Introduction

> Mrs Cameron is making endless Madonnas and May Queens and Foolish Virgins and Wise Virgins and I know not what besides. It is really wonderful how she puts her spirit into people. (Letter from Emily Tennyson to Edward Lear, 1865)[1]

'Fancy subjects'

When Julia Margaret Cameron took up photography in 1864, she passionately embraced allegory as her preferred artistic impulse and arranged her sitters in poses taken from classical literature, the Bible, contemporary poetry, and recent history. She called these photographs her 'fancy subjects', borrowing the term from the tradition of academic painting practised by her friend and mentor, George Frederic Watts. Working methodically, she carefully noted the textual sources that inspired her most valued pictures and gave evocative titles to each photograph she produced for public exhibition, mass production, or inclusion in a photographic album. Cameron's avid pursuit of photography apparently won her much esteem from friends and neighbours, but her seemingly arbitrary choice of subjects bewildered even some of her most fervent admirers. Emily Tennyson, for example, was clearly confused by the wellspring of her friend's imagination and the purpose of her activities.

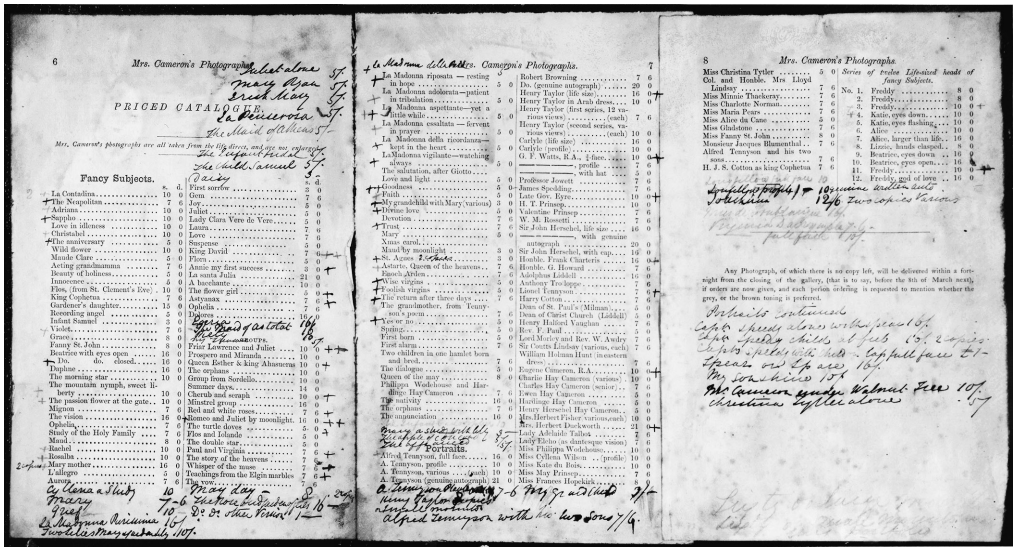
This book argues that an organizing principle informed Cameron's choice of 'fancy subjects' and that they were not chosen randomly or without design. During a decade of activity that started in the mid-1860s, when the medium itself was still young, Cameron created allegories in photography as part of a sustained effort to represent the country's national heritage and cultural identity. To nineteenth-century Britain, this was a complex inheritance that traced its National Church to ancient Rome and its parliamentary government to ancient Greece. It based its moral guideposts on the heroic legends and chivalric code of medieval England and established domestic norms upon the familial bonds celebrated in biblical tales. It justified its territorial expansion across the globe as part of a 'civilizing mission' that would spread these very ideas and narratives to new lands and peoples in the

colonies. And it was through allegorical storytelling, whether by means of poetry, fiction, theatre, or visual art, that it broadcast these ideas.[2]

Cameron was among the earliest to bring allegory to photography, but the model of the 'fancy picture' had its roots in eighteenth-century English painting. This visual form emerged from its origins in Dutch and French genre painting, and was associated with Sir Joshua Reynolds, George Romney, and Thomas Gainsborough.[3] Pictures containing 'fancy subjects' were inherently sentimental, often theatrical, and always contained a narrative element; they included scenes of everyday life that featured individuals or small groups as well as picturesque subjects extracted from a broad sweep of well-known historical, mythological, religious, and literary stories. They could be sugary, nostalgic, or erotic, but they were typically invested with romantic or idealistic thoughts about the human condition and often embodied pretensions to the 'nobility' of high art. By the mid-1850s, the 'fancy picture' became a catchall term for paintings that framed isolated subjects in a momentary suspension of activity, capturing quiet contemplation, religious devotion, or sentimental feelings.

In photography, men as diverse as Oscar Gustave Rejlander, Lewis Carroll, and Roger Fenton embraced this approach, and called it 'pictorial photography'. Rejlander's photograph, *Poor Jo*, is a typical example, the subject taken from the fictional street urchin created by Dickens in *Bleak House* (1850). In order to focus attention on the pathos of the sick and impoverished child, Rejlander clothed his model in rags and darkened his bare feet with charcoal, all within a controlled studio setting. Importantly, this aesthetic did not frown on artificiality, nor did it elevate naturalism. Cameron often echoed its romantic motives, claiming she sought inspiration in Romantic or Renaissance painting more so than she did in other contemporary visual forms that surrounded her, like book illustrations or graphic art. As she wrote to her friend Sir John Herschel: 'My aspirations are to ennoble Photography and to secure for it the character and uses of High Art by combining the real & Ideal & sacrificing nothing of Truth by all possible devotion to Poetry & beauty.'[4] She combined the real and ideal successfully only by carefully understanding her narrative sources and applying their allegorical references wisely when she titled her photographs.

The first meaning of each image derives from its assigned title. These titles were chosen directly from well-known texts in order to identify specific sources and subjects of each photograph, but occasionally her titles also possessed more than one meaning. Sometimes, she borrowed titles from contemporary poems or excerpted lines directly from them; at other times she gave her sitter a new identity entirely: Sir Henry Taylor, for example, became *King David*; her personal maid, Mary Hillier, became *Maud by Moonlight*; a village boy became *Young Endymion*. Cameron's titles are preserved on the prints themselves, in the lists she made to accompany albums and exhibitions (see Figure 1 for an example), and in the



Mrs Cameron's Photographs. Priced Catalogue, 1868. Pamphlet, 22.3 x 41.6 cm. 1

copyright registrations she filed in order to preserve her exclusive right to reproduce these works. The entries describe her models' poses and notes their gestures and use of any props or unique costume, itemize the number of individuals used in each composition, and very often record the title she chose for the photograph.

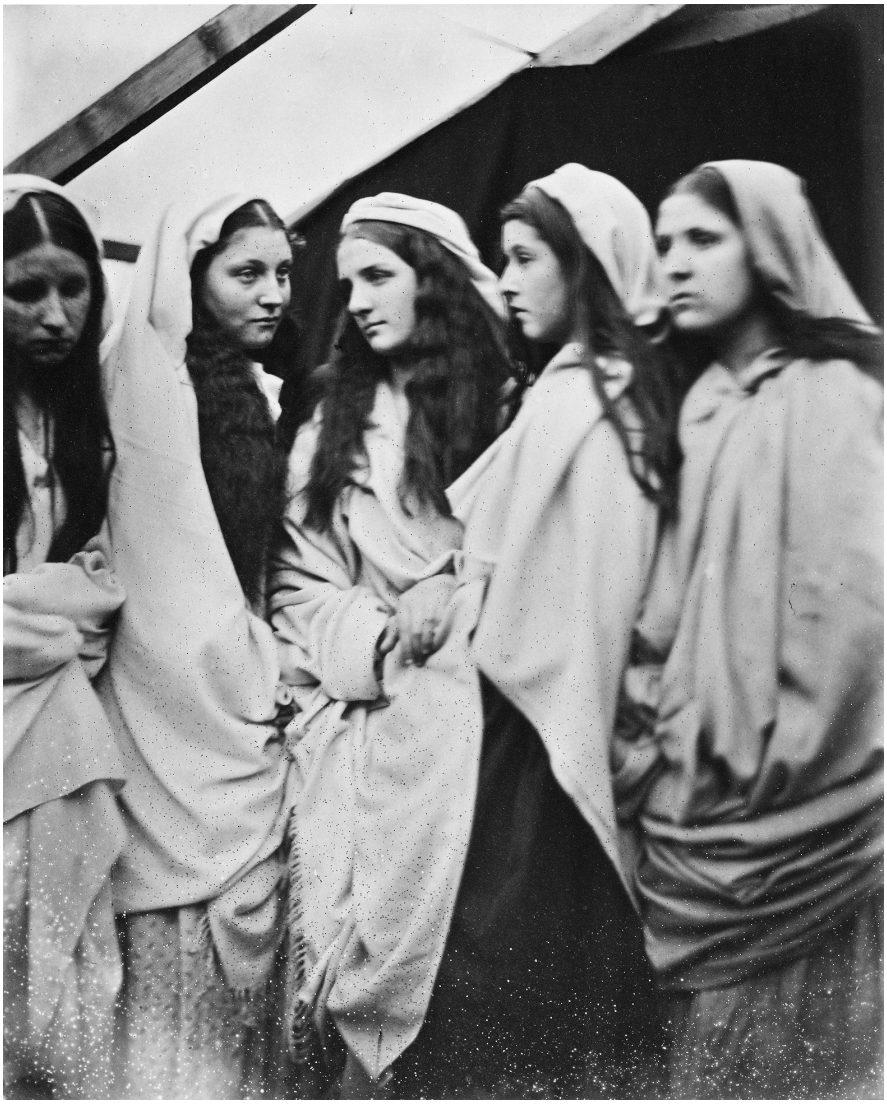
During Cameron's time, copyright registers protected artists by recording such details, making it difficult for anyone other than the true owner to claim authorship and reproduce the same imagery. Because they listed new records chronologically, the registers help historians recreate the events of a given day or period. For example, a brief selection of sequential entries made for 4 November and 12 December 1864 helps to support Emily Tennyson's observation that Cameron was simultaneously pursuing a wide range of symbolic, mythological, and biblical subjects:

> 90. St. Agnes (Mary Hillier) eyes down, hands together, with moon in background, draped figure
> 91. May Queen (Mary Ryan & Caroline Hawkins), one figure in bed ¾ face, the other Profile
> 92. Madonna almost profile, child full face on lap
> 93. The Water Babies. Two Children seated as if floating, both nearly full face, nearly naked,
> 94. Mary Hillier, full face, with shawl over chest, star on brow, eyes upraised
> 95. Photograph entitled 'Gentleness' with two children. Mother ¾ face looking up child on one side standing on the other side kneeling naked figure ¾ face on Mother's shoulder[5]

Julia Margaret Cameron has been inscribed as a pioneer in the history of photography for more than a century, but many gaps still exist in our understanding of why she pursued certain subjects and not others, and of what forces drove her ambitions. For example, the *catalogue raisonné* of Cameron's photographs produced by the J. Paul Getty Museum in 2003 identifies more than 1,200 of the known photographs she produced.[6] Nevertheless, the nineteenth-century copyright registers record little more than 500 of her photographs, and even today, scholars have matched up only about half of those written descriptions with the actual photographs. In some cases, too, the copyright registers mention sitters for which no surviving prints exist. But the registers clearly reproduce Cameron's methodical methods for identifying and titling her work, just as her handwritten notations, captions, and marks to the letter or reverse side of the surviving prints also demonstrate her thoughtful care to provide clear textual references and literary interpretations for each photograph that she considered a complete work of art.

The *catalogue raisonné* also provides evidence that Cameron returned repeatedly to favourite subjects over time. Sometimes she reconceived a subject entirely or extended a thematic point of interest by portraying another character or scene from the same narrative source. Sometimes she gave a new title to an old photograph or chose to apply a title already used years before to a new and different image. Sometimes she would return to an earlier photograph and work in the darkroom to reverse its image, so that, for example, a profile that had originally faced in one direction would now face the opposite way in the newer photograph. By examining Cameron's working methods and by interpreting patterns that emerge from her choice of titles and narrative sources, we can determine that her photographs of 'fancy subjects' made use of, and relied upon, the inherently fluid and interconnected relationship that exists between texts and pictorial forms.[7] As she demonstrated in her earliest framed series of Madonna images, which she called *The Fruits of the Spirit* (1865), Cameron understood that texts and images bound one to the other in narrative photography, and that collectively, a group of allegorical photographs could tell a more persuasive story than any single image on its own. The nine photographs that comprise *The Fruits of the Spirit*, for example, include individual prints titled to correspond to the New Testament text from the Epistle of St Paul to the Galatians (5:22–3), which lists the cardinal virtues: 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance'.

Because Cameron embraced the narrative potential of the camera and gave special attention to religious imagery, young mothers and children, and portraits of the important cultural figures of her time, like Tennyson, Darwin, and Carlyle, historians have focused on how she used these particular subjects to elevate her art and 'ennoble Photography'. But Cameron's 'fancy subjects' *as a whole* have received relatively little attention compared to her portraits, particularly because when she indexed her albums and exhibitions, as we see in Figure 1, she grouped



Julia Margaret Cameron, *The Five Foolish Virgins* (Cox 123), 1864. **2**
Albumen silver print, 24.8 x 20 cm.

her allegorical works together and did not provide any particular context or perspective. In other words, despite her deep commitment to this pictorial work, she apparently gave little regard to its formal thematic coherence or to whether individual prints should be considered in relationship to others or to some greater purpose, leaving many questions unresolved to this day.

Like all allegories, where ideas and truths are represented indirectly, Cameron's 'fancy subjects' are inseparable from the act of storytelling, and like all

narratives, dependent upon the multiple messages and meanings created by those literary sources. What did it mean in the mid-1860s to be engaged in 'making endless Madonnas and May Queens and Foolish Virgins and Wise Virgins' in photography? What was at stake in this activity, and what possible outcomes could Cameron have imagined would follow as a result of the wide distribution of these allegorical images? Many forms of debate among today's art historians and literary critics are embedded in these questions. Chief among them is the complexity of what we mean by the narrative image itself.[8] If we commonly refer to a 'story' as a succession of events, and to the 'text' as the spoken or written form that depicts those events in discourse, it is 'narration' that describes the process of delivering that story to a reader or listener. In visual art, where iconography defines the act of narration using abstract visual symbols, both popular and high art versions of different stories may coexist. Narration may be complicated further by the way that texts deliver stories in different expressive forms, like poetry, literature, music, and drama, for example, but also through expository means, like news accounts, satire, diaries, or essays, or in the visual arts, in paintings, book illustrations, popular prints, and photographs. Different individuals or communities might also interpret a story's many meanings according to their familiarity with, or political allegiance to, particular symbols, allegories, and textual references, further complicating otherwise simple interpretations of the narrative being represented or told.

As we shall see, Cameron's 'fancy subjects', like her image of *The Five Foolish Virgins* (Cox 123; Figure 2), consciously intertwine textual narratives and visual iconography, using signs and symbols in visual art to tell an allegorical story; for example, this photograph illustrates the New Testament Parable of the Ten Virgins from Matthew 25:1–13. This book provides evidence that Cameron understood and manipulated the narrative imagery she was creating. But because she joined together interdependent texts and images in her 'fancy pictures', we might also wonder if Cameron's narratives embodied fixed meanings and references that connected them to well-defined literary sources and historical events, or if her choices of pictorial and textual elements actually destabilized and undermined those connections. When narratives that seemed otherwise stable have become mutable, multiple associations may emerge and new meanings created. Because Cameron chose allegory as her primary artistic vehicle, it is helpful to appreciate that the earliest writings about her photography asked precisely these kinds of questions about her use of textual and pictorial narratives.

We begin Cameron's story with Virginia Woolf, who published one of the first biographies of the photographer in 1926. Ironically, it was Woolf's pen that first gave rise to 'Julia Margaret Cameron', casting her not as the decorated photographer, but instead as an idiosyncratic literary personality, a caricature starring in a work of dramatic fiction.

Imagining Isumbras

In Virginia Woolf's three-act play, *Freshwater: A Comedy*, the author imagines the Victorian world of her great-aunt, portraying Julia Margaret Cameron as hopelessly idealistic and stodgy, even among her old-fashioned contemporaries. First written in 1923, and then later expanded and performed in 1935 for Woolf's Bloomsbury friends in her sister Vanessa Bell's London studio, the play's dramatic action was set in Cameron's own house in Freshwater, the small Isle of Wight village in which she lived.[9] There, Woolf portrayed the photographer with her neighbour, the poet Alfred Tennyson; her friend, the painter George Frederic Watts; and Watts's betrothed, the actress Ellen Terry – the four engaged in an imaginary dialogue about the exhausting process of creating great works of art. Toward the end of the first act, Woolf parodied Cameron by deriding her choice of subject matter and her efforts to turn the magic of ordinary, everyday life into remote and ancient stories, mocking her use of photography to look to the past rather than the future:

> **Mrs C.:** [*She goes to the window and calls out:*] Young man! Young man! I want you to come and sit to me for Sir Isumbras at the Ford. [*She exits. A donkey brays. She comes back into the room.*] That's not a man. That's a donkey. Still, to the true artist, one fact is much the same as another. A fact is a fact; art is art; a donkey's a donkey. [*She looks out of the window.*] Stand still, donkey; think, Ass, you are carrying St. Christopher upon your back. Look up, Ass. Cast your eyes to Heaven. Stand absolutely still. There![10]

Although Cameron never titled any of her photographs *Sir Isumbras at the Ford*, Woolf's ironic point is well made. Even if Woolf's literary group could not immediately place the reference, they would surely have understood 'Sir Isumbras' as cultural shorthand for a chivalric subject, one that had religious and medieval roots in the Crusades that placed it alongside other heroic tales like *King Arthur*, *Sir Gowther*, *Octavian*, and *Richard Coeur de Lion*.[11] Those in her audience with a deeper knowledge of English romantic poetry would also be able to recall Sir Isumbras's story as a familiar Orientalist tale. In brief, the fourteenth-century poem describes Sir Isumbras's noble origins and the knight's penance as he travels to free the Holy Land; it relates his wife's abduction and eventual recovery, his own personal sacrifice and despondency, and his loss of honour at the hands of a despotic Eastern sultan. Finally, it applauds his ultimate revenge in battle and in claiming foreign lands in the name of Christianity.

Because Woolf wrote her satire for a well-read and culturally astute group of literary friends, she could also have counted on those listening to 'Mrs C.' to have seen first hand, or to know through reproduction, John Everett Millais's painting of the same subject, called *A Dream of the Past; Sir Isumbras at the Ford*, which Millais had exhibited originally in 1857 at the Royal Academy. Woolf and her friends would have been able to place Millais as the artist for *Sir Isumbras* and recall his

outmoded style as Pre-Raphaelite; to know, too, how Millais attempted to 'update' the Isumbras story in Victorian terms by joining it to sentimental themes like the vigilant father tending to his vulnerable children, and how this in turn inspired the art critic Tom Taylor to write additional romantic verses to accompany the painting.[12] But because Woolf knew that her audience expected parody, and that its members were well versed in the history of English art, she could also count on their knowing that both John Ruskin and William Michael Rossetti criticized Millais's painting for its stylistic faults and lampooned him for his efforts to use the high moralism of a tale like Isumbras to elevate mawkish and sentimental themes. In short, Isumbras was, in Woolf's eyes, a negative example of artistic overreaching and false pretensions. By extension, of course, Woolf was able to criticize Cameron.

But there is an important political dimension present in this subject as well. Shortly after it was exhibited, Frederick Sandys parodied Millais's painting in the *Cornhill Magazine* in a caricature that he called *The Nightmare*. In his caricature, Sandys substituted a braying donkey for Isumbras's knight's horse, replacing a noble steed with a vulgar ass, a substitution that Woolf emphasizes in her fictional scene involving Cameron. By replacing the knight's horse with a donkey, Sandys effectively devalued the supposed 'nobility' of the scene along with its symbolic idealization of nationalism, heroism, and paternalism. Sandys's send-up also ridicules the Pre-Raphaelite's painterly style, as he portrayed Millais in place of the knight, Dante Gabriel Rossetti in place of the girl, William Holman Hunt for the boy, and branded John Ruskin's initials into the rear flank of the donkey. In her analysis of the nineteenth-century reception of Millais's painting, Julie Codell wrote, 'Sandys's jibe was taken in good spirits as a gentle joke.'[13] But Codell also makes plain that embedded in Sandys's commentary was an overt criticism of the inflated nationalistic sentiments associated with romantic medieval poetry and the religious zealotry associated with the Crusades, and that this critique was even more effective because it censured the joining of 'legitimate' high art subjects with popular and vulgar forms.

For Virginia Woolf, *Sir Isumbras at the Ford* served a dual purpose in *Freshwater*: Isumbras was an archaic subject, an absurdist stereotype for an obsolete Victorian aesthetics as much as it was concise shorthand for the opposite impulses that described Woolf's own modern outlook, which focused on the complex interior spaces and dynamic interactions of contemporary social life. It proved a reliable token for mocking Pre-Raphaelite painting as an out-dated visual style. But Woolf's choice of the Isumbras tale also discloses her own thoughtful understanding about Cameron's process for choosing her narrative subjects. In particular, Woolf recognized that Cameron deliberately chose medieval subjects when those narratives embedded nationalistic sentiments. She also understood that the story itself could refer to, and be shaped by, a wide range of sources in medieval poetry, academic

painting, and mass produced caricature, and that in this way, Isumbras was a perfect emblem to characterize Cameron's photography.

Woolf was in many ways correct: Cameron purposefully chose subjects like Sir Isumbras that relied upon the interplay of literary texts and historical images to influence and complicate the meaning of those narratives. She recognized that subjects like these resonated in literary, pictorial, and popular examples, that one expressive form influenced and affected the reception of another, and that the interpretation of these narrative subjects was deliberated culturally over time, taking shape in ever new and on-going forms.[14] Woolf also understood that Cameron took advantage of the vibrant interrelationship that mediates back and forth between literary texts and pictorial symbols, a dynamism that destabilizes the notion that fixed meanings must be attached decidedly to narrative photographs. In *Freshwater*, for example, she has Cameron exclaim, 'I have found him at last. Sir Galahad!' In doing so, Woolf references Watts's 1862 painting, *Sir Galahad*, which had become popularized through mass-reproduced prints into her own time, and she might have also intentionally referenced Cameron's characterization of her own son, Henry, whom she called 'Sir Galahad' because she admired his goodness and moral conduct.[15] As we examine the production and reception of Cameron's 'fancy subjects' in the chapters that follow, we will see that, like Woolf much later, Cameron thoughtfully considered how texts and pictorial forms influenced each other, how photographs could draw upon older graphic forms and make them new, and how she too could count on her audience to generate new meanings by challenging and reinterpreting the narrative stories she depicted.

Image into allegory

Although *Freshwater* was not published in her lifetime, Woolf nevertheless reiterated the Victorian stereotypes embedded in the play when she composed Cameron's biographical sketch in1926, which she wrote to accompany *Victorian Photographs of Famous Men and Fair Women*, the book of Cameron's photographs that she published with Roger Fry. As portrayed by Woolf, Cameron was a creative and inspired woman overflowing with unfocused and unpredictable energies, needing only to be surrounded by beauty; she was imperious and unstoppable in her efforts to shower her family and those she admired with the bounty of endless gifts. Only when she received a camera as a gift at the age of forty-eight was she able to realize

> an outlet for the energies which she had dissipated in poetry and fiction and doing up houses and concocting curries and entertaining her friends … The coal-house was turned into a dark room; the fowl-house was turned into a glass-house. Boatmen were turned into King Arthur; village girls into Queen Guinevere. Tennyson was wrapped in rugs; Sir Henry Taylor was crowned with tinsel. The parlour maid sat for her portrait and the guest had to answer the bell.[16]

Unique among her peers, Woolf wrote, Cameron was unfailingly generous, reliably unconventional, and above all, eccentric; she was 'like a tigress' around her children, uncaring about the brown stains that marked her hands from photographic chemicals or their harsh odour in her home, and 'uncompromising' about her art, which forced 'the carpenter and the Crown Princess of Prussia alike [to] sit still as stones in the attitudes she chose, in the draperies she arranged, for as long as she wished'.[17]

While it is not unusual for one generation to look down upon the aesthetic preferences of its predecessors, Woolf's assessments entered art history in 1926, and her book with Fry has cemented an unflattering depiction of the photographer as an eccentric woman who struggled to overcome her peculiarities and who created works of lasting cultural importance solely by virtue of the portraits she made of her famous male contemporaries. This unsympathetic portrait persists to the present day, as many of Cameron's biographers have felt compelled to retell an amusing anecdote that casts her in a dismissive light.[18] Woolf and Fry believed Cameron's portraits alone had lasting value and elevated them at the expense of Cameron's allegorical compositions, which they simply did not take seriously. In fact, all but two of the forty-four plates in *Victorian Photographs* reproduce portraits, minimizing and all but expunging from this early record the allegorical photographs that Cameron called her 'fancy subjects'. But we should not be surprised by their disapproval of Cameron's allegorical work, for several reasons.

For one, in writing her biography about Cameron (which became the model for all that have followed), Woolf relied upon the diaries, letters, and personal recollections of several of Cameron's child models (Agnes Weld, Laura Gurney, Lionel and Hallam Tennyson), who, as children, found her terrifying, along with those of extended family members who stayed with the Camerons in Freshwater as young adults (Anne and Hester 'Minnie' Thackeray), who found her both unpredictable and indomitable. Woolf's parents, Sir Leslie Stephen and Julia Prinsep Stephen (née Jackson), very likely enhanced these assessments by drawing upon their own published statements and personal memories.[19] Additionally, Woolf's knowledge of Cameron's photographs was limited; she did not have access to her great-aunt's entire photographic *oeuvre*, as Cameron's prints had been dispersed across the globe into many private collections.

Moreover, Cameron's photographs were situated within a set of well-established ideological attitudes that devalued the work of women artists; as Linda Nochlin reminds us, these attitudes assumed 'her defining domestic and nurturing function; her identity with the realm of nature; her existence as object rather than creator of art; [and] the patent ridiculousness of her attempts to insert herself actively into the realm of history by means of work or personal engagement in political struggle'.[20] As Griselda Pollock put it succinctly, 'High Culture systematically denies knowledge of women as producers of culture and meanings.'[21]

In Cameron's time, John Ruskin exemplified this arrogance when he criticized the painter Anna Mary Howitt, who in 1856 painted a work called *Boadicea Brooding over Her Wrongs*. Ruskin wrote to Howitt to dress her down for having the temerity to paint noble historical subjects, disqualifying her simply because she was a woman. Expressing his contempt, Ruskin declared: 'What do *you* know about Boadicea? Leave such subjects alone and paint me a pheasant's wing.'[22]

The visibility and potential impact of creative women were diminished when male critics preferred that gentle still lifes, rather than warrior queens, issued from the studios of its women artists. Similarly, their ability to give voice to what Nochlin calls 'the master discourse of the iconography or narrative' of their chosen subjects was impeded. Consequently, women artists faced an uphill climb in their efforts to contribute to a broad cultural dialogue, standing against those, like Ruskin, who would obstruct their way. The climb was steeper for artists like Cameron who used allegory in the relatively new graphic medium of photography. Yet when Cameron's 'fancy subjects' were criticized, the attacks seemed to strengthen her resolve. As this study makes clear, Cameron resisted any critique of her decision to represent allegorical and national subjects and chose instead to focus on these consistently, throughout her career. She even created her own pantheon of nationalistic warrior queens, producing photographs depicting *Boadicea* (Cox 521) in 1865; *Thalestris* (unknown or now lost) in 1867; and *Zenobia* (Cox 544) in 1870. We examine all three in Chapter 3.[23]

Cameron's chief interest in photography was in representing historical, literary, and allegorical subjects like these, subjects that held cultural significance and national historical importance: although she certainly cared about creating evocative portraits, her correspondence shows that she worked assiduously to master the iconography and narrative coherence of her allegorical compositions. A letter from George Frederic Watts to Cameron, dated 21 June 1865, provides evidence of their dialogue toward this end; its first lines are revealing:

> I have received with your letter two beautiful photos. More like old pictures than ever. I don't know that they are your very best but they are certainly amongst the most artistic. Some parts of the child with half a head are wonderful[.] More like Phidias & more anti pre-Raphaelite than anything I have seen.[24]

Cameron held on to Watts's letter for her own use at a later time and modified it by placing an asterisk after the phrase 'child with half a head'; then she wrote in the space above, 'called the Shunamite [*sic*] woman & her dead son', and 'G.F. Watts upon my photography'. Watts's letters to Cameron over the years refer consistently to her use of allegorical subjects, to the *Cupid*, to the *Alathea*, to the *Diana*.

Cameron's photograph of *The Shunamite* [*sic*] *Woman & her dead Son* (Cox 135; Figure 3) depicts a woman in a headscarf in front of a nearly naked recum-

3 Julia Margaret Cameron, *The Shunamite Woman & her dead Son* (Cox 135), 1865, albumen silver print, 27.1 x 21.3 cm.

bent child who appears asleep. As Watts wrote, the image indeed shows that the camera's frame has seemingly cut off a portion of the child's head, just as it has also cut off the child's feet, a fact left unmentioned by Watts. And as Watts observed, the graphic modelling is rounded and full (like the sculpture of Phidias), and the composition formal and symmetrical, 'like old pictures'. As recorded in the copyright registers of 1865, over the course of several months, Cameron clearly experimented with compositions using women and children, posing them in arrangements that correspond to familiar subjects in religious art, including the

Mother and Child, Mary Madonna, and the infant *pietà*. To each of these photographs Cameron assigned a different narrative title, including: *Light and Love* (Cox 127), *Devotion* (Cox 128), *The Day-Spring* (Cox 129), *Prayer and Praise* (Cox 130), *Shepherds Keeping Watch By Night* (Cox 131), and *The First Born* (Cox 133).

The poses of the sitters in all of these photographs are similar to each other; their titles, in fact, are the only truly distinctive markers that allow us to tell them apart and to assign them different meanings and associations. Commenting on Cameron's repetitive Madonna studies, Watts cautioned her in this regard, urging her to introduce some compositional variety to the series: 'The expression is fine when Mary Madonna sits & you have had that view of head & identical expression over & over again. [F]or the purposes of sale[,] repetition will not do.'[25] Cameron's religious subjects are examined in detail in Chapter 2, but it is important to point out here how each of these titles bears multiple textual and pictorial references, making them as much specific subjects of the Old Testament (*The Shunamite Woman*, 2 Kings 4) and the New Testament (*Shepherds Keeping Watch*, Luke 2:8), as generalized emblems of family-centred Victorian domestic life and embodiments of motherly love and tenderness (*Prayer and Praise*; *Devotion*), or personifications of hopefulness, innocence, and joy associated with the dawn of a new day (*The Day-Spring*; *Light and Love*). Indeed, because allegory is a form of indirect representation, many of Cameron's admirers to this day have appreciated how these kinds of multiple associations are bound together in this related imagery.

What did Cameron hope to achieve by creating photographs like these, which contained multiple allegorical references, and by submitting them to competitions that were dominated by Photography Society jurists, whose commercial perspective generally disregarded such work? After all, photographic societies of the day encouraged photographers to use the medium for realistic purposes – to produce conventional portraits, landscapes, and still life arrangements that held commercial value. Their juries were predictably harsh toward Cameron, disparaging her choice of subject matter far beyond any superficial quibble they might have had with her technique or skill. By the end of 1864, she complained to her friend Sir John Herschel about this treatment: while she was happy to be included in their exhibitions, she was also pained by what she considered their unrefined preference for 'mere conventional topographic Photography – map making and skeleton rendering of feature & form'.[26]

Cameron allowed her increasing fluency in composing 'fancy subjects' to affect her stylistic approach to portraiture, not the other way around: whereas commercial photographers emphasized sharpness and overall diffused lighting in creating their portraits, Cameron chose strong raking light and soft focus instead, adopting this style from her Madonna series to suggest how a sitter's character emanated from within, using light to reflect an interior state of mind. Yet early

in 1865, in response to an exhibition of her work at Colnaghi's, her print dealer, a reviewer claimed that her 'fancy subjects' were entirely ill-suited to photography. He particularly derided subjects that illustrated 'symbolic embodiments of the cardinal virtues', such as *Devotion* (Cox 128), a composition of a mother and child that the critic understood was related thematically to her nine-part series, *The Fruits of the Spirit*. 'This lady evidently possesses considerable artistic feeling', he declared, 'but we fear she is aiming to obtain from photography other results than those in which its strength lies.'[27]

In 1868, Cameron encountered similar resistance. At an exhibition of her photographs at London's German Gallery, for which she made the title list in Figure 1, she again exhibited 'fancy subjects' alongside portraits and figure studies. In response, the *Athenaeum* produced a critical review that disparaged her 'fancy subjects' outright, its reviewer apparently of the same mind-set as Ruskin, outraged that a woman would presume to represent national or historical subjects:

> Of these [photographs] we dismiss at once such as bear 'fancy' names, and pretend to subjects of the poetic and dramatic sorts. When such productions are [*sic*] due to the camera, or to any other scientific or mechanical instrument, aim at that which is properly brain-work, the less that is said about the results the better for all parties. In this case, when the poetic or dramatic titles have any aptitude, they are, to say the least, unpleasant, and often wreck that which, without an intendedly [*sic*] suggestive name, would be grateful to the artistic eye.[28]

Although the focus of this attack was on photographs bearing 'fancy names' and 'poetic or dramatic titles', we might also ask: was it the particular allegorical subjects that displeased this critic, or was his chief objection that a woman produced them? Or, perhaps, did he object most to the pretensions of using photography allegorically, that is, to the idea of applying a 'mechanical art' for which thoughtful 'brain-work' was not typically required, to the fine arts?

In contrast to the narrow-mindedness of the photographic societies, Cameron's social circle regarded her 'fancy subjects' as the intellectual focus and artistic inspiration, the driving force, of her photography. She found critical success in the *Illustrated London News*, which favourably reviewed her November 1865 exhibition at Colnaghi's. Paying special attention to her Madonna subjects, its critic praised her sitters for their 'rare and refined female loveliness', and paid special attention to her *Prospero and Miranda* (Cox 1092, 1093), a theatrical subject drawn from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.[29] Two months later, Coventry Patmore reviewed the same exhibition in *Macmillan's Magazine*. Although Patmore found difficulty in admiring Cameron's *tableaux vivants*, he praised her allegorical studies, which he referred to as 'heads in the grand style'.[30] Also in 1866, William Michael Rossetti, brother of the painter Dante Gabriel, published a full estimation of Cameron's subjects, finding her work 'magnificent': it was exceptional, he wrote, because

of its ability to 'well-nigh re-create a subject; place it in novel, unanticipable [*sic*] lights; aggrandize the fine, suppress or ignore the petty; and transfigure both the subject-matter, and the reproducing process itself, into something almost higher than we knew them to be'.[31] By 1868, Cameron had won over the *Art-Journal*, too, which accepted her 'fancy subjects' as entirely appropriate for photography, its critic likening her compositions to the paintings of 'Caravaggio, Tintoretto, Giorgione, Velasquez, and others of the princes of their Art'.[32]

Allegory and identity

Cameron exerted a strong will when it came to defining her subjects; she posed and lit her models with clear aims in mind, insisting they wear period costumes or drapery and hold certain props, and above all, that they maintain their poses and gestures long enough for their image to be recorded on the sensitized glass plate. A typical exposure could take several minutes. Because her sets had to be arranged and her models suitably attired, it would seem that Cameron's working method was deliberate and her intentions worked out in advance: her portrait sessions with Marie Spartali, daughter of a Greek consul-general, provide an instructive example. Marie Spartali was admired for her beauty; during the 1860s, she posed as a model for Rossetti and Burne-Jones. It is likely that they introduced her to Cameron, who made at least twenty-one photographs of Spartali in 1868 and 1870. Many of her prints of this sitter are not dated, and not all were registered for copyright protection.

On 15 September 1868, however, Cameron registered eleven photographs of Marie Spartali in dramatic or theatrical poses, all numbered sequentially. Here is how they were described in the copyright register for that date:

> 405. Miss Marie Spartali as Spanish Lady with black Veil, fan in one hand and Myrtle in the other, No. 1
> 406. Miss Marie Spartali as Spanish lady with cross in hand & beads round wrists, Eyes down, No. 2
> 407. Miss Marie Spartali, full face, head raised, right hand to broach, left hand to waist, No. 3
> 408. Miss Marie Spartali, White gown, dark bars, a bunch of grapes in hand close to cheek, grapes & leaves on lap, both hands seen, No. 4
> 409. Miss Marie Spartali in white gown, ¾ face bunch of grapes in right hand close to cheek, grapes on lap, No. 5
> 410. Miss Marie Spartali, full length with hat, beads round throat, Umbrella in hands, No. 6
> 411. Miss Marie Spartali, ¾ length, flowing hair with Ivy leaves, white robe & Ivy branch in hands, No. 7
> 412. Miss Marie Spartali, ¾ length, one hand raised, beads round wrist, ivy leaves between hands, hair flowing, No. 8

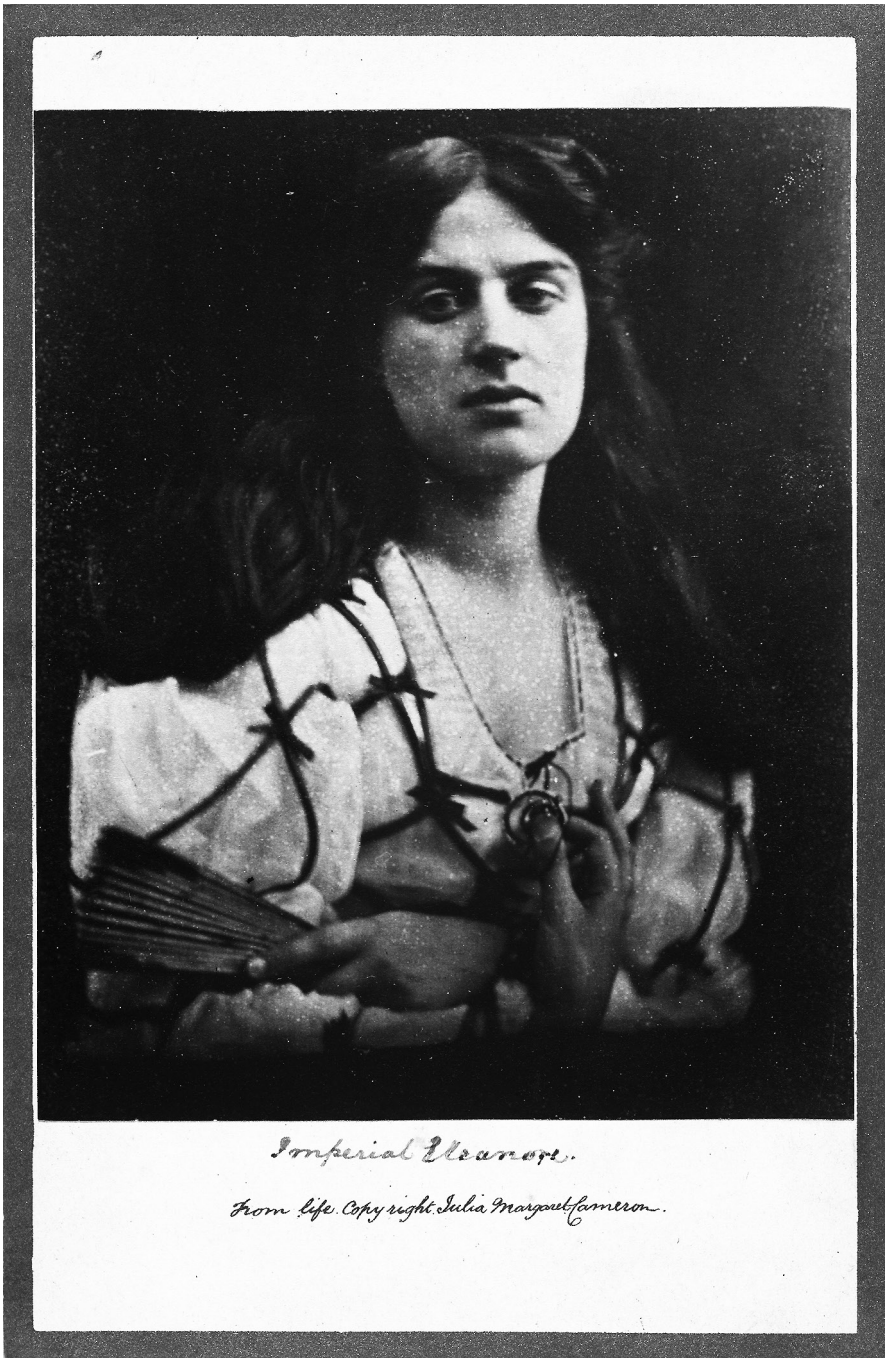
> 413. Miss Marie Spartali, full face, white robe, hands holding skirt – flowing hair, No. 9
> 414. Miss Marie Spartali, ¾ face, flowing hair, white dress with dark bars, one hand folded over other wrist, necklace round throat, No. 10
> 415. Miss Marie Spartali, as Spanish Lady, fan in right hand raised, & beads falling from left hand, No. 11.[33]

Cameron assigned allegorical titles to almost all of the individual prints from this series, titles that do not necessarily follow from the plainly factual and descriptive quality of the copyright registers. Matching the register to the prints in the *catalogue raisonné*, for example, we find that nos. 411 and 412 correspond to prints that she called *Memory* and *Mnemosyne* (Cox 467 and 468); 414 corresponds to *Hypatia* (Cox 469; Figure 4); 408 (or its slight variation, 409) correspond to *The Spirit of the Vine* (Cox 470); 407 corresponds to *Marie Spartali as The Imperial Eleänore* (Cox 471; Figure 5), and 415 corresponds to *La Donna at her Devotions* (Cox 473).

Spartali is costumed differently in the photographs; her props, hairstyle, and jewellery are altered in each image. Yet, since none of the registered prints include titles, it seems clear that Cameron gave these portraits allegorical titles after they were first produced. These images are curious hybrids: they insist on the camera's authority to ground the subject in real life, and they deny the realism of the camera and the specific identity of the sitter, now transformed into a 'fancy subject'. The photographs reflect Cameron's deliberate effort to create an artistic transformation, one that converted their graphic status as a 'sun recording from life' into narrative pictures that tell stories. *Mnemosyne*, for example, personifies Memory, and in Greek mythology is Mother of the nine Muses. *Hypatia*, a Platonic philosopher who lived in fifth-century Alexandria, is also the title character from a historical novel written in 1853 by Charles Kingsley. *The Imperial Eleänore* refers to a fictional figure from an 1864 poem by Tennyson. And while *The Spirit of the Vine* references the mythic story and wine-fuelled celebrations of the Dionysian ritual, *La Donna at her Devotions* is drawn from a dramatic scene in Byron's poem, *Don Juan*.

Each of these subjects is examined in greater detail below, but for the present purposes, it is important that each photograph insists upon its allegorical status as both narrative and pictorial. These shared attributes allow us to explore the particular cultural and historical contexts in which these photographs of Spartali acquired meaning for Cameron's audience. We might ask, for example, because they contained specific references to subjects drawn from history, mythology, and contemporary literature, what value and significance these subjects held in the mid-1860s? Was there any thematic coherence to this selection, or were they a random group of 'fancy pictures', chosen more for their pretensions to high art rather than to contribute to a unified narrative? These are important questions, because it is only through the process of encountering and confronting the

Julia Margaret Cameron, *Hypatia* (Cox 469), 1868. 4
Albumen cabinet card, 12.2 x 8.9 cm.



5 Julia Margaret Cameron, *Marie Spartali as The Imperial Eleänore* (Cox 471), 1868. Albumen cabinet card, 12.2 x 9.8 cm.

narratives of history and by recognizing the way that representations like these produce new ways of knowing and being in the world that we are truly able to locate ourselves historically.[34]

During Marie Spartali's sitting with Cameron, for example, the sitter may indeed have collaborated with the photographer in striking poses that projected strength and self-possession and which denied the 'visual spectacle of women', as Deborah Cherry has suggested.[35] And as Sylvia Wolf has inferred, Cameron may well have chosen Spartali as her photographic model because of her 'exotic' looks, Greek heritage, and even her association with the Pre-Raphaelites.[36] But neither author has asked whether Cameron's photographs of Spartali functioned coherently as part of a substantial historical narrative. Indeed, among these images, Cameron's allegorical titles do not suggest any apparent connection, and although she numbered them from one to eleven, there seems to be no apparent 'progression' implied by the sequence. But by casting a wider historical perspective to this work, we can see that a theoretical and structural centre is present that makes the whole of the eleven images more than the sum of its constituent parts: Cameron relied upon the symbolic language of allegory, a strategy which functions in literature and art as an important means to connect the present to the past.

Allegory is the chief principle underlying the iconography of Cameron's 'fancy subject' pictures. In particular, the nostalgic, sentimental, and romantic works of the eighteenth century that preceded Cameron's imagery represented longing for a simpler, bygone era or an uncomplicated way of life. In such works, allegories give shape to social systems and values that are under siege or about to disappear, like the simple rural family menaced by the forces of industrialization or the innocent child of nature who appears unaware that events outside of her control will alter her life for the worse, ruining both nature and her innocence in the process. Allegory conveys these meanings because it engages the viewer in a dialogue between the seemingly intangible forces shaping the present and the ostensibly recoverable history of the past. As Craig Owens wrote, allegory functions 'in the gap between a present and a past which, without allegorical reinterpretation, might have remained foreclosed. A conviction of the remoteness of the past, and a desire to redeem it for the present – these are its two most fundamental impulses.'[37] In Cameron's work, allegory confiscates and appropriates imagery from the past and makes it new and culturally significant: we observe this process in action when Cameron gave allegorical titles to her prints of Marie Spartali.

But in depicting *Hypatia*, *Mnemosyne*, and the *Imperial Eleänore* in the new medium of photography, Cameron was not randomly choosing any historical narrative. Rather, she selected narratives that were important to the nation's cultural identity. Historians have shown that 'English national identity' emerged from many different sources around the turn of the eighteenth century, but that

nationalistic pride was not expressed coherently across the land during that time as a vehicle of collective understanding. During the nineteenth century, however, when political culture began to centre on the nation's relationship to the world stage, national identity became connected broadly to 'the two "English empires," the empire of Great Britain and the British overseas empire'.[38] If the making of national identity also depended upon an intelligible 'imagined community' that could produce narratives that were broadly agreed upon by society, as Benedict Anderson has argued,[39] that infrastructure was built purposefully during this period. It was constructed historically much as a modern road is built physically, in overlapping strata, with cultural engineers excavating its past, storylines of heritage and tradition layering its foundations, narratives of unity and commemoration bonding its many layers, and tales of heroic bravery and personal sacrifice shaping and refining its surface.

Especially during the 1860s, new narratives emerged from the relationship between Britain and the colonial lands it occupied: in order to help sustain the country's political and economic power and win support for its policies, both at home and abroad, the nation's writers and artists created fresh approaches to tell old stories that would support its dominant role as a colonizer. Likewise, colonized peoples coped with the new authority imposed by the Empire either by absorbing or by opposing those points of view and cultural differences.[40] If colonialism disrupted the nation's myths of origin, like the supposed racial purity of England's Anglo-Saxon ancestors or its early adoption of Christianity as a national religion, it also provided an opportunity to debate the merits of those founding stories. And because colonialism also introduced disagreements about the social bonds that held the nation together, a space was opened up for new contributions to the dialogue that could help resolve those differences. These debates took many forms, but were characterized by a persistent conflict and lack of resolution during this period, in part because the relationship between London and its colonies was dynamic and in flux, and in part because of the latent political and cultural volatility between the two societies, where violence was suppressed or suspended, but never absent. This instability generated psychological states of anxiety and uncertainty in colonizers and colonized peoples alike, a feature that Cameron embedded in her most explicit photographs of the relationship between the two. Among her social circle, this instability up-ended the sure confidence of men like Lord Overstone and Tennyson that Britain's colonial activities were fair and honourable, as we explore below in Chapters 5 and 6.

Some of the architects of Britain's global political and cultural dominance, of course, were Cameron's close friends and neighbours, the same men of influence with whom she socialized at her sister's Holland Park salon after 1850, and later on, at her own home on the Isle of Wight.[41] This circle included Lord Macaulay of the Council of India, who, during the 1830s and 1840s, employed her husband

Charles as a Council member, and whose 'Minute on Indian Education' argued that it was Britain's mission to transform the people of India into 'a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals, and in intellect'.[42] A frequent visitor was Thomas Carlyle, whose books, like *Past and Present* (1843), celebrated England's cultural ancestry in terms of its Anglo-Saxon roots, and whose political commentary of the 1860s argued for the nation's historical role in teaching the world how to live and how to act. Also included was Francis Turner Palgrave, whose poetry collection, *The Golden Treasury of English Verse*, celebrated the English lyrical voice. Palgrave frequently visited Tennyson and Cameron on the Isle of Wight, and in 1861 he dedicated his volume to the poet, expressing the hope of producing 'a true national anthology'.[43] Cameron's close friend, Sir Henry Taylor, an official in the Colonial Office, also regularly visited the photographer in Freshwater. Taylor, himself a poet, embodied Macaulay's 'civilizing mission' to spread English influence abroad by working to replicate the nation's governmental administration and political economy in the colonies.

The Holland Park circle also included well-established painters, poets, musicians, and literary critics; men of the University and of the Church; aristocrats who patronized the arts through their commissions and extensive collections; and reviewers of art and literature. Nationalism was a focal point of their many activities: Tennyson and Watts represented the heroic national past in poetry and in painting; Sir Henry Cole collected national historical artefacts for his Museum to represent the nation's shared and collective identity; Austen Henry Layard and William Gifford Palgrave literally excavated foreign lands in their effort to recapture remnants of the nation's cultural past; and George Grote and Benjamin Jowett, who translated and reinterpreted ancient Greek and biblical texts, did so as a way to re-evaluate the foundational role of those texts for the nation's current needs. By actually reconceiving the 'original meaning' of St Paul's *Epistles* or Plato's *Dialogues*, for example, Grote and Jowett independently engaged their intellectual peers in debate about whether these ancient documents were being used legitimately by their present exponents to justify the contemporary religious practices or political actions that were the supposed foundation of their beliefs. Cameron was not only familiar with the published works of each of these men, she often engaged them personally in debate or wrote about their works in letters to others, clearly articulating her own point of view, which was not always in agreement.

Like these influential men, Cameron also wanted to contribute to the on-going narrative of British national identity, and she chose allegorical photographs as her primary instrument. By arranging her sitters to represent 'fancy subjects', she could personify these intellectual and political ideas figuratively. Consequently, she chose familiar narratives and well-known parables and legends to engage with these men, but also with the larger intellectual audience that made Grote, Jowett, Carlyle, and Tennyson famous authors. This was the same public

that bought Christmas editions of Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* and Palgrave's *The Golden Treasury*; the same art lovers that attended Watts's exhibitions at the Royal Academy; the same audience that viewed the Elgin Marbles in the British Museum and visited Cole's South Kensington Museum to appreciate the best in historical design and applied art. This public's enthusiasm for Thackeray influenced his publisher to produce numerous illustrated editions and made journals like *Punch* and the *Illustrated London News* household names. Its appetite for visual imagery supported the Arundel Society's production of fine art prints as well as the livelihood of celebrity-chasing photographers who made *cartes-de-visite* and cabinet photographs of famous men to be pasted into albums. In such a context, where artists and authors influenced each other, where popular and high art forms crossed multiple boundaries, and where cultural ideas were as much the subject of debate as the expressive forms they took, it makes less sense to think about the uniqueness of these different artistic forms and more about the shared spaces they occupied and the interdisciplinary effect of their imagery.[44]

Because of these overlapping and multiple influences, Cameron began producing hybrid works of art when she took up photography. The term 'hybrid' neatly describes this imagery because these photographs contained converging and intersecting references, fused together multiple sources of imagery and expressed opposing forces that coexisted simultaneously, or created new narrative structures that generated multiple ways to interpret a story. Three examples illustrate this aspect of Cameron's hybrid approach: in Chapter 1, we will see how Cameron engaged her audience with a sentimental story of primitive simplicity and childhood innocence common to the 'fancy subject' model of the eighteenth century. In representing the story of *Paul and Virginia*, the title characters of a French book of the same name that was widely popular in English translation, Cameron drew upon illustrated books, fashionable wallpaper, and contemporary photographs as source material. She also relied on the way this popular imagery took on new meanings in different contexts, from Thomas Carlyle, who used the novel as a means to idealize colonial emigration, to Prince Albert, who romanticized the tale in terms of his own Anglo-Saxon heritage. In Chapter 5, we will examine how Cameron drew upon caricatures in *Punch* and graphic art in the *Illustrated London News* when she photographed Prince Alamayou, the orphaned child of the vanquished king of Abyssinia, which had been overrun by a British military expedition in 1868. And in Chapter 6, we will see how Cameron studied earlier graphic illustrations of Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* prior to producing her own photographic interpretations of scenes from that epic poem, replacing, where she could, Tennyson's voice with her own, both in textual and in pictorial form.

Hybridity is also a valuable way to describe how two or more interpretations of the same narrative could be joined together to create a new reality, one that manifested psychological anxiety and social instability because it held together at

least two contradictory points of view. As we shall see, in Cameron's hands, hybrid works of art embody ambivalence as much as they do conflict, especially when they stand in opposition to a prevailing interpretation about a historical event or stake out an ambiguous position in order to avoid expressing explicit disagreement with a dominant viewpoint. Several chapters illustrate how Cameron produced photographs that held simultaneously contradictory positions: in Chapter 2, we will see that Cameron chose religious subjects that could support both orthodox and radical 'free-thinking' positions, especially with regard to important moral questions. In Chapter 3, we will examine how Cameron embraced historical and mythological stories from fifth-century BC Athens as contemporary civic models, using photography to comment on the classical past and interpret Hellenism for the Victorian present. And in Chapter 4, we will investigate how Cameron chose Byronic subjects to offer her own take on contemporary historical and political events, fusing together Oriental and Western ideas of beauty, honour, duty, and nationalism in her allegorical imagery.

Narrative instability; submerged narratives; hybrid imagery; narrative 'gaps': during the 1860s and 1870s, Cameron constructed 'British national identity' as a tentative, even contentious undertaking, but she embraced this narrative project as one that required vigilant attention and constant revision.

Cameron's project

Until now, the full range of Cameron's photographic 'fancy subjects' have been regarded as frivolous; following Emily Tennyson and Virginia Woolf, critics have called them idiosyncratic, unconcerned with serious purpose or intent. Modern scholars rejecting this view have focused narrowly on Cameron's religious subjects or her pictures of children and motherhood, extracting a small number of images from the much larger whole.[45] By contrast, my objective is to offer a new and broader historical framework to help contextualize Cameron's 'fancy subjects' as important contributions to the on-going dialogue of her time about British national life and to explain how these contending forces and social conflicts shaped her thematic selection. It is important, too, that Cameron's personal biography as a British landowner in the colonies also shaped her worldview. Consequently, this study also clarifies her own idealization of colonialism, both as a Freshwater resident and Ceylonese plantation owner, helping to explain why she embedded photographs with complex narratives about British colonial history, especially as these were expressed in terms of reclaiming a lost heritage or reconnecting with a distant and remote element of the national inheritance.

I have grouped together Cameron's 'fancy subjects' in the context of several larger themes that she used to address these controversial cultural and political debates. Importantly, because she consciously wove together her allegories and

her portraits in albums and exhibitions, and because the men she portrayed were also writing and helping to shape the nation's cultural identity, I have examined her allegories and portraits together in each chapter, taking particular note when certain portraits and 'fancy subjects' were hung in the same exhibition. In addition, each chapter is arranged chronologically to capture the ways that Cameron constructed her historical narratives in response to timely political and cultural events. In particular, we shall examine her engagement with religious arguments that pitted High Church doctrines against those of the Low Church; her confrontation with contemporary political interpretations about the Greek classical past as they were used to support or undermine governmental reforms; and her nostalgic critique of material conditions in the Empire, especially in relation to her idealization of colonial lands as unspoiled. Cameron's worldview was romantic: her 'fancy subjects' romanticize the simple and uncomplicated life of the past and venerate old traditions; they celebrate inspirational stories of atonement, redemption, and deliverance; they elevate patriotism, nationalism, and nobility.

Chapter 1 examines the photographs Cameron made of two children to represent the central protagonists of the sentimental novel, *Paul and Virginia*. Written originally in French in 1788 by Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre and translated shortly thereafter into English, Saint-Pierre's tale became one of the most widely published novels of the century. *Paul and Virginia* takes place on a remote island colony, and in order to help contextualize the story's importance, this chapter also explores how Julia Margaret and her husband Charles regarded their own island homes on the Isle of Wight and the island of Ceylon, especially in relation to their ownership of the land, the impact of the colonial condition, and their romantic attitudes about art. In *Paul and Virginia*, one of the first allegorical photographs that she produced in 1864, Cameron demonstrated her interest in taking a sentimental story about exiled children and connecting it to conflict-filled narratives about colonialism then facing Britain, including the intersection of race and slavery, the origins of English ancestry, the birth of Christianity as a national religion, and the spread of national economic and labour policies in the colonies.

Cameron's religious images of Madonnas and children, especially the nine photographs that she grouped together and called *The Fruits of the Spirit*, are the focus of Chapter 2. Inspired by the unorthodox approach to biblical criticism of her friend Benjamin Jowett, Cameron created *The Fruits of the Spirit* to put forward what she called a 'theological work in photography'. A frequent visitor to the Tennysons and the Camerons on the Isle of Wight, Jowett published his most controversial essay on biblical interpretation in 1860 in a volume called *Essays and Reviews*. Chapter 2 contends that Jowett's volume inspired Cameron to create religious photographs that conveyed both High Church and Broad Church interpretations and that stood in opposition to both the rigid orthodoxy advocated by

Jowett's opponents and the one-dimensional typological approach to visual art promoted by Anna Jameson.

A similar responsiveness to mid-Victorian thinking about classical antiquity informs Cameron's photographs devoted to classical Greek subjects, which are the subject of Chapter 3. George Grote's historical essays about ancient Greece inspired both Charles and Julia Margaret Cameron. Grote was a political radical who was associated with Jeremy Bentham, and a close friend of Charles. In his numerous essays and books, Grote advocated that Britain adopt a participatory brand of democracy that was modelled on ancient Athens. Julia Margaret, through her husband, and very probably through her own reading, was exposed to Grote's histories in 1866, but his intellectual contribution to her artistic work has been overlooked until now. Chapter 3 addresses this oversight by examining how Cameron created a coherent body of classical imagery, and how, like Grote, she used stories from Greek myths as a way to engage with the debate over the practice of British civic life.

Cameron's photographs containing Byronic subjects are the focus of Chapter 4. The extent to which she drew subjects and meaning from Byron, both in terms of his Romantic subject matter and the political context of his poetry, has not been recognized and fully appreciated. Cameron stayed away from maudlin or carnal themes that many of her contemporaries used to disparage the poet. Henry Taylor, for example, famously disliked Byron's works and disapproved of his continuing fame. Cameron apparently disagreed with Taylor. As we shall see, she chose the poet's heroic and selfless subjects that served patriotic, noble, and nationalistic ends as suitable subjects for her photographs. In fact, in Cameron's Byronic subjects, she represented narratives of personal sacrifice and loss in which the grand ambitions of country and nation take priority over narrow familial bonds. As a result, she produced allegorical photographs that invited multiple and often contradictory interpretations, as her national heroines and defenders of liberty both celebrated and undermined the British imperial cause.

Chapter 5 examines Cameron's photographs of colonial conflict, responding to hostile encounters in Jamaica and Abyssinia and examining the whirlwind of controversy that swept up her social circle, particularly Lord Overstone, but also Carlyle, Taylor, and Tennyson: in 1868, at London's German Gallery, she exhibited recently made portraits of Edward John Eyre, the colonial governor of Jamaica who had brutally suppressed an insurrection in 1865, along with portraits of Carlyle, who publicly supported Eyre as his most ardent defender. Shortly thereafter, she rushed last-minute prints into circulation that depicted refugees from the 1868 war in Abyssinia; these studio-produced images deliberately re-enact scenes of violence and aggression. Cameron's Abyssinian photographs are analysed in relation to these historical events, and in relation to other works, particularly her portraits of disguised British Orientalists (some of which

she included in the exhibition) who had achieved fame by infiltrating colonial lands on behalf of the Empire.

On the Isle of Wight, Alfred Tennyson was not only a close friend and neighbour, but also an inspiring figure whose poetry provided a rich source of literary material for Cameron to represent photographically. Her illustrations for Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, which she undertook in 1874 with the poet's encouragement and advice, are the focus of Chapter 6. This chapter examines how Cameron interpreted Tennyson's epic narrative and selectively counterbalanced the poet's repeated cries for war and national rejuvenation with her own emphasis on the moral guidance and 'temperate qualities' that she found in the voices of his female characters. By pairing together her photographs with lines of Tennyson's verse that she selected, Cameron emphasized these female voices in her illustrated volumes, expressing anxiety about the legitimacy of the nation's imperial cause and questioning its effects on British domestic life. In her photographs, she tempered Tennyson's strident call to strike out against 'the heathen' by focusing on how his female characters positively expressed the lyrical, tolerant, and altruistic qualities of English civic life. In doing so, she implied that a generous and compassionate hand could secure the nation's future more effectively than could hostile manoeuvring or outright war.

In 1875, Charles and Julia Margaret Cameron decided to move permanently to Ceylon for the remaining years of their lives. Chapter 7 concentrates on the photographs she made during this time and explains the commercial decisions she made prior to leaving England to publicize her volumes illustrating Tennyson's *Idylls*. While residing there in 1877, she was visited by the botanical painter Marianne North, which allowed both Cameron and North to create works of art in each other's presence. In their imagery, both women expressed a profound cultural displacement and commented on the exoticism, primitivism, cultural inferiority, and dependence they found in the colony. Cameron's Ceylonese photographs contain a complex dual reality: on the one hand, she experienced Ceylon as an extension of Britain, where it felt 'natural' to live off the land as a coffee grower and exporter; on the other hand, living in Ceylon made it possible for her to experience a 'return to origins', a position that allowed her to repudiate the repressive influences of colonialism that might one day threaten her island paradise.

This chapter also examines Cameron's 1877 portrait photograph of Marianne North looking up from reading George Eliot's novel, *Daniel Deronda*. Eliot's novel had been published in instalments the previous year. By connecting the portrait to the central themes of the novel, which involve the return of the protagonist to his Jewish roots in the ancient land of Palestine, Cameron embodies the British colonialist's conflict in the image. The presence of *Daniel Deronda* in Cameron's portrait of Marianne North not only grounds the two artists in place and

time, it also metaphorically marks this photograph as a sign of the colonialist's unresolved conflicts. Cameron's final work in portraiture is thus revealed to be yet another expression of the ambivalence that is also present in her allegorical 'fancy subjects': for Cameron, celebrating the cultural extension of Britain's national borders across the globe, as measured by the long reach of George Eliot's novel from its publication in London to its reception in Ceylon, is countered by the photographer's heartfelt desire to interpret her own return to the island colony as an act of moral redemption.

Notes

1 Letter from Emily Tennyson to Edward Lear, quoted in Colin Ford, *The Cameron Collection: An Album of Photographs by Julia Margaret Cameron Presented to Sir John Herschel* (London: Von Nostrand Reinhold and the National Portrait Gallery, 1975), p. 127, plate 44.

2 See Rosemary Mitchell, *Picturing the Past: English History in Text and Image, 1830–1870* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

3 *The Discourses of Sir Joshua Reynolds, with Explanatory Notes by John Burnett* (London: James Carpenter, 1842), esp. Discourse Fourteen. See also: Martin Postle, *Angels and Urchins: The Fancy Picture in 18th-century British Art* (Nottingham: Djanogly Art Gallery and Lund Humphries, 1998).

4 Letter from Julia Margaret Cameron to Sir John Herschel, dated 31 December 1864, quoted in Ford, *The Cameron Collection*, p. 141.

5 R. Derek Wood, ed., *Julia Margaret Cameron's Copyrighted Photographs* (London: privately published, May 1996), copy archived at the Royal Photographic Society, Bath, and online at: www.midley.co.uk/cameron/cameron.pdf

6 Julian Cox and Colin Ford, eds., *Julia Margaret Cameron: The Complete Photographs* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Trust, 2003).

7 Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); W. J. T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), chapter 2.

8 There is a vast literature on narrative and narration. Of particular importance to this study, see: Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London: Methuen, 1983); Marie Maclean, *Narrative as Performance: The Baudelairean Experiment* (London: Routledge, 1988); Wallace Martin, *Recent Theories of Narrative* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986); Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981); M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981); Homi K. Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990); Robert Scholes, James Phelan, and Robert Kellogg, *The Nature of Narrative*, rev. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

9 Virginia Woolf, *Freshwater: A Comedy* [1935], ed. Lucio P. Ruotolo (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), p. v.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 16.

11 See Lee Manion, 'The Loss of the Holy Land and *Sir Isumbras*: Literary Contributions to Fourteenth-Century Crusade Discourse', *Speculum*, 85 (2012), 65–90. On the Isumbras story, see also: Samara P. Landers, 'And Loved He Was With All: Identity in Sir Isumbras', *Orbis Litterarum*, 64: 5 (2009), 351–72; Raluca Radulescu, 'Pious Middle English Romances turned Political: Reading *Sir Isumbras*, *Sir Gowther*, and *Robert of Sicily* in Fifteenth-Century

England', *Viator*, 41:2 (2010), 333–60.On the persistence of these themes in Victorian and in modern times, see Debra N. Mancoff, *The Arthurian Revival in Victorian Art* (New York: Garland, 1990) and Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

12 Julie Codell, 'Sir Isumbras, M.P.: Millais's Painting and Political Cartoons', *Journal of Popular Culture*, 22:3 (1988), 29–45.

13 *Ibid.*, 33.

14 Julia Thomas, *Pictorial Victorians: The Inscription of Values in Word and Image* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2004), Alison Byerly, *Realism, Representation, and the Arts in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), and Martin Meisel, *Realizations: Narrative, Pictorial, and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

15 Victoria C. Olsen, *From Life: Julia Margaret Cameron and Victorian Photography* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 236.

16 Virginia Woolf, 'Julia Margaret Cameron', in Virginia Woolf and Roger Fry, *Victorian Photographs of Famous Men and Fair Women* [orig. London: Hogarth Press, 1926] repr. (London: Chatto and Windus, 1992), p. 18.

17 *Ibid*.

18 Janet Malcolm is emblematic: 'The trouble is that Cameron *was* the heroine of a screwball comedy. There is too much evidence of the picturesque behaviour for it [earlier criticism] to be summarily dismissed as a calumny […] If Cameron's Madonna and Child pictures and her illustrations of scenes from Tennyson seem less silly to us than they did to the puritanical modernists, even the most catholic of postmodernists will have to acknowledge that these photographs bear unmistakable traces of the conditions under which they were taken, and that these conditions were often comical.' Original emphasis; from 'The Genius of the Glass House' [1999], in *Forty-One False Starts: Essays on Artists and Writers* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2013), p. 154.

19 Agnes Grace Weld, *Glimpses of Tennyson and Some of His Relations and Friends* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1903); Lady Laura Troubridge (née Laura Gurney), *Memories and Reflections* (London: Heinemann, 1925); Anne Thackeray Ritchie, *From Friend to Friend*, ed. Emilie Ritchie (London: John Murray, 1919); Hester Thackeray Ritchie, ed., *Thackeray and His Daughter: The Letters and Journals of Anne Thackeray Ritchie* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1924); Lord Hallam Tennyson, ed., *Tennyson and His Friends* (London: Macmillan, 1911); Julia Prinsep Stephen, 'Julia Margaret Cameron', in Sir Leslie Stephen and Sir Sidney Lee, eds., *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 3 (London: Oxford University Press, 1921).

20 Linda Nochlin, 'Women, Art, and Power', in *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), p. 2.

21 Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 17.

22 Quoted by Deborah Cherry, *Painting Women: Victorian Women Artists* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 187.

23 Cox identifies the work (Cox 521) from its inscription in Cameron's hand, *Boadicea*, but dates it 1864–66, with attribution in the copyright records. However, the image corresponds well to '#190 – Miss Mackensie, both arms extended, holding dagger, full length, white dress dark drapery', which was recorded in the registers on 15 September 1865. Cox and Ford, *Julia Margaret Cameron*, p. 274.

24 Letter from G.F. Watts to Julia Margaret Cameron, 21 June 1865, National Portrait Gallery, London, NPG-P125.

25 Letter from G.F. Watts to Julia Margaret Cameron (undated, but probably 1865), National Portrait Gallery, London, NPG-P215, pp. 2–3.
26 Julia Margaret Cameron to Sir John Herschel, 31 December 1864, reprinted in Colin Ford, *The Cameron Collection*, pp. 140–1.
27 *Photographic News*, 9 (6 January 1865), 4.
28 'Fine Arts Gossip', *Athenaeum*, 15 February 1868, p. 258.
29 *Illustrated London News*, 11 November 1865, p. 463; and 18 November 1865, p. 486.
30 'Mrs Cameron's Photographs', *Macmillan's Magazine*, 13 (January 1866), 230–1.
31 Quoted by Joanne Lukitsh, *Cameron: Her Work and Career* (Rochester, NY: International Museum of Photography at the George Eastman House, 1986), p. 47.
32 'Minor Topics of the Month', *Art-Journal*, 1 March 1868, p. 58.
33 Wood, *Julia Margaret Cameron's Copyrighted Photographs*, 15 September 1868.
34 Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, pp. 34–5.
35 Cherry, *Painting Women*, p. 198.
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42 Thomas Babington, Lord Macaulay, 'Minute on Education', in W. Theodore de Bary, ed., *Sources of Indian Tradition*, vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), p. 49.
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44 Carlo Ginzburg, James D. Herbert, W. J. T. Mitchell, Thomas F. Reese, and Ellen Handler Spitz, 'Inter/disciplinarity', *Art Bulletin*, 77:4 (1995), 534–52.Thomas, *Pictorial Victorians*; on the periodical press, Peter Sinnema, *Dynamics of the Printed Page: Representing the Nation in the 'Illustrated London News'* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998).
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