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Print Culture
of American
Women from the
Nineteenth
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WOMEN IN PRINT

Edited by **James P. Danky and Wayne A. Wiegand**

PRINT CULTURE HISTORY IN MODERN AMERICA

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James P. Danky

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Wayne A. Wiegand

Foreword by

Elizabeth Long

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Alice Millard and the Gospel of Beauty and Taste

MICHELE V. CLOONAN

In 1896 two ambitious, creative, middle-class Chicago sisters in their early twenties set off for Europe to further their educations.¹ Emily Parsons went to Berlin to study piano, while Alice Parsons studied art in London. Emily returned to Chicago to teach and perform the piano. Alice would eventually teach and perform as well, in southern California, where she also lectured on the “gospel of beauty”² as it pertained to books and the decorative arts. As Alice Millard, she became one of the most important American booksellers of the twentieth century, advising, teaching, and influencing such affluent disciples as William Andrews Clark, Templeton Crocker, Caroline Boeing Poole, and Estelle Doheny. She also introduced Californians to the British fine press movement through the exhibitions she curated and the accompanying catalogs that she wrote. Millard was a connoisseur and a judge of taste—a promoter of highbrow culture, even (according to Lucille Miller, Estelle Doheny’s secretary and librarian) in “philistine Pasadena.”³ Since there were no other American women when she started out who sold books at the high end of the trade, Millard’s role, and her influence, is even more remarkable. This paper will examine Alice Millard’s influence as an arbiter of

highbrow taste in the face of prevailing middlebrow values. The notion of “taste” in reading and book collecting that Millard promoted will be considered against writings on the subject.

Alice Millard’s own taste was formed as much by Chicago, where she came of age, as by Europe, which she frequented throughout her life. She blended American and British sensibilities in her approach to collecting and selling art and books. Her career embodies the discourse on taste and culture in Britain and America reflected in the nineteenth-century writings of artists and critics such as James Jackson Jarves, T. J. Cobden-Sanderson, Charles Eastlake, and Matthew Arnold.

Chicago in the 1890s was a microcosm of American culture. It was home to architects Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright (who later built two homes for Millard), the social reformers Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr and their Hull-House, and the newly founded University of Chicago.⁴ (Wright, Addams, and Starr were all influenced by the Arts and Crafts Movement.) In 1893, Chicago hosted the Columbian Exposition, the most splendid American fair to date with its 150 buildings dubbed the “White City.” At the same time, the decade also witnessed the aftermath of the Haymarket Square riot,⁵ the Pullman strike of 1894, and financial panics. Mr. Dooley, the fictional Irish saloonkeeper created by *Chicago Post* columnist Finley Peter Dunne,⁶ provided a running social commentary on the times. His commentaries reflected the often uneasy tension between the haves and have-nots, a tension found frequently in the contemporary fiction of Chicago-realist writers Hamlin Garland and Frank Norris in the 1890s, and Upton Sinclair and Theodore Dreiser a decade later.⁷

The social tensions of the late nineteenth century are also explored in *The Gilded Age* (Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner) and *Democracy* (Henry Adams). Both novels describe political and social corruption, though the rough-hewn manners and mores of Americans are satirized particularly by Twain in *The Gilded Age*. How did these mores reflect the cultural taste of Americans? How did the material excesses that these authors portrayed suggest an American tendency to commodify culture? Or even to measure the “worth” of all things by their monetary value? There is no better source to begin our inquiry with than Fanny Trollope’s *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, a work that Mark Twain himself admired.⁸

Fanny Trollope came to America in 1827 with two of her children “to seek temporary shelter from hardship and troubles at home.”⁹ She was hoping to improve her family’s fortunes, but the only enterprise she succeeded at was lambasting the Americans in her first book. And succeed the book did:¹⁰ In its first year of publication, 1832, it went through four English and four American editions. The book was enthusiastically received in Europe, but Americans were understandably furious with the author. Trollope would be caricatured in print and illustrations for decades.¹¹ The term “Trollopize” was even coined to suggest harsh criticism.¹²

Trollope’s sin? *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, though undeniably witty, is harshly critical of Americans. Trollope faults the brand of democracy that Americans practiced, repudiating Jefferson’s “mischievous sophistry that all men were born free and equal” (57). She also criticizes Americans who “with one hand [were] hoisting the cap of liberty, and with the other flogging their slaves” (168).

Besides criticizing Americans—justifiably—for the institution of slavery, Trollope derides them for being uncouth, unmannered, and uncultured. To cite but one example of many, she relates a conversation she had concerning English literature with a Mr. Flint, then editor of the *Western Monthly Review*:

And Shakespeare, sir?

Shakespeare, Madam, is obscene, and, thank God, WE are sufficiently advanced to have found it out! (72)

Trollope’s narrative is liberally peppered with such anecdotes; indeed, she seemed to believe that the New World was evidence of the collapse of the standards of the Old World. As a Briton, Fanny Trollope could be expected to look down on what she obviously felt was a break-away republic, and it is clear that she could not overcome her own class consciousness. She concludes her book by observing that

... if refinement once creeps in among them, if they once learn to cling to the graces, the honours, the chivalry of life, then we shall say farewell to American equality, and welcome to European fellowship one of the finest countries on the earth. (318)

The critic Russell Lynes has dubbed the period in which Fanny Trollope was writing—the late 1820s through the early 1830s—the “Age of Public Taste.”¹³ The period was ushered in by the election of President Andrew Jackson, “Old Hickory,” in 1828. By the 1830s almost everyone in America could afford carpets, wallpapers, and certain textiles because of the invention of new weaving looms and wallpaper-printing machines. The home-decorating industries flourished and magazines such as Peterson’s *The Lady’s World of Fashion* and *Godey’s Lady’s Book* introduced European style to the emerging American mass market.

The development of a taste for fine art in America was much slower to evolve. Art unions opened and closed, while by the 1840s, P. T. Barnum operated the most popular museum of the day—a dubious attainment, given the nature of Barnum’s exhibits.¹⁴ Paintings that had prurient or sensationalist features were popular; others were ignored. From the 1850s to the Civil War, several American “art missionaries,” the best known of whom was James Jackson Jarves, tried to introduce the American public to European art by purchasing paintings in Europe and placing them in American institutions such as athenaeums and universities. Jarves also wrote about art in such volumes as *Art Hints* and *Art Studies*. The results he achieved were mixed: the Boston Athenaeum could not muster support to purchase his collection, and Yale wound up with it by default. Still, Jarves had influence. After the Civil War, comprehensive and historical collections were gathered in museums such as the Metropolitan in New York.¹⁵ Later, collectors such as William C. Corcoran and William T. Walters were able to open museums to house their enormous collections.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the Atlantic, critics and artists were beginning to speak out against the injustices brought about by the Industrial Revolution. These voices would eventually find a large audience in America. In England, John Ruskin, perhaps the most influential art critic of the nineteenth century, wrote prolifically about art and social reform for a wide audience. Great art, Ruskin believed, should convey great ideas. To understand art, one needed a discerning eye. Wealthy industrialists had little training in art and so could only imitate earlier art patrons. Further, industrialists ran factories and mills that exploited child labor and caused all manner of social ills. Ruskin felt that reform could take place if society returned to medieval craftsmanship and the naturalistic style of the Gothic era, an aesthetic that—though naïve—was embedded in his moral convictions. (He was also short-

sighted in opposing efforts to raise the standard of design in industry.) Ruskin's writings inspired designer, craftsman, and social reformer William Morris and others to champion the Arts and Crafts Movement in the 1880s. Unlike Ruskin, Morris had the genius to fuse ideals with practical activity.

William Morris was a prolific craftsman and writer. In 1861 he founded the manufacturing and decorating firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., which produced furniture, tapestry, stained glass, furnishing fabrics, wallpaper, carpets, and more. For Morris, art was the expression of one's joy in the labor. His last venture was to produce letterpress-printed books on handmade papers. Morris started his Kelmscott Press in 1891 and in the scant five years before his death, the press produced dozens of books that continue to influence book design to this day. Ironically, as a socialist Morris wanted to produce art for the masses, but only the well-to-do could afford his expensive handmade products.

Charles Eastlake was another British aesthetic crusader. Eastlake's uncle, Sir Charles Eastlake, was president of the Royal Academy. Eastlake the nephew was a talented architect and watercolorist who turned his attention to interior design. His first book, *Hints on Household Taste* (1868),¹⁶ was a best seller on both sides of the Atlantic. Like Ruskin and Morris, Eastlake was concerned with both aesthetics and morals. He favored the "sincere" over the "showy" and insisted that there is "a right and a wrong notion of taste in jewelry . . . and in many other fields which stand apart from a connoisseurship of what is commonly called 'high art'" (12). He concludes that if the public "encourage[s] that sound and healthy taste which alone is found allied with conscientious labor, whether in the workshop or factory, then we may hope to see the ancient glory of those industrial arts which . . . should owe their highest perfection to civilized skill" (264).

Ruskin, Morris, and Eastlake were born to wealth, as was the American social reformer Jane Addams. In founding the social settlement Hull-House, she aimed not only to educate Chicago's poor but also to bring beautiful objects into their lives. Addams had visited the first settlement house, Toynbee Hall in London, in June 1888 and within a year began Hull-House. Her cofounder, Ellen Gates Starr, later studied bookbinding with William Morris' protégé T. J. Cobden-Sanderson and then taught it at Hull-House. This is but one of many links between Americans and the British Arts and Crafts Movement. Such links, in

Chicago and elsewhere, influenced American tastes and sensibilities for more than a generation.

Let us now turn our attention back to young Alice Parsons, who at the beginning of this essay was headed to London. Her development as a book expert and taste-maker can be partially gleaned from her background. But little is known about her early life, and Millard left few letters and no diaries. Therefore, the process of “triangulation”—so well described by Jean Strouse in her biography of J. P. Morgan—is necessary.¹⁷

Alice Covell Parsons was born in Jefferson City, Missouri, on May 4, 1873.¹⁸ She had two sisters, Emily and Clara, and a brother, Walter. Little is known of her childhood, though a surviving grandnephew believes that Alice Millard’s father was an alcoholic and that her mother may have left him and moved the children to Chicago.¹⁹ At some point the Parsons converted to Christian Science, which Millard practiced for the rest of her life.²⁰ Her family was not wealthy, and her nephew and others believe that she was a schoolteacher before, and possibly after, she went to Europe. That is the extent of what is known about her prior to her departure for Europe in 1896.²¹

Unfortunately, information about Millard’s experiences during her first stay in London has also been lost. But we can glean something of them from her return to Chicago. One day she went to McClurg’s bookstore looking for volumes on the Pre-Raphaelite painters. George Madison Millard sold or gave her J. W. Mackail’s newly published *Life of William Morris* (1899). As Ward Ritchie describes it, “Millard soon became a regular visitor at the bookstore, seeking guidance from her new-found mentor.”²²

In fact, there was more to this mentorship than George Millard had provided the many others who sought his advice and judgment. In 1901, Alice Parsons accompanied the bookseller on his annual European book-buying trip—and returned as Mrs. George Millard. The two were married in the Christopher-Wren-designed St. Bride’s Church in London, an appropriate venue for this bookish couple, since the St. Bride Printing Library—which opened in 1895—was just across the way.

Richie and Rosenthal have each described the May-December relationship of Alice and George Millard: she was twenty-eight and he was fifty-four or fifty-five at the time of their marriage.²³ By all accounts it was a happy one, fueled in part by their shared interests. According

to Ritchie as well as family accounts,²⁴ Alice Millard continued to travel with her husband, meeting the William Morris family, the Cobden-Sandersons, the booksellers Pickering & Chatto, Maggs, Quaritch, and many others involved in the creation and/or selling of books. These men became teachers and role models for Alice Millard. Many years later she would do business with them as an established bookseller herself.

George was, no doubt, Millard's teacher in matters pertaining to the book world, and she seems to have spent the early years of their marriage absorbing all the knowledge she could. It seems likely that she also educated herself through extensive reading. We can draw some conclusions about what she read by studying the list of books in the inventory of her possessions made shortly after her death, as well as by looking at the books she owned that are still in her family, many of which have inscriptions and other marks of bibliographical evidence.²⁵

There are four generalizations that can be made about the Millard library: 1) George and/or Alice was interested in fiction and poetry—nearly every nineteenth-century British and French writer of importance appears on the inventory. 2) The Millards maintained a strong reference collection. The inventory contains many books on bibliography, fine art, decorative art, and design, dating from the 1880s until shortly before Alice Millard's death in 1938. 3) The Millards held on to many of their reference books. For example, the Mackail book that Alice acquired from George in 1899 was on the inventory. Millard might have kept it for sentimental reasons, but it would still have been as useful a reference tool in the 1930s as it was when it was first published. 4) Millard probably read books on design, the arts, bibliography, and bookbinding, since she continued buying books in these areas to the end of her life.

It is probably safe to conclude that Millard was reading reference books published in the 1880s, 1890s, and the first decade of the twentieth century while she and George were living in Chicago. Some of these authors and titles from the inventory are: Owen Jones, *Grammar of Ornament*; William Thackeray, *Critical Essays in Art*; William Morris, *Gothic Architecture*; T. J. Cobden-Sanderson, *The Ideal Book or Book Beautiful*; Sydney Cockerell, *Some German Woodcuts*; and works by the young Bernard Berenson as well as books on bookbinding by William H. J. Weale and Joseph Cundall. Missing from the inventory are Matthew Arnold and Charles Eastlake. It is possible that Millard read their works when she was studying in London.

The happiness of the Millards' relationship was marred only by the tragic birth of their daughter Roxana on January 22, 1904. In accordance with Alice's Christian Science beliefs, the child was born in their home on the South Side of Chicago. Apparently there were complications with the delivery, and later on it was evident that the child was mentally retarded. For a time they relied on home care, but eventually—after the Millards moved to California, and probably after George died—Roxana was placed in the first of the institutions in which she resided until her death in the 1980s.²⁶

In 1906 the Millards moved into a house in Highland Park designed for them by their friend, Frank Lloyd Wright. Their two-story Prairie-style house was the setting for many Millard parties.²⁷ Alice Millard's friendship with Wright continued in California, where he designed another house for her after she and George moved to Pasadena in 1914.

By then, George Millard was in his late sixties and ready to retire from McClurg's. The Millards decided to start a rare-book firm in California, calling it George M. Millard Rare & Fine Imported Books—a name Alice continued to use after her husband's death. They started such a business based on George's reputation alone: he was well known in the book world in part because Eugene Field had written about the Saints and Sinners Corner at McClurg's, a gathering place for writers and other artists. Not long after the couple's arrival in southern California, the *Los Angeles Times* featured a long article about George with a title and subheads that give evidence of his reputation: "New Nook for His Hobbies. Saints and Sinners' Corner Relocated Here. Genius and Friend of Chicago Literati Comes. Has Established Unique Book Corner in House."²⁸

Alice is not mentioned in the *Times* article—not surprising, given the era. Yet she seamlessly continued running the book business immediately after George's death in November 1918. That, along with the fact that women are still not common in the high end of the rare book trade, is further evidence of her expertise and importance—another illustration of biographical triangulation. Millard created a unique and distinctive place for herself, a position she held for some time. In effect, there was no other woman doing what she was doing. Later on, two pairs of women antiquarian booksellers established themselves: Frances Hamill and Margery Barker of Chicago (1928), and Leona Rostenberg

and Madeleine B. Stern of New York (1944). These younger women had something that Alice did not: money.

Alice Millard was different from these other women in another way, too: she didn't just sell books, she created "undeniable opportunities for those who wanted to possess fine things."²⁹ She was able to achieve some financial success because she sold antiques and art as well as books and could place a higher markup on decorative objects than she could on books.³⁰ She genuinely seemed to love having opportunities to teach her clients how to appreciate her wares. And she had tremendous flair. She advertised in fashion magazines, reported on her European buying trips to the local newspapers,³¹ and lectured to her fellow members in the Friday Morning Club.

Her style was quite different from that of her husband, as is revealed in the letters each wrote to the collector William Andrews Clark, Jr. that are now preserved in the library that bears his name. Where George was gentle and deferential, Alice was bold, even daring. When she felt that a particular collector should own a particular book or object, she did not hesitate to make that point vehemently. She helped Clark select not only books but furniture and literary portraits as well. Seven letters that she wrote to him characterize the nature of her working relationship with Clark.³² Throughout the letters Millard seems to take advantage of what she judged was Clark's competitiveness as a collector. In a letter dated November 23, 1923, she writes that if Clark doesn't want a certain Dryden portrait, "I shall offer it to Mr. Huntington." A year later (May 3, 1924) she writes him regarding an edition of Walton's *Angler*, "Mr. [Templeton] Crocker had wanted it, but he's abroad," and consequently she is offering it to Clark instead.

At the same time that Millard employs these rather transparent business tactics, her letters contain meticulous descriptions of the items that she is offering for sale. Her deep knowledge of books and art is always evident. As the inventory of her library shows, Millard continued to buy reference books throughout her life, many of them published in the 1920s. To read her correspondence is to imagine her beginning all of her research in her own studio/library.

Another important client was Estelle Doheny, who was serious, reserved, and a deeply devout Catholic. The two women never had much personal rapport.³³ At the time they became acquainted, Doheny was collecting literary first editions. Millard sensed that this woman of enormous wealth should be collecting more of the highbrow items that

were Millard's stock-in-trade. If Millard could educate Mrs. Doheny, she would have the opportunity to create a great American private library—and of course to reap significant financial rewards.

Others have described at length Mrs. Doheny's initial rejection of Alice Millard's wares.³⁴ Little by little, however, she captured Mrs. Doheny's imagination. The first significant purchase that Doheny made from Millard was the *Aeneid* manuscript written on vellum by William Morris. Mrs. Doheny, unsure of her own tastes, was naïve and indiscriminating; Millard even suggested the design of Mrs. Doheny's bookplates.³⁵ Alice, on the other hand, seemingly was never unsure of her own taste. She seemed to infuse her confidence into others. Eventually, Alice Millard transformed the reluctant Mrs. Doheny into a discerning collector. Mrs. Doheny became interested in works illustrating the art and history of printing, and books and manuscripts that had religious content. Other significant purchases included Colonna's *Hyppnerotomachia Poliphili* and one volume of the Gutenberg Bible. Although Mrs. Doheny purchased books and manuscripts from other dealers, Alice Millard provided the foundation for her great library.³⁶

We know from photographs that Alice Millard was physically striking. We also know it from accounts of her by Ward Ritchie and Frank Lloyd Wright. Millard's stunning looks and intelligence were coupled with a formidable side, which at times intimidated the young Ward Ritchie. Ritchie knew her for the last ten years of her life, during which time he printed catalogs for her exhibits. He has written of their first meeting in 1928 that

I too was captivated by her charm and ardor. . . . She was crowned with a glorious burst of white hair delicately tinted bluish. Her eyes too were blue as were her clothes. [Her appearance] belied her aggressive forcefulness. She had one distressing habit of pulling back her lips as if snarling at one as she made a telling statement. . . . [Yet] [t]here was an elegance she created in her fashionable attire, her surroundings, and her impeccable taste and style of living.³⁷

Ritchie also wrote—in a draft letter to her—that “in the beauty of your little museum I first found my delight in the lovely thing that a book can be, and I remembered your talking with such reverence for those books which you showed me that I could not help wanting to know them and to love them as you did.”³⁸

Wright, who knew her for over thirty years, called her “slender, energetic—fighting for the best of everything for everyone.” As the architect recalled,

The Millards lived in a little wooden dwelling I had built for them at Highland Park near Chicago. I was proud now to have a client survive the first house and ask me to build a second. Out of one hundred and seventy-two buildings this made only the eleventh time it had happened to me. . . . Alice Millard, [was] artistic herself, with her frank blue-eyed smile beneath her unruly hair.³⁹

Wright then describes the building of *La Miniatura*, the first of four houses he designed for his Los Angeles clients. (The house was completed in 1923.) Millard risked all of her assets to build the house, which—typical of many Wright projects—had significant cost overruns. With *La Miniatura*, Wright was experimenting with his new technique known as the “knit block” or “textile-block,” and there were tremendous technical difficulties with the construction. Wright had selected a site for the house on a ravine, so in addition to all the other difficulties, leaks and floods were a constant worry for Millard throughout her residence in the house.⁴⁰ One of Millard’s closest friends felt that the house was too much of a drain on her slender financial resources, and he gave up the legal guardianship of Roxana in protest.⁴¹

Still, the creation of *La Miniatura* is one of the most significant collaborations in Millard’s career and is starkly revealing of her personality, demonstrating her risk-taking and understanding of the importance—socially and professionally—of allying herself with a famous and controversial architect. Had George Millard survived, he might not have selected such a daring design.⁴² In addition to the house itself, Wright’s son Lloyd designed, in 1926, a small museum below the living quarters; Alice referred to it as her “Little Museum of the Book.” The museum housed much of Millard’s collection of books and antiques, and it was the setting for the exhibits that she curated of newly arrived treasures or the books owned by friends and customers. The first exhibit, titled “Order Touched with Delight,” was devoted to the work of her old friend T. J. Cobden-Sanderson. Millard assembled 166 items from nineteen collections.⁴³ Another exhibit, “Civic Relief,” demonstrated the history of printing. She organized it for students in the Printing Department of the Frank Wiggins Trade School.⁴⁴ This exhibit was drawn from her

own collection and included work from some of the earliest printers, continuing through to the 1930s. Some of these printing students later produced their own catalog, *From Gutenberg to the Twentieth Century*.

Millard's little museum furthered all of her aims. Her exhibits attracted visitors, which sometimes translated into sales. The backdrop of Frank Lloyd Wright and his architecture added to the allure of Millard and her books. And the Little Museum of the Book gave her the opportunity to influence cultural taste. Collectors and dealers knew of Millard as herself a collector and purveyor of fine art and desirable books. If she showed a copy of a book in an exhibit in her museum, it must be collectable. In such a circumstance, it was (she probably hoped) an easy matter for her to influence the taste of her colleagues, friends, and customers.

Alice Millard was active in the book trade until just a few weeks before her death from cancer in July 1938, at the age of sixty-five. (The cancer was discovered only after she was injured in a car crash, by which time the disease was far advanced.) She left behind a treasure trove of objects and books, most of which had to be sold for the benefit of Roxana. A group of her friends purchased items from her history of the book collection and donated them to the Huntington Library as "The Alice and George Millard Collection Illustrating the Evolution of the Book."

Alice Millard's taste was rooted in the Arts and Crafts Movement, and her longtime friend T. J. Cobden-Sanderson particularly inspired her. His *The Ideal Book or Book Beautiful*, first published in 1900,⁴⁵ has become something of a manifesto to printers, designers, and bookbinders. Cobden-Sanderson asserts that there are many elements of a book's design that contribute to its beauty; and that no single element should stand out more prominently than any of the others. All elements should contribute equally to the beauty of the whole. Millard seems to have modeled her life on that premise. The life of the mind was not enough for her; beautiful things must be part of it too. Her religious beliefs played an important part in the life that she created for herself. As a Christian Scientist, she embraced a positive outlook that included self-healing.

Beauty and perfection were the hallmarks of culture, according to Matthew Arnold: "Culture is, or ought to be, the study and pursuit of perfection; and that of perfection as pursued by culture, beauty and intelligence."⁴⁶ Arnold's cultural optimism had enormous appeal to

American intellectuals such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, and it continued unabated into the twentieth century. (Arnold published *Culture and Anarchy* in 1869; he died in 1888.) Late-nineteenth-century Americans became interested in fineness, taste, and culture as antidotes to vulgarity. Dictionaries and grammar and etiquette books were popular. In the twentieth century, some of the people who edited the book review sections of newspapers and magazines, and started organizations like the Book of the Month Club (e.g., Stuart P. Sherman, Irita Van Doren, and Henry Seidel Canby), were also Arnoldians.⁴⁷

In an article on book ownership in the 1920s, Megan Benton discusses the debate that was taking place about the meaning and function of books.⁴⁸ Critics like Canby—editor of the *Saturday Review of Literature*—felt that real booklovers cared about books for the “right” reason: for the merits of a book’s content alone. Benton says that “bookafuge”—using books to create a personal environment that suggests or pronounces one’s cultural values—“proved as constructive a strategy for self-definition for those beleaguered elite who struggled to preserve traditional cultural hierarchies as it was for those who wished to transcend such boundaries.”⁴⁹ Those who championed “serious” book stewardship, Benton continues, “used book ownership to assess others’ cultural identity” (271). These two book cultures have been characterized as highbrow and middlebrow. The highbrow-middlebrow debate is extended by Joan Shelley Rubin as she evaluates the books selected for the Book of the Month Club and how they were selected.⁵⁰ Critics have derided the Club as decidedly middlebrow.

How does Alice Millard fit into the two book cultures and the highbrow middlebrow debate? Alice’s clients were highbrow, if considered solely from a socioeconomic viewpoint. The Clarks, Crockers, and Dohenys were among the wealthiest families in California, if not in America. But from the standpoint of taste, some of them were firmly middlebrow. Mrs. Doheny was an unimaginative collector buying first editions when Alice Millard met her. She was clearly seeking assistance in developing her own taste, and Millard served her purposes.

Millard would most likely have argued with Canby that the books she collected and sold were characterized by the merits of their texts and by their beauty. Millard’s tastes were highbrow but not avant garde. Her library did not contain works by Ezra Pound, Amy Lowell, Virginia Woolf, or James Joyce. Her Arnoldian optimism seems not to have been clouded by the End of American Innocence, as May describes

the years 1912 through 1917, or later, by the Great Depression.⁵¹ Perhaps by the end of her life she could best be described as a standard-bearer of a culture that had begun its “descent” to middlebrow. One example is her continued preference for antique over modern furnishings. In a letter to Frank Lloyd Wright (March 13, 1929), she discusses the interior of “San Marcos in the Desert,” which would later be named Taliesin West: “Just because it is in the desert I can’t see why it has to be handled with fabrics modern in spirit. To me, the beauty and dignity of your patterned blocks is so enhanced by quiet rich old fabrics—or plain velvets, and I am sure that these things could be bought, wholesale, abroad, very inexpensively.”⁵² Needless to say, Wright was one person whose taste Millard could not influence, but Alice was always looking for opportunities to share her vision and to sell her goods.

Lucille Miller’s memoir of Alice Millard includes several observations that are useful to any consideration of Millard as an arbiter, even a missionary, of taste. To Miller, Millard seems “to be *all* intellect, all soul, all mind. . . . [S]he believed in IDEALS. . . . The ordinary, the commonplace, the second-rate, were not for her. Ugliness and vulgarity gave her actual pain.” Alice was “a born teacher. She needed disciples, she needed an audience.” But at the same time, “Alice was a Voice crying in the Wilderness—the Wilderness of the Depression; the Wilderness of provincial class-conscious Pasadena; the Wilderness of her struggle to survive in business as a woman alone, without capital. . . . But she was undaunted and undismayed. She . . . expounded her Gospel of Beauty to any who would listen.”⁵³

Similarly, Kevin Starr notes that Millard sold her important wares to collectors eager “to bring the world into southern California, to seek out the symbols and artifacts of older civilizations so as to possess and re-express them locally.”⁵⁴ Starr’s observations are reminiscent of the social critics of the nineteenth century who lamented the lack of culture in America. A review of Eastlake’s *Hints on Household Taste* that ran in *Harper’s Bazar* noted that “Suddenly the voice of the prophet Eastlake was heard crying in the [American] wilderness. . . . Repent ye, for the kingdom of the Tasteful is at hand!”⁵⁵

Starr’s appraisal of Millard’s clients can also be appreciated within the more general context of collecting. In “A Rationale of Collecting,” G. Thomas Tanselle describes motivations for it when he writes that “one’s sense of self-awareness is increased by being able to

place one's own endeavors in a framework that comprehends the full panoply of related pursuits." He adds, "For some people, the pleasure of amassing objects is increased by knowing that the activity supports scholarship, science, and art; for others, the satisfactions are entirely personal, but the results are nevertheless of public benefit. Collecting is a prime example of behavior in which private desire and social gain are mutually supportive."⁵⁶

There is a growing literature about collecting by biographical and cultural studies scholars. Tanselle and Nicolas Barker are of the former school; Susan M. Pearce and Werner Muensterberger exemplify the latter. Alice Millard's career as a bookseller can be evaluated within both contexts: she appealed to the social and psychological needs of her clients as well as the bibliographical needs of their collections. She catered to the social and psychological by creating La Miniatura, an elite and inviting setting. Her knowledge of books, and her desire to build important collections for her clients, appealed to the bibliographical acumen of some of her clients.

Alice Millard's role as an arbiter of taste can also be given a sociological reading. In *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Pierre Bourdieu surveyed Parisians and "provincials" representing various social classes and educational levels.⁵⁷ He examined not just judgments of taste but also aesthetic attitudes. In this work, as well as in his other writings, Bourdieu concludes that culture bestows status and power. Although the survey on which *Distinction* is based was carried out in France during the 1960s, it might just as well apply to the robber barons of the nineteenth century or the bourgeoisie of Pasadena in the 1920s. While Alice Millard might have functioned as a commercial facilitator of a particular community of taste, she also facilitated the need within the bourgeoisie for cultural validation, as Starr implies.

Another finding in *Distinction* has relevance here. Bourdieu asserts that all cultural practices and judgments of taste—from museum visits to reading—can be linked primarily to educational level and, secondarily, to social origin. Although Bourdieu is referring to the French educational system, an appropriate comparison can be made to Millard and her circle. Few women of Millard's generation went to college; indeed, it was an era in which many colleges were just beginning to admit women and also in which many women's colleges were being established. Millard herself probably never went to college. Yet through her own initiative—not to mention her acute mind and boundless

curiosity—she became highly educated. Not all of her clients were formally educated either; yet many of them were wealthy. In the United States, new money and new education created enormous opportunities for acquiring cultural capital. One way to display this new capital was through collecting. Millard may have implicitly understood this need through her own desire for education, a desire that probably led her to study in Europe as a young woman.

The Gospel of Taste is always subject to revision, as a reading of Bourdieu's *Distinction* demonstrates. Still, Alice Millard preached an Anglo-American gospel that has endured in the rare-book world. The areas in which she collected and sold—early printed books, fine-press books, and books about books—have proven to be of lasting interest. It is clear that she preached an enduring gospel.

Notes

1. The author acknowledges, with thanks, the research assistance of SuKim Chung, Nina Schneider, and Michael Porta, all UCLA graduate students when this paper was researched and written. Special thanks to Peter Thompson for making available family photographs of Alice and George Millard.

2. Lucille V. Miller, "Remembering Alice Parsons Millard." Typescript, Pasadena, CA, April 1984, 12 pp., in the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA. This phrase is on p. 12.

3. *Ibid.*, 6.

4. Chicago had many direct links to the British Arts and Crafts Movement. Wright, Addams, and Starr were all members of, and the latter two were founders of, the Chicago Arts and Crafts Society in 1897. Starr had studied bookbinding with T. J. Cobden-Sanderson in London. Several professors at the University of Chicago were active in the society as well as in the Art Industrial League, which was founded by Professor Oscar Lovell Triggs in 1899. Finally, Walter Crane, T. J. Cobden-Sanderson, and others lectured in Chicago.

5. The riot took place on May 4, 1886; Alice Millard was born May 4, 1873. One wonders what impact the riots may have had on the thirteen-year-old Alice Parsons, occurring as they did on her birthday.

6. Jacques Barzun, *From Dawn to Decadence, 1500 to the Present* (New York: Harper Collins, 2000), 593. Meanwhile, in New York City, the journalist Jacob Riis wrote *How the Other Half Lives*. Published in 1890, this book (together

with its accompanying photographs) created an uproar that resulted in some reforms.

7. Chicago realism has had staying power, as illustrated by the novels of James T. Farrell, Nelson Algren, and Richard Wright.

8. Fanny Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*; ed. by Pamela Neville-Sington (London: Penguin, 1997), "Introduction," xxxvi.

9. Her husband had serious debts and was suffering from mercury poisoning. *Ibid.*, "Introduction," viii.

10. Fanny Trollope went on to write five more travel books and thirty-five novels, and she also helped launch the writing careers of her two sons Anthony and Thomas. (Thomas went to the United States with his mother, while Anthony was left behind.)

11. It is amusing that the title of the first of Anthony Trollope's *Palliser* novels is *Can You Forgive Her?* The Americans apparently could not.

12. Trollope, "Introduction," xxxiii.

13. Russell Lynes, *The Taste-Makers* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955), 6.

14. *Ibid.*, 19.

15. Some critics believe that the museum has manufactured history by trying to summarize it without context. By taking art out of context, museums are criticized for actually dehistoricizing art. See, for example, Didier Maleuvre, *Museum Memories: History, Technology, Art* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999).

16. Charles L. Eastlake, *Hints on Household Taste in Furniture, Upholstery and Other Details*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman's Green, 1869). Quotations are drawn from the second edition.

17. "Biography inevitably includes elements of triangulation—locating an unknown point on a triangle by reference to its two known points—but the known points for the aging Morgan rarely yield straight lines." Jean Strouse, *Morgan: American Financier* (New York: Random House, 1999), 629.

18. From her 1926 passport at the Huntington Library in the Millard, Alice (Parsons) Papers, #2024.

19. Interview with Peter Thompson, Chicago, May 28, 1998.

20. Robert Rosenthal states that Millard had adopted Christian Science in 1904 but presents no evidence to support that claim. Mary Baker Eddy established the religion in 1879, when Alice was six. Mrs. Parsons probably learned about the religion in Chicago. See Rosenthal's "Los Angeles & Chicago: Two Cities, Two Bibliophiles," in *A Bibliophile's Los Angeles: Essays for the International Association of Bibliophiles on the Occasion of Its XIVth Congress, 30 September—11 October 1985*, ed. John Bidwell and Carol A. Sommer (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1985), 7.

21. Peter Thompson, Chicago, May 28, 1998, and a conversation between the author and Ward Ritchie in December 1995.

22. Ward Ritchie, "Alice Millard as I Remember Her," *AB Bookman's Weekly* 95.7 (February 13, 1995): 648. According to one of Alice Millard's friends, the copy of the book that was in her library at the time of her death was inscribed "Alice Parsons from George Millard, 1901," so the book may have been a gift. See *The Alice and George Millard Collection Illustrating the Evolution of the Book. Acquired for the Huntington Library by a group of their friends* [n.p.: 1939] printed by the Ward Ritchie Press, 2.

23. Ritchie, "Alice Millard as I Remember Her," 648; Rosenthal, "Los Angeles & Chicago," 7–8. There are inconsistencies in the ages that are given for George Millard. Roxana Millard's birth certificate states that George was fifty-seven at the time of her birth in January 1904. That would put his birth date at 1846 or 1847. He was born in Greenfield, MA, but the town clerk's office there could not locate a birth certificate for him. He appears in the *Massachusetts 1850 Census Index* (Bountiful, UT: Accelerated Indexing Systems, 1978), 585.

24. A letter written January 30, 1978, to Betty Hunt Thompson, Alice Millard's niece, by Thompson's eighty-eight-year-old cousin, Mabel Hilton Stock, another niece, gives a short description of the Chicago years following the birth of Roxana Millard. The letter mentions that the Millards traveled to Europe together for George's book-buying trips. (One-page typescript letter, Millard, Alice [Parsons] Papers, #2024, Huntington Library.)

25. The Inventory is contained in five "order books." When I began my research, Millard's great-nephew Peter Thompson owned them; they are now in the Huntington Library. I have also examined Alice and George Millard books that are owned by Thompson.

26. The expense of institutionalizing Roxana was high, as Alice Millard concedes in two letters dated April 6 and May 3, 1928, to Frank Lloyd Wright. The letters relate to overruns in the cost of building a museum addition to Millard's Pasadena home, La Miniatura, and the necessity of safeguarding money for Roxana. The original letters are housed at the Frank Lloyd Wright Archives at Taliesin West in Scottsdale, AZ. The author examined the microfiche copies at the Getty Research Institute, M003A02 and M003A04. For a complete listing of the Wright/Millard correspondence, see *Frank Lloyd Wright: An Index to the Taliesin Correspondence*, 5 vols. (New York and London: Garland, 1988).

27. See, for example, Marianne Tidcombe, *The Doves Bindery* (London: The British Library; reprinted New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Books, 1991). Tidcombe gives an account of T. J., Annie, and Stella Cobden-Sanderson's visit with the Millards in Highland Park in October, 1907.

28. Sydney Ford, *Los Angeles Times*, Section 2 (Sunday, February 22, 1914), 9.
29. Rosenthal, "Los Angeles & Chicago," 12.
30. Millard describes her finances in some detail to Frank Lloyd Wright in the letter cited above. Also, the inventory of her goods is included in her papers at the Huntington Library. The prices Millard paid for things as well as what they sold for after her death can be compared.
31. To whit: "Rare Books on Exhibition. Pasadena Woman Acquires Choice Works During Summer Trip to Europe." *Los Angeles Times* Section 2 (November 26, 1924), 3.
32. These letters are at the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library at UCLA.
33. Lucille Miller describes their relationship in her memoir.
34. See both Rosenthal and Miller.
35. See Msgr. Francis J. Weber, "Carrie Estelle Doheny: The 'Other' Collection," *Hoja Volante* 216 (February 2002): 5.
36. Mrs. Doheny donated her library to St. John's Seminary in Camarillo, CA, in 1940. The Church decided in 1987 to sell the library. See "The Estelle Doheny Collection," 7 vols. (New York: Christie, Manson & Woods, 1987–89). Between 1987 and 1989 Christie's auctioned the library in eight sales. In the seven-volume auction catalog, one can identify the Millard books.
37. Ritchie, "Alice Millard as I Remember Her," 654, 658.
38. Ward Ritchie, draft of letter to Alice Millard, n.d., ca. 1936, in the Ward Ritchie Press Archives, ca. 1930–78, Box 88, 1934–39, A–O, in the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, UCLA.
39. Frank Lloyd Wright, *Frank Lloyd Wright: An Autobiography* (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1943), 241.
40. In a letter to Frank Lloyd Wright of January 10, 1935, Alice Millard details all of the problems with the house that occurred during a recent rain storm: six inches of muddy water in the dining room, the ensuing damages to all the furnaces, and so forth. (Getty Research Institute, M035B02.)
41. Alice Millard spells this out in the letter to Frank Lloyd Wright cited above. She refers to Colonel John Hudson and Mrs. Poole. Caroline Boeing Poole was a close friend and client of Alice Millard.
42. In a letter to W. A. Clark of November 16, 1922, Alice describes her late husband as "very cautious and conservative" in the way he did business. It is fair to assume from that description that George probably would not have agreed to the enormous cost overruns that resulted from Wright's novel design.
43. The Huntington Library owns some of Alice's exhibition catalogues.
44. Rosenthal, "Los Angeles & Chicago," 18.

45. T. J. Cobden-Sanderson, *The Ideal Book or Book Beautiful: A Tract on Calligraphy, Printing & Illustration and on The Book Beautiful as a Whole* (Doves Press, October 19, 1900); this brief pamphlet has frequently been reprinted.
46. Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* (New York: Macmillan, 1925), 69.
47. For a discussion of Arnold's twentieth-century influence, see Joan Shelley Rubin, *The Making of Middlebrow Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).
48. Megan Benton, "'Too Many Books': Book Ownership and Cultural Identity in the 1920s," *American Quarterly* 49.2 (June 1997): 268–97.
49. *Ibid.*, 271.
50. Rubin, *The Making of Middlebrow Culture*.
51. Henry F. May, *The End of American Innocence: A Study of the Years of Our Own Time, 1912–1917* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959).
52. Alice Millard to Frank Lloyd Wright, March 13, 1929, typescript, 2. (Getty Research Institute, Mo05E06.)
53. Miller, *Remembering Alice Parsons Millard*, 5, 6, 12.
54. Kevin Starr, *Material Dreams: Southern California Through the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 334.
55. Lynes, *The Taste-Makers*, 100.
56. G. Thomas Tanselle, "A Rationale of Collecting," *Studies in Bibliography* 51 (1998): 1, 25.
57. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).