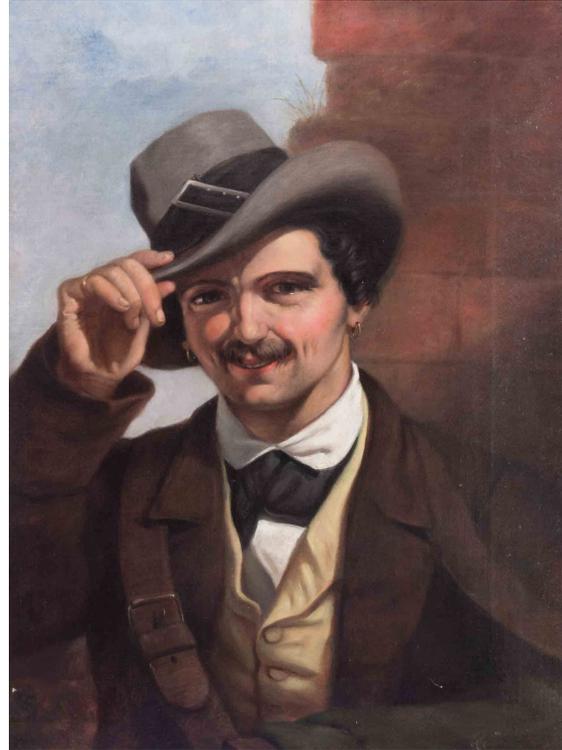
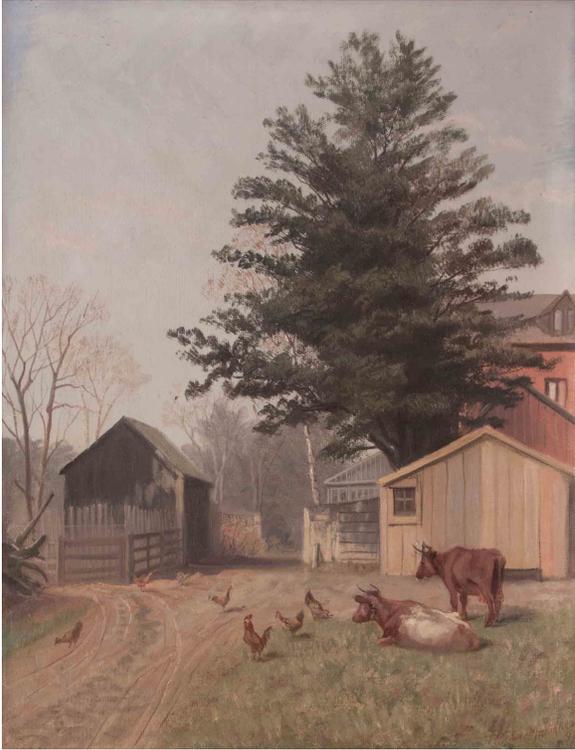




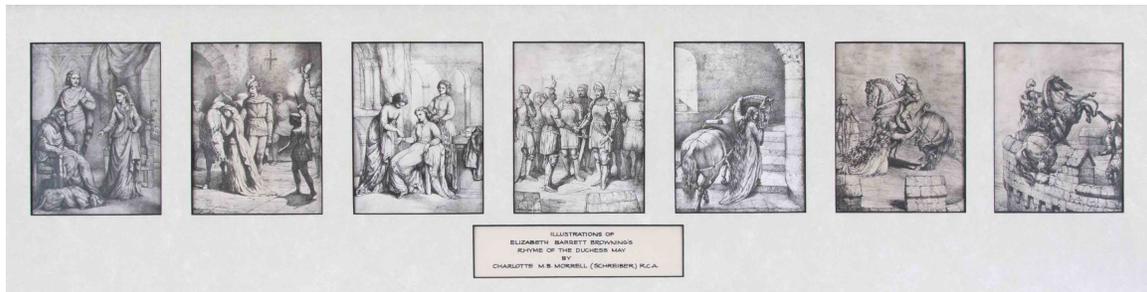
**Charlotte Schreiber (1834-1922)**  
**Essay by Carol-Ann M. Ryan**  
**2012**



Left: Martin T. Moore, *Rear View of Woodham – Studio of Charlotte Schreiber*, 1898, oil on canvas. Gift of Mrs. J.B. Robinson.

Right: Charlotte M. B. Morrell Schreiber, *One of the Price Brothers*, no date, oil on canvas.

Charlotte Schreiber (née Morrell) was an accomplished painter and illustrator who worked in a realist style and was known for her attention to detail. Although she is commonly recognized for her contributions to Canadian art history, as she spent her mature working years in the Toronto area, she was born and died in England. Her marriage to Weymouth Schreiber brought her to Canada and eventually to Lislehurst, in a village called Springfield-on-the-Credit. During the twenty-three years she spent on Canadian soil, Schreiber was the first woman to teach at the newly formed Ontario College of Art (OCA) in 1877, was a founding member of the Royal Canadian Academy (RCA), and was the first woman elected as full academician in 1880, and was an active painter of portraits, landscapes and literary scenes. Today her work is held in collections across Canada including the Blackwood Gallery at the University of Toronto Mississauga, built on the property of her former home. The paintings in the Blackwood collection highlight her work in portraiture and skillful observation of human and animal form.



[Fig. 1] Charlotte M. B. Morrell Schreiber, *Rhyme of the Duchess of May*, no date, engraving. Gift of Howard Schreiber.

Schreiber was formally educated in England at Mr. Carey's School of Art in London, where she took anatomy lessons while also studying portraits and historical paintings under John Rogers Herbert, R.A. Her early work, produced while still in England, included book illustrations for "Knight of the Red Cross", the first book of the epic poem *The Faerie Queene* by Edmund Spenser (1871), and a posthumous publication of *The Rhyme of the Duchess May* [Fig.1] by Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1874). After moving to Canada in 1875 with her new husband and his three children, her painting practice focused on Realism, capturing subjects from everyday life. In Linda Nochlin's formative book, *Realism*, the movement is summarized as one that aimed "to give a truthful, objective and impartial representation of the real world, based on meticulous observation of contemporary life." Like her peers in England and on the continent, Schreiber was working within the dominant movement of her time, which remained central from about 1840 to 1880. The National Gallery of Canada credits Schreiber with bringing high realism to her adopted country; the paintings she produced here certainly attest to this recognition in their highly detailed documentation of daily life and community in rural Toronto.



Left: [Fig. 2] Charlotte M. B. Morrell Schreiber, *Olivia Paring Apples*, no date, oil on canvas. Gift of J.R.G. Leach and Mrs. O.M. Browne.



Right: [Fig. 3] Charlotte M. B. Morrell Schreiber, *Puck, the Artist's Dog*, no date, oil on canvas.



*Olivia Paring Apples* [Fig.2] is the more poignant of the two human portraits in the Blackwood collection. Schreiber has painted a woman engaged in a tedious, repetitive task, lost in her thoughts. The subject, Olivia, appears to be a housemaid, indicated by her black and white costume and cap. She is not represented in an active pose, rather, she is captured in a moment of pause, her peeling ceased as her hands and the apple and knife they are holding have fallen to her lap. She is seated in a finely carved wooden chair with her back straight and head tilted slightly forward. Schreiber has taken care to document every loose hair escaped from the subject's cap and every crease and fold of her dress and shoulder cover, including the frayed edges of her orange bowtie. The scene is flooded with natural light entering through the open window, softly illuminating Olivia and the table at her side. The features of her face are beautifully outlined by the light and cast shadow, her porcelain skin smooth and youthful. Beyond the open window is a landscape; a lush rural setting that may have been inspired by the forested area behind Schreiber's residence in Springfield-on-the-Credit. It is also possible that Olivia worked in the Schreiber home and was therefore an easily accessible subject. Choosing to paint a housemaid at a banal daily task demonstrates Schreiber's commitment to the Realist movement. Although the artist was also the housemistress, she portrayed a private moment stolen during working hours with great sensitivity.

As a member of the middle-class with an artistic education and career, Schreiber was familiar with the latest fashions both for painting and art collecting in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In England, depictions of animals showing great detail and fidelity to nature were extremely popular and the standard for this genre was set by Rosa Bonheur. A famous French artist, Bonheur was, according to Whitney Chadwick in *Women, Art & Society*, "one of the most admired animal painters in history." She tended to focus on laboring animals such as cows and horses but the Victorian love for animal art extended to pets and frequently dogs. Schreiber made a foray into this genre with her painting *Puck, the Artist's Dog* [Fig.3]. Queen Victoria was an enthusiastic collector of dog paintings inspiring a trend among the middle-classes, specifically for commissions of pet portraits. In *Dog Painting 1840-1940: A Social History of the Dog in Art* William Secord states that these portraits sought to represent a beloved pet in a casual, domestic environment, apart from the images of sporting dogs and purebreds meant to illustrate superior attributes. Schreiber took the casual route in this charming painting of her white Maltese Terrier. Puck is seated erect on his hindquarters wearing a red cap, holding a red musket between his paws, and clenching a pipe between his teeth. The dog stoically peers through wisps of fur above his eyes while his paws lay crossed and draped over the musket. Schreiber painted this portrait of her pet in characteristic detail right down to the tassels on the blue velveteen pillow on which he is seated.

Charlotte Schreiber worked as an artist and educator in the Toronto area until the death of her husband in 1898 when she returned to England. Her teaching position at OCA led to an appointment to the managing board in 1878 where she ran the College with Lucius O'Brien and James Smith. Her election to the RCA in 1880 was exceptional, as she remained the only female member until 1933 when the second woman, Marion Long, was elected. Schreiber's work was exhibited at the annual exhibitions of the RCA, the Ontario Society of Artists, the Art Association of Montreal, the Canadian Women's Art Association, the Toronto Industrial Exhibitions, the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibitions, the Paris Salon (1890) and the World Columbian Exhibition in Chicago (1893).



Charlotte M. B. Morrell Schreiber, *The Legend of the Red Cross Knight*, no date, engraving. Gift of Howard Schreiber.

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