Part III: Choices

I was by no means set against marriage and had no glimmering vision of another sort of future...[but the] terrible standard of what love should be...held back the romantic heart.

Cecilia Beaux

I am a very firm believer [that a] woman's place [is] in the home.... Not that I believe for a moment that doing a man's work unsexes a woman. It does not. It is a question of whether she can satisfy the demands which her art makes upon her. Has she the vitality to give?

Cecilia Beaux

Chapter 7: Sacred Calling, 1888 - 1889

Paris made the difference -- Cecilia's experiences there made her choose. When she set sail for Europe at the age of thirty-two, she left three suitors in Philadelphia. While she went to Paris to finish her art training, she also needed to leave home to sort out her romantic feelings. Could she marry and also be a working artist? When she left Philadelphia, she still did not have a clear answer.

Since Cecilia's late teens, as she was maturing into a "seemly girl" with "French roses" in her checks, "the little god [of love had been] pretty constantly about." Her earliest suitors were young men who attended the Woodland Presbyterian Church. Sam, Harry, and Robinson competed to walk her home, to take her to a social, and to share a supper with her. While she was "by no means set against marriage" and in fact "talked much of marriage," she responded to these young men with a certain nonchalant indifference, noting, when one young fellow came to pick her up, that she "as usual kept him waiting."

Still, Cecilia thrived on the attention of her numerous and handsome admirers, first captivating them with her startling beauty and stylish dress, and then allowing them to linger in amazed fascination as she presented herself to them. Cecilia was beautiful, vivacious, intelligent, and energetic, but she was also slightly aloof. Essentially concerned with the pursuit of romance, Cecilia lost interest if a man wanted more than companionable friendship. The first to experience her rather fickle attitude was probably Henry Drinker, who had developed more than a passing interest in her during the years when she worked with his sister Catharine. Henry's marriage proposal, the first of many that she refused, seemed to alarm rather than please her, and at one point, when he and his sister "dropped by for a visit" while she was away from home, she noted in her diary that she didn't "mind missing him."

But Cecilia enjoyed the chase rather than the conquest, and while her family needlessly worried, her sister Etta had already concluded that Cecilia "wouldn't marry anybody." Etta saw that Cecilia "had another life before her," and even though her sister avoided the issue for years, Etta could see even then that Cecilia didn't really "want a husband."

It
was only when Catharine and Etta married that Cecilia found it necessary to confront her own feelings regarding marriage and love. Not surprisingly, she did it artistically through her numerous *Elaine* paintings. In these images, based on an Arthurian legend concerning a virgin’s death from unrequited love, Cecilia revealed her fear of the potency of love, commingling it with death. While these paintings were a clue that Cecilia’s future lay somewhere besides marriage, the significance of the *Elaine* image did not fully manifest itself until her trip to Paris.

Up until that time, Cecilia had pursued both her artistic interests and her romantic friendships. She still considered marriage, hoping that a “stern voice” would tell her, “you are to marry this man.”[11] But a subtle shift was triggered when her painting *Les derniers jours d’enfance* went to Paris with Margaret Lesley Bush-Brown. Thrilled that it was accepted at the 1887 Salon, when it came back to Philadelphia with all its stamps and labels, Cecilia started to see the possibility of a successful art career and the impossibility of a conventional marriage. As she arranged her art training in Paris, she started settling some of her romances.

In January of 1888, just days before her ship sailed, Cecilia received a flurry of letters from her friend Henry Thuron. “You have been constantly in my thoughts since first we met [and] I have dreamt of the happiness of being with you.”[12] Distressed by Henry’s declaration of love, Cecilia wrote to explain herself: “I have let myself enjoy your friendship too much -- feeling that I might do so, thinking that you understood. I could not help showing the pleasure I always felt -- Oh I could not help it. You think I am strong perhaps -- but I am weak* there.*”[13]

Cecilia had made him realize that a marriage would be impossible, and while Henry blamed himself, thinking that she would not accept him because “I am Catholic, and -- I am poor,” Cecilia softened the rejection by asking Henry to “try to be my friend still.”[14] In anticipation of her Parisian studies, Henry had prepared a series of “monochrome drawings on oil-sketch boards” for her to use at “the Louvre and elsewhere.”[15] As she continued her note to him, Cecilia told Henry that “I am going to keep your beautiful gift to prove how much I desire this -- and for the roses I never thought there could be so much pain with such beauty and sweetness.”[16]

Henry contented himself with the camaraderie Cecilia offered, noting that “I shall be deeply grateful for the possession of a friendship thus proved, and try to be worthy of it.”[17] His handmade study compositions acknowledged her artistic ambitions, and if Cecilia was not to be his wife, Henry could still encourage her work. With that thought in mind, Henry saw Cecilia off at the train station, and over the year and a half that she was gone, he kept in touch with her relatives, asking about her studies and reassuring them of the wisdom of her choices.

Despite Henry’s assurances, Cecilia’s departure distressed her family. It was one thing for her to study art in Philadelphia, but something else altogether for her to decide to go to Paris to definitively complete her training in order to launch an art career. In addition to their doubts and fears, the family keenly felt the loss of her companionship, and an early letter from Aunt Eliza described how much they missed her and how they worried about her, too. *We had prayers this A.M. in Mother’s room. Uncle W. found a prayer for an absent member of the family -- and -- when he came to that part, would you believe he stopped short and could not go on for such a long time that I began to think he meant the rest to be all a silent prayer -- but at last he gathered up and went on. You must know that the sting of parting...is the fear that you will be beguiled into making a wreck of your life and worrying the peace of your family -- which -- May God forbid.*[18]

Even though the family was anxious about Cecilia’s future, her grandmother, aunts, and uncle, as well as her sister and nephews read everything they could about ancient and modern France, participating vicariously in Cecilia’s European adventure. Uncle Will took care of her remaining business affairs, entering her portraits of Fanny Travis Cochran and the Colton children in the Academy’s spring exhibition, and also finding a renter for her studio while she was gone.[19] Letters flew back and forth between Cecilia and the family. Her sister, aunts, and grandmother wrote news of friends and relatives, with one note reporting on the impending marriage of a friend. *Bessie Biddle announced her engagement to the boy who gave her the dog today. Nelson Ritten by name -- a clerk at Drexel’s. Not a bad boy, but very young, sans shekels -- not very exciting for the family. None of those girls have made what one would call brilliant alliances. Bessie’s perhaps the least distinguished.*[20]

The missives Cecilia wrote recorded May’s and her exploits. Within weeks of their arrival, the cousins had joined a circle of expatriate American artists, including Florence Este, Gabrielle Clement, and Margaret Lesley Bush-Brown, all friends of Cecilia’s from the Pennsylvania Academy. May and Cecilia were visited by Philip Hale and Ned Stewardson, and Cecilia had sent a letter of introduction to Clifford Grayson, hoping that he would take her to the Salon’s Varnishing Day. In the spring the cousins met Catherine and Lucy Conant, and Cecilia wrote that “Mrs. C [was the] wife of artist [Albert] Conant from Boston -- [the] daughter [is] very ugly but nice and does good watercolor and pen and ink, [she] goes to Lasar.”[21] Ellen Day Hale had given Cecilia a letter of introduction to Elizabeth (Boott) Duveneck, and soon the two artists were calling on one another. Cecilia wrote that Elizabeth “was Henry James first and only love,” adding that, “I think Isabel in *The Portrait of a Lady* is like her. She is the original of it.... The most quiet being I ever saw. She has always
gone to the Passage Julian until this winter when she has a baby to look after."[22]

That winter the cousins were invited to numerous parties and festive gatherings. At a soirée in February hosted by Mlle de Villeneuve, Cecilia amused herself by reading the palmistry of several of the guests. Surprised that the "Frenchmen...believed everything I told them," Cecilia commented that "I am going to stop doing it.... The count went today to a Professional... [who] told him exactly what I did."[23] A month later, recounting the events of another gala, Cecilia described the manners of the Frenchmen when they took to the dance floor: These funny Frenchmen and their conduct at the soirées is a singular mixture of boyish gaiety and formality. They come, make their stiff little bow and ask you to dance, and if you don't, retire without talking to you to their side of the room. If you do dance they retire when they have deposited you -- generally.[24]

The cousins attended church in the company of their Aunt Sarah and cousin Constance, and when the weather warmed in the spring, Sarah took them sightseeing to St. Cloud. Cecilia described the visit, noting that "[t]he palace is in Nêmes, thanks to the Prussians, but they have not hurt the gardens and the Park.... I am sure it must be more beautiful now than when Napoleon and Josephine were there."[25] Later that spring Cecilia went to the Sewers, to the Beaux Arts, and to the Jardin d'Acclimatation.[26]

Reveling in the season's breathtaking beauty, Cecilia wrote to Aunt Eliza that "the horse-chestnuts are all in bloom now," and as you walk along, the river...is close beside you over the wall...and you see the boats and beautiful grey stone bridges, and towers of all sorts in the distance. The gigantic Tour Eiffel is going to be 500 ft high and is to be finished for the Exposition next year. [It] is a hideous blot, and will never be any use either that I can see. It is most unparsian in them to have built it.[27]

While Cecilia enjoyed the splendor Paris had to offer, it was her atelier experiences that primarily occupied her time. As she focused on her work all through the cold, damp winter, most of her relatives wrote to encourage her artistic efforts. But the letters from her Aunt Eliza frequently had another tone. As an unmarried woman who had devoted her life to teaching music, Eliza was extraordinarily aware of what her niece's art training actually signified. Anxious that Cecilia consider all her options, Eliza took it upon herself to regularly remind her niece that she was a genteel and well-bred young woman and that her art training should not go to her head. She admonished Cecilia that "there are so many ways opened -- so much stimulus everywhere...don't get too much stirred up and work yourself into a fever! May must cool you off."[28] Eliza worried excessively about the excitement of the art world, and at the same time she had misgivings concerning the stimulation of the city. In April she wrote to Cecilia: I do hope your stay in the wicked city of Paris will not be for the disadvantage of your better self.... To be without one's own regular duties and church environment is very apt to cause indifference. But on the other hand -- the very consciousness of the danger ought to quicken one's watchfulness.... Only remember that you are first of all a Christian -- then a woman and last of all an Artist.[29]

But Cecilia knew how to maneuver within the boundaries of respectability. In addition to descriptions of her many Parisian adventures, her letters were also filled with constant reassurances that her experiences were not going to her head. In March she wrote to her family that "Miss Huistes is the belle of this establishment -- and I am not being over flattered here. Shall make my only, if any, sensation at the atelier."[30] In April, in response to a letter that her Aunt Sarah had written to the family, Cecilia wrote: You really need not be worried about any indiscretions of ours. We have almost no temptations nor any chance for any, and we are not going to do anything imprudent anyway. I think Ceci takes pleasure in making out that things are improper to do. Aunt Sarah allowed Constance to go with us to Ned Stewardson's studio, so she oughtn't to say a word. When we were leaving Mr. Stewardson's studio I made a laughing sort of apology about its being Bohemian. The only other thing we have done that could possibly be called imprudent was our walking home with Mr. Rhinehart and Mr. Grayson...and my taking a Sunday afternoon walk with little "Billy Ellicott" the stuffiest little Phila. prig that ever lived who would perish before he would do anything not comme il faut.[31]

The longer Cecilia was in Paris, the more involved she became with her work. That spring she especially guarded her time when she learned of American acquaintances coming to the Continent for a visit. "I don't want any more valuable friends!" she wrote to her sister Etta: I don't know what to do with those I have -- And what shall I do when the Van Ingens, the Gibsons, and L. W. B. come? The latter will expect me to devote myself to him and will have all sorts of extraordinary plans -- such as climbing the column Vendome with him or something -- I dread him.[32]

Cecilia's second suitor was Dr. Leonard W. Bacon. She may have met him four years earlier when she sketched a posthumous portrait of his father. Later, when Bacon's wife died, he had "taken notice" of Cecilia, and when he came to Paris in early June, her friends observed his interest. While Cecilia wrote to her Uncle Will that "of course it makes me mad and is a bother,"[33] nevertheless, she and May accompanied him to L'Africaine, Giacomo Meyerbeer's romantic opera.[34]
While Leonard Bacon hoped that Cecilia would be the "successor to his sainted Susan," his pursuit was put to rest in July when he unexpectedly stopped Aunt Emily as she entered the gate to their house in Philadelphia. "Flabbergasted" by Bacon's hope that Cecilia "might be a mother to his young children," Aunt Emily "was obliged to tell him that in her opinion he hadn't the slightest [chance], -- altho' that was only her opinion & not certain knowledge." Uncle Will found the situation to be absolutely hilarious, noting in his letter to Cecilia that "my logical mind insists on including the other consequence, which he didn't mention, of your being a grand mother to his young grand children, & then I roar, -- every time -- Oh! dear me!" Dr. Bacon had "fallen from the pedestal" on which the aunts had placed him, and the "interview" with Aunt Emily "sav[ed] Cecilia from all further worry and trouble from that source."[35]

Primarily concerned with his own needs, Bacon was apparently oblivious to Cecilia's artistic ambitions, and the graceless encounter with her Aunt Emily did nothing to endear him to her. "Poor Aunt Emily," Cecilia wrote to her Uncle Will, what a shame she had to take it.... I almost wish he would write to me point blank so that I could settle him once for all and let him see what a flippant and unsympathetic creature the gentle and womanly Cecilia really is. I would be hard on him if he were to write to me now. He deserves it.[36]

It was easy enough for Cecilia to limit her relationships with Thuron and Bacon. Henry's Catholicism and poor finances were reasons enough to rule him out, and as for the widowed Leonard, becoming the mother to his children was not even remotely appealing. But that fall in Concarneau, as she completed her summer's work, Cecilia came to terms with a love affair that genuinely meant something to her.

All summer T. Alexander Harrison and "Shorty" Lasar had praised Cecilia's work, as well as her dedication. They had made her realize that few artists were as impassioned about their achievements as she unquestionably was. Their encouragement gave her the necessary fortitude to fully commit herself to her art, a resolution that Cecilia made after carefully considering and painfully declining the serious and heartfelt marriage proposal of her third suitor, Edwin Swift Balch.[37]

Balch was a young, wealthy, and socially well-connected Philadelphia bachelor. He painted miniatures, was an author, a scientist, and an explorer, and throughout the 1880s he kept a studio in the same building in Philadelphia as Cecilia did.[38] It may have been there where the two artists first met and where their romance may have blossomed. At any rate, by the fall of 1888, she faced the passion she felt for her art work and soon realized that she did not have the same feelings for Edwin Balch.

That September she wrote her Uncle Will a heart-wrenching letter. And now prepare your dear mind for the real and serious thing I have to say. You will not perhaps believe the struggle that it costs me -- because I know that this is the real end. It is all over between me and Mr. Balch. It is not his fault, but I believe now that he is reconciled to it. He speaks of it as "the break which I foresaw" and at the end -- "I have written more but tore it up as it is silly to reproach you." He will never know how much I cared for him and still do. What I admired in him, what attracted me, and what I really loved -- time and distance could not, and have not changed, but what was not satisfied has grown more imperative and for the first time I know that it will not do. I have expanded here and I could not get into the place I might have got into before. Though even then I should have had to stifle something. You will say that I ought to have known this before. That if I had listened to reason I should have saved many people much pain. To which I can only say that no one but myself can know how I clung to what I found in him. I know that it was selfish, but I hoped to make up for it. Of one thing I feel sure that he does not suffer now more than I do, and he has, as regards this side of life, a much more hopeful future than I. All the same I ought to have made the sacrifice and taken the risk of losing. Do not think I am not paying for it -- that is all.

I am waiting anxiously now to hear what you think about my staying over here a few months longer. You will easily understand that now I wish to stay as never before. It would be very painful for me to go home now, and for him too. He would almost be driven away himself if I did. Besides I must allow to the weakness of its being safer for both of us. I am besides very anxious to paint something for next year's Salon.[39]

Will Biddle responded immediately to his niece's anguished letter, supporting her decision regarding Edwin Balch as well as her longing to stay in Paris for another year. Even so, he began his correspondence with a worried admonishment: You do flit about pretty fast, -- physically, -- & perhaps Emotionally -- but I trust not morally or mentally. With those departments of one's being it is wiser & safer to "go slow".... In regard to Mr. B. I can only say that if you really feel sure about yourself we all rejoice in your decision, -- & unless you were prepared to accept now, or at least very soon, it was your duty to so decide anyway. Even if you were not sure of yourself, -- or were sure, the other way.... Judging from what you have written me, his attitude in the affair seems manly & dignified & raises him in my estimation. I'm sorry for him, -- but do not think his life will suffer.... If there is no change in our family status at 4305, I can see no valid reason for your hurrying home in May or June & leaving the Salon & Exposition unseen or only half seen.[40]
The romance with Edwin Balch was the relationship that made Cecilia realize how temperamentally unsuited she was for a traditional and conventional marriage. For the first time, she clearly recognized her self-determination, restlessness, and independence. No matter how attractive her suitor, she now knew that she was uninterested in "succumbing" to anyone in marriage. She elaborated on her decision in a letter to her sister Etta: They have told you of course that it is all over between me and Mr. B. It was not a quarrel or his fault. I seemed to feel by degrees that it would not do. He was weak about holding onto me though he was perfectly true. He felt when I left that it would come to this. My absence made it easier for him at the last. I do not think it hurts him more than me now. It hurts me a great deal. If he had only been a little different. I could have been so happy with him. I can never feel so tenderly nor so satisfied with anyone else all told - though I often see other men who are far superior to him in particular. You can imagine this is a great reason for my staying over -- though it is hard to be so long without a sight of all your dear faces.Embracing a "beau ideal", Cecilia had come to believe that the "terrible standard of what love should be...held back the romantic heart."

But there was more to it than that. Not only was she avoiding the emotional entanglements of love, Cecilia was also keeping a distance from the flame of physical affection. That winter, after a short trip to Italy, the cousins were back in Paris so that Cecilia could start her Salon picture. Intended first as another artistic credential, like the earlier Elaine paintings the portrait was also subliminally autobiographical. The divine Louise Kinsella evoked a myriad of images that helped Cecilia put her marital decision in ever-greater perspective. The picture that she created contained underlying themes of love, marriage, and death, and her portrayal of the ethereal Louise -- a popular image of ideal beauty symbolizing innocent sensuality -- suggests how she addressed her career commitment and her future relationships with men. As Cecilia began the portrait, T. Alexander Harrison told her that she was "always trying to reconcile the impossible."[44]

The painting, now lost and never reproduced, portrays the blond-haired Louise either seated in a "camp chair" wearing a "brown breton cloak with the hood thrown back," or "standing, her grand pale countenance lifted toward the light, in profile, a pearl against the shadowy suggestions of her dark costume and the darker background...a brown picture with a light spot in the midst."[45] The first description is from Beaux's family letters and the second from her autobiography. Whistler's The Lady with the Yellow Buskin (circa 1883) may adequately suggest the image [Illus. 47].

When Cecilia had met Louise in Concarneau the previous summer, her type of delicate beauty had attracted her even then. Cecilia described Louise as looking "like one of the English Millais heroines -- Lucy Ashton or the Huguenot, golden hair tumbling around her ears and down her back."[46] Lucy Ashton was a heroine in Sir Walter Scott's Bride of Lammermoor. First betrothed to Edgar Ravenswood, Lucy is forced by her mother into a loveless marriage to Frank Hayston. Grief drives Lucy insane, and she dies on her wedding night.[47]

Beaux's reference to the Huguenot was Sir John Everett Millais's The Huguenot (1852) [Illus. 48], a painting based on Giacomo Meyerbeer's 1836 opera Les Huguenots. It, in turn, recalled the Catholic massacre of the French Huguenots in 1572, a conflict that Cecilia had been aware of since her childhood, as her father was a Huguenot. Millais portrayed the moment when the Catholic Valentine declared her love for the Huguenot Raoul, who is about to leave for battle and what Valentine believes to be certain death. As the operatic tale continues, Valentine converts to the Huguenot faith, and at the end, she and Raoul perish together, united in their faith.[48]

Cecilia soon found other analogies for Louise. She wrote to her Grandmother Leavitt, if you want to know her type "The Book of Beauty"...[in] the bottom drawer of the parlor secretary [contains an image] of "Gertrude of Wyoming" who as far as I can remember is perhaps as much like Louise as the portrait I shall make of her.... The picture I mean is a girl with a cloak and hood tumbling back, and a stray lock of hair floating out in front. It may be the one called the Mayflower. Gertrude was the beautiful heroine of Gertrude of Wyoming or The Pennsylvania Cottage, an 1809 stanza by Scottish poet Thomas Campbell. Set in the late eighteenth century in the Wyoming valley of northeastern Pennsylvania, Cecilia may have been drawn to the story because she identified with the heroine's early life. Gertrude had lost her mother and was raised by Judge Albert, her widowed father, who also raised Henry Waldegrave, a young boy brought to him by the Indian chief Oultalissi. Later, Gertrude and Henry marry, but their bliss ends when the aged Oultalissi returns wounded to warn them of an invasion, a battle in which Gertrude and Albert are killed [Illus. 49].

Something about Louise brought a series of literary sources to mind. She suggested a novel, a poem, and an opera with stories of parting lovers and situations where the consequences of love and marriage for the woman were death. As Cecilia began the portrait of Louise, she figuratively fused love and marriage with death, an association for her that was both personal and professional. At the time that she refused Balch's marriage proposal, society demanded that a woman choose either career or marriage, an expectation that was even further complicated by another contemporary notion. Professional accomplishments and successful marriages were also thought to be impossible for artists, an idea popularized by Henry James in "The Lessons of the Master." Published in 1888, the very year Cecilia rejected the pursuits of her suitors, James's story suggested that "true art" only happened at the sacrifice of marriage...
These powerful ideas permeated the literature of the day. Authors such as Louisa May Alcott, Sarah Orne Jewett, and Henry James wrote fictional accounts about contemporary American woman, while Elizabeth Stuart Phelps Ward, William Dean Howells, and Dinah Maria (Mulock) Craik specifically wrote novels about the lives of women artists. The persistent theme in the work of all of these authors was that women's lives were controlled by the fate of their choices. If they married, there were incalculable consequences, as careers and marriages were totally incompatible.

Alcott, Jewett, James, Ward, Howells, and Craik all struggled with the themes of choice and fate in the lives of the women about whom they wrote. Louisa May Alcott, in *An Old Fashioned Girl* (1870), wrote about Polly Milton, a humble country girl who moved to the city and supported herself by giving music lessons. Part of her income was used to help her brother finish college and become a minister. Polly symbolized the independent woman with a purpose to her life. She could "stand alone and help herself."[53] Sarah Orne Jewett's *Nan in A Country Doctor* (1884) was a young woman whose ambition was to become a doctor. When she received a proposal of marriage from a young lawyer who disapproved of her career, she rejected him because she opposed the condition that required her to give up the career that for years had given her a sense of identity.[54] Marital choice and fate were also two of the themes in Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881). Isabel Archer was a young American girl with a "ridiculously active imagination" and a large measure of liberty due to her substantial wealth and satisfactory social position. Yet in spite of all of her advantages, Isabel still had to "affront her destiny" -- an unfortunate marriage to Gilbert Osmond, a choice that she had made in her early twenties, which seemed to determine the fate of her life.[55]

The themes of choice and fate were even more evident in Elizabeth Stuart Phelps Ward's unsettling *Story of Avis* (1877). Ward's story conveyed the message that the life of the artist and that of wife and mother were utterly incompatible, and that for women, marriage and motherhood destroyed any possibility for creative achievement. Avis was a young New England woman who, it was thought, would have a brilliant painting career. Her talents had been affirmed by the great French artist Thomas Couture; yet like Isabel Archer, Avis, too, had made a poor alliance. Despite promises that she could continue to paint after her marriage, mounting domestic and maternal responsibilities forced her to set her work aside. She bore two children -- a son, and a daughter who was called "Wait." Her husband lost his teaching position, her son died, her husband's health failed, and on a recuperative trip to Florida, he lost his way in the swamp, where he died. All of these events took place within a five-year period in Avis's life. When she tried to resume her art career, still a young woman in her early thirties, her art style was considered out of fashion, and she was too emotionally depleted to start again.[56]

In *The Coast of Bohemia* (1893), William Dean Howells described the plight of Cornelia Saunders, a poor but talented Ohio girl who gave up her dream of an art career when she married her mentor, Ludlow.[57] Finally, in Dinah Maria Craik's *Olive* (1851), the artist-heroine was allowed independence and success, because she was crippled and automatically considered ineligible for woman's allegedly natural destiny. Again, the novel ends with Olive marrying and Mrs. Craik noting that the influence of Olive's husband would deprive the Scottish Academy of "no one knows how many grand pictures."[58]

Cecilia Beaux would have been well aware of the attitudes toward professional women and artists in the last decades of the nineteenth century. As she painted her portrait of Louise Kinsella, the literary references suggest that she quieted her womanly romantic feelings in favor of the primacy of her career, professionally equating love and marriage with artistic death. But the painting has even further symbolic meaning associated with Louise's physical appearance. Her looks unravel Cecilia's personal reasons for relating love and marriage with death, while also revealing how Cecilia came to satisfy both her private desires and her public ambitions.

Physically, Louise conformed to an ideal of feminine beauty developed by such Pre-Raphaelite and Aesthetic artists as John Millais, Lord Leighton, and James Abbott McNeill Whistler. She particularly reminded Cecilia of the heroine in Millais's *The Huguenot*, a tall, thin woman with classical Greek features. Cecilia chose to paint the Irish girl because she had an "appearance of other-worldliness." Louise's face, "without being large...had almost sibylline grandeur." Her "eyes were pure Irish, grey, long, superbly drawn, and wide apart." She was a pale-featured and "bloodless sort of creature...sometimes white to her very lips," and her hair was "the palest of blondes...flowing back from her forehead like an angel's flame and dropping in a flossy tangle." Louise never wore a bustle, "always a plain skirt of some soft material," and she generally wore "a kerchief of some kind thrown around her shoulders or over her head, or a big hat tied under her chin." As Cecilia began her friend's painting that winter, she rejected the girl's dreamy "aesthetic clothes," posing her instead in her "brown Breton cloak," believing that to "simply copy her as realistically as possible would make of her an ideal work."[59]

Cecilia was drawn to the girl's type of beauty, because it signified a nineteenth-century ideal of innocent sensuality. In the first place, Louise epitomized the contemporary natural woman whose countenance predominantly featured an aesthetic, classical look. In the late 1870s, American elites had shifted their allegiance in matters of style from France to England,
Frederic Leighton's *The Last Watch of Hero* (circa 1887) indicates just how fully these artists were influenced by the classical model of beauty [Illus. 50]. They believed that the Greeks had achieved an unparalleled sense of face and form, and they also viewed the classical style as grand and asexual. The Venuses de Medici and de Milo were considered precursors of the natural woman, and it followed that they represented an unsurpassed ideal of asexual female beauty. Cecilia Beaux, who had chosen to sketch cool antiques during her days at the Pennsylvania Academy, was "perfectly satisfied" when she saw the classical and asexual Venus de Milo in the Louvres.

Cecilia chose to paint Louise, because not only did she have an otherworldly look associated with classical asexuality; her model also did not "care at all for men." Cecilia identified with Louise, and therein lies her literal association of love and marriage with death. While Cecilia had definitely entertained a number of friendly romances, she never allowed them to progress beyond a certain point. She never risked the perils of physical affection, and conceivably one of her reasons for deciding on a professional life was that it gave her an acceptable way to avoid the dangers of maternity.

In the 1880s marriage, for a woman, still meant pregnancies and childbirth, and fear of the birth process and death in childbirth was still a frighteningly pertinent concern. Since her own mother had died from the complications of her delivery, Cecilia had legitimate reasons to fear the process of birth. In choosing to pursue an art career, she directed the focus of her decision away from a valid fear of pregnancy, highlighting instead the vocation that she regarded as a sacred calling, requiring the sacrifice of marriage. Embracing the "cult of single blessedness" that had first developed in the early nineteenth century, Cecilia considered her portrait-painting career as a celibate commitment, which she ironically equated with the responsibilities of motherhood.

The author of *Single Blessedness* (1853) wrote that noble work was given to the unmarried woman at the inspiration and command of her God, and through her vocation she was provided with a high sense of purpose as well as meaningful satisfaction in life. The idea of a vocation was not new to the nineteenth century, but when it was applied to the well-bred Victorian woman who was for the first time choosing a career, societal approval was accorded if she regarded her work as a spiritual "calling" and remained celibate and single. It often followed that a woman described her commitment to a certain chosen profession with language that created the illusion of participation in a formal religious order, expressing her sense of purpose through images of godliness, sanctification, and the novitiate.

This was precisely how Cecilia Beaux viewed her career. She compared the pursuit of art to the priesthood, and further concluded that her calling as an artist had been predestined. In an article entitled "Why the Girl Art Student Fails," Beaux stated that "[t]he would-be artist should realize...that nothing but a high degree of natural gift will in the end prevail." She claimed that an artist was born and was "one of the truly elect" in whom the "power of the Senses is raised to the power of Spirit." In painting the portrait of Louise Kinsella, Cecilia Beaux concluded that a professional vocation, while an acceptable alternative for a single and well-bred Victorian woman, was also a socially legitimate way to avoid the perils of marriage and motherhood.

While Cecilia had definitely come to terms with the primacy of her career, what she had not yet settled was how she would now relate to men. Well aware of her ability to attract scores of admirers, Cecilia needed a barrier that could successfully dash any hopes for love or marriage but still allow companionable friendship. Cecilia knew that her own beauty was one of her enticements, and through nineteenth-century symbolism associated with blond hair, her portrait of Louise Kinsella again helped to address her dilemma with men.

European culture had traditionally identified dark hair with passion and blond hair with purity and innocence. Yet in the early nineteenth century, according to physiognomists, blond hair also came to represent an insipid and uninteresting personality. But blond hair as a signifier of purity and insipidness began to change in America in the late 1860s and early 1870s with the country's fascination with the British Blondes, a British burlesque troupe brought to the United States by the music-hall performer Lydia Thompson. The British Blondes were the embodiment of the type of woman defined as voluptuous. They were sensual, sturdy, and buxom, and with their arrival in the States, light blond hair became the vogue. The old associations of blond hair with purity and innocence were now combined with a new sensuality. By the late nineteenth century, America had its own symbol of sensual purity in the blond-haired, white-skinned stage actress Lillian Russell [Illus. 51]. Innocence was the major ingredient of her beauty, while her popularity rested on her portrayal, in her acting roles, of romanticized sensuality.

Cecilia Beaux saw Louise Kinsella as a "sibyl." She was a prophetess and oracle who declared the will of the divine. None of Cecilia's subsequent paintings of beautiful women were as autobiographical as was her enigmatic portrait of Louise. Cecilia created an image of the enchanting Irish girl that literally represented what she saw when she looked at
Chapter 8: Professional Career, 1889 - 1897

and for Cecilia it was entirely different from the romances she had so recently ended. The relationship centered on their corresponding aesthetic pursuits, and extended the allegiance he demonstrated toward his clerical companion to his new artist acquaintance. Cecilia was in his "great coat and 'bonnet'" on the flyleaf of a book by an author named Harrington. Discovered that they had a mutual interest in the arts. Cecilia memorialized the trip for George by making a sketch of him dressed "with gold combs" in her hair, noting that Mr. Middleton "furtively" observed her during the meal, "but Mr. R. S. [the librarian] would just as lief I had been bound in calf." As a working artist, she now felt it necessary to maintain her own appearance. The professional working artist. That summer, over the objections of her relatives, Cecilia accepted a number of portrait commissions and assumed the role of one of the family providers. She was pleased with "the idea of leaving some work in Cambridge" and also liked coming home with a little bit of money. As a portrait painter, she reveled in her ability to closely observe the appearance of others, describing Maud Darwin's friend Mr. Duckworth as "a stunning and charming young fellow -- such a type and such a beauty. When a young Englishman is beautiful he can't be matched -- especially when he is in loose white flannels." As a working artist, she now felt it necessary to maintain her own appearance. The evening she met Mr. Robertson-Smith, the Cambridge librarian, and Mr. Middleton, the university's professor of fine art, at a dinner in the home of Maud and George Darwin, Cecilia commented that she "really looked rather nice" in her "blue dress" with "gold combs" in her hair, noting that Mr. Middleton "furtively" observed her during the meal, "but Mr. R. S. [the librarian] would just as lief I had been bound in calf." Before returning to Philadelphia at the end of the summer, Cecilia saw Henry Thuron in Paris and Edwin Balch in London and Cambridge. Maud Darwin had invited Balch to join them on a picnic, and Cecilia wrote to Etta that "it was better" that they had met again. That August, aboard a liner called the Anchovia, May and Cecilia eagerly set sail for America. During the voyage, Cecilia met a young New Haven lawyer named George Dudley Seymour [Illus. 52] traveling with a friend named Reverend Charles Morris. Cecilia observed that George was "Jonathan...devoted to David -- who is one of the kind to receive rather than to give devotion." As George and Cecilia got to know each other on their journey, they discovered that they had a mutual interest in the arts. Cecilia memorialized the trip for George by making a sketch of him in his "great coat and 'bonnet'" on the flyleaf of a book by an author named Harrington. He later framed the little sketch and extended the allegiance he demonstrated toward his clerical companion to his new artist acquaintance. Cecilia was destined to become one of George's lifelong friends. The relationship centered on their corresponding aesthetic pursuits, and for Cecilia it was entirely different from the romances she had so recently ended.
Cecilia returned to Philadelphia with a new sense of herself. She had settled the distressing marriage issue and had gotten her family to accept her decision. She now eagerly turned her attention to painting and her career, knowing that she could not have had a better fate than to have been brought up in a family of musicians who were aware of what art was, knew what its pursuit meant, and also what it exacted. Their extraordinary sensitivity regarding the "spirit and necessities of an artistic life" allowed Cecilia to focus her energies on her professional development.\(^1\)

Her family also realized that she intended to employ her talents for their comfort and provision; consequently, each one found a way to support her artistic efforts. In the fall of 1889 Uncle Will helped Cecilia find a new studio at 1710 Chestnut Street, and then helped her organize it so that she could begin a regular work schedule. At home, her aunts assumed the routine household duties. Each morning Aunt Emily made Cecilia's bed, straightened her room, and followed her to the front door as she left for her studio, handing her a "basket containing a bottle of milk and a large buttered roll." In the evening when she returned home, exhausted from the demands of the day, Cecilia entered a refuge of comfort and relaxation, where meals were prepared and served by Aunt Emily and piano serenades were performed by Aunt Eliza and Uncle Will. Not once during the years she was cultivating her vocation did her relatives expect her to "do an errand" or "some bit of shopping."\(^2\)

A sense of purpose and discipline marked Cecilia's daily routine. She typically arrived at her studio at nine and spent an hour "clearing the decks for action," so that by ten she was patiently waiting for her sitter to appear. From ten until the early afternoon she completed hours of "intensive work," taking a break "when there was nothing more of the best to give." During midday she tended to the "operations and accumulations that characterize any studio" and also made time for the "agreeable interruptions of friends."\(^3\) In the months just after her return from Paris, Cecilia accepted and completed five portrait commissions.\(^4\) It was the beginning of a steady clientele of Philadelphia matrons, children, and businessmen.

While the more routine assignments helped pay Cecilia's bills, that fall the young artist made a family portrait that opened other vistas for her. The picture recorded an incident mentioned in a letter that Etta had written when Cecilia was in Paris: "I discovered last eve that [Henry] was transposing his pieces -- really. He said, 'Mamma don't this sound pretty when I play it in the scale of d or a or e!' I could hardly believe it. He looks up, never at his hands & you will want to make a picture of his side face as he sits there & plays, he never looked so charming!"\(^5\) Cecilia's pastel rendering of her nephew precisely fits her sister's description [Illus. 53]. Henry is seen in profile playing an upright piano, his feet dangle above the floor. While the remarkable sketch is a record of an actual moment, it is also a timeless image of a child thoroughly engaged.

Cecilia had missed Etta and her children when she was in Paris completing her art training. When she returned, she expressed her devotion through a series of family portraits. Etta, Henry, and the children all cheerfully posed for her, declaring their admiration as well as support of her work. Cecilia, in turn, used these paintings as opportunities to teach herself new artistic techniques, and then sent the finest of them to the annual shows in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and New York -- yearly exhibitions where her ever-growing body of work was showcased and her maturing talents widely praised.

Beaux's best paintings of family, friends, and commissioned sitters expressed the most innovative techniques then displayed in American grand-manner portraiture. This new approach was characterized by a superb mixture of various artistic styles and portrait conventions, as well as aesthetic choices dictated by the type of sitter portrayed and by the artistic status of the portrait itself. Stylistically, grand-manner portraits were synthetic expressions of realism, the decorative aesthetic, Impressionism, and the classical academic of the American Renaissance. Iconographically, the sitters were accorded a certain status and glamour through exquisite costumes and from the fashionable accessories and lavish backgrounds in which they were displayed. Thematically, the images themselves had expanded beyond the mechanical influence of the camera and its emphasis on true likeness to the use of sentimental, moralistic, pictorial, or commemorative themes. There was a clear distinction between a portrait and a picture, with the use of a narrative theme typically found in Pre-Raphaelite paintings as a now-familiar pictorial device in grand-manner portraits.\(^6\)

Beaux combined the narrative qualities of the Pre-Raphaelite movement with the Aesthetic movement's preoccupation with "technique" and "the purely sensuous delight in the beautiful."\(^7\) Technically, her portraits were noted for their Impressionistic and bravura brushwork, completed with an Aesthetic palette of tonal color harmonies highlighted by color notes. Her portraits were carefully structured with the intention of creating an illusion of spontaneity, incorporating daring compositions, unusual poses, novel backgrounds, and experimental perspectives. Thematically, Beaux froze moments of activity on canvas by combining a narrative idea with compositional devices, while iconographically her images were types of upper-class men, women, and children in depictions expressing social and cultural ideals.
In the first years after Paris, Beaux painted with monochromatic Whistlerian color tones similar to her earlier work. An oil of Cecil, painted in 1891, portrays her stubborn and self-determined four-year-old nephew in a brown multi-caped greatcoat and black fur cap, holding a cane with a color note, a little red ribbon near the top [Illus. 54]. Between 1891 and 1893, Cecilia exhibited the painting at the Philadelphia Art Club, the sixty-seventh Annual at the National Academy of Design, and the World's Columbian Exposition. In each show the painting was well received and favorably reviewed, with one critic contrasting Cecilia to Manet's Boy with a Sword.[8]

The portrait of Cecil was also the first time that Beaux's work was seriously compared to that of John Singer Sargent, an equation that would continue for the rest of her career. Another reviewer wrote: Miss Cecilia Beaux exhibits a long panel portrait of a little boy which has a wealth of interesting features. The lad is dressed in an old-fashioned garb and supports himself in grown-up fashion on a staff. His face is a masterly study in childish character and the drawing and modelling, as well as the color, are all that could be desired. Miss Beaux has done nothing in oils to surpass this portrait. It suggests, because it equals, Sargent's picture of the little Goetel child... and while, perhaps, it lacks the final distinction of that piece of work, it yet surpasses it in careful art.[9] Cecilia had not only painted an exquisite Sargentesque portrait, she had succinctly captured the individual personality of her nephew while at the same time creating an appealing image of the contemporary well-bred child.

While Cecil's portrait helped establish the artist's reputation, it later had an impact on its model. As an adult, Cecil Drinker became a world-renowned research physiologist known for his work at the Harvard Medical School.[10] In 1942, when his Aunt Cecilia died, he was named the executor of her estate. All of Beaux's correspondence eventually came to him, and one of the penned missives concerned her portrait of him. In essence the writer wanted to know what had happened to that arrogant little boy with the cane and the fur cap and collar? Cecil saw this as a great joke, and wrote back a long list of honors that he had received and appointments that he had achieved and finally ended the letter by saying "and this arrogant little boy, sir, was yours very truly, Cecil K. Drinker.”[11]

Cecilia painted other Drinker portraits in 1891 -- a thinly painted image of her sister in a dreamy, contemplative pose [Illus. 55], and another sketch of her nephew Henry, which gave her a lesson in foreshortening.[12] Awkwardly posed on a cushioned sofa in clothing designed for bicycle riding, Henry's stance is reminiscent of Mary Cassatt's Little Girl in a Blue Armchair (1878) and Giovanni Boldini's Picolo Subercaseuse (1891).[13] But, as the art critics would soon note, Beaux portrayed less sophisticated sitters than either Cassatt or Boldini. Indeed, her images of simple and unpretentious people launched her reputation first nationally, and then on an international level.

One of the first paintings lauded for its demure simplicity was Cynthia (1892) [Illus. 56], a portrait of the second child and oldest daughter of the highly regarded New York painter Rosina Emmet Sherwood, a close friend of Cecilia's. The two women had met through their involvement in the arts, and in 1892 they exchanged portraits that memorialized their friendship and symbolized their lives. Rosina painted Cecilia with her palette and brushes, and Cecilia painted Rosina's bright-eyed child.[14]

With free-flowing brushstrokes, Beaux created a vivid yet delicate study in crimson, lilacs, and whites. Cynthia is seated on a red sofa with a white ribbon in her soft brown hair. She wears a white pinafore over a blue-gray dress and her arms rest in her lap. The image spontaneously captures the "scrapy" essence of a charming "household infant," qualities that are further emphasized by the unfinished dress, arms, and hands.[15]

Rosina recorded Cecilia's standing among her peers when she wrote to her friend about the response to the painting at the Society of American Artists' annual exhibition in 1895: My dear -- you and Cynthia were the lions of the Exhibition yesterday. Really, much as I admired the picture, I was startled at its brilliancy and force.... It never looked so like Cynthia before. The artists all moved about it.... Mr. Chase said he would give anything to own it and Robert Reid, after extravagantly praising the big picture [Sita and Sarita] said he liked Cynthia's portrait much the best. Kenyon Cox said that for the sort of portrait painting you chose to do, you do it better than any man he knew except John Singer Sargent. So there Madame![16] Cecilia added Rosina's letter to the "Book of Fame," and "bless[ed]" the "dear child" for her share in the success of the painting. "How good she was -- sitting there on the red sofa, and how inspiring!" Later that year, the portrait was engraved by Henry Wolf for St. Nicholas Magazine.[17]

Two years after Cecilia finished the Cynthia Sherwood painting, she made the first portrait of Ernesta, her beautiful niece, then two years old [Illus. 57]. She described how the painting came about: At my sister's house in Haverford I posed little Ernesta Drinker and her mother and the nurse Matty on the sofa in the library, but found that all I had was a conventional "family group." We gave it up. My sister and the others left the room. I sat there beginning to put my painting things away. In a few minutes the nurse came back through the library leading Ernesta -- they were going out for a walk. Suddenly I saw that that was what I wanted to paint. A child of that age is habitually being led by the hand.[18] Etta brought her daughter to Cecilia's Chestnut Street studio, and it was there that she painted the little girl's portrait.
Cecilia gave free rein to her creativity when painting portraits of her family. The picture of Ernesta displayed the comfortable world of the privileged child, with an emphasis on the dependent relationship of a very young child to adults. By focusing on the clasped hands of the girl and her nurse, and placing the portrait's vantage point at the eye level of another child, the painting makes a strong psychological statement and also gives a subtle didactic message. The portrait was also brilliantly composed and finely painted, a Beaux's trademark "white" painting, this one "highlighted by rich lavenders and luscious pinks." The cropping of the nurse's figure, the uneven distribution of masses, the dimly rendered couch in the background, and the empty floor space surrounding the figures all suggest a moment of arrested action.[19]

Beaux began exhibiting the painting almost from the moment it was completed. It went to the Society of American Artists spring exhibition in 1894, and while it was on display there, Catherine Drinker Janvier gave a reception for her former student. Those "who had not already pledged themselves to Ernesta at the Exhibition" promptly "fell in love" with Cecilia at the party.[20] Two years later the painting was awarded a third-place bronze medal at the Carnegie Art Institute's first International exhibition.

The critics were drawn to Beaux's portraits of children because she portrayed "the delicious character of youth without the degrading prettiness that attends so many renderings of the rose leaf skin and tenderly modulated forms of childhood."[21] Her portraits were appealing because "her children [were] nineteenth century little ones; just as they appear[ed] in their everyday life at home," and the "little lovable characters of small children are imprinted on their faces."[22] While Beaux did not overly flatter or romanticize the children, her images still suggested an idealized view of childhood.[23]

Both characterization and stylistic competence were noted by the critics. One reviewer felt that, for her portrait Cynthia, "the child's family [could] not [be] more proud of it as a work of art than as a most speaking and truthful likeness."[24] Another noted her "fresh touch" in the painting of Ernesta with Nurse writing that Beaux had captured "the fleeting expression and the half-forms which make child portraits at once the longing and the despair of portrait-painters."[25] Her portrayal of Ernesta also displayed many of the qualities of the turn-of-the-century child -- "individuality, curiosity, charm, simplicity and naturalness" but "no chic."[26]

The same year Beaux did the portrait of Cynthia Sherwood, she painted an entirely different kind of likeness of the Reverend Matthew Blackburne Grier [Illus. 58]. In 1892 the retired Presbyterian clergyman and former editor of The Presbyterian made his home in West Philadelphia just a few doors from where Cecilia and her family lived.[27] The artist had requested the eminent minister to sit for her, and she portrayed him in the tricornered Chippendale chair that she used for so many of her portraits of the late 1880s and early 1890s. While the colors were dark and somber, the brushwork was fluid and loose; and within a year the painting became a prize-winning portrait.

By 1893 Beaux had accumulated an impressive number of awards. Since completing her art training in Paris, she had won the Mary Smith Prize at the Pennsylvania Academy in both 1891 and 1892; her portrait of the Reverend Matthew Blackburne Grier brought her the Philadelphia Art Club's Gold Medal in 1893; and that same year the National Academy of Design bestowed the Dodge Prize on her 1892 painting of Mrs. Isaiah Stetson.[28] In the spring of that year, she was also publicly thanked for designing a seal for the Geographical Society of Philadelphia, a small commission that probably came to her on the recommendation of her former suitor, Edwin Swift Balch, who was the club's secretary pro tempore.[29] Beaux also sent at least three portraits to the World's Columbian Exposition that spring.[30] and when the Swedish portrait painter Anders Zorn saw her work at an exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy, he pronounced her portraits "the best woman's work he had ever seen, and among the best by any artist, man or woman."[31] Zorn had meant to flatter, but instead his comment was one of the first to implicitly suggest the thorny gender issues surrounding Cecilia's decision to pursue a highly visible professional life in the arts.[32]

In May of 1893, when she became the third woman chosen for election to the Society of American Artists, unspoken gender objections influenced the selection. It was reported in Art Amateur that at the Society of American Artists there was a stormy time in the election of new members. Miss Cecilia Beaux (pronounced "Boze") got in only through the most strenuous effort on the part of Mr. Chase. She certainly is worthy of membership. It is odd though that the Society, which has usually rejected her pictures for its own exhibitions, should elect her to membership because of the excellence of her work at the [National] Academy of Design.[33]

Contemporary attitudes toward the creative abilities of women were at variance with Beaux's mounting examples of well-painted and imaginative work.[34] Furthermore, her decidedly feminine persona presented "a charming contradiction to the theory that beauty and genius have no affinity."[35] The societal attitudes Cecilia encountered regarding beauty, intelligence, creativity, and the proper roles for women soon fueled, in a new way, the subject matter of her images of
Beaux had been painting conventional portraits of lovely young women in her social set for years. The pastel of her friend Helen Biddle Griscom, executed in 1893 presents a dignified and composed young woman, while Beaux's charming portrayal of the glittering socialite Mrs. George W. Childs Drexel (née Mary S. Irick) (1894) is graceful and pleasing. A reviewer who saw the Drexel painting at the National Academy of Design's "Portraits of Women Loan Exhibition" in the fall of 1894 thought it "one of the most delightfully painted things in the exhibition. Who would not have a friend portrayed thus?"

Beaux created an oeuvre of types of American women, which conformed with, but also challenged, prevailing opinions regarding the roles and status of women in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-centuries. She painted classic beauties, modern girls, pretty young matrons, sophisticated society hostesses, selfless and devoted older women, professional workers, wives of successful American men, and idealized women symbolizing liberty and patriotism. Beaux's standards of beauty and breeding always entered into her portrayals, but she further suggested a woman's type by depicting personal attributes or imbuing the image with characteristics that indicated class and status.

Some of Beaux's portraits of stunningly beautiful young women were decidedly thought-provoking. Just as her portrait of Louise Kinsella had been a metaphor for her own celibate commitment to her vocation, Self Portrait #3, The Dreamer, and Sita and Sarita -- all completed in 1894 -- were paintings that addressed the artist's own concerns regarding beauty, sensuality, intelligence, and creativity.

Beaux was elected an associate of the National Academy of Design at their annual meeting in May 1894. Admission was contingent on her compliance "with the requirements of Article 4, Section 7 of the Constitution," which meant submitting a portrait of herself for the Academy's permanent collection. At thirty-nine, Beaux saw herself as an attractive and sophisticated artistic woman, and she created a self-portrait that was in marked contrast to the simple and girlish image she had painted at seventeen. Beaux's painting was a self-contained and focused portrayal that emphasized her regal beauty and sense of commitment to her profession. She subdued her sexuality and accentuated her stylish appearance, highlighting her fashionable lavender, beige, and white striped silk dress. Beaux's self-portrait tells the viewer that this beautifully dressed and appealing young woman is also steadfast and serious. While her beauty might make her a desirable companion, enchanting to both men and women, it was her extraordinary artistic talents that would forge her place in society. Beaux's painting is an impression meant to challenge the limiting conventional attitudes she was then encountering regarding the acceptable roles for well-bred and genteel women, and it was also a depiction meant to defy the notion that beautiful women were not intelligent or creative.

Both Beaux's rank among artists and her social standing in the community were honored in February 1894 by members of the Philadelphia Art Club, who hosted a reception for her and Anna Lea Merritt. Some of the women on the planning committee were Beaux's family and friends, and on the day of the event, hundreds gathered to pay tribute to the artists. On Friday, February 2nd, from four to six in the afternoon, the "brilliant" event closed the social season with a "crown of distinction." Beaux and Merritt exhibited twelve pictures for the celebration. The reception committee welcomed the guests in front of the fireplace, which was hidden behind a bower of palms and Japanese plants in which "curiously fashioned leaves" were entwined with "blooming azaleas of snowy-white and vivid crimson." Cecilia thrived at such festive and genteel affairs. They were opportunities to showcase her work and pleasurable moments when she allowed herself to bask in the appreciative accolades of colleagues, family, and friends.

The self-portrait she created for the National Academy of Design was a satisfying image, which indicates that her personal choices were in accord with her professional decisions. But the paintings of her friend Caroline Kilby Smith and her cousin Sarah Allibone Leavitt were decidedly less tranquil depictions. Smith posed for The Dreamer in Beaux's Philadelphia studio, and Leavitt sat for Sita and Sarita in a "barn studio" in Essex Fells, New Jersey, in July. While the models fit Beaux's archetype of physical beauty -- dark-hair and dark-eyed features, and heads where the mouth, eyes, and brows were all a straight line -- the completed portraits suggest that Cecilia was still struggling with the issues surrounding feminine beauty, intelligence, and sensuality. Her paintings portray thoughtful and wholesome young women who are not quite approachable. One is lost in dreamy thought, and the other is a self-possessed beguiler.

Caroline Smith is seen lounging in a William Morris steamer, her elbows resting on the purple arm of the chair. One palm nests the side of her face and the other rests at her wrist. Placed close in the foreground, Caroline wears a simple but brilliant white-muslin dress with a black-velvet ribbon tied at her neck. Beaux created depth of perception by rendering a separate background in harmonies of brown, dimly suggesting a window with a window seat, her Chippendale corner chair, and a painting on the wall. When Beaux exhibited the portrait at the spring exhibition at the National Academy of Design, the critics noted that the "trace of the effeminate which usually trails the canvas of the woman-painter is not to be
While the canvas of Caroline Smith was disquieting to its viewers, the painting of Sarah Leavitt and her coquettish black cat was a puzzling enigma. The artist created a mystery by titling the portrait *Sita and Sarita*, leaving the identity of the woman and the cat in perpetual ambiguity. Sarah is seated on an overstuffed Japanese patterned sofa, and with one hand alluringly holds in her lap the waist sash of her white frock. With her other, she gently strokes the yellow-eyed black furry presence, whose tail is erect in the air. The cat is perched on Sarah's shoulder, and its fur is the same color as her hair, a blending that makes it difficult to determine where the woman ends and the animal begins. Such a provocative and sensuous portrayal suggests the animal in the woman and the woman in the animal, defying the artist's denial that she had not "thought of the character which romance and superstition have given to that creature."[47] When the portrait was shown in 1895 at the spring exhibition of the Society of American Artists, one reviewer wrote, "I don't see how even Mr. Sargent could paint a portrait with more distinction than that of the woman with a black cat by Miss Beaux."[48]

Cecilia's growing reputation rested on her ability to paint technically accomplished portrayals of fascinating subjects of interest to herself. Her talents were soon "identified with the recent progress of art in Philadelphia,"[49] and she reached a new level of success in 1895, when the Board of Directors at the Pennsylvania Academy appointed her the "Instructor of the Head Class of the Schools," at a salary of $1,200 a year.[50] The newspapers announced her selection as another victory for women: "Never before, either in this country or abroad has a woman been chosen as a member of the faculty in a famous art school. It is a legitimate source of pride to Philadelphia that one of its most cherished institutions has made this innovation."[51]

Beaux was soon a popular and much-appreciated teacher, and for more than twenty years she taught either a "Head Course" or a "Portrait Class" to which students were required to make application.[52] While she took a fairly laissez-faire approach to art instruction, believing that students should not be disciples of their teachers and should solve problems for themselves, she took the craft of painting quite seriously. She grounded her students in the basic technical skills required to paint successfully, exemplifying the importance of careful attention to detail with a story of a young woman who refused to clean her palette properly. The girl remarked that it was too much trouble, to which Beaux retorted that indeed painting was a great deal of trouble.[53]

Beaux was notoriously hard on the women students in her classes, believing that if they did not have the highest level of talent and the accompanying drive to succeed in the established art world, at best they could do decorative work, and at worst they should give up art altogether and get married.[54] Women such as Violet Oakley, Mary Thrason, and Caroline Peart accepted her challenge. Thrason regarded Beaux as her "one true teacher," and Oakley called Cecilia her "first master," considering the training with her to be an important part of her artistic development.[55]

While Beaux's teaching was indeed an inspiration to Violet Oakley, the example of her life may have been even more important. Even though Beaux never married, in some respects she maintained a traditional family life, living at home with her aunts and uncle who nurtured and applauded her talents. Like Cecilia, Violet chose an art career instead of marriage, and she stretched the definition of traditional family life by living with illustrators Jessie Wilcox Smith and Elizabeth Shippen Green for fourteen years in various communal settings throughout the Philadelphia area. The women's arrangement was an enriching sister-like artistic support system.[56]

Beaux approached her male students from an entirely different perspective than she approached the female ones. Rather than focusing on their place in society, she encouraged their talents and critiqued their work. George Bellows was taken on as a protégé, Will Richardson appreciated the interest she took in his work beyond the classroom, thanking her for her "expression of it in [her] letter to [his] mother," and Arthur B. Carles applied the training she provided regarding color composition and arrangement to many of the portraits he later produced.[57]

Before assuming her duties at the Pennsylvania Academy in the fall of 1895, Beaux spent part of the summer with her aunts in Washington, Connecticut. Cecilia had "planned a piece of work to do up there," a painting that expressed her love for the quietly devoted Leavitt women who had so compassionately raised her.[58] Cecilia's Grandmother Leavitt had grown up in the hills of western Connecticut, and ever since her granddaughters were girls, she had been taking them there in the summer to stay with Leavitt relatives at the old family homestead. The gentle and kindly Leavitts gave the Beaux sisters their heritage, but the beautiful and tranquil hamlet gave Cecilia a particular sense of ancestral place. One of her "supreme child moments" was at the village's Mallory Brook. It was there that the city child first experienced "crystal water purling over warm-hued pebbles and foaming around dark-hued stones."[59]

A return to Washington, Connecticut, always brought her grandmother to mind. Three years earlier, at the advanced age
suggests Beaux's ability to discern her sitter's characteristics and then capture them in the image. By associating both and professional positions of her Uncle Will, who was a Biddle, that helped open many doors. The portrait of Mrs. Scott Philadelphia's leading families, and undoubtedly, in addition to her own well-recognized artistic talents, it was the social daughter Mary Scott Newbold, painted in 1896, led to this commission. Beaux was now painting portraits for England Woman a round table and chair are faintly sketched in the background [Illus. 64].

knee. The table holds a silver tea tray, a blue bowl of red geraniums, and a brown porcelain Chinese export teacup, while from the lessons of the Colonial revival. Two years later, the 1897 commissioned portrait of Mrs. Thomas A. Scott (née Anna Riddle) benefited By using the colonial setting of Julia Leavitt's home, Beaux created an image that appealed to the contemporary craze for portrayal suggests "a faithful devoted life into which no thought of self has entered to mar its usefulness...it is evident that her lap, holding pages of a letter, and in her left is "one of those old-fashioned palm-leaf fans bordered with green." The apparel of "respectable grandmothers whose garb is thirty to forty years late on the day's fashion." Her right hand rests at bed. Dressed in a white lace cap and white "morning neglige" belted at the waist with a lavender ribbon, Julia wears the white-covered one and a blue diary-sized volume. To Julia's right, piled high with white pillows, is a large white-sheeted cushion. Behind her to the left hangs a "dotted muslin" curtain, and next to her stands a tilt-top candle stand covered with a nineteenth-century brass candlestick and candle, as well as two books -- a large white-fringed cloth. On the stand are a floral-patterned cushion. Behind her to the left hangs a "dotted muslin" curtain, and next to her stands a tilt-top candle stand covered with a white fringed cloth. On the stand are a nineteenth-century brass candlestick and candle, as well as two books -- a large white-covered one and a blue diary-sized volume. To Julia's right, piled high with white pillows, is a large white-sheeted bed. Dressed in a white lace cap and white "morning neglige" belted at the waist with a lavender ribbon, Julia wears the apparel of "respectable grandmothers whose garb is thirty to forty years late on the day's fashion." Her right hand rests at her lap, holding pages of a letter, and in her left is "one of those old-fashioned palm-leaf fans bordered with green." The portrayal suggests "a faithful devoted life into which no thought of self has entered to mar its usefulness...it is evident that this New England woman is absorbed in the thought of what has been."

New England Woman Beaux portrayed Julia in profile in her "own colonial room at the Corner," seated in a white-painted Chippendale country side chair with a cupid's-bow crest rail and a rush seat, covered with a floral-patterned cushion. Behind her to the left hangs a "dotted muslin" curtain, and next to her stands a tilt-top candle stand covered with a white fringed cloth. On the stand are a nineteenth-century brass candlestick and candle, as well as two books -- a large white-covered one and a blue diary-sized volume. To Julia's right, piled high with white pillows, is a large white-sheeted bed. Dressed in a white lace cap and white "morning neglige" belted at the waist with a lavender ribbon, Julia wears the apparel of "respectable grandmothers whose garb is thirty to forty years late on the day's fashion." Her right hand rests at her lap, holding pages of a letter, and in her left is "one of those old-fashioned palm-leaf fans bordered with green." The portrayal suggests "a faithful devoted life into which no thought of self has entered to mar its usefulness...it is evident that this New England woman is absorbed in the thought of what has been."

By using the colonial setting of Julia Leavitt's home, Beaux created an image that appealed to the contemporary craze for Colonial revival. Two years later, the 1897 commissioned portrait of Mrs. Thomas A. Scott (née Anna Riddle) benefited from the lessons of the New England Woman. Mrs. Scott is also portrayed in a shimmering ivory-satin gown and white-lace cap, with one bejeweled hand resting on a marble-top tea table and the other clutching a parasol against her left knee. The table holds a silver tea tray, a blue bowl of red geraniums, and a brown porcelain Chinese export teacup, while a round table and chair are faintly sketched in the background [Illus. 64]. The painting Mrs. Thomas A. Scott, like New England Woman, is filled with colonial furnishings.

Anna Scott was the wife of the president of the Pennsylvania Railroad, and Beaux's successful bridal portrait of her daughter Mary Scott Newbold, painted in 1896, led to this commission. Beaux was now painting portraits for Philadelphia's leading families, and undoubtedly, in addition to her own well-recognized artistic talents, it was the social and professional positions of her Uncle Will, who was a Biddle, that helped open many doors. The portrait of Mrs. Scott suggests Beaux's ability to discern her sitter's characteristics and then capture them in the image. By associating both
Mrs. Scott and her cousin Julia with their colonial surroundings, Beaux sent a message regarding this type of woman. She was American, she held old-fashioned values, and was of the finest breeding and ancestry.

During the fall of 1895, when Cecilia began teaching at the Academy, she also accepted a portrait commission that added to her repertoire of distinguished professional men. Painted in her Chestnut Street studio during the year that Dr. John Shaw Billings lived in Philadelphia, the work was announced at a testimonial banquet for the doctor on November 30, 1895, at the Hotel Bellevue [Illus. 65].

Billings was a renowned surgeon and librarian, who had made significant contributions to the American medical profession. A pioneer in preventive medicine, Billings spent much of his career in the Surgeon General's Office of the United States Army, in charge of the library and medical museum. While there, he developed the monumental Index Catalogue -- the first comprehensive guide to medical literature -- and its companion Index Medicus, a monthly listing of current sources. He drafted plans for the organization and construction of the Johns Hopkins University Hospital and was also instrumental in selecting Dr. William Henry Welch and Sir William Osler for the faculty of their medical school.[66]

During the 1895 testimonial celebration, Dr. Billings was presented with a silver box containing a check for $10,000, "in grateful recognition of his services to medical scholars," a gift raised by 259 physicians of the United States and Great Britain.[67] Funds had also been advanced for the portrait commission, and the same group of physicians later presented Beaux's work to the Army Medical Museum and Library in Washington, D.C.[68]

Beaux chose to paint Dr. Billings in his blue navy uniform and the scarlet gown that was his vestment when he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Civil Law at Oxford in 1889. She later wrote that Dr. Billings's "personality seemed to me of the noblest and highest, and of course the most direct and simple.... I felt what an inspiration his character would be to any worker, and was thankful that I was permitted to observe for a short time the external evidence of such a spirit."[69] While Beaux's portrayal does not suggest the same urbane and cosmopolitan man seen in Sargent's Dr. Pozzi at Home (1881), Billings's bright red gown nevertheless brings the earlier painting to mind.

Since her return from Paris in the summer of 1889, Beaux had been painting and exhibiting with a relentless determination and diligence, and had even filled her summer holidays painting portraits of her family. By 1896 she was ready for a change. The portrait group that she sent to Paris for the spring exhibition at the Champ de Mars gave her a reason to return to Europe. Once there, she stayed for six months, inspecting her work at the Champ de Mars, visiting friends, and absorbing European art and culture.

Just as Margaret Lesley Bush-Brown had entered Les derniers jours d'enfance in the Parisian salon exhibition of 1887 nearly ten years earlier, Philadelphia artists John Lambert and Henry McCarter, who were then working in Paris, encouraged Cecilia to send a number of paintings for the 1896 Champ de Mars exhibition. When the cable came with news of the jury's decision, all six of her paintings had been accepted. The portraits were hung in a group "with nothing above or below," a panel that held its own and made "a splendid showing."[70]

The six paintings Beaux sent to the Champ de Mars exhibition were portraits that revealed the interests and contours of her life. She sent Cynthia and Ernesta with Nurse -- paintings of idealized children who were the daughters of her sister and a friend. She shipped The Dreamer and Sita and Sarita -- images of a close friend and a cousin portrayed as beautiful and intelligent American girls. She also dispatched New England Woman, a painting of her second cousin in a representation of old-fashioned values, as well as the portrait of Reverend Matthew Blackburne Grier, an exquisite illustration of the distinguished professional man. Katharine De Forest predicted that Beaux would be made a societaire of the Société Nationale des Beaux Arts, on the strength of her showing at the Champ de Mars exhibition.[71]

Artists and critics alike were astonished by the quality of her work, and they were equally amazed that such provocative and beautiful portraits could have been painted by a woman. Even though the critics assessed her portraits on the merits of her painting skill and subject matter, her creative abilities so clearly challenged the norm that they felt compelled to find gender explanations for both her portrayed images and professional achievements. Astounded, they wrote that Beaux had "passed beyond the limits of mere popularity and [had] become famous," even though she was "handicapped by the double disadvantage of being a foreigner and also a woman."[72]

The accolades heaped on both Beaux and her work escalated her reputation to an international level. She was soon hailed as "the foremost woman artist of the day,"[73] and such critics as Henri Rochefort, writing for the New York Herald, had to admit "that not one of our female artists, Mlle. Abbema included, is strong enough to compete with the lady who has given us this year the 'Portrait of Dr. Grier.'"[74] The Grier painting "count[ed] tremendously" at the Champ de Mars exhibition.[75] It displayed "a simplicity of...attitude"[76] and had a narrative theme, and focus on the sitter's head, that accounted for its success: Best of all is the head, in old French the old word chef means the head, the keeper of the home, the one who keeps it safe, unviolated, in peace, freedom, truth, courtesy and discretion, and its domestic tasks,
While the portrait of Dr. Grier was considered a satisfying portrayal of a patriarch, *Sita and Sarita* and *The Dreamer* became international icons of the American girl. To the European art critic, these portraits were astonishing revelations of "the home life in America," a realization "that there were loveable maidens 'even more beautiful than the fair daughters of France on the other side of the Atlantic.' 

The art critic Paul Bion described why *Sita and Sarita* and *The Dreamer* were so appealing: All the American girls have not the assurance -- I would not venture to say the impudence -- to thrust themselves before the world that they might laugh in its face...no they do not chatter like a flock of parakeets; the bicycle and the tandem...are not their sole delights. Madame Cecilia Beaux demonstrates to us that they have, among themselves, thoughtful moments -- the most natural and the most graceful, something almost like timidity, even when they are not before the world, and with this a surrounding atmosphere of gayety, freshness and smiling, just like a ray of sunlight coming through the window. Pretty as plums on the tree, Madame Cecilia Beaux presents them to us as "fruits of the garden" truly American.

It was Beaux's simplicity of presentation that the critics saw as characteristically American. Her young beauties "spread abroad the idea that the country contains another class than the one which dresses its daughters in velvets and satins for Carolus-Duran, Charran and Boldini to paint." The critics liked Beaux's girls because they showed "the air of good breeding" but were not overly sophisticated or worldly. It was also evident that the artist was sympathetic to her sitters. "Timid young beauties, anxious to preserve the more fragile aspects of their charms, and yet desirous of appearing at Prince's might even if they were afraid of Blanche and Whistler, of Besnard and Guthrie, of Lavery and Rothenstein, sit down with a light heart before Cecilia Beaux." Beaux's portraits of women were appreciated because she focused on "things of beauty as opposed to things of fashion."

Cecilia's tremendous success at the Champ de Mars exhibition once again generated discussion regarding the place for women in art. "If women would do anything significant in art, they must find, with no uncertain choice, what is distinctly the womanly thing to do," one writer felt. The splendid work of Cecilia Beaux in the Champ de Mars is justly looked upon as one of the chief successes of late for women in art. It might so easily be taken for the work of a man, that I confess it nearly spoils my argument. But I think such a view of it would be superficial. She has reached the top of good painting, and all that; just as gifted people have done before and will continue to do; but her work contains what is of much more importance, a thing which she makes us feel the need of in art, the womanly sense of things. Her pictures are full of it. For this reason they stand among the most impressive works in the Salon.

While expressing a feminine perspective was new and unusual, those who noticed her point of view frequently added gender-confusing explanations for her talent and success. Beaux often faced such descriptions as that of Mrs. Schuyler Van Rensselaer, the premier female art critic of the late nineteenth century. In an article for *The New York World*, she stated that "a notable future must await this young woman, so masculine in the strength, so feminine in the sentiment of her work."

In other instances, Beaux's art work was connected to her gender and the traditional roles of women. Paul Bion described Beaux as "a corner of America, remote, discreet, shaded...a grove...within the soft and contemplative atmosphere where blooms her admirable talent." He noted that she created portraits that highlighted "the peacefulness of family customs" and declared, "One cannot portray the home the way she does without traces of it lingering in her own soul." Art critic Sadakichi Hartmann, who took a rather dim view of the art work of all women, only reluctantly acknowledged that Beaux painted with "brilliance and refinement," producing pictures that were "real fragments of beauty." With that said, he then tempered his compliments with comments that cast doubt on her creativity. "Beneath her flamboyant surface there is a good deal of drab, a rigidity, inherent in her personality, which she has not yet learned to animate with emotional and intellectual dashes that flash forth from the storm clouds of genius." Hartmann ultimately condemned Beaux for daring to challenge the traditional roles of women, suggesting that "if she had lived a woman's life more completely her art would probably be more complete also, but to discuss such a speculation, art criticism would have to be laid aside and psycho-physiology taken up instead."

As the "gender in art" debates continued to rage, Beaux spent six months in Europe rejuvenating her spirits and enjoying the attention of her friends. After spending May 1896 in Paris reviewing her work at the Champ de Mars, she traveled to England in June to stay with the Darwin family in Cambridge. In return for their hospitality, she made an oil sketch in the open air of Maud's son, William -- "a green, blue, white, and pink effect" that "would have been a better success within." She went to a wedding and garden parties where she "flaunt[ed her] nice clothes," and was disappointed when the women did not "notice how much more swell" she was, taking consolation from "the men [who] occasionally cast an eye"
She also went to London with the Darwins for a Royal Society soiree: *All the Darwins and wives were there and I met a dear old fellow named Sir Charles Galton who invented composite photography and seemed pleased with my interest in it... I felt very small which was perhaps good for me.*[90] The next day, Cecilia and Maud went through the picture galleries of the "Royal Academy, New Gallery, and several accidentals with old Masters." The Sargents she saw were "not his best," and she "didn't care much for the Abbey."[91] By the end of the month, the Darwins traveled to Paris with Cecilia and together they looked at the pictures at the Champ de Mars.

*I saw mine in a glare of sunlight on Saturday afternoon and they didn't look very well to me but you should have seen the dozens of little extra bows the old fellow at the door made me when I gave my card as exhibitor and he saw I was "Miss Beaux." When I came out he had told the others and they all peeped at me.*[92]

After the Darwins left, Cecilia spent time with the Richard Watson Gilder family, who were also on a European holiday that summer. As editor of the New York arts and literary magazine *The Century*, Gilder had been an admirer of Beaux's work for years. In 1893 he had met her through Catherine and Thomas Janvier, an introduction that was both the beginning of a profitable working relationship and a felicitous friendship.[93] Younger than Richard and Helena but older than their children, Cecilia appreciated the people she came to know through the Gilders and enjoyed her status as an aunt or older sister to the children.

Cecilia had been with the Gilders in May when she had first arrived in Paris, and as a memento of the trip had made an oil sketch of their oldest daughter, Dorothea, in a long, pale pink scarf. That summer she wrote to her nephew Jim that "there are two little Gilder girls who look so like Earnesta that I have to hug them a great deal. They have just the same big black eyes."[94] Indeed, Earnesta Drinker and Dorothea and Francesca Gilder, whose dark hair and dark eyes exemplified Beaux's artistic ideal of beauty, were the models she most frequently painted.

But Beaux was not in Europe to work that summer. By mid-July she was back in Cambridge with the Darwins, planning a sightseeing tour with Maud. For a few weeks they traveled around England visiting Oxford, Gloucester, Devonshire, and Stonehenge. By September Cecilia had returned to France, covering all the places where she had been when she had studied there several years earlier, including "a lovely afternoon at the Louvre in the Renaissance sculpture."[95]

Later that month she ended her continental holiday with a visit to Claude Monet: *I went out to Giverny and spent my day or the afternoon with Mrs. Perry "Lila Cabot Perry" a Boston swell and poet and artist.... It was a grey and green little French village with brilliant gardens among high walls and Monet is a "real white man." Dressed in striped blue and white cotton trousers buttoned around the ankles. The simplest and quietest of men -- we went into the studio and saw ever so many new and just begun pictures. He talked a good deal but I lost a good deal of it not understanding fast enough. Mrs. Perry and I then looked at his things and then talked.*[96] By the first of October Beaux was back in America, teaching at the Academy again, and writing to Rosina Emmet Sherwood that she was "trying to think my native land interesting."[97]

Chapter 9: Professional Renown, 1896 - 1905

The accolades of the French art critics soon brought the most fashionable Philadelphians knocking at Cecilia Beaux's door. For the next several years, when she was not teaching at the Academy, Beaux was creating sumptuous and elegant portraits.

Before the end of 1896 Beaux had completed another four paintings, including a portrait of Mrs. Clement Buckley Newbold (née Mary Dickinson Scott), which may have been painted as a bridal picture, as it was done shortly before her marriage [Illus. 66]. The couple's wedding announcement in the *Public Ledger* noted the event as "one of the most fashionable of the social season," for both families were "among the ultra-fashionable of the city and [had] long been identified with Philadelphia financial and social history." Both the Scotts and Newbolts were also major art collectors who possessed an awareness of the best in contemporary art. With advice from Mary Cassatt, the Scott family amassed an important collection of late-nineteenth-century French art. Their interest in the current styles is also evident in Beaux's portrayal of their daughter.[41]

Mary Scott, portrayed as a sophisticated society hostess, is fashionably seated on a French-Revival green-plush-upholstered love seat wearing a white satin ball gown with a low neck and puffed sleeves. Her extended right arm is at rest on the back of the chair, and in her left hand is a folded fan, held at her lap. Directly behind her is a Japanese screen with a gold peacock and branches -- Beaux's nod to both an ornate possession of a lady of distinction and the Aesthetic
Beaux's stylish portrayal suggests the work of Giovanni Boldini, an association that New Haven lawyer George Dudley Seymour made when he saw the painting in her solo exhibition at the American Art Galleries in New York in December 1897. George recalled Cecilia enthusiastically showing him portraits by Boldini in Paris, but his own opinion of the Italian painter's work was that it was "too decadent and vampireish to be at all worthwhile." George assessed Cecilia's portrait of Mrs. Newbold with his judgment of Boldini in mind: "I still do not like it as a whole as it seems to me too 'society' but the color is certainly very lovely, especially those prismatic effects in the gown."[3] Boldini may have seen the Newbold portrait when it was exhibited in New York. He was showing paintings in the city then, and his 1902 portrait of Edith Blair is similarly composed.[4]

Beaux's flattering portrayal of Mary Scott Newbold brought a commission the following year from Mary's mother, Mrs. Thomas A. Scott, and the year after that from one of Mary's bridesmaids, Anna Fisher. While the painting of Mary Scott Newbold emphasized her costume and furnishings, the portrait of Anna Fisher, painted in 1898, illustrated genteel classical perfection [Illus. 67]. Beaux described Anna as "the Venus de Milo -- really -- five foot eleven, tight ripples of gold for hair -- and I am doing her à ducce [sic] -- rather a new thing for me, and may not succeed but I couldn't do her in a French frock."[5] Anna wears a cream-colored dress with two bands of narrow dark-blue ribbon around her waist; and the portrait captures her height and exudes an Amazonian sense of vitality. Mrs. Fisher found the painting "utterly soul satisfying," and John Beatty, director of the art galleries at the Carnegie Institute, made a futile attempt to buy it.[6]

Praise from colleagues and critics alike strengthened Beaux's self-confidence. In 1896 she again began to paint double portraits, and before the close of the decade had completed six. The first was a mother-and-child picture of Mrs. Beauveau Borie and her son Adolphe (1896), an interpretation of "the spirit of youth and maturity" executed in contrasting dark and light colors [Illus. 68].[7] Beaux's sitters were the wife and son of a fellow Philadelphia portraitist, and the commission suggests his admiration of her work.

While Beaux painted numerous images of women and children throughout her career, in her entire oeuvre there are only fourteen group portraits of mothers and children. Even though she believed that the role of wife and mother was appropriate for most women, the narrow and confining attributes applied to a woman who was a mother were disconcerting to Beaux.[8] She refused to produce overly sentimental renditions of motherhood, resisting a kind of portrayal that would also have limited her status as an artist.

*Mrs. Beauveau Borie and Her Son Adolphe* indicates Beaux's ambivalence toward the theme of the mother and child. One reviewer suggested that she had "merged her own idiosyncrasies [into] those of her subject." She had "produced two very effective likenesses in spite of the somewhat awkward arrangement of the figures, their relationship not being indicated in any way except in the title of the picture."[9] When it was exhibited in 1900 at the Exposition Universelle in Paris, Lorado Taft, a Chicago sculptor and writer, called the painting "a fine amiable looking lady of mature years and her out of focus son."[10]

In 1897 Cecilia turned to her sister's children again, painting a superb double portrait of five-year-old Ernesta with her two-year-old brother Philip [Illus. 69]. Etta's busy life made it impossible for her to bring the children to her sister's studio, so Cecilia completed the painting in the Drinkers' Haverford home. Beaux placed Ernesta and Philip on a diagonal, facing one another, she in a pink dress and white pinafore in conversation with her brother, who is attired in a brown dress with a white collar, his hands holding a toy behind his back. The painting's perspective is from the vantage point of an adult looking down upon the children, and depth is created by placing them in the middle ground; by developing a lightly rendered background with an open window, wicker chair, and chest of drawers; and by a rapidly brushed but empty foreground.

By focusing on the relationship of an older sister and younger brother, Beaux created a portrait that was seen as an "episode of child-life...with real dramatic effect," the successful blending of "pictorial effect," and portraiture. *The little fellow with his chubby hands flung behind him in his eagerness, in the gesture so natural to children, is holding forth on a matter of vital importance to himself to his sister, who listens with a very grown-up air of superior wisdom. It is her turn now to be the guardian and the leader, but her features are little changed from the time when she posed to her aunt for her first likeness*.[11] Beaux later noted that she considered Rubens one of "the first of our great painters" because of "his dramatic sense." She felt that the "drama of a portrait is the only thing that lifts it above photography, plus good craftsmanship, if it is well painted."[12]

The lessons Beaux learned from *Ernesta and Philip* were applied a year later, when she began a double portrait of Gertrude and Elizabeth Henry (1898 - 1899) [Illus. 70]. Painted from the same high-point perspective, the Henry girls -- who reluctantly posed for Beaux -- were placed more closely in the foreground than were Ernesta and Philip. Gertrude
While Beaux's success at the Champ de Mars exhibition had brought her many new portrait commissions, the notoriety also affected her professional standing in other ways. In September 1897 she was elected to serve on the international jury for the second annual exhibition at the Carnegie Art Institute. Director John Beatty wrote to her, Your election has been brought about by the votes of well known artists residing in America, England, Scotland, France, Germany, Holland, and Switzerland. The honor of selection by prominent painters, representing so many nations, is a most distinguished one; probably the greatest ever received by an American artist. The jury gathered in October to award prizes and honors and also to accept work for the exhibition. Two years later Beaux again served as a juror there [Illus. 71].

As both an artist and a woman, Cecilia was gaining tremendous popularity and artistic standing, but also occasional criticism. By 1897 she was a sought-after teacher at the Pennsylvania Academy, a founding member of Philadelphia's Plastic Club -- Art Club for Women, a desired and experienced art juror, and a frequent exhibitor at national and international exhibitions. That year she sent Sita and Sarita, The Dreamer, and Ernesta with Nurse to London to the first annual exhibition of the International Society of Sculptors, Painters, and Gravers. Her paintings hung in the second room of the exhibition, with work by Édouard Manet, Anders Zorn, Toulouse Lautrec, and the Whistler student Inez Bates. Whistler, who held Beaux's work in low regard, hung her portraits next to the skillful and simply rendered paintings of Bates, with the intention of exposing "the cleverness of Beaux." Despite Whistler's assessment, articles on her life and work began appearing in various magazines, with the first full profile in Scribner's that October. The story came out just a month before the opening of her solo exhibition at the St. Botolph Club in Boston and may have contributed to the show's unusually large attendance.

Beaux was the first woman to have a solo exhibition at the St. Botolph Club, and while she wrote to the Gilders, as she was preparing the show, that "Fame in Massachusetts is expensive," the praise she received and the commissions that came her way made the price worth her while. The artist Carroll Beckwith wrote, It was a great delight to a painter to see such direct and skillful brushwork combined with fresh delicate color. Certainly you set us all an example of how to handle a head and my only regret is that I do not see examples of your work more frequently.

In the middle of December, the show went to its second venue at the American Art Galleries in New York, where a reception was organized by an illustrious committee of women that included Mrs. J. Pierpont Morgan, Mrs. Richard Watson Gilder, Mrs. Grover Cleveland, Mrs. Schuyler Van Rensselaer, and Mrs. Isaac Newton Phelps Stokes. Tea was served at a private viewing on Tuesday, December 21, with the show on exhibit through the end of the year.

Boldini's work was on display at the same time as Beaux's show, and the comparison made by one critic further strengthened what was considered so individual about Beaux's work. Just as we pointed out that the unquiet poses of Mr. Boldini's subjects might be thought to give a clue to certain nineteenth-century unquietude, so it may be that, if most of Miss Beaux's sitters are Philadelphians, she has, in showing their willingness to pose in simple drawing-rooms, beside unpretentious furniture, and in juxtaposition to simple candlesticks, given graphic record of certain Quaker propensities which still linger in the "City of Brotherly Love," though absent from Mr. Boldini's nineteenth-century Paris. If this be true, both she and Mr. Boldini are following the unalterable law of environment influence. And Miss Beaux's sitters may represent in her domestic portraits the native American, as it were, while Mr. Boldini's represent the cosmopolitan. So each painter may be a veracious historian.

As Cecilia organized the exhibitions, she confided her "ups and downs" to Helena Gilder. The owners of three of her best pictures "refused to let me have them, even in face of all the circumstances laid before them with all the passion I possess." While Beaux continued to paint portraits of such prominent Philadelphians as Thomas B. Wanamaker, orders were also "piling up," now from clients beyond the Philadelphia area.

In November she was approached by a New York couple, Dr. and Mrs. Robert Abbe, who requested that she paint a full length portrait of Katherine Amory Abbe wearing a white satin evening gown with black jet embroidery [Illus. 72]. Writing to Helena Gilder, Beaux noted, "the mold that Mrs. A. was run in, nature found so popular that she never broke it. So that if you've ever seen her, you've seen her like scattered over the earth in dozens." Katherine Abbe's lack of distinctive features did not discourage Beaux from the commission. Instead, she focused on her sumptuous dress, remarking that painting "an interesting portrait of a thoroughly insignificant-looking man" was much more difficult than a woman of

recalled posing for the portrait: It took Miss Beaux two afternoons a week from October to May to paint it & every time we wanted to go skating or coasting we would have, "No, Miss Beaux is coming. You must stand for your portrait."...We were standing in a corner of the dining room at Stonehurst in stiff pique dresses and a green parrot was perched on my finger. Beaux wrote to the Gilders that the bright green parrot was "the 'note' of the picture," a device she had used in Cecil with a dash of red and in Ernesta with a pink hat. While the bird was the color note of the painting, it also represented more than decoration: birds were frequently added to children's portraits as a symbol of the spiritualization of the soul.

While Beaux's success at the Champ de Mars exhibition had brought her many new portrait commissions, the notoriety also affected her professional standing in other ways. In September 1897 she was elected to serve on the international jury for the second annual exhibition at the Carnegie Art Institute. Director John Beatty wrote to her, Your election has been brought about by the votes of well known artists residing in America, England, Scotland, France, Germany, Holland, and Switzerland. The honor of selection by prominent painters, representing so many nations, is a most distinguished one; probably the greatest ever received by an American artist. The jury gathered in October to award prizes and honors and also to accept work for the exhibition. Two years later Beaux again served as a juror there [Illus. 71].

As both an artist and a woman, Cecilia was gaining tremendous popularity and artistic standing, but also occasional criticism. By 1897 she was a sought-after teacher at the Pennsylvania Academy, a founding member of Philadelphia's Plastic Club -- Art Club for Women, a desired and experienced art juror, and a frequent exhibitor at national and international exhibitions. That year she sent Sita and Sarita, The Dreamer, and Ernesta with Nurse to London to the first annual exhibition of the International Society of Sculptors, Painters, and Gravers. Her paintings hung in the second room of the exhibition, with work by Édouard Manet, Anders Zorn, Toulouse Lautrec, and the Whistler student Inez Bates. Whistler, who held Beaux's work in low regard, hung her portraits next to the skillful and simply rendered paintings of Bates, with the intention of exposing "the cleverness of Beaux." Despite Whistler's assessment, articles on her life and work began appearing in various magazines, with the first full profile in Scribner's that October. The story came out just a month before the opening of her solo exhibition at the St. Botolph Club in Boston and may have contributed to the show's unusually large attendance.

Beaux was the first woman to have a solo exhibition at the St. Botolph Club, and while she wrote to the Gilders, as she was preparing the show, that "Fame in Massachusetts is expensive," the praise she received and the commissions that came her way made the price worth her while. The artist Carroll Beckwith wrote, It was a great delight to a painter to see such direct and skillful brushwork combined with fresh delicate color. Certainly you set us all an example of how to handle a head and my only regret is that I do not see examples of your work more frequently.

In the middle of December, the show went to its second venue at the American Art Galleries in New York, where a reception was organized by an illustrious committee of women that included Mrs. J. Pierpont Morgan, Mrs. Richard Watson Gilder, Mrs. Grover Cleveland, Mrs. Schuyler Van Rensselaer, and Mrs. Isaac Newton Phelps Stokes. Tea was served at a private viewing on Tuesday, December 21, with the show on exhibit through the end of the year.

Boldini's work was on display at the same time as Beaux's show, and the comparison made by one critic further strengthened what was considered so individual about Beaux's work. Just as we pointed out that the unquiet poses of Mr. Boldini's subjects might be thought to give a clue to certain nineteenth-century unquietude, so it may be that, if most of Miss Beaux's sitters are Philadelphians, she has, in showing their willingness to pose in simple drawing-rooms, beside unpretentious furniture, and in juxtaposition to simple candlesticks, given graphic record of certain Quaker propensities which still linger in the "City of Brotherly Love," though absent from Mr. Boldini's nineteenth-century Paris. If this be true, both she and Mr. Boldini are following the unalterable law of environment influence. And Miss Beaux's sitters may represent in her domestic portraits the native American, as it were, while Mr. Boldini's represent the cosmopolitan. So each painter may be a veracious historian.

As Cecilia organized the exhibitions, she confided her "ups and downs" to Helena Gilder. The owners of three of her best pictures "refused to let me have them, even in face of all the circumstances laid before them with all the passion I possess." While Beaux continued to paint portraits of such prominent Philadelphians as Thomas B. Wanamaker, orders were also "piling up," now from clients beyond the Philadelphia area.

In November she was approached by a New York couple, Dr. and Mrs. Robert Abbe, who requested that she paint a full length portrait of Katherine Amory Abbe wearing a white satin evening gown with black jet embroidery [Illus. 72]. Writing to Helena Gilder, Beaux noted, "the mold that Mrs. A. was run in, nature found so popular that she never broke it. So that if you've ever seen her, you've seen her like scattered over the earth in dozens." Katherine Abbe's lack of distinctive features did not discourage Beaux from the commission. Instead, she focused on her sumptuous dress, remarking that painting "an interesting portrait of a thoroughly insignificant-looking man" was much more difficult than a woman of
At the beginning of January, in 1898, Beaux began "going over to New York two days at a time" to do a portrait of Mrs. Anson Phelps Stokes. Cecilia had met Helen Phelps Stokes's son Isaac and daughter-in-law Edith in Paris when her work was on exhibit at the Champ de Mars, but she may have gotten to know the parents in New York through Richard and Helena Gilder. Anson and Richard shared professional interests in the same New York political-and social-reform organizations, and both families spent their summers in the Massachusetts Berkshires -- the Gilders in Tyringham and the Stokeses just a short distance away in Lenox.

Beaux executed the painting of Mr. and Mrs. Anson Phelps Stokes in their Madison Avenue residence, and compositionally it recalls the Borie double-portrait [Illus. 73]. Helen Louisa Phelps Stokes dominates the picture, and Anson, who is cast in shadow, is relegated to the background. Rather than an insightful study of character, Beaux chose to carefully detail the couple's opulent possessions, emphasizing Helen's expensive striped and floral-patterned dress and her beautiful Louis XV writing table. Like the portrait of Mrs. Clement Buckley Newbold, the Stokes painting highlights a life of privilege and wealth, but it also indicates the ease this older couple felt in each other's company.

Their son saw the portrait as primarily of his mother, writing to Beaux, "You have painted her heart and soul." He also wished that someday she would paint a portrait of his wife Edith, which she did two years later. When the portrait of his parents was exhibited at the National Academy of Design in 1899, a critic for the New York Times praised its "naturalness and simplicity," but when it was seen at the Pennsylvania Academy later that year, it was thought to be "very clever, far too obviously so, and grows tiresome with renewed acquaintance." Beaux stayed in New York with the Gilder family while working on the Stokes commission. That developing friendship, her triumph with the Stokes painting, and the success of the St. Botolph Club and American Art Galleries exhibitions indicated the beginning of a new phase in Cecilia's ever-expanding career. The year after she completed the Stokes portrait, she opened a new studio in New York, and in another year or so was also fulfilling portrait commissions in Boston and staying with friends there. By the turn of the century, her association with both cities became permanent. She chose Boston and Gloucester for social and professional reasons and New York to be near the Gilders. They had become like a second family to her.

Cecilia had visited them in Tyringham during the fall of 1897, and had made numerous drawings of all the Gilder children then. She sketched George playing his violin and drew his tutor, W. A. Hickman; she did chalk drawings of Dorothea; and she made a sketch of Rodman. She also completed an exquisite charcoal drawing of nine-year-old Francesca with a kitten, a sketch that displayed her ability to elicit velvet-like textures from the medium [Illus. 74]. Cecilia later wrote to the children's mother, offering her any of the sketches that she might "care for," noting that "Rodman is hardly worth framing -- of course Mr. Hickman's is George's, and Francesca is yours, and the big drawing of Dodo is hers -- but I am hoping to do better ones of all of you!"

In addition to the sketches that Cecilia made for the family, by October she had also completed a portrait of Dorothea for herself. Painted in a floral setting as homage to Claude Monet, Dorothea is a wood-nymph in an Impressionistic landscape of flowers and trees. Beaux was working on the portrait when she wrote to George Dudley Seymour a description of her Berkshires setting: Do you know Tyringham Valley? It lies to the Southward from Lenox...and Hickory Farm lies on the Southern slope of one of its encompassing hills -- and if you could look in at one of its lamp-lit windows you would see only CB writing and a young beauty beside her -- deep in Grecian history....I have had a sap house in a sugar maple grove for a sort of studio in which I have done nothing to keep wagging the clapper of fame, though the beauty has done her best for me. But I have had some happy hours -- and one can't help hoping that these add in some way to the mysterious substance out of which "works" are made. Although initially unhappy with Dorothea in the Woods, Beaux liked it better when it was framed, and she included it in the St. Botolph Club and American Art Galleries exhibitions that November and December.

The following fall, the Tyringham countryside and beautiful Gilder girls inspired yet another portrait, the idea for which may have come from a photograph of the children in one of the family photograph albums. Beaux's first designs for Dorothea and Francesca (1898) survive in a pencil sketch of two poses. When she settled on the final image, the two sisters modeled "like angels" in an "unused tobacco barn...on the edge of the orchard" at Four Brooks Farm [Illus. 75]. Beaux had a "clear view" of the painting that she would do: Dorothea and Francesca used to execute a dance of the simplest and all too circumscribed design, invented by themselves, and adorned by their unconscious beauty alone. This was the subject. I built a platform with my own hands, as the girls could not move easily on the bare earth. When it rained hard, in September, the orchard let its surplus water run down the hill and under the barn-sill, so that as my corner was rather low, I put on rubber boots and splashed in and out of my puddle, four inches deep. October was difficult, for it grew bitterly cold. But valiant posing went on, though the scenic effect of the group was changed by wraps. Summer, indeed,
All the difficulties of production quickly melted away and were replaced by enthusiastic praise and positive critical review. Louise Heustis, a fellow Parisian art student from a decade earlier, wrote to Cecilia at the end of the year after seeing the portrait on exhibit at the National Academy of Design: I simply must tell you how perfectly splendid I think your big picture of the Gilder children. It is a masterpiece & would be anywhere in any collection. Not Whistler, nor Sargent, nor Zorn -- and they are truly fine -- give me the same superlative enjoyment or sense of complete satisfaction.[34] In January 1899 Beaux sent the painting to the sixty-eighth annual exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy, and in May to London for the second annual exhibition of the International Society of Sculptors, Painters, and Gravers.

The portrait’s aesthetic and decorative qualities suggested its stylistic appeal: The canvas excels in beauty of composition, in decorative impression, in aesthetic charm. The difficult momentary action has been met in a most artistic way, and the rhythmic lines of the figures give the sense of harmony of some utterly sweet chord of music.[35] Thematically, "the abandonment of youthful glee," expressed through artistic movement, made Dorothea and Francesca as popular as Ernesta with Nurse. One reviewer hoped that this was the beginning of a new period in [Beaux’s] successful career in which she will delight the world with other compositions than portraits, for there is no doubt that she might rival...any of her fellow countrymen in the production of subject pictures that would appeal to an ever wider audience.[36]

While Cecilia expressed her affection for the Gilder children by making lovely portraits of them, her relationship with Richard Gilder was a more complicated balance of enchantment and professionalism. Richard found Cecilia delightful and wrote poetry that alluded to his attraction to her.

When day is dark & so is Amelia  
I think it is best to kiss Cecilia -

It has a subduing effect on Amelia -
When I think it is best to kiss Cecilia -

One cannot always be kissing Amelia -
Sometimes it is best to kiss Cecilia -

At times of course I must kiss Amelia
But its nicer, of course, to kiss Cecilia -
Especially in the absence of Amelia
I think it is best to kiss Cecilia.[37]

He even published a poem about her in the Century Magazine “Distinguished Man Series,” expressing the “charming” effect she had on men in general. The poem’s last stanza read:

She of the noble heart, she of the merry -
This is the best of life: who could ask for more?
Charon shall wait for her long at his ferry,
Charmed while she draws him from Styx’s dark shore.[38]

Gilder took great pleasure from the company of Cecilia, but he also respected and admired her work. He composed a biographical sketch of her life for Century Magazine, where he also published poetry she had written and illustrations of her paintings. He also periodically gave her artistic assignments, and one of the first was a commission in 1898 for three drawings of war heroes.

As an enthusiastic supporter of the Spanish-American war, Gilder wanted sketches that suggested the patriotism, high endeavor, and courage of Commander Richmond Pearson Hobson; Rear Admiral William T. Sampson, who had been in charge of the Atlantic fleet; and Commander Richard Wainwright, who had led the attack in the battle of Santiago Bay that sunk two Spanish torpedo-boat destroyers while in command of the U.S.S. Gloucester [Illus. 76].[39] The drawings were published in various issues of Century Magazine in 1899, and as Cecilia completed the sketches, she and Richard discussed their merits.[40] Gilder thought that the Sampson drawing had "an intellectual fullness" and that it "reveals the man through the eyes," and, even though Hobson had only posed for an hour, Cecilia felt that his drawing amounted "to quite as much as Sampson's." As for the Wainwright portrait, Cecilia had met the commander on board the U. S. S. Gloucester when it was in port in Philadelphia at the end of October. The contact allowed her to request more time for the drawing, making it possible for her to pose him in "proper clothes," so that she could "do more with the figure."[41]
Beaux completed the Century Magazine commission in the fall of 1898, and almost immediately began a double-portrait of an aristocratic mother and her debutante daughter. Painted in her 1710 Chestnut Street studio for Philadelphia financier and ship owner Clement Acton Griscom, the fashionable portrait of Mrs. Clement A. Griscom and Daughter Frances Canby, titled Mother and Daughter, captured the moment when “Pansy” Griscom made her debut in society [Illus. 77]. The proud mother and her self-confident daughter enter a dimly lit ballroom wearing evening gowns and elegant fur-trimmed cloaks. A Japanese scroll painting hangs on the wall in the background, and the same lacquered Victorian lady's chair seen in Beaux's portrait of Fanny Travis Cochran is also included there. From the moment Cecilia began exhibiting the Griscom painting, it was a highly acclaimed and prize-winning portrait, one of her finest in the grand-manner tradition.

In the fall of 1899, it went to the annual exhibition at the Carnegie Institute, where it was awarded a first-class gold medal and $1,500 at the Founders Day celebrations on November 2. In an address following the announcement of awards, William Merritt Chase pronounced Cecilia “the greatest woman painter of modern times.” He later elaborated: I not only hold to my original statement which was not a hasty or unguarded one, but would like to add that I consider Cecilia Beaux the greatest woman painter that ever lived. Her execution is that of a master, and her conception is not merely that of a great woman, or a woman seeking a great man's point of view, but of a great artist, impersonal, without sex limitations...

The most noticeable quality of her portraits is style -- style in composition and in drawing -- the same quality that in writing makes great literature, the manner that genius adopts to express itself in any channel. Besides being a “stylist,” Miss Beaux is a great painter, as artists use the term, not merely a tinter of canvas, like Carolus Duran, but a mistress in the art of handling colors. One is too deeply impressed with the actual existence of the men and women in her canvases to consider if she has the knack for reproducing texture of clothes. She is a painter as Valasquez [sic] and Rembrandt were, and like them, she infuses the subtle quality of life into her work.

The Chicago sculptor and writer Lorado Taft visited Beaux in her studio during the winter in which she began the Griscom portrait and saw the preliminary drawing for it on the canvas then. Following the Pittsburgh award, he wrote an article that addressed the personification of genius. In her own way, Cecilia continued to challenge the usual vision. The writer was relieved to find that the gifted artist was in no sense mannish; on the contrary, she gives the impression of a most womanly woman. She meets one cordially but with dignity and grace. She has the air of distinction and of cultivation, which is easier inherited than acquired -- one does not put it on like a garment. She is strikingly handsome; tall, with hair turning gray, but the face young and finely chiseled. The modest yet interested way in which she showed her works, some of them of international fame, made the call most entertaining.

The day after Beaux won the Carnegie prize, the Griscom family telegraphed “hearty congratulations,” and Cecilia felt the award “placed me higher than I ever was before.” But when she received the “pound of Gold...alone at the studio,” the pleasure it gave her was poignantly mixed. She wrote to the Gilders that “it was so glorious in saffron velvet and chamois, so great and splendid that I stooped to kiss it and it was cold -- such is fame.”

While the manifestations of fame may indeed have been cold, Cecilia nevertheless had an insatiable need for it. In February 1898 the Pennsylvania Academy presented their Gold Medal of Honor to her, and the following year awarded the Temple Gold Medal to the Griscom painting. The portrait was given another gold medal in Paris at the Exposition Universelle, and yet one more gold medal in 1901 at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York. The critics again concluded that “the sex line in art [had] disappeared” when Cecilia painted her portrait of the Griscoms. It marked “without effort or intention, the disappearance of the last film that has separated the work of man and woman in Painting.”

Beaux embraced the idea that success was sexless, but she also believed that she was unusually gifted as a woman, a romantic idea of herself that was balanced by an understanding of the more practical reasons for her fame. As both an artist and career woman, Beaux seized every professional opportunity that placed her before the public, a confidence in herself that was not always appreciated.

George Biddle noticed Mary Cassatt's “furious antagonism” toward Cecilia Beaux, whom she sarcastically referred to as "that woman." Once, when Cassatt met Beaux on the steps of the Philadelphia Museum, she "cut her dead." The animosity that Cassatt felt toward her stemmed from Beaux's popularity with Philadelphia clients -- such as the Scotts and the Fishers -- who preferred her more traditional portrait style to Cassatt's avant-garde painting and printmaking. Cassatt, who disdained the facile approach of such portraitists as Beaux and Sargent, wrote to Louise Havemeyer in 1902: “How did you like Miss Beaux? I hope you did not make my Beaux mistake & talk Art?...There is Miss Beaux, not without ability, but you must not talk Art to her.” Furthermore, unlike Cassatt, who on principle refused to serve on art juries, because in France the system had “kept out of exhibitions the most original paintings,” Beaux relished such experiences as she had in the fall of 1899, when she was the only woman chosen as a juror to select “paintings in oil, watercolor, and pastel” for the upcoming Exposition Universelle in Paris.
When the exhibition opened in the following spring, Cecilia was in Paris admiring her efforts. She wrote Rodman Gilder, the French also admit that next to theirs, our Exhibit of paintings is the best. Mr. Caldwell has hung our rooms in a pale olive green -- very stylish -- but makes the pics look rather hot. However, the effect of the whole is rather becoming and quite elegant as there are only two rows of pictures.\[51\] Beaux had sent three paintings, Mrs. Beauveau Borie and Son Adolphe, Anna Fisher, and the prize-winning Mother and Daughter. In July, when "the medal rumor [had] been corroborated," Cecilia "had the honor of seeing my name on the...first page of the St. James Gazette, the last name of seven Americans to receive Gold medals."\[52\] On the strength of her showing at the Exposition Universelle, Beaux was also elected an associataire of the Société Nationale des Beaux Arts, "an honor accorded few women."\[53\]

Just as she had done four years earlier, when she had sent work to the Champ de Mars exhibition, Cecilia again spent several months in Europe combining work and pleasure. In May she was in England with the Gilders, who had just returned from Egypt, and was invited to dinners for them hosted by American expatriates Robert and Adele Chapin. The Gilder and Chapin families first met in the Berkshires, where the Chapins had a summer residence in Lenox. But by 1900 they were living in London, as the Boer War had driven them out of South Africa, where Robert was employed. In London Adele had found "the house of [her] dreams," and for five months the family rented Queen's House in Chelsea. It had been built by Christopher Wren for Catherine of Braganza, "when Charles II wanted to get rid of her," and had also been the home of such luminaries as George Mededith, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and James Abbott McNeill Whistler.\[54\]

Even though Adele was not well during the months they lived in Queen's House -- she had phlebitis and was pregnant with her last child -- she still managed to arrange entertaining dinners. Beaux joined the Chapins and the Gilders at table with Ambassador and Mrs. Joseph H. Choate, John Singer Sargent, Henry James, Mark Twain, and James Abbott McNeill Whistler for evenings filled with amusing stories and quick-witted repartee. In October Adele's daughter Christina was born, and the following fall, when the Chapins were again living in Lenox, Cecilia made a quick oil sketch of mother and daughter [Illus. 78]. Cecilia asked to do it, and was very amusing about it. She said I must not be unduly flattered; she wanted to paint us because I was so vast and old and experienced, and the baby so small and fair and inexperienced.... The lighting is interesting and I believe very difficult to paint. I was sitting in the bay window in the library in a voluminous white muslin tea gown, with the light behind me and on both sides of me through the muslin curtains...The sittings were a great pleasure, for Miss Beaux is one of the most interesting of women and a very dear friend; and the picture, which she gave to me, is one of the family treasures.\[55\]

While so many of Cecilia's experiences seemed to inspire paintings, her summer in Europe highlighted some of the other dimensions of her life. Her companion for the trip was Anne Dehon Blake of Boston, "a staunch friend and ally" who coordinated their travel plans. One of the highlights of their time together was a lunch with John Singer Sargent and a visit to his Tite Street studio, where the women saw some of the panels for his Boston Library commission\[56\] Over the course of the summer, Cecilia and Anne traveled extensively with the Gilders, and it made her feel that "the great heap of indebtedness [grew] apace."\[57\] Beaux also met her nephew Henry in England on his first trip abroad. He had just graduated from Haverford, and that June he made a tour of Great Britain with his college's cricket team. In July he joined Cecilia in Cambridge for a week at the Darwins, and at the close of that visit, aunt and nephew made a memorable three-week trip to Holland, where Cecilia introduced Henry to the beauty of Dutch pictures.\[58\]

Cecilia enjoyed sharing the art world with her sister's children, and she was especially attached to Henry as the oldest of the six. Henry in turn was grateful for the "glimpse of sophistication in manners" that his Aunt Cecilia provided him, and also admired and respected her accomplishments. The year after their trip, when Henry was a first-year law student at Harvard, Cecilia painted a portrait of him that was both a memory of their time in Holland and a tribute to the work of the old masters [Illus. 79].\[59\]

The 1901 portrait of Henry pays homage to Titian's Man with a Glove (circa 1520), a dark-toned but freely brushed picture of a dreamy young man lost in melancholy thought. Cecilia had seen Titian's portrait at the Salon Carré when she was an art student in Paris, and she later wrote that it "held first place" for her "in personal appropriation."\[60\] In contrast to Titian's gloomy young man, Cecilia's portrait of Henry exudes a quiet confidence and surety. Still, the palettes of the two portraits are similar -- rich, monochromatic tones of black, gray, and white. Henry wears a gray glove on his left hand and holds the other in his right, and he sports a small black bowtie on a white turnover collar.

By the turn of the century, Beaux's standing in the art world was solid and sure, and she was now one of the country's most sought-after portraitists. Her reputation rested on her beautifully executed images of the men, women, and children who populated the closely knit American upper-class world.\[61\] The critics consistently described her sitters as the "finer types" -- people of good breeding who displayed beauty, charm, refinement and struggle, individuality, intellect, aristocratic dignity, nobility of the spirit, and spiritual significance.\[62\] Her portrayals were filled with identifiable references to lineage, race, status, and proper gender roles, and also reflected her own preoccupation with beauty, intelligence, and social or professional standing. Her distinctive contribution was an ability to coalesce her sitter's characteristics -- both
Throughout the 1890s Beaux's commissions came primarily from patrons in Philadelphia, but as the new century dawned, people in Washington, D.C., New York City, and Boston also began requesting portraits. While Beaux still kept a studio in Philadelphia, in 1899 she also opened one in New York. Henry McCarter, a Philadelphia artist and close friend of Cecilia's, had found just what she needed -- a second-floor space in a building called the Old Ireland House, located on the corner of South Washington Square and West Broadway. My studio...was the large front room au premier, and included the hall-room, which had two windows. There was a plain marble mantel, and fireplace. A beautiful old white lay upon the doors and window shutters; the view on Washington Square was enchanting, and the light from the high windows, what I had always dreamed of.... I resisted all temptations to "furnish" for the sake of space and proportion, and was rewarded. The room did itself, and a mirror, easels and canvases, a divan, and one over-mantel picture seemed to make it a place to live in as well as work. Beaux soon painted some of her most interesting portraits in this studio, "exactly the types I would have chosen to do.... The atmosphere of the room fitted them as if they had been born in it."[64]

The 1899 portrait of Edward Seecomb Wallace was one of the first completed there [Illus. 80]. The Wallace family lived across the river from Manhattan, in Plainfield, New Jersey, and mother and child commuted to New York for the picture. The three-year-old boy liked going to the "nice ladies [sic] house," to pose for his portrait, and he happily donned his white dress with blue trim, and climbed into the high-chair for the sittings. The child's mother commissioned the portrait and paid Beaux $1,000 for it. Three years later, when Cecilia organized another solo exhibition in New York at the Durand-Ruel Galleries, Grace Wallace permitted her son's painting to be shown.[65]

While the picture of Edward Seecomb Wallace added to Beaux's charming portrayals of children, between 1900 and 1903 she completed several portraits in her New York studio, and a number of others in Boston and Washington, D.C., that were soon considered her finest expressions of the regal upper-class.

The first, created in her New York studio, was of Mrs. Isaac Newton Phelps Stokes (née Edith Minturn) (1900 - 1901), the painting her husband had desired after Beaux had completed the one of his parents [Illus. 81] [66] Isaac had been trying to get Beaux to paint Edith's portrait since he had met her in Paris in the summer of 1896, but Cecilia refused the commission then, as she was not interested in working while on holiday.[67] The young couple then turned to Sargent, who painted a double portrait of them the following summer. While it began as a formal portrait of Edith in a blue evening gown, Sargent was soon dissatisfied with the original painting. He planned another pose of her in an informal walking costume, with her husband added as an accessory, when the Great Dane that was to have been in the painting was no longer available. Isaac and Edith hesitantly agreed to Sargent's informal portrayal, since the painting was a wedding gift from a family friend.[68]

Although the Sargent painting was well-regarded, Isaac still wanted a formal portrait of his wife. When he finally convinced Beaux to accept his commission, she gave him exactly what he wanted. Beaux began the portrait in February 1900, sending young Dorothea Gilder over to her studio to turn on the heat, as "I fear Mrs. Stokes will freeze."[69] Beaux painted Edith in a three-quarter-length pose, wearing a soft gray and green square-necked dress and lace scarf, to which she then added a rich Chinese silk hanging in the background. Yet the focus of the painting is Edith's enigmatic smile, with the most vivid realization, she makes all else on the canvas subservient to this with a sense of compositional quality that is exceptionally satisfying.[63]

On her return in the fall, she was to have begun a portrait of Mrs. Larz Anderson (née Isabel Weld Perkins) (1900 - 1901) at Weld -- the family estate in Brookline, Massachusetts [Illus. 82]. But Beaux had misunderstood the starting date, and that December she was forced to "jump into the portrait, with the idea of 'check' in three moves, or nothing," traveling to Weld to begin the portrait before the Andersons left for Mexico in the middle of January. With a few weeks of intensive work, Cecilia had gotten the picture "well started," but as she wrote Helena Gilder, of course it would be impossible if there had not been raised up an understudy, a friend of Mrs. A whom the dress fits perfectly, same poise and coloring (both the conventional figure). So that in the two weeks working every day, I have only to do the head which is well under way now, bust and one arm! They send for me every day at 11:30, in closed carriage. I have lunch out there at 12:30 after pleasant half hour's country drive ALONE, Thank Heaven... work from one till three thirty or four. Tea, and drive back, which is restful.[70]
wrote to Dorothea Gilder that "I am going to take Lucy Conant out to Weld with me today and wish she was YOU." But she was forced to dash through the painting of Isabel's face in just a few weeks because of the Andersons' travel plans. When the picture was completed, Isabel's mother-in-law decided that the portrayal of her features was the portrait's weakest point, writing to her son that "Isabel's face is so infinitely prettier. The elasticity, however, of movement is very characteristic."

Even though the Anderson family was not entirely satisfied with Isabel's portrait, Beaux was quite pleased with it and included it in several exhibitions. Like the portrait of Mrs. Clement Buckley Newbold, the portrayal of Mrs. Larz Anderson was the epitome of the American society portrait. Exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy in 1905, it was regarded by the Philadelphia Press as the distillation of wealth and privilege. The setting was thought to "breathe that air of gorgeous surroundings, of much entertaining, of luxurious living among fine bibelots and all the usual and cluttering mise-en-scene of our great houses," while Isabel was seen as a representation of "the freshness and animation of youthful womanhood," the embodiment of "unmistakable breeding and grace," and the personification of the glittering society woman. The painting was dubbed The Hostess.

Stylistically, the Impressionistic brushwork displayed Beaux's skill in using "white against white, in a very pleasingly realistic manner." The painting held its own in comparison to Sargent's Mrs. George Swinton, with Beaux considered just as much a master of the international-style portrait in terms of both characterization and technical ability. The painting of Mrs. Larz Anderson, like Dorothea and Francesca and Ernesta with Nurse, captured a moment of arrested action, and gave the portrait its narrative -- the gracious hostess about to mingle with her guests.

By March 1901 Beaux was back in New York working on a portrait of Mrs. Frederick Otis Barton (née Mary Lowell Coolidge); and wrote to Dorothea Gilder, "I am still Bartonizing as hard as I can." Commissioned by the sitter's husband, a New York businessman with an urbane awareness of the art world, Beaux's "serene and composed" depiction of Mary Barton emphasized her "unflinching heroism" as a true "New England woman" who was also a "great-grand daughter of Thomas Jefferson" [Illus. 83]. The portrait of Mary Barton -- where the sitter is seated on a wicker chair holding an ostrich-feather fan in her lap -- is a tonal study of blues and greens, and represents Beaux's attempt to create a surface that suggested the quality of enamel. The portrayal is quietly reminiscent of Jules Bastien-Lapage's audacious portrait of Sarah Bernhardt (1879).

Beaux finished and framed the painting in the early summer of 1901, sending it off to the not "quite satisfied" owners, with "just a morning's work" left to do in the fall. Two years later, she sent it to be juried for exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy, writing to the managing director, Harrison S. Morris, that the portrait was "the apple of my eye, and if the committee doesn't see that she is the best thing I ever did they are idiots." When it was exhibited in Paris several years later, one reviewer commented that the stern portrayal of Mary Barton gave the impression that she would "like to burn us for our sins."

At the opening of the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York, in 1901, Edith Kermit Roosevelt admired Beaux's portrait of the Gilder children. Later, when Teddy was elected President, the first lady remembered Cecilia and asked the artist if she would consider painting an intimate family portrait for her. Beaux accepted the prestigious commission and soon saw it announced in the Philadelphia Times on Sunday, February 2, 1902: The coveted distinction of being the first artist to be called upon to paint a portrait of Mrs. Roosevelt since the latter has been mistress of the White House has been conferred upon Miss Cecilia Beaux, the noted Philadelphia artist. Miss Beaux is now in Washington, and each day she devotes a considerable part of the time at the White House in Mrs. Roosevelt's apartments painting the portrait of her distinguished model. It is understood that the picture will be a life-sized one of Mrs. Roosevelt. President Roosevelt has long been anxious to have a painting of his wife, and although the latter would never consent to sit for an artist she has finally been prevailed upon and Miss Beaux was selected to do the work. The result of Miss Beaux's efforts are awaited with the greatest interest by the President and his family.

Beaux moved to Washington to complete the commission, first renting rooms at 1600 I Street but soon "shift[ing] to a very clean and chaste abode" at 2017 F Street, where her landlady was a Trumbull. Beaux lived there off and on from February until April, when the portrait was finished. Her constant companion was her Boston friend Henry Copley Greene, who both entertained her and did nearly all of her writing when neuritis took over her right hand and arm. Often seated in the warm sunshine in Lafayette Square "under the lifted bronze hoofs of General Jackson's statue," artist and friend were routinely "aflutter with paper and pens, and pages drying in the sun" as Cecilia chronicled her Washington experiences.

Beaux had just begun the painting of Mrs. Roosevelt when she wrote to Richard Gilder: My "run" of the White House is only from the big glass doors to the red dining room. We get on slowly, but she says I can have 50 sittings if I want -- but this I pray not to desire. Charbran [sic], who is to do her for the French Government for the Salon -- is to have five, soon -
Beaux returned to New York while the French society portraitist Theobald Chartran completed his painting of Edith Roosevelt. In New York on February 16, in her Washington Square studio, Cecilia made "a very slight red chalk drawing" of the author Anne Douglas Sedgwick, a friend of the Gilders [Illus. 84]. After studying painting for several years and exhibiting a portrait of her sister in the Champ de Mars exhibition, Sedgwick had turned to writing international novels of manners. She had launched her writing career in 1898, when her father found a publisher for The Dull Miss Archinard, a Jamesian romance with a picturesque Old World setting that had originally been written to entertain her sisters. Sedgwick was just the kind of young writer whose work Gilder liked to publish in Century Magazine, and that winter he even further endorsed her when he requested Cecilia to make the drawing of her for his magazine. Author and artist had never met before this commission, which led to their friendship and to Beaux's deeper appreciation and enjoyment of Sedgwick's books.

By the end of February, Cecilia was back in Washington, where the concept for the Roosevelt painting developed slowly and then took shape as Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt and Daughter Ethel, (1902) [Illus. 85]. Edith Kermit Roosevelt's eleven-year-old daughter had "[gotten] into the portrait," and Cecilia soon described the "enchanting child." Ethel sits beside her mother in a C. B. costume on a sofa made of a W. H. monstrosity, from the East Room, converted by means of a box addition, a [comforter] and some green brocade, into a charming "chaise lounge" by C. B. The drama is -- Mrs. R (profile on) cordially engaged with a visitor. Modestly fearless little daughter, impelled by mingled curiosity and affection, enters and plumps herself down beside Mamma, who takes her little hand into her own lap to insure quiet and communicate maternal sympathy. Little daughter however, not interested in visitor, looks eagerly across her mother's bows at SOMETHING ELSE -- for which I am an humble but active understudy. A pale blue velvet bow pins the eye to the middle of the canvas, and around all these various animations vibrate, and are finally lost in the ruby depths (no opposition) of the private dining room wall-paper. Edith Roosevelt insisted upon the pale-blue bow on what was otherwise a dress in "tones of white," while the "deep rich crimson" background of the picture took on "the warmth of the Red Room." It was a portrait that dramatized maternal affection.

The painting was nearly finished by the beginning of April, and on Sunday afternoon of April 6 there was a small but "jolly" reception, to which a steady procession of Washington cognoscenti came to view the picture. Two Chief Justices came and a stream of other interesting people. M. Chambon, with whom I spoke French daringly. Mr. Putnam the Librarian, [and] Langdon Mitchell and wife.... The good Proctors took hold and saw me through... and there was a whole batch of German naval officers.... The most interesting person I met was Archbishop Ireland -- of course only an introduction, but I watched him for some time.... I met the George Kennans, the Rockhills, and of course Mrs. Cowles. I saw the Wainwrights, and they were delightfully friendly. No one was very beautiful or very wonderful, but the whole thing was easy and agreeable.

That morning before the reception, Cecilia had made a quick sketch of the President, recording the events of the sitting in a letter to Richard Gilder [Illus. 86]. Yesterday I did the drawing. It's just a head, but I don't believe more of the figure would add to its interest. He sat for about two hours -- talking and reading Kipling, reciting the same, also Browning and was most loveable and delicious. It seems to be a very deep human instinct to love the chief of one's tribe. It is charcoal, something like Sampson, expressive and alive. He asked me what it was for, and I said that you had been very anxious for me to do it but I was not concerning myself much with what should become of it. But I shall be very glad to keep it for myself if no one wants it. Accustomed to public interest, Beaux knew that there would be an audience for both the drawing of the President and the full portrait of the first lady and her daughter. In another letter to Richard Gilder, she noted, "The R's would not object to having [the painting] reproduced."

That first week of April, as Beaux completed the Roosevelt portrait, she was invited to a White House event that became the highlight of her experiences in Washington. "Just going to dress for dinner at the WHITE HOUSE," she wrote Dorothea Gilder. "I was at first invited [only] for the evening. [Paderewsky] recital -- but now it is dinner too. Think of dining with the great P...r sky at the WH. I'm thinking St. Gaudens will be there too.... What a crown of stars WE'll be."

The next day, she sent a record of the evening to Helena Gilder, noting that she was taken into dinner "by the Hon. Lucius N. Littaur," and was seated between him and "the Hon. William H. Moody." [but] did not extract any state secrets from them." After dinner they moved to the Blue Room where the recital was performed. The tempestuous musician began the performance with a "terrific cannonade" to get the audience's attention, continuing the concert with a heartfelt Beethoven sonata and polonaise, in which, Beaux noted, "P. took fire completely, and nearly consumed poor inflammable me." At the close of the recital, as the guests mingled and talked, Beaux "missed and longed for certain dear faces that would have been so at home and so shining in that assembly."

The Roosevelts were as charmed by Cecilia as she was by them, and in July they invited her to their private home --
Beaux's friendly relationship with the Roosevelt family allowed her to frequently request the portrait for exhibition. In September 1902 it went to the annual at the Pennsylvania Academy and the following spring to New York for her solo show at the Durand-Ruel Galleries. Beaux's ability to express the essence of fine breeding, as well as charming and simple elegance was once again noted by the critics. *Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt and Daughter Ethel* was considered "a dignified representation of the first lady of the land, simple and direct in its arrangement as befits the likeness of a well-born lady." Beaux had pleasantly captured "the womanly quality" of Mrs. Roosevelt.

While the Roosevelt commission brought Beaux even greater public recognition, that same year, another mother-and-daughter picture done for love -- *con amore*, offered a chance to give free rein to her imagination. Created in 1902 in Cecilia's New York studio, the painting came to life "in a sort of rhythmic union" with her sitters Mrs. Alexander Sedgwick (née Lydia Cameron Rogers) and Christina, another Berkshire family whom she had met through the Gilders [Illus. 87]. The full-length Whistlerian portrayal had begun as the head of Christina only, but Beaux found that she "was so hotly pursued by another idea that [she] was led to ask Mrs. Sedgwick if she could come into the picture as an accessory." Like *Mrs. Beauveau Borie and Son Adolphe*, the Sedgwick portrait is a tonal study of contrasting light and dark hues with color notes -- the flaxen-haired Christina holding a yellow hat. The brightly painted child, attired in a white dress and black cloak, is counter-posed to her mother, who is more dimly rendered in a black dress, hat, and gloves -- a pale-featured woman with a string of coral beads around her neck. Lydia Sedgwick's thin and elongated figure, as well as the simple setting in which she and her daughter are placed, suggest Whistler's *The Fur Jacket: Arrangement in Black and Brown* (1876), a similar aesthetic and decorative tonal harmony expressing "art for art's sake" beauty. Indeed, the Sedgwick portrait may have been an homage to Whistler, who died the following year.

Beaux considered the Sedgwick portrait her favorite picture, and included it the following year in her exhibit at the Durand-Ruel Galleries, and again in 1907 in another solo show at the Boston Art Club. The usual descriptions soon followed -- it "demonstrated much sympathetic insight," and was noted for "a quietness of tone, a reserved simplicity of style, a permeating suggestion of pathos, having much in common with Whistler's portrait of his mother." The Sedgwick portrait was not the only one that Beaux painted in her New York studio *con amore*; she also did pictures for her brother-in-law, Henry Sturgis Drinker, and for her friend Richard Watson Gilder. In these images Beaux presented ideals of male dignity and nobility, expressing artistic virtuosity in contrasting light and dark portrayals. In another trademark white painting, Henry Drinker is depicted as a gentle man at leisure, while Richard Gilder, represented in monochromatic tones, is portrayed as the elegant learned man.

At *Home or Man with a Cat* (1898 - 1899) is Beaux's surprisingly debonair portrayal of her somewhat rough-and-tumble forty-eight-year-old brother-in-law and his lazy cat, a depiction that captured Henry's vigorous energy and tamed his buoyant spirit [Illus. 88]. Henry Drinker was at the prime of life when Cecilia painted his portrait, a hard-working corporate railroad lawyer who devoted much of his spare time to rescuing his mountainous mining-region school, Lehigh University, from imminent bankruptcy. Henry was a strong-willed patriarch who occupied a distinctly male world and firmly believed that only men shaped destiny. While he left the care and training of his two daughters to his wife Etta, he carefully monitored the activities of his four sons, believing that it was his responsibility to keep them busy and to raise them to healthy competition of all kinds. He encouraged their interest in a variety of sports and supervised their education, expecting the best from his sons in whatever they chose to do.

Henry Drinker lived his life at a furious pace, and when he came to sit for his portrait with his equally energetic sister-in-law, she subduced him on canvas in a brilliantly colored, imaginative scene of domesticated gentility. Henry is seated in a Windsor chair in a laconic cross-legged pose, wearing summer whites and a pink shirt and offering a comfortable lap for his pink-eared tangerine tabby. In the spring of 1900, soon after the painting was finished, Cecilia sent it to the Society of American Arts annual exhibition; three years later, she included it in her solo show at the Durand-Ruel Galleries. Several years later, she placed it in another one-woman exhibition. A critic reviewing it then praised her color sense: *The white of the man's suit in Mr. Drinker's portrait is quite different. This is a white of sunlight, a white that acknowledges the difference between it and the interior of the room, a white that has enough of yellow to account for the amber cat seated in the gentleman's lap. Here Miss Beaux's brush becomes very dexterous, very free from restraint, and the result is an*
The show received many favorable reviews, with one writer commenting, "Having been warned by Beaux to not "plan for the afternoon or you will have to get in line at the Ex." coming at half past eight in the morning." The woman at the office yesterday asked if it was so full because it was that hour of day; and she said "Oh no they begin half had been completed since 1900. When the show opened, Cecilia wrote to her family about the public's response: "Galleries exhibition opened in 1903. Beaux had gathered twenty-five paintings and three drawings, of which more than..." The degree to which Beaux was recognized by the art-loving public was especially evident when the Durand-Ruel exposition was also awarded a gold medal. Like her experience in Paris four years earlier, in addition to her jury service, one of the paintings she sent to the National Academy of Design. Within the year she submitted an oil sketch of Francesca Gilder and was judged "duly qualified as an Academician." In 1902 the Society of Washington Artists awarded her the first Corcoran Prize, and in May of that year -- contingent on awards and memberships and was regularly asked to serve on the juries of both national and international exhibitions. Cecilia had hoped to have the portrait finished for her upcoming exhibition at the Durand-Ruel Galleries -- to run from March 3 to 14, 1903 -- and had even included it as "No. 17" of the catalogue. Despite her furious "grinding," she did not get it finished until after the exhibition closed. It was not exhibited until the end of the year, when it went to the Carnegie Institute. Director John Beatty then wrote to Gilder, asking if it would be possible to acquire the portrait for their permanent collection, "only not because of the strength of the painter, but because of its being your portrait as well." Gilder wrote to Beaux for advice, to which she quickly responded. "I couldn't think of "realizing" on your portrait -- dear poet. I did it for you and yours -- and for my own satisfaction. It is yours - and I have nothing further to ordain in the matter. I think, however, that as you are a public character that it should always be borne in mind -- that the portrait may be sold to an Institution where it will be honorably placed. It would be very fitting and right that some day, given appropriate circumstances, this might be -- and whoever owns it must feel free to place it that way." The painting remained with the Gilder family, but Beaux continued to request it for exhibition. It went to the 1904 annual show at the Pennsylvania Academy, where it hung until her one-woman exhibition that April at the St. Botolph Club in Boston. "I hate to let it go," managing director Harrison Morris wrote to Cecilia. "It has been hanging with Sargent's "Mr. Cassatt" in the corridor at the top of the stairs and has attracted about as much attention there as it did in the show. A whole load of artists have been in for the St. Louis and Water Color Juries and everyone of them has had something to say in admiration of it -- Chase, Low, Volk and Bolton-Jones and the rest." The patterns of Cecilia's career and successes were now firmly established. She regularly accepted commissions from New York, Boston, and Philadelphia patrons, sending the best of her current work to the annual exhibitions. She periodically held one-woman shows, displaying a selection of her current works. She also continued to gather prestigious awards and memberships and was regularly asked to serve on the juries of both national and international exhibitions. In 1902 the Society of Washington Artists awarded her the first Corcoran Prize, and in May of that year -- contingent on her presentation of a diploma work, as required by its constitution -- she was also elected to full membership in the National Academy of Design. Within the year she submitted an oil sketch of Francesca Gilder and was judged "duly qualified as an Academician." In 1904 she was a juror for the Louisiana Purchase Exposition held in St. Louis [Illus. 90]. Halsey C. Ives, chief of the exposition's Department of Art, especially wanted Beaux to serve, as "we desire above all things to form a Jury of a character which will insure judgment based upon the highest standards of art intelligence." Like her experience in Paris four years earlier, in addition to her jury service, one of the paintings she sent to the exposition was also awarded a gold medal.

The degree to which Beaux was recognized by the art-loving public was especially evident when the Durand-Ruel Galleries exhibition opened in 1903. Beaux had gathered twenty-five paintings and three drawings, of which more than half had been completed since 1900. When the show opened, Cecilia wrote to her family about the public's response: "Well dear ones all at home I think you would be amused if you could see the crowds staring at the works of your child at Durand Ruef's. Two thousand catalogues have been used and two thousand more have been ordered for next week.... I asked the woman at the office yesterday if it was so full because it was that hour of day; and she said "Oh no they begin coming at half past eight in the morning." George Dudley Seymour arranged a trip to New York to see her pictures, having been warned by Beaux to not "plan for the afternoon or you will have to get in line at the Ex." The show received many favorable reviews, with one writer commenting, "There is nothing of the experimental nature..."
about Miss Beaux's work. She is well equipped in the fundamentals of her art, is a thorough draughtswoman, an expert manipulator of her brushes, and must be judged by the highest standards.... We know of no one who excels her in the management of her pigment and there is much here that stands for a final achievement in the art of portraiture.\[116\]

In April of the following year, her second solo show at Boston's St. Botolph Club was equally well received, and even though it was a smaller display, with just twelve paintings and four drawings, the exhibition largely represented Beaux's new Boston work. Cecilia's career was now quite removed from her early Philadelphia clients, who had both known her and had followed her progress since the mid-1880s. At the turn of the century in Boston, where her commissions were more clearly that of artist and patron, Beaux accepted clients that she might not have earlier. Since she did not know her sitters personally as she had in Philadelphia, she now created likenesses and characterizations that tended to draw more heavily upon the standard flattering conventions of grand-manner portraiture.

Beaux accepted a number of Boston commissions for the fall of 1902 and spring of 1903, temporarily moving to the city and living with Agnes Irwin, a former Philadelphia schoolmistress who was now dean at Radcliffe College.\[117\] Cecilia agreed to complete some of her new commissions in the homes of her sitters, and had also borrowed a "cabin studio" in the garden of Professor Thayer.\[118\] In adopting such a peripatetic existence, Cecilia disregarded her feelings of just a few years earlier. She had written to George Seymour then that it was "too wearsome and disturbing to knock about from place to place," and she yearned for just "one place where everybody had to be."\[119\] During the two years in Boston, when she constantly shifted about and attempted to placate various sitters, her efforts in one instance resulted in a disastrous but hilarious experience.

In the fall of 1902, Beaux undertook a triple portrait of Mrs. Charles Franklin Sprague and her two daughters, Marion and Eleanor of Forest Hills (Boston), an ambitious effort that she described in a letter to Richard Gilder. "I have got up on a big horse in the Sprague picture, and am carackling [sic] up and down in it. Landscape, Columns, Curtain all out of my own 'Wisconsin,' but it may go under after all." At the same time that she was at work on the Sprague picture, she was also painting another Anderson portrait in Brookline at Weld, writing to Dorothea Gilder that "the Sprague-Anderson Trust takes every scrap of my capital now." Still, by the middle of November, when the Sprague family left for California, Beaux had the portrait in "a hopeful state" and planned to take it up again the following spring.\[120\]

In May 1903 Cecilia returned to the Sprague portrait, continuing it along with two new commissions of Harriet Sears Amory and Mrs. A. P. Howe. By this time, Mrs. Sprague's rather difficult personality had emerged: I have never been so petted and waited on by customers as I am by the two sets -- Howe & Amory but the "Spraggs" as Miss Irwin calls them makes up for it. I never did anyone of quite the humor and parts of Mrs. S. I have almost stopped twice and ordered myself out of her house. She's a sick woman I know -- but I don't believe she would be any nicer if she had 24 more lungs and 14 1/2 more kidneys than she has. I believe she gets along with fewer vital organs than anyone has been known to, but I think the [compensation of the] $7,000,000 is the only thing that would really do her any good. But Oh, I do have splendid whizzes there and back in her automobile with a very companionable chauffeur.\[121\] Work on the Sprague and Amory portraits continued through June 1903, and at the end of the month Cecilia wrote to Dorothea Gilder, "I have to come back to finish Sprague on Monday -- Oh if it only would finish!"\[122\]

Beaux's premonition that the portrait might "go under" came to pass, as she was unable to keep her ambivalent feelings toward Mrs. Sprague out of her portrayal. That December, Beaux wrote to George Seymour, "Mrs. Sprague has seen the picture (not me, however) and coldly accepts it 'if you prefer it as it is.' The end is not yet." Beaux's patron refused to pay her commission until the following April, and once Mrs. Sprague did, she cut the portrait apart, destroying her image and separately framing those of her two daughters.\[123\]

The Boston commissions for little Harriet Sears Amory (1903) and Henry Parsons King, Jr. (1905) were decidedly more pleasant experiences for Cecilia, and were also more successful portraits. These fine interpretations of upper-class children both pleased Beaux's patrons and were also critically reviewed. Leila Mechlin touched on the various qualities that made Beaux's portraits of children so successful: Observe how in each case the little sitter is so placed on the canvas that the childishness of his or her figure is made manifest at a glance. And, furthermore, it will be seen that these children are provided with precisely the right environment to emphasize their inherent individuality, giving to each a simple dignity which is the badge of innocence and breeding. These portraits are essentially impressions, using the word not in its perverted sense, for they reflect those fleeting expressions which are peculiarly the attributes of a transitory state and a child's chief prerogative.\[124\]

Beaux began the portrait of Harriet Sears Amory on April 15 in Professor Thayer's Cambridge studio, writing to Helena Gilder that she hoped it would be a "mimic Sargent...Think I can?" \[Illus. 91\]. In May, Cecilia drove to Dorchester with Mrs. Amory to Japanese greenhouses, "to look at trees for the portrait. It is to have one of those long dark green ones in the background. They cost -- the big ones $200 -- so we hire this."\[125\]
Beaux created an imaginary Oriental setting for the brown-eyed, golden-haired, self-possessed Amory girl, placing her in the middle of the canvas. She wears a saffron-colored silk kimono with a small red strip at the bottom and displays bare legs and a pair of fine white kidskin sandals. The tree is in the background to the left, in a large blue-green glazed Japanese jar. In front of the child to the right is a tiger-colored object. When the painting was exhibited, it was described as "the embodiment of childhood, flashed on the canvas with inimitable knowledge and skill." Stylistically, it was a likely source for Lydia Field Emmet's 1911 portrait of Olivia Stokes and Irving R. Wiles's picture of Florence Rossin painted before 1912. When the painting was finished, Beaux wrote to Richard Gilder, "I have had few bouquets lately except a poem from the mother of the little yellow child I did in Cambridge this spring."

As Beaux finished the Amory portrait in the summer of 1903, she contemplated how much her life had shifted from New York and Philadelphia to Boston and Gloucester, writing to Dorothea Gilder that "a thick veil seems to have dropped between me and my life in New York -- but I know that you and your dear parents are there." Her experiences in Boston seemed to be just the opposite of her memories of New York. Living with Agnes Irwin and spending her summers in the North Shore village of Gloucester, Beaux found that doors were continually opening for her.

In the fall of 1902, Cecilia and Anne Dehon Blake went to a picnic in Gloucester at Red Roof, the new home of A. Piatt Andrew, a Harvard economist she had met through her nephew Henry. In Boston the following April, she was invited to Isabella Stewart Gardner's Fenway Court, "with Miss Irwin, [her nephew] Harry, and Mr. Andrew," and a few days later she lunched "at Mrs. Sears with Sargent and Von Glehn," where she made such an impression on Sargent that he later remarked to Mrs. Fisk-Warren that she was "an Astounding woman." Cecilia's social outings added a pleasant dimension to her life in Boston, but she was also happy there because she was "working too hard to know many people." Yet Beaux was in her late forties now, and was tiring of her unsettled, boarding-house existence, writing to Dorothea Gilder, in the fall of 1903, that the lack of a permanent residence made her "feel homeless [and] ragged." Within a year she purchased land in Gloucester and began construction on a summer house and studio, settling back in New York in the winter, in a studio near the Gilders.

During 1904 and 1905, as Beaux built and completed the summer home and studio that she called Green Alley, she accepted as many portrait commissions as she could handle to meet the mounting expenses of her new home. In May 1905 she painted Henry Parsons King, Jr. (Jimmy), in Boston, in "Joe Smith's studio -- The Ludlow" [Illus. 92]. A "lively black-headed boy of seven," Jimmy is portrayed in a sporty white turtleneck sweater, white shorts, and gray moccasins. He is posed in an elaborate library, with red panels on the wall behind him, and is standing next to a Regency-style Victorian round table, on which rests a large piece of sculpture. The library opens into a hallway, with a dining room suggested in the background to the left. The painting of Jimmy King is compositionally and iconographically similar to Ellen Emmet's 1902 portrait of her half-brother Grenville Hunter, titled Boy with Bow. Both pictures are insightful rather than sentimental renditions of boyhood, depicting the youngsters in settings of wealth and comfort.

When the portrait of King was completed, the boy's mother, Alice, asked him if he was glad that his sittings were over. He replied, "No, I just love Miss Beaux & please, can't she paint me every winter." Alice King recognized that Beaux had an amazing skill in settling young children into their poses. She did this by creating a relaxed and interesting atmosphere in which reading often accompanied the sittings, allowing the children to move about freely and then periodically asking them to "freeze." On seeing Jimmy's finished portrait, Alice King commented, "I almost felt as if the little boy in front of me would go through the usual gymnastics before settling down."

The portrait of Jimmy King -- for which Beaux's fee was $2,000 -- was one of several commissions completed that year that helped the artist meet her increasing financial obligations. Green Alley was growing "more expensive every day," she wrote to Dorothea Gilder, "and more beautiful."