparison between Jutland agricultural workers and black residents of the West Indies filtered into at least some of the debate over the West Indies between 1898 and 1902. The most radical and socialist artists and authors, even though they did not generate an “explicit iconography of protest,” found a parallel between the exploitation of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie in European cities with the abuse of colonial populations, especially in Africa.[68]

Ancher’s painting of the Inner Mission also could be understood to use race to reiterate the marginalization and doctrinal separation of the Inner Mission membership, as well as their quest to serve and to convert the downtrodden. Gender compounded the figure’s lowly status, based on the cultural equivalence of women from other races and promiscuity. Significantly for a painting of the Inner Mission, the Danish government and state church leadership complained about the morality of Caribbean women. The Church fretted over a surge in the numbers of illegitimate children on the Islands, in part due to

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[68] Bindman, Gates, Dalton and Honour, *The Image of the Black in Western Art: From the American Revolution to World War I: Slaves and Liberators,* 263.

its willingness to baptize them, unlike Moravians and other denominations.[69] This statistic reinforced the stereotypical conflation of black women with sexual depravity and lasciviousness that had deep roots in European culture.[70]

Figure 4-14: Anna Ancher. *Harvesters* (1905)

Empowering Rural Labor

During this same first decade of 1900, in canvases such as *Harvesters* (1905, Fig. 4-14) Ancher employed the motif of a procession of farm hands led by a male whose silhouette and tool can be likened to a reaper. This group of images suggests that in

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[69] Karen Fog Olwig, "Women, 'Matrifocality' and Systems of Exchange: An Ethnohistorical Study of the Afro-American Family on St. John, Danish West Indies." *Ethnohistory,* Vol. 28, no. 1 (Winter, 1981), 68. Olwig notes that most Afro-Caribbeans belonged to the Moravian Church, however, the Lutheran Church's more lenient policy contributed to its distorted perceptions of West Indian behavior.

[70] See Stephen F. Eisenmann, "Modern Art and Life." In *Nineteenth Century Art: A Critical History* (1994) ed. Stephen F. Eisenman. 2nd Ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 2002) 287. A more in depth discussion can be found in, among other places, Beverly Guy-Shetfalls, "The Body Politic: Black Female Sexuality and the Nineteenth-Century Euro-American Imagination," in *Skin Deep, Spirit Strong: The Black Female Body in American Culture,* ed. Kimberly Wallace Saunders (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 13-35.

addition to displaying intimate awareness of the religious context of Denmark, like other avant-garde artists, Ancher additionally showed sensitivity to party politics, socialist rhetoric and rural labor issues in the country. Class issues exacerbated the vulnerability of Denmark's coalition government during these years. A new alliance joined urban radicals from the intelligentsia with smallholders and laborers. The resultant union excluded both middle-class farmers and diminished the political sway of the urban commercial center at Copenhagen.[71] In her paintings executed between 1900 and 1905, farm labor controls the Danish landscape, while both the market and the large commercial farms of the Jutland region are invisible.

Figure 4-15: Anna Ancher. *Harvest Time* (1901)

Ancher's art provides visual evidence of complex cultural, political and economic relations between Denmark's periphery in Skagen and the center in Copenhagen, which are further complicated by the modernist preoccupation with primitivism. In *Harvesters*,

[71] Gregory M. Luebbert, *Liberalism, Fascism, or Social Democracy: Social Classes and the Political Origins of Regimes in Interwar Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 138-9.

Ancher divided the picture plane into three unequal bands. A linear frieze of laborers en route to or from the day's work mediates the ripe rye field and broad luminous sky. The strong profiles, clear palette, coarse features and high horizon implicitly challenged international contemporaries who depicted peasants as either picturesque or as primitive. While deriving from observed terrain in Skagen environs, Ancher summarily rendered the characteristic spikes of the local rye plant, punctuating the canvas in rhythmic gestures of white and pale yellow. Sunlight pervades the finished canvases without consistent source or reference to a specific time of day. The profiled laborers carry hand

Figure 4-16: Anna Ancher. *Harvest Time,* sketch (1901/1905)

tools, scythes and rakes, emphasizing the traditional, timeless methods of rural farming. Their specific implements confirmed the painted subjects as strong, autonomous producers.

Ancher's series of harvester paintings increases attention to the arable land that dominates the canvas. Whereas in the 1901 *Harvest Time* (Fig. 4-15), she carried the gold of the field into the blue and white, highlighting the cloud forms with yellow tones and

producing an overall harmony, there is no blending of land and sky in the 1905 painting. At the same time, Ancher's palette became brighter and purer with each rendering. Each variation also progressively deepened the viewer's submersion into the grasses and subsequently removed a stabilizing sense of ground. The five laborers in the sketch (Fig. 4-16) have an uncanny translucence that makes them appear to float like ghosts. In that sketch, however, the colors overall are grayer and each band of the tripartite composition shows more tonal variation. Ancher also strengthened the contrast between sky and field. While in the 1901 version she tamed the ripe grasses with the intercession of a strip of cultivated green land, for the 1905 *Harvesters* she pulled in the vantage point. As a result, the field becomes an impenetrable barrier; despite such near distance the potential harvest seems to consume the legs of the three workers. Ancher also raised the man and women higher relative to the horizon in the final version, so that the scythe touches the top edge of the picture plane and the head of the rake extends beyond the perimeter of the canvas.

In the context of the politics of the Danish avant-garde, the *Harvesters* series raises questions about the valuation of Denmark's land and farms and the perception of peasants and agricultural laborers as subjects of art. Ancher's complex approach demonstrates her gravitation toward Symbolism and Symbolism as well as her independence as an artist. Consistent with other Danish Symbolists, Ancher's *Harvesters* series drew on proximity, observation and experience of daily life, but also strove to communicate the meaning that the artist assigned to the subjects. As examples of Symbolism, the paintings represent farming as healthy, with robust workers in brilliant

sunshine, among fertile fields. Ancher's light-infused golden landscape and the healthy laborers, furthermore, are in keeping with Symbolist affirmations of life, energy and sun.

Land or Sea: An Independent Place in Denmark

In Denmark, paintings by Slott-Møller and Ring aligned closely with Ancher's subjects of land and labor. Slott-Møller created a paean to the golden fields of Denmark, emphasizing place, whereas Ring focused on the worker as a hero of modern life. Slott-Møller's *A Danish Landscape* of 1891 (Fig. 4-17) celebrated Denmark's flora and terrain. Berman describes the work as a proclamation of his "new Symbolist orientation." Using a mix of materials and genres, "a field of wheat is turned into literal gold" and the painting "sacralizes the Danish landscape, its gilding operating at once as optical decoration, a sign of fertility, and a symbol of divinity."[72] Slott-Møller's handmade decorative frame functions to isolate and call attention to his stylized treatment of individual florets. The artifice of his inorganic materials, making a cast-iron relief and gilding the vegetation, forces attention to the land's abundance. Slott-Møller eliminated the human figure from the landscape, and only the labor of the artist and craftman is evident in the painting and its frame. Unlike Slott-Møller, Ancher generalized the grasses. Instead of gilding, her clear, brilliant blue sky highlights the covered heads of the workers and the fertile tips of the plants. Slott-Møller's tonal shifts converge at a narrow strip of woods, whereas Ancher denied a sense of depth, forcing the eye up to the workers in all versions rather than across to a distant vantage point.

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[72] Patricia G. Berman, *In Another Light: Danish Painting in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Vendome Press, 2007), 207.

Both Ancher and Slott-Møller drew on primitivist techniques in the fabrication of the image. Slott-Møller's use of materials paralleled the revival of handiwork popularized through Britain's Arts and Crafts movement; the frame is roughly hewn revealing the grain, with irregular joints and the decorative application of paint for finish. The material use inverts the paradigm of traditional framing, eschewing the gilding generally accorded for the display of a painting; instead, the artist substituted that metal for the expected oil pigments in order to illuminate the represented fields of Denmark. Ancher's primitivism derives from the formal silhouetted shapes rather than materials. She used a similarly reductive profile to indicate the figures as she had done with the women of the Inner Mission. She also rendered the tools of traditional agriculture with comparatively crisp contours and detail, which emphasized functionality. The size of the tools dwarfs the bearers, as the blade and the rake are close to the same length as the laborers' backs. In

Figure 4-17: Harald Slott-Møller. *A Danish Landscape* (1891)

contrast to the thick, sculptural application of pigment characteristic in most of her paintings, in this series, the paint layers are relatively thin, allowing the canvas to peek through at the edges and in the sky of the 1905 painting.

Anna Ancher's noticeable subject shift to harvesters and the focus on grain production seems a paradox given the importance of the sea to the town of Skagen. The fisherman and the beach were trademarks of the core members of the Skagen art colony including Michael Ancher and Peder Severin Krøyer. Why did she not paint fishermen like her husband? Where are the bourgeois spa guests and fashionable tourists who populate Krøyer's Skagen canvases? By the end of the century, Ancher's own family appeared in photographs dressed like the urban visitors who came to Skagen to enjoy the beach or for therapeutic bathing. The Brøndums prospered from Skagen's increasing popularity as a vacation destination and the inn underwent three expansions between 1894 and World War I. Friends like Ida Suhr left their impressively appointed Copenhagen apartments to spend much of the summer months in Skagen visiting the Brøndums and Anchers. The Danish royal family made regular visits to Skagen, called at the Anchers, and built a summer residence on the heath in 1914. Ancher's class background was closer to the tourists than to this series depicting rural laborers in and around Skagen. Nonetheless, socioeconomic tensions touched Ancher's immediate family as part of general shifts in Skagen and on the Jutland Peninsula.

In Denmark, Copenhagen functioned as the focal point of industrialization and modernity. Even in Scandinavia, Copenhagen was the only city whose scale and culture came anywhere near to Paris, Berlin or London. The capital derived its historic

importance from its centrality to a historic merchant kingdom and national military network. From the Renaissance through the time of Napoleon, the country's territories radiated around Copenhagen, unlike the city's present relative location at the far eastern border of national land. Kenneth Olwig queries, "What…is a large cosmopolitan city, with its grand foreign ministry, its world-scale shipping companies, its girth of warlike fortifications and docks with names recalling distant exotic ports, doing amid a pacific terrestrial sea of butter, bacon, barley, and beer?"[73] As a consequence of the geographic divide, occupation, power, language and mobility distinguished residents of Copenhagen from surrounding farmers. It is interesting that the core members of the Skagen colony, the group who participated in Krøyer's academy the summer of 1883, almost all came from Copenhagen, many had spent long periods in Paris, and few established Skagen as a home base. Their arrival in Skagen coincided with the international rise of tourism and greater ease of travel.

Unlike Anna Brøndum Ancher, the Skagen artists had stronger ties to the cityscape and industrialists of Copenhagen. Ancher's subject choice asserts independence from the Skagen Colony. Her relatively radical representations of the rural farming communities allied more closely with Symbolist Ring than with Skagen's most famous and successful painter Krøyer. While Ring painted the grueling labor of the farmer in the outdoors in his 1886 *Harvest* (Fig. 4-18), bourgeois factory owners commissioned Krøyer to paint *The Iron Foundry at Burmeister and Wain* (1885). The Skagen painter in this work depicted the labor and machines of capitalist manufacturing, although large-scale

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[73] Kenneth R. Olwig, "Danish Landscapes," in *Nordic Landscapes: Region and Belonging on the Northern Edge of Europe* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 5.

factories constituted a relatively minor proportion of the nation's development in comparison with shipping and trade.[74] The bourgeoisie later paid for tribute to their own success with a group portrait, *The Industrialists* (1903), intended for the new Østerbro electric power station.[75] Krøyer's patronage by Hirschsprung, his depiction of elite leisure on Skagen beach and his annual jaunts to Paris and other European cities demonstrate how fundamentally different Ancher's painting motifs in this period were from the acknowledged leader of Skagen's Art Academy of the 1880s and the Modern Breakthrough.

Ancher chose different painting subjects from the trademark paintings of the Skagen painters and therefore expressed difference. According to Olwig's geography, Danes with origins in Copenhagen such as the Skagen colonists, identified more closely with marine culture, like that of Skagen fisherman, than the agriculture on the canvases of Anna Ancher, paradoxically the only local Skagener.[76] Even Michael Ancher, who would also make a few small paintings of rye fields and farm laborers, came from a part of Denmark where the economy centered on fishing and fleets. Early in their relationship, Michael Ancher gave Anna an anchor-shaped brooch that can be seen in most photographs of her through the turn of the century. The large ornament pins his homonymic presence across her vocal chords. However, its mercantile associations are

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[74] Henry Nielsen and Birgitte Wistoft, "Painting Technological Progress: P. S. Krøyer's 'The Industrialists.'" *Technology and Culture*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (Jul., 1998), 415-17, http://muse.jhu.edu/ (accessed March 17, 2014).; Luebbert, *Liberalism, Fascism, or Social Democracy,* 60-1.

[75] Nielsen and Wistoft, "Painting Technological Progress,'" 415-17.

[76] Kenneth R. Olwig, "Danish Landscapes," in *Nordic Landscapes: Region and Belonging on the Northern Edge of Europe* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 4-5.

not manifested in her artistic expression. Outside of a few paintings in the early 1880s, she did not depict the fishermen or the sea.

In addition to the series of harvesters, many of Anna Ancher's representations of rural life show the preparation of fowl or the shearing of sheep. These activities are associated with farming rather than with seacoast industries. One has a stronger sense, therefore, of Ancher's matrilineal background from the farms of Jutland. Ane Møller Brøndum was the daughter of a local farmer and miller from northwest Jutland, who sold the family farm in 1850 and bought the property in Skagen.[77] Svanholm describes grandfather Møller as a de facto "political dictator" who had the power to decide who held seats on Skagen's city council.[78] Ane Møller's brother, the father of Martha Møller Johansen, also owned a good-sized farm until he was forced to sell it in 1874. Anna's own father, Erik Andersen Brøndum, on the other hand, came from a lower class, was a poor businessman, who after their hotel burned (also in 1874) required financial rescue by his wife's father. Svanholm reports that after the fire, Ane Brøndum assumed administration of the family business, as her husband's competency deteriorated.[79] The strong maternal connection to the land and the Møller family's dominant role in the relative prosperity of Anna Brøndum Ancher linked the artist to Denmark's agrarian Jutland rather than Copenhagen's maritime past and contributed to her development as an independent artist.

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[77] Lise Svanholm, *Malerne på Skagen* (Denmark: Gylendal, 2002), 21.

[78] Lise Svanholm, *Malerne på Skagen,* 219.

[79] Lise Svanholm, *Malerne på Skagen*, 220.

Figure 4-18. Laurits Andersen Ring. *Harvest* (1886)

Unlike Slott-Møller who focused on the land, Ring, another Danish Symbolist, focused on the human worker. In *Harvest,* Ring employed similar elements to Ancher's paintings two decades later: grain, high horizon, and reaper. However, her series abstracted and generalized the components. Ring's fields are more naturalistically rendered in color, but harsher in texture. Ancher's citron palette is less descriptive. Her paintings inverted the proportion and position of Ring's, presenting the figures at enough of a distance such that individual exertion is not as evident. Instead, through the common motions, the shared direction and the strong horizontal, Ancher established the group identity of laborers. Ring drew attention to the grueling physical exertion, as well as the impoverished condition of the worker. The corporeal demands of the labor are manifested

in the subject's attenuated arms and bent posture; a large gaping hole in the worn woven workshirt is very nearly the dead center of the painting.

P. N. Larsen explains the symbolism of Ring's *Harvest* relative to Denmark's conflicts between large farm owners and the subsistence laborers and smallholders in the 1880s. Although the painting was a portrait of Ring's brother, *Harvest* was also related to labor unrest at that time. In 1885, revolution threatened large landholders and recurring strikes plagued Copenhagen.[80] Larsen explains the symbolic importance of Ring's "agricultural laborer as a type" by comparing the Danish painting to Edvard Munch's *Workers on the Way Home* (1913-1914):

> As in Edvard Munch's later depictions of laborers returning home, spectators stand face to face with both a Symbolistic and insistent movement that clears and paves the way for the inexorable development. It is also, however, a depiction of the Reaper cutting down the stalks, inevitable death. The extremely high horizon ensures that the reaper does not extend into heaven; in keeping with Ring's atheist view of life he remains rooted in the earth.[81]

Larsen juxtaposes the potent image of the "reaper" against its life-affirming opposite by using the adjective "vitalistic" to describe the painting. The represented thresher became the reaper through the action of cutting stalks. As Larsen notes, the painter impressed on the viewer the physicality of the task, the engagement of muscles and the strain to the body. He also stressed the deprivation and poverty of the worker and brought the beholder to a much closer distance to the painted subject than Ancher. In contrast, Ancher elevated the workers upwards to the luminous horizon, in bright and clean clothing, an apparent beacon of health and honest labor.

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[80] Peter Nørgaard Larsen, *L.A. Ring: On the Edge of the World.* Transl. Réné Lauritsen. ([Copenhagen]: Statens Museum for Kunst, 2006), 24-6.

[81] Larsen, *L.A. Ring: On the Edge of the World*, 26.

The two decades that separated Ring's *Harvest* (1886) and Ancher's *Harvesters* (1905) brought Denmark's peasants increasingly into the center of the cultural and political arenas. Ancher's *Harvester* series not only aligned with Danish avant-garde leftist political sympathies for farmworkers, but was also tinged with the concurrent modernist arrière-garde push back against the intrusions of industrialization and urbanization.This shift in Ancher's art paralleled in time and location the emergence of the Radical Left. Farm labor played a decisive role in Denmark's complex party system during the years that Ancher painted harvest paintings. While the majority Venstre [Left] Party controlled the Folketing, a gap widened between smallholders living at below subsistence and the agrarian middle class. The wealthier farmers blocked government efforts to subsidize land purchase and also endorsed a new tax code punitive to subsistence farmers.[82] Additionally, rural laborers waged four crippling strikes in 1903.[83] By 1905, when Ancher painted the second *Harvesters,* the poor tenant farmers had joined with landless laborers and the radical middle class to form still another party, the Radical Venstre [Radical Left] party.[84] The Radical Left formed as a splinter group expelled from the larger Left Party the same year. It established its headquarters in Funen, a short distance from southern Jutland. One of the Radical Left's key platforms was advocacy for greater rights for tenant farmers, the type of laborers depicted in *Harvesters*. Over the

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[82] Luebbert, *Liberalism, Fascism, or Social Democracy*, 137.

[83] Statens Statistiske Bureau [Denmark]. *Statistisk Aarbog: 9de Aargang 1904* (København: H. H. Thiels, 1904), 123. PDF e-book.

[84] Luebbert, *Liberalism, Fascism, or Social Democracy*, 137.

next few years, the party rapidly grew so that by 1909 its members secured the positions of prime minister and finance minister, the latter held by none other than Edvard Brandes.

Ancher's attention to the folk had cultural associations as well as political resonance. Her paintings shared in a regional tendency centered in Funen, also the site of the headquarters of the Radical Left. The art of "Fynboerne (Funen painters)" after the 1880s showcased provincial and peasant subjects as a vital element of contemporary life in Denmark. Many artists located in Denmark's agricultural regions of Funen and Jutland encouraged a revitalization of local crafts, promoted folk song and compiled anthologies of traditional stories. Barbara Miller Lane argues that on a regional scale, Scandinavian architects turned to the vernacular for inspiration as an expression of a romantic, anti-authoritarian "worker-peasant" model for future social organization, based on a cultural "egalitarian ideal of the family" and resonating with the region's Protestant heritage.[85] In Sweden, according to Facos, Carl Larsson joined a cooperative effort between National Romantics and Social Democrats to encourage the revitalization of peasant culture. Larsson's artistic activism came out of a radical desire "to realize a totalizing program of individual freedom, health and happiness; social equality and harmony; symbiosis with nature, and preservation of indigenous culture."[86]

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[85] Barbara Miller Lane, *National Romanticism and Modern Architecture in Germany and the Scandinavian Countries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 6-7.

[86] Michelle Facos, "The Ideal Swedish Home: Carl Larsson's Lilla Hyttnäs," in *Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture*, ed. Christopher Reed (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1996), 90.

The representation of the peasant in modern painting created a mild uproar in the Danish art world at the beginning of the twentieth century. At the center of the controversy were the Anchers' friend, north Jutland author Johannes V. Jensen, along with the Funen painters. Jensen's stories were set in the region encompassing the bordering regions of southern Jutland and western Funen and feature healthy rural

Figure 4-19: Peter Hansen. *A Ploughman Turning* (c. 1900)

peasants who grapple with universal issues of faith, love and loss.The Funen Painters, which included Fritz Syberg (1862-1939) and Peter Hansen (1868-1928), like Ancher represented local subjects, yet exhibited with modernist groups such as Den Frie and after 1915 with the even more radical splinter group, Grønnigen. Hansen's subjects in the early twentieth century parallel Ancher's outdoor scenes of rural labor, children playing, and the regional landscape. *Ploughman Turning* (c. 1900, Fig. 4-19) exemplifies Hansen's peasant paintings. His use of intense brilliant white for the trousers and strong contrast between light and shadow draw attention to the forceful thrust of the laborer's legs. At

the same time, Hansen's exaggerations of the torso's torque focus the eye on the body's motion as the man maneuvers the manual plow. Due to Hansen's attention to physical movement and outdoor life, many historians consider him along with the other Funen Painters to be part of Symbolism. However, Hansen's goal of capturing the particular conditions of light at different times of day also looked back to the French Impressionists and his darker hues differed from the clarity of Ancher's *Harvesters*. [87] Her more restricted palette and luminous contrasting colors have little resemblance to the gradations of purple to brown in the sky, houses and shadows on the soil in *A Ploughman Turning*. Ancher's use of color resulted in simplified forms instead of replicating the exact time of day.

Some urban Symbolists such as Slott-Møller disdained the Funen tendency to paint peasants and their labor. As the Hirschsprung museum acerbically observes: "Certain Copenhagen painters held their noses when they referred to the 'peasant painters.'"[88] Nonetheless, author Jensen, like his Funen contemporaries, offered the peasant as an antidote to foreign, unhealthy influences coming from Paris. The implicit but unresolvable binary split motifs into rural and natural as opposed to urban or decadent. In his 1944 autobiographical statement on the occasion of winning the Nobel prize for literature, Jensen specifically contrasted his own poetry to Charles Baudelaire's decadence: "The essence of my literary work is to be found in my collection of poems,

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[87] Susan Thestrup Truelsen, "Faaborg Museum and the Funen Vitalists," in *Spirit of Vitalism,* ed. Hvidberg-Hansen and Oelsner, 233.

[88] Den Hirschsprungske Samling, "Foråret" http://hirschsprung.dk/Image.aspx?id=16andcol=5 accessed 12 December 2013.

which may be regarded as a reaction against the fastidious style of the day bearing Baudelaire's poisonous hall-mark. My poems represented a turn to simple style and sound subject matter."[89] Jensen claimed Baudelaire's citified aesthetics had brought deleterious effects to Danish culture. In contrast, during his lifetime, Jensen wrote about biology, anthropology and evolution, and stories in which the small farmers play a more integrated role than the alienated city dweller. These essays, stories and poems drew a growing readership in northern Europe and English-speaking countries. Jensen's assessment of the essential divide in Denmark was shared by the urban authors he disdained. The literary Symbolists associated with Jørgensen did not have any sympathy for Jensen. Furthermore, they did not believe the "peasant painters" should be recognized as part of the Danish avant-garde. As early as *Taarnet's* first issue, contributor Simon Koch panned *Spring* (1893, Fig. 4-20) by the Funen painter Syberg as well as other farming landscapes at an October exhibition of 1893.

Figure 4-20: Fritz Syberg, *Spring* (1893)

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[89] "Johannes V. Jensen – Biographical," *Nobelprize.org,* Nobel Media AB 2013, <http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1944/jensen-bio.html> accessed 12 Dec. 2013.

There were financial consequences for artists because of this turmoil. Discontented artists, who affiliated with foreign city centers or possibly identified as part of artistic bohemia, ostensibly found diminished opportunities for monetary rewards at home. Accusations mounted against even the Academy for discriminating against edgy urban subjects and only subsidizing painters who represented the Danish peasant.[90] Artists' claims that the Kunstforeningen and the Academy had exercised prejudicial favor for paintings depicting peasant subjects peaked in 1907. The apex of this dissent coincided exactly with the Radical Left's rapid rise to power and concurrent to Ancher's representation of peasant subjects.[91]

The division in the Danish avant-garde can also be seen as another manifestation of national tension between the urban and industrial "head city" or "capital" and its provincial appendages, tipping in favor of the countryside. Ancher, Jensen, Ring and Syberg represented its new rural mainstream, while Koch and Jørgensen constituted part of what was now an urban minority. Michael Ancher and the pioneers of the Skagen Art Colony remained on the fringes of such developments. Anna Ancher, on the other hand, experimented with paintings that showed sensitivity to the period's cultural, social and political issues. Although a causal connection cannot be verified, Ancher's paintings of rural Inner Mission and farm laborers correlate to a period of great honor for the artist. In 1903 and 1904 she received the prestigious honor of two consecutive Eckersberg medals for excellence in the fine arts from the Royal Academy, the maximum then allowed for

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[90] Flemming Friborg, *Det gode selskab: Kunstforeningens historier 1825-2000* (Denmark: Gyldendal, 2000), 92-5.

[91] Friborg, *Det gode selskab: Kunstforeningens historier 1825-2000*, 95.

any individual. Although during the 1890s more Danish avant-garde painters expressed their strong connection with Parisian and then Berlin's urban culture, within two decades, the balance of power in Denmark seemed to shift to the rural subjects depicted by Ancher.

The pivotal role of farmers in Danish politics and economics increased regional differences between Ancher's locale and cosmopolitan cities. Like her paintings of the Inner Mission, Ancher's representations of the most common, subsistence laborers in the harvest series are somewhat problematic. There is little individual differentiation among the figures. The peasants essentialize a type distinguished by clothing and bearing. Although less judgmental than Gauguin's pronouncement on the "freakish helmets" of the Breton women, simple head coverings of scarf or straw hat and practical clothing signify the subject. However, unlike the images of the Inner Mission, Ancher's paintings of poor peasants did not portray authentic concerns based on intimate knowledge of actual difficulties. While the images of religious practices in Skagen served as one form of rejoinder to outsider intrusions into local systems, Ancher's pictures of rural labor subtly demonstrated her sympathy with an important Jutland political cause, while safely avoiding overt assertion of radical leanings. She did not jeopardize professional recognition by the Academy or patronage from the bourgeoisie with radical representations that advocated for farm laborers.

Nonetheless, Ancher rendered peasants in a clear palette, retained their coarse features and showed their movement high on the horizon, a handling that implicitly challenged artists like Gauguin. Furthermore, she confirmed the subjects as autonomous

producers, despite some evidence that the bourgeoisie from the commercial center may have felt vulnerable to the growing hostility and activism of local workers. Ancher's subjective and experimental rendering of regional subjects from the Jutland farms interwove both avant-garde modernism and its *arrière-garde* inverse.

CHAPTER 5

REFRAMING THE INTERIOR

Michael Ancher's 1902 portrait of his wife in reform dress (Fig. 1-16) located Anna Ancher within a specific discourse in the applied arts advocating simplicity and hygiene. The implicit imperative for designers of clothing, architecture and decorative objects alike was a healthy functional balance of space, light and cleanliness. Architecture historian Mark Wigley observes, "The discourse of modern architecture…literally occurs within that of clothing reform…The reformists had long argued for the simple cut, the pure line, and the reduction of ornament as part of the

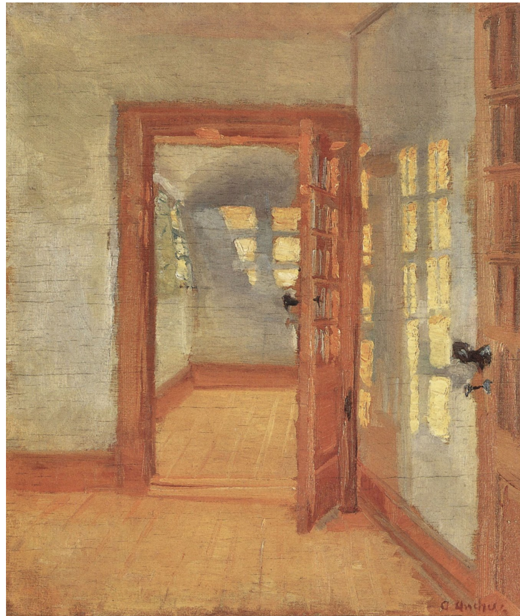

Figure 5-1: Anna Ancher. *Interior, Brøndum's Annex* (c. 1916-17)

general argument about function."[1] More austere aesthetics trended away from the cluttered interiors, egocentric individualism and excessive ornamentation pejoratively associated with accelerated industrialization during the Gilded Age and the lack of discernment in the new bourgeoisie. In keeping with new ideas for design, Anna Ancher painted several representations of rooms that have no inhabitants and have been furthermore stripped of most decorative or signifying articles, furnishings or ornamentation. *Interior, Brøndum Annex* (c. 1916-17, Fig. 5-1), exemplifies her paintings of unoccupied interiors during the first decades of the twentieth century, which are among her most interesting, most modern and at the same time least contextualized works.

Figure 5-2: Anna Ancher. *Daphnesvej. A Lane in Skagen's East Town* (c. 1915)

Ancher's images also operated within a complex modernist shift in the valuation of private and gendered space in the home. Viewers, creators and users understood art, fashion and design as having a dynamic social and psychological function that related to

[1] Mark Wigley, "White-out: Fashioning the Modern [Part 2]." *Assemblage,* No. 22 (Dec. 1993), 27, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3171168.

shifting roles for women and socio-medical perceptions of factors contributing to good living. Modern architects aspired to design functional rooms, whose forms and surface matched or harmonized with the temperament and attitude of intended users. Additionally, increased emphasis on the "abstract interior" supplanted the importance of domestic rooms and furnishings as an urban "metaphor for bourgeois identity" by World War I.[2] Modernists opted for minimal decoration and strong planar surfaces. This shift can especially be found in the British Isles, in Germanic countries and regions, as well as in Scandinavia by 1920.

Ancher's application of color and pigment became more vigorous and expressive during the teens, evident in *Interior, Brøndum's Annex* and in the townscape, *A Lane in Skagen's East Town* (c. 1915, Fig. 5-2). Denmark's neutrality in World War I made it an

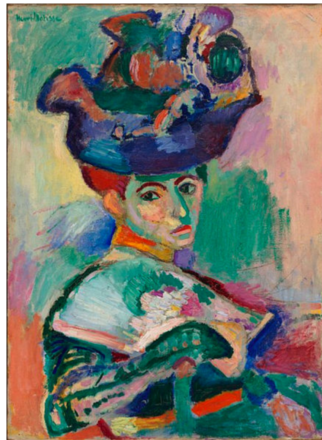

Figure 5-3: Henri Matisse. *Woman with a Hat* (1905)

[2] Susan Sidlauskas,"Psyche and Sympathy: Staging Interiority in the Early Modern Home," in *Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture*, ed. Christopher Reed (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1996): 65, 79-80.

important refuge and experimentation center in the arts, according to the essay "Danish Expressionism" by Per Stounbjerg and Jelsbak. Jelsbak and Stounbjerg argue that although of short duration, this late war period in Danish art pulled more from the formal properties of French Expressionism rather than the Germanic spiritual dimension of Wassily Kandinsky or William Worringer.[3] French Expressionists, including fauvist painters Henri Matisse and André Derain applied bright vivid, unmixed pigments and liberated color from any descriptive function (Fig. 5-3). Kandinsky and Worringer, on the other hand, aspired to more idealistic ends in their art. J. F. Willumsen's *Painter and His Family* incorporated some of the vivid coloration of the fauvist canvases (1912, Fig. 5-4). The clash of dominant red against the orange and the accents of the blues in the children's clothing stridently asserted color as the primary subject of the painting but also

Figure 5-4: J. F. Willumsen. *Painter and his Family* (1912)

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[3]Per Stounbjerg and Torben Jelsbak, "Danish Expressionism," in *A Cultural History of the Avant-Garde in the Nordic Countries 1900-1925,* ed. Hubert van den Berg, Irmeli Hautamäki, and Benedikt Hjartarson (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2012), 466-7.

generated what the Willumsen's museum describes as a "highly charged atmosphere."[4] The younger Edvard Weie (1879-1943) moved in a different direction, breaking down form into component planes of single brilliant colors in his *View over Wilders Plads, Christianshavn* (1906, Fig. 5-5). Ancher's attention to the painted surface, her coloration, and the geometric division of the pictorial compositions in her late works likewise suggest correlation with the shifting avant-garde attentions in Copenhagen at this time, but also her movement beyond Symbolism.

Figure 5-5: Edvard Weie. *View over Wilder's Plads, Copenhagen* (1906)

Although Stounbjerg and Jelsbak argue that metaphysical Expressionism played a minor role in Denmark, Ancher's late oeuvre also manifests psychological interiority within unoccupied spaces. Her images seem to be inflected by not only Germanic psychology and functionalism, but also the evolving British prescription for the ideal artist's home. Many of Ancher's paintings depicted her house and studio or her mother's rooms at the Brøndum Inn. As historians Peter Nørgaard Larsen and Guénola Stork have

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[4] "*The Painter and his Family*" (1912) website entry of The J. F. Willumsen Museum, http://www.jfwillumsensmuseum.dk/index.php?id=195andL=1 accessed 21 March 2014.

both discussed, the elimination of human signifiers created a void that relates Ancher to her contemporary Vilhelm Hammershøi. She clearly valued the home as an artistic space; however her aesthetic differs dramatically from the picturesque interiors popularized by Carl Larsson and quoted by P. S. Krøyer. The unfilled rooms she represented also complicate her position in relationship to the applied arts. A wide variety of venues encouraged the production by women of material goods to bedeck their homes. This Danish woman artist stripped the walls of her represented home of all such decoration. She also subverted gender roles in paintings of her house. Her stark personal spaces, like the plain fabric and style of the reform dress in Michael Ancher's portrait, intimate her absence from the normative domestic role. The increased abstraction in her paintings and the aesthetics of her studio intersect contemporary avant-garde, mostly masculine

Figure 5-6: Anna Ancher. *Interior with Clematis* (1913)

discourse about the psychological, hygienic and perceptual advantages of white, unadorned spaces and blank walls.

Painting Gendered Spaces

Anna Ancher did not exhibit a rebel's temperament. She was popular, affable and avoided entanglements in controversy. Although she joined the Kvindelige Kunstneres Samfund (Women Artist's Society) at its formation in 1916, she seems to have been reticent to get involved with protests and demonstrations. However, Ancher's professional life as a woman artist was nonetheless unconventional for her age and class. She had relatively few female peers as successful easel painters, and many sources challenged the appropriateness of this career. According to a 1900 article in *The Studio,* women artists should pursue a distinctly different mission than men, avoiding any elision of the distinct spheres that could produce "foolish" and deleterious results.[5] The safest course for women artists was a career in the decorative arts, especially those that beautified the home. Despite her reputation as easy-going, Ancher pursued a radically different path, which is evident in the arrangement of her home and her art.

Ancher's 1913 painting of her studio *Interior with Clematis* (Fig. 5-6) and the sketch *Evening Sunshine in the Artist's Studio in Markvej* (Fig. 5-7, after 1912) move gender to the forefront as an element of her practice through their representation of her own professional workspace. *Evening Sun in the Artist's Studio* transformed the interior through tactilely rendered brilliant orange light set against walls that have absorbed the violet hues of a dusk sky. Two canvases lean against the wall, exposing only the painting

[5] "The Lay Figure: Women as Artists." *The Studio,* Vol 20 (1900), p. 138.

back to the viewer. A third, again inverted, rests precariously on a small pedestal table. The artist defined her space through intense color, vivid light and unrevealed paintings. In the signed *Interior with Clematis*, furthermore, the modest proportions, austere furnishings, and the absence of painter's tools in the room obscure Ancher's celebrity as that year's recipient of Denmark's prestigious *Ingenio et Arti* award. She described her private workspace as clean and uncluttered, with plain walls framed by clear architectural elements. Although the room was brand new in the painting, Ancher does not seem to have subsequently added to its furnishings or accouterment, beyond hanging a few pictures and positioning her easel and brushes. Additionally, according to discourse of the period, the only feminine attributes of the room depicted in *Interior with Clematis* are the decorative tablecloth, chair cushion and flower vase.

In contrast, in her painted representations of their house interior, Michael emerges

Figure 5-7: Anna Ancher. *Evening Sun in the Artist's Studio at Markvej* (undated).

from Ancher's canvases as a successful, well-fed, bourgeois artist. He is also, however, bodily inserted into the areas of the home that were conventionally female spaces, at the table, in the sitting room and in a studio that doubly functioned as a central hall. In *Breakfast Before the Hunt* (1903, Fig. 5-8) Michael eagerly attacks the ample morning meal that includes fresh bread and a pot of tea. Nearby, his gear signals the imminent excursion, and the dog sits alert in anticipation of the hunt. The preparations are for male recreation. Although occasional photographs and paintings suggest that sometimes the female Skagen colonists joined hunting outings, it was generally a time of masculine bonding and often organized by Michael. Anna Ancher is notably absent from the morning meal, contrary to conventional expectations for the bourgeois woman depicted in *A Baptism* and *My Wife* in the 1880s. She has extricated herself from the scene, substituting in her place an empty chair pulled back from the table.

Ancher's detailed rendering of the table setting and the upholstery announce Michael's financial achievement as the provider of a comfortable home. Michael Ancher's recently gained prosperity is also evident in *The New Hunting Boots* (1903, Fig.

Figure 5-8: Anna Ancher. *Breakfast before the Hunt* (1903)

5-9), where he contentedly stretches out his stockinged feet across the big parlor rug. The gold chain of a pocket watch outlines the curves of his full, round belly. His new hunting boots stand at attention, their soft, supple leather gleaming. Finally, in Ancher's 1920 portrait of Michael in his spacious studio (Fig. 5-10), he appears with brushes in hand, while dressed in vest and coat as if to meet a wealthy client. Giant canvases and heavy antique furniture surround him. Ancher's hint of a painted seascape on the wall alludes to Michael's trademark paintings of fishermen. Her final version remarkably transformed a sketch of the same motif. In that rendering the figure sits cross-legged amidst a field of planes suggesting canvases, walls and doors and absolutely devoid of signifiers. The

Figure 5-9: Anna Ancher. *The New Hunting Boots* (1903)

abstracted planar surfaces, especially the painting back at the foreground, shield and protect the inmate.

Michael Ancher's mediating presence dominated the house museum located in what was the Ancher's former home in Skagen, as discussed in the introduction. Any omissions or substitutions by Anna Ancher in her paintings of the house serve as a

counterpoise to her husband's authoritative role in the decorative program. Although the yellow damask-covered empire mahogany sofa, the luncheon table and the direction of the light indicate the specific room in the house for *Breakfast Before the Hunt,* the canvas does not exactly replicate the room as it exists today. Ancher's cropping concealed her husband's defining decorative additions to the room. To the right of the couch, Michael had installed doors and mouldings salvaged from a local house on which he painted regional Skagen birds from his hunts. She also does not show the array of fifteen portraits of the Anchers' friends, all but two painted by Michael Ancher (Fig. 5-11). In their place, Ancher inserted her own signature in the form of representations of light animated across the wall's surface. The contemporary author Johannes V. Jensen had claimed that, "The paintings hung more or less in the same place 'when you saw them after an interval of years, always in the same order, an arrangement like in a museum.'"[6]

Figure 5-10: Anna Ancher. *Michael Ancher at his Easel* (between 1920 and 1929).

[6] Johannes V. Jensen quoted by Inge Mejer Antonsen in *Michael and Anna Ancher House,* transl. David Hohnen (Skagen: Helga Anchers Fond, 2010), 10.

Anna Ancher's replacement of paintings with sunlight on the wall problematizes her role in the stasis that Jensen proclaimed and challenges our acceptance of the house museum as a fixed memento of the couple's life in Skagen. The images suggest that the house may have changed along with its inhabitants as they continued to develop their personal and professional identities. At the same time, if we accept Jensen's assertion of permanence, the lack of the portraits in 1903 effectively reduces Michael Ancher's professional trace by increasing Anna Ancher's implied painted presence, as the stripped wall transforms into a canvas for her image of positive and negative light. The sensuous apprehension of sunlight recurs as a motif in Ancher's canvases after 1891 and suggests that she has

Figure 5-11: South Room in the Michael and Anna Ancher House,
Array of Portraits

replaced his decorative scheme with her own painted surfaces, her work rather than her husband's portraits or doors in the position of authority and visibility.

Anna Ancher depicted rooms in the family home in Skagen that vary according to who was associated with the represented space. For example, *Interior with Clematis* reduces her studio, her only private room in the house, to a table, flowers and a large window. By eliminating both expected objects and herself as occupant, Ancher erased its legibility whereas she included signifiers of both Michael Ancher's profession and social status. As creator of these images of the home, Ancher limited her own role to implied observer rather than subject. While Ancher signified Michael's bourgeois masculinity in the paintings showing him at breakfast, or in the evening, or dressed in the studio, she deleted most references to herself as his female counterpart, imperceptibly reversing gender roles. Like most middle class males in this period, Michael could traverse freely the boundaries separating the public arena from the private zones of the home.[7] Ancher's letters reference Michael's travels while she remained in Skagen; her own trips abroad were always in his company.[8] In these paintings, however, he is home and she is absent. Her refusal to define self in relationship to the home departed in practice from Scandinavian colleagues. For example, Norwegian Modern Breakthrough author Amalie Skram described feminine spaces with stifling details of shaded lamps, velvet sofas,

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[7] Suzanne Singletary, "*Le Chez-Soi:* Men 'At Home' in Impressionist Interiors," in *Impressionist Interiors* ed. Janet McLean (Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland, 2008), 30-51.

[8] Anna Ancher, *Breve fra Anna Ancher,* ed. Lise Svanholm (Denmark: Gyldendal, 2005), 99-102.

embellished screens, large stoves and lingering smells.[9] A critic in Copenhagen's *Dagbladet* described the claustrophobic world of women captured by the painter Carl Holsøe, "[He had] a good grasp of the Copenhagen parlor atmosphere in the peculiarly closed 'home' where wives and daughters could live a whole life without the least sense of the world outside."[10] The absence of Anna Ancher's own image from her representations of home quietly asserted liberation from its traditionally restrictive boundaries.

Figure 5-12: Carl Larsson. *Azalea* (1906)

Interior with Clematis remarkably refuted its walls as barriers, constricting the space.[11] The painter focused on the window as an opening to light and the curtains as a

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[9]See for instance Amalie Skram's description of Marie Hansen's house in *Constance Ring* (Norway, 1888). Trans. Judith Messick with Katherine Hanson (1988; repr. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2002), 91.

[10] *Dagbladet,* 28 April 1888 quoted by Kasper Monrad, in *Hammershøi and Europe* (Copenhagen: Statens Museum for Kunst, 2012), 18.

[11] Mark Wigley, "Untitled: The Housing of Gender," in *Sexuality and Space,* ed. Beatriz Colomina, Princeton Papers on Architecture (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 382. Wigley cites Jacques Lacan in describing how the visual extends the perception of physical space: "[Jacques Lacan] repeatedly identifies this 'optical structuring of space,' which eventually makes possible the idea of the Cartesian subject, as itself a 'construction' which is 'simply the mapping of space, not sight.' It only deals with 'vision in so far as it is situated in a space that is not in its essence the visual,' such that a blind

gauzy screen. The foliage intrudes on the blue drapery sometimes as dark shadows, other times as marks of color. The neutral plaster, in the current museum restoration a pure white, absorbs all of the colors from the window as well as from the room. Ancher transected indoor limits by using the same pigment for both the curtain and for the sky. The cool blue pushes against the wall; in tandem, the mullions of the center window bay cannot resist the tactile ingress of the insistent golden flora. These transferences refute the idea of the interior as protected and secluded space. The visual image challenges the compressions of the architectural structure. Anna Ancher's studio space is thus visually expanded outside the home, affording her independence and expressing the modern orientation of her artistic practice.

Ancher subtly asserted a pioneering role as artist and wife. Her canvases proclaimed an alternate view of women as makers of art, which diverged from the increasingly evident strategy of encouraging craft revival as an appropriate artistic venue for women. Susan Sidlauskas describes a patriarchal agenda in official facilitation of the Paris Women's Art Exposition of 1892 to counter the disruptions caused by the "New Woman." On the one hand, Sidlauskas observes that the attention paid to the decorative arts could revive flagging luxury industries in France. On the other, women were encouraged to develop skills in trades that traditionally engaged women, but in a conformist milieu. "While the exposition seemed to support women's talents, the authors

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person is capable of 'reconstructing…everything that vision yields to us of space.' The essence of the visual exceeds space and so cannot simply be 'situated' or even 'constructed.' It is a product of the sensuous play of surface, a 'play of light' rather than a 'space of light,' an intimate exchange in which the surface fills and overflows the eye, such that the viewer cannot be detached from the surface. Wigley referenced Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis,* trans. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), p. 86, 94 and 92.

were careful to insist that they must exercise their talents only at home, so as not to disrupt the equilibrium of their families."[12] Women were encouraged to make art for the home while remaining at home.

Ancher's representations of her studio are entirely different from the space for making art allotted to the woman of other prominent Scandinavian artist couples. Carl Larsson's popular illustrations of Dalarna, Sweden fully imbedded his wife Karin Bergöo Larsson in the home amidst the children. Krøyer likewise executed watercolors in a similar style to Larsson that show Marie Triepcke Krøyer as decorator rather than painter. Although these women continued to work as artists after they married, Bergöo Larsson and Triepcke Krøyer virtually abandoned their careers as easel painters. Their art-making shifted to the home-centered production of decorative objects intended primarily for their own family's domestic use. Triepcke Krøyer and Bergöo Larsson, furthermore, became more important to contemporary audiences as integral subjects in the image making of their husbands. Larsson widely circulated images of his wife and her decorations of Dalarna in attractive reproductions and books. In Larsson's images, his wife is entirely confined within domestic space, although her role as a decorative artist is part of his images. His 1906 watercolor *Azalea* (Fig. 5-12) presented the physical body of his wife eclipsed by the flower arrangement, a traditional feminine embellishment of the home. In *The Workshop* (1908) the loom, the household objects and a spinning wheel totally dominate his wife's body. We can only intimate her worker identity based on the fabric pattern, nearly identical to the one depicted on the loom in *Azalea.* Her weaving

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[12] Sidlauskas,"Psyche and Sympathy: Staging Interiority in the Early Modern Home," 74.

apparatus and her many textile creations crowded the family room, her sphere for creating. Photographs confirm that unlike her husband, the artist did not have separate production facilities. In other images, Triepcke-Krøyer until her divorce in 1906 and Bergöo Larsson up through World War I were mostly represented by their husbands as either muse, helpmate or, especially in Larsson's case, as mother.[13] Although Krøyer depicted his wife painting in Ravello soon after their marriage, in his 1898 watercolors of their home he only referenced her art-making obliquely through the furniture that she made. Even more extreme in his omissions, Michael Ancher's many portraits of his wife do not represent her occupation.[14]

Unlike Triepcke Krøyer or Bergöo Larsson, Brøndum Ancher continued to engage professionally in the public sphere, marketing her work through exhibitions and dealers. *Evening Sunshine in the Artist's Studio in Markvej* emphasized her professional practice disentangled from domestic tasks, and in combination with *Interior with Clematis* guarded her privacy by keeping her own likeness out of the image. Danish exhibition visitors were accustomed to viewing Anna Ancher's represented figure as in Michael Ancher's huge *Christmas Day 1900* (1903), where she is posed with the other women of her family; the fashionable representation of her in *Summer Night on the South*

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[13] Barbara Miller Lane, *National Romanticism and Modern Architecture in Germany and the Scandinavian Countries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 7.

[14] There is one painting that plausibly could be a late work by Michael Ancher depicting his wife painting a portrait. However, this work is not listed by Elisabeth Fabritius in her entry on Michael Ancher to *Kunstindex Danmark and Weilbach's Kunstnerleksikon,* 4th ed. (1994) https://www.kulturarv.dk/kid/VisWeilbachRefresh.do?kunstnerId=133andwsektion=vaerker, accessed 13 April 2014. The only two references to the painting are an art reproduction site (AllPosters.com, #8603532) and a blog by Nancy Bea Miller, "Women in the Act of Painting, *in flagrante depicto*," (December 29, 2012), http://womenintheactofpainting.blogspot.com/2012/12/anchers-aweigh.html, accessed 13 April 2014.

Beach at Skagen (1893) by Krøyer or as an identifiable figure in his later image of a Sankt Hans celebration in Skagen (1906). Anna Ancher's paintings of the studio, in contrast, eliminated the attention to her face and form, prioritizing the evidence of professional labor through her thick application of colored pigment, and in the sketch, through the canvases leaning against the otherwise undecorated wall. Ancher's paintings of her studio significantly removed her represented image from the public domain. Only Krøyer's and Michael's male gaze captured Anna Ancher's physical face or body as important to paint; the artist herself made her labor and space instead the subject of the painting.

A Room of Her Own

Interior with Clematis depicts the artist's own studio, representing a specific genre of space. At the end of the nineteenth century, artists in Germany and Scandinavia conceived their entire homes as a Gesamtkunstwerk, whose success as an total work of art relied on its distinctiveness, individualism, and consistency with professional and lifestyle habits while still indicative of personal taste. According to Barbara Miller Lane, "All were self-consciously humble in materials, furnishings and the arrangement of spaces."[15] Artists such as the Larssons published images of their homes as greeting cards or in popular magazines for international audiences. Krøyer painted two watercolors of his home in Skagen and one from the house in Copenhagen. These were inspired by Larsson's watercolors of Sundborn that Krøyer saw in Stockholm in 1897. Triepcke

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[15] Lane, *National Romanticism and Modern Architecture in Germany and the Scandinavian Countries,* 80-1.

Krøyer gave her husband a copy of Larsson's book *Ett Hem* in 1899.[16] Larsson, Krøyer, as well as the Norwegian Gerhard Munthe popularized furnishings produced by the artists or at least through handcraft as opposed to ready-made, industrially manufactured items available commercially.[17] While the Larsson home, Lilla Hyttnås, may seem crowded, child-centered and nostalgic, in contrast to bourgeois interiors of the time, it was comparatively simple and pared down. Michelle Facos observes that the Dalarna house lacked the clutter of bric-a-brac, the overstuffed furniture, or the patriotic Gustavian revival prevalent in the decoration of Swedish bourgeois homes.[18] Simplicity and clean lines increasingly distinguished artist homes from the taste of their bourgeois patrons.

Analysis of the plan, style and furnishings of the Ancher's house demonstrates that Anna Ancher's claims for and paintings of a personal sector within quietly flouted gendered norms at the turn of the century and asserted professional autonomy and personal independence. A 1913 addition by Ulrik Plesner (1861-1933) divided the home along a north south spine. The rooms east of the axis are private spaces (Fig. 5-13). The rooms to the west serve to circulate or receive public. In the addition, Michael gained a large, new studio, which was the grandest public room. It was directly accessed off an oversized dining room, the home's nerve center, which established the main circulation route from street entry. A grand entrance announced the public function of Michael's

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[16] Mette Bøgh Jensen, *At male sit privat liv: Skagensmalernes selviscenesættelese* (Skagen: Skagens Museum, 2005), 237.

[17] Michelle Facos, "The Ideal Swedish Home: Carl Larsson's Lilla Hyttnäs," in *Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture*, ed. Christopher Reed (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1996), 88.

[18] Facos, "The Ideal Swedish Home: Carl Larsson's Lilla Hyttnäs," 87-8.

studio. Its large French doors, bedecked with a Kelim carpet, connected visitors to an exterior glade (Fig. 5-14). Furthermore, the furniture in the room was arranged to frame a large inglenook, the only public fireplace in the house. The hearth signified the core as in most contemporary domestic architecture, including both Queen Anne revival and the Arts and Crafts style. The attention to access and the fireplace in combination with heavy Baroque and Rococo furnishings signified the centrality and the importance of Michael's gallery space. In sum, his designated spaces dominated the house layout giving him the preeminent opportunity to entertain guests, manage the household and govern the entrances. Through World War I, however, such roles were considered to be part of a woman's domestic responsibilities in industrialized societies.

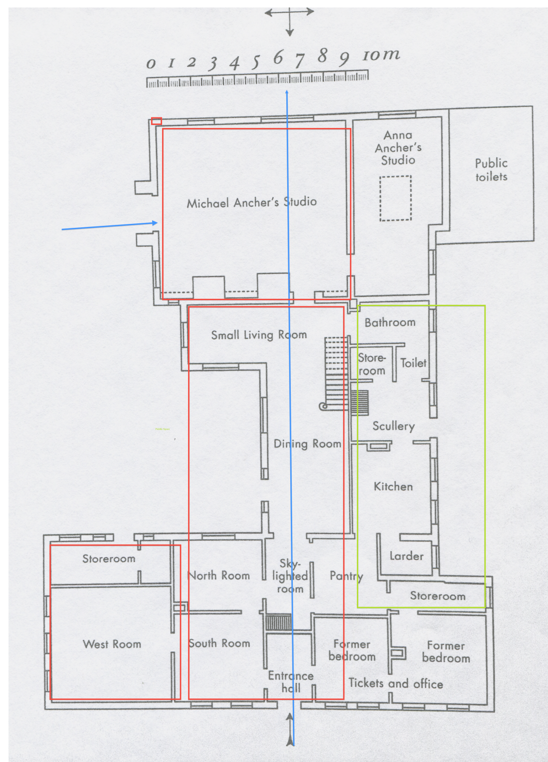

Figure 5-13: Plan of Michael and Anna Ancher House
Public (red) v. Private (green) space and Axis (blue)

Anna Ancher did not cordially invite voyeurs in her own personal space, the studio physically adjacent in the house, but opposite in character to Michael's. Her studio occupied the private and sheltered location usually accorded to the masculine den. Its restricted ingress was governed by passage through her husband's room. The location would be inefficient for managing the preparation of meals and impossible as a place to greet guests or receive clients. The placement of Anna Ancher's private studio was contrary to the normative designs for custom homes or additions at the turn of the century. Architectural plans generally respected a public ideology of differentiated

Figure 5-14: Michael Ancher's Studio at the Michael and Anna Ancher House

spheres, where males controlled the public venue of factories and businesses, while women oversaw all domestic functions. Males therefore required a den or a library, where they could study and attend to their affairs in relative tranquility and seclusion. Exclusive male enclaves in bourgeois villas could also be set apart to allow for segregated masculine socializing, such as in a billiard room. "In this sense, the home was

the inverse of public space, which was dominated physically and socially by men."[19] If women had specially designated rooms, they were contiguous to the household operations. In Richard Norman Shaw's 1873 plan for Lowther House, "Mrs. Lowther's Room" was placed on the ground floor, aligned with the entrance and adjacent to the Drawing Room, while the husband's room was protected from unwelcome distractions by several turns, stairs and doors.[20] The Ancher plan also subverted the more contemporary recommendations for domestic arrangements offered by the British architect, M. H. Baillie Scott, who was highly admired by Plesner and the Skagen colony. A 1900 article by Baillie Scott in *The Studio* recommended that in addition to large central public rooms with their inglenooks and exposed beams (like Michael's studio), modern country homes should include a protected area of feminine haven, a "bower," as a complement to the masculine den. Although the bower was a distinct space, it was still integrated into the traffic pattern of visitors to the house offering a more intimate setting for tea or calls from close friends. Its design therefore was subordinate to and a dependent appendage of a larger public room. Unlike the small doorway to Anna Ancher's studio, Baillie Scott admonished that the female bower be easily accessed by the public flow of traffic through the house. He wrote about the small space, "Still it does not entirely separate itself from the hall, or claim a definite and distinct room." Its decoration should evoke "a certain

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[19] Greg M. Thomas, *Impressionist Children: Childhood, Family, and Modern Identity in French Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 75.

[20]For the Lowther House plan, see Lynne Walker, "The Royal Geographical Society's House: An Architectural History," *The Geographical Journal* , Vol. 146, No. 2 (Jul., 1980), 181-3.

daintiness."[21] It should have a softer, more ornamented decorative treatment than male or public rooms. Its wallpaper and textiles would offer strong contrast to the "glimmering whiteness" he recommended for the public rooms.[22]

Despite Baillie Scott's popularity in Denmark when Plesner's addition was conceived and later built, Anna Ancher's space of work and retreat in both configuration and decoration differed from his model for traditional women of her class. Her studio is the refuge that cannot be accessed by visitors, a place for work and study. Rather than "a certain daintiness," Spartan furnishings and undecorated walls, "a glimmering whiteness," characterize her private space and distinguished it from Michael's studio.

Figure 5-15: Susette Skovgaard Holten. *Green Armchair* (1895) from Michael and Anna Ancher House, detail

[21] M. H. Baillie Scott, "The Country House," *The Studio,* Vol. 19 (1900), 30-1.

[22] Baillie Scott, "The Country House," 30-1.

Although the head of the house and the overseer of the central public rooms customarily would be the woman, the Ancher's house suggests that Michael rather than his wife

Figure 5-16: Anna Ancher. *Interior with Clematis* (1913), detail

played the role of host. His studio functioned like the hall in the designs by both Baillie Scott and Shaw. Its décor resembled the dark woods, carpeted floors, and heavy fixtures common to British and Danish bourgeois interiors of the late nineteenth century.

Ancher's selection of objects to include in her studio signified her link with contemporary design and affiliated her with the burgeoning women's art movement in Denmark. In *Interior with Clematis,* Ancher furnished her studio space with only four items: sheer blue curtains, a white-painted Louis XVI chair with an upholstered seat, an Aluminia faience vase filled with purple clematis, and a green table designed by Susette Skovgaard Holten (1863-1937) for the Kvindernes Udstilling (Women's Exhibition) of 1895. The vase from the early twentieth century privileged contemporary craft in

Denmark. The Royal Copenhagen pottery factory was a notable producer of similar vases and many of the artists of the avant-garde participated in their design and production.

Even more intriguing is the inclusion of a key piece from Holten's set. Her green-painted furniture was dramatically different from the heavy neo-Baroque furnishings and deeply hued textiles that predominate in the Ancher House. Holten innovated in the unusual cutout motifs and the flat, grid forms that form the structure of the ensemble. The light-green paint cover was unusual for artist-designed furniture, but also drew on vernacular practice of Danish farmers.[23] In keeping with ideals shared by both the English arts and crafts movement and the Viennese avant-garde, the requirements of the constituent material, pine planks, its fibers and its suitability for cut-out decorations, are apparent in the design of the set.

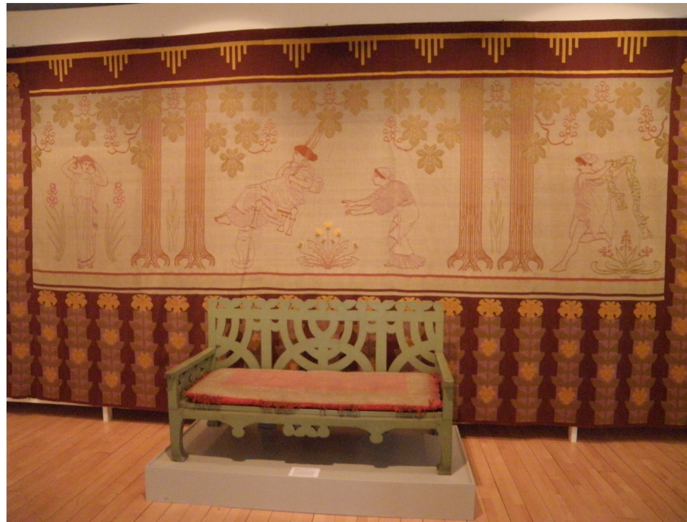

Figure 5-17: Susette Skovgaard Holten. *Green Furniture Set* (1895). Settee in front of Kvindernes Udstilling tapestry. Recreation at Vejen Kunstmuseum, 2013.

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[23]Tove Holdgaard Bendtsen, "Født Skovgaard," in *Susette Holten født Skovgaard. Den glemte søster,* ed. Anne-Mette Villumsen and Teresa Nielsen (Denmark: Skovgaard Museet, 2013), 64.

Holten's flat, planar furniture ensemble, acquired by the Anchers in 1906 stood in strong contrast to the heavy Victorian furnishings of Michael Ancher's studio, where most of the pieces rest (Fig. 5-14) . The substantial golden armchairs, the bulbous legs of the round table and deep hues of the Oriental carpet aligned with more conventional bourgeois taste from the late nineteenth century.[24] The tassels and fringe that bedeck the upholstery in Michael's studio emphasized the armrests and the head bolster, the parts of the chair that enclose the body. In contrast Holten's distinctive design stressed the vertical back through the upward thrust of the cutouts, and reduced the height of the sides so that the armrests barely rise above the embroidered cushion (Fig. 5-15). Rather than containing the body, the low armrests functionally facilitate exiting the chair. The freedom and sparseness of Holten's design also refuted the overstuffed furniture, which entrapped the female protagonists of Skram's *Constance Ring* and defined both the entire sphere of their activity and their perception of well-being. "Lovely things…velvet upholstered furniture…the fine curtains, and the beautiful paintings," were expected to compensate for her husband's abuse of the protagonist, her loneliness and her persistent disappointment.[25]

Moreover, Ancher's rendering of the tablecloth in her painting *Interior with Clematis* within the studio space invoked the presence of Holten, the furniture maker and advocate for women's art. On the painted corner that faces the viewer, the green of the table breaks the otherwise opaque white covering (Fig. 5-16). Ancher's stylized pattern

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[24] Bendtsen also notes that the Ancher studio color combination of green and gold was a common one that was mocked by Gilbert and Sullivan in the 1881 satirical song "Greenery-yallery, Grosvenor Gallery." Bendtsen, "Født Skovgaard," 65.

[25] Skram, *Constance Ring,* 165.

additionally linked the object to its maker. Holten's signature emblem, her graphic design and her pottery incorporated similar arabesque gestures and patterns. The green ensemble was part of an entire interior concept displayed at the 1895 Kvindernes Udstilling (Women's Exhibition) where Ancher was one of the featured artists. The set was shown resting on a rug of Holten's design and in front of her tapestry of women in classical garments enjoying leisure (Fig. 5-17). Like the furniture, these objects add a strong linear component to the decoration and have a lighter palette than contemporary taste. Holten controlled the overall public image of the Women's Exhibition. She designed and produced the bookplates and the posters. She designed the typeface and layout for the program. She crafted the commemorative plate. Finally her interior, of which the green furniture set was the preeminent feature, was photographed and illustrated in the media. Ancher's brush forged through the table and cloth a subtle visual connection to Susette Holten and the Women's Exhibition of 1895, concurrent with the conceptual formation of the Danish Women's Artist society.

Plain, White Modern Walls, Subverting Gender

Anna Ancher's studio as it is presented in the Michael and Anna Ancher House museum and in the painted representations is radical in the absence of decoration. Interior decoration was considered to be an innate female quality, whereas abstract space depended on male analysis. Ancher's differences in representation reversed the period's normalizing of intuition with the feminine and rationality with the masculine; they inverted the "opposition between the 'masculine' domain of structure and the 'feminine'

domain of ornament."[26] Her studio expressed its intended use for making art and in this practicality connoted masculinity. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, revolutionary architects imposed qualities of "order" and "discipline" associated with males rather than females.[27] Pioneers of modernist architecture such as Adolf Loos (1870-1933) and Le Corbusier (1887-1965) associated decoration and ornament with the primitive and the feminine. White architecture came to signify masculine resistance to the whimsy of fashion, considered to be a woman's domain.[28] A feminized decoration scheme generally would be generated through color, drapery or upholstery.[29] Critics disparaged its changeability in ornament and style. Annual or seasonal changes in trim and detail of women's costume and accessories indicated ephemerality. Interior decoration matched this whimsy. In contrast, the finest male suits displayed enduring attributes of austerity and simplicity, which were necessary for building designs that needed to last for generations.[30] Avant-garde design at the turn of the century through

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[26] Wigley, "White-out: Fashioning the Modern [Part 2]," 25. Wigley also points out that architects and historians have downplayed or obscured the relationship between reform design and modern architecture because, "Architecture cannot subordinate itself to the effeminate domain of clothing design and maintain its macho logic of 'mastery,' 'order,' and so on," 27.

[27] Wigley, "White-out: Fashioning the Modern [Part 2]," 26.

[28] Bridget Elliott and Janice Helland, introduction to *Women Artists and the Decorative Arts 1880-1935: The Gender of Ornament* (Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), 2.

[29] Wigley references the male versus female attributes of architecture on p. 30 of Wigley, "White-out: Fashioning the Modern [Part 2]."See also Elliott and Helland, introduction to *Women Artists and the Decorative Arts 1880-1935: The Gender of Ornament*, 8.

[30] Wigley, "White-out: Fashioning the Modern [Part 2]," 36.

World War II sought to “Reform all the spaces that enclose the body, whether those of the building or of clothes.”[31]

Ancher’s paintings asserted a masculine attention to permanence and discipline through their stress on the architectural details. *At Noon* (c. 1914, Fig. 5-18) and *Interior, Brøndum’s Annex* articulated the millwork and emphasized the geometry of the rooms through her hierarchical repetition of rectangles. Striking contrasts and intense color

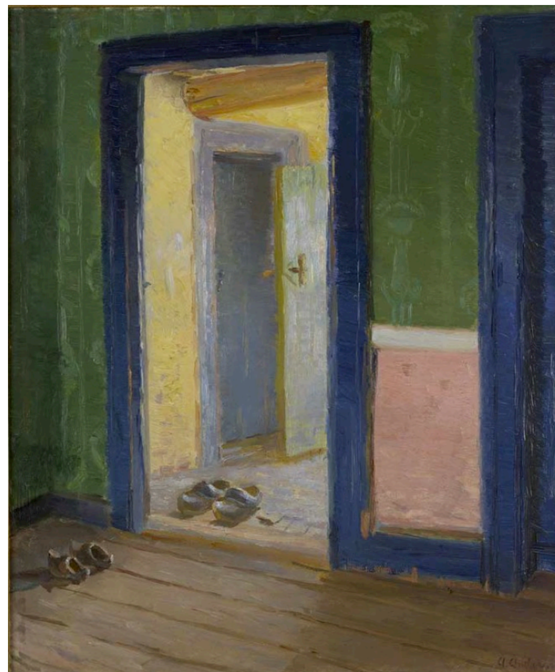

Figure 5-18: Anna Ancher. *At Noon* (c. 1916)

proclaim the surface. Ancher’s strong, bold assertion of form expressed modernity and permitted few subtle invasions of the sensuous feminine.

Ancher’s unadorned architecture and the attention to the broad surface connected her to revolutionary developments elsewhere in Europe. She adorned the walls of her

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[31] Wigley, “White-out: Fashioning the Modern [Part 2],” 6.

represented rooms with only the variations of the brush and the intercessions of light. Although her walls are not always white, the use of local color such as rose or gold, indicates a regional variation on a modernist idea. Wigley and others point to the white wall as a key signifier of modernism in building design, which began to emerge in the first decade of the twentieth century. Notable early manifestations include the white hall of Otto Wagner's Post Office Savings Bank (1904-6), the casing in white marble of Josef Hoffmann's Palais Stoclet (1905-10) and the skin of white plaster for Adolf Loos, Villa Steiner (1910).[32] The white wall culminated from a process of stripping away unnecessary decoration and objects to focus on functional structure.[33] Parallel to dress reform, the two main streams leading towards the unembellished interior came from the arts and crafts tradition, especially through *The Studio* magazine, and a related but more cutting-edge tendency from Vienna, Berlin and Darmstadt. In addition to the smooth white skins on the exterior of his country house, Baillie Scott in Britain recommended that inside, the structure of a home not be obscured with plaster, paint or wallpaper, and he advocated "plain white-washed surfaces."[34] Likewise, the illustrated articles by C. F. A. Voysey (1857-1941) in *The Studio* advocated interior-driven designs, sensitive to light with sparse decoration and geometric emphasis.[35] In Germany, Herman Muthesius argued

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[32] Wigley, "White-out: Fashioning the Modern [Part 2]," 29-30.

[33] Tim Benton, "The Twentieth-Century Architectural Interior: representing Modernity," in *Imagined Interiors: Representing the Domestic Interior Since the Renaissance,* ed. Jeremy Aynsley and Charlotte Grant (London: V and A Publications with Harry Abrams, 2006), 221.

[34] Baillie Scott. "A Country House," 30.

[35] Clive Ashwin, "Artistic Homes for 'Upper-Middle-Classers.' Architecture in the Early *Studio,*" in *High Art and Low Life:* The Studio *and the* fin de siècle, ed. Michael Spens, Studio International Special Centenary Number. Vol. 201. No. 1022/1023 (1993), 88.

that "stripping off the excess layers of decoration to liberate and mobilize the underlying structure" would necessarily improve architecture through the consequent simplification in his 1904 essay "Kultur and Kunst" (Culture and Art).[36] By 1907 he argued that simplicity, functionalism and standardization would promote national identity and achieve timelessness in design.[37] Denmark had embraced the shift in architecture and interior design away from decorated surfaces and excessive furnishings by 1909, evident in the much lighter interiors displayed at the 1909 Århus Exhibition.[38] A commercial silhouette postcard of Michael and Anna Ancher advertised their affiliation with this exhibition.

Modernist theory emphasized the human physical and psychological experience of architectural space. Modernists demanded the art of building resurrect its essential vocabulary, the building blocks of "pure forms, masses and spaces," which were stripped from "historical anecdote." Theorists saw the human user's physical experience of the space as completing the design and determining a room's effectiveness.[39] The body's apprehension of physical space was an idea articulated by Heinrich Wölfflin. In his 1886 dissertation, *Prolegomena zu einer Psychologie der Architektur,* Wölfflin noted that the corporeal apprehension of physical space determined human response. Susan Sidlauskas summarizes what the German historian saw as the requisite animation of physical space

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[36] Wigley, "White-out: Fashioning the Modern [Part 2]," 17-8.

[37] Wigley, "White-out: Fashioning the Modern [Part 2]," 22.

[38] Erik Lassen, "The Early 20th Century: Design in Transition." *Scandinavian Modern Design: 1880-1980,* ed. David Revere McFadden (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1982), 91.

[39] Anders V. Munch, "Framing the Life Rhythm," in *The Spirit of Vitalism: Health, Beauty and Strength in Danish Art, 1890-1914,* ed Gertrud Hvidberg-Hansen and Gertrud Oelsner. (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 2011), eds., 107.

by the body that experienced it. According to his argument, ornament interfered with "The mental animation of architectural forms, as well as the voids they enclosed."[40] The body and its movement through space generated a psychologically animated experience of architecture. Removing distractions from the room transformed it into a psychological space for immersion in the art object or performance. The idea that architecture was intimately connected with physiology and mental health translated into Vitalism. Nietzsche argued that true meaning could be conferred only when movement had augmented linguistic and visual knowledge.[41] By 1918, the Danish architect Aage Rafn (1890-1953) extended Nietzsche's views and recommended that designers find inspiration in movement, specifically the rhythms of dance, to generate a haptic perception of the built environment.[42]

While the walls of her studio in *Interior with Clematis* share the unadorned aesthetic with the modernists, Ancher's canvases intensify the experience of the bare wall through the use of brilliant and warm wall colors punctuated by contrasting trim. The bright colors echo Zarathustra's proclamation in favor of "deep yellow and hot red" and excoriation of "whoever whitewashes his house."[43] The architectural spaces oscillate through the vibrancy of light, but also rhythmically repeat boldly-colored vertical

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[40] Sidlauskas,"Psyche and Sympathy: Staging Interiority in the Early Modern Home," 69.

[41] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy* (1886) interpreted in connection to the rise of Vitalism by Anders V. Munch, "Framing the Life Rhythm," in *The Spirit of Vitalism: Health, Beauty and Strength in Danish Art, 1890-1914,* ed Gertrud Hvidberg-Hansen and Gertrud Oelsner. (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 2011), eds., 113.

[42] Munch, "Framing the Life Rhythm," 107.

[43] Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the Spirit of Gravity, "*Thus Spoke Zarathustra: Third Part* (1891-2), 306. Reprinted in *The Portable Nietzsche.* ed. Walter Kaufmann, reprint (New York: Penguin Books, 1982).

elements in both *At Noon* and in *Interior: Brøndum's Annex.* Her manipulations of lines and surfaces set the walls in motion.

Similarly, Ancher produced dynamism in the experience of the represented rooms through the aggressive brush and palette knife. In *At Noon* broad areas of color pull the viewer through a framed door opening into a brighter space. Several artistic choices thwart the visual understanding of the space. For instance, the oblique angle of a heavy timber beam cuts across the opening, making the distant space push back against the pull generated by the brighter palette. Color dabs escape the edges between floor, wall and trim. To the right of the door opening, the brown of the floor breaks the indigo line of the trim, and the rose of the wall below the chair rail and the blue of the woodwork move the eye back and forth. Ancher formed the traces of wallpaper decoration through etching, scraping away from the color form, defying expectations of an additive application. Peasant clogs that are worn, but not being worn, constitute the only human presence in the empty space.

In *Brøndum's Annex*, the viewer again witnesses the bleeding between wall and trim and the blocked space through the open door. The blue shadow through the opening appears to bend down while the reflected light through the windowpanes retains a strong geometry. Edges of the ceiling in both near and far space dissolve. In this painting, Ancher's palette is even more limited than in *At Noon,* dominated by orange for trim and floor, yellow for the sunlight, with shadows in blue. The bare white walls become a canvas for the colors found elsewhere in the room. The moldings vibrate like a violin string, and join the pulsating blocks of sunlight in alternating rhythms.

Art historians have not sufficiently explored how the decorative ideas of Thorvald Bindesbøll at the turn of the century, or how the physical space of Ulrik Plesner's 1913 addition to the Ancher's home related to the representations of architecture and interiors of Anna Ancher's art from the same period. Plesner and Bindesbøll established a practice that emphasized function, abstract forms and flat planar surfaces. *Interior with Clematis, At Noon,* and *Interior, Brøndum's Annex* were painted following a period of extensive building in Skagen executed by these two designers. Between 1904 and 1907, Bindesbøll took the lead in designing the Fiskepakhusene, warehouses surrounding the harbor, commissioned when it was dredged and widened for commercial advantage. Plesner built many homes and public structures in the expanding town. He and Bindesbøll also took charge of a major extension and remodeling of Skagen church completed in 1910. Bindesbøll masterminded the interior design while Plesner attended to the structural changes to the original building designed by the neoclassical architect C. F. Hansen in

Figure 5-19: Thorvald Bindesbøll. *Fiskepakhusene* (1905-1907). Oblique view.

1841.[44] As the church project neared completion, Plesner began work on a "building and studio for the painter Michael Ancher" in 1911 and completed the addition in 1913, followed the next year by a commission to design the royal summer residence in Skagen, Klitgården.[45]

Anna Ancher's representations of architectural surfaces denoted modernity in their barrenness and corresponded exactly to the peak of building in Skagen. Plesner and Bindesbøll were deeply attuned to regional and international theories of functional design, architectural control of light, surface decoration, adaptation of vernacular sources and abstraction. Their practice and ideas visually align with Ancher's images during the period, suggesting an interchange that developed through friendship and was likely reinforced through negotiations during the Ancher's own house addition. The designers link the artist to modern theories of domestic architecture and design from England, Germany and Vienna.

As discussed in Chapter Three, Bindesbøll designed the first exhibition structure for Den Frie in 1893 and retained close friendships with many of its members. Although trained as an architect, Bindesbøll enjoyed an international reputation for his innovative ceramics, graphic arts and bookbinding associated with *Skønvirke*, a movement in Denmark that integrated the fine and decorative arts that developed between 1890 and 1920. Skonvirke incorporated elements of *Japonisme,* espoused a handwork aesthetic that

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[44] Bindesbøll died in 1908 before the project was completed.

[45] Dates of Plesner's construction from Helge Finsen, *Arkitekten Ulrik Plesner* (Copenhagen: Selskabet for arkitekturhistorie, Arkitektens forlag, 1951), 102-3.

was the legacy of William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement, and the ideal of the Gesamtkunstwerk as described by Richard Wagner.[46]

Bindesbøll's architecture for Skagen's Fiskepakhusene integrated a modernist functional approach to plan with decorative surfaces suggestive of both Arts and Crafts and National Romanticism. He treated the façades with white painted wood trim against red panel siding, highlighting gables and roof pitches of vernacular timber shore cottage architecture. However, details like "T" forms as part of the pediment decorations adhere to the more ornamental style of *Skønvirke* design (Fig. 5-19). The complex of five warehouse clusters derived from Norwegian models of maritime Bergen in the 1700s. Each unit joined four forward-facing smaller storefronts that were linked along the back by a long masonry warehouse. The mass of that functional space dominates the individual

Figure 5-20: Thorvald Bindesbøll. *Fiskepakhusene* (1905-1907).
1910 Photograph

sets in weight and volume. Bindesbøll minimally relieved the dominant flatness and whitewashed walls with shallow gold niches, large "T-shaped" cutouts, and small red windows (Fig. 5-20). These geometric patterns forge a unity in the decorative program

[46]Jennifer Opie, "A Dish by Thorvald Bindesbøll." *The Burlington Magazine,* Vol. 132, no. 1046 (May, 1990), 356.

and emblemize the transition from Nordic, folk-inspired decorative treatments to functionalism.[47]

Plesner had roots in Western Jutland, but trained in the national Academy for architecture, and his strong connections with the Skagen artists are demonstrated by his three additions to Brøndum Hotel between 1891 and 1911 and the commission to build Krøyer's villa in Copenhagen in 1901. Like the first generation of Skagen artists, he defined his practice as an architect through opposition to the establishment. Many accounts repeat his claim to have spent his entire career forgetting what he learned at the Academy.[48] Consistent with this position, Plesner's modern approach to design determined the form of a building based on the needs of the client rather than following the academic guidelines that stressed the unified appearance of the façade.[49] His first commission in Skagen was an addition to the Brøndum hotel in 1891. In this extension, Plesner employed the traditional red-brick cladding of West Jutland architecture, which can also be seen in his subsequent 1897 addition. Around 1904 his style changed. The next wave of commissions retained some of the character of indigenous West Jutland building styles, but introduced many new elements from outside the region, informed by trips to Greece and Italy, but more importantly by a study tour through England in the spring of 1902. He especially admired the architects associated with the English Domestic Revival, whose designs could also be seen in *The Studio.* According to Helge

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[47] For details on the buildings and Thorvald Bindesbøll's drawings, see Anne-Louise Sommer, *Den danske arkitektur* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2009), 290-291.

[48] For example, see, *Havnemesterboligen i Skagen* (Denmark: Realea A/S, 2006), 8.

[49] Anne-Louise Sommer, *Den danske arkitektur* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2009), 313.

Finsen, subsequent Danish domestic architecture followed his lead, learning much from English architecture while avoiding slavish imitation.[50] His Jutland houses, such as those he designed in Skagen, earned him commercial reward and professional recognition. To some extent they became prototypes in the national imagination for characteristic "Danish architecture" whether in the capital or the provinces. Finsen credits Plesner as a pioneer in integrating an interest in the folk traditions of building into the art of architecture, aligning him with parallel trends in painting and literature.[51]

As the century progressed, both Plesner and Bindesbøll present progressively less of National Romanticism's folk revival in their design and more of the greater objectivity and functionalism of *Skønvirke* aesthetics. In Plesner's design for the royal summer

Figure 5-21: Thorvald Bindesbøll. Skagen Kirke (design 1908). View to altar across furnishings by Bindesbøll.

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[50] Helge Finsen, *Arkitekten Ulrik Plesner* (Copenhagen: Selskabet for arkitekturhistorie, Arkitektens forlag, 1951), 25-27.

[51] Finsen, *Arkitekten Ulrik Plesner*, 25-27.

residence built in Skagen in 1914, Klitgården, the subtle asymmetry and traditional half-hipped roof clad in red tile adhere to a vernacular tradition. Conversely, broad, solid expanses of blank masonry define the building through the architectonic volumes. Surfaces expressed the interior space, a modern development consistent with Baillie Scott's decree that a project's success depends on the merits of the plan, determined by practicality and suitability, and his admonition in *The Studio* that the plastered walls reflect "the realities of the structure itself."[52]

Plesner's and Bindesbøll's collaborative efforts at Skagen church additionally resonated with developments coming through the Deutsche Werkbund, debates in Vienna and the Secession exhibitions and the work of Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Margaret MacDonald. Bindesbøll's leaf motif is barely recognizable as a natural form when carved into the pew ends or on the pulpit (Fig. 5-21). A more naturalistic grapevine pattern emerges on Bindesbøll's altar carpet, although the red rims of repeated triangles contain its growth and strengthen the impact of the abstract negative spaces of white. His deliberate and pointed use of bright color focuses the user's attention to the sacraments, culminating at Joakim Skovgaard's nativity above the altar. The lower register of the walls echo the intensity of the palette in the carpet. White dominates the sanctuary, however, with painted walls and furnishings. These glimmer in the plentiful sunlight that enters through panes of clear glass in enormous windows (Fig. 5-22).

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[52] M. H. Baillie Scott, "'Yellowsands'—A Seaside House," *The Studio,* vol. 28 (1903), 190; "A Cottage in the Country." *The Studio,* vol. 34 (1904), 120.

Bindesbøll's more famous ceramics demonstrated a simplification of form that moved beyond the organic forms of *Skønvirke* or Art Nouveau, an aesthetic that parallels the simplifications in Ancher's interiors. One of Bindesbøll's most characteristic porcelain designs relied on a black thick-line arabesque set against the white glaze of the pottery (5-23). Jennifer Opie describes as "artifice" Bindesbøll's transformation of Art Nouveau's natural imagery so that the designs can no longer be recognized as organic

Figure 5-22: Thorvald Bindesbøll. Altar detail at Skagen Kirke, (design 1908)

forms.[53] The aesthetic impact of his ceramics comes from their rhythmic contrasts of solid, represented by the black, and void of the white background. Bindesbøll also developed an innovative standardization process similar to the later practice of the

[53] Opie,"The New Ceramics: Engaging with the Spirit," 207.

Deutsche Werkbund. He acquired stockpiles of unglazed earthenware plates and vases manufactured to his specifications. On these forms, he painted and incised his vocabulary of gestures.[54] All of his art objects engage in a dialogue with modernism and his accomplishments earned international recognition at the time of their production. Ancher's close association with Bindesbøll and her ongoing friendship with Plesner, who was buried in the same plot as the Anchers, direct attention to how her abstracted rooms and empty spaces participated in modern currents.

Ancher broke the conventions of the interior through abstractions and reductions in *At Noon* and *Interior, Brøndum's Annex*. The intersections of broad planes demarcated by intense, pure color make the paintings function almost as studies of constructed space. The overall absence of objects that could serve as signs of occupancy or access points for the viewer to enter contribute to the paintings' illegibility. Only a pattern, surface or a

Figure 5-23: Thorvald Bindesbøll. Ceramic Vases (c. 1900)

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[54] Opie,"The New Ceramics: Engaging with the Spirit," 205.

shape offers trace of the presence of the painter or possible inhabitants. In *Interior, Brøndum's Annex* as in the study of the studio (Fig. 5-7), the striking matrix of sunlight on the white plaster vigorously triumphs over the plain wall without masking its function. The remarkable thickness of the pigment in the reflections raises the oranges and yellows off the façade. The resultant radical texture interrupts the smooth structure of the finished surfaces and aggressively asserts its role as central to the composition, subject and visual interest of the painting. The artist even brings to question the integrity and durability of constructed objects. In both *At Noon* and *Interior, Brøndum's Annex* the color bleed elides the distinction between wall and frame. Pattern, line, texture, color are employed as abstractions that deny a narrative or descriptive function of the image. The textures of the paint and the rhythmic pulses connote Vitalist value and energy.

Healthy Physical and Psychological Spaces

Artists and authors of the first decades of the twentieth century described the interior as a place where one was secreted and isolated against the competition, filth, disease and depravity one encountered on the streets of the big cities, whether they be Paris, London or Copenhagen. Cultural discourse carried over from the nineteenth century the sense of interiors as a place of refuge, but increasingly rejected representations of them as an expression of individual identity. Mary Gluck observes that the appealing colors and patterns of Impressionist interiors had simultaneously presented "a claustrophobic space of elite connoisseurship and isolated contemplation."[55] By the

[55] Mary Gluck, *Popular Bohemia: Modernism and Urban Culture in Ninenteenth-Century Paris* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 120.

turn of the century, interiors become more open and airy than the packed spaces represented by Mary Cassatt or Berthe Morisot.[56]

In contrast to the crowded apartments evident in 1880s paintings, the Mackintosh and Macdonald partnership in the first decade of 1900s created a style that "provided a means of reimposing meaning and coherence on the fluid conditions of city life, helping to bolster it and to mask its unpalatable aspects. Its emphasis on the visual synthesis of self-contained environments sent out strong messages of individuality and control."[57] Macdonald and Mackintosh took as given that the streets of Glasgow were dirty, chaotic and noisy, and therefore designed tea shops and home interiors that were harmonious, unified, and calming. The Mackintoshes made a profound transition from the street in remodeling their home at Southpark Avenue in Glasgow. The innermost destination was their bedroom, which served as an inner sanctum of pristine and serene space, protected from the outside world.[58]

On a larger scale, housing reform movements applied the premise that a clean, uncluttered interior, with a uniform treatment of the walls, would promote psychological and physical health. British efforts from the 1880s already linked good domestic design

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[56]For discussion of the compressed space of Impressionist interiors see for example Griselda Pollock on Mary Cassatt, ""Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," in *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History,* ed. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (New York: Icon Editions, Harper Collins, 1992), 244-267 or in *Mary Cassatt* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980).

[57] Juliet Kinchin, "Glasgow: The Dark Daughter of the North," in *Art Nouveau 1890-1914,* ed. Paul Greenhalgh (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2000), 320.

[58] Kinchin, "Glasgow: The Dark Daughter of the North," 321.

with social and moral improvements.[59] Copenhagen's expansion and industrialization in the twentieth century posed parallel problems and similar solutions. One group of activists formed in 1903 aspired to educate the public and reform housing construction for workers in Copenhagen. Plesner, its first architect, publicized revolutionary ideas for an open floor plan that addressed sanitation and recreation needs.[60] Many other Scandinavian modernist designers by the end of World War I believed that good home and apartment design could remedy modern ills. Interiors on display at the Stockholm exhibition of 1917 demonstrated a prevailing thesis: "That good design is a serious responsibility; that design has an impact on the quality of life in all aspects of society; and that the arts can be a vehicle for social improvement."[61]

In these reforms, the white wall consistently was advocated to provide for the user an element of healthy architectural clarity and enduring, good design. In his "Architecture" essay of 1910, Loos also associated the white wall with rural tendencies that had escaped the whimsies of fashion. He advocated the preservation of the traditional wall treatment, warning that "the white-washed vernacular in an isolated countryside…would be violated by the arrival of architecture."[62] Baillie-Scott made a similar assertion, suggesting that a home in the countryside could serve as a haven, "Simple, quiet rooms full of that repose which belongs to woods and groves." Light and

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[59] Gillian Naylor, "Secession in Vienna." in *Art Nouveau 1890-1914,* ed. Paul Greenhalgh (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2000), 300.

[60] Finsen, *Arkitekten Ulrik Plesner*, 19.

[61] David Revere McFadden, Introduction to *Scandinavian Modern Design: 1880-1980* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1982), 17.

[62] Wigley, "White-out: Fashioning the Modern [Part 2]," 36.

Figure 5-24: Anna Ancher. *Old Woman Plucking Hens* (1931/32)

fresh air entering through the windows, according to Baillie-Scott, culminated in a final effect where "the whole breathing of sweet and simple reasonableness."[63]

Spartan architecture on the interior thus resisted the temporal invasion of the transient, hectic pace of modern urban living. Ancher included two pairs of worn, wooden peasant clogs as the only human trace in *At Noon.* The doors and walls in the painting do not establish a sequence of spaces that might unveil a narrative around the shoes. Her primitivist reference to rural lifestyle contrasts with the formal geometries that divide the composition. Ancher created a similar effect to encase the figure in her last known painting *Plucking the Hen* (1931/32, Fig. 5-24). In contrast to the other paintings

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[63] Baillie Scott, "The Country House," 35.

considered in this chapter, the artist did not signify the represented subject through a painted context, and the sitter is still very much present in the image.

In this late work, Ancher revisited one of her traditional motifs and totally divested it of semblance to a particular, local source. Instead, the woman and the hen she plucks blend with the architecture as complementary forms. The body of the old woman emerges from walls that are articulated through only color modulations and parallel horizontal brushstrokes. No objects, tools or decorations interrupt the surface of the interior. The rust color bleeds across the scarf, the gold onto the seat, examples of how the artist obscures the actual context. Ancher suggested vigorous, expressive, but intentional movement in the cascading feathers summarily indicated as marks of pigment. Two awkward, distorted hands engage in the labor of plucking, grasping the tail and pulling the quills. The artist did not fully mix the paint to generate the skin tones, leaving discrete inflections of reds, blacks, whites and even ochre the hands that reveal raw work of both artist and represented subject.

Ancher's *Plucking the Hen* is entirely modern in the dissolution of the subject into strokes and planes of color and texture. As an avant-garde artist, she has negated the conventional function of a painting to describe or represent visual reality. Ancher's <u>method</u> of painting is the only point of entry for the contemporary world; her subjects, however, are people who cling to vanishing lifestyles. Ancher's paint shielded and protected the old woman from the new age. The artist denies the viewer's gaze by surrounding the subject with walls thickened into a viscous plaster of auburn and gold layers of paint. She obscured part of the cheek with a bright vermillion patch and cut

across the chin with a slice of raw umber. Ancher's innovative representation of a traditional rural task conveyed a sensitivity to the performative function of her brush and the gluey pigment.

The effect is totally different than that of French Intimists to whom she is compared. (See Introduction.) Édouard Vuillard in *Interior, Mother and Sister of the Artist* (1893, Fig. 5-25) collapsed the interior on the two represented women. The rising floorboards and disproportionately scaled furnishings reduce the perceived stature of the artist's mother. The angled and patterned surfaces press down and encroach on his sister's body.[64] Even in one of Vuillard's works from the early twentieth century, *Breakfast at VillerVille* (1910, Fig. 5-26) the decorated surfaces overwhelm the figures. Vuillard's walls threaten, and therefore require human resistance. The artist established prominent black outlines of various thickness to intervene between the women and the

Figure 5-25: Édouard Vuillard. *Interior, Mother and Sister of the Artist* (1893)

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[64] Susan Sidlauskas, "Contesting Femininity: Vuillard's Family Pictures," *The Art Bulletin,* Vol 79, No. 1 (Mar 1997): 85. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3046231.

Figure 5-26: Édouard Vuillard. *Breakfast at VillerVille* (1910)

interior in the 1910 painting, needing to reassert the human forms against the overall pattern. In contrast, in Ancher's painting the room's most important function aligns with the design concepts of Loos; it serves as an intimate dwelling, a harmonious environment, that permits and protects the presence of the old woman at work.[65] Ancher's bare walls bar intrusions of transitory fashion, technological change, city ailments or industrial alienation. Her wall provides advantages for the subject in *Plucking the Hen*, rather than adds oppression as it does in the examples by Vuillard.

The healthy effect associated with unadorned architectural surfaces required the clearing of the interior in order to promote cleanliness. Juliet Kinchin points out that Mackintosh and Macdonald partnership had to contend with notorious smog. Their solution of softer palettes, however, was seen to be advantageous in "the constant

[65] Dariusz Gafijczuk, "Central Europe—Between Presence and Absence: The Architectonics of Blur in Loos, Schoenberg, and Janáček," *Common Knowledge* 19, no. 3 (2013): 541, http://muse.jhu.edu/.

physical battle against dirt …which helped keep disease at bay."[66] The battle against urban dirt and manufacturing smog also led to technical innovations. Nilfisk became the first Danish firm to market vacuum cleaners in 1909. Interior decorating magazines suggest that "The heavy curtains, fan palms, plush furniture and other dust-magnets were thrown out, and instead light and airiness were introduced to home furnishings."[67]

Although Wigley describes the white wall as "lightweight sports clothes of the newly athletic body of architecture," in the Nordic countries walls that were "lightweight" could not perform their essential function of shelter.[68] Ancher consistently applied pigment thickly to indicate walls. For exterior scenes such as *Daphnesvej. A Lane in Skagen's East Town* (Fig. 5-2), as an example, the impasto is so thick it creates an almost sculptural surface, where the change in direction of the palette knife iterates the planes of the buildings. However, Wigley correctly identifies the development of athletics and the healthy body as key signifiers of "the modern" in architecture between 1910 and 1930. Herman Muthesius, for instance, associated the new functionalist aesthetic with health in addition to utilitarianism, economics, structure and suitability.[69] This trend had strong resonance in the development of modern architecture. Le Corbusier very early in his career established healthy living through a "formula of light, air and

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[66]Juliet Kinchin, "Glasgow: The Dark Daughter of the North," in *Art Nouveau 1890-1914,* ed. Paul Greenhalgh (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2000), 320.

[67] Gertrud Hvidberg-Hansen and Gertrud Oelsner, "The Triumph of Life," in *The Spirit of Vitalism: Health, Beauty and Strength in Danish Art, 1890-1914,* ed. Gertrud Hvidberg-Hansen and Gertrud Oelsner. (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 2011), 33.

[68] Wigley, "White-out: Fashioning the Modern [Part 2]," 29.

[69] Wigley, "White-out: Fashioning the Modern [Part 2]," 38.

hygiene" at the core of his design.[70] Scandinavians and others focused on improving the physical condition of the body through both beneficial sun, bathing and exercise pursued in leisure and extolled the virtues of physical labor over sedentary service and factory employment.

The new white architecture served as a buffer against nervous disorders characteristic of twentieth century cities, but that equally plagued many of the artists of Skagen. Krøyer suffered extended bouts with mental illness requiring intensive care and hospitalization. Likewise Plesner suffered from depression that periodically interfered with his work.[71] Michael Ancher took several extended cures at Wiesbaden. By 1900, Skagen itself had developed as a health resort promoting vigorous living and restorative cures for not only medical tourists, but also for these artists. Mental, emotional and physical recuperation demanded healthy refuges characterized by clarity and functionality in their design, and respect for the bodily experience of the architectural space. Walls with pure surfaces and interiors without clutter protected the fragile modern identity. Their representation in Ancher's canvases opens up the claustrophobic spaces of impressionist interiors, forming areas that could both shield the inhabitants and their egos, and engage the body in a healthy, haptic experience of constructed space. Her abstract interiors anticipate the formal experiments of De Stijl and the Bauhaus where interlocking planes of color or rationalized functionality dictate the appearance of the inner chambers of a house or apartment. Nonetheless, in *At Noon* and in *Interior:*

[70] Munch, "Framing the Life Rhythm," 124.

[71] Finsen, *Arkitekten Ulrik Plesner*, 35.

Brøndum's Annex, Ancher's colors still vibrated with energy, the warmth of palpable sunlight transformed the walls and the brushstroke continued to express the rooms as a private, individual domain. Ancher's interiors provide healthy retreat from the pressures of modernity, where the fragile self can be defended by the walls, and "The surface [became] an elaborate mechanism for concealing and preserving, if not constructing, identity."[72]

Interiority and Empty Spaces

Plesner and Bindesbøll combined light and color with a functional clarity that provide the Skagen church with a meditative atmosphere. Anna Ancher combined these elements to similar effect. Her paintings of empty interiors counter instantaneity and progress by filtering evidence of the present, condensing space and eliminating extraneous personal belongings or furnishings. While historians have painstakingly reconstructed a narrative for many paintings, their efforts counter Ancher's own achievements of intensified privacy and illegibility in the works. As her friend Palle Bruun wrote in 1905:

> What Mistress Anna paints/ We do not know;
> She's loath to show/ Hides it away;
> Unseen in drawers/ Tucked down in chairs,
> Kept well away from light of day.[73]

By 1913, Ancher's represented interiors emphasized the function of the spaces as shelter, where things are hidden like her paintings, and as retreat, where people can remain

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[72] Wigley, "White-out: Fashioning the Modern [Part 2]," 35.

[73] Palle Bruun (1905) published in *Politiken* 17 August 1929, reprinted in "The Story of Anna" by Mette Bøgh Jensen in *I am Anna: A Homage to Anna Ancher,* ed. Mette Bøgh Jensen, transl. Walton Glyn Jones (Skagen: Skagens Museum, 2009), 1.

protected from voyeuristic scrutiny, "well away from the light of day." Objects and inhabitants disappear from view in these places.

At the end of the nineteenth century one's home or apartment, and the objects within, were considered to be "a personal space, a place of refuge from the anonymity, rationality and efficiency that—according to the Swedish ethnologist Ovar Löfgren—infuses public life."[74] Scandinavian home design and decoration embraced this theme of refuge. There is an evident preference for nostalgic decorations evoking bygone periods. Timber frames asserted a counter-narrative to steel and other factory materials. A resurgence of homespun textiles demonstrated a preference for handicraft over the impersonal readymades available at the department stores. Likewise Plesner's admiration for the British Domestic Revival matched widespread popularity in Denmark for the crafts that appeared in *The Studio.* While this can be seen as a widespread provincial tendency of resistance to the urban centers, it had a particularly Scandinavian resonance. Georg Brandes complained irritably that unlike the Parisian *flâneur* who roamed the boulevard and the London socialite who frequented the coffee houses, "Danes tended to retreat into the shelter of their homes."[75] Larsen observes that both Hammershøi and Ring devoted a significant portion of their art to representations of the interior, part of a growing tendency between 1880 and 1914.[76] However, most of their interiors include

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[74] Peter Nørgaard Larsen, "Hammershøi and Homelessness," in *Hammershøi and Europe,* ed. Kasper Monrad (Copenhagen: Statens Museum for Kunst, 2012), 189.

[75] Timo Huusko, "National Art and the Nation of Artists in the Nordic Countries," in *Nordic Art : The Modern Breakthrough, 1860-1920,* ed. David Jackson (Munich : Hirmer Verlag, 2012), 204, exh. cat.

[76] Larsen, "Hammershøi and Homelessness," 189; Peter Nørgaard Larsen, *L.A. Ring: On the Edge of the World* (Copenhagen: Statens Museum for Kunst, 2006), 77, exh. cat. See also Nils Ohlsen,"Women's

human figures, usually women. What is striking about Anna Ancher's late works is the human absence. There is no body in the shoes at the door of *At Noon;* there is no one sitting in the chair in *Interior with Clematis.* There is no human trace at all in *Brøndum Annex*. Even the body of the woman plucking hens, the, feathers and brushstrokes become a harmonious part of the interior. Ancher has subverted what Susan Sidlauskas described as a cross-cultural and multidisciplinary "imaginative fusion" of a person's body with its surroundings in the interior.[77]

Rooms. An Aspect of Nordic Interior Paintings," in *Nordic Art : The Modern Breakthrough, 1860-1920,* 217, 221.

[77] Susan Sidlauskas, "Psyche and Sympathy: Staging Interiority in the Early Modern Home," in *Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture*, ed. Christopher Reed (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1996), 70.

CONCLUSION

Historical analysis of artist Anna Ancher has distorted her formal innovations and misidentified the cultural context due to a significantly biased lens, dominated by the written records of her husband and keyed to the goals and aspirations of the Modern Breakthrough. The chronological approach of this thesis facilitates examination of Ancher's art in tandem with shifts in Modernism and important relevant contextual developments beyond the immediate art colony in Skagen. Ancher never fully embraced any single modernist tendency, but through most of her life, a significant body of her painting conversed with the most recent discussions of what was new, experimental or innovative. Photographs and painted portraits of the artist indicate both her awareness of shifting fashions from the urban centers and of the associated change in gender roles, design concerns and normative expectations that accompanied the sartorial variations. Ancher kept abreast of cosmopolitan developments in art, theory and culture.

Ancher joined the efforts of other Skagen colonists in the 1880s when she practiced some of the radical experiments of the French Impressionists in finish, composition and color. Pursuing parallel goals to represent authentic subject matter in contemporary life, many Danish painters including Ancher actually became more intensely aware of their difference as artists of the periphery. The occasion of the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1889 proved pivotal, a time when many modernists from Denmark joined other Scandinavians for study and professional development during an extended stay in the French capital. Through social interactions in the cafés and opportunities to work together in studios, they coalesced as a Nordic subculture within

modernism. For many of her peers in the Scandinavian avant-garde, public exhibition strategies in defiance of the Academy and the Salon remained an even more important legacy of the French Impressionists than their technical and stylistic innovations.

Ancher not only found better opportunities to learn the fundamentals of her craft by studying with Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, she formed a richer network of strong women artists. Parisian experiences increased Ancher's awareness of other developments in Nordic art associated with the Fleksum painters of Norway and the Swedish Symbolists such as Richard Bergh and Prince Eugen. Her return to Skagen in the summer of 1889 marked the beginning of a decade of innovative works, ranging from *Sunshine in the Blue Room* (1891) to *Communion in Skagen Church* (1899). These paintings drew on artistic ideas that circulated in Paris and in Copenhagen or entered the discourse through international journals, but also demonstrate the artist's technical independence.

Figure 6-1: Anna Ancher. *Portrait of Fru Brøndum* (1890), pastel

Furthermore, Ancher's paintings symbolically represent ideals of faith, manual work, health and sunshine using imagery drawn from local subjects and relevant to regional issues.

Anna Ancher's intimate paintings of her mother executed across nearly three decades demonstrate the artist's interpositions in the fluid context of Danish modernism. The pastel of her mother from 1890 maintains the coloration and verisimilitude of the Modern Breakthrough (Fig. 6-1). Ancher's portrait clearly references the vogue for seventeenth-century Dutch art among her colonial colleagues. The clear and simple contours, however, demonstrate more forceful drawing than her earlier work as an emerging artist and respect Puvis de Chavannes' imperative that his pupils attend to line. At the same time, Ancher's handling of the pastel medium also shows innovative

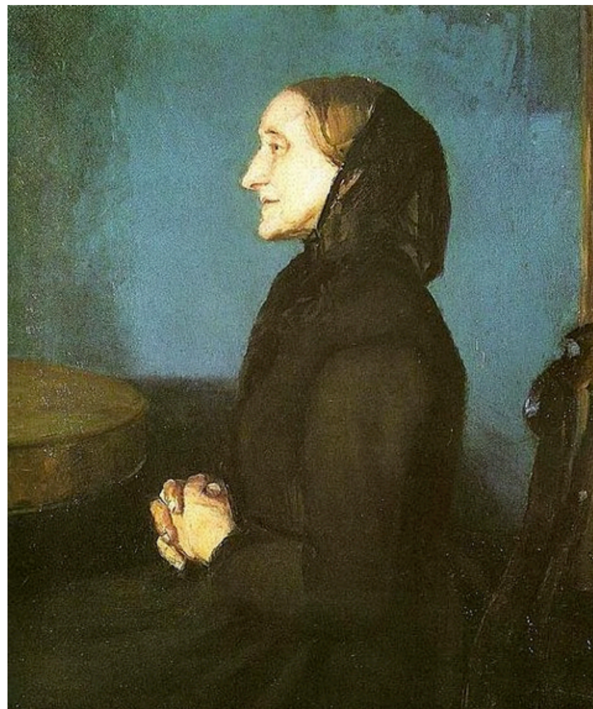

Figure 6-2: Anna Ancher. *Portrait of Fru Brøndum* (1893), oil

interruptive markings in bright, contrasting colors, moving away from the paint handling of her Skagen colleagues. The visit to Paris in 1889 constituted a turning point in Ancher's participation as a Skagen colonist and Modern Breakthrough artist.

Ancher's paintings from the decade after her return from Paris provide evidence of her "weaving in a little symbolism."Already by the early 1890s, Danish painters and authors pulled from new modernist threads of symbolism in art and literature. In the wake of the Exposition Universelle, several important journals and newspapers published extended articles on the poet Charles Baudelaire and reviews of Parisian symbolism. French symbolist art could be seen in commercial venues, galleries and private collections. The 1893 oil profile of her mother bears close similarities to the pastel, but makes evident Ancher's nascent symbolist ideas (Fig. 6-2). The painting evokes James McNeill Whistler's iconic image of his mother, *Arrangement in Grey and Black, No. 1* (1871). Ancher's use of light and color extend further than the pastel in evoking mood and spirit, evident in the halo of lighter pigment that sacralizes her mother's face. The coarse treatment of the hands through the unblended strokes of thick pigment timidly approaches the expressive quality of Vincent van Gogh's folded hands in *La Berceuse* (1889). Ancher, however, also defers to some of the primitivist ideas circulating through the European avant-garde. Her mother's headscarf and plainly cut garment were appropriate to a pious churchwoman of provincial Denmark, but were represented with greater sensitivity to the signifying cultural meanings than paintings of Breton women by Paul Gauguin. Although the sitter's profile is less severe than in Ancher's 1895 double portrait of her mother and sister (Fig. 4-6), the symbolist revivification of Florentine

masters and adaptation of rural traditions such as silhouette painting remove the portrait from its function as memento to impart timelessness and meaning.

In Denmark, the aesthetics and outwardly oriented universal symbols of Hans Christian Andersen's writing and vitalist ideas from Friedrich Nietzsche received equivalent and arguably more positive attention than Baudelaire, who many felt to be both pessimistic and decadent. By 1900, Ancher's painting style and motif selection suggest a subtle strategy of distancing from her initial associations with the Modern Breakthrough and likewise from Parisian orientations within Danish symbolism. Importantly, her representations of the Inner Mission were based on a more intimate experience and understanding of rural piety. Paintings by Ancher that depicted agricultural laborers from the same period paralleled sociopolitical developments

Figure 6-3: Anna Ancher, *Portrait of Fru Brøndum* (1909)

impacting the Jutland Peninsula concomitant with accelerated industrialization and transformations of the regional cultural geography due to commercial farming.

In the period leading up to and during World War I, many Danish modernists in the fine arts, architecture and design moved toward abstraction. Ancher's paintings of interiors demonstrate an affinity with the architectural aesthetic of white, unadorned walls associated with health and strength, popularized by *The Studio* and advocated by the German and Viennese modernist designers. During this period Ancher also inverted normative binaries for bourgeois women in the spatial organization, decoration and representation of her house. In her depictions, Michael Ancher assumed the role of host in the domestic sphere, while Anna Ancher's own personal spaces are presented without decoration or excess furnishings. Her interiors reflect contemporary privileging of architectural functionalism in order to promote and protect the physical and mental health of the inhabitant by removing distracting clutter and articulating the framing elements of the exterior in order to create a safe and hygienic haven from urban incursions. Her paintings of empty rooms provided refuge from instantaneity and progress, but also offset her appearance in the public gaze in painted representations by her husband and P. S. Krøyer.

Ancher's images of her mother in the last years of her life echo discourse about the interior. In 1909, as her mother's health began to decline, Ancher figuratively wrapped the frail woman in vibrant color and bathed her in the beneficial curative rays of the sun (Fig.6-3). The light still seems to warm the old woman's knuckles and to caress her face. The portrait demonstrates aspects of vitalism and employs expressionist color.

The alternating orange-red or gold against blue forces the eye to move across the canvas and engage actively with the image. The artist stripped down the décor to a limited number of simple furnishings, while the depicted walls, openings, and painting frames are abstracted into areas of energetic color. The elimination of bric-à-brac signified the move into a cleaner aesthetic of modern architecture. At the same time, there are few openings that might invite the viewer to move in and out or interrupt the reading woman. Near orange and presumably distant blue space collide at the gold millwork, without permitting ingress or exit (Fig. 6-4).

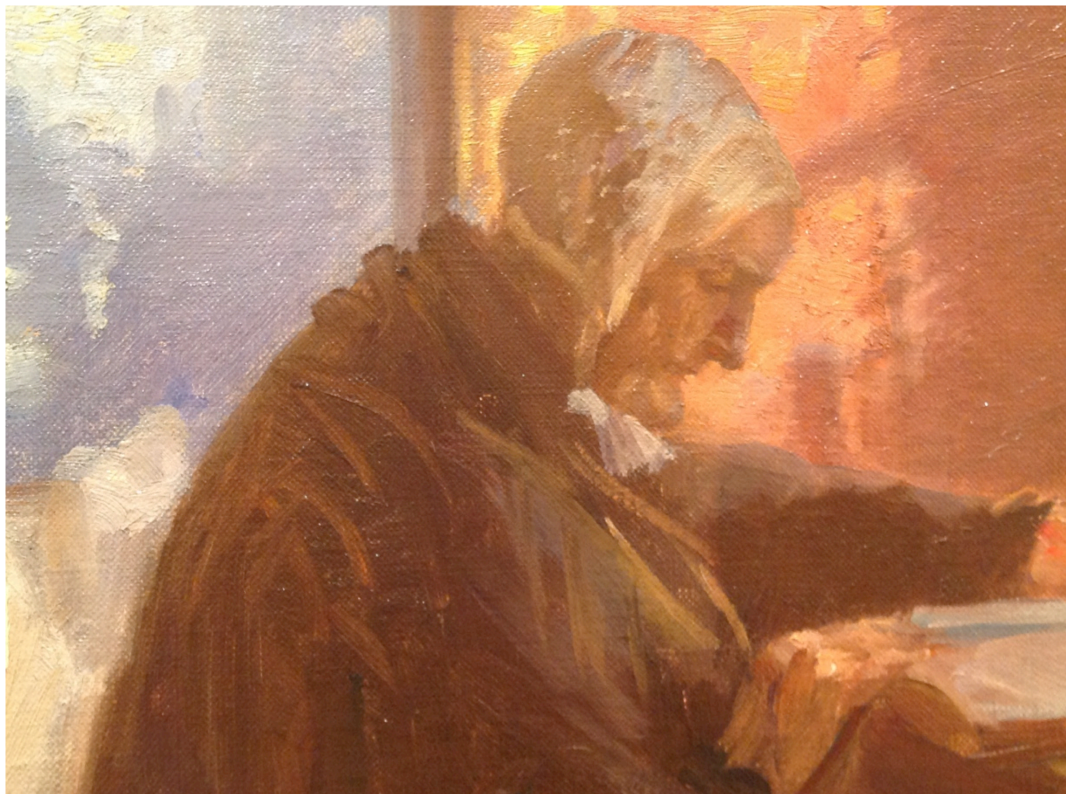

Figure 6-4: Anna Ancher, *Portrait of Fru Brøndum* (1909), detail

Figure 6-5: Anna Ancher. *Fru Brøndum in the Blue Room* (1913)

One of several paintings executed during her mother's final years, *Mrs. Ane Brøndum in the Blue Room* (1913, Fig. 6-5) integrates a history of Ancher's painting into the sensitive representation of her frail mother. Ancher divided the composition into broad planar surfaces defined by tonality. The walls provided a canvas for the artist's signature solar reflections that also dance gently on her mother's face and shoulders, animations of the positive sun symbol. The painting has a temporal vagueness, as if representing the liminal moments common to both Baudelaire and Andersen. Her mother's closed eyes and folded hands create stillness, suggesting a magic time where hints of dusky violet creep into the ancient fingers and across the coverlet. In apprehending such a narrow portal in her mother's resting eyes, the beholder recognizes the dying woman's access to a dimension unbound by the visual field, akin to the experience of listening to music. Ancher protected her mother's repose. The floor appears tilted and the chair is cropped keeping out visitors. The artist depicted no openings to the room. The old woman's peace contrasts with the artist's vigor in handling the medium. The soothing, warm red blankets the mother' legs, but is infused with the Nietzschean, animated motion of the artist's brush, which strokes a pattern of color onto its surface giving it new life. Within this modern handling of subject and surface, Ancher continued the dialogue with modernism and its exploration of healthy, restorative interiors and its preoccupation with refuge from the city.

Even in relation to Copenhagen, this artist remained on the periphery, referencing without fully embracing the urban cultural centers. Furthermore, elements of naturalism continued to characterize a significant portion of her work representing local Skageners

and rural Denmark. This persistent thread of conservatism could be attributed to the taste of the intended end-user based on her understanding of demand. I have not been able to locate records differentiating the functions of Ancher's images, whether for personal expression, public exhibition, commissions, gifts or items for sale in the market. It seems likely that the national popularity for paintings of peasants discussed in Chapter Four may have encouraged the artist to continue producing in this vein. The shifts after 1905 could be related to the freedom that the artist now had since her receipt of the two Eckersberg medals meant that she was now a plenary member of the Royal Danish Academy. Additionally, some paintings seemed to have served for specific historical or commemorative purposes. *Before the King's Visit* (1909) and *Three Old Women Sewing a Blue Dress for a Fancy Dress Ball* (1920) invite further inquiry into the royal reception, patronage and taste as well as the role of Ancher's art within Skagen town. Images of women doing needlework in the 1890s and 1900s and her complex painting (1899) of the vaccination clinic in Skagen purchased by Skagens Museum in September of 2013 also have political and social implications.

There continue to be questions about how Ancher saw her own status within the family and in the local community. We are only able to glean a partial sense of her role within the Brøndum family. In addition to the shift that is signified by representations of Ancher's clothing in the images by Krøyer and Michael Ancher, it will be important to unpack more thoroughly the observation of the anchor brooch evident in painted and photographed representations of her. I find that this proprietary symbol, given to her by her husband during their courtship, calls into question the claims made by Elisabeth

Fabritius, Annette Johansen and others with regards to the equality and mutual encouragement of the husband and wife artistic partnership. Evidence gleaned from the small number of available letters and primary source materials currently available cannot adequately refute Fabritius' conclusions drawn from her extensive and deep familiarity with the written testimony. It is a question that certainly should be taken up again when the scholar's manuscript is published (anticipated 2014) or the archives are unlocked. Furthermore there are many more paintings of Anna Ancher by her husband and photographs in Skagen and the Royal Library that together forge a complex and not altogether consistent representation of how Michael viewed his wife and her public

Figure 6-6: Photograph from the Dansk Kongelige Bibliotek of Anne-Marie Carl Nielsen, Elisabeth Dons and Anna Ancher, undated.

image, a project that was beyond the scope of the dissertation. One wonders, for instance, if Karl Madsen's description of her feminine insights and painterly touch prompted the persistent characterization of Ancher as an impressionist, despite the lack of transitory, observable phenomenon in her images.

Similarly, Anna Ancher's relationship to the Copenhagen bourgeoisie and the city as a cultural center can only be incompletely described without greater access to the closed archives. Ancher painted many more interiors set in the apartment on Amalievej than I knew about when setting the parameters of the project. Images of women reading, looking, engaged in an active life indicate another issue that needs to be explored. Additionally, my understanding of the Ancher's participation in the spring exhibition season and its culture, and knowledge of the conflicts among important acquaintances in the Art Society and Den Frie require more extensive study. The anticipated release by Fabritius of the Michael and Anna Ancher letters and papers will help to illuminate the fragmentary record garnered from the available notes and cards to isolated correspondents.

Ancher's relationship to vitalism and to the women's movement in Denmark has only been partially reconstructed, but both avenues show promising links. An undated photograph (Fig. 6-6) of Anna Ancher with Anne-Marie Carl Nielsen and the opera singer Elisabeth Dons conjoins the painter with feminist organizing, opens up a new dimension to the question of her involvement with music in Copenhagen, and links her through the sculptor to a circle of radical artists and practices. Both Carl-Nielsen and Dons had significant connections to developments elsewhere in Scandinavia. The

research also, however, raises some troubling issues of nationalism and racial ethnocentrism in Denmark, with especially sinister overtones when one considers the Vitalist goal of cultivating the healthy Danish body in parallel with the rise of National Socialism in Germany. The initial effort in this dissertation to consider Ancher's art as it intersects the monumental works of J. F. Willumsen and some of the musical ideas of Carl Nielsen suggests important, but also problematic avenues for future inquiry. This research will necessitate detailed study of the Carl Nielsen papers and extended probing of the Willumsen library at the Danish museum housing his collection.

Finally, there is much more to be done with Anna Ancher's travel and with her drawing practice and printmaking. She went to London in 1907 on the occasion of a Guildhall Art Gallery exhibition. She visited Vienna and Munich in 1882; Berlin three times between in 1882 and 1900; and made at least two trips to Dresden, Amsterdam and one to Belgium. Ancher uses the funds she received as the first recipient (along with historian Ellen Jørgensen) of the Tagea Brandt Travelling Bursary to return to Italy following her initial visit there in 1897; from the published letters, all we know about this trip was that she loved the climate. I do not know how often she traveled to Sweden; Gothenburg was an easy journey and relatively common destination for Copenhagen artists. Even if Anna Ancher's letters reveal little about her journey, Michael Ancher habitually documented extensively his affairs and meetings, permitting a greater understanding of the extent and nature of how avant-garde developments in Germany, the Benelux region and Scandinavia related to Ancher. These destinations provide clues about her interests in international culture and an orientation shifting away from Paris and

towards alternative modernisms. Additionally her prints and drawings that were not accessible during the period of my research due to planned renovations at the Skagens Museum may offer additional directions for research. Published exemplars are from the 1880s and it is unclear if her practice and interest in other media changes. Ancher's oeuvre deserves considerably more attention to its nuances and permutations. This dissertation has reframed the artist as a symbolist, modernist and independent painter facilitating subsequent scholarship to address more fully the implications of the research in understanding and recognizing Ancher's significant contribution to painting.

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APPENDIX

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Name of artist **Title of work**

P. S. Krøyer ***Hip, hip, hurrah! Artist Partyat Skagen***
Oil on canvas 134,5 x 165,5 cm, 1887-88

Acceptance of the above mentioned conditions

Date:
14 August 2013

Name:
Alice M. Rudy Price / Alice M. Price

VAT NO ...

Alice M. Rudy Price
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