

# Introduction

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In 1896, Beatrix Potter visited the British Museum (Natural History) and wrote afterwards in her diary, ‘To museum, studying labels on insects, being in want of advice, and not in a good temper, I worked into indignation about that august Institution.’<sup>1</sup> A year later, *Temple Bar* magazine reviewed the exhibition of Mrs Delany’s paper flowers at the British Museum (BM) (these had been bequeathed a couple of years previously by Lady Llanover, a descendant of Mrs Delany, apparently in fulfilment of George III’s own wish that they should be held by this institution). The review described the bequest as ‘a singular and pathetic monument of feminine ingenuity’. It went on to say that it had ‘been placed under the protection of Mr Sidney Colvin [Keeper of Prints], probably because there was nowhere else to put it, but it must be confessed that it seems a little below the dignity of high art.’<sup>2</sup> These two sets of comments, confessing dissatisfaction with an important museum, and outlining generally understood limits to the value of women’s contributions to another museum, suggest both the enabling and the constraining roles which museums offered women; it indicates that women used museums, but were subject to limits and sought to expand their field of action within them. This book, examining a range of ways in which women interacted with museums in the period 1850–1914, suggests that women sought to make museums more inclusive by reorienting them towards feminine concerns, while at the same time using them to try to enter a ‘man’s world’ of scholarship and public disinterestedness. It argues that the examination of women and museums allows us to understand more fully the ways in which modernity produced ideas about gender, tradition, knowledge and community.

## Remaking gender relations, remaking the museum

This is a study of how women and museums were remade, or remade each other, between roughly 1850 and 1914, mostly in English museums, but with occasional examples from Scotland, Wales and Ireland. It investigates a variety of women and women’s roles in connection with museums: women working in museums, women donating to museums, women visiting museums; as well as women’s involvement in trends that significantly impacted on museums, such as the growth of archaeology

and anthropology, and the influence of Ruskinian thought on museums. It interrogates museums as unique cultural institutions which straddled the public and the private – or the domestic and the scholarly – to show how such borderlands opened to women (and were opened by women) during the period, but also tended to segregate women in specifically gendered enclaves which institutionalised feminine expertise as real and separate, but less important than masculine expertise.

It uncovers the ways in which women brought distinctive concerns into museums, focusing on education and what might now be called 'outreach', as well as on memory and emotional objects of various sorts; women's involvement in museums often came out of and reinforced family relationships and domestic practices. Moreover, such feminine engagement with museums can also often be read as an attempt to dissolve binary oppositions and hierarchies which were often reinforced by the dislocations and tensions produced by a modernising society and culture. Masculine privilege was defended through the process of professionalisation, the denigration of the domestic, the assertion of the ability to act and create as male, the exaltation of disinterest and atomic individuality, and the idea of the nation as a masculine community.<sup>3</sup> Women, framed as amateur, domestic, local, relationally oriented and as helpers rather than creators, both used these ascriptions to make space for themselves in the museum, and tried to breach the underlying dichotomising which tended to devalue those spaces which they had made. A feminine vision of modern culture did not distinguish between or ascribe differential values to knowledge and affect, research and engagement, old and new, seeing them all as ways of negotiating a new, modern world. As part of this vision of how their involvement with museums could be modernised, women sought to enter the professionalising world of museums, asserting identities as expert scholars and curators; but in this attempt they were only partly successful.

During a time of considerable change for middle-class women in Britain, why examine their relationships with museums? It is those very changes in women's lives, juxtaposed with the changes in museums at the same time, which make the conjunction so fruitful to study. Many of these changes could be glossed as 'modernity': museums were becoming widely diffused centres of popular education and entertainment, while women were becoming better educated, with greater legal rights over their own property, and more able to earn their own living in particular fields; they were becoming 'public' figures in new ways, most visibly through the campaign for women's suffrage, waged with increasing militancy from the end of the 1890s. By examining the relationships between

two such areas of change, we can see that women made museums modern, while museums made women modern. During the period studied here, it was not clear what women would be, or what museums would be, merely that both were changing; some of the answers about the possible directions of change which were formulated are traced in this book.

Women emerge as following two major strategies or images of a new femininity; many of them highlighted 'essential' features of womanhood to justify roles as new professionals with a distinctive approach to museum work; as donors and patrons giving value to domestic memorial practices and creating a new form of collective memory for modern society; staging the museum as a space for liberatory experience and for political protest; and driving a deeper engagement of museums with their community. On the other hand, many of them strove to emulate male norms of collecting, donating and curating. This latter strategy might be better conceptualised as an attempt to de-gender the museum, eliminating the idea of gender competences of any sort. Neither approach was in itself totally successful, but the maintenance of both integration and separation in women's approach to museums was important for women's ability to take advantage of all opportunities that arose; it also, I suggest, sheds some light on women's wider strategies and aims during this period. Hoberman has recently suggested that for most of this period women tended to favour assimilation into male circles; whereas studies on US libraries and museums suggest women built on specifically feminine qualities alone to remake their involvement in these institutions.<sup>4</sup> In Britain, my study shows, women tried to be both feminine and masculine, in different ways and different places.

At the same time, museums were developing into institutions with increasingly diverse goals. Not only were they to be centres of knowledge creation and emblems of the nation, since the middle of the nineteenth century they had increasingly been seen as places to support governmental agendas of population improvement and 'governability'.<sup>5</sup> In the face of increasing concern not just about the behaviour of the poor, but of their deprivation and consequent disengagement from society, museums were also charged with 'outreach' and with attracting marginalised groups, including children, as well as the privileged. They increasingly acted not just as sacralised spaces of national myth making but also as everyday spaces embedded in the locality (though not at the same time; different institutions had different aims); and women were instrumental in imagining and achieving new sorts of museum.

This is, then, a story of mutual becoming, without, in many ways, a beginning or an end; certainly by the end of the period neither museums

nor women had found a single way of being. Such a story, I think, is not only dictated by the findings of my research, but also avoids some familiar narratives which emerge particularly from women's history, and also from museum studies. Women are either seen, optimistically, as blazing a trail into new areas such as science, a story of 'progress' from oppression to liberation, or as victims of a modernity which devalued their contribution, looking back to a golden age before the formalisation of education.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile museums suffer from amnesia and suppose that they are much more open, democratic and responsive than elitist nineteenth-century forebears.<sup>7</sup> I hope to complicate these narratives.

Although little work has been done on the history of women, or gender, and museums, that which does exist suggests that in the UK, the period between 1850 and 1914 was a crucial one both for perceptions of women within museums, and for their active engagement with these institutions. Previous work has mainly considered women as visitors, and as visitors specifically to art museums and galleries. Additionally, women have been considered as collectors of fine and decorative art.<sup>8</sup> It is important, however, to look beyond visitors, art and indeed national institutions. In the category 'museums', I include all institutions which collected things and displayed them to at least some of the public, from rocks and fossils to paintings and statuary. Not every museum can be studied, of course, but the small local branch museum and the amateur archaeology museum have as much to tell us as the BM and the National Gallery. This was a period of museological vitality; new types of museum, museum object and museum display were appearing, usually outside the 'universal survey' museums which embodied the nation.<sup>9</sup> Not only that, but we need to understand museums as much more than simply the buildings, or the people within those buildings. It has been suggested that museum have no edges – they are connected out around the world by complex linkages and networks. By exploring outwards into dispersed networks and less obvious or prominent actors, we can find a better, fuller picture of women and museums.<sup>10</sup>

Examining museums and women together, then, allows us to ask questions about how modernity, as a way of narrating or understanding the experience of change, figured gender as part of a professionalising, democratising and innovation-seeking society. As a topic it straddles the social and the cultural and requires careful analysis of the various forms of agency available to all the players in the game. Although I am primarily concerned with what women did, why, how and with what consequences, this involves also acknowledging what discourses did, what men did, what institutions and spaces did, and

what objects themselves did. This in turn allows us to move beyond the issue of whether museums impose and maintain certain social patterns, or whether they allow excluded and marginal groups to challenge and reshape those social patterns. If theorists such as Bennett and Bourdieu have stressed the extent to which museums historically have been enlisted to produce governable populations, or to reproduce social prestige through cultural capital, commentators on contemporary museums have stressed their ability to empower excluded groups and offer arenas for the negotiation of the idea of the citizen, and of cultural significance.<sup>11</sup> Both the institutions and the users are, or can be, endowed with agency; agency is negotiated in a variety of sites and by a variety of means. A visit to a museum is an exercise in negotiating rules and norms, but so is donating to a museum: depending on wider discourses about object value, the curator's need for the objects, the respective social and cultural capital of donor and curator, and the nature of the object being donated.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, such a negotiation of agency continues as the object begins its museum life, making the investigation of museums a complex task; often, the way one investigates this issue depends on the sort of institution one considers museums to be.

### **The distributed museum**

What kind of institution or organisation is a museum? There are many possible answers to this question, and the answers change significantly over time; museums have been described as temples, 'universities of the people', community centres and mausoleums; they have been compared to shops, exhibitions and fun fairs. When the history of museums was first investigated, it seemed that heroic curators and other individuals single-handedly drove forward the intellectual and pedagogical visions which shaped their museums.<sup>13</sup> In the late twentieth century, it increasingly seemed that individuals were unimportant, and the museum was an apparatus of sorts; a machine for creating knowledge, making citizens, disciplining populations and even shaping the Empire. A great deal of attention was focused on the impersonal ways in which power was inscribed in the institution, the spaces and the discourses of the museum; which importantly de-naturalised the workings of the apparently objective, disinterested individual-as-organisation.<sup>14</sup> However, such an analytical approach gave far too much weight to the power of the museum to propagate a unified, universal effect upon visitors. The most recent examinations of museums

have recognised that they never functioned in a unified way, because they represented aggregations of different groups of people with different agendas. Curators were dependent on those who held the purse strings, whereas the committees in charge of museums might have to defer to the specialist knowledge of the curator. This led to compromises over, for example, the way in which the space of the museum was developed, which mitigated against any strong powerful effect emerging from that space.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, objects entered museums through a series of widely dispersed networks, of dealers, donors, fieldworkers and others with powerful agendas of their own; curators' abilities to control what their museum actually owned were limited.<sup>16</sup> Audiences participated in the project of making meaning from objects, however didactic the displays presented to them.<sup>17</sup>

The museum, then, needs to be seen as a *distributed* institution, as Gosden and Larson so compellingly argue.<sup>18</sup> It was the collective production of a wide range of people, some of whom were more conscious of this than others, but all of whom could have an effect. As a corollary of this, it needs to be seen not as a place where fixed meanings were produced and distributed, and clear roles acted out; but rather as a place where dialogue took place, about ideas, identities and valuations. This should not, of course, be seen as some sort of democratic paradise of openness; the museum defined the most important things, knowledge, and ideas in its culture, and therefore there was a huge amount at stake in the debate, and any means of loading the dice towards any particular group would be taken. The museum often tended to reproduce hierarchies already present in society; but it did also offer opportunities to new groups to remake social value. This makes it an incredibly rich institution to study; and as I argue in the book, by examining the museum as a distributed entity we can recover both the agency of a wide range of women, and the strategies which were deployed to try to contain that agency.

### Public/private/domestic: gendered divisions in the late nineteenth century

Some extremely problematic concepts hover around both gender, and the museum, through the second half of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century. These are chiefly the ideas of home and domesticity, linked in complex ways to ideas about the 'public' and 'private'. Public and private might be seen as opposed, whereas the 'domestic' was associated with the private; though in fact, such ideas were under

considerable pressure, especially around the *fin de siècle*. Commentators have traced the emergence of a largely middle-class ideal of gendered 'separate spheres' of public and private in the early nineteenth century, with the feminine associated with an increasingly privatised home, while men moved in the rational public world, basing their actions on intellectual, not emotional, motivations.<sup>19</sup> While such an ideal was clearly never in place, even the ideal came under pressure by 1900, by which point public and private, and the relationship between home and gender, were increasingly blurred and contested.<sup>20</sup> The home remained a heavily loaded concept but its relation to public, private, feminine and masculine became much more ambiguous. The home, therefore, the space of relationships, emotions, care and nurture, was no longer imagined as a blissful space of seclusion, and its links with public life were debated.

This could be seen in a number of ways. Women entered the public sphere in more assertive ways, colonising particular areas of public life, and were felt to be alarmingly immune to the 'feminine' attraction of home and family as they entered higher education and took on new occupations. They continued to assert, however, or even asserted more strongly, their domestic expertise, and ability to manage the relationships, emotions and material culture of the home and family. Women's identities were still very much rooted in the domestic, but this was increasingly a 'militant domesticity', asserting specifically feminine moral qualities which needed to be put to work in public.<sup>21</sup> In a number of ways, women brought the domestic into the public as a way of amplifying the female public voice. In higher education, new women's colleges replicated a domestic environment based on close, familial-type relationships to a greater extent than men's; women's charity work ideally took place in the homes of the poor even as it professionalised; and shops not only enabled proper, feminine consumption of items for the home, they took steps to ensure their spaces blurred the public/private divide.<sup>22</sup> Deborah Cohen and Jane Hamlett note the close association between suffrage campaigners and interior decoration, which was one of a number of ways in which women brought the home into public discourse.<sup>23</sup> Men also, however, claimed and created domestic spaces, both in actual family homes, and in alternative spaces such as universities; the material culture of the home was, as several commentators confirm, a key way in which ideas of the domestic, and the gendering of that domesticity, were asserted and contested. Men both rejected the domestic as effeminising, and claimed it 'back' from women.<sup>24</sup>

'Home', of course, was also a concept opposed to 'away', and the resonance of domesticity as both a national signifier, and a way of thinking

about empire, was possibly at its height in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>25</sup> Britain was seen by its own inhabitants and by foreign observers as a nation obsessed with houses and the idea of domesticity.<sup>26</sup> This made control of and the ability to speak for the home especially significant, as women's success in deploying domestic expertise in public realms indicated. The relationship between empire and home was more complex; the empire was spoken of as a family, and the export of British domestic practices seen as one of its most valuable effects or goals. Home and away could be seen as embodying gendered characteristics: as Hall and Rose suggest, 'symbolically, empire building and maintenance was a masculine task whereas the home-place was feminised'.<sup>27</sup> In the distributed museum, it was often the case that men collected objects in 'the field' overseas, while women 'domesticated' those objects in a variety of ways which strongly affected the way Britons lived with and understood their empire; but this did not mean that women did not collect themselves where possible, or that the meaning of objects 'at home' was not also heavily controlled by men.<sup>28</sup>

One effect of this is that because the home was so important a symbolic resource, and seemed in some ways so threatened by modernity (both by a commercialisation which reached deep into the home, and by women's perceived lack of commitment to domestic roles), interest in the historic home grew. Around 1900, domestic life in the past became a key cultural preoccupation. It had been of interest before this, of course; Macaulay had (briefly) described the 'dress, furniture, repasts' of past ages; while mid-century interest in history had fastened on the homes of the great, as well as the lives of more domesticated royals such as queens.<sup>29</sup> But around 1900, wide interest is apparent in the kind of historical home that might be relevant to a wider range of people than those who could aspire to the home life of aristocrats and monarchs; indeed, as Mandler has shown, interest in the aristocratic past waned after 1860. But interest in the domestic lives of those from a humbler station increased: Anne Hathaway's cottage and Shakespeare's birthplace became popular tourist attractions, partly because of their function as a shrine to a national hero, but partly also because they offered an attractive destination by making tangible a home not riven with the ambiguities of the 1900 home.<sup>30</sup> Even more notable were the series of 'Olde' streets at exhibitions such as Old London, Old Edinburgh, and Old Manchester and Salford, from 1884, 1886 and 1887 respectively.<sup>31</sup>

The domestic is also worth examining for the conceptual relationship it had with the museum. Although for most of our period they



would have been understood as in opposition, the domestic aligned with the private, and the museum with the public, this was in many ways a temporary and incomplete separation.<sup>32</sup> Museums were rooted in elite homes, with their origins in the curiosity cabinets and picture galleries of the aristocracy.<sup>33</sup> Much nineteenth-century museum development was an attempt to align them away from the domestic and towards the public, 'official' realm: architectural models for museums started to follow the temple, cathedral, or department store; whereas objects' meanings were thought to be derived not from their family ownership, but from their objective characteristics, and the scientific context to which they belonged.<sup>34</sup> Yet my study suggests very strongly that the domestic and the museum were never as clearly opposed as some Victorian museums wished. Children, eminently domestic creatures, were repeatedly urged to form their own museum at home, which they should make as much like the real thing as possible. Meanwhile, urban elites in control of local museums tended to treat them as an extension of their own homes, holding social events there.<sup>35</sup> All these developments, importantly, also affected the gendering of museums, as girls as well as boys collected, and women were prominent at elite social events in museums.

The line between the domestic and the museum, then, was not clear, and it became even less clear as the period progressed. If the National Gallery was the 'nation's mantelpiece', provincial museums, Amy Woodson-Boulton suggests, were sometimes conceived as parlours for the working class to emulate the middle-class domestic Sunday (see also Figure 8 in Chapter 4).<sup>36</sup> As a corollary, 'private' and 'public' valuations of objects were not distinct either. Objects in museums could be valued for 'private' reasons such as the fact that they had lived in the home of someone in particular; while objects in the home could be valued for 'public' reasons such as their contribution to scholarship on art.<sup>37</sup> Thus, shifting meanings for public, private and domestic meant that women could draw both on persisting associations between their nature and key characteristics of the domestic – emotions, relationships, memory, craft, childcare – and public virtues such as scholarship and professionalism, which they were increasingly able to access.

In order to understand the role which gender played in the distributed museum, we also need to consider the relationship between gender and materiality. Studies of collecting and gender have not always paid sufficient attention to the ways in which apparently inherent gender characteristics were produced discursively, or simply by the different circumstances in which men and women could gather and value objects.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, I see the material as a key constituent of understandings of

gender. It is increasingly clear that materiality could constitute gendered subjectivities, as well as reflecting them. In the very different work of Beverley Gordon, Dianne Sachko Macleod and Victoria Mills, the ways in which things opened up new interior worlds and new, more satisfying ways of being to women can be seen. Gordon examines a wide range of feminine collections, usually of things with little economic value; while Macleod examines the formation of large, important and valuable collections of objets d'art by wealthy, leisured women; but they both point to the kind of ludic relationship these women had with their possessions.<sup>39</sup> The intensity of their relationships with their things unlocked a kind of creative confidence for them. Mills, meanwhile, examines Victorian literary explorations of women and things, where again the objects helped the women to become someone else, to explore feminine identities, and to make new journeys into their psyches.<sup>40</sup> Thus there is evidence of what we might call 'women's things', and of distinctive feminine relationships with things which helped to constitute feminine subjectivities, as this book will show. However, it is also important to be aware of how women's relationships with particular objects were structured and produced by circumstances, and that when women had the opportunity they often sought out 'male' objects and used them in 'male' ways. Materiality was used to break down or remake, as well as to reinforce, gendered identities.

The book uses the ideas of the distributed museum, and the domestic or private/public divide, to understand the different ways in which women and museums interacted. It is important to capture the range and variety of women's involvement, and so these analytical ideas are drawn on in varying ways through the book. There are many nodes and relationships in the networks of the distributed museum, but they are all characterised by the active role that materiality – objects, spaces and material practices – play in them. Equally, domesticity could be invoked, and public and private could be blurred or made distinct, through the acceptance or rejection of objects from the home for museums; the valuing or devaluing of 'domestic' work like encouraging children, cleaning, or even arranging (an activity which was simultaneously the badge of 'proper' curating, and the mark of women's domestic genius); and male professionals' reliance on the unpaid and unacknowledged labour of their wives, daughters and sisters.

This study initially proceeds to examine the different roles which women might play within museums and to interrogate the idea of the museum as an entity with an inside and an outside. The first chapter looks at women working within museums as employees and volunteers. This is framed as 'inside' the museum, but in fact it recovers the contribution of women who while 'inside', have been largely hidden; traditionally,

museum history engages with key figures such as curators, but in fact hardly any women had ‘curator’ in their job title, and their presence has been hidden from much museum history thus far, though they did work inside museums in surprising numbers. The chapter also considers women’s relationship with the nascent professional body of curators, the Museums Association (MA), which shows some marked contrasts with the American Association of Museums (AAM) at the same time.

The second and third chapters are devoted to a consideration of women’s donations to museums; such women donors were ‘outside’ museums but nevertheless acted as museum makers. The second chapter examines the donors themselves, their identities, relationships and strategies, while the third chapter looks at the objects donated, to see whether ‘women’s things’ are identifiable, as well as to investigate what sort of journey women’s donations made to the museum setting, and whether this was distinctive and affected their meaning. In these chapters, the ways in which ‘ordinary’ women used objects and museums to memorialise their families and to revalue objects which sat outside existing curatorial schemes of value are shown. Chapter 4 examines women as visitors to museums, in some ways the most distanced relationship which women had with museums, as they might visit only once, fleetingly. Nevertheless, in terms of numbers, this was the most important engagement which women had with museums, and the space of the museum, poised between the civic and the entertaining, was embraced by women as a space for imaginative travel, self-exploration and protest. These first four chapters, therefore, show that women were active both within and outside the museum, and recover the extent of their contribution and agency as museum makers.

Secondly, this book moves on to examine what might be termed different museum feminisms, or ways of framing a feminine input into museums. Women’s museum patronage, understood as direct attempts to lead and shape museum policy which cut across several different roles, is examined in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 examines the ways in which the growth of the new human sciences, archaeology and anthropology, both within and without the museum context, offered new opportunities and new constraints to women. And in Chapter 7, women’s development of a John Ruskin-inspired museology is considered.

These chapters show that women had various ways of marking their presence in museums. Women were drawn to archaeology and anthropology in substantial numbers, and fulfilled important roles in distributing objects to provincial museums, but their attempts to become archaeologists and anthropologists on the same terms as men were less successful. In archaeology, they were prominent in museums largely

because they were kept out of fieldwork; while in anthropology conversely, their involvement in ‘accidental’ fieldwork allowed them to supply objects to ‘proper’ male anthropologists but they were rarely seen as having such status themselves. The point here is that their involvement in, for example, popular lecturing in museums, or fundraising, though it was significant, was not necessarily what they themselves wanted to do; they were segregated in particular roles.

Women patrons fared a little better, with their involvement in major donations, the creation of new museums, and involvement in the funding and management of museums and galleries. Here women strove both to follow the ‘rules’ of masculine museum making, and to develop alternatives which promoted the characteristics of the ‘feminine’ already established; for example, by prioritising aesthetically pleasing and emotionally charged objects, and encouraging the involvement of the working class and children. These alternatives were not always successful and sometimes served to confirm women as ‘outsiders’ in the museum world; they were not able to access ‘mainstream’ museum space and so created space outside that mainstream. Women’s most successful attempt to remake museums was to be found in their enthusiastic espousal of Ruskinian ideas in a museum setting in the very late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; in many ways this represents the culmination of trends in women’s involvement in museums apparent earlier in the book. Although Ruskin’s ideas about museums were often lukewarm and contradictory, and although men made the running in setting up the first Ruskinian museums in the 1880s, as the turn of the century approached women developed these ideas in more radical directions, turning museums into community hubs in deprived areas, and oases of traditional craft skills, where making was endowed with transformative and preservative qualities.

By adding in the idea of the distributed museum, and of the way that people and objects are linked in networks, to more traditional biographical and institutional approaches, along with attention to the discursive production of the museum by Ruskin, among others, I hope to recover a wider and deeper sense of women’s involvement in museums – and in a range of different museums too. The research for the book was partly determined by the limits of the source material – there were fewer museums in existence before 1914, and some of those which were in existence have lost their nineteenth-century records. Moreover, the records which museums kept were not designed to foreground women’s roles and contributions; indeed, their silencing of women’s voices can even seem intentional. Museums were run by Boards of Trustees, scientific societies,

university governing bodies and local government – all, until right at the end of the period, exclusively male. Yet by examining textual and material sources both with and against the grain we can find women in and around museums of different sorts.

Overall, the story of women and museums between 1850 and 1914 is a complex and varied one, not easily reducible to a single narrative. Engagement with museums produced new women (as well as more self-consciously New Women), who were museum professionals and workers, collectors and donors, visitors, patrons and scholars.<sup>41</sup> Women themselves created new museums which contained different objects, including more social history and domestic craft, displayed in more evocative and less classificatory ways, and which communicated much more fully with a wider range of people. And such engagements also produced new understandings of concepts like tradition, public and private, which formed part of the complex and contradictory patchwork of attitudes which was modernity. Women created new professional and public identities for themselves which were often rooted in the domestic; museums themselves took on new roles in collective memory, community engagement and popular education. However, such new female or feminine roles and identities also produced a renewed sense of the higher value of the ‘masculine’ museum.

## Notes

- 1 Leslie Linder (ed. and transcr.), *The Journal of Beatrix Potter from 1881 to 1897* (London and New York: Frederick Warne & Co. 1966), p. 405.
- 2 *Temple Bar*, December 1897, p. 506.
- 3 Although this was never an absolute trend; see Catherine Hall, Keith McClelland and Jane Rendall, *Defining the Victorian Nation: Class, Race, Gender and the Reform Act of 1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2000), p. 36.
- 4 Ruth Hoberman, ‘Women in the British Museum Reading Room during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries: from quasi- to counterpublic’, *Feminist Studies* 28: 3 (2002), pp. 489–512; Ezra Shales, *Made in Newark: Cultivating Industrial Arts and Civic Identity in the Progressive Era* (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rivergate Books 2010).
- 5 The most important reference here is Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum* (London and New York: Routledge 1995).
- 6 I have consciously tried to avoid the narratives often found in studies of women in a particular field, which can tend either to the Whiggish story of inevitable progress, or the opposite tale of descent from a golden age. For example, Ann B. Shteir, *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science: Flora’s Daughters and Botany in England 1760–1860* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press 1999); P. N. Wyse Jackson

- and M. E. Spencer Jones, 'The quiet workforce: the various roles of women in geological and natural history museums during the early to mid-1900s', in C. V. Burek and B. Higgs (eds), *The Role of Women in the History of Geology*, Geological Society, London, Special Publications 281 (2007).
- 7 As pointed out by Graham Black, *The Engaging Museum: Developing Museums for Audience Involvement* (Abingdon: Routledge 2005).
  - 8 See, for example, Bennett, *Birth of the Museum*; Dianne Sachko Macleod, *Enchanted Lives, Enchanted Objects: American Women Collectors and the Making of Culture 1800–1940* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 2008).
  - 9 Carol Duncan, *Civilising Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (London: Routledge 1995).
  - 10 Chris Gosden and Frances Larson, *Knowing Things: Exploring the Collections at the Pitt Rivers Museum* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007); Rodney Harrison, 'Consuming colonialism: curio dealers' catalogues, souvenir objects, and indigenous agency in Oceania', in S. Byrne, A. Clarke, R. Harrison and R. Torrence (eds), *Unpacking the Collection: Networks of Material and Social Agency in the Museum* (New York: Springer 2011).
  - 11 Bennett, *Birth of the Museum*; Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. R. Nice (London: Routledge 1989); Lois H. Silverman, *The Social Work of Museums* (Abingdon: Routledge 2010); Richard Sandell and Eithne Nightingale, *Museums, Equality and Social Justice* (London: Routledge 2012).
  - 12 Helen Rees Leahy, *Museum Bodies: The Politics and Practices of Visiting and Viewing* (Farnham: Ashgate 2012); Samuel J. M. M. Alberti, *Nature and Culture: Objects, Disciplines and the Manchester Museum* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2009), pp. 95–101.
  - 13 See, for example, Edward Miller, *That Noble Cabinet: A History of the British Museum* (London: Andre Deutsch 1973); William Stearn, *The Natural History Museum at South Kensington* (London: Heinemann 1981); Edward Alexander, *Museum Masters: Their Museums and Their Influence* (Nashville, TN: American Association for State and Local History 1983); L. W. Kemp, 'Biography and the museum', in M. S. Shapiro (ed.), *The Museum; A Reference Guide* (New York and Westport, CT: Greenwood Press 1990).
  - 14 Most notably, Bennett, *Birth of the Museum*; Carol Duncan and A. Wallach, 'The universal survey museum', *Art History* 3: 4 (1980).
  - 15 See Kate Hill, *Culture and Class in English Public Museums, 1850–1914* (Aldershot: Ashgate 2005), esp. chapter 4, and Suzanne MacLeod, 'Significant lives: telling stories of museum architecture', in Kate Hill (ed.), *Museums and Biographies* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer 2012).
  - 16 Alberti, *Nature and Culture*, esp. chapter 4; Gosden and Larson, *Knowing Things*.
  - 17 Hill, *Culture and Class*, chapter 7; Samuel J. M. M. Alberti, 'The museum affect: visiting collections of anatomy and natural history', in A. Fyfe and B. Lightman (eds), *Science in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-Century Sites and Experiences* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press 2007).
  - 18 Gosden and Larson, *Knowing Things*, chapter 1.

- 19 The most extensive exploration of the nature and limits of the separate spheres ideal can still be found in Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780–1850*, rev. edn (London: Routledge 2002); note particularly the discussion in the Introduction to the revised edition.
- 20 Jane Hamlett, *Material Relations: Domestic Interiors and Middle-Class Families in England, 1850–1910* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2010), esp. ‘Introduction’.
- 21 Deborah Cohen, *Household Gods: The British and Their Possessions* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press 2006), p. 105.
- 22 Erika D. Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London’s West End* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press 2000), p. 39.
- 23 Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*, pp. 23, 29. See also Jane Rendall, ‘Women and the public sphere’, *Gender and History* 11: 3 (1999) and Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late Victorian London* (London: Virago 1992).
- 24 John Tosh, *A Man’s Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press 1999), pp. 179–183; Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family and Empire* (Harlow: Pearson 2005), pp. 117–118; see also A. James Hammerton, ‘The English weakness? Gender, satire and “moral manliness” in the lower middle class, 1870–1920’, in A. Kidd and D. Nicholls (eds), *Gender, Civic Culture and Consumerism: Middle-Class Identity in Britain 1800–1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 1999).
- 25 This discussion is heavily indebted to Catherine Hall and Sonia Rose, ‘Introduction: being at home with the Empire’, in C. Hall and S. Rose (eds), *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2006), pp. 25–29.
- 26 Cohen, *Household Gods*, p. x.
- 27 Hall and Rose, ‘Introduction’, p. 27.
- 28 See especially Chapters 3 and 6.
- 29 Thomas Babington Macaulay, *The History of England from the Accession of James II* (London: Longman 1856), p. 3; Peter Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 1997); Rosemary Mitchell, *Picturing the Past: English History in Text and Image, 1830–1870* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 2000), esp. chapter 6.
- 30 Paul Readman, ‘The place of the past in English culture c.1890–1914’, *Past and Present* 186 (2005), pp. 147–199.
- 31 Wilson Smith, ‘Old London, Old Edinburgh: constructing historic cities’, in Marta Filipová (ed.), *Cultures of International Exhibitions, 1840–1940: Great Exhibitions in the Margins* (Farnham: Ashgate 2015).
- 32 Kate Hill, ‘Collecting authenticity: domestic, familial and everyday “old things” in English museums, 1850–1939’, *Museum History Journal* 4: 2 (2011), pp. 205–206.
- 33 Of course, such homes were not ‘private’ in the way Victorian homes were felt to be; but they were homes. The interplay between ‘private’ and ‘public’ collecting and

- display are discussed by Ken Arnold in *Cabinets for the Curious: Looking Back at Early English Museums* (Aldershot: Ashgate 2006), esp. pp. 13–20.
- 34 Hill, ‘Collecting authenticity’.
- 35 Diana Dixon, ‘Children’s magazines and science in the nineteenth century’, *Victorian Periodicals Review* 34: 3 (2001), pp. 228–238; Hill, *Culture and Class*, p. 143.
- 36 Amy Woodson-Boulton, *Transformative Beauty: Art Museums in Industrial Britain* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 2012), chapter 2.
- 37 Beatrix Potter’s father enjoyed charitable art exhibitions in private homes because of the opportunity they gave him to inspect other people’s houses: Leslie Linder (ed. and transcr.), *The Journal of Beatrix Potter from 1881–1897* (London: Frederick Warne & Co. 1966), p. 185.
- 38 See, for example, Macleod, *Enchanted Lives, Enchanted Objects*.
- 39 Beverley Gordon, *The Saturated World: Aesthetic Meaning, Intimate Objects, Women’s Lives, 1890–1940* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press 2006); Macleod, *Enchanted Lives*.
- 40 Victoria Mills, ‘The museum as “dream space”: psychology and aesthetic response in George Eliot’s *Middlemarch*’, 19: *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 12 (2011), online, available at <http://19.bbk.ac.uk/index.php/19/article/view-File/596/704>, accessed 5 September 2011.
- 41 On the relationship between the label ‘New Woman’ (partly media driven, partly self-ascribed) and feminist or women’s movements around the *fin de siècle*, see Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 1997), chapter 1.