
WHEN ARTISTS BECAME INTELLECTUALS: SCIENCE AS A SIGNIFICANT OTHER FOR THE FEMALE ARTISTIC PERSONA

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ABSTRACT

The increasing appreciation of science posed an interesting challenge to art in the late 19th Century. Modernisation, professionalisation, secularisation and technical novelties all seemed to question the social status of the artist. Arguing that one possible way for individual artists to meet this challenge was to incorporate elements of the scientific persona with their artistic self, this article focuses on the Swedish-speaking, Finnish artist and writer Helena Westermarck (1857–1938). While constructing an intellectual comradeship with her brother, the internationally well-known sociologist and anthropologist Edward Westermarck (1862–1939), Helena Westermarck often referred to the exceptional intellectual and analytical capacities of the artist. Arguing that the prestige of science could be used to lend credibility to the artistic persona, the article will discuss some of the ideas that led Westermarck to gradually fashion her public appearance as an artist into the persona of a public intellectual, writer and self-supporting (single) woman on equal terms with her brother.

KEY WORDS

Artistic Personas; Intellectuals; Intellect; Creativity; Science

INTRODUCTION

Just like two siblings of the same family, art and science often share a complex relationship. Not always bestowed with equal appreciation in different historical contexts, these two branches of human intellectual pursuits are capable of mutual support and fruitful creative co-operation at best, but also prone to rivalry and fierce competition under other circumstances. In the Romantic era, “the artist” enjoyed a strong position in popular imagination as a cultural hero of the time. Ranking the creative intuition of the artist – and especially “the poet” – above the rational intellect and logic of the “scientist”, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant did for example promote this opinion in his *Critique of Judgment* in 1790 (Kant 1914, Div 1, § 43, 46–50, pp. 183–185, 188–205). But a century later the tone of speech had radically changed. In the late 19th century, science was associated with modernity, urbanisation and industrialisation. As these phenomena were linked to professionalism and expertise, both scholars and scientists

became increasingly involved in governance, administration as well as law-making and the formation of popular opinion (Frängsmyr 1984, p. 175).

While the scientific persona was gaining in both political influence and social status, the artist seemed to be losing some of his/her previous prestige through the processes of modernisation. Technical novelties like the camera made the artist's professional know-how and his/her skill to depict seem less impressive and unique. Secularisation and a more materialist worldview also questioned the existence of a Divine source of inspiration to aesthetics and thus, the artist's role as an intermediate between humanity and the true Creator. Likewise, positivism and the faith in progress put more emphasis on human intellect and reason than on creative intuition. The artist's sensitivity and intuitive insight in matters hidden from most of humanity was thus challenged by the scientist's intellect and ability to uncover the laws of nature through reason. The artists' lack of official degrees and specialised knowledge became a fault in a society that valued professionalism and expertise (Charle 1990).

GENDER AND THE ARTISTIC PERSONA

Focusing on the development outlined above, the purpose of this article will be to discuss the challenge that the increasing appreciation of science posed to art in the late 19th century, and some of the ways through which individual artists could respond to it. Arguing that some artists chose to incorporate elements of a scientific persona with their artistic self, thus adopting a new role as public intellectuals, I shall demonstrate my arguments with the example of the Finnish painter and writer Helena Westermarck (1857–1938) and her brother, the anthropologist and philosopher Edward Westermarck (1862–1939), who in 1907 gained international repute as the first professor of Sociology at the London School of Economics. Drawing upon an analysis of Westermarck's relation to her brother, the article will also address some questions about the relationship between gender and the artistic persona.

While discussing Helena Westermarck's public self, I shall on purpose come to understand "art" in a very broad sense of the word. In doing so, I let myself be guided by Westermarck herself, who studied painting in Paris during the 1880's and later became a writer of novels and biographies as well as other kinds of fictional and non-fictional prose including journalism. Although she was active both as a painter and as a writer, she generally chose to define herself as an "artist" rather than choosing any other available and more specific title such as "painter", "writer" or "author". This choice corresponded with the general 19th century interpretation of the terms "fine-arts" or *beaux-arts*, which generally was understood to cover painting, sculpture, writing, music and architecture.

Adopting a definition of the 'persona' put forward by Herman Paul for my own purposes, I understand the persona as an ideal-type or model of abilities, attitudes, and dispositions that on a collective level are regarded as crucial for the pursuit of a specific social activity with a corresponding social role. Persona does therefore often, but not always and exclusively, correlate with a professional role, such as that of 'a historian' (as analysed by Paul), or with some other occupation, vocation or call, such as that of 'an artist', 'a scientist', 'a politician' or 'an intellectual'. Just like Paul, I see the persona as a range of skills and moral qualities (or "epistemic virtues") which commonly are associated with the successful performance of a specific persona such as that of 'the artist' or 'the historian' (Paul 2014, p. 535; see also Paul 2011; Paul 2016 A; Paul 2016 B; Daston & Sibum 2003). Even though I am fully aware that the persona of a social role (such as "the artist") never really comes in a singular form, I shall, for the simplicity of the argument, refer to the persona in singular when comparing the persona of a specific role to the personas of other social roles. Speaking of the "artistic persona" in singular, I

therefore mean the collective of many different personas associated with artists as opposed to a similar collective of personas associated with some other social role, such as that of scientists.

To investigate how the prestige of science affected the artistic persona, one needs to consider the question of how different personas change over time and how individual performances may affect the persona. Just as Paul has pointed out, the persona is a collectively recognised model that individuals must appropriate rather than a “private dream or individual ideals of how to be” an artist. The persona does therefore change – not because of the actions of a single individual but because of similar actions by multiple individuals. These actions might, as Paul have suggested, be provoked by institutional changes and different awards that are offered in return for certain behaviour (Paul 2014, 354, 365–369). This emphasis on institutional change might be a consequence of Paul’s focus on the different forms of scientific and scholarly personas, which at least since the 19th century have been strongly affected by the different academic institutions. However, for other types of persona, the impact of institutional change may not be as influential. In my own interpretation I would like to stress the more general changes in cultural and political power structures which affect the way in which individuals craft their own public self.

In that sense my interpretation comes closer to that of Mineke Bosch, who has emphasised that individuals may draw upon several collective repertoires of social and cultural authority and power in their self-fashioning as they try to establish a trustworthy appearance and earn the recognition of their peers. As Bosch points out, the individual identities that relate to a persona are thus, “always formed by way of bricolage and do often rely on a mixture of new and old repertoires” (2016, p. 43). Therefore, not only social categories of class, gender and sexuality, race and religion, but also social aspects such as wealth or physical health, play a role in the formation of the persona (Bosch 2016, p. 42–43). In my own understanding of the persona, I would like to emphasise Bosch’s interpretation of the persona as a mixture of different repertoires, drawn from multiple sources. To me, this means that an “artist” like Helena Westermarck could borrow different repertoires, not only from previously existing versions of artistic personas, but also from multiple other personas associated with the completely different, more prestigious social roles. The specific example that I will use to address my point, is the scientific persona as manifested by her brother, which to Westermarck represented an admired and well-respected social position. This comparison between the artistic persona of Helena Westermarck as opposed to the scientific persona of her brother, does not only illustrate the way in which different personas may affect each other, but also how gendered structures affect the persona.

To date, the exploration of the relation between gender and the persona has only begun (for example Hallberg 2012; Bosch 2016). Indeed, Herman Paul, who exemplifies his writings with mostly male Dutch historians from the 19th century, does not to any greater extent touch upon the role of gender in his writing. In his account, the skills which are associated with a persona can be acquired through practical training whereas the epistemic virtues can be obtained through the assertion of personal willpower (Paul 2014, pp. 357–360). This focus on practical training and moral motivation does, however, support the impression that the attributes of a persona are open to everyone on equal terms if they only have endurance enough to acquire the necessary skills and motivation enough to practice certain virtues. Accentuating the importance of endurance and motivation too much might thus conceal the fact that both practical skills and moral virtues might in certain cultural contexts be so tightly associated with different physical, psychological or moral features that the lack of one might make it virtually impossible to impersonate the other. A very good example of this could be the mental ability which generally has been described as “intellect”, e.g. the capacity for rational and logical

thinking. As Genevieve Lloyd has convincingly shown, this ability, which is so crucial for both the scientific and the artistic personae, has since Antiquity been associated with the masculine sex (Lloyd 1984). Another such example would be “creativity”, or “geniality”, as the ability to generate new and original ideas was frequently referred to in the 19th century. This ability, equally crucial to the general understanding of both an artistic and a scientific persona, was also for a long period of time primarily attributed to men (McMahon 2013, pp. 71). Lacking the masculine gender would, therefore, in the eyes of Helena Westermarck’s contemporaries, also mean that one lacked the intellectual abilities required of a trustworthy scientific persona or the creative capacity required of a convincing artistic persona. Any woman trying to impersonate a scientific persona as well as an artistic one would in Westermarck’s time have had to find a way to contradict this assumption.

From an early stage, Westermarck was very serious about her own role as an artist. Already during her years as a student of art, she made it clear that if she would not have the possibility to become a professional painter, she would not bother to paint at all: “To paint solely for my own pleasure, would never cross my mind” (Westermarck s.a., probably around 1883). Still, not all her contemporaries were prepared to acknowledge her as a professional painter. Looking at how the letters that she received were addressed, one can find that although many of her friends and colleagues chose to address her with titles in the feminine form, such as *målarinna* (the feminine form of the Swedish word for ‘painter’) or *konstnärinna* (the feminine form of ‘artist’) many also continued to simply address her as “miss Westermarck” (*fröken*). When her paintings were reviewed in the papers, it was a common custom to refer to her and her female colleagues as the “painting ladies” (*målände damer*) after the lengthier reviews of male “painters”. This discrepancy between her own self-perception and the response from others was something that seems to have motivated Helena Westermarck’s many efforts to contribute with her own interpretations of which qualities, skills and abilities that were required of an artist. One way for Westermarck to do so, was as I will show, to present herself as the equal intellectual partner of her brother the scientist.

The important conclusion that we must draw from the examples given above is that the persona can never be open to everyone on equal terms because many of the dispositions associated with the persona are, or at least appear to be, linked with specific gender, ethnicity or class. Therefore, recognising the limitations that Westermarck and many others faced is crucial for understanding the mechanisms of exclusion that are a permanent part of the persona. Still, these mechanisms have of course not entirely prevented women, nor other groups who because of their gender, class, ethnicity or other reasons lacked the optimal background, from seeking to impersonate a scientific or artistic persona. This leads to a question which shall be dealt with briefly within the scope of this article, namely how it is possible for individuals to contest, renegotiate and eventually also change the persona. However, before I move on to this question I shall provide a brief introduction to Helena Westermarck’s life and to that of her brother Edward Westermarck, who for decades assumed the role of an intellectual comrade and a significant other to his sister.

SISTER AND BROTHER

Helena Westermarck’s family belonged to the educated and liberally oriented bourgeois elite in Helsinki, the capital of the Grand Duchy of Finland. All her four siblings were well educated. Just like her younger sister, Helena Westermarck received her education in the Swedish school for girls in Helsinki (*Svenska Fruntimmersskolan i Helsingfors*). The school was the first state-organised school for girls in the country and it was led by one of Westermarck’s maternal aunts Elisabeth Blomqvist (1827–1901), known as a pioneer of female education. The family was

Swedish-speaking just like much of the educated elite at the time. Even though Helena Westermarck studied Finnish at school, it seems like she never learnt to speak the language very well. She never wrote or spoke publicly in Finnish (Dahlberg 2018, 54–97).

After finishing school, Westermarck studied drawing and painting in Helsinki, but was encouraged by her teachers to continue her studies in Paris, where she arrived in late November 1879. In Paris, she studied painting at the privately-owned studio of Madame Trélat and later at Académie Julien in the early 1880s. After a couple of years as an independent artist, her interest in writing gradually took over, and she became a writer. From the 1890s until her death, she produced novels and short stories as well as a number of biographies on other female writers and artists. Westermarck also gained a living by writing literary critique and other texts for newspapers. From the 1890s onwards, she took part in the fight to achieve female suffrage in Finland. She edited the magazine *Nutid*, which served as the unofficial voice of the women's rights organisation Unionen for several years. In doing so, she became a visible promoter of female civilian rights. After Finnish women had been granted the right to vote in political elections in 1906, Westermarck was one of the first women who posed as candidates in the first elections to the Finnish Diet after the reform. Being perceived as too controversial by many voters, she failed to be elected, but nevertheless continued to engage in public debate (about Helena Westermarck's life and work in general, see for example Westermarck 1941; Konttinen 1991; Claesson-Pipping 2007; Toftegaard Pedersen 2016; Dahlberg 2018. Westermarck's bibliography in Tegengren 1974).

Helena Westermarck's work as an artist as well as a writer received a fair amount of publicity during her lifetime through reviews and articles in the Finnish papers. She also received several rewards like an honorary mentioning for her painting *Laundresses (Strykerskor, 1883)* at the Universal exhibition in Paris in 1889 and the prestigious literary award of the Finnish state (*Valtion kirjallisuuspalkinto*) for her novel *Lifvets seger* in 1898 (Dahlberg 2018, p. 134; Hirvonen 1993, p. 846). This made her a well-recognised public figure to her fellow countrymen. However, although many of her books were published both in Sweden and Finland, her works were, except for a couple of short stories, never translated into any other language. Instead, it was her younger brother Edward who undoubtedly received the larger international repute. His work as an anthropologist, sociologist and philosopher made him an internationally well-recognised scholar. His most famous work, *The History of Human Marriage*, was based on his doctoral thesis at the university in Helsinki and became an immediate international success after its publication by the London-based publishing house Macmillan in 1891. While professor of Philosophy at the university in Helsinki, Westermarck also held the position as the first professor of Sociology at the newly established London School of Economics. His anthropological field work in Morocco, his research on subjects such as homosexuality and ethics and his dispute with Sigmund Freud on the nature of the incest taboo made him an internationally recognised scientist and a well-respected public intellectual in his own time (about Edward Westermarck's life and work in general, see for example Westermarck 1927; Lagerborg 1951; Ihanus 1999; Lagerspetz & Suolinna 2014; Timosaari 2017).

Edward Westermarck was born on the day of his sister Helena's fifth birthday in 1862. It became a private joke within the family that the two siblings were "fake twins". To Helena Westermarck, this idea later came to mean that there was a special bond between her and her brother. In her memoirs, written mostly during the 1920's and 1930's and published posthumously in 1941, she remembered the day of her brother's birth and how she had considered him as a kind of birthday present to herself. She also underlined that this had made her feel more connected to him than to any other of her siblings. In another context, however, she also pointed out that comparing herself with her brothers – among them perhaps most

obviously the famous Edward – had made her realise how easily boys were advancing in society and how the limitations opposed on her own sex affected her own chances in life. (Westermarck 1941, pp. 16–17 compared to pp. 92–93). For Helena Westermarck, the relationship with her brother thus served both as an intellectual comradeship and as a point of reference and comparison for her own gender role. (About siblings and gendered roles, Davidoff 2012, pp. 65–74).

There is no doubt that the relationship between Helena Westermarck and her brother was close. This can be seen in the correspondence between the two siblings, which consists of roughly 600 letters, dating from the late 1870's until the time of Helena Westermarck's death in 1938. As the two siblings spent much of their time apart due to extensive travelling and longer periods spent living abroad, much of the relationship did in fact take place in the letters. Considering that they often spent long periods without any other contact than through the letters, it is interesting to follow how Helena Westermarck made use of the relationship to her brother to emphasise certain qualities of her own public appearance as an artist.

While referring to Helena Westermarck's "use" of her brother, I do of course not wish to imply that Westermarck as a sister performed a deliberate or calculated exploitation of her brother in any form. The point I would like to make by using this term should, on the contrary, be understood in a similar way as the "social use of kinship" that Pierre Bourdieu referred to in *The Logic of Practice*, where he argued that there is a difference between actual kinship, and "representational" kinship. The latter, he underlined, is a kind of staged community that individuals make claims to when they want to gain access to a certain kind of symbolic capital present in the family name or group identity (Bourdieu [1990] 2014, pp. 169–170). Paying close attention to the ways in which Helena Westermarck mentioned her internationally well-recognised brother in her memoirs can in fact help to create an understanding of the elements that Westermarck wanted to emphasise in her own public appearance.

THE INTELLECTUAL AVANT-GARDE OF SOCIETY

The initial observation which brought me to reflect upon Helena Westermarck's appearance as an artist was the fact that she seemed to associate a lot more with her role as an artist than simply the acts of painting paintings, writing novels or other kinds of aesthetic pursuits which one would primarily associate with an artist. Beside these artistic activities, she also actively engaged with public opinion as a journalist and editor, and through different political activities. Not only did she take part in the fight for women's rights and for female suffrage, but she also participated in the secret political activism against the Russian authorities in Finland (Dahlberg 2018, pp. 209–217). She remains one of the few historical contemporaries who has written about the way in which Finnish women took part in these illegal and therefore highly dangerous activities (Ramsay 1997).

The interesting thing about Westermarck is how she incorporated her political activities into her role as an artist. Writing about the restrained political situation in the Grand Duchy of Finland during the early 20th century, she later underlined that the artists of the time could no longer limit themselves to simply aesthetic pursuits. If the painter and poet of the romantic period still could stand as "strangers" and "unengaged observers" in relation to society and to the civic questions of their time, the modern artist could, according to Westermarck, no longer afford to do so (Westermarck 1941, pp. 299–300). The task of the artists was thus both to inspire others into action and to act as public leaders and as an intellectual *avant-garde* (Dahlberg 2018, pp. 165–171). The way Westermarck undertook these tasks herself while still understanding herself as an artist, seems to imply that something was changing in the

contemporary understanding of the artistic persona. Adopting different repertoires from several kinds of personas – including those of scientists, politicians, journalists and other public figures – Helena Westermarck and many other artists of her time had begun to present themselves as public intellectuals.

The existence of a cultural and political elite of “intellectuals”, who hold a special position within any given society regardless of time and context, is often taken for granted in every-day conversation. While describing Helena Westermarck as a public intellectual, I do not, however, want to imply that this is a label or title that Westermarck herself attributed to her own person. To my knowledge, there is no evidence that Westermarck would ever have described herself as an “intellectual”. For the most part, this can be explained by the fact that the concept of “the intellectual” did not exist in the Swedish language, which was Helena Westermarck’s mother tongue, for most of the period which I deal with here. According to Christophe Charle, the concept of the ‘intellectual’, or rather *les intellectuels* as it was coined in French, was introduced in France by the writers, artists and scholars who took part in the Dreyfus-affair in the 1890s. Thus, the concept was used for the first time as a descriptive term designing a certain kind of cultural and political elite, who challenged the establishment through their critical and creative way of thought and thus acted as an *avant-garde* of society. The most visible among this small but influential elite, who did not hesitate to use their own fame as writers, artists and scholars to attract publicity for the greater good of a cause, was the writer Émile Zola. Through the pamphlet *J'accuse*, in which he spoke on behalf of the falsely accused Jewish officer Alfred Dreyfus against the anti-Semitic and nationalist tendencies among the French society, he did not hesitate to make use of the symbolic capital he possessed as a famous writer to defend those in a weaker position. (Charle 1990, pp. 7–10).

Other languages adopted similar terms slightly later than French. In English, ‘the intellectual’ seems to appear around the turn of the century (Heyck 1980), while in other languages it took a while longer. In Swedish, *de intellektuella* appears in the late 1910s and in the Finnish language *intellektuellit* or *älymystö* as a neologism appears in the 1920s. However, neither the Swedish nor the Finnish words became established in every-day use of language in Finland until the 1930s. (Koivisto 1997; Karkama & Koivisto 1997, pp. 9–29). When I describe Westermarck as a “public intellectual”, I therefore mean a person who engages in contemporary and public debate about social, philosophical, ethical, or political issues on a regular basis in a way that makes him or her into a public figure regardless of how the person chooses to describe his or her own person (See Eliaeson & Kalleberg 2008, pp. 1–7).

But although Zola and his French contemporaries may have been the first to coin the term, the idea that artists, writers and other public figures such as journalists, politicians, scientists and scholars, could (and should) use their fame and position in the public eye in order to speak on behalf of the weak or the powerless, was not a uniquely French invention. On the contrary, it seems like the idea that the social status which came with creative or intellectual originality could be used to draw attention to important issues and to defend the rights of those whose weak position made it difficult for them to speak for themselves appeared all over the western world. One of the reasons for this was undoubtedly the continuously expanding public space and especially the growing media-business of the late 19th century and early 20th century. It was no longer difficult to notice the social capital present in publicity, and people of various backgrounds were quick to put it to use (for example Joyeux-Prunel 2015, pp. 51–55; Seigel 2012, pp. 510–525; Gedin 2004, pp. 267–296).

Another reason, pointed out by Darrin McMahon, was that although generally in the 19th century ideas of equality among people started to gain grounds, there were also trends which

worked in the opposite direction. Not only were there many groups (like women, workers and people of colour) who were excluded from the ideals of equality and therefore from power, but there were also smaller groups of people who sought to gain a position above the broader public, thus gaining privileges and rights which extended those which were accorded to the masses. McMahon points to the increasing interest for the “genius” in both scientific and popular imagination as one example of this. (McMahon 2013, pp. xix–xx).

However, in popular imagination “the genius” was both a rare and an elusive figure. The epithet continued to hold a prestige, which meant it could only be bestowed on an individual by others. Claiming the status of a genius for one-self was, on the contrary, not easily done. (McMahon 2013, Kete 2012). The identity as “an intellectual” did thus offer something which “the genius” did not: it was a self-identity that the individual could assume on his own, without the endorsement of others. Still, it operated in a similar way, as it made assumptions about the qualities and the position of the individual with regards to others. Assuming the role of an intellectual, or simply a public appearance that was beginning to take the form of an intellectual persona, could thus potentially increase the individual’s cultural or political prestige, influence and social position.

The (self-assumed) role as an intellectual offered privileges and rights that were not open to the masses. Given this circumstance, it is not surprising that the intellectual persona seemed especially tempting to those who lacked the official expertise or professional status that the modernising society valued. Such groups were, as Christophe Charle has pointed out, writers, artists, and others (for example the previously so admired man of letters), who lacked the stately sanctioned professional position that a university degree or some other professional title could offer. Similarly, it also seemed more tempting to those who represented the new disciplines of science which were about to establish themselves at the time. Such disciplines included anthropology, sociology, psychology and other human sciences among others. (Charle 1990, pp. 48–54, 139–182). Together with the artists, these academics sought to advance their position through a persona which required a certain set of abilities, skills and moral qualities (see further, Paul 2014). This persona thus came to focus on an ability which they all had in common, namely the *intellect* or the ability of rational and critical thinking.

THE ARTIST AND THE ATTRACTION OF INTELLECT

In Helena Westermarck's writings about art, the highly developed intellect of the artist is strikingly often underlined. In 1894, she published a biography on the British novelist Mary Ann Evans, known by her pen name as George Eliot (1819–1880). Westermarck's biography was the first to present Eliot for a larger public in Swedish (Claesson-Pipping & Sandbach-Dahlström 2016). In her biography – the first of several biographies about female writers and painters that she produced – Westermarck went to great length to describe George Eliot's personality and the parts of her character which had made it possible for her to become the famous author of novels such as *The Middlemarch* and *The Mill on the Floss*. Emphasising that it was indeed the inborn and natural qualities of the mind and the personality that made the artist so exceptional, Westermarck returned to one of these qualities at several occasions through the book. To Westermarck, the core of Eliot's talent lay in her inborn and natural intelligence or "intellect" (see for example Westermarck 1894, pp. 4, 11, 13, 21, 28, 29, 33). The same emphasis on intellect seems to return in many other of her biographies. While writing about the writer Fredrika Runeberg (1807–1879) in 1904, Westermarck also stressed the "intelligence" of Runeberg, as well as the "intellectual" surroundings which she belonged to as wife of the much-admired Finnish national poet Johan Ludvig Runeberg (Westermarck 1904, pp. 39, 44, 53, 75).

Westermarck's strong emphasis on the intellectual abilities of artists is rather unexpected. The artist of the Romantic age was after all primarily a man of refined emotions rather than logic and reason, as the example by Kant quoted in the beginning of this article shows. In Westermarck's time, however, the power relations of the cultural field had already shifted: "Ideas are not created by poets", declared the influential Danish literary theorist George Brandes in 1882: "[Ideas] appear through the work of scholars and scientists, as great and genius insights about the nature and laws of reality, they are developed and reach their form through scientific experiments, through historical or philosophical enquiry" (Brandes 1882 [1900], pp. 295). Comparing George Eliot to a scientist, Helena Westermarck therefore emphasised that in her detailed and skilful descriptions of the English landscape and the minds and thoughts of the people who she wrote about, Eliot worked with the preciseness of a scientist who studied nature with a sharp and attentive gaze. In her thorough knowledge of the culture of the past and her special attention to traditions and habits, according to Westermarck Eliot did in fact use the same methodological approach as an anthropologist or a sociologist who made a specific culture or society the focus of his/her study. Without this scientific approach and a thorough knowledge about contemporary scientific debates, Westermarck claims that Eliot would never have been able to produce her literary work (Westermarck 1894, pp. 27, 157–173).

Helena Westermarck's assumption that artists possessed the same intellectual capacities as the scientists also seems to have correlated with her personal experiences. In her letters to her brother, Westermarck often made claims to a certain kind of intellectual equality and comradeship between the two of them. "Art", she wrote in 1901, "is just a demanding master as science" (Westermarck 1901). By emphasising that she and her brother shared their love for "the work", she often implied that there was something in common between the work of the artist and that of the scientist which made it different from "work" in a more general sense of the word. It was never stated openly what the common features were exactly, but the pleasure of an intellectual challenge seems in many cases to be implied, as in the previous quotation.

The way Helena Westermarck wrote about her brother in her memoirs also reinforces this impression. While working on the biography about George Eliot, Helena Westermarck spent

the summer of 1893 in the British Library, gathering material for the biography from Eliot's letters and other writings. Having acquired the entrance ticket to this highly prestigious place through the recommendation of her brother, Westermarck sat next to him in the library and when the time for lunch came, they left the building together for a quick break until they resumed their separate works in the library. Devoting no less than 25 full pages of her memoirs to these few summer months, Westermarck clearly felt that this was a significant experience which promoted an impression which she wanted to bring forth in the eyes of the potential reader (Westermarck 1941, pp. 223–238).

As Ruth Hoberman has pointed out, the experience of entering and working in the great reading room of the British library was a highly symbolic experience for many women of Helena Westermarck's time. The library, which at the time was pretty much the centre of all existing human knowledge, was a prestigious place. Gaining access to the reading room required a written recommendation from a male person of trustworthiness, which stated that the library would be used for research rather than recreational purposes. The recommendation did, as Hoberman has noted, allow women to publicly identify themselves as scholars or researchers (Hoberman 2002). This symbolic meaning of the library was not lost on Helena Westermarck. Referring to the library both as the "happy island in Bloomsbury" – a description that she borrowed from her brother's memoirs – and as the "temple of knowledge" or the "pantheon of science", she underlined that the British library was in fact the centre of all human knowledge and science at the time. In her memoirs, she also made sure to point out that this was the place of work for many of "the most intellectual men" through history (Westermarck 1941, pp. 223–238). Thus, she established the library as a milieu where artists such as herself worked side by side with scientists and scholars such as her brother, united in an intellectual equality.

This notion of equality was important to Westermarck. Despite the great respect Helena Westermarck held for science and the intellectual capacities that were required for scientific work, she was not willing to acknowledge that science would be more prestigious or valuable to society than art. Because of this, there is in fact a degree of ambivalence towards the rationality and logic of the scientific world view in many of her texts. Humanity, she withheld in her personal notes, had a need not only for logic and rationality, but also for the aesthetic and for the spiritual. (Westermarck 1898). She was, therefore, critical to the "scientific" methods employed by naturalist French writers such as Émile Zola or Gustave Flaubert, who sought to investigate their literary characters with the thoroughness and "objectivity" of a scientist. Comparing the realist ambitions of Zola and Flaubert with that of George Eliot, she was more in favour of the approach of the latter. Unlike the scientist whose work was based on intellectual reasoning, the ultimate source of the artist's special talent was rooted in an ability to sense and recreate human experiences and emotions. It was thus not the intellectual and rational sense, but rather an emotionally empathic sensibility that was the source of true artistic creativity. As the essence of human experience was a phenomenon which science could never hope to capture, it was the task of the artist to try to interpret it. (H-a 1884 A; H-a 1884 B; Westermarck 1894, pp. 157–173). Thus, reclaiming the supremacy of the artistic intuition over the rational intellect of science, Helena Westermarck sought to make use of some of the prestige of the scientific persona to support her own position as an artist.

CONCLUSIONS

As these observations bring me closer to my final remarks, I would like to return to the question of Helena Westermarck's position as an artist in relation to her gender. Just as research done over the twenty last years or so has shown us, the position of the "intellectual" is very much the result of an active process through which artists, writers, scholars, politicians and others have

fashioned themselves in the eyes of the public. This process has in many cases had the specific goal of increasing one's personal influence in the cultural or political field, or promoting the general prestige of already existing personas, such as that of the writer or the painter. To Westermarck there was no doubt that women could possess an intellect with the same level of logic and scientific reason as any male scientist. In her writings this was often made clear by the way she presented her female objects of study as a natural and respected part of a larger intellectual group of both men and women. When describing the group of artists, writers and scholars to which George Eliot belonged, she made a point of describing this group, which included both male celebrities such as Herbert Spencer or Eliot's companion George Lewis as well as George Eliot herself, as particularly "intellectual" (Westermarck 1894). The lengthy description in her memoirs of her own visit in the British library did in a similar way present herself as part of an intellectual community. Thus, she remembered for example how she, during her stay in London, had met with a friend of her brother's, the internationally renowned psychologist James Sully, who had been personally acquainted with George Eliot and who frequented the intellectual circle of friends that used to gather in Eliot's home (H. Westermarck 1941, 229, 231). With these descriptions, she of course also challenged the established assumption that this intellectual comradeship was an affair between men.

Science with its tempting claims of modernity, efficacy and objectivity as well as promises of endless progress and possibility to provide answers and solutions to all human problems was highly regarded in the 1880's and 1890's. Helena Westermarck's emphasis on "intellect" as an ability which characterised the artist can thus be seen as way to fashion her own self-understanding as a 19th century artist through an adaptation of repertoires which she modelled on both the scientific and the artistic personas. In doing so, she could effortlessly attribute artists with the same status as the scientists while at the same time avoiding putting too much emphasis on her own gender. As a natural or inborn quality, intellect had the advantage of being open to anyone regardless of social position or background, but still sufficiently difficult to display for it to be highly exclusive. A high level of natural intellect acquired at birth did thus separate the "intellectual" from the larger public and justified the special position of the members of this new, largely self-proclaimed elite regardless of gender. Thus, emphasizing both the pre-existing idea that some people possess an exceptional inborn or God-given talent for creativity, and a new 19th century understanding of intellect as a measurable and natural quality of the mind not equally distributed among individuals, Helena Westermarck came to see artists as possessors of unique mental talents. Such exceptional people had a moral responsibility to act as the *avant-garde* of change and the critical conscience of society regardless of one's gender.

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