

Friendship as Methodology: Women Artists Working in
Britain, 1871-1939

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Abstract

This thesis uses friendship as a methodological tool with which to reappraise the work and careers of women artists working in Britain in the decades on either side of the turn of the twentieth century. Not only does this reveal the centrality of friendship to the lives and work of these artists, it also offers a novel research method. Tessellating these artists' lives and works together to form a fuller understanding of them is one solution to the challenge of researching artists whose extant works or archives are incomplete. This thesis is made up of four case studies, each of which addresses a different mode of relationship between women. Together they offer a fuller picture than currently exists of the true importance of female friendship to the lives of women artists in this period, and the breadth of forms these friendships could take.

These case studies are: the friendship of Annie Swynnerton and Susan Isabel Dacre, focusing on their travels together in Italy between 1874 and 1910; the Alma-Tadema household, focusing on the women who lived or worked there: Laura Alma-Tadema, Anna Alma-Tadema, Ellen Epps Gosse, and Emily Epps Williams; the group of friends who studied at the Slade School of Art between circa 1895-1898, focusing on Gwen John, Edna Waugh (later Lady Clarke Hall), Ursula Tyrwhitt, Ida Nettleship (later John), and Gwen Salmond (later Lady Smith); and the romantic and domestic partnership between Ethel Sands and Anna Hope 'Nan' Hudson. Each of these case studies brings together artists with vastly unequal amounts of extant works and archival material, allowing the work that does survive to speak for each member of the group, rehabilitating the stories of those who are difficult to study alone. Each case study also assesses the permeability between professional and personal relationships and physical spaces, elucidating changing norms of respectability, domesticity, and the importance of class in understanding the diversity of relationships between women.

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This thesis is about friendship, and I would be lost without my own friends. You make life so joyful! Thank you most especially and always to my very best friend, Paddy Cavanagh.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

Introduction: Friendship Between Women Artists as a Rehabilitative Lens

A pale, dark-eyed face gazes luminously out at us from a dark background. Head tilted, lips parted, eyebrows furrowed as if listening intently, or perhaps about to respond to a question, the figure of Susan Isabel Dacre is rendered with intimate familiarity by her friend, Annie Swynnerton, in a portrait made in the 1880s (c. 1880s) (Figure 0.1). The painting is inscribed in French in the top left corner ‘A Mon Amie S. Isabel Dacre’ (‘to my friend S. Isabel Dacre’). It has the personal, discerning quality of a self-portrait; the gaze of a friend can be as, if not more, penetrating than one’s own. Dacre’s face itself creates light and life out of the dark nothingness that surrounds her, existing as both the source of light in the painting and the only recipient of it. The edges of her face are encroached upon by dark brushstrokes, indicating the texture of her collar and her hair. Their textuality evokes the process of painting, too, reminding the viewer of how the painting is constructed of thousands of brushstrokes. Though Dacre is not visibly at work, her identity as a fellow artist is referenced through these marks.

There is a sense in the painting of conversation between the sitter and the artist—not just an exchange of words in an immediate sense, but a deeper dialogue manifested in image as well as word. The viewer is invited to inhabit this relationship between artist and subject. Standing in front of this painting is like standing between the two women, joining in with their fellowship. There is a sense of interrupted intimacy in this participatory invitation, a way in which the visible figure of Dacre and invisible figure of Swynnerton seem to have just noticed they are not alone. Dacre’s direct gaze out of the portrait seems to take in the viewer but is focused on something just behind us, where the artist would be standing. The questioning expression on her face and parted lips seem frozen in motion. It is an arrestingly subtle and vitally alive portrait. The Rembrandt-esque style is transcended by the immediacy of the interruption; the timeless stillness of the genre is broken by our awareness of the presence of the artist-friend behind us. The inscription, from Swynnerton to Dacre, makes this object both work of art and gift. It

transforms the painting into a fragment of a long exchange over the course of a lifetime of objects, ideas, and care between the two women. By adding text to the canvas, the sense of conversation is made more tangible, as is the feeling that the viewer is interrupting a picture space intended for only one recipient. The painting thus exists as both a product of a friendship and a record of it, a piece of the archive and the reason for the archive. It tells the viewer about the relationship between artist and sitter, which in turn tells the viewer more about the painting; this circuit of meaning travelling between object and artist(s) is infinite.

Swynnerton and Dacre were great friends for decades, from their meeting at the Manchester School of Art in 1871 until their deaths in 1933. In this painting, the friendship between the two artists involved in making it is clearly visible on the canvas. When we look at the work, the relationship between the sitter and the artist itself is the subject and also the maker. Without both artists, the painting would not exist. It is a product of their collaboration. Collaborative work is not usually understood in this way—instead, it is usually qualified by tangible contributions and mutual credit-taking. In this thesis, I reframe the idea of collaboration to include the interpersonal nature of art-making.¹ I place this interpersonal dimension of visual analysis at the centre of my art historical methodology, focusing on the specific relationship of friendship. Friendship between artists, particularly women, around the turn of the twentieth century was a key aspect of their creative development and artistic practices. I view the work made by close friends as collaborative and seek to demonstrate the ways in which this work can be representative of all the artists involved in making it, socially as well as materially. I combine a biographical, archive-focused study of the lives of the artists with close reading of their works in conversation with one another. In other words, I seek to make the invisible figures within works

¹ For a detailed evaluation of creative collaboration and its importance, see Vera John-Steiner, *Creative Collaboration* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

like Swynnerton's portrait of Dacre visible. They populate the spaces around and behind the canvas. Only by recognising their contributions can the full story of their work be told.

Methodology

Friendship is a unique relationship that bridges the gap between the public and private spheres – terminology that has long been associated with studies of gender dynamics in the nineteenth century.² The history of friendship might also be considered the history of community or the history of relationality. It is a fundamental thread of the fabric of society. Understanding it is as relevant today as it was in the nineteenth century, or indeed in Ancient Greece.³ For the purposes of this thesis, I define friendship as a strong emotional connection that is manifested in tangible acts of care and purposeful shared experiences. Such a relationship may overlap with other categories of relationships, including familial or sexual relationships. Indeed, this potential for overlap is a central, fundamental quality of my use and understanding of friendship. For example, the set of friends discussed in the second chapter of this thesis is also a family group, and the pair of friends discussed in the final chapter were also romantic partners. I do not set parameters around the concept of friendship such that relationships like these would be excluded, nor do I seek to spend inordinate time on the specific emotional intricacies of these relationships. I accept and revel in the ambiguity, vastness, and inclusive potential of the relationship of friendship.⁴ Leela Ghandi writes that friendship 'privileges [...] the trope of

² For a review of the use and pitfalls of the language of social 'spheres' in the nineteenth century, see Amanda Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History,' *The Historical Journal* 36, no. 2 (1993): 383-414. Janice Helland also engages with the overlap of private and public spheres for women artists who were friends. See Janice Helland, *Professional Women Painters in Nineteenth-Century Scotland: Commitment, Friendship, Pleasure* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).

³ For a helpful overview of the philosophical discussions surrounding friendship in antiquity and beyond, see Neera Kapur Badhwar, ed., *Friendship: A Philosophical Reader* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

⁴ For more on friendship as a productive and vast concept, particularly in the nineteenth century, see Leela Ghandi, *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Jacques Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (London: Verso, 1997); Sharon Marcus, *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

friendship as the most comprehensive philosophical signifier for all those invisible affective gestures that refuse alignment along the secure axes of filiation to seek expression outside, if not against, possessive communities of belonging.⁵ In many ways, this assertion parallels the way ‘queer’ has been constructed in scholarship, which will be discussed later in this introduction: it uses ‘friendship’ as a term to describe relationships that sit outside ‘secure’ or binary interpersonal connections. Ghandi’s thinking embraces ambiguity, as does my own. However, friendship is more specific than terms like ‘relationality’ or ‘connection’ – these seem to relieve the relationship of agency or intention. Friendship is chosen, maintained, and self-identified. This thesis is a study of what friendship, a fundamental category of relationship, tells us about art making amongst a certain group of artists.

While the flexibility and potential of friendship to overlap with other relationships is key to this work, it is also historically specific and located in a particular period and place in time. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries presented a particular set of circumstances for female friends. Close relationships between women in the nineteenth century have been called by other names in scholarship and wider culture, including ‘romantic friendship’ and ‘sisterhood.’ These terms, and why I do not use them in this thesis, will be discussed in more detail later in this introduction. Friendship is a niche in art historical scholarship that fits between other scales of looking or study: it is larger than a monographic study of an individual, but smaller than a study of a period or formalised group. In occupying this in-between space, my work offers new insight into the interpersonal influences and dynamics of artists.

My methodological approach is defined by a collective way of thinking. In each of my four case studies, I take the artistic oeuvres of each artist as representative of their friendship, and therefore representative of each member of the friendship. Thus, every artist can be seen in the work of her friend(s). In some cases, literally seen—as in Swynnerton’s portrait of Dacre. In

⁵ Ghandi, *Affective Communities*, 10.

other cases, shared spaces can be seen, or shared aesthetic styles or manners of mark making, or shared experiences. In the cases of chronically understudied artists, who are often also women or members of other underrepresented or oppressed groups, their oeuvres are rarely comprehensive. This is due to a variety of factors, most related to a lack of historical interest in their careers, which precluded good record keeping, preservation of archival materials, and the collecting of their work by public institutions. Without these records, it is difficult to locate some or all of the works of these artists, which may be dispersed amongst private collections or lost or destroyed. My methodology allows the work of their close friends to begin to fill the gaps in their collected works. It remains a challenging task for art historians to study artists with little surviving work, as our work depends on visual analysis. My methodology is one solution to this problem: by allowing the work of each artist to speak for her friends as well as herself, the visual material from which it is possible to extrapolate knowledge about that artist's life and practice grows significantly. I use the term 'tessellate' to describe this method of puzzling together the disparate traces of artists' lives and works.

This term, tessellating, is the perfect descriptor of the methodology I have developed herein. Fragments of the works, stories, and networks of each of these artists are scattered throughout archives, museum stores, books about other, more famous artists, and boxes under people's beds. Putting them together is a practice of puzzling through gaps, turning over jagged edges, and joining up loose ends. It is not linear, but it is distinctly creative. Foregrounding creativity and imagination in the process of researching and rehabilitating the work of these artists is not in conflict with accuracy. The stereoscope provides a useful metaphor: inside a stereoscope, two real, flat images are placed at such a distance from the viewer's eyes that they appear to overlap and form a three-dimensional picture. This final, third view is not 'real,' but it is also not false. It is a product of the interaction of the two images and the eyes of the beholder. In the same way, imagining life into these artists is the product of the amalgamation of pieces of

their stories into a prism through which they become visible. Friendship itself is a practice, and this methodology is also a practice-based way to bring new analysis and insight to light.

In looking relationally at artworks by friends, it may be suggested that I am seeking to identify an aesthetic or visual form of friendship that can be isolated or described. That is not the intention of this thesis. Instead, friendship is studied as is a lived experience and used as a methodological tool. As each of my case studies demonstrate, the ways in which friendship between artists is manifested in their work is highly varied and inconsistent. What is *not* inconsistent is the importance of these friendships to the artists emotionally and logistically, and the usefulness of those relationships to the scholar of their work. I do not reject the possibility of further work in this area that may offer rich insight to the idea of an aesthetic of friendship, but it is beyond the scope of this thesis. I also recognise the other ways scholars have studied friendship in very differently to my own method here.⁶

Although this thesis does focus exclusively on women, my methodology is not gender-specific. It is fundamentally transferable to the study of artists of any gender and any period. At its core, it simply recentres relationships between artists and privileges collectivity over individuality, asking the viewer to look at an array of artworks by friends in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of each friend, and of their friendship. It is a rehabilitative method of study that writes into negative space in the scholarly narrative by uncovering new knowledge and ways of seeing by focusing on collectivity rather than individuality. Too often, scholarship about women is assumed to be a useful contribution only to further study of women, rather than a significant contribution to the field at large. This is rarely the case with scholarship about men. In this case, my methodology has arisen through the practice of studying women who were artists and friends in a particular moment in time. Through the course of my research, it has become

⁶ For work by scholars looking at friendship differently to me, and in different periods, see Ghandi, *Affective Communities*; Madeleine Pelling, "Collecting the World: Female Friendship and Domestic Craft at Bulstrode Park," *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 41, no. 1 (2018): 101-20; Amy Tobin, *Women Artists Together: Art in the Age of Women's Liberation* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), 2023.

clear that my tools of investigation and analysis are useful in ways that reach beyond my subject. While thinking collectively has been gaining notice in the academy across disciplines, art historical scholarship has struggled to fully break away from the artist-monograph model, in which artists are studied as individuals with unique genius.⁷ The work I have done to develop a collective methodology with which to study artists who had close friendships with other artists is novel. It begins to fill a significant gap in art historical literature not only in the scholarship on the artists addressed in my chapters, but in the broader discipline's capacity to appreciate the communal and collaborative nature of art making.

A necessary feature of this methodology is an analysis of a wealth of artists and works. This thesis is made up of four case studies highlighting four friendships, covering a total of thirteen artists in detail and a number of works by each of them. This structure allows me to balance a thematic study of collaborative friendship between women artists with the desire to offer detailed and particular analysis of specific groups and pairs of artists. These four microhistories weave together to create a comprehensive picture of the potential ways in which artists who are women loved and worked together around the turn of the twentieth century.⁸ As a consequence, I do not spend more than a few paragraphs on each work of art mentioned, with few exceptions. This fast pace of visual analysis is key to my collective methodology: when analysing groups of artists, it is necessary to analyse groups of works. In the case of many of the artists featured in this thesis who have received little or no previous scholarly attention, it is also necessary to introduce the reader to their identity and oeuvre. Not only does this thesis argue for

⁷ For more on the disruption of the cult of the male genius, see Linda Nochlin, 'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?' in *Art and Sexual Politics: Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists*, eds. Thomas B. Hess and Elizabeth C. Baker (New York: Macmillan, 1971); see also recent journalistic publications on the subject, including Eliza Goodpasture, 'The State of Feminist Art History,' *ArtReview*, November 2022, p.35, which points to the continued conflict and lack of resolution around these questions in the art world outside the academy.

⁸ For examples of similar works structured around a series of so-called microhistories, see Amanda Herbert, *Female Alliances: Gender, Identity, and Friendship in Early Modern Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014) and Jo-Ann Wallace and B.J. Elliott, *Women Artists and Writers: Modernist (Im)Positionings* (London: Routledge, 1994).

the importance of studying groups of artists, but it also argues for a method of art historical analysis that prioritises looking at scale rather than singular examination of works. This stands in contrast to other methods of historical investigation that, like my work, take an approach to history that focuses on the social. T.J. Clark is a prime example of a scholar whose methodology focuses deeply on close reading of individual works of art, such as Manet's *Olympia*.⁹ In taking an alternative approach to visual analysis, I do not mean to argue that the works I regard here are less meaty or able to withstand scrutiny than Manet's *Olympia*. No single method of visual analysis or historical investigation is suitable for answering every set of questions. In this thesis, my questions concern groups of artists, and I have therefore chosen to investigate these via study of groups of works. I wish for the collective and communal to transcend the individual in regard to the art object as well as the figure of the artist.

Similarly, my work takes a tone or method I will call 'friendly,' in several ways: I take each of these women's work seriously and appraise it from a position of positivity, which does not preclude me from assessing its weaknesses. As Heather Love writes of her historical subjects in *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (2007), 'I tend to think with them rather than against them, identifying with rather than critiquing their refusals and their backwardness.'¹⁰ This ethos of meeting figures of the past where they are, with respect and seriousness but without harshness, is fundamental to my methodology. I also am largely uncritical of existing scholarship about these artists, with the exception of Chapter 4. Because there is very little secondary literature available about most of these artists, there is little reason or need to engage in critical exchanges within the literature – this introduction notwithstanding. While this circumstance makes my approach less of a choice than a requirement, I am also aware of and influenced by conversations within the academy about the so-called 'post-critical' turn. In his book *After*

⁹ T.J. Clark, 'Olympia's Choice,' in *The Painting of Modern Life*, rev. ed. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), 79-146.

¹⁰ Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 23.

Criticism: New Responses to Art and Performance (2005), Gavin Butt writes that criticism has become one mode of interpretation among many, rather than a mode of judgement backed by authority.¹¹ In this apparent vacuum, he argues for methods that ‘go beyond criticism’ to return to the methods of creation, aesthetics, and interpretation.¹² My methodology does just this, with a firm focus on visual analysis in the absence of rich textual and archival resources. I am led by the works themselves to an interpretation and story of the artists that is based on what I see. In this, I am also influenced by the work of Elizabeth Prettejohn, whose singular approach to scholarship is distinctly interpretive rather than critical. Her work on Aestheticism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, both artistic movements that have been maligned by the twentieth-century art historical establishment as kitsch and unserious, reappraises the subjects in a way that does not descend into critical infighting but rather is led by the works themselves and by visual, philosophical, and social context.¹³ I refer to my own methodological practice, which sits within the context of this literature, as ‘friendly’ to reflect this project’s study of friendship, and to place myself self-consciously within the framework of friendship as a scholar.

Periodisation

The historical period that this thesis covers—1871–1939—is a vast amount of time. It covers the full lifetimes of many of the artists discussed here, or close to it. The vast quantity of the artworks I focus on in this thesis were made between c. 1890 and c. 1915, which I characterise as the turn of the twentieth century. However, I include the widest possible relevant date range to encompass the full bounds of these artists’ careers. 1871 is also a relevant starting point because it was the year the Slade School of Art was founded, the first British art school to admit and

¹¹ Gavin Butt, ed., *After Criticism: New Responses to Art and Performance* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005).

¹² Butt, *After Criticism*, 17.

¹³ See, for example, Elizabeth Prettejohn, *Art for Art’s Sake: Aestheticism in Victorian Painting* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007); Prettejohn, *The Art of the Pre-Raphaelites* (London: Tate Publishing, 2007).

teach women on equal terms with men. 1939 is the end point because it is the year Britain joined the Second World War, a seismic event for society and the arts, and women's role in them, and represented the functional end of the careers of the women in my case studies who were still alive at the time. The period in between was a vibrant and tumultuous cultural moment in Great Britain. It is not easily labelled, but includes parts or all of the Victorian, Edwardian, and (second) Georgian periods. Within the field of art history, it includes a series of schools, movements, and 'isms,' including but not limited to Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, High Victorian, and Modernism. David Peters Corbett has articulated the challenge of dividing 'Victorian' from 'Modern,' noting the way that the timeline of British art has not aligned with that of French art in art historical scholarship, and the way that the 'Edwardian' period complicates any effort to draw a line between the two.¹⁴ The periodisation of this moment in history is not fixed and remains a rich, and fraught, area for intervention. My thesis does not limit itself to these labels, nor is it particularly governed by them. In periodising this thesis, I have been equally guided by the circumstances of the lives of the artists I analyse as well as the broader social context of female friendship at this time. My case studies also cover a wide geography, encompassing London, Manchester, Oxfordshire, Essex, Paris, Italy, and the United States, reflecting both the mobility of artists in this period and the wide reaches of British influence. The category of 'British art' is porous, contested, and reflects the legacy of the British Empire, particularly in the context of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹⁵

I initially came to this research with an interest in female friendship that arose from my own experience of formative close friendships with other women. I wanted to formally investigate the ways relationships like these, which had such a powerful influence on my own

¹⁴ David Peters Corbett, 'Crossing the Boundary: British Art across Victorianism and Modernism,' in *A Companion to British Art: 1600 to the Present*, eds. Dana Arnold and David Peters Corbett (Chichester: Blackwell Publishing, 2013), 131-155.

¹⁵ For more on the porous ambiguity of 'British Art' see Richard Johns, ed., "There's No Such Thing as British Art", *British Art Studies*, Issue 1, <https://doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-01/conversation>.

sense of self, could be seen to effect the lives of women artists. As I will illustrate later in this introduction, relationships between women have often been described as existing on some sort of spectrum or continuum between sexual attraction and platonic love. Unlike relationships between men, which are more firmly divided between these two poles, relationships between women have the potential to be both intimately supportive and in service of communal uplift. This ‘asymmetry,’ best examined by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, results in a framework of female friendship, particularly in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, that is distinct from male friendship.¹⁶ Therefore, this thesis exclusively examines women working as artists at the turn of the twentieth century. The sociohistorical specificity of this category of relationship guides the boundaries of this research and allows for a nuanced and complex understandings of the artists discussed herein.

This sociohistorical moment is characterised by a number of motifs, developments, and concepts around women and women’s rights in Britain. These events and cultural ideas coloured the fabric of the lives of the artists I discuss herein. One key motif is that of the ‘New Woman.’ The term ‘New Woman’ was coined in March 1894 by Sarah Grand, in her *North American Review* article ‘The New Aspect of the Woman Question’ and refers to the stereotypical independent woman in late Victorian Britain.¹⁷ She was unmarried, rode a bicycle, lived in an urban flat alone or with fellow single women, and carried a latch key. Sometimes she smoked cigarettes and wore bloomers. She quickly became an easily identified caricature on both sides of the Atlantic. In one 1895 American newspaper cartoon, she is pictured seven times in different outfits and pursuits, usually involving bicycles and bloomers (1895) (Figure 0.2). The politics of the New Woman are complicated; while she was distinctly modern and progressive in her cultural meaning, her focus on independence and personal pleasure meant that she was not as readily associated with

¹⁶ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

¹⁷ Sarah Grand, "The New Aspect of the Woman Question." *North American Review* 158 (March 1894): 270-76.

organised political movements like women's suffrage as might be assumed.¹⁸ This new image of womanhood carried contested definitions of modernity and femininity, and indeed the image itself was contested.¹⁹

Closely related to this idea was that of the 'Odd Woman,' which refers to the demographic circumstance that led to a significant surplus of women to men in the late nineteenth century, and thus a large number of unmarried women seeking incomes, social and professional identities, and a recognition of their independence.²⁰ The Odd Woman, so-called in George Gissing's 1893 novel of the same name, was a threat to Victorian fetishization of marriage and domesticity, and therefore sexuality. Leland Jasperse writes that 'the odd woman's estrangement from eros became a structuring antagonism to the New Woman.'²¹ Riya Das notes that the conflict between the threat of the Odd Woman and the 'proto' progressivism of the New Woman disrupts narratives of female solidarity in this period, forcing historians to grapple with the racial and classed dimensions of New Woman feminism.²²

Wrapped up in anxieties about the Odd Woman and the New Woman was an evolving but ancient understanding of hysteria, which was broadly understood as a physical and neurological disorder suffered by women with a vast range of possible symptoms, from psychosis to high libido to fatigue.²³ Since antiquity, it has been associated with celibate, unmarried, or childless women who disrupt social norms of behaviour and respectability. By the nineteenth century, hysteria had become a highly medicalised disorder that was treated by

¹⁸ Deborah Cherry, *Beyond the Frame: Feminism and Visual Culture, Britain 1850-1900* (London: Routledge, 2000), 151-153.

¹⁹ For more on the New Woman, see Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997) and Carolyn Christensen Nelson, ed., *A New Woman Reader: Fiction, Articles, and Drama of the 1890s* (Peterborough, Ont.; Orchard Park, NY: Broadview Press, 2001).

²⁰ For more on the Odd Woman, see Leland Jasperse, 'Odd Women, New Women, and the Problem of Erotic Indifference in Late-Victorian Feminism,' *Signs* 49, no. 2 (Winter 2024): 411-434.

²¹ Jasperse, 'Odd Women, New Women,' p. 414.

²² Riya Das, 'Antagonistic boundaries: the professional New Woman's retro-progress in *The Odd Women*,' *Nineteenth Century Contexts*, 45 (2023): 365-383.

²³ For more on hysteria and its long history, see Sabine Arnaud, *On Hysteria: The Invention of a Medical Category, 1620-1820* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

doctors. In 1898, Sigmund Freud published 'The Aetiology of Hysteria,' which posited a psychological source for hysterical symptoms rooted in childhood sexual abuse.²⁴ The social and medical potency of hysteria as a diagnosis waned after the First World War, when huge numbers of diagnoses of shell shock, which often paralleled symptoms associated with hysteria, severed the preexisting understanding of the relationship between gender and mental illness.²⁵ However, throughout the late Victorian and Edwardian periods, the threat of being diagnosed with hysteria governed women's behaviour, motivating them to conform to a narrow range of socially accepted behaviours for fear of being not just ostracised but medically treated and stripped of personal agency.

This period also saw the growing momentum and eventual success of the women's suffrage movement in Britain. The start of the campaign is traditionally dated to the founding of the Kensington Society in 1865 and the Manchester Society for Women's Suffrage in 1866, with the ultimate success occurring in 1928 with the passage of the Representation of the People Act in Parliament.²⁶ Paralleling a similar movement in the United States, the fight for universal suffrage has been dubbed the 'first wave' of the women's movement, and represents the largest organisation of women for an increase in their legal rights in Western history.²⁷ This cocktail of progress and change around women's place in society fomented instability and unrest around the category of 'woman' and ways in which womanhood and femininity functioned in British society in this period, distinguishing it from the earlier nineteenth century and the later twentieth. While some elements of this instability existed elsewhere and took different forms, particularly the

²⁴ Sigmund Freud, 'The Aetiology of Hysteria,' in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. III, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1953), 189–221. For more on this, see Lucy C. Barker, "'Toujours La Chose Génitale': Charcot, Freud, and the Etiology of Hysteria in the Late 19 Century,' *University of Toronto Medical Journal* 93, no. 1 (2015): 9–13.

²⁵ Andrew Scull, *Hysteria: The Disturbing History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 153–162.

²⁶ Harold L. Smith, *The British Women's Suffrage Campaign: 1866–1928*, rev. 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), xii–xiv.

²⁷ For more on this, see Ellen Jordan, *The Women's Movement and Women's Employment in Nineteenth Century* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999).

suffrage movement in America and hysteria in France, the cultural motifs I have described here and the way in which they overlap were specific to Britain. This context is key to a full understanding of the periodisation of this thesis.

Literature Review

In order to position my research within existing scholarship, it is necessary to review the existing literature upon which this thesis builds. My work sits at a nexus between the fields of women's studies, queer studies, and art history. My methodology, as articulated above, is fundamentally art historical in its object-based analysis and concern with visual languages. However, it is indebted to work in the fields of women's studies and queer studies, which sometimes overlap with the fields of gay and lesbian studies, sociology, and social history. The interdisciplinary nature of this work reflects the porous boundaries between disciplines and the necessity to broaden the scope of analytical tools and sociohistorical frameworks available for use in any single project. I have broken the literature that it is necessary to review into three categories: friendship and queer theories, women's studies, and art history. These categories are fluid and overlapping, as are the labels under which the material in each section might sit, but it is useful to separate them for clarity and to reveal the ways in which these disciplines and ways of thinking have often remained siloed. I do not wish to suggest that this is an exhaustive review of all the potentially relevant literature in any of these fields, but rather hope to give a clear sense of scholarly trends over the past fifty years or so, leading up to the work in this thesis.

Philosophy of Friendship and Queer Theories

Building on the discussion of friendship above in my explanation of my methodology, here I will review further literature in the field. Valerie Traub argues in her book *Thinking Sex with the Early Moderns* (2015) that the history of friendship is really the history of social structures and the concept of individualism, or the history of shifting ways of understanding gender, community,

and public and private space: in other words, a collective social history rather than the history of individual desires.²⁸ She rejects the traditional division between sexuality studies and social history—however, most scholars working before her did not. Friendship is a culturally specific relationship that varies over time and across cultures. In the West, friendship is traditionally constructed as a private relationship that has been culturally ambiguous due to its primacy of emotional ties in a culture that prioritises economic and sexual relationships.²⁹

Writing on friendship in Western culture dates back at least to Aristotle, who described a friend as a ‘second self.’³⁰ He differentiated between so-called end friendships, in which friends are loved for who they are, and instrumental friendships, in which friends are valued for their usefulness. This recognition of the fact that friendship is a relationship generally defined, more than any other, by *choice*, is key to defining its boundaries. Friendships are voluntary, unlike family relationships, and not based on a clear expectation of exchange of goods and services, unlike marriages and other economic relationships. Aristotle believed that ‘ideal friendship’ was only possible between two people of utmost virtue, with the friendship being the recognition and appreciation of each other’s virtue. This precluded women from participating in an ideal friendship, because women could not be as virtuous as men. This model of friendship is based on the key idea of the relational self: that one’s own selfhood is constructed via and in response to relationships with others.³¹ This concept is central to the framing of my research. In order to see the importance of friendship for artists, the self must be understood to be constructed relationally.

Philosophers in the millennia since Aristotle have weighed in on the purpose of friendship, to innumerable conclusions. Of specific importance to this thesis are scholars in the

²⁸ Valerie Traub, *Thinking Sex with the Early Moderns* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).

²⁹ Pat O’Connor, *Friendships Between Women* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), 163, 172.

³⁰ Aristotle, *Aristotle in 23 Volumes*, vol. 19, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press and William Heinemann, 1934), Bekker 1169b28.

³¹ For a discussion of ideal friendship in the writings of Aristotle, see Dean Cocking, “Aristotle, Friendship and Virtue,” *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 68, no. 267 (1) (2014): 83–90.

nineteenth century who studied relationships between people of the same sex, with the intention of redefining categories of normative and non-normative relationships. This moment saw a transformation in the social understanding of relationships between people of the same sex. In the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth, the influence of the theories of psychologists and medical professionals including Sigmund Freud, Richard von Krafft-Ebbing, and Havelock Ellis, among others, introduced and popularized the heterosexual/homosexual dichotomy and shifted the social consensus towards a more sex-oriented view of relationships and desire. Western understandings of sexuality, interpersonal relationships, and identity were fundamentally reshaped. However, while the identity of male homosexual, associated with sodomy and public indecency, was formalised and criminalised in England, the identity of the 'lesbian' was not. It was not until the 1928 obscenity trial of Radclyffe Hall for her novel *The Well of Loneliness* that English criminal courts chose to pursue criminal indecency charges against lesbians. Prior to this, it was considered a risk of provoking or publicising the idea of lesbianism to criminalise sex between women.³²

These understandings were altered again with the publication in English of Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* in 1980, which offered a new theoretical paradigm of sexuality. His work permanently shifted Western thinking about sexual identity. If it was no longer assumed that humans had always functioned in the same way sexually, as he claimed, the possibilities for new understandings of past societies and civilizations were vast. Rather than attempting to uncover or examine some sort of universal truth, Foucault's goal was different: for him, 'what is at issue [...] is the over-all "discursive fact," the way in which sex is "put into discourse."'”³³ However, Foucault's work focused heavily on male sexuality and, while his ideas

³² For more on Radclyffe Hall, see Esther Newton, 'The Mythic Mannish Lesbian: Radclyffe Hall and the New Woman,' *Signs* 9, no. 4 (1984): 557-75. For more on the legal category of lesbian and its failure, see Laura Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism: The Origins of a Modern English Lesbian Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

³³ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), 11.

promoted broader thinking about the spectrum of sexuality, he did not elaborate on the possibilities therein, including lesbianism, bisexuality, or other queer identities. Other scholars of relationships and family life in Britain writing around this time focused on changing meanings of marriage, divisions of labour, and class distinctions.³⁴ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall's ground-breaking book *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* was published in 1987 and remains the reference point for historians of family life in this period. Davidoff and Hall spend very little time on friendship, especially friendship between women, as a meaningful relationship. They take a micro lens, examining marriage, and a macro lens, examining communities and networks. Friendship occupies a space in between those two perspectives.

The categories of relationship and identity with which these studies worked were disrupted by scholars in the 1990s who began to write what is now termed 'queer theory.' Sedgwick defines 'queer' as 'the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excess of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or *can't be* made) to signify monolithically.'³⁵ Her second book, *Between Men*, which I referenced in the first section of this introduction, studied relationships between men that are described as homosocial or homosexual, and, by extension, relationships between women, which are differently structured and described. 'There is an asymmetry in our present society,' she writes, 'between, on the one hand, the relatively continuous relation of female homosocial and homosexual bonds, and, on the other hand, the radically discontinuous relation of male homosocial and homosexual bonds.'³⁶ Breaking with the traditional scholarly interest in relationships between the sexes, this book also addresses relationships amongst those

³⁴ See Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) and John Gillis, *For Better, for Worse: British Marriages, 1600 to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

³⁵ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 'Queer and Now' in *Tendencies* (London: Routledge, 1994), 8.

³⁶ Sedgwick, *Between Men*, 4-5.

of the same sex, asking why they are so different, as well as how relationships between men impact women. Other scholars, including Gayle Rubin and Judith Butler, similarly disrupted the notion that gender and sexuality can be clearly separated into categories across history.³⁷ Collectively, queer theorists posit that questions about non-normative gender identities and sexualities are not only relevant to the segment of the population who identify or might identify themselves accordingly, but rather are relevant to us all as we navigate the complexities of human relationships and self-construction. This perspective is key to my work in this thesis, which is built on the idea that the nuanced and queer friendships between the women about whom I write are relevant to a general history of art, not just a history of women in relationships with other women.

Women's Studies and Lesbian Studies

The study of women and relationships between them has traditionally been siloed outside of 'history' and 'queer theory' into the categories of 'women's studies' and 'lesbian studies.' In recent decades, this has been somewhat remedied by the advent of a larger category of 'gender and women's studies' or 'gender and sexuality studies.' In any case, I continue to separate these works here in part because many of the works I cite date from a period in which their authors self-categorised into 'women's studies,' and in part because it is useful to zoom in on women's relationships only, in the context of the topic of this thesis.³⁸ Much of the scholarship that has been written about relationships of any kind between women in the nineteenth century, and earlier, situates itself within the field of lesbian studies. The significance of terms used to describe

³⁷ See Gayle Rubin, *Deviations: A Gayle Rubin Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press), 2011; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge), 1990.

³⁸ During the time in which most of the scholarship cited here was written, the term 'woman' was defined by biological essentialism. Today, the term includes all who identify as women, regardless of the sex they were assigned at birth. All of the women artists I study in this thesis are cis-women, or women who were assigned female at birth. Regardless, I wish to recognise the shift in the meaning of the term 'woman' over time, as well as the historic limitations of its use in the scholarship cited here.

relationships between women, including ‘romantic friendship’ and ‘lesbian’ remain contested. Although this thesis does not attempt to resolve this debate, it is necessary to give a general review of the literature on female friends in Victorian England in order to contextualize the terms and methodology I use. This is not an exhaustive review of the field, but rather an overview of the evolution of the discourse.

The term ‘romantic friendship’ was popularly used in the second half of the twentieth century by scholars of this period to describe relationships between Victorian women. The term’s existence denotes the perceived difference between twentieth-century friendship and Victorian friendship: only one requires a qualifier. As attitudes towards same-sex relationships and understandings of sexuality shifted around 1900, the attitudes and activities that had characterised women’s romantic friendships over the past century fell out of fashion. Things like hugging and kissing, sharing a bed for sleepovers (even when one or both women were married to men), exchanging tokens or gifts, like locks of hair, and writing profusely emotive letters were no longer viewed as normal elements of women’s friendships.³⁹ Women’s relationships that had been seen as romantic friendships in the nineteenth century were often relabelled ‘lesbian’ in the twentieth. In other words, it became less socially acceptable for women to share emotional and physical intimacy without being given a sexual identity that was, for sexologists and soon for the general public, considered inverted or deviant.⁴⁰ Contemporary nineteenth-century writing on female friendship, such as Sarah Ellis’s publications including *The Women of England* and *The Daughters of England*, published in 1839 and 1842 respectively, spend significant time on the rules and expectations of proper female friendship, and clearly recognize the centrality of these

³⁹ Details of these practices, and their evolution, are discussed in Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship & Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (New York: Perennial, 1981).

⁴⁰ This is a brief assessment of a sociohistorical shift about which much ink has been spilled. For further reading about the impact of the early psychoanalysts and sexologists on women, see Traub, *Thinking Sex with the Early Moderns* and Sheila Jeffreys, *The Spinster and Her Enemies: Feminism and Sexuality, 1880-1930* (North Melbourne, Vic.: Spinifex Press, 1997).

relationships to a Victorian woman's daily life.⁴¹ The growing women's rights movements in the 1850s and '60s also gave greater voice to the realities of women's lives and relationships, including the importance of friendship. Life-writing, including letters and journals, provides the most intimate and detailed accounts of the way women interacted with and felt about one another.⁴²

Another term used in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth to describe relationships between women was 'Sapphic,' referring to the Ancient Greek poet from the island of Lesbos, Sappho. Sappho's work was published in a new edition in 1854, and new fragments of her poetry were discovered in the 1870s and on a regular basis thereafter. Her fame grew significantly in this period, both as a remarkable poet and as an icon of womanhood and female love. The term 'Sapphic' has been described as an aristocratic or upper-class term that was used both by and about women who engaged in intimate relationships with other women, often sexual or romantic ones.⁴³ Virginia Woolf called her lover Vita Sackville-West a 'pronounced sapphist' in her diary, and the term was associated with women of their high social tier.⁴⁴ Its particularly artistic associations, and its reference to a figure about whom very little is known for certain, including her sexual inclinations, mean the term was and remains more of a euphemism than a specific descriptor of a sexual identity.

Many of the first scholars to address this moment as historians began writing in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1975, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg's paper 'The Female World of Love and Ritual' continues to be a starting point for scholars of female friendship and femininity in the

⁴¹ Sarah Ellis, *The Women of England: Their Social Duties, and Domestic Habits* (London: Fisher, Son, & Co., 1839) and *The Daughters of England, Their Position in Society, Character & Responsibilities* (London: Fisher, Son, & Co., 1842).

⁴² Examples cited later in this thesis include the collected letters of Gwen John, the collected letters of Ida Nettleship John, the autobiography of Edna Clarke Hall, the diary of Wynne George, and the diary of Marie Bashkirtseff.

⁴³ See Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism*.

⁴⁴ Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Volume 2: 1920-24* (London: Granta, 2023), 293.

nineteenth century.⁴⁵ Focusing on nineteenth-century American women, Smith-Rosenberg argued that ‘the twentieth century tendency to view human love and sexuality within a dichotomized universe of deviance and normality, genital and platonic love, is alien to the emotions and attitudes of the nineteenth century and fundamentally distorts the nature of these women’s emotional interactions [...] their heterosocial and their homosocial worlds were complementary.’⁴⁶ This articulation of the distinction between women’s relationships in the twentieth century and the nineteenth is key to reaching a more accurate understanding of Victorian women’s lives and social networks. The idea of ‘complementary’ homosocial and heterosexual worlds was picked up and taken further by Adrienne Rich in 1980. She introduced the idea of the lesbian continuum, which posits that all relationships between women fall somewhere on a continuum of lesbianism.⁴⁷ This concept proved highly influential in the field of women’s studies, with many scholars using the term ‘lesbian’ to encompass broad swathes of women. While the term remained associated with a homosexual identity, Rich and others used it in a way that suggested that any relationship between women, regardless of its sexual character, could be described in terms of lesbianism. Lillian Faderman’s *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship & Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (1981), was the first publication genuinely to address the history of female friendship in modern Europe and North America.⁴⁸ Her goal was to create a ‘usable past’ for twentieth-century lesbians; in other words, to claim a history and heritage for lesbians living at the time of publication in 1981. Though this piece of work remains the foundational text of the field of the history of relationships between women, it is entirely guided by Faderman’s predetermined goal of reclaiming women into a late twentieth-century lesbian identity. Nonetheless, two of her key arguments are important to the work done

⁴⁵ Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, ‘The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America,’ *Signs* 1, no. 1 (1975): 1-29.

⁴⁶ Smith-Rosenberg, ‘The Female World of Love and Ritual,’ 8.

⁴⁷ Adrienne Cecile Rich, ‘Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence,’ 5, No. 4, (Summer, 1980): 631-660.

⁴⁸ Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men*.

in this thesis. She highlights the way the shift during the nineteenth century from an acceptance and celebration of friendships between women to a suspicion and suppression of these relationships was tied to the growing independence of women, including increasing access to education, paid employment, and lack of marriageable men, resulting in significant numbers of single women. Faderman also continues to return to the idea that relationships between women enabled their creative or professional success both logistically, by providing a material support system, as well as emotionally, because women could provide emotional support and encouragement to one another in ways men could not. These two claims undergird the analysis I undertake in this thesis.

It is also important to mention the work done on women's friendships in the field of English literature, which is much more substantial than that in the field of art history. Tess Cosslett's book *Woman to Woman: Female Friendship in Victorian Fiction* (1988), explores in detail the ways friendship between women is depicted in Victorian fiction, and the relationship of those depictions to women's lived realities. She writes that the 'pattern of friendship is set up as a debate on the possible female identities a woman can take up,' including wife, mother, daughter, and lover.⁴⁹ Unlike historians such as Faderman or Martha Vicinus, Cosslett explicitly states that it is both impossible and unproductive to attempt to label historical women, fictional or otherwise, as lesbian or not.⁵⁰ Historians studying the Bluestocking Circle in the eighteenth century, such as Sylvia Harcstark Myers, take a similarly nuanced approach to the individuals they examine.⁵¹ Myers problematizes Faderman's fundamental claim that the women of the past would have been more progressive if they could, writing that the Bluestockings were not feminists and to consider them as such is historically inaccurate. Taking a more creative

⁴⁹ Tess Cosslett, *Woman to Woman: Female Friendship in Victorian Fiction* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1988), 6.

⁵⁰ See Martha Vicinus, *Intimate Friends: Women Who Loved Women, 1778-1928* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 2004.

⁵¹ Sylvia Harcstark Myers, *The Bluestocking Circle: Women, Friendship, and the Life of the Mind in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

methodological approach, Terry Castle's *The Apparitional Lesbian* (1993) remains a key text in the field. Castle argues that the concept of lesbianism and lesbian women have been literally 'ghosted' throughout history and, specifically, eighteenth and nineteenth century literature. She uses a series of examples of ghosts in fictional texts that she claims represent the apparition of lesbianism to demonstrate the potency of this motif.⁵² These examples are illustrative of the types of focused historical literary scholarship being published in the 1980s about historic literature by and about women. They speak to conflicts that remain unresolved in scholarship today.⁵³

By the 1990s, sociologists, historians, and literary scholars began to build on the work begun by Faderman and consider relationships between women in the context of the history of sexuality, including the history of lesbianism and/or relationships of all kinds between women. For most of them, the emergence of modern heterosexuality at the end of the nineteenth century is linked to capitalist systems of consumption and individualism, as well as the patriarchal medical and political establishment. Yet there was still no consensus on how to treat female sexuality, particularly lesbianism. Scholars disagree on when the word came into usage, when it gained its modern meaning, whether women practiced homosexual acts before the word was associated with them, and whether the term should be used historically at all. Some offered alternative terms, like female 'alliances' or 'female intimacy,' in an effort to avoid the baggage of 'lesbian,' while others embraced the term.⁵⁴ Some chose to pick up 'Sapphic' as a more historically specific option. Others explicitly reject the focus on terminology in favour of

⁵² Terry Castle, *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

⁵³ For more about friendship amongst seventeenth and eighteenth-century Englishwomen, see Irene Q. Brown, 'Domesticity, Feminism, and Friendship: Female Aristocratic Culture and Marriage in England, 1660-1760,' *Journal of Family History*, 7, no. 4 (1982): 406-424.

⁵⁴ For the use of 'alliances,' see Herbert, *Female Alliances*. For the use of 'female intimacy,' see Elizabeth Wahl, *Invisible Relations: Representations of Female Intimacy in the Age of Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999). For an embrace of 'lesbian' throughout early modern history, see Emma Donoghue, *Passions Between Women: British Lesbian Culture, 1668-1801* (London: Scarlet P., 1993).

exploring the experiences and accounts of women about their own relationships, rather than relying on a pedagogy of categories defined by men.⁵⁵

These scholars are all engaged with the question of when, or indeed if, innocent or socially acceptable intimate female friendship suddenly transformed, in the eyes of society, into a deviant lesbianism. Many dates are proposed, from the early 1890s through Radclyffe Hall's obscenity trial for *The Well of Loneliness* in 1928.⁵⁶ While no consensus has yet been reached on this moment of transformation, a review of the literature reveals several things. First, that the roughly fifty-year period around the turn of the twentieth century was a time of transition in the general public's understanding of sex and sexuality, including relationships both platonic and sexual between women. Second, the terminology used to describe emotionally and/or sexually intimate relationships between women, both today and in the past, is deeply fraught. There is no consistency in the usage of terms, particularly the term 'lesbian.' These two facts underline the lack of innovative study of this subject and the need for further investigation. They also demonstrate that the search for some kind of consensus on the nature of all relationships between women in this period is a pointless endeavour. The complexity and diversity of relationships that fall under this umbrella preclude such a conclusion. Study of them must recognise and nurture variety and nuance. Perhaps one truth that comes from these discussions in the twenty-first century is that the ideas in question were just as contentious in their own time. Debates about identity, propriety, and the roles of the sexes were hotly fought in the nineteenth century.

⁵⁵ See Jeffreys, *The Spinster and Her Enemies*. For a discussion of these issues in research and terminology, see Liz Stanley, 'Romantic Friendship? Some Issues in Researching Lesbian History and Biography,' *Women's History Review* 1, no. 2 (1992): 193-216.

⁵⁶ For more on the various timeframes that have been proposed, see Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism*; The Radclyffe Hall trial was a watershed moment in the history of lesbian rights and visibility in Britain. Many of the artists discussed herein witnessed and remarked on the trial late in their lives, with varying degrees of interest and an array of opinions. Where relevant to each case study, these have been discussed therein.

In 2007, Sharon Marcus published the first piece of scholarship to rethink significantly the basic arguments offered by Faderman and other scholars of female friendship in Britain: *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England*. Marcus builds on the ideas of queer theorists to address women's relationships with one another outside the confines of categories or dichotomies, such as homosexuality versus heterosexuality, male versus female, and married versus unmarried, which she sees as anachronistic and unhelpful. She rejects the idea of studying all relationships between women within the field of lesbian studies, instead accepting the diversity of women's experiences and contributions as part of the general field of history. Her work is a social history as well as a work of literary studies; it addresses a huge range of subjects from novels to letters, fashion magazines to dolls. She works from the foundational argument that while men had huge power over women's lives in the nineteenth century, 'our mistake has been to assume that those structural forces precluded the strong, complex, and socially acknowledged bonds between women.'⁵⁷ Marcus synthesises the work done in the field from Smith-Rosenberg's essay onward and presents new questions and paths forward through the rich material available to study the nineteenth century and the women who lived through it. Her work has revitalised the field of study of women's relationships and made a firm case for its relevance in social history beyond the confines of women's studies or lesbian studies. This thesis is indebted to her work. Most of the works of theory cited in the first two sections of this literature review take relationships between people as their subject. In this thesis, I am informed by this literature to take relationships between people as a tool or a method, rather than a subject, with which to better understand works of art. With this in mind, I turn now to a review of relevant art historical literature.

Victorian Art History

⁵⁷ Marcus, *Between Women*, 22.

The treatment of friendship, groups, and social networks in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries within the discipline of art history is remarkably scant. Friendship and interpersonal relationships generally have long been seen as private, personal, and domestic. As Lara Perry cogently points out, ‘the pressure to dissociate the production of art from the material context of family life has been tremendous.’⁵⁸ This, of course, raises the interesting question of whether ‘family life’ includes friendships, but it is safe to say that where women are concerned it consistently has. The longstanding method of studying individual artists or creators has been slow to shift to a more collective form of history that makes interpersonal networks and interaction central. While more ink has been spilled on formal artist groups in this period, such as the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, the focus largely remains on formal alliances and the individuals within the group, rather than on emotional ties. In their collection on artistic brotherhoods in the nineteenth century, Laura Morowitz and William Vaughan argue that the rise of groups of male artists who self-identified as ‘brotherhoods,’ as distinct from the earlier and differently used term ‘schools,’ was a response to the rise of capitalism and industrialisation. These groups sought utopian forms of community to escape modern life. Morowitz and Vaughan also claim that their explicit gender exclusivity was a response to the rise of the first wave of feminism and a fear of encroachment by women.⁵⁹ In recent years, some work has also been done on queer relationships amongst male artists in this period, especially around decadence and aestheticism. Whitney Davis’s excellent book *Queer Beauty* (2010) synthesizes and pushes forward questions about queerness in art history of the nineteenth century, but his book does not use the term ‘lesbian’ once, and although he spends a fair amount of time on the work of Vernon Lee, he otherwise focuses entirely on male artists and theorists.⁶⁰ His work is

⁵⁸ Lara Perry, ‘The Artist’s Household: On Gender and the Division of Artistic and Domestic Labour in Nineteenth-Century London,’ *Third Text* 31, no. 1 (2017): 15-29, p. 19.

⁵⁹ Morowitz Vaughan, *Artistic Brotherhoods in the Nineteenth Century*.

⁶⁰ Whitney Davis, *Queer Beauty: Sexuality and Aesthetics from Winckelmann to Freud and Beyond* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

indicative of the continuation of a larger pattern of exclusive focus on male homosexual and homoerotic relations in the history of art and artists.

There has also been some attention paid to multi-gender friendships or relationships, particularly heterosexual partnerships. Whitney Chadwick's classic book *Significant Others: Creativity and Intimate Partnerships*, originally published in 1993, has remained in print since then and continues to be a reference point for scholars of artistic collaboration and partnership.⁶¹ Recently, more work has been done on the role of the muse or model in the production of artwork, with the intention of giving more attention to those often uncredited or unappreciated. Many of these works are less scholarly and more personal or aimed at the general public—from Eunice Lipton's memorable *Alias Olympia*, published in 1992, to Ruth Millington's recent *Muse*, published in 2022.⁶² These works share an interest in the relationships that gave rise to works of art. Chadwick's book embraces the nuance and uniqueness of each partnership, with the intention of demonstrating the breadth of forms such collaborations can take. Scholarship on the model/muse relationship has been less effective, as it usually retains the basic assumption that women are most relevant as accessories to the male artists they modelled for. Nonetheless, these various forays into the importance of relationships between artists of opposite genders are examples of the increasing interest in centring relationships, networks, and interpersonal dynamics among artist communities. Lucy Ella Rose's more recent *Suffragist Artists in Partnership* (2018) combines these two, with sections on heterosexual romantic partnerships as well as intimacy between women, in the context of political art or art made by politically active suffragists.⁶³

⁶¹ Chadwick, *Significant Others*.

⁶² See Eunice Lipton, *Alias Olympia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 1999; Ruth Millington, *Muse: Uncovering the Hidden Figures Behind Art History's Masterpieces*, (London: Square Peg), 2022.

⁶³ Lucy Ella Rose, *Suffragist Artists in Partnership: Gender, Word and Image* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018).

Scholarly attention to groups of artists who are women, specifically those working in the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, is rarer. Some exceptions to this pattern, in terms of scholarship on groups of women, include Jo Wallace and B.J. Elliott's innovative book *Women Artists and Writers: Modernist (Im)positionings* (1994), which is structured around case studies of pairs of artists and writers and asks how the questions posed by Modernism made an impact on artists who were women.⁶⁴ Their book does not universalise the female experience, but instead uses case studies or microhistories of a variety of Modernist women artists and writers working in Paris. Their insightful research questions include: 'did formal experimentation *mean* the same thing to women and men artists, or to the women and men who viewed and read their work? Did women feel the same need to restore a lost cultural coherence? Whose interests did 'modernism' (and its critics) serve?'⁶⁵ These questions go beyond the biographical and seek deeper analysis of the dynamics of gender and sexuality amongst Modernist artists. They astutely note, unlike many other historians of women artists, that for many of these women 'their creative works have been virtually devoured by their lives.'⁶⁶ The book's French focus is shared by several other forays into women's groups, including Jane Mayo Roos's article 'Girls 'N the Hood' and Tamar Garb's *Sisters of the Brush* (1994).⁶⁷ Roos's article appears in Morowitz and Vaughan's book, and it is worth noting that they make the claim that the notion of 'sisterhoods' of artists in parallel to brotherhoods in the nineteenth century is an impossibility, because women lacked the power to create any group or movement that was purposefully outside the mainstream, since they did not wield enough social power to enter and exit the mainstream art world at will.⁶⁸ This claim goes rather far in its assessment of women's social power, particularly in its lack of

⁶⁴ Wallace and Elliott, *Women Artists and Writers*.

⁶⁵ Wallace and Elliott, *Women Artists and Writers*, 6.

⁶⁶ Wallace and Elliott, *Women Artists and Writers*, 37.

⁶⁷ Jane Mayo Roos, 'Girls 'N' the Hood: Female Artists in Nineteenth-Century France,' in *Artistic Brotherhoods in the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Laura and William Vaughan Morowitz (Ashgate, 2000): 154-184. Tamar Garb, *Sisters of the Brush: Women's Artistic Culture in Late Nineteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994).

⁶⁸ 'Introduction,' Morowitz and Vaughan, *Artistic Brotherhoods in the Nineteenth Century*, 23-25.

engagement with the impact of class dynamics on women's cultural and social capital. Janice Helland's study of women painters in nineteenth-century Scotland also centres the collective nature of the art world for women. For Helland, friendship among women artists, and working women generally, was far more than an emotional relationship. It had economic costs and benefits, and was a critical tool working women artists used to compete in a male-dominated art market.⁶⁹ Other scholars of Victorian art, such as Jan Marsh and Pamela Gerrish Nunn, have written about connections between women artists, but have not made the case for their centrality to women's artistic practices.⁷⁰ Even in the 2019 National Portrait Gallery exhibition 'Pre-Raphaelite Sisters,' the women featured were connected via the men in their lives rather than their own interrelationships.⁷¹

This language of 'sisterhood' has been consistently used in art historical references to groups of artists who are women and adds a third term or framework to the initial dichotomy I introduced between 'romantic friendship' and 'lesbianism.' While it offers a tempting parallel to 'brotherhood,' made particularly famous and relevant by the Pre-Raphaelites, 'sisterhood' also falls short as a useful term with which to examine relationships between women artists. This option has nevertheless gained traction and usage in the past few decades of scholarship. The term benefits from a seeming lack of politics, and therefore an inclusivity, but it is still inadequate. Like 'lesbianism,' it is gendered. It also suggests a more formal organisation, in line with established brotherhoods, that did not exist for any of the women in my case studies.⁷² Furthermore, as I articulated earlier in this introduction, friendship is a uniquely ambiguous yet fundamental term which describes a relationship that can (and does) overlap with other forms of

⁶⁹ Helland, *Professional Women Painters in Nineteenth-Century Scotland*.

⁷⁰ See Jan Marsh, *Pre-Raphaelite Sisterhood* (London: Quartet, 1985) and Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Victorian Women Artists* (London: Women's Press, 1987).

⁷¹ Jan Marsh, ed., *Pre-Raphaelite Sisters* (London: National Portrait Gallery Publications, 2019).

⁷² However, this term is very aptly used to describe the group of women working in the 1850s and 60s that included Anna Howitt, Jane Benham Hay, and Barbara Leigh Smith, who wrote about their desire to form an 'Art Sisterhood.' See Jan Marsh, 'Art, Ambition and Sisterhood in the 1850s' in *Women in the Victorian Art World*, edited by Clarissa Campbell Orr (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).

relationship. I therefore maintain that ‘friendship’ is the most appropriate term to use for my project, and that it is distinct from these three previous socio-theoretical frameworks.

Feminist Art History

Feminist art historical scholarship is impoverished by a ‘swing towards the present.’⁷³ Much of the excellent feminist art history published recently has been about overtly feminist artists working in or after the second wave of the feminist movement in the 1970s, such as Amy Tobin’s *Women Artists Together: Art in the Age of Women’s Liberation* (2023), Jo Applin’s work on artists including Lee Lozano, and Lauren Elkin’s *Art Monsters: Unruly Bodies In Feminist Art* (2023).⁷⁴ These works are critically and methodologically exciting, but their methods rest on the analysis of self-consciously feminist artists. Victoria Horne and Perry identify our current scholarly moment as a ‘historiographical turn,’ or a moment characterised by the reframing of ‘the proposition of feminist art history [...] from a direct question of “where are the women” to a more nuanced question around memory and forgetting.’⁷⁵ In other words, after decades of feminist art history, why is the field still siloed? Why are women artists still forgotten? My work is feminist, but it is not about feminist artists, and as such is not in direct conversation with work about self-identified feminist artists or those who practiced during and after the second-wave. This distinction is important, and points to the breadth of feminist art historical scholarship. There is not a single method or theory that defines this school of art history, which by its nature rejects the monographic, exclusionist notion that there is a single ‘correct’ history of art.

⁷³ Judith M. Bennett, *History Matters: Patriarchy and the Challenge of Feminism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 31

⁷⁴ Tobin, *Women Artists Together*; Jo Applin, *Lee Lozano: Not Working* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2018); Lauren Elkin, *Art Monsters: Unruly Bodies in Feminist Art* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2023).

⁷⁵ Victoria Horne and Lara Perry, eds., *Feminism and Art History Now: Radical Critiques of Theory and Practice* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2017), p. 12 and p. 7.

However, use of a feminist lens with a historic gaze is based in second-wave feminism, too: Griselda Pollock identified her work as born of the women's movement, and other writers such as Lucy Lippard, who were early to draw attention to the historic erasure of the contributions of women artists, were likewise strongly identified with the women's movement of the later twentieth century.⁷⁶ It is impossible to speak of feminist art history without crediting seismic shift brought to the field by the work of feminist art historians Linda Nochlin and Pollock, among others, to not only raise the profiles of artists who are women but also to demonstrate the importance of a social history of art.⁷⁷ Their intense focus on the social conditions that allow for an individual to be an artist and impact their work broadened the field in ways that reached beyond questions about gender. Pollock continues to be the touchstone for any new work done on women artists, as few who have followed her have been as able to marry formal analysis with social history, leading to a pattern of women's art history that falls into biography or gender studies. My work seeks to follow Pollock's lead of balancing the social with the visual.

Pollock's work is fundamentally structural: it deconstructs art history itself to reveal the inherent sexism and male-centric ways of looking that define the discipline. In *Differencing the Canon* (1999), she introduces the eponymous idea of 'differencing' the canon, as opposed to adding women into the existing canon and theoretical framework of art history.⁷⁸ 'I would like to explore how to introduce difference into the problem of the canon, allowing several discourses to co-exist, thickening the slim volume that Western white phallogocentric logic inscribes within culture,' she writes.⁷⁹ This notion that multiple narratives and ways of looking must be able to co-exist is central to my framing of this thesis: not only do I argue that the art historical narrative

⁷⁶ See Griselda Pollock and Rozika Parker, *Old Mistresses* (London: Pandora, 1981); Lucy R. Lippard, *From the Center: Essays on Feminist Art* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1976).

⁷⁷ See Nochlin, 'Why have there been no great women artists?' and Pollock and Parker, *Old Mistresses*.

⁷⁸ Griselda Pollock, *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999).

⁷⁹ Pollock, *Differencing the Canon*, 41.

must be broadened to include the careers and work of women, who had different access to the art world and different social challenges compared to their male peers, but I also argue that the relationship of friendship is ambiguous and must be seen to co-exist with other relationships. Pollock's school of feminist art history is also fundamentally transferable. In *Differencing the Canon*, she uses the example of a feminist reading of Vincent Van Gogh to illustrate the way her structuralist theory is not only useful for analysing women artists, but also for male artists.⁸⁰ I, too, argue for the importance of transferability of my methodology in making the case for its wide relevance.

Despite Pollock's critical deconstructive work, as well as the work of her peers and the feminist art historians who followed her, the work of artists who are women remains understudied, under-valued (both commercially and culturally), and under-represented in museum collections, special exhibitions, textbooks, and academic publications. The structuralist attitude of Pollock has not been shared by many more recent scholars and curators, who continue to silo women away from men as 'minority' or 'undiscovered' artists.⁸¹ In the cases in which intervention has been more successful, such as so-called exceptions like Artemisia Gentileschi, or popular twentieth-century artists like Frida Kahlo, curatorial and general interest has remained firmly focused only on the well-known names of individuals.⁸² These blockbuster names have become well-known, but they continue to be treated as novelties or anomalies. It is important to note that my characterisation of the field here is not limited to an assessment of academic scholarship but includes the influence of broader cultural currents. In 2022, Katy Hessel

⁸⁰ Pollock, *Differencing the Canon*, 41-61.

⁸¹ Some recent exhibitions that have done so include 'Action, Gesture, Paint: Women Artists and Global Abstraction, 1940-1970,' at the Whitechapel Gallery, London, from February to May 2023, 'If Not Now, When? Generations of Women in Sculpture in Britain,' at the Hepworth Wakefield, March to September, 2023, both of which Pollock herself was involved in, and 'Now You See Us: Women Artists in Britain, 1520-1920,' at Tate Britain, May-October 2024.

⁸² For example, see the National Gallery's groundbreaking retrospective 'Artemisia,' on view October to January 2021 and the Victoria & Albert Museum's exhibition of Frida Kahlo's clothes, 'Frida Kahlo: Making Herself Up,' on view from June to November 2018.

published *The Story of Art Without Men*, a popular history of women artists intended as a riposte to Ernst Gombrich's canonical *The Story of Art* (originally published in 1950).⁸³ Hessel's book became a bestseller, a Waterstone's book of the year, and a social media phenomenon. It also prompted a conversation within the academy about the state of feminist art history, because the book was written as if the past fifty years of scholarship had not happened – and was received by an eager public who seemed unaware that women artists were not a novel development. Hessel is not an academic, but her book has had an impact on art history as a discipline and serves as a microcosm for the challenges facing historians of women artists. The fundamental questions raised by feminism cannot exist on an academic island, untouched by the tides of political and social waters around them. I do not intend to erase the important and critical work done by feminist scholars since the 1970s, not all of which falls into the traps I describe, but it is important to recognise the broader cultural and political landscape in which I am writing now.

With this thesis, whose methodology has arisen from the circumstances of researching a group of poorly known female artists, I demonstrate the way that feminist scholarship can not only offer essential analysis of the work of women but also pioneer transferable methodological innovations that push the discipline forward, like Pollock. This point has been well-made by queer theorists, who have posited that queer theories disrupt hegemonic methods of research in a productive way far beyond the study of queer individuals. Building on Pollock's work, I argue that feminist methods of research like mine can do the same.

Modernist Art History

The decades on either side of the year 1900 have been, paradoxically, both hotly researched and largely ignored by different subsets of art historians. Those who study French art and European

⁸³ Katy Hessel, *The Story of Art Without Men*, (London: Cornerstone, 2022); Ernst Gombrich, *The Story of Art*, 16th ed., (London: Phaidon, 1995).

Modernism locate the birth of Modern art in these years, while historians of English and American art have traditionally jumped from the mid-nineteenth century to the First World War and beyond, leaving the turn of the century to become something of a backwater. In recent decades, this has ceased to be the case. Attention has turned to the rich developments in British art in this period, leading to a discussion of the ways in which our definition of ‘Modernism’ might be disrupted or adapted to more aptly fit the true breadth of Anglo-European modernity and the art it inspired. Corbett’s ground-breaking work on English Modernism argues for a firm focus on the material and aesthetic features that characterise Modernism across Europe – chiefly an emphasis on the materiality of paint.⁸⁴ In the introduction to his seminal book *The World in Paint: Modern Art and Visuality in England, 1848-1914* (2004), he writes,

An identification of a self-conscious awareness of the mediating role of paint in representation, along with an anxiety to reconcile that knowledge with the belief in painting’s immediacy and truthfulness in accounting for the world, lies at the heart of my reading of English painting from the Pre-Raphaelites on.⁸⁵

It is key to note that he locates the start of modern art in Britain with the Pre-Raphaelites, who are also very much of the High Victorian tradition. In doing so, Corbett makes a strong claim for the link between modern life and modern art, with a much more diverse array of artistic styles and movements falling under the umbrella. He also distinguishes between ‘modern art’ and ‘Modernism,’ which is a more aesthetically specific category. While Corbett’s examination of the interplay between material and modernity is fundamental to my own use of both terms, his focus on male artists and on a narrative of disruption guided by them is not. The traditional narrative of modernity and Modernism with which this definition is concerned traces the work of male artists of the avant garde, or those who disrupt the mainstream of academic art. In a more recent essay mentioned earlier in this introduction, Corbett addresses the messiness and overlapping

⁸⁴ David Peters Corbett, *The World in Paint: Modern Art and Visuality in England, 1848-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

⁸⁵ Corbett, *The World in Paint*, 13.

nature of art historical periodisation in Britain, with Victorian, Edwardian, and Modern all vying to describe the period between roughly 1900 and 1910.⁸⁶ His comparison with the much different historiographical trajectory of French art history helps to put the scholarship of British art history in context.

Another significant voice in the history of modern art and modernism is Lisa Tickner, who takes a more social, historiographic scholarly framework. In *Modern Life & Modern Subjects: British Art in the Early Twentieth Century* (2000), Tickner begins by examining the 1914 Whitechapel Gallery exhibition 'Twentieth Century Art: A Review of Modern Movements.' By taking this exhibition as a starting point for her examination of the category of modern art, she sets up an analysis that is rooted in contemporary understandings of the modern. The 'diversity of "isms"' that characterise the exhibition demonstrate the variety and conflict between different strands of modern art in the early twentieth century.⁸⁷ The fundamental inflection point for Tickner is 'the traffic in particular paintings between a self-consciously radical approach to form and *facture* and pictorial resources drawn from the material and emotional conditions of modern experience.'⁸⁸ Tickner's location of the modern in self-consciousness radicality excludes artists Corbett would include, particularly artists in the tradition of Aestheticism. Other scholars of late Victorian and Edwardian art, including but not in any way limited to Prettejohn, Julie Codell, Janet Wolff, Deborah Cherry, Pamela Fletcher, and Lynda Nead, take a wide variety of frameworks to assess the modernity of English art while also inherently questioning the way 'modern' and 'modernity' are constructed.⁸⁹ 'Modernism' remains a nexus of debate for these two reasons: what aesthetic

⁸⁶ Corbett, 'Crossing the Boundary.'

⁸⁷ Lisa Tickner, *Modern Life & Modern Subjects: British Art in the Early Twentieth Century* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2000), 8.

⁸⁸ Tickner, *Modern Life & Modern Subjects*, 9

⁸⁹ For representative works, see Prettejohn, *Art for Art's Sake*; Julie Codell, *The Victorian Artist: Artists' Lifewriting in Britain, ca. 1870-1910* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Janet Wolff, *AngloModern: Painting and Modernity in Britain and the United States* (London: Cornell University Press, 2003); Cherry, *Beyond the Frame*; Pamela Fletcher, *Narrating Modernity: The British Problem Picture, 1895-1914* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003); Lynda Nead, *Victorian Babylon: People, Streets and Images in Nineteenth-Century London* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2000).

qualities are ‘modern(ist)’ and what social conditions constitute the ‘modernity’ that gave rise to them?

In this thesis, I build on the work done by these scholars to broaden the scope of the modern to include the experiences of women living in a modernizing world. Their visual languages are part of the narrative of modernity and modern art, too.⁹⁰ I distinguish between ‘Modernism’ and ‘modern art,’ such that ‘Modernism’ refers to the narrower definition set by Tickner, and ‘modern art’ to the much broader notion espoused by Corbett and others. My work follows Corbett’s focus on materiality and the conditions of modern life, rather than Tickner’s focus on self-identified radicality. I seek to understand the specific experiences and practices of a set of artists who shared the common experience of close friendships with fellow artists. I use the language of modernity to argue for the relevance of the art made by the women in my case studies. Like the history of art generally, the history of modern art has traditionally been told as a history of male artists, in terms of a series of individual geniuses. My work does not follow this framework, and yet I continue to require its language to describe the aesthetic and professional positions of the artists I write about. The purpose of this thesis is to ask how friendship can be a form of artistic collaboration, and how studying groups of friends rather than individual artists can reveal meaning about their work and lives. In doing so, it also asks questions about the boundaries of modern art, the history of friendship and sexuality, and the role of biography in art history.

Case Studies

I have organised this thesis in a series of four case studies. I have done so in order to give a sense of the diversity of women artists working in England in this period, and the variety of ways in which they formed relationships with other women artists. There are many other pairs and

⁹⁰ For more work on the ways women are present in and push at modernity, see Cherry, *Beyond the Frame*; Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art and Society* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2002); Marcus, *Between Women*.

groups of friends who could have been part of this narrative, including many that overlap with those who are. For example, the artist Edith Hipkins was a close friend of the Alma-Tadema family and shared many of the same visual styles with her friends, Anna Alma-Tadema and Laura Theresa Alma-Tadema. Gwen John had a series of close female friends and lovers after leaving the Slade, including the artists Dorelia McNeill and Mary Katherine Constance Lloyd. Dacre lived with the artist Mary Florence Monkhouse after Swynnerton got married. These women's lives were filled with close relationships with women artists, as were the lives of many, if not most, artists who were women in this period. The four pairs and groups of friends that I have chosen to spend time with here have well-documented friendships and similarly partial surviving oeuvres. I hope that this work lays the groundwork for further study.

Each of the artists in these case studies is white and most are upper middle class. Some had financial challenges, including John, Dacre, and Swynnerton, but none would be considered working class. This reflects the demographics of artists working in Britain in this period, particularly women artists. While there were individuals who broke this mould, including working class and non-white artists, the vast majority were white and came from comfortable wealth. It is important to acknowledge the reality of the class dynamics of the art world in this period, which governed access to training and education, exhibition spaces, social networks, and the financial security to pursue a precarious career. This will be examined throughout the following chapters. My case studies also reflect the realities of racial demographics in Britain at this time. Although the British Empire was at its height and immigrants from around the world were present in Britain's cities, particularly London and Liverpool, Britain remained almost exclusively populated by white British citizens. Empire and its consequences are present in every part of British history in the nineteenth century. However, none of these case studies engage in detail with colonialism abroad or in Britain. It is nonetheless critical to acknowledge the whiteness of these artists.

In my first chapter, I examine the friendship of Swynnerton and Dacre, focusing on their frequent and extensive travels together in Italy between 1874 and 1910. I focus on the work they created while travelling together because it functions as a visual document of their artistic conversation and correspondence of ideas over more than three decades. These works create a fascinating visual representation of collaboration and shared experience, as Swynnerton and Dacre painted similar or identical subjects alongside one another, developing into their distinctive styles over decades. Very little written documentation survives about these two women, particularly Dacre. Using their Italian paintings both as a demonstration of their collaboration and as physical records of their travels together offers a new way to read their work collectively. By starting with this case study, in which the shared nature of the creation of these works is straightforward and clearly visible through side-by-side comparisons, I lay the groundwork for the following investigations of work by women friends via my relational methodology.

In my second chapter, I examine the friendship dynamics within a family, and the way family ties between women enable creativity, by looking at the women in the Alma-Tadema household. This included Laura Theresa Alma-Tadema, wife of Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, her stepdaughter Anna, and her sisters Emily Epps Williams and Ellen (Nellie) Epps Gosse. Like the women in all my chapters, these women shared formative spaces: in this case, their home. This household dominated by women artists is remarkable, and though it has been noted by Prettejohn and Peter Trippi in writings accompanying their 2016-17 exhibition, *Alma-Tadema: At Home in Antiquity*, more work remains to be done.⁹¹ The surviving work by and archival material on these women is inconsistent. By analysing the overlap between friend relationships and

⁹¹ Prettejohn and Peter Trippi, 'Laboratories of Creativity: The Alma-Tadema's Studio-Houses and Beyond,' *British Art Studies*, no. 9, August 2018; Elizabeth Prettejohn and Peter Trippi, *Lawrence Alma-Tadema: At Home in Antiquity* (Munich: Prestel, 2016).

kinship, my methodology furthers the potential for understanding these artists as individuals and as members of this household.

In my third chapter, I assess the relationships between and among a group of women students at the Slade School of Art in the 1890s that includes John, Ida Nettleship (later John), Ursula Tyrwhitt, Edna Waugh (later Lady Clarke Hall), and Gwen Salmond (later Lady Smith). These women found varying degrees of professional success but were granted the unusual opportunity to form social and artistic relationships within the structure of an institution. Since they shared teachers, models, and assignments, I allow the student work of all five women to exist as a collective body of work that stands for the work of each artist, thereby allowing me to assess the student careers of all of them. The five women represented in this chapter have vastly different amounts of surviving work and archival materials. My methodological approach rehabilitates the stories and legacies of those artists about whom little is known by allowing the work of their friends to fill in the gaps.

In my final chapter, I focus on the relationship between Ethel Sands and Nan Hudson. These two women lived in a ‘female marriage,’ to use Marcus’s term; they lived as a couple for decades and were received in society as a pair. Both women were artists who were members of the Fitzroy Street Group and later the London Group, though they were conspicuously excluded from membership of the intervening Camden Town Group. Today they are more remembered as hostesses than as artists in their own right. They often depicted domestic space and interiors. Sands and Hudson are the only example in my project of an overtly romantic relationship between women, and they are also the latest chronologically. Their careers and partnership help elucidate changing norms of respectability, domesticity, class in the early twentieth century. Like all my case studies, little of their work survives—much of it was destroyed in the Blitz. I analyse their contrasting depictions of the homes they shared, which they consistently depicted as inaccessible or unreachable. Only by using a relational lens to view the collective oeuvres of Hudson and Sands does this shared visual language of unreachable

domestic space become clearly articulated as a pattern. This chapter continues to demonstrate the way studying artists collectively can be a strategy to rehabilitate their lost narratives and oeuvres.

Over the course of these four chapters, I develop my relational methodology from a conceptual framework into a practical investigative tool. The thread of analysis is firmly grounded in the visual, weaving a web of collective ways of looking. As my research moves from the work of Swynnerton and Dacre through increasingly complex friendships and more inconsistent sets of documents and works, the strength of the relational lens is made clearer. As stated earlier in this introduction, no single methodology can answer every set of questions, and I do not offer this one as a solution to every research problem. Instead, in this thesis, I thoroughly demonstrate the potential of collective thinking and a framework of relationality to rehabilitate and reframe the legacies of lost or understudied artists at the turn of the twentieth century.

Chapter 1: Visual Conversations: Annie Swynnerton and Susan Isabel Dacre in Italy

Two visions of the same landscape: the city of Siena rises up from a Tuscan hillside under the brushstrokes of close friends Annie Swynnerton and Susan Isabel Dacre. Painted in the 1880s on one of her earliest trips to Italy, Swynnerton's *The Town of Siena* (c. 1880s) (Figure 1.1) is intensely evocative of the Italian landscape. The viewer is positioned low down in the landscape outside the boundaries of the town, gazing across a valley at the hill town, up through winding streets and cliffside buildings toward the Duomo of Siena, alone at the top of a hill against the hazy sky of a hot day. The foreground of the painting, depicting the lower landscape, is loosely painted, almost abstract. Swynnerton's paint handling is chalky, suggesting the texture of the dusty streets and crumbling plaster walls she depicts. She uses dark, heavy outlines to render the buildings in this section, giving them a heft and dimensionality even as the rest of the space has a softness. Three tiny figures, no more than dots of dark paint, populate the steep street on the left side of the picture space. It is not clear if they are travelling up or down, though the sense of upward motion in the image hints that they might be moving up. Rising through space, up the hill, the structure on the peak is far lighter than the buildings below it. The Duomo of Siena, the main cathedral of the city, is constructed in the distinct black and white striped pattern of marbles characteristic of this region of Italy. Swynnerton references this pattern but does not focus on it; most of the visible parts of the building are rendered in a light palette, nearly erasing the black stripes. Her work is more interested in the texture and material qualities of the paint she uses than the detail of the buildings she captures. The church almost blends into the sky, catching the last of the sun's rays at the end of the day. It echoes the pinkish, rosy hues of the sky, though the back wall has fallen into shadow and blends in with the darker buildings below. To see this precise view, Swynnerton would have been positioned on a steep path just below the Basilicata Cateriniana San Domenico on the edge of town, gazing southeast across this small valley towards the back of the duomo (see Figure 1.2 for a photograph of the site).

Dacre's painting of an almost identical view of Siena (undated) (Figure 1.3) is undated, but it was probably completed during the same trip to Italy or based on experiences she had at that time. Dacre's work shares the subject of Swynnerton's but approaches this view of Siena differently. Unlike Swynnerton, Dacre does not give the viewer the sense of looking up from below at this hill city. She reduces the drama of the incline and paints a landscape that is almost flat, though the buildings on the left side do appear to be on an incline, sinking into the valley. Dacre's paint handling is tighter, though she too leaves the bottom right section of the scene loose, almost unfinished. The green vegetation of this section of the landscape is only suggested through colour. Dacre gives us a late afternoon scene, with sunlight shining from the west onto the sides of the structures in the cityscape. The pale, clear blue sky that dominates the upper half of the work creates a sense of space and climate that is quite different from Swynnerton's. Rather than the desert-like palette of Swynnerton's early evening haze, Dacre's cooler hues and clear atmosphere are calm and gentle. Like Swynnerton, her rendering of the *duomo* is pale and light-drenched, with hardly any indication of the black and white stripes that characterise the building. The slight shift in perspective between the two views leads Dacre to include the empty, lone arch to the left of the cathedral, a remnant of an expansion project abandoned when plague consumed the city in 1348.⁹² Though pleasant to look at, Dacre's work does not have the drama of Swynnerton's, nor quite the same interest in the thick textuality of her paint. The textured paint handling Swynnerton uses is not present in Dacre's work. Instead, Dacre's painting has a smooth surface and a calm atmosphere. Without the view of the road leading up into the town that Swynnerton's picture depicts, Dacre's lacks any sense of narrative at all. It is entirely a landscape, concerned with the ways the buildings of Siena form a skyline and interact with the

⁹² For more on medieval Siena, see William M. Bowsky, *A Medieval Commune: Siena under the Nine, 1287-1355* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

setting sun. It is less grounded—the viewer has a sense of floating in space, rather than entering into a landscape.

Placing these two works side by side allows us to see one example of the artistic conversation that occurred between Swynnerton and Dacre on their numerous travels to Italy between 1874 and circa 1910. It is impossible to know the exact manner in which these two works were created. Perhaps the two women were painting alongside each other, causing the slight difference in perspective: Swynnerton slightly down the steep path from which this view is visible, further to the right, and Dacre on more level ground, more to the left. Perhaps they painted these scenes after returning from their trip, helping each other remember the details of the landscape. The details of their practice do not survive, though Swynnerton spoke in later life of her commitment to painting *en plein air*, which suggests that her work might have been done in situ. She also claimed that ‘it is difficult to say when my pictures are painted, for I keep going at them for several years.’⁹³ This practice of revisiting works many times over a long period suggests that her works would be influenced by interactions with friends after the moment of first recording a scene. As she worked, Swynnerton would probably have seen Dacre’s picture of the same scene progressing, helping her think through her own composition.

This kind of collaboration, which is built on sustained shared experiences and significant exchange of ideas, pushed Swynnerton and Dacre in pioneering artistic directions.⁹⁴ As described in my introduction, collaboration has traditionally been understood and readily traceable when it is characterised by shared physical or tangible work—for example, two sets of hands making an object. In this case, I use the term in a broader sense to include work that is equally significant but less tangible: acts of care, inspiration, and knowledge exchange.

⁹³ Annie Louisa Swynnerton to Mr Brown, September 16, 1922, National Gallery of Canada Archives, scanned document provided by the Archives to the author. Given the date of this remark, it was most likely made in reference to Swynnerton’s later and much larger pictures, which would have warranted significantly more work than her early landscapes. However, this insight into her practice is still useful for ascertaining the speed at which she worked and her penchant for returning to works multiple times.

⁹⁴ John-Steiner, *Creative Collaboration*, 3.

Swynnerton and Dacre collaborated in this way throughout their explorations of Italy over several decades. This chapter will examine this collaboration using the relational methodology I outlined in the introduction, with the intention of revealing a more comprehensive understanding of their artistic practices over the course of their careers.

Very little written documentation about either artist survives, particularly documents about Dacre. Swynnerton's significant professional success in her later life, culminating in her election to the Royal Academy, resulted in more of a written record of her career, though it is biased towards the final decades of her life. Because of this imbalance in the available resources about these two women, my research is heavily grounded in visual analysis. Using the surviving body of work of both women to track the visual evidence of their artistic exchange is not only an effective tool for a deeper examination of their paintings, but also offers a methodology for reconstructing some of the missing parts of their stories. Their collaboration was complementary: productive because of the differences between the two women.⁹⁵ Through exchange of ways of working, styles, and artistic ideas, they engaged in a correspondence about how to depict the world. In such a partnership, choosing to depict the same subject is an innovative, collaborative tool. A common manifestation of this type of collaboration, writes Vera John-Steiner, 'occurs when friends choose to render the same motif in different ways.'⁹⁶

These two paintings of Siena are from relatively early in the careers of Swynnerton and Dacre, though they were late bloomers as artists. They first travelled to Italy together aged thirty, after spending several years studying at the Manchester School of Art, where they met. A comparison between their works over their decades of friendship continues to produce many of the same visual contrasts - Swynnerton's work is more textured and dramatic in its palette and angularity, and Dacre's work is much softer. The two women shared a prolonged fascination

⁹⁵ John-Steiner, *Creative Collaboration*, 70.

⁹⁶ John-Steiner, *Creative Collaboration*, 74.

with the Italian landscape, and although their work was never identical, their styles and interests evolved along similar lines over the course of their careers. As they progressed, each artist wove strands of the other's approach to painting into her own work, synthesising the inspirations working together generated. Their combined bodies of work are a striking visual depiction of their friendship, both as a document of their shared travels and as a representation of their collaborative creative evolution. The ability of each woman to travel and work freely and productively was enabled by the friendship of the other, and their work was in aesthetic conversation throughout their careers.

In the few previous discussions of Swynnerton's work, her Italian works, especially landscapes, have been overlooked in favour of her figural works. Describing Swynnerton's Italian landscapes, Pamela Gerrish Nunn wrote, 'the materiality of these subjects seems in sharp contrast with the imaginative canvases for which she was known, and they should be understood as minor works which afforded the artist some relief from the demands of figurative composition'⁹⁷ In fact, it is the very materiality of these works which make them so relevant for further study. Swynnerton's figural works, which include more conventional portraits as well as inventive symbolist-adjacent works, are remarkable and worthy of the attention they have been afforded. They, too, are characterised by a significant materiality: the artist's paint handling favours impasto and heavy, textured brushstrokes that give the canvas a striking three-dimensionality. The Manchester Art Gallery held a retrospective of Swynnerton in 2018 which was the first significant exhibition and scholarly reappraisal of her work in the twenty-first century. This exhibition and its accompanying catalogue, by Katie J.T. Herrington and Rebecca

⁹⁷ Pamela Gerrish Nunn, 'Catalogue entry for The Olive Gatherers,' in *I Giardini Delle Regine: Of Queen's Gardens: The Myth of Florence in the Pre-Raphaelite Milieu and in American Culture*, eds. Margherita Ciacci and Grazia Gobbi Sica (Livorno: Sillabe, 2004), 205.

Milner, offer fruitful insights into Swynnerton's work and life, and some into Dacre's, but still spend little time on the landscapes.⁹⁸

Interestingly, Dacre's Italian landscapes received more attention during her lifetime and were considered a significant part of her artistic identity. Of the fifteen paintings Dacre exhibited at the New English Art Club (NEAC) between 1906 and 1916, only one depicted a subject that was not Italian.⁹⁹ In an obituary of her in the Manchester *Guardian*, this body of work was described as having a 'grave, serene, and intimate beauty not readily appraised by casual sketchers and tourists.'¹⁰⁰ Dacre held an exhibition of her Italian pictures at Walker's Gallery in 1912 that was well-received. One reviewer wrote in *The Times*: 'We can call to mind few modern painters who can render the different phases of Italian colour with greater accuracy than this lady, who has evidently lived long in the country and learned to love it in all its moods and tenses.'¹⁰¹ It is all the more remarkable that these works have received little to no attention from scholars since these contemporary reviews, given both their positive reception and their obvious centrality to Dacre's reputation. They share the 'materiality' and modern qualities of Swynnerton's paintings—indeed, the *Times* reviewer describes Dacre as a 'modern painter.' The term 'materiality' in this chapter, and throughout this thesis, is used to describe the use of paint (or other medium) in a way that is not solely to describe or represent an image of something else, but also to explore or highlight the qualities of the material of paint itself, as established in the introduction.

Swynnerton and Dacre painted Italian scenes from 1874, the year of their first trip to Italy together, until approximately 1910, when both were nearing seventy. This consistency of sustained interest in the subject of the Italian landscape is striking and indicates the significance of these works to their respective careers. The purpose of this chapter is to trace their friendship

⁹⁸ Katie J. T. Herrington and Rebecca Milner, *Annie Swynnerton: Painting Light and Hope* (Manchester: Manchester Art Gallery, 2018).

⁹⁹ Charles Baile de Laperriere, ed., *The New English Art Club Exhibitors 1886-2001*, vol. I (Calne, Wiltshire: Hilmarton Manor Press, 2002), 319.

¹⁰⁰ 'Miss S. Isabel Dacre,' *The Manchester Guardian*, 21 February 1933.

¹⁰¹ 'Art Exhibitions,' *The Times* (London), 12 March 1912.

via these works and examine these works via their friendship. Thus, the goal is not simply to appreciate their friendship's impact on their work, but it is also to reappraise the way these works have been viewed (or ignored) with the added context of the friendship between the two artists. In so doing, I put into practice my methodology of examining these artists and their work relationally.

Outsiders from the Start

Both Swynnerton and Dacre shared a Northern identity, placing them outside the cultural and geographic centre of Britain. Annie Louisa Robinson was born in 1844 in Manchester to middle-class parents. After a change in fortune caused her father to declare bankruptcy in 1869, it became necessary for Annie and her six sisters to earn their own livings. Annie and two of her younger sisters, Emily and Julia, enrolled in the Manchester School of Art. Annie was a student at the school from 1870 to 1874, from the age of twenty-six to thirty. This was a late start for a training in the arts, and Swynnerton would have been surrounded by students younger than herself. As art schools began to accept women, they were quickly filled with single women who were seeking an occupation, out of either need or interest.¹⁰² In the second half of the nineteenth century, a demographic mismatch between the number of men and women in Britain meant that statistically, there was a significant number of women who would remain unmarried.¹⁰³ In her late twenties, Swynnerton was of an age at which she would have expected to be married, and therefore likely expected to remain a spinster. Therefore, the stakes for her ability to support herself independently were high. While a student, she won a Queen's Prize in her second year and earned a second place Princess of Wales Scholarship, which had a prize of £11. An obituary of Swynnerton described her as having studied art 'despite the opposition of her family to professional painting as a career for women,' yet there is little evidence of any great opposition

¹⁰² For more on this, see Cherry, *Beyond the Frame*.

¹⁰³ Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men*, 183.

from her family, particularly as she was accompanied in her studies by two of her sisters.¹⁰⁴ The three women lived together in a studio near the school, in an unusually independent situation for the period.¹⁰⁵ This start to her career as an artist already indicates Swynnerton's propensity to surround herself with a female support system.

Despite the lack of specific evidence that the young Annie faced opposition to her chosen career from her family, she still certainly experienced the general hurdles of attempting to have a successful professional career as a woman. The shame she may have felt over abandoning traditional feminine roles and lack of encouragement from those around her in these early years may have been significant.¹⁰⁶ A journalist quoted her as saying,

I have had to struggle so hard. You see when I was young, women could not paint – or so it was said. The world believed that and did not want the work of women, however sincere, however good. I refused to accept that. I fought and I suffered.¹⁰⁷

Genuine encouragement from equal peers was difficult to come by for a woman in a male-dominated profession, as any encouragement from male peers was clouded by the imbalance in socioeconomic power between men and women.¹⁰⁸ The contradiction between the feminine ideal of naiveté and the need for savviness to pursue a career in art was difficult to navigate.¹⁰⁹ Later in her life, Swynnerton would describe herself as 'principally self-taught,' despite her years at the Manchester School of Art.¹¹⁰ Perhaps an indication of the lack of education she felt she received at the school or the importance of her own evolution as an artist after leaving, it could also be reflective of her discomfort with her perceived late start to her career. In any event, this

¹⁰⁴ 'Mrs. Swynnerton Dead,' *Art Digest* (New York), 1 November 1933. Scanned document provided to the author by National Gallery of Canada Archives.

¹⁰⁵ Herrington and Milner, *Annie Swynnerton*, 10.

¹⁰⁶ Susan P. Casteras and Linda H Peterson, *A Struggle for Fame: Victorian Women Artists and Authors* (New Haven: Yale Center for British Art, 1994), 8.

¹⁰⁷ *The Evening News*, 15 February 1933, cited in Herrington and Milner, *Annie Swynnerton*, p. 32.

¹⁰⁸ See Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men*.

¹⁰⁹ Casteras, *A Struggle for Fame*, 30.

¹¹⁰ 'Annie Louisa Swynnerton, Information Form: For the Purpose of Making a Record of Canadian Artists and Their Work,' 29 June 1920, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Canada. Scanned document provided by National Gallery of Canada Archives.

characterization sets her outside the normal path of professional Victorian artists, most of whom were formally instructed from adolescence.

Swynnerton's travels to Italy began in 1874. Between her trips, she gained stature in the Manchester art world and eventually moved to London in 1879. In doing so, she joined the ranks of 'provincial' artists who 'moved on' from cities like Manchester to London.¹¹¹ In 1883, at the age of forty, she married Manx sculptor Joseph Swynnerton, whom she met in Rome, where he had lived for almost a decade. Joseph was just thirty-one and considered himself a late bloomer like Annie; he started studying sculpture at the age of twenty-one and constantly felt as if he was trying to catch up to those who started younger.¹¹² He was by all accounts a pleasant man and loved his life in Rome. In his 1910 obituary, his brother Frederick Swynnerton described his life there as 'joyous and picturesque.'¹¹³ The Swynnertons divided their time between Rome and Fulham, London, from the time of their marriage until Joseph's death in 1910. Swynnerton's career progressed successfully through the 1910s and '20s, culminating in her election as an Associate Royal Academician in 1922. She was the first woman since Angelica Kauffman to be elected an Associate Royal Academician, though the honour was rescinded several days later when the Academy realised that at seventy-eight, she had technically exceeded the age limit permitted to admit members.¹¹⁴ Though the situation was disappointing and embarrassing for both parties, Swynnerton retained the honour of having been the first to receive the award in over a century, and was referred to as an A.R.A. at the time of her death. When members of the press visited her after the announcement of her election, Swynnerton received them in a decadent fashion and is recorded as saying 'Here I am with all my jewellery on.' The unnamed

¹¹¹ John Hughs Gordon Archer, *Art and Architecture in Victorian Manchester: Ten Illustrations of Patronage and Practice* (Manchester: Manchester University Press: 1985), 9.

¹¹² Frederick Swynnerton, 'A Manx Sculptor and His Work,' *Mannin* 2, no. 3 (1914), <http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/mannin/v3p129.htm>.

¹¹³ Swynnerton, 'A Manx Sculptor and His Work.'

¹¹⁴ L. G.-S., 'Mrs. Swynnerton Is No Longer an A.R.A.' Scanned document provided by National Gallery of Canada Archives.

reporter who recorded this described her as looking ‘like a real old-fashioned Mid-Victorian, except that she was utterly indifferent to everything except her work.’¹¹⁵

Susan Isabel (sometimes recorded as ‘Isobel’ and sometimes ‘Isabel S.’) Dacre was also born in 1844, in Leamington, Warwickshire. Her early years were plagued by ‘sufferings and hardship’ of which she ‘could never be persuaded to speak,’ but this was resolved when her mother became the landlady of the Stamford Arms, a pub in a village south of Manchester.¹¹⁶ From 1858 to 1871, Dacre lived in Europe. She attended school in France and then worked as a governess. She spent the winter of 1869 in Italy, before returning to Paris, where she was present for the Paris Commune and was ‘with difficulty extricated from a perilous situation.’¹¹⁷ In 1871, she returned to England and enrolled in the Manchester School of Art. While there, she won the Queen’s Prize in 1873 and 1874. Dacre never married. Though she spent time in London in the 1870s and ‘80s, she resided in Manchester from 1883 until her death in 1933. She exhibited at the NEAC, various London venues, and was closely involved in Manchester’s art world, including the Manchester Academy of Fine Art. Her nephew, the artist Francis Dodd, lived with her in Manchester for a time, and later hosted her at his home in Blackheath.¹¹⁸ The two exhibited work together on at least two occasions, in 1913 and 1927. His portrait of her, exhibited at the NEAC in 1927, (c. 1927) (Figure 1.4), is a warm, elegant impression of Dacre in her eighties.

Dacre and Swynnerton both maintained a life-long connection with the Manchester School of Art, both exhibiting in the Manchester Academy’s Annual Exhibition as late as 1927.¹¹⁹ The city underwent a rapid evolution during their lifetimes, as the manufacturing that made it a

¹¹⁵ ‘Mrs. Swynnerton Decked Self with Gems to Receive Word of Brief Honors in Art.’ Scanned document provided by National Gallery of Canada Archives.

¹¹⁶ ‘Miss S. Isabel Dacre,’ *The Manchester Guardian*.

¹¹⁷ ‘Miss S. Isabel Dacre,’ *The Manchester Guardian*.

¹¹⁸ Dodd is a representative example of a prolific and successful academic painter about whom little if anything has been written, but whose work fills British museum collections. Read more about him on the National Portrait Gallery’s website (npg.org) or in David Buckman, *Artists in Britain Since 1945* (Art Dictionary Ltd, part of Sansom and Company, 2006).

¹¹⁹ ‘Manchester Academy Of Fine Arts,’ *Times* (London), 8 February 1927.

metropolis also made its more fortunate residents wealthy. The Art Treasures Exhibition held in Manchester in 1857 remains the largest art exhibition ever held in the UK. 1.3 million people attended, making it exceptionally likely that both Swynnerton and Dacre would have done so—both would have been thirteen years old at the time. Even if they did not, the impact of the exhibition on Manchester and its surrounding communities in bringing art to the forefront of people’s consciousness was significant. Despite a dismissive attitude from London elites, which persists to some degree to this day, Manchester was a modern urban city with a thriving artistic class, particularly in regard to patrons, by the time Swynnerton and Dacre came of age as artists.

The two women met while studying at the Manchester School of Art in the early 1870s. They were almost exactly the same age and were both beginning their artistic educations rather later than usual, in their mid-twenties. Together they decided to travel to Italy in 1874, partly enabled by the cash prize Swynnerton had received with her second place Princess of Wales scholarship. Swynnerton had never been abroad, but Dacre was well-travelled and had visited Italy at least once before, and therefore was a particularly valuable travel companion for Swynnerton. The two women were thirty years old when they set off on their first trip. Marie Bashkirtseff, who would later be their fellow student at the Académie Julian in Paris, remarked in her famous Diary that ‘at age thirty maturity commences;’ she was adamant about achieving fame before this eventuality, ideally by the age of seventeen.¹²⁰ It is indicative of their singularity that Swynnerton and Dacre were embarking on the nascent stage of their lives as artists at what was considered by their contemporaries to be a woman’s middle age—yet another reason they fell outside the normal circles of English artists.

¹²⁰ Marie Bashkirtseff, *The Journal of Marie Bashkirtseff*, trans. Mathilde Blind, with an introduction by Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock (London: Virago, 1985), 287.

The Idea of Italy

By the time of their trip in 1874, Italy's place in the modern British imagination had been developing for almost two centuries. In the eighteenth century, the primacy of the Grand Tour as a cultural experience for male members of the upper classes, which usually included in the Italian leg of the journey visits to Venice, Florence, Rome, Naples, and Pompeii or Herculaneum, was unmatched. The objects brought back to England by grand tourists, as well as the attitudes and anecdotes, had significant cultural and political influence at home.¹²¹ In the first half of the nineteenth century, British travellers to Italy were visiting a geographical space embroiled in the struggle to become, or not to become, a nation state. The variety of well-known Anglophone expatriates living in Italy between the middle and later decades of the century, or spending significant time there, included Britons Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, William Makepeace Thackeray, George Eliot, Christina Rossetti, Vernon Lee and Americans Harriet Hosmer and John Singer Sargent.¹²² The slightly earlier generation of women in Italy, which included figures such as Anna Jameson, Jane Benham Hay, and Marie Spartali Stillman, laid the groundwork for this growing Anglophone colony.¹²³ The influence of Italy on their work, particularly the paintings of Hay and Stillman, was significant. Their work was inspired by the aesthetic priorities of medieval and early Renaissance Italian art, reflecting trends in English painting. Despite the foundational importance of Italy and its culture on British culture, the artists and other creative professionals who chose to move to Italy in this period were outliers.

¹²¹ For more on the legacy of the Grand Tour in Britain, see the work of Chloe Chard, including her edited volume: Chloe Chard and Helen Langdon, eds., *Transport: Travel, Pleasure, and Imaginative Geography, 1600-1830* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1996).

¹²² For more critical work on the colony of women artists working in Rome that included Harriet Hosmer, see the recent scholarship of Melissa Gustin: for example, Melissa L. Gustin, "Corps a Corps': Martyrs, Models, and Myths in Harriet Hosmer's Beatrice Cenci,' *Art History* 44, no. 4 (2021): 824-53. See also Melissa Dabakis, *A Sisterhood of Sculptors: American Artists in Nineteenth-Century Rome*, (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014).

¹²³ For more on these figures, see Margaretta S. Frederick and Jan Marsh, *Poetry in Beauty: The Pre-Raphaelite Art of Marie Spartali Stillman*, (Delaware Art Museum, 2015); Judith Johnston, 'Anna Jameson: Victorian, Feminist, Woman of Letters,' (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1997); Marsh and Nunn, *Pre-Raphaelite Women Artists*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 1998).

The most common path, especially for English and American women seeking a European artistic education, was still to move to Paris.

Italy existed in the English imagination through the words and images of figures like these expatriates as much as it existed physically. The ‘allegory of a gifted, suffering *Italia*’ fighting for her unification in the middle decades of the century was a symbol for women artists and writers seeking a model for their own ways of living and working outside those offered by Victorian Britain.¹²⁴ It felt accessible to women travellers, yet still foreign enough to remain interesting. ‘For women of various social backgrounds,’ writes Margherita Ciacci, ‘Italy began to appear in the light of a lost paradise, a site of sensual satisfaction and emotional fulfilment denied them in their country of origin.’¹²⁵ It offered an escape from the strict expectations of young ladyhood at home without posing a threat.

By the time Swynnerton and Dacre took their first trip to Italy together, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the idea of ‘Italy’ had evolved beyond the powerful associations it garnered during the decades on either side of the Risorgimento.¹²⁶ Yet it remained potent, nonetheless. As E.M. Forster examined in his novels set in Italy, particularly *A Room with a View*, published in 1908, Italy continued existing, into the Edwardian era, as an escape for a certain class of Englishwomen (and men), a haven from the pressures of modernity and propriety.¹²⁷ At the same time, it was still considered a respectable and civilised place for a young woman to visit. Suzanne Roszak writes that, in Forster’s novel, ‘the anticipation that Italy’s influence might work to consolidate rather than challenge an Englishwoman’s social identity

¹²⁴ Esther Schor, ‘Acts of Union: Theodosia Garrow Trollope and Frances Power Cobbe on the Kingdom of Italy,’ in *Unfolding the South: Nineteenth-Century British Women Writers and Artists in Italy*, ed. Alison Chapman and Jane Stabler (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 90-109, p. 91.

¹²⁵ Ciacci, ‘Not All Gardens of Delights Are the Same. Or How Journeys, Imagery and Stories Induce Changes and Taste,’ in Ciacci and Sica, *I Giardini Delle Regine*, 12-39, p. 16.

¹²⁶ Marsh, ‘The Old Tuscan Rapture’: The Response to Italy and Its Art in the Work of Marie Spartali Stillman,’ in Chapman and Stabler, *Unfolding the South*, 159-182, p. 159.

¹²⁷ E.M. Forster, *A Room with a View* (London: Edward Arnold, 1908). For recent scholarship on queer or lesbian potentiality in Forster, see Rachel Gaubinger, ‘The ‘Voiceless Language’ of Sisters: Queer Possibility in E.M. Forster’s *Howards End*,’ *Journal of Modern Literature* 45, no. 2 (2022): 52–68.

rests on the view of Italy as both a refined civilising force and an inferior Other from which England can be successfully distinguished and separated.¹²⁸ This duality of meanings was central to the appeal of Italy to women like Swynnerton and Dacre. It was exotic and exciting, yet also ancient and familiar, and therefore accessible, literally and figuratively, to two women travelling unchaperoned.

The appeal of international travel more broadly for women artists was significant because of the greater accessibility of art education in Europe compared to Britain. Private Parisian art schools and ateliers accepted women students to study the undraped nude in the mid-nineteenth century, decades before the Slade School of Art would be the first institution to do so in Britain.¹²⁹ The importance of the accessibility of international travel for women is key to understanding the specific context in which women artists were training and working in the nineteenth century. By the time Swynnerton and Dacre went abroad, art schools in Britain had become more accessible to women and the Slade had opened in London. This was still not as robust an array of options as could be found in Paris. Notwithstanding, the foundations had been laid by previous generations of women artists for travelling abroad in order to pursue a more comprehensive art education. Though Paris was the centre of art schools in the period, broader travel through the European continent was part of this legacy of internationalism for women.

Though their first trip, in 1874, is the only journey that can be dated with certainty, the two women travelled to Italy several times over the ten years between their first trip and Swynnerton's marriage. On these early trips, their works were mostly cityscapes, though they also painted portraits of locals, which might also be described as genre scenes. Swynnerton's

¹²⁸ Suzanne Roszak, 'Social Non-Conformists in Forster's Italy: Otherness and the Enlightened English Tourist,' *ariel: A Review of International English Literature* 45, no. 1-2 (2014): 167-194, p. 169.

¹²⁹ For more information about women artists studying and working in Paris in this period, see the exhibition catalogue by the American Federation of Arts, *Women Artists in Paris, 1850-1900* (New Haven and New York: Yale University Press and American Federation of Arts, 2017).

Town of Siena (Figure 1.1) and *Siena* (c. 1883-1910) (Figure 1.5) both approach the city as an environment, depicting the two cities from a great enough distance that their skylines are visible. Both are concerned with rendering the steepness of the hills upon which these Tuscan hill cities are built and do so in almost identical ways. They are so alike that the cities themselves are almost indistinguishable—the two paintings could easily be read as alternative views of the same locale. They share the same brown, earthy palette and interest in the texture of Italian surfaces and spaces. A notable distinction between them is Swynnerton's unorthodox choice to format *Siena* in a portrait orientation, with the effect of further dramatizing the sense of height.¹³⁰

Many of Dacre's works have not been dated, so it is more difficult to place her works alongside Swynnerton's accurately. Her likely early Italian landscapes include *Assisi from the City Walls* and *The Walls of Siena* (both undated) (Figures 1.6 and 1.7). The subjects of these works match to geographies of those of Swynnerton in the 1870s and early 1880s, further suggesting that Dacre painted them around the same time, concurrent with travels with Swynnerton. Though these works also depict cities, they have much more of a traditional sense of landscape, with a focus on the natural world around the built cityscape. The cities depicted, Assisi and Siena, are shown from a greater distance, placing them within the larger spatial context in which they sit. The foregrounds are filled with verdant foliage and the atmosphere has the same clarity that we see in her first painting of Siena, with bright blue skies. The cities in these works are neat, serene, and distant, unlike Swynnerton's respective renderings of cities, which appear haphazard and slightly gritty. The softness of Dacre's brushwork and colour palette is reminiscent of early Impressionist landscapes, such as those of Sisley or Pissarro, which she could have encountered during her time in Paris in the 1870s, which will be discussed later in this chapter.¹³¹

¹³⁰ This painting was previously identified as *Assisi*, but the title has been corrected by Birmingham Art Gallery.

¹³¹ Impressionism is one of the most studied movements in the history of Western art. The literature is vast, but for more on landscapes see Andrea P.A. Belloli and Richard R. Brettell, *A Day in the Country: Impressionism and the French Landscape* (Los Angeles Country Museum of Art, 1984); James Henry Rubin, *Impressionism and the Modern Landscape: Productivity, Technology and Urbanization from Manet to Van Gogh* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2008).

Swynnerton's *Interior of San Miniato* (1881) (Figure 1.8) and Dacre's *Gateway at Siena* (undated) (Figure 1.9), which is likely roughly contemporary to her other depictions of Siena, treat the city from a closer vantage point. These two works are street scenes, though they might be more accurately described as architectural studies or streetscapes. Dacre's scene includes three figures sitting in the doorway of a building that appears to be a church. A few pedestrians are suggested in the distance, but all of the figures are too vaguely rendered to be identifiable. They are minor details in a painting whose real subject is the perfect framing of the distant Torre del Mangia, in Siena's central Piazza del Campo, through the brick archway in the foreground. Swynnerton's painting of San Miniato al Monte in Florence is entirely empty of figures. Like Dacre, she takes an archway, or series of arches, as her subjects. Swynnerton's palette is muted and earthy, lacking the lightness that Dacre's characteristic blue sky gives her work. While the ostensible subject of Swynnerton's picture is the structure of San Miniato, the haziness of the rendering of the space prevents focus on the detail of the masonry or frescos pictured. Instead, the painting evokes a sense of the atmosphere of the space. The warm tones and chalky texture of the surface of the paint communicate a visceral feeling of a hot, dusty environment. These two modalities of viewing a space—from afar, as a landscape, and up close, as a cityscape—echo the more subtly different modalities of viewing and of inhabiting space visible between Swynnerton and Dacre's works. Though patterns emerge from the very beginning of their travels that allow the viewer to place them in conversation, and indeed demonstrate that they are talking to one another, the two artists have distinct styles and ways of looking.

Italian Portraits

Alongside these early landscapes and cityscapes, both Swynnerton and Dacre painted portraits of local Italians, especially Italian women and children. These portraits are generally characterised by the traditional composition of Victorian portraits, with a seated figure shown as a bust, yet

they depict the less conventional subjects of working-class locals.¹³² Swynnerton's *Jebsa (Roman Lady)* (1874) (Figure 1.10), for example, painted the year of her first trip to Italy, seems to be titled with the name of the sitter herself, suggesting a more personal relationship between Swynnerton and her model.¹³³ Though the work has a traditional composition for a portrait, it is composed with a dark, unadorned or even described background. The chiaroscuro and loose, thick impasto are reminiscent of Rembrandt and Velazquez, indicating Swynnerton's familiarity with European old masters.¹³⁴ The subject matter joins the Northern European tradition of rendering 'exotic' peasants and working-class individuals, often from Southern Europe.¹³⁵ Dacre also made images of local Italians, again undated. *Italian Girl with Necklace* and *Italian Child* (both before 1884) (Figures 1.11 and 1.12) are both posed portraits with solid or non-descript backgrounds, like Swynnerton's *Jebsa*. These works by Dacre contrast less sharply with her portraits of English children, such as *A Girl (Bertha Edgar)* (before 1884) (Figure 1.13), which also shows the bust of a child against a solid, coloured backdrop. The Italian works are rendered with looser brushstrokes and with figures glancing away from the artist/viewer. Dacre's other portraits of children, including *A Girl*, as well as *Portrait of a Child* (undated) (Figure 1.14), *Portrait of a Girl* (undated) (Figure 1.15), and *Little Annie Rooney*, (1898) (Figure 1.16), show a little girl making direct eye contact with the viewer. This discrepancy in pose is interesting and suggests that Dacre conceived of the Italian images as studies rather than portraits, less interested in capturing a finished likeness and more in exploring manners of representation.

¹³² For more on Victorian portraits, see Colleen Denney, *Women, Portraiture, and the Crisis of Identity in Victorian England: My Lady Scandalous Reconsidered* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009); Richard Ormond, *Early Victorian Portraits* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 1973).

¹³³ Herrington and Milner, *Annie Swynnerton*, 36.

¹³⁴ For more on these figures, see Enriqueta Harris, *Velazquez* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982); Dawson W. Carr and Xavier Bray, *Velazquez* (London: National Gallery, 2006); Ludwig Münz, *Rembrandt* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1984).

¹³⁵ See the work of Jane Benham Hay for an example of another English woman artist making paintings of European, especially Italian, peasants in the second half of the nineteenth century. For more information see Marsh and Nunn, *Pre-Raphaelite Women Artists*.

The question of race is raised by both artists in these early images of Italian figures, which depict individuals with noticeably dark skin tones. Later works also depicting Italian women by both artists, such as *Italian Women in Church* by Dacre (undated) (Figure 1.17) and *An Italian Mother and Child*, by Swynnerton (1886) (Figure 1.18), show figures with paler, Northern European complexions.¹³⁶ Other English and Northern European artists painting Italian figures often depicted them with pale skin, such as Frederic Leighton's *Roman Peasant Girl* (1840) (Figure 1.19), which has been juxtaposed with Swynnerton's *Jebsa* by Herrington and Milner.¹³⁷ A closer comparison can be drawn between John Singer Sargent's *Head of a Capri Girl* (1878) (Figure 1.20), which shares the loose, rough paint handling and dark-hued skin tones of Dacre's and Swynnerton's respective portraits.¹³⁸ We might see this as a shift towards more accurate depictions of local Italians, but it could also be seen as exoticizing. Dacre, Swynnerton, and Sargent firmly distinguish these figures from their other portraits of English or American sitters through their poses, local costumes, and looser, more casual paint handling, as well as skin colour. This distinction brings to mind the tradition of 'fancy pictures' of working-class figures, a term first used to describe works by Thomas Gainsborough in the eighteenth century and indicates the visual inheritance influencing Swynnerton and Dacre's works. The issue of darker skin colour jars with the classical ideal of Mediterranean beauty located in the pure whiteness of marble sculptures, which itself undergirds much of Western Europe's fascination with whiteness.¹³⁹ Race in this context is deeply intertwined with class—while the visual reference of darker and lighter skin tone is what communicates difference to the viewer, more lies behind the

¹³⁶ Another discussion could be had about the maternal imagery of these works, which deserves separate time and space outside this thesis. For a canonical discussion of paintings of mothers and children by women in the nineteenth century, see Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism, and Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 1988).

¹³⁷ Herrington and Milner, *Annie Swynnerton*, 36. For more on Frederic Leighton, see Elizabeth Prettejohn and Tim Barringer, eds., *Frederic Leighton: Antiquity, Renaissance, Modernity* (London: Paul Mellon Centre, 1999).

¹³⁸ For more on Sargent and race, see Andrew Stephenson, 'A Keen Sight for the Sign of the Races': John Singer Sargent, Whiteness and the Fashioning of Anglo-Performativity,' *Visual Culture in Britain* 6, no. 2 (2005): 207-225.

¹³⁹ For recent discussions of the legacy of classicism and race in nineteenth-century Britain, see Cora Gilroy-Ware, *The Classical Body in Romantic Britain* (London: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2020).

canvas. The status of these figures as peasants or rural working-class people Othered them to English artists as much as their skin colour.

The Power of Pilgrimage

These early years of travel together were personally as well as artistically significant for both women. Both were supporting themselves by this point in their lives, and the cost of travel, coupled with the risk that the work that came out of it would not sell, made such journeys audacious. At the beginning of their careers, the two women did not have reputations or regular patrons to fall back on if their investment of time and money in travel abroad did not bear fruit. The idea of travel was increasingly accessible as the nineteenth century progressed. As the world seemed to open up, strata of meanings developed to differentiate between types of travel among different classes. For the intellectual middle classes, to which Swynnerton and Dacre belonged, travel to places of rich cultural meaning such as Italy became almost sacred. Travellers like them in search of the venerable artefacts and geographies that are the foundation of Western art have been called ‘passionate pilgrims.’¹⁴⁰ The concept of pilgrimage, used here in a secular sense, still evokes the fervour of religious travellers, and is defined in contrast to tourism. That word, as several of Forster’s characters in his Italian novels tell us, was common, philistine, even as the act of travel to see great cultural sites was ever more valued. Though Swynnerton and Dacre were travelling for pleasure, like tourists, they were also travelling for work. As such, they occupied a liminal space between categories of traveller. The deeper implications of engagement with place that pilgrimage carries help define exactly what the two women sought and found on their journeys to Italy. As Alexandra Peat describes, a pilgrimage is a mediation between individual and place, in which ‘the sacred nature of any location thus becomes [...] a function of the

¹⁴⁰ Grazia Gobbi Sica, ‘Florence between the 19th and 20th Centuries: An Anglo-American Perspective,’ in Ciacci and Sica, *I Giardini Delle Regine*, 40-67, p. 42.

interaction between the individual and the geographical space that he or she encounters.¹⁴¹ It is 'a process and way of seeing.'¹⁴² The connection Swynnerton and Dacre felt with the Italian landscape and culture is borne out by their return to it again and again throughout their lives, and by the evolution of their depiction of it in their work.

Aesthetic Contexts

In the late 1870s, Swynnerton and Dacre attended the Académie Julian in Paris, in another example of their assertive search for equal access. The Académie Julian remains famous for the sheer number of female artists who passed through it and became prominent, though it counted many male students among its ranks as well. Lack of comparable institutions in other places meant that women from around the world converged in Paris at Julian's, and later at other similar ateliers that accepted women. The Académie Julian, founded in 1869, was a 'challenge to the art establishment of its time, especially in that authority was shifted from the professors to the students.'¹⁴³ In an interview, founder Rodolphe Julian stated that 'most women who have become famous in French art belonged directly to an artistic family,' because there was nowhere for those who did not have this background to study.¹⁴⁴ His school filled a gaping hole in the market for such women. By the time Dacre and Swynnerton attended, in 1877, Julian had so many students that separate studios had been established for men and women.¹⁴⁵ All students studied from the live model, including the undraped nude, which was unavailable to most women elsewhere, including to Dacre and Swynnerton at the Manchester School of Art.¹⁴⁶ This

¹⁴¹ Alexandra Peat, 'Modern Pilgrimage and the Authority of Space in Forster's *A Room with a View* and Woolf's *The Voyage Out*,' *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* 36, no. 4 (2003): 149-153, p. 141.

¹⁴² Peat, 'Modern Pilgrimage,' 141.

¹⁴³ Catherine Fehrer, 'Women at the Académie Julian in Paris,' *Burlington Magazine* 136, no. 1100 (1994): 752-757, p. 757.

¹⁴⁴ 'Julian's Studios. An Interview with their Creator', *The Sketch*, June 1893, 473-74, cited in Fehrer, 'Women at the Académie Julian,' 752.

¹⁴⁵ Fehrer, 'Women at the Académie Julian,' 753.

¹⁴⁶ Herrington and Milner, *Annie Swynnerton*, 13.

exposure was crucial to any artist's education, and Swynnerton in particular went on to paint grand allegorical scenes featuring nudes, such as *Cupid and Psyche* (1890) (Figure 1.21).

Despite Julian's unusual commitment to accessibility for women, his school's treatment of them was not equal to that of men. Swynnerton and Dacre's fellow student at Julian's in the late 1870s, Bashkirtseff, remarked that 'the professors are prejudiced against women,' and that Julian 'says that *sometimes* his female students are as clever as the men' [emphasis added].¹⁴⁷ Bashkirtseff describes an environment that is intensely competitive among the women students, as they feel they are vying for a limited number of positions as successful women artists. Interestingly, after a short time studying in Paris, Bashkirtseff became obsessed with the idea of going to Italy, writing that 'to devote oneself to art, one should go to Italy.'¹⁴⁸ She remained mostly in Paris for the rest of her studies and short life, but her description of Italy as a haven for true artistic development helps conjure a sense of the context in which Swynnerton and Dacre were travelling. In contrast, Frederick Swynnerton wrote that 'in selecting Rome and not Paris a great mistake was made' by Swynnerton's husband, his brother.¹⁴⁹ Though Swynnerton and Dacre preferred Italy, that they spent time in Paris as well reflects their awareness of it as the centre of the Western art world at this time. It also indicates that they were most likely exposed to avant garde trends in modern art, notably the work of the Impressionists, whose first exhibition was held in 1874. The parallels between their work and Swynnerton's and Dacre's include the practice of painting *en plein air* and the use of loose, textural brushwork to convey the sense of a landscape.

It was around the time of their studies in Paris that Swynnerton painted the portrait of Dacre with which I began this thesis. The exceptional portrait remains the only record of either woman referring to the other as 'a friend.' The French inscription might point toward the

¹⁴⁷ Bashkirtseff, *The Journal of Marie Bashkirtseff*, 203, 275.

¹⁴⁸ Bashkirtseff, *The Journal of Marie Bashkirtseff*, 264.

¹⁴⁹ Swynnerton, 'A Manx Sculptor and His Work.'

portrait having been done during or soon after the two women's time in Paris. The painting stands out amongst Swynnerton's collected portraits as strikingly crisp and cleanly lit. It is entirely focused on rendering a likeness of the sitter, unlike so much of Swynnerton's work, which is far more interested in a celebration of paint. It is a moving painting and a key piece of proof in confirming that the two women considered themselves friends.

Painting landscapes was a common subject in the nineteenth century, particularly for women. Those exhibited at the Royal Academy at mid-century were often treated as 'anecdotes of touristic charm,' but this became an untenable description as the century progressed.¹⁵⁰ As quoted earlier in this chapter, one reviewer of Dacre's landscapes specifically differentiated her from 'casual sketchers and tourists.'¹⁵¹ The complexity of landscapes increased alongside shifting cultural understandings of tourism and travel, creating space for landscapes like Swynnerton's and Dacre's that were much more than anecdotal. Landscapes expressed significant meaning in the work of female artists, and female writers, in this period. Alison Chapman and Jane Stabler elegantly describe how 'Italy's palimpsestic layering of nature and culture' and its transgression of categories and boundaries was 'often expressed in terms of the landscape.'¹⁵² Some wrote off landscapes as minor works, as Gerrish Nunn wrote off Swynnerton's. Yet in her career, and in Dacre's, these works are a constant. They were consistently the space in which these two artists explored new ideas and styles, tried things out, created paradigms of looking. That these innovations became the foundations of figurative works does not make them minor or anecdotal, but rather fundamental to the evolution of Swynnerton's and Dacre's styles.

In the late nineteenth century, there were many artists painting the Italian landscape, both locals and foreigners.¹⁵³ These artists were the inheritors of a long and storied tradition of

¹⁵⁰ Pamela Gerrish Nunn, 'Liberty, Equality, and Sorority: Women's Representations of the Unification of Italy,' in Chapman and Stabler, *Unfolding the South*, 110-136, p. 124.

¹⁵¹ 'Miss S. Isabel Dacre,' *The Manchester Guardian*.

¹⁵² Alison Chapman and Jane Stabler, 'Introduction,' in Chapman and Stabler, *Unfolding the South*, 11.

¹⁵³ A small but wide sample of said foreigners include Sargent, Laura Alma-Tadema, Hay, Stillman, Henry Scott Tuke, Frank Randal, Frederic Leighton, Christiana Jane Herringham, John Ruskin, and William Logsdail.

European landscape painting.¹⁵⁴ The group that became known at the Macchiaioli is the most stylistically relevant example of Italians painting their landscape, specifically Tuscany, in the mid to late century. The all-male group included Giuseppe Abbati, Cristiano Banti, Odoardo Borrani, Vincenzo Cabianca, Adriano Cecioni, Vito D'Ancona, Serafino De Tivoli, Giovanni Fattori, Raffaello Sernesi, Silvestro Lega and Telemaco Signorini and was centred around Florence.¹⁵⁵ They have been perhaps overly associated with the Risorgimento and depicted in scholarship as the modern nation of Italy's first national art school (though there is little scholarship about the group published in English).¹⁵⁶ While the historical connection between the group and Italian unification exists, the group is relevant here because of their painterly, impressionistic style and interest in local subject matter. Though often compared to the Impressionists, they have no tie to them beyond an interest in capturing on-the-spot sensation and using distinct individuated brushstrokes, creating scenes 'liberated from narrative consequences.'¹⁵⁷ The compositions of artists within this community departed from earlier nineteenth-century depictions of the Italian landscape, many of the most recognizable of which are by Northern European painters. The Romantic ideal of an uninhabited, pristine Italy painted by men like Fragonard, Cozens, Fries, Rørbye, Schirmer, and Böcklin laid the foundation for transcending narrative, but the Macchiaioli were the first group of artists to cross into a style that might be called Modernist. Working chiefly during the two decades before Swynnerton and Dacre first arrived in Italy in 1874, their innovations are a generation ahead of the two women. The visual connections

¹⁵⁴ For more on the tradition of European painting, see Anne Helmreich, 'Defining, Shaping, and Picturing Landscape in the Nineteenth Century,' in Arnold and Corbett, eds., *A Companion to British Art*, 317-350; Kay Dian Kriz, *The Idea of the English Landscape Painter: Genius as Alibi in the Early Nineteenth Century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997); Joseph Leo Koerner, *Caspar David Friedrich and the Subject of Landscape*, 2nd ed. (London: Reaktion, 2009); Nils Büttner, *Landscape Painting: A History*, trans. Russell Stockman (New York and London: Abbeville, 2006).

¹⁵⁵ For more on the Macchiaioli, see Edith A. Tonelli and Katherine Hart, eds., *The Macchiaioli: Painters of Italian Life, 1850-1900* (Los Angeles: Frederick S. Wight Art Gallery, University of California, Los Angeles, 1986).

¹⁵⁶ For recent scholarship on a related figure who moved in parallel circles to the Macchiaioli and had wide connections to English artists, Nino Costa, see Arnika Schmidt, *Nino Costa (1826-1903) Transnational Exchange in European Landscape Painting* (Milan: Cinisello Balsamo, Silvana Editoriale, 2016).

¹⁵⁷ Anna Ottani Cavina, 'The Landscape of the Macchiaioli: A Path Towards the Modern,' *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 18, no. 2 (2013), 225-231, p. 228.

between the Macchiaioli style and the two women are clear: the materiality of their brushstrokes, interest in light, and rejection of a sanitised countryside in favour of a warm, lived-in landscape. The Macchiaioli painted more populated scenes than Swynnerton or Dacre, some of which might be characterised as genre scenes, but they also painted landscapes or cityscapes that focused entirely on depicting the environment in paint. Raffaello Sernesi's *Tetti al sole* (1861) (Figure 1.22) is one example. This small painting depicts the backs and rooftops of a group of buildings, rendered with blocks of differently toned terracotta pinks, with angular shadows cutting through the space. The sky is a bright blue but has a darker haziness around the corners of the painting. The picture is empty of figures and entirely interested in describing the light and atmosphere of a bright day in a nondescript corner of a city or town, probably Florence or somewhere nearby. The richly textured paint handling and geometric building blocks of colour are a striking divergence from earlier naturalistic approaches to the Italian landscape and form the beginning of the legacy of modern approaches to depicting it, of which Swynnerton and Dacre became part. Thus, their work is part of a much larger conversation than the one between the two artists themselves—they were responding to many competing influences and situating themselves within a European artistic milieu.

Between their trips abroad in the 1870s, Swynnerton and Dacre founded the Manchester Society for Women Painters in 1879, which they ran until 1883, when it disbanded. Their leadership of the group, and regular exhibitions both with it and in other venues, reflect their growing professional recognition and success. The society had exhibitions each year of its existence, and in 1880 it made a donation to the Manchester Society for Women's Suffrage.¹⁵⁸ Swynnerton and Dacre both remained publicly involved in the fight for the vote throughout the suffrage campaign. Dacre painted a portrait of Lydia Becker (c. 1885-1890) (Figure 1.23), the president of the Manchester Suffrage Society, around the time of her work with the Manchester

¹⁵⁸ Cherry, *Beyond the Frame*, 148.

Society for Women Painters. The painting was submitted to the National Portrait Gallery. It was rejected on the grounds that the sitter was still living, but it was never accepted, even after her death, and is now in the collection of the Manchester Art Gallery.¹⁵⁹ Swynnerton also painted a leader of the movement, Millicent Fawcett (c. 1889-1920) (Figure 1.24), the leader of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies. As successful and mature working artists, both Swynnerton and Dacre grounded their advocacy for women's suffrage in their own contributions to the nation as independent professionals. Dacre noted that she owned property and paid taxes on her income, meaning she met all requirements for suffrage at the time, except for being male.¹⁶⁰ The political activities of these two women further cemented their partnership as friends and collaborators. Not only did they share an interest in the same artistic questions, but they also shared a conviction that their artistic concerns, and ability to pursue them professionally, were fundamentally connected to their political and social rights as female citizens. They were galvanised by the rich heritage of the city of Manchester in terms of liberal politics and women's rights campaigning. The merchant industrialism of Manchester also gave the two women a broader background in class mobility and the ambition of the nascent modern middle class. This sense of striving from the outside of the privileged class contributed to their disposition for collaboration.

Italian Evolutions

They continued to travel to Italy through the 1880s and '90s after leaving the Académie Julian. In 1883, when Swynnerton married sculptor Joseph Swynnerton, she began to live for about half the year in Rome at Casa Swynnerton, located just behind the British Embassy. Dacre's trips to Italy became visits to her friend, though they were by no means limited to Rome. The two friends continued to travel widely around the country, including to Capri, Orvieto, Perugia, and

¹⁵⁹ Cherry, *Beyond the Frame*, 191-93.

¹⁶⁰ Cherry, *Beyond the Frame*, 144.

throughout the countryside of Lazio. Their work during this period, after over a decade of travel in Italy, was significantly evolving. Both artists' work moved towards more vibrant palettes and a focus on rural landscapes and nature, as opposed to cityscapes or scenes featuring figures.

Swynnerton's *The Olive Gatherers* (1889) (Figure 1.25), shows the start of this shift. Though two small figures feature in the painting's foreground, the ostensible olive gatherers, they almost disappear into the landscape. The artist evokes dusk with rich, delicate hues. On the right side of the sky, just above the horizon line, is a tiny crescent moon. As in her cityscapes, in this painting Swynnerton renders a hazy atmosphere, giving the viewer a sense of the denseness of the humid evening air. The mountains are swathed in mist, both visible as a white vapour and as the deep blue-lilac colour that they become when seen through humidity from a distance. The brown and purple colours of the olive trees and other fauna of the valley come together in the painting into a symphony of colour, nearly transcending the subject identified by the title. This level of focus on colour and abstract materiality of paint is strikingly modern.

A few years later, in the late 1890s, Dacre painted a similar view of a valley at sunset, *Assisi from Perugia* (c. 1899) (Figure 1.26). Dacre's painting echoes Swynnerton's deep purple colour palette in the rich violet tones of the sky as well as the hazy atmosphere she depicted often. Unlike her previous works, the sky here has little trace of clear blue. Though we are told by the title that the painting depicts Assisi, the town is no more than a pale-coloured area in the centre of the canvas. As in Swynnerton's work, the real subject of this painting is the vibrant colours of the sunset. Dacre's palette is warmer, without the sharp, crisp indigos of early evening that Swynnerton used. Instead, Dacre's colours are more evocative of late afternoon, and the feeling of fading heat. She seems to be approaching the palette Swynnerton used in her earliest hot and hazy Italian cityscapes, shifting her visual language in the direction of that of her friend.

As Dacre seems to be moving toward Swynnerton's style, in her more vibrant palette and textured, hazy skies, Swynnerton used some of Dacre's most common tools in *Italian Landscape* (c. 1900) (Figure 1.27). This vivid painting looks almost like an enhancement of *The Olive*

Gatherers, a step even further towards dramatic colour and a rockier, more extreme mountain landscape subject. Yet here, Swynnerton paints a crisp, bright blue sky, leaving the murky climates of her past paintings behind for a clear day, much like those Dacre painted over Siena and Assisi several years earlier. The palette of *Olive Gatherers* (Figure 1.25), characterised by shades of purple, blue, and pink, is present in this work as well, albeit on a sharper and more vivid level. There is no moon on the horizon here, leaving the viewer to guess at the time of day based on the landscape. The pink hues of the mountain peaks in the distance suggest morning light, perhaps in the hours after dawn. The valley in the foreground of the picture is still in partial shadow. This area of the painting is reminiscent of parts of the foreground of *The Town of Siena* (Figure 1.1), in which the artist depicts an area of vegetation so loosely as to appear like an abstract area of colour, suggestive of its subject only through colour and a few more solid brush strokes. Swynnerton paints the brown trunks of the trees in the foreground clearly, giving the space some legibility. The abstractness of the foreground contrasts with the sharp ridgeline of the peaks in the distance, crisply delineated from the sky. This painting has a joyful energy to it, a sense of life and motion, that defined Swynnerton's figurative works from this period and later, such as *The Sense of Sight* (1895) (Figure 1.28) and *New Risen Hope* (1904) (Figure 1.29).

The Sense of Sight (1895) (Figure 1.28) offers a useful example of the ways in which Swynnerton's approach to painting Italian landscapes carried over into her figural works. This painting, depicting a winged woman looking upward as if in a moment of religious or spiritual epiphany, is at first glance much more tightly painted than Swynnerton's landscapes. The face of the figure is smooth, naturalistic, and delicately rendered. Her clear eyes are especially arresting, and the title confirms that they are central to the composition. Yet the looser, gestural paint handling and vivid colours of Swynnerton's landscapes are present here, too. The landscape behind the figure is soft and vague, with a large section of indigo-violet suggesting distance beyond the green hillside in the middle ground. Swynnerton's characteristic hazy sky, with a few pale pink wisps of cloud, and perhaps the suggestion of a rising sun on the right side of the

horizon, gives the space dimensionality. The focus on materiality is not limited to the background of this painting, however. The wings of the figure are modelled in heavy impasto, which Herrington and Milner write are only ‘prevented from making a bid for freedom by the confines of the frame.’¹⁶¹ The thick areas of wing on either side of the figure’s body have none of the careful, naturalistic brushwork of the figure’s face. They are far more reminiscent of Swynnerton’s mountains and olive groves, made up of individuated brushstrokes that only cohere into a legible image through the context of the composition.

As they entered the twentieth century, Swynnerton and Dacre continued to evolve in their depictions of the Italian landscape. Dacre’s *Tuscan Landscape* (1901) (Figure 1.30) revisits the tonality of her earlier cityscapes, using rusty browns and a pale wispy blue sky to create an environment that evokes autumn. Unlike her cityscapes, the sky in this work is cloudy, though a clear, weak sun shines through, barely seeming to reach the earth in the lower half of the painting. Like Dacre’s other landscapes, it features a few scattered man-made structures that seem to blend seamlessly into the natural terrain. In this image, tiny dots of paint suggest figures travelling along the grey road winding through the centre of the painting. Though rather small and quiet, this work is one of Dacre’s most concerned with the materiality of paint over the details of her subject. The texture of her brushstrokes varies across the image, with soft, chalky strokes for the lower part of the painting and more prominent, sculptural gestures in the upper part, rendering the white clouds and branches of the golden-brown trees. The smoke emitting from the chimney of the structure at the centre of the canvas, in the bend in the road, is loosely depicted in a pale blue hue in three simple strokes, standing out against the dull colours behind it. On the right side of the canvas, Dacre creates a subtle rainbow of colours across the hills receding into the distance - reds, with traces of gold, fade into green, then blue-indigo and into

¹⁶¹ Herrington and Milner, *Annie Swynnerton*, 94.

violet. There is a rugged cosiness to the landscape Dacre creates, even as she focuses most on the formal potential of her palette and brushwork.

Swynnerton's *Rain Clouds, Monte Gennaro* (1904) (Figure 1.31) shares the grey palette of Dacre's work as well as the focus on the textuality of her paint handling. The colour and texture of the canvas itself is visible through much of the image, giving the sense that the rain is literally washing the painted landscape away. Swynnerton's minimal and efficient brushstrokes suggest a hilly landscape with larger peaks rising in the background, but details of the vegetation and contours of the valleys are not given. The brushstrokes under the visible curtains of rain in the middle ground of the painting are smooth, as if wet, and those in the foreground are patchier, as if the rain has not reached them yet. With this layering of the effects of weather, Swynnerton creates a medley of textures and a sense of temporality and movement, as the rain clouds drift over the landscape and alter it as they do so. Like Dacre, Swynnerton's focus in this work is on the texture and materiality of the paint on the canvas. The landscape itself is a tool with which to interrogate the formal qualities of her materials. In his obituary of his brother Joseph, Frederick Swynnerton wrote about visiting Monte Gennaro: 'on foot, generally with congenial friends, we have climbed Mount Soracte, the Alban Hill, and Monte Gennaro, the highest peak of the Sabines.'¹⁶² The description of Joseph's lifestyle suggests that the Swynnertons lived an adventurous life. If Annie was, like her husband, an 'indefatigable walker,' it is clear how she accessed the remarkable vistas she painted.¹⁶³

This focus of both Swynnerton and Dacre in these early twentieth-century paintings on the examination of the material of paint through their landscapes reveals the awareness of the two artists of the larger context of European Modernism through which they travelled. Though the Macchiaioli were a relevant local artistic group working in a Modernist style, the visual

¹⁶² Frederick Swynnerton, 'A Manx Sculptor and His Work.'

¹⁶³ Frederick Swynnerton, 'A Manx Sculptor and His Work.'

connections between Swynnerton and Dacre's landscape and their French contemporaries are also undeniable. As previously discussed, the likelihood of their exposure to Modern art in France during their studies in Paris is high. Though the Impressionists were not the first to paint *en plein air*, their commitment to it, and to capturing light and sensation, is the most famous. Sargent, who owned at least one work by Swynnerton, displayed it alongside his works by Claude Monet, which Milner and Herrington note is an acknowledgement of the 'affinity between their practices.'¹⁶⁴ Of Swynnerton, Sargent wrote, 'I think she is a genius or words to that effect – really I am not exaggerating [...] it is difficult to describe her style if you have never seen anything of hers, it is very powerful and rich [...]'¹⁶⁵ Post-impressionist painters, particularly Paul Cézanne, also shared Swynnerton and Dacre's interest in earthy colours, chalky textures, and using areas of semi-abstract paint to describe the natural world.¹⁶⁶ His Mont Sainte Victoire series parallels Swynnerton and Dacre's Italian landscapes both with its compositional and stylistic approach to landscape as well as its repeated return to the same subject. This comparison will be revisited below.

Sargent himself offers another key reference point for Swynnerton and Dacre, as an English-speaker who spent a significant portion of his life in Italy and painted it often. Sargent's cosmopolitanism and comfort on both sides of the Atlantic was becoming familiar to both the British and American cultural elites.¹⁶⁷ Sargent occupies the space between many categories of artist, in some ways like Swynnerton and Dacre did. He was a society portraitist, a cosmopolitan globe-trotter, and a painter in the truest sense of the word. Despite his vast acquaintance, he is generally written about and understood as a solitary artist because of the way he transcends

¹⁶⁴ Milner and Herrington, *Annie Swynnerton*, 70.

¹⁶⁵ John Singer Sargent to Viscountess Nancy Astor, 13 May 1911, cited in Herrington and Milner, 2018, p. 22.

¹⁶⁶ For more on Paul Cézanne, see Ulrike Becks-Malorny, *Cézanne, 1839-1906: Pioneer of Modernism* (London: Taschen, 2004).

¹⁶⁷ Bruce Robertson, *Sargent and Italy* (Los Angeles & Princeton, N.J: Los Angeles County Museum of Art and Princeton University Press, 2003), 11.

artistic schools and movements.¹⁶⁸ His fascination with the capabilities of the medium of oil paint pervades his oeuvre. His Italian scenes, such as *Campo San Agnese, Venice* (c. 1890) (Figure 1.32), an empty terracotta-coloured street scene reminiscent of Swynnerton's *Interior of San Miniato* (Figure 1.8), and *Val d'Aosta* (c. 1908-1910) (Figure 1.33), a rugged and dynamic mountainscape with violet-indigo skies similar to those in Swynnerton's *Italian Landscape* (Figure 1.27), are as much about the materiality of paint as they are about their subjects. Sargent's position as a foreigner painting the Italian landscape makes him a particularly relevant comparison. Though American, he grew up in Europe and spent many years as an adult there. Like Swynnerton, he oscillated between visitor and resident in the European, especially Italian, locales he painted. This specific positionality of inside and yet still outside characterises his work. Like many of Swynnerton and Dacre's Italian scenes, many of Sargent's are uninhabited or populated by vaguely described pedestrians who function as background, not subject. His fascination in his Italian paintings is with the built or natural environment, light, and colour, not with the people who live in it. Sargent also straddles the line between Modernism and Victorian academic painting. The way in which Sargent has been understood as transcending the need to fall on either side of this line, rather than written off for failing to choose a side, offers a useful model for how Dacre and Swynnerton might be understood, as well.¹⁶⁹ For Sargent, it was possible to be both Modern and Victorian. Swynnerton and Dacre's Italian works demonstrate that it was for them, too.

¹⁶⁸ For more on Sargent, see Elaine Kilmurray and Richard Ormond, *John Singer Sargent* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

¹⁶⁹ For more on the position of Sargent within literature on modern art, see Anne L. Helmreich, 'John Singer Sargent, "Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose," and the Condition of Modernism in England, 1887,' *Victorian Studies* 45, no. 3 (2003): 433–55.

Give and Take

The give and take of aesthetic styles and compositional choices between Swynnerton and Dacre encompasses the complementary, conversational nature of their friendship. As they offer each other new and contrasting ways of painting, their collaboration is based on exchange. The differences between them allowed them to share skills, ideas, and ways of seeing, encouraging growth and evolution. John-Steiner notes that ‘in such spatially and conceptually close collaboration, artists heighten their own understanding of their purpose and evaluate its execution by examining the work of their partners.’¹⁷⁰ Swynnerton and Dacre consistently chose similar or identical subjects, as my examples have shown, sometimes contemporaneously and at other times across several years. Even without this mirroring, their close working relationship allowed them to engage with and critique one another’s work on an intimate and serious level. Such exchange pushed them to adapt and mature as artists. The interplay between their styles over time demonstrates the ongoing correspondence of ideas between the two artists. It is difficult to parse the line between their influence on each other and their mutual enabling of exposure to shared influences. This blurriness is unresolvable and does not negate the pertinence of assessing their work in concert. Both forms of influence overlap, with one pointing the viewer to the other.

Around 1911, nearly forty years after her first trip to Italy with her friend Swynnerton, Dacre painted *The Paglia from Orvieto, Italy* (before 1912) (Figure 1.34). This painting encapsulates these four decades of friendship and artistic collaboration. The conversation between Swynnerton’s and Dacre’s paintings reaches its zenith here, in the last currently traced Italian landscape by either artist. Though Swynnerton continued to incorporate landscapes inspired by Italy in her larger figurative works, such as *Montagna Mia* (c. 1923) (Figure 1.35), we have no surviving works that are pure landscapes after approximately 1904. Swynnerton’s husband died

¹⁷⁰ John-Steiner, *Creative Collaboration*, 74.

in 1910, leading her to eventually relocate to London full-time, and then to Hampshire.¹⁷¹

Dacre's painting, dated by Lotherton Hall to 'before 1912' is therefore the latest known.¹⁷² In this work, the characteristics of both artists throughout their long years looking at and reflecting upon the Italian landscape are visible. Dacre depicts the landscape around Orvieto. The valley is spread out beneath the viewer, with the golden fields suggesting late summer. Dacre uses a light blue for the sky, as she has many times before, but here the sky has a haze to it. The area closest to the horizon is paler, fading to white just along the horizon line. A few clouds are present in the top left corner of the picture. This modulation of tone is closer to Swynnerton's Italian skies, with their humid-looking atmosphere. Moving down through the landscape, Dacre's work is also reminiscent of Swynnerton's earlier landscapes and cityscapes in its use of a dark outline to delineate the fields and other geographical features on the floor of the valley. The uneven and inconsistent shapes of these outlined areas create a strange patchwork of colour, with different shades of green interspersed among the golden yellow and brown. A thin white road winds through the landscape, guiding the eye through the space, echoing the pathways in Dacre's *Tuscan Landscape* (Figure 1.30) and Swynnerton's *Town of Siena* (Figure 1.1). This work most brings Cezanne's mid-career landscapes, especially the Mont-Sainte Victoire series (c. 1887) (Figure 1.36), to mind, with its broad blocks of colour and narrower palettes of beiges and blue-greens. In the background, the lilac and indigo hues of the mountains receding into the distance are consistent with the palettes used by both women, especially Swynnerton, to depict peaks along the horizon. These colours add to the sense of a hazy, humid atmosphere, as they suggest that the viewer's vision of the ridgeline is altered by mist or moisture in the air, making the distant mountains appear blueish. In the foreground, the perspective becomes unclear. Is the pale blue and white area at the bottom of the picture plane flat ground on which the artist/viewer is

¹⁷¹ Herrington and Milner, *Annie Swynnerton*, 138.

¹⁷² Catalogue entry for *The Paglia from Orvieto*, Leeds Museums and Galleries, provided by ArtUK, https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/the-paglia-from-orvieto-italy-38615/search/actor:dacre-susan-isabel-18441933/page/1/view_as/grid, accessed 2 August 2024.

standing, or is it a steep hill descending into the valley? It's clear that we are looking at the valley from above, but the exact relationship of the viewer to the vantage point is not clear. This disruption of the clear relationship between viewer and picture-plane reminds the viewer of the physicality of the painting itself. The paint handling is loose and gestural, drawing attention to its own texture. Like both Swynnerton and Dacre's mid-career and later works, this painting is about the paint itself as much as the landscape.

As the culmination of a long career, this painting is effectively a synthesis of the evolution and stylistic shifts Swynnerton and Dacre made over the course of their decades in Italy. Though their styles were never identical or interchangeable, they experimented with and learned from each other's techniques and approaches. Both artists have been dismissed in their later careers as too Victorian for the twentieth century, yet their Italian landscapes were consistently forward-looking. Without any known surviving letters between or about each other, or other relevant documents, we are left to decipher the relationship between these two women through only their work, and the record of their travels together. Though the lack of written record leaves tantalising holes in their stories, their friendship is clearly visible in their paintings alone. Their collective works weave together to form a narrative of both their careers that is much more comprehensive, and places them within a larger context of Anglo painters in Italy at the end of the nineteenth century.

Chapter 2: A Web of Relatives: The Artist Women of the Epps-Alma-Tadema Family

Anna Alma-Tadema's self-portrait, painted between 1886 and 1891, is a declaration of her identity as artist (c. 1888) (Figure 2.1). She gazes out of the picture directly at the viewer, while raising her right fist as it clutches two paint brushes. Her pursed lips curl up at the edges and her eyebrows are lifted, in an expression of expectant pleasure. She has rendered herself in shades of brown, and closely cropped the painting around her face. In the top left corner, part of a round window gives us a glimpse of white sky and a dome-like architectural feature outside. Little of the interior space behind the artist is legible—it is painted in even darker shades of brown, but the sense of a jumble of patterns and casual, domestic space is clear. Anna would have been between nineteen and twenty-four years old when this painting was made.¹⁷³ It is described as being painted at Grove End Road, which she and her family moved to in 1886, and was first exhibited at the 1891 Berlin International Art Exhibition, so we can ascertain that it was painted sometime between these dates. It's a forthright and intimate portrait. The collapsed space between the viewer and Anna communicates the closeness between artist and canvas. It feels as if Anna is literally at work, given her closeness to the canvas and the viewer. We must mirror her as we approach the canvas, meeting her at eye level.

Anna was the product of a multi-generational web of female relatives who were artists: her stepmother, Laura Theresa Alma-Tadema, and her step-aunts, Emily Epps Williams and Ellen Epps Gosse, were all trained as artists and worked at various times in the Alma-Tadema home. Her sister, Laurence, was a writer and creative person, and her father, Sir Lawrence Alma-

¹⁷³ For the sake of clarity due to the abundance of shared surnames, all individuals in this chapter are referred to by their first names. I recognise the tendency in scholarship to refer to women by their first names and men by their surnames, so wish to state that my intention is not to diminish these women but to describe them accurately and clearly.

Tadema, was one of the most successful painters in Victorian London.¹⁷⁴¹⁷⁵ In many ways, Anna's youth and those of her Epps relatives were very similar: all of these women grew up in progressive, cultured homes and were supported in their artistic pursuits from childhood. Laura's lifelong artistic career was enabled in part by her marriage to a successful artist who, quite unusually, fully supported her career. Anna's was enabled by the more common path (among female artists) of eschewing marriage, and by the support of both her parents. Ellen and Emily were more encumbered by marriage and caregiving responsibilities which precluded them from the same level of professional success enjoyed by Laura and Anna.

In 1871, Laura was nineteen years old, the same age Anna was when she moved to Grove End Road, and she also painted a self-portrait (1871) (Figure 2.2). Laura's self-portrait forms half of a double portrait, made to celebrate her marriage to Anna's father, the painter Lawrence Alma-Tadema. The two portraits were displayed in a folding wooden frame, in the style of ancient paintings like those found in Pompeii, with an inscription around the outside naming the subjects of the portraits and giving their dates and places of birth. On the folding panels, two flowers are painted: a rose beside Laura's face, and a tulip beside Lawrence's, representing their respective countries, England and the Netherlands.¹⁷⁶ Laura painted her portrait, and her husband painted his, making the final product a collaborative work of art.¹⁷⁷ The painting was also meant to be an educational exercise, since Lawrence had been Laura's tutor.

¹⁷⁴ For biographical information about Laurence, see 'Miss L. Alma-Tadema,' *The Times*, 21 March 1940, p. 11; see also Prettejohn and Trippi, *Lawrence Alma-Tadema: At Home in Antiquity* and Susie Beckham, 'Recovering Anna Alma-Tadema (1867–1943),' *British Art Journal* XXII, no. 3 (2021/2022): 32–43, which point to the successes of Laurence's career and her position in her family.

¹⁷⁵ For more on Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, see Edmund Swinglehurst, *Lawrence Alma-Tadema* (San Diego: Thunder Bay, 2001); Vern G Swanson, *The Biography and Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings of Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema* (London: Garton & Co. in association with Scholar Press, 1990.)

¹⁷⁶ Prettejohn, 'At Home in London: 1870–1885,' in *Lawrence Alma-Tadema: At Home in Antiquity*, eds. Prettejohn and Trippi, 56–73, p. 59.

¹⁷⁷ According to conversations between the author and Prettejohn and Trippi during the process of staging the exhibition 'Lawrence Alma-Tadema: At Home in Antiquity,' questions have been raised about the attribution of the painting of Laura to her own hand by Marlies Stoter of the Fries Museum. However, consensus among scholars remains that the portraits in this double work are each done by their sitters, as they are described in the exhibition catalogue (see Prettejohn and Trippi, *Lawrence Alma-Tadema: At Home in Antiquity*).

Like Anna, Laura gazes out of the portrait at the viewer, but her expression is less engaging than Anna's. Her eyes are downcast and heavily lidded, and her mouth turns down. She holds a fan in her left hand, covering her chest and the bottom of her chin, as if trying to keep herself hidden. The style of both her portrait and Lawrence's is loose and brushy, giving the work an almost sketch-like quality that is at odds with the staid nature of the poses. Yet the fact of this portrait's existence and the circumstances of its making, as a celebration both of the artists' marriage and their mutual artistic skills, gives it a complex weight and narrative. The portrait resurfaces in another painting, made by Lawrence in 1896 on the occasion of his and Laura's twenty-fifth anniversary. *A Family Group* (1896) (Figure 2.3) depicts Laura, her sisters Emily and Ellen, and her brother Washington, crowded around an easel on which this portrait sits, identifiable from the back by the painted rose and tulip visible on one panel. Though the way the two flowers are painted beside one another does not match the reality of the original double portrait, it is unmistakably a reference to this work. The ongoing importance of the double portrait is clearly demonstrated by this reference to it in this later painting.

In these two self-portraits, made at parallel moments in Laura's and Anna's lives, their shared values and influences as well as their different approaches to life and art are clearly articulated. Both portraits are honest and unadorned, yet somehow reserved in their presentation of the face of the artist. Anna's, in its proud claiming of the identity of 'artist' and its exhibition at an international art exhibition, is a public-facing work. Laura's, with its small scale and panels that can close to hide it from view, is an object meant for the eyes of family and friends only, as *A Family Group* emphasises. They contrast, yet the fact that both women painted such forthright self-portraits in their youths underlines the strength of their support systems and their confidence as practising artists.

Sister Friends

These two women, and Laura's sisters Ellen Epps Gosse and Emily Epps Williams, are the central subjects of this chapter. Unlike the women in the other three chapters in this thesis, these women were related by blood or close family ties. Their relationships with one another as well as their careers and identities as artists were based within a family unit and in a family home.

Although they are the minority in this sense in the context of this thesis, historically this reality would have been very common. Their inclusion in this study of female friendship is therefore key to a full understanding of the way intimacy among women functioned in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. Friendship is a semi-private relationship, occupying a slippery space between the private world of family and the public world of work and social networks. It can and often does overlap with other forms of relationship, including colleague, lover, and kin. The closeness of Laura, Anna, and Laura's sisters was and is taken for granted. Yet the depth of these relationships had a powerful influence over the lives and artwork of each woman. Not all sisters are friends, and not all friends are sisters. By framing my examination of them through their friendship, the interplay of their work reveals their exchange of ideas and care for one another.

Existing scholarship about these women has grown significantly in recent years, notably with the 2016-17 exhibition curated by Prettejohn and Trippi, *Lawrence Alma-Tadema: At Home in Antiquity*, and the 2022 article 'Recovering Anna Alma-Tadema' by Susie Beckham, which represents the most detailed study of the artist published since her death.¹⁷⁸ However, they are still largely written about in specific ways: Laura as wife, homemaker, and great supporter of Lawrence's career, and Anna as painter of the interiors of her family's two spectacular and idiosyncratic studio homes. As recent scholars have begun to note, both women's careers were extremely successful during their lives. They also existed in a female-dominated household and

¹⁷⁸ Prettejohn and Trippi, *Lawrence Alma-Tadema: At Home in Antiquity*; Beckham, 'Recovering Anna Alma-Tadema.'

immediate social circle made up chiefly of their own family members who were also artists. In this chapter, I explore this web of women, made up of Laura, her sisters, and Anna. Close female friends of the family who were also artists included Edith Hipkins, Lawrence's cousin Sientje Mesdag-Van Houten, and Lucy and Catherine Madox Brown, as well as the larger Pre-Raphaelite milieu orbiting around the Rossetti family. This chapter focuses on those women who shared family relationships with Laura and Anna, but it is important to note that they existed in a larger social network of women artists.

The research challenge confronted by this chapter, more so than any others in this thesis, is the fact that constant physical proximity between the women discussed herein precluded the existence of significant correspondence between them, or other written records of their relationship. Even more so than for other friends who shared a home, such as Ethel Sands and Nan Hudson (see chapter 4), the relationship between Anna, Laura, Emily, and Ellen was taken for granted. They were not burdened by the need to perform or defend the importance of their closeness or emotional intimacy because it was assumed. Of course, not all family groups maintain the level of intimacy found amongst the Epps-Alma-Tadema families. Indeed, as will be discussed further below, it is likely that Laura's parents Dr and Mrs Epps were estranged from each other as early as 1861, demonstrating the way in which family groups can fall apart. Yet the methodological challenge remains for the scholar of relations between the family group studied here. Thus, like chapter 1, this chapter is guided by the artwork of Anna, Laura, Emily, and Ellen, and by anecdotal evidence of their shared experiences. None of their oeuvres survive today anywhere near complete—only two works each are traced at present by Emily and Ellen.¹⁷⁹ Anecdotes and circumstance give shape to a pattern of relational living and working over decades of shared space, community, and care. By studying these women in the context of their

¹⁷⁹ A third painting by Ellen, a landscape of Devon, has surfaced online in a grayscale image, but the whereabouts of this work are not known.

relationships with one another, it becomes possible to gain a richer understanding of the circumstances in which they worked. Because this group was based around the Alma-Tadema household and regularly painted the house itself, this method of study is specifically revealing of the relationship between house(s) and painter. It is also revealing of the blurred line between domestic labour and professional labour for artists who worked in their own homes.

The Epps Sisters

Although Anna and Laura were only fifteen years apart in age, there is a generational difference between Anna and the Epps sisters. It will therefore be helpful to begin with the sisters as a distinct group, before turning to the relationship between stepmother and daughter and larger household. Laura was the youngest child of Dr George Napoleon Epps, a prominent and innovative homoeopathic doctor, and his wife Charlotte. Three of her older sisters, Amy, Emily, and Ellen were also trained as artists.¹⁸⁰ The fourth, Louisa, is not known to have studied art. Her brothers Franklin and Washington followed their father into the medical profession. In the first census taken after Laura's birth, in 1861, the family lived at 10 Grafton Street in the parish of St George Hanover Square, in the city of Westminster, a fashionable address just off Berkeley Square in Mayfair.¹⁸¹ By the following census, taken in the year 1871, the family had moved north to Devonshire Street in Marylebone, just south of Regent's Park.¹⁸² In the period between 1861 and 1871, Emily had married a Mr. Williams and been widowed, returning to the family home. In 1861, she was listed as 'single, physician's daughter,' and in 1871 as 'widow.'¹⁸³ Nothing further is known about her husband and she is not known to have remarried. At this time, Mrs. Epps, wife

¹⁸⁰ Beckham, 'Recovering Anna Alma-Tadema,' 33.

¹⁸¹ 1861 census of England, *Census return for Grafton Street, St George Hanover Square, London and Middlesex, England*. Public Record Office, R.G. 09 44, accessed via FindMyPast.

¹⁸² 1871 census of England, *Census return for Devonshire Street, Marylebone, London and Middlesex, England*. Public Record Office R.G. 10 157, accessed via FindMyPast.

¹⁸³ 1861 census of England, *Census return for Grafton Street, St George Hanover Square, London and Middlesex, England*. Public Record Office, R.G. 09 44, accessed via FindMyPast; 1871 census of England, *Census return for Devonshire Street, Marylebone, London and Middlesex, England*. Public Record Office R.G. 10 157, accessed via FindMyPast.

of Dr George Epps, lived with her daughter Amy and her husband Charles Pratt on the Isle of Wight.¹⁸⁴ Mrs. Epps is not recorded as living with her husband and family after 1851, though she kept house with her two widowed daughters, Emily and Louisa, after her husband's death in 1874.¹⁸⁵ Though Amy Epps Pratt studied art with her sisters as a girl, she is not known to have continued as an artist into adulthood and no works by her are traced, so she is not studied in this chapter.

The three sisters who remained in London and worked most as artists—Laura, Emily, and Ellen—lived within close walking distance of one another throughout their lives. After her marriage to Lawrence Alma-Tadema in 1871, Laura moved to Townshend House at 46 Regent's Park Road, on the northern border of Regent's Park. A few years later, after her marriage to the critic Edmund Gosse in 1875, Ellen moved to 29 Delamare Terrace, in Maida Vale.¹⁸⁶ The distance between these two homes was just under three miles, longer than it had been when Ellen still lived in her father's home on Devonshire Street in Marylebone. But the sisters remained within a contained urban footprint in northwest London and continued to see one another on a regular basis. Ellen was trained as an artist in the studio of family friend Ford Madox Brown, along with his daughters Lucy and Catherine and artist Theresa Thornycroft. It has been suggested that Emily studied with artist John Brett, whose portrait of Laura as a child survives today (1860) (Figure 2.4).¹⁸⁷ However, no details are known about this potential student-teacher relationship between Emily and Brett. Laura met her future husband Lawrence at a party

¹⁸⁴ 1871 Census of England, *Census return for Glanville Lodge, Ryde, Isle of Wight, Isle of Wight & Hampshire, England*, Public Record Office R.G. 10 1166, accessed via FindMyPast.

¹⁸⁵ 1881 census of England, *Census return for 45, Carlton Hill, St Marylebone, London and Middlesex, England*. Public Record Office R.G. 11 164, accessed via FindMyPast. It is assumed that the person recorded as 'Ann C Epps, widow, annuitant, birth year 1816' living with Emily Williams and Louisa Epps Hill is the same person recorded in 1851 as 'Charlotte A Epps, wife, born 1815.' Other records list Mrs. Epps as 'Ann Charlotte Epps,' suggesting her first and middle names were sometimes interchanged given that she went by Charlotte. Inconsistencies in birth year recorded in the census, particularly among women, were common.

¹⁸⁶ 1881 census of England, *Census return for 29, Delamere Terrace, Paddington, Kensington, London and Middlesex, England*. Public Records Office R.G. 11 3, accessed via FindMyPast.

¹⁸⁷ Beckham, 'Recovering Anna Alma-Tadema,' 33-34.

at the Madox Brown residence in 1869, and it is likely that she had received instruction in the Madox Brown studio as well, but quickly began studying with Lawrence from then on.¹⁸⁸

As mentioned above, the challenge for the scholar of these women's lives is the anecdotal nature of the records of their relationship. Because they saw each other so regularly, they had little need to make a record of their time together. One rare record of this schedule of interactions is Ellen's 1875 diary, kept the year she married Edmund Gosse. It is a tiny book, not made for long diary entries but rather for brief records of the events of the day. In January alone, Ellen records visiting, being visited by, or going on an outing with the 'Tademas' four times (or once per week). By the summer, she is there multiple times per week, often to see her future husband, Edmund. Her sister and brother-in-law would have been appropriate chaperones who were not her parents, which provided some freedom. Ellen also records regularly seeing and going on outings with Emily, already a widow, who she lived with in their father's home. The mentions of Emily must be understood as indications of notable events or outings, rather than the total number of occasions on which they spent time together, considering that they lived together.

On the 20th of May, Ellen wrote "Tadema comes in disconsolate, being Lauraless!" - Laura was away with her mother.¹⁸⁹ This is a touching demonstration not only of Lawrence's dependence on Laura, but also of Ellen and her family's affection for their brother-in-law. Ellen also records her mother coming to stay at Townshend House regularly. In this period, she lived with her daughter Amy on the Isle of Wight. The fact that she stayed with the Tademas when visiting London, not her husband some few blocks away, further suggests that she was estranged from him. When Amy and her husband Charles Pratt come to visit on 5 July, Ellen records that they 'go into lodgings.' It is again notable that they should do so rather than stay at the Epps

¹⁸⁸ Prettejohn, 'At Home in London,' 57.

¹⁸⁹ Ellen Epps Gosse, '1875 Rue's Indelible Diary,' 1875. BC MS 19c Gosse E-3.1, University of Leeds Special Collections.

family home.¹⁹⁰ Dr Epps is not mentioned at all in the diary, though Ellen was still living in his home as the last daughter to remain unmarried. Ellen references her step-nieces, Anna and Laurence, twice: on 14 July, she writes ‘Anna + Laurence Tadema came to tea with us and EWG [Edmund William Gosse] came with neuralgia. We had a fire.’ On 16 October, she recorded that ‘Tadema, Laura, Laurence + Anna, + Miss Search leave for Italy.’¹⁹¹ She and her new husband, Edmund Gosse, moved into their house while they were away for the winter.

This diary is an invaluable source of information about the way in which these sisters, and their respective families, interacted as a larger family group. Family and the home were, for Victorians, the fundamental building blocks of society. The centrality of private domestic life to the English middle classes contrasts with the public spaces of cafe culture in Europe. Thus, ‘the Victorian family emerges as both a refuge and a springboard’ for English culture.¹⁹² Because of this, it is necessary to delineate the boundaries of the ‘public’ and ‘private’ spheres more fluidly than has traditionally been done in scholarship on this period. Recent work has largely debunked the famous ‘separation of spheres’ method of viewing Victorian England, and this chapter continues in that vein.¹⁹³ For the Alma-Tadema household, this is baked into the structure of their home and social life. Their home was a ‘semi-public space’ that functioned as a domestic setting, workplace, and reception space-cum-sales suite.¹⁹⁴ It also functioned as the centre of a large kinship web that was based on the extended Epps family. Because Lawrence had no family connections in England, being born and raised in the Netherlands, he joined the ‘small army of relatives’ of his wife’s family.¹⁹⁵ One of the earliest works he and Laura worked on together,

¹⁹⁰ Gosse, ‘Diary.’

¹⁹¹ Gosse, ‘Diary.’ ‘Miss Search’ refers to the family’s governess, Alice Search, who travelled with them to Italy.

¹⁹² Anthony S Wohl, *The Victorian Family: Structure and Stresses* (London: Croom Helm, 1978), 15.

¹⁹³ For more on the history of, and issues with, the ‘separate spheres’ tradition, see Vickery, ‘Golden Age to Separate Spheres?’

¹⁹⁴ The term ‘semi-public space’ is used by Lara Perry to describe artist households in the nineteenth century (see Perry, ‘The Artist’s Household’, 20).

¹⁹⁵ Christopher H. Johnson and David Warren Sabean, *Sibling Relations and the Transformations of European Kinship, 1300-1900* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), 13.

when he was still just her painting tutor, was the object later titled *The Epps Family* (1870-1871) (Figure 2.5). This painted folding screen is made up of six wooden panels and measures nearly five meters across and nearly two meters high. It is a somewhat enigmatic work that remained unfinished, but it depicts the Epps family gathering in a room with a large dining table. The figures include Laura's father, brothers, and other extended family members. This work, like their self-portraits, is credited to both Laura and Lawrence. Its existence, along with the portrait of Laura and some of her siblings made by Lawrence twenty-five years later, demonstrates the longevity and centrality of this family group to the Alma-Tademas throughout their married life.

The maintenance of bourgeois culture in Victorian England was synonymous with the maintenance of kinship networks.¹⁹⁶ The work of maintaining and advancing these networks was done largely by women—‘the sisters, who became mothers and, especially, aunts.’¹⁹⁷ This dynamic is not only important in characterising the lived experiences of the Alma-Tadema and Epps women, but also as a key window into the realities of artmaking in the home for artists of all genders. As Lara Perry reminds us, ‘every home was somebody’s workplace.’¹⁹⁸ She goes on to note, ‘Establishing the importance of the family in the history of art practice requires a method of enquiry which shifts the focus from the artists and her product to the artist’s total engagement with labour both artistic and domestic.’¹⁹⁹ In making such a shift, it is critical to acknowledge the work of kinship maintenance expected of Laura and her sisters in the course of appraising their artistic output. Not only does this re-situate domestic work and artmaking as inherently linked, particularly within the home, but it also centralises kinship relationships for artists who worked at home like Laura. Though this chapter examines the women in the Alma-Tadema household specifically, this framework is also relevant for any examination of Lawrence’s work and manner

¹⁹⁶ For recent scholarship on the complexity of Victorian families, see Marie-Luise Kohlke and Christian, Gutleben eds., *Neo-Victorian Families: Gender, Sexual and Cultural Politics*, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011).

¹⁹⁷ Johnson and Sabeen, *Sibling Relations*, 13.

¹⁹⁸ Perry, ‘The Artist’s Household,’ 20.

¹⁹⁹ Perry, ‘The Artist’s Household,’ 19.

of working. Like his wife, daughter, and sisters in law, he worked in his home. Further examination of the implications of the overlap of domestic and professional space for male artists who worked at home is needed.

The motif of sisterhood was strong throughout cultural production in the period, including visual art and literature. Sisterhood was distinguished from other relationships as something that was inborn and impossible to opt out of, unlike friendship, romantic partnership, or economic relationships. And yet, it was also ‘conceived not exclusively as a static relation fixed at and by birth, but also as an achieved and achievable state of relationship to others.’²⁰⁰ The scandals that ensued following a widow’s marriage to his deceased wife’s sister, for example, demonstrate the way in which siblinghood was constructed: the relationship between a man and his sister-in-law was considered so equivalent to blood kinship that such a marriage would constitute incest. Therefore, when approaching the relationship between sisters like that between the Epps women, it must be understood as both innate and constructed. Their sisterhood existed in a social context that valued family relationships enormously and took for granted that they were central to one’s life, but that also encouraged the active cultivation of close relationships between family members. The sisters’ closeness would have been taught to them as children, but it was also maintained and strengthened by them as adults. As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, the term ‘sisterhood’ has been co-opted for use by twenty-first century scholars to describe non-familial relationships between women, such as in the exhibition *Pre-Raphaelite Sisters* at the National Portrait Gallery in 2019.²⁰¹ That is not the meaning of the term that is used to describe the Epps sisters in this chapter.

The question of how this kinship can be considered in a wider study of friendship between artists is raised by this chapter. I have defined friendship in the introduction to this

²⁰⁰ Mary Jean Corbett, ‘Husband, Wife, and Sister: Making and Remaking the Victorian Family,’ in *Sibling Relations*, eds. Johnson and Sabeen, 263-288, p. 266.

²⁰¹ See Marsh, *Pre-Raphaelite Sisters*.

thesis as ‘a strong emotional connection that is manifested in tangible acts of care and purposeful shared experiences.’ As discussed in the introduction, this relationship can and does overlap with other categories of relationships. In this case, Laura, Emily, and Ellen shared a friendship according to my definition, as well as a sisterly relationship. Defining their relationship along specific terms in this manner allows for careful study of this group of individuals through a relational lens. The overlap of these two types of relationship has rarely, if ever, been articulated thus and studied along these lines. This contributes to the sparsity of sources documenting the relationship between the Epps sisters. It also underlines the importance of framing my study of them through a relational lens that uses the terminology of friendship as well as sisterhood.

Home as Inspiration

All three women took direct inspiration from the Alma-Tadema home, Townshend House, which the family occupied from 1871 to 1885. Ellen painted two images of it which survive today: *Portrait of Laura Alma-Tadema* (1873) (Figure 2.6) and *The Hall in Townshend House* (1873) (Figure 2.7), both made in 1873. Emily’s only known surviving works depict Townshend House: *The Drawing Room, Townshend House* (1885) (Figure 2.8) and *The Studio, Townshend House* (1885) (Figure 2.9). Laura’s works do not claim the setting of Townshend House as directly, but many still depict its interior. For example, her early still life *The Mirror* (1872) (Figure 2.10), contains the reflection of the artist and the room in which she sits in the eponymous mirror. The room features the similar striped curtains hanging in the doorway behind the artist’s head to those that can be seen in Ellen’s painting of *The Hall in Townshend House* (Figure 2.7). The wallpaper surrounding the mirror is also recognisable as the distinctive red and cream checked pattern that adorned the lower half of this room. A similar pattern can be seen in Ellen’s *Portrait of Laura Alma-Tadema* (Figure 2.6), which is set in the dining room of Townshend House. The decorative details of these rooms can be seen in contemporary engravings of the house, which was described by Ellen’s husband Edmund Gosse as ‘one of the most famous private dwellings of

our time.²⁰² The article from which this quote is taken, published in *Modern Artists: A Series of Illustrated Biographies*, edited by F.G. Dumas in 1883, features engravings of various rooms in the house including the dining room. This image (1883) (Figure 2.11) features the same large sideboard that can be seen in the left foreground of Gosse's portrait of Laura, as well as the same wallpaper pattern and textured wall hangings.

Many of Laura's later works are genre scenes depicting historical Dutch subjects. These works are not explicitly set in her own home, but their settings are characterised by objects and decorative themes that are present in Townshend House. For example, the Japanese matting shown in her watercolour *May I Come In?* (1881) (Figure 2.12) has been noted as characteristic of Townshend House by Prettejohn.²⁰³ Laura uses repetitive visual motifs that suggest her works were set in a space that she occupied and returned to, such as the blue and white wall tiles that appear in *May I Come In?* and her oil painting *A Birthday* (1884) (Figure 2.13). *May I Come In?* also includes a door with painted inset panels, the right of which is recognisable as Sientje Mesdag-Van Houten's panel made for Townshend House, *A Scene in Drenth (Landscape in Drenthe)*. These details place Laura's works within her home, despite their ostensible setting in the seventeenth century.²⁰⁴ The depth of influence Laura's home had on her cannot be overstated, and it is equally important to acknowledge the influence she was able to exercise on her home. She and Lawrence decorated Townshend House in tandem. It is clear from the presence of the house in these early paintings that the aesthetic of the house was personal and creatively catalysing for Laura.

It is not possible to know whether these surviving works represent a pattern or simply chance. Particularly in the case of Ellen and Emily, in which so few works by them survive, it is

²⁰² Gosse, 'Diary,' 89.

²⁰³ Prettejohn, 'At Home in London,' 61.

²⁰⁴ This has been examined by Prettejohn and Trippi in their exhibition catalogue and further in their article 'Introduction: The Alma-Tademas' Studio-Houses and Beyond,' *British Art Studies*, November 2018. They note that the way in which the interiors of Townshend House as artistic inspiration was first explored by Laura, before being taken up by Lawrence as well.

unwise to conclude that they only or even predominantly painted their sister Laura's home. What can be definitely claimed is that these women *did* paint this space, and that they spent regular time in it in community with one another. Much has been made of the studio homes of the Alma-Tadema family, generally in the context of their most famous occupant, Lawrence. But he rarely depicted the homes themselves in his work, though he was clearly deeply inspired by them. When he did, the home itself was not usually the subject of the painting but rather a setting, as in his portrait of his daughter Anna (1883) (Figure 2.14). It is striking to note that the many women who lived and worked in this home did paint it as a subject, while its sole male occupant used it only as a setting, if at all.²⁰⁵

The Next Generation

Both Laura and Anna were taught to paint by Lawrence, and Anna was also taught by Laura. A photograph held in the Gosse family collection, taken in Lawrence's studio in the family's second home at Grove End Road, depicts Lawrence sitting in front of a canvas at work, with Anna and Laura both behind him, watching him over his shoulder (undated) (Figure 2.15). It is labelled in pencil on the back 'Lawrence Alma-Tadema - Laura - Anna - Studio - Grove End Road.' This photo is a key piece of evidence for the way in which the Alma-Tadema women learned to paint, and the way in which they worked collaboratively with the members of their household. This tradition, which follows that of previous generations, including the other Epps sisters, of learning the trade of being an artist from one's family or family network, was, by the 1880s, no longer the only option for someone wishing to pursue a career in art. The other subjects of this thesis all trained in art schools, outside the home. Laura and Anna's education within the family is notable and connects them to a long tradition of art education at home.²⁰⁶ Their rejection of

²⁰⁵ Lawrence's 1883 painting *In My Studio* is an explicit depiction of his home at Grove End Road and is one of very few, if not the only, painting of this space by the artist.

²⁰⁶ For more on the traditions of arts education in Britain, see Stuart McDonald, *The History and Philosophy of Art Education* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2004).

the contemporary trend of institutionalised art school is not necessarily progressive or ‘modern,’ but it is distinctive and purposeful.

A similar image was published in *The Graphic* in 1888 accompanying an article titled ‘Two Fair Artists: Mrs. Alma-Tadema and Miss Anna Alma-Tadema’ (1888) (Figure 2.16).²⁰⁷ The image echoes the aforementioned photograph but differs in its exclusion of Lawrence. Here, Laura sits in front of a canvas, palette in hand, and Anna stands behind her chair, gazing at the canvas that Laura has just paused her work on. This image of collaboration and intergenerational sharing of knowledge between women further demonstrates the way in which Laura and Anna worked together. It was usual for sons to learn a profession from their fathers, but far less so for daughters to learn a profession from their mothers. That is, of course, unless one considers keeping house, raising children, and caring for a husband a profession. These two images demonstrate the radical family structure that existed within the Alma-Tadema household, in which both parents shared a profession along with the task of passing it on to their daughter. This is made more complicated in this instance because Laura was originally taught by Lawrence, too. Thus, a sort of tri-generational heritage emerges within the family, with Laura and Anna functioning as both peers and teacher-and-student.

One of Laura’s few surviving works that depicts a named member of her family is her painting *Anna Leafing through a Folder of Prints* (1874) (Figure 2.17). This lovely little painting shows Anna aged approximately seven holding up a print taken from an open folder on the table in front of her. Laura was still new to the Alma-Tadema family at the time of this painting’s creation, having married Lawrence three years earlier when Anna was just four and her sister Laurence six. This painting is not only a telling window into the centrality of art and visual culture to Anna’s life from an early age, but also a demonstration of her stepmother’s tenderness and love. The figure of the stepmother in Victorian culture was sometimes associated with the

²⁰⁷ See Beckham, ‘Recovering Anna Alma-Tadema.’

‘wicked stepmother’ stereotype of fairy tales, but real stepmothers were so common that they could not be contained to generalisations.²⁰⁸ Between 1860 and 1900, the average maternal mortality rate was approximately sixty deaths per 1000 live births, a rate of six percent.²⁰⁹ Given that many women gave birth more than once, the chance of death for an individual was statistically higher. Combined with other causes of early death in the period, the number of widowers with young children in need of a wife to raise them was not insubstantial. In their landmark study of the English middle classes of the period, Davidoff and Hall noted that though ‘specific categories of age, gender and function were seen as necessary to staff a family’, these roles could be filled non-biologically by individuals who could ‘act as educators, sponsors or even “pro-parents” (taking over parental functions).’²¹⁰ A stepmother was the most straightforward category of ‘pro-parent’—others included aunts and uncles, godparents, other extended relatives, and patrons. In Laura’s case, partly because she became stepmother to Anna and Laurence when they were so young, it appears that their relationship was reasonably untroubled and loving from the beginning.

One of Anna’s early works, whose setting is not clearly identifiable as her home, is her *Still Life with Wine Glasses* ((1883) (Figure 2.18), painted in 1883. This painting prompts a natural comparison with Laura’s early still life, *The Mirror* (Figure 2.10). Laura’s painting is conceptually more complex, with its reflection of the artist in the eponymous mirror. However, both works are interested in the reflectivity of glassware and the contrast between dark textile decoration and the shades of white of light, reflection, and glass. Anna’s piece was painted when she was about sixteen, only a few years younger than Laura was when she painted *The Mirror*. The works are not identical, but their similarities suggest parallel early artistic development between Anna and

²⁰⁸ See Hannah Rosefield, ‘How Differently It Came Upon Her’: The Ageing Young Stepmother in Charlotte Yonge’s *The Young Step-Mother* and Dinah Craik’s *Christian’s Mistake*,’ *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, no. 32 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.3480>.

²⁰⁹ Geoffrey Chamberlain, ‘British Maternal Mortality in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries,’ *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 99, no. 11 (2006): 559-63, Figure 1.

²¹⁰ Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 322, 341.

Laura. Since both women were principally taught by Lawrence, it is not surprising that their early work would follow similar patterns and priorities.

Anna's works depicting the interior of her childhood home, Townshend House, make up a significant portion of her extant oeuvre. She painted her family's second studio home, Casa Tadema at Grove End Road (1886-1887) (Figure 2.19), as well, along with the interior of at least one house that was not her home (1887) (Figure 2.20). These works are breath-taking in their intricacy and luminous quality of light. It has been suggested that the series of watercolours of Townshend House that she produced, made in 1884 and 1885, were meant to be commemorative records of the house for the family after they left it.²¹¹ They record a home that is empty of figures but filled to the brim with objects that describe the specific subjectivities and tastes of their owners, Lawrence and Laura. It is the culmination of a unique project to create a studio home that is representative of the couple, and their family, visually. Thus, although Anna's watercolours are empty, they are on some level portraits of Anna's parents. Their home was so much the product of both their subjectivities and personal tastes that any depiction of it was also a depiction of them.

Anna and her aunt, Emily, both painted the drawing room of Townshend House in 1885. Emily's painting (Figure 2.8) is a tall, thin panel intended to be installed in a door panel, like the ones Laura included in her watercolour (discussed above, Figure 2.12). Anna's is a watercolour, like all her depictions of Townshend House (1885) (Figure 2.21). The two paintings take opposite viewpoints: Anna looks into the drawing room through an archway with a crimson curtain, in the centre of which hangs an ornate black birdcage. Through the archway, shiny black floorboards reflect the busy patterns that cover walls, ceiling, and upholstery in the drawing room. Emily gives us the opposite view, from within the room. The black floorboards stretch

²¹¹ See Beckham, 'Recovering Anna Alma-Tadema' and Prettejohn and Trippi, *Lawrence Alma-Tadema: At Home in Antiquity*.

out into her painting, towards the curtained archway in which we see the same large birdcage. It is entirely possible that the two women painted these works simultaneously, as their positions would have been hidden from each other. Imagining this process of making art of the same space is strongly evocative of collaborative community.²¹² It is impossible to know the exact circumstances of the making of these works, but it is clear that the two women shared the space of this room literally and artistically.

Emily's painting, as well as her work *The Studio* (Figure 2.9), were both made to be door panels. The Alma-Tademas commissioned a great number of their friends to paint these door panels for their home at Townshend House, and then brought them with them and reinstalled them into a Hall of Panels at Grove End Road, where they continued to add to their collection. These works functioned as a 'grand autograph book,' in the words of Charlotte Gere, recording their wide network of artist-friends from across Britain and Europe.²¹³ The artists represented in these works included Henry Moore, Sientje Mesdag-Van Houten, Sargent, Frank Dicksee, and, of course, Emily and Anna. This project is emblematic of the cosmopolitanism of the Alma-Tadema household as well as their rich artistic community. As the images of Lawrence, Laura, and Anna working together also demonstrated, communal artmaking and the fostering of creativity in concert with other artists was central to the culture of their family.

Anna also painted work that is categorised as genre painting, like Laura. Anna's paintings in this category were set in the contemporary period, unlike Laura's old Dutch imaginings. At least three paintings of these survive today: *Girl in a Bonnet with her Head on a Blue Pillow* (1902) (Figure 2.22), *At the Window* (1908) (Figure 2.23), and *The Closing Door* (1899) (Figure 2.24), which is a key surviving example of this strand of her work. The work shares the soft, diffuse natural light and bright earth tones that characterise her interiors of Townshend House, but this scene

²¹² Beckham has also suggested that these two works suggest an interactive relationship between Emily and Anna. Beckham, 'Recovering Anna Alma-Tadema,' 39-40.

²¹³ Charlotte Gere, 'The Alma-Tademas' Two Homes in London,' in Prettejohn and Trippi, *Lawrence Alma-Tadema: At Home in Antiquity*, 91.

has a narrative. Falling into the category of ‘problem pictures’ that regularly drew crowds of viewers trying to decipher coded narratives at the Royal Academy’s Summer Exhibitions, the story in this work is not obvious to the viewer.²¹⁴ In Anna’s painting, a single figure stands in the centre of the room looking as if she has just risen from the chair in the left foreground. She clutches her necklaces and gazes up and out of the canvas in distress. In the right background, we can see a hand pulling the door closed. What news has this retreating figure brought that has caused such a reaction? There is a portrait of a mother and child behind the figure’s head, positioned almost like a halo. Does this suggest a crisis related to the figure’s mother, or to her child? The fact that the door is closing, not opening, points to a metaphorical reading—has some opportunity been lost, some future prospect been taken away, some love affair been broken off? The jumbled surface of the desk behind her evokes a sense of the figure as a woman of substance. Several open books lie scattered across the surface, with more within easy reach for consultation. The small vase of flowers and the cameo portrait hung at eye-level beside the desk add to the image of this person as more than just a prop in a narrative painting. Yet the work fits the tropes of fashionable academic narrative works, and engages the viewer in the question of why, exactly, the titular door is closing.

The other two works that survive are less narratively engrossing, though still suggest some sort of story. In *At the Window*, the central female figure turns away from an open window with a piece of paper held in her hand. Like in *The Closing Door*, the moment captured seems to be one in which the figure has just received dreadful or surprising news—in this case, from a letter or other written material. It is hard to know whether the details of the figure’s face are less crisp than in the earlier painting or whether the reproduction of the painting is simply poor quality, but in any case, the work feels less immediate and dramatic than *The Closing Door*. *Girl in a Bonnet*, on the other hand, while less narratively-focused is decidedly engrossing. We see only the

²¹⁴ See Fletcher, *Narrating Modernity*.

figure's head, wearing an elaborate white bonnet or hat, laid upon a bright blue quilted pillow. Her detached gaze is jarring, as is the crispness of the image and the drama of the head piece. The palette is limited to the whites of the bonnet, wall, and skin of the woman, the blue of the pillow, and the shock of pink of her lips. It's a strange image that, though simple, conjures a narrative by the fact of its enigma. Why does this woman lie here so dejectedly? What is she thinking about? Is she ill, sad, at rest? The immediacy of these questions distinguishes the painting from a portrait.²¹⁵ Together, these three extant genre paintings offer a glimpse into Anna's practice in this area. The enigma of these narratives, and Anna's insistence on them, is notable.

Studios in Casa Tadema

Anna had her own studio at Casa Tadema on Grove End Road, which the family had moved to by the time this work was made. According to floor plans of the house, it abutted a room labelled on the floor plan of the house simply as 'Miss Tadema's Room' (1885) (Figure 2.25). This room is difficult to identify. Down the hall, a bedroom is labelled 'Miss Tadema's Bedroom.' Anna's studio is labelled 'Miss A. Alma-Tadema's Studio.' Miss Tadema would have been Laurence, as the eldest daughter. However, this leaves Anna without a bedroom. She could have slept in her studio or in the 'Spare Bedroom' across the hall. In an image of Anna's studio published in an article about Casa Tadema in *Hampton & Sons* in 1912, the room is described as 'The Corner Studio, or Bedroom No. 5,' suggesting that Anna may have used the space as both bedroom and studio.²¹⁶

²¹⁵Alexis Goodin has recently suggested that this watercolour is the work titled *Maisie*, exhibited by Anna at Royal Hibernian Academy of Arts in Dublin, Ireland in 1903. She also suggests that the identity of the sitter is Mary Aglaia ("Maisie") Ionides (1871–1945). See Alexis Goodin, "Identifying Anna Alma-Tadema's *Maisie*," *Master Drawings* 62, no. 1, (spring 2024): 85-90.

²¹⁶"The Corner Studio, or Bedroom No. 5," in Hampton & Sons, *Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema's World Famous Home* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1912), 18.

Based on the floor plans, I posit that Anna's painting *The Closing Door* uses the room beside Anna's studio, 'Miss Tadema's Room,' as a setting. The small room is entered via a door on the south side of the room, bordered by a wall to the right. The room opens out several feet past the door, creating an alcove like the one in the painting, which is bordered by east-facing windows which would create the bright space we see in the painting (see Figure 2.25). Though the identity of her model remains a mystery, the space in which she made this painting and from which she took inspiration does not. If it was indeed her sister Laurence's room, distinct from Laurence's bedroom, the painting may depict Laurence at her writing desk. However, the figure in the painting does not have Laurence's dark colouring, so this is unlikely.

Laura also had her own studio in Casa Tadema. Hers was on the ground floor, next to her husband's cavernous, two-storey studio. A great deal can also be learned from the floor plans of the house (1885) (Figure 2.26). Laura's studio had two entrances: one via the conservatory, which served also as an entrance hall, thus the studio could be entered almost directly from the street, and one from the hallway in which the main staircase to the family's rooms stood, so that Laura could enter her studio directly from the living spaces of the house. The two entrances also suggest that the studio space could be a space for hosting, as visitors could easily move through it as they moved around the large rooms on the ground floor. The Tadema home was designed for large social events, with massive rooms and careful planning for easy flow of people between them.²¹⁷ Though Laura's studio was less than half the size of her husband's, it was still quite large and in a location in the home that meant it was on display. The way in which it was accessible from two sides suggests a freedom of movement throughout the house that the spaces reserved for men did not offer. Laurence's studio, while grand, is isolated on one side of the home. The billiard room, another all-male space, is located in the cellar with only one entrance. The spaces

²¹⁷ For more on the dynamic hosting of the Alma-Tademas, see Prettejohn and Trippi, *Lawrence Alma-Tadema: At Home in Antiquity*.

that were possessed by the women of the home offer a far more liveable, open sense of space and movement. It was a house in which the majority of its residents were women.

In a photograph of Laura's studio published in the magazine *The Architect* in May 1889 (1889) Figure 2.27), the white walls that can be seen throughout Laura's paintings are visible. The room is filled with heavy wooden Dutch or Dutch-inspired furniture, including at least six wooden chairs. On the left of the image, dark wood panelling adorns the walls on one side of the room, in the same tone as the wooden floorboards. It is a cohesively styled space that looks quite distinct from the other spaces in the house, with their busy textiles and colourful walls, suggesting that Laura took ownership over her workspace. Comparing the picture to photographs of Lawrence's studio (1910) (Figure 2.28), which is not only cavernous but also full of easels, canvases, and other tools of a painter, it is notable that none of this artistic paraphernalia is present in the image of Laura's studio. Another image of her studio, a watercolour by Nicolaas van der Waay (c. 1890-1891) (Figure 2.29), makes the space look even more domestic. In this image, a panelled seat occupies half of the frame, and the other half shows a doorway through which a bed is visible.²¹⁸ The framing reads as a more purposeful choice by van de Waay to depict Laura's studio as a domestic space rather than a workplace. But overall, the space is presented both by those recording it and by Laura's decorating choices as a domestic space more than a workplace.

It is also the case that the studio functioned as a set or stage for Laura's paintings and was in this way designed to be a workplace. Unlike her husband, whose grand and dramatic settings were mostly conjured from his imagination, Laura's genre scenes are all set in a Dutch-inspired space and repeat key elements that suggest they incorporate qualities from the room the artist occupied while painting them. *Sweet Industry* (1904) (Figure 2.30) and *Airs and Graces* (1871-

²¹⁸ The bedroom that would have been visible through a door from Laura's studio was the Antique Bedroom, labelled on the house floor plan referenced above. Laura's 'boudoir' would have been her bedroom and dressing room, both on the floor above. The bed featured in van der Waay's image is represented by Laura in her painting *Bright Be Thy Noon* (1894).

1909) (Figure 2.31) seem to be in almost identical spaces, and both were made after the family moved to Casa Tadema. Both paintings depict a room with white walls and a single mullioned window with a golden stained-glass element. The floors are bare hardwood, and the furniture is sparse. There are differences: *Sweet Industry* contains wood panelling around the bottom of the wall and multiple blue upholstered wooden chairs, while *Airs and Graces* features a map on the wall and a low wooden bench in the background. *Satisfaction* (c. 1890-1899) (Figure 2.32) and *The Persistent Reader* (before 1909) (Figure 2.33) join this group of works made at Casa Tadema, as well, and echo the same spatial tropes. These works all share a sense of space, though they differ in detail and narrative. It is possible to gain a sense of her space, both real and imagined, through this series of works. Because they do not all depict the same space exactly, it is clear that Laura edited and adjusted elements of her studio to create different spaces in her paintings. It is also clear that her studio was a key source of inspiration for her work, and a reminder that Laura designed her home in partnership with her husband. She had agency over creating the unique and idiosyncratic space she lived and worked in. That it inspired her is demonstrative of her success in creating a home and workspace that suited her needs so well. Laura's interest in Dutch painting from the so-called Golden Age is evident in her work and her studio. She is specifically interested in the work of Johannes Vermeer, which her paintings overtly reference in their treatment of light, their intimate domestic setting, their depiction of enigmatic relationships between a man and a woman, and the details of attire and interior decor.²¹⁹ Like Anna's genre paintings, these works turn on provocative and unresolved suggested narratives. The above-mentioned works generally have a lighter, more cheerful sense of story than Anna's, which is reflected in the positive adjectives that make up their titles.

²¹⁹ Prettejohn has noted that Laura was one of the first artists to draw inspiration from Vermeer, whose work was largely unknown until the publication of a series of articles in 1866 by French critic Theophile Thoré. See Prettejohn & Trippi, *Lawrence Alma-Tadema*, p. 134. See also Frances Suzman Jowell, "Thoré-Bürger's art collection: "a rather unusual gallery of bric-à-brac,"" in *Simiolus: Netherlands quarterly for the history of art*, vol.30, 2003 no. 1/2, 54-55.

The greatest mystery of all the spaces in Casa Tadema is recorded in the plan of the top floor of the house. Though mostly occupied with servants' quarters, in the centre of the plan, above Anna and Laura's rooms the floor below, a small room is labelled 'Mrs. Williams' Room' (1885) (Figure 2.34). The Mrs. Williams in question was almost certainly Emily Williams, as no other Mrs. Williamses are known to have been close to the Alma-Tadema family. The family moved into the house in 1885. In 1881, Emily was listed in the census as living with her mother and widowed sister Louisa at 45 Carleton Hill, Marylebone.²²⁰ She disappears after this, and never joins the Alma-Tadema family at 17 Grove End Road on the 1891, 1901, or 1911 censuses. It is certain that she was still alive and connected to the family during this time, because upon her death in 1912, she left the painting *Airs and Graces* by Laura to the National Gallery, and correspondence regarding it was received by the Gallery from her solicitors and from Ellen Gosse. Ellen's letters were written on mourning stationery, indicating her state of mourning after the death of her sister, and were sent to request the picture be sent to her after it was rejected by the National Gallery.²²¹ The painting was then given to the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, by Ellen in 1913.

The details of Emily's life are so lost to the passage of time that she is impossible to study alone. It is only by piecing together the details of the ways in which her life overlapped with that of her sisters that a sense of her story and contribution can be gleaned. It is a notable gesture that Emily received her own room in the 'Tademas' home. The circumstances which led to this provision are unknown. It has been suggested that Emily might have lived in this room, but I believe that to be highly unlikely. Her mother was still alive when the house was acquired by the Alma-Tademas, so she could theoretically have continued living with her at 45 Carleton Hill. The 1881 census records that the 45 Carleton Hill household included a trained nurse,

²²⁰ 1881 census of England, *Census return for 45, Carlton Hill, St Marylebone, London and Middlesex, England*. Public Record Office R.G. 11 164, accessed via FindMyPast.

²²¹ Emily Williams, probate granted 7 May 1912, County of Middlesex; Letters from Ellen Gosse to National Gallery, dated 9 May and 29 May 1912, NG7/404/9 and NG7/404/10.

suggesting that Mrs. Epps was in poor health. In that 1881 census, Emily is listed for the first and only time as ‘artist (oil paintings)’ rather than ‘daughter’ or ‘widow.’ Mrs. Epps died in 1890; perhaps this provided a reason for Emily to return to sharing a house with her sister Louisa, without the burden of caring for their mother, before the 1891 census. I posit that the room in the Alma-Tadema house was actually meant to be a studio, never a bedroom. This scenario is far more likely than one in which Emily lived amongst the servants at Casa Tadema, given the state of her finances at her death in 1912. At that time, she lived at 80 Hamilton Terrace, a detached house on a fashionable street in St John’s Wood, just a few doors away from the famous novelist Thomas Hardy. This address is moments away from Casa Tadema, a mere five-minute walk. Emily specifically bequeathed over £25,000 to named family members, and left instructions for the rest of her assets to be distributed evenly. She hardly needed to live in her sister’s attic.

If this was the case, Casa Tadema becomes an even more complex space. Not only was it the workplace of the family who lived there, but it also served as a destination for work for an artist who did not. While the likelihood of Emily needing to live in a small room next to the Tadema servants is small, far more possible is a need or desire for studio space, particularly studio space near other artists. As I have described, the Alma-Tadema family prized community and communal working. Understanding Casa Tadema as a workplace for Emily, an artist with her own home nearby, adds another layer to this studio home. Not only does it transcend the house further beyond the realm of the domestic into the professional, revealing the porousness of that boundary, but it also demonstrates the seriousness of Emily’s career and the way her own domestic life defied convention. Having a studio outside her home was deeply unusual for a female artist. Indeed, most male artists worked in their homes, too.

Imagining the possibilities of Emily’s life based on the circumstances at hand, especially those of her family members, is one way to give shape and colour to a life that otherwise cannot be seen clearly. Her will is a treasure trove of information that points to the importance of her relationships with her family members, which by the time of her death included a wide web of

siblings, nieces and nephews, and friends. She left specific paintings made by herself to her two nieces Sylvia and Tessa Gosse, daughters of her sister Ellen, and to her cousin Annie Epps. She left a ‘small dutch inlaid ivory cabinet’ to her brother-in-law Lawrence, one thousand pounds each to Anna and Laurence, and five thousand pounds each to Sylvia and Tessa, the largest sums left to any single individuals. She also left paintings by other artists: a watercolour by D G Rossetti, the John Brett portrait of young Laura Epps, and a landscape by Bell Scott to Ellen Gosse, an oil painting by Sylvia Gosse, a charcoal drawing of herself by Lawrence, and ‘such of my sketches not herein bequeathed to be selected by herself as she may care to have’ to her niece Tessa Gosse, a painting by Val Prinsep [sic] to Sylvia Gosse, an oil painting by Mesdag, a watercolour by Edwin A Abbey, and a landscape by Brett to Hahnemann Epps, a portrait of himself and a painting of a dog by G Barnard, plus two paintings by her of his choice to her nephew Phillip Gosse, and a landscape by Brett to her brother Washington Epps. This window into her personal collection of works by other artists gives a sense of her taste and values as an artist. The group of artists she collected—Rossetti, Brett, Bell Scott, Prinsep, Mesdag, Abbey, and Barnard—is grounded in the ethos of Pre-Raphaelitism she was raised in.

Outside the Home

Although most of the surviving works by all these women depict interior spaces, mostly of the Alma-Tadema home, some do not. As stated previously, we cannot know how the works that survive fit into the complete oeuvres of these artists, now lost. Did these women constantly paint their homes, or are those simply the bulk of the works that survive? Based on textual evidence, it is known that Laura’s and Anna’s works were much more diverse in their subject matter. Anna is described as a ‘landscape painter’ in contemporary reviews about her.²²² At least one of Laura’s landscapes survives, as do two of Anna’s. These works are clues to the larger collection of lost

²²² Beckham, ‘Recovering Anna Alma-Tadema,’ 42.

works made by both women. Laura's painting *In an Italian Garden* (1876) (Figure 2.35) was made on the winter trip to Italy the family took the year Ellen and Edmund Gosse married. The painting is small, painterly, and gestural. The bottom third is occupied by a red, clay-coloured wall with a staircase ascending to the space on top of it to the left of the foreground. Two small figures lurk at the top, described in a few brushstrokes and giving a sense of scale to the space. A single cypress tree rises to the top of the canvas, dwarfing the figures. The painting is characterised by thick, textured paint, which is unlike the studied smooth surfaces of Laura's genre paintings. It has the feeling of a study or a sketch, offering a sense of how Laura's artistic practice might have been filled out by more than just her polished, finished paintings.²²³

Anna's largest surviving landscape is *The Idler's Harvest* (1900) (Figure 2.36). It is also a small oil painting, depicting what looks like a British landscape. Thistles rise up from yellowed grass in the foreground, against a backdrop of rugged hills rising over a green valley. A full moon, just covered by mist, shines soft, flat light over the scene. It's a quiet picture, with flat colours and little contrast. It looks more like a watercolour than an oil painting. The title and subject match this flatness: the idler's harvest is no harvest at all, but rather a fallow field plagued with weeds. Like *The Closing Door*, this painting can be read as a problem picture with a suggested but enigmatic narrative. Who is the idler, and why has he failed to sow his field this season? Whose prosperous lands fill the valley below? What will the consequences be of this failure? Behind the softness of the painting, these heavier questions lurk.

These two paintings are windows into the vastness of the outputs of Laura and Anna, and reminders of how flawed it is to draw firm conclusions about them and their careers based only on the works by them that survive today. Neither Laura nor Anna solely painted domestic interior spaces. With these two works, we can see patterns in their preoccupations: Laura's with

²²³ This painting is ripe for comparison with Swynnerton and Dacre's textural cityscapes, discussed in Chapter 1. No interpersonal connection is known between Laura and Swynnerton and Dacre, but all three artists spent time in Italy and painted Italian landscapes in a loose, textural way that was in conversation with a similar set of influences, including the work of Sargent.

the construction of space in a painting, and with temporality, cultural specificity, and narrative. Anna is also preoccupied with narrative, though of a much more enigmatic sort, and with space and environment. Laura's works have a quality of sureness, stability, and looking backward to them, while Anna's are more disruptive and uncanny, and definitively about the contemporary world.

Only one other work each is known by Ellen and Emily, both reproduced in tantalising greyscale in Kathleen Fisher's *Conversations with Sylvia Gosse*. Their whereabouts are unknown, but both depict the outdoors. Emily's is titled in the book *The Garden at St John's Wood with Anna Alma-Tadema* (undated) (Figure 2.37), although as Beckham has pointed out, if that date is correct then neither Emily nor Anna yet lived in St John's Wood. It depicts the figure of a girl sitting surrounded by flowers with a small black cat on her lap and croquet equipment abandoned on the lawn behind her. Ellen's depicts Torcross, a village in south Devon (1879) (Figure 2.38). Like Swynnerton's second painting of Siena (Figure 1.5), this landscape is painted in a portrait orientation, giving the viewer a disorienting view of a hill rising up almost to the top of the canvas. Not a great deal more can be said about these works without better reproductions of them, but their existence demonstrates that both Emily and Ellen painted more than just their sister's home. Given the context of these images, it is highly likely that there are more works by both still in the possession of the Gosse family.²²⁴

Both women, as well as the Alma-Tademas, were part of the colony of artists that developed around Sargent and Abbey in Broadway, in the Cotswolds in the mid-1880s.²²⁵ While there, Sargent famously painted *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose* (Tate, 1886).²²⁶ In his essay about the colony at Broadway, Stanley Olson vividly describes the scene in which this painting was made,

²²⁴ Kathleen Fisher, *Conversations with Sylvia: Sylvia Gosse, Painter, 1881-1968* (London & Edinburgh: Charles Skilton, 1975), illustration section.

²²⁵ Elaine Kilmurray, 'Sargent in Broadway, 1885-9,' in *Sargent: Portraits of Artists and Friends*, eds. Elaine Kilmurray and Richard Ormond (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2015), 87-93, p. 89.

²²⁶ For recent scholarship on this iconic painting, see Rebecca Hellen and Elaine Kilmurray, 'Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose and the Process of Painting', *British Art Studies*, no. 2 (2016).

describing the group playing tennis, which Mrs. Williams ‘plays well’ and at which ‘Alma-Tadema is comically awful.’²²⁷ When the light begins to fade, ‘Sargent drops his racket’ to begin work on the painting.²²⁸ These descriptions are based on Edmund Gosse’s recollections of the making of the painting, as told to Evan Charteris for his biography of Sargent.²²⁹ Sargent painted a portrait of Edmund, as well as another of his daughter Tessa, in 1885. Another of Sargent’s paintings made that summer, *In the Orchard* (c. 1885-1886) (Figure 2.39), may depict Emily.²³⁰ The work shows a woman dressed in black sitting in a wooded meadow, her face turned away from the viewer, with what appears to be a sketchbook in her lap. Her hand rests on the page, holding a pencil or bit of charcoal. The brushwork is Impressionistic and non-specific, making it difficult to discern any details about the figure. If it is indeed Emily, the painting would be a remarkable record of her at work as an artist. Another of the Broadway residents, Lucia Millet, described her as ‘painting in various corners of the garden,’ which has led to the suggestion that this painting depicts her.²³¹ Millet also wrote in a letter to her family, ‘I wish you could see my poppy garden. On a sunny day, you would see Mr B[lashfield], Mr Sargent, Mr A[bbey], Mrs Williams and Frank [Millet] all doing different views of it.’²³² Together, these anecdotes position Emily in the centre of a group of serious and prominent artists and make clear that she painted far more than just the two interiors that survive today. No similar anecdotes are known about Laura and Ellen, but the sense of the community in Broadway and their presence there are regardless an excellent window into the ways in which Laura, Emily, and Ellen remained part of a vibrant milieu of artists after their marriages.

²²⁷ Stanley Olson, Richard Ormond, and Warren Adelson, eds. *Sargent at Broadway: The Impressionist Years* (New York: Universe and Coe Kerr Gallery, 1986), 21.

²²⁸ Olson, Ormond, Adelson, *Sargent at Broadway*, 21.

²²⁹ Evan Charteris, *John Sargent: With Reproductions from His Paintings and Drawings* (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1972), 74-75.

²³⁰ Olson, Ormond, Adelson, *Sargent at Broadway*, 113.

²³¹ Olson, Ormond, and Adelson, *Sargent at Broadway*, 113.

²³² Quoted in Kilmurray and Ormond, *Sargent: Portraits*, 118.

These four women were not unique. The patterns of their lives, made up of fiercely treasured friendships with the women in their family, persistent artistic creation, and a strong community within their home, echoed those of other women whose family structures enabled and supported them as artists. Yet they have mostly been lost to history—some more than others. These women who lived and worked in the Alma-Tadema home come into crisper focus as members of a group. As discussed at the start of this chapter, they do so through a series of anecdotes and scattered extant works. By allowing these circumstances to guide my research, rather than fighting them, has it been possible to gain new knowledge about these women. Their contribution to late Victorian art through creating work in a variety of styles and categories, as well as their use and maintenance of exceptional studio homes, is remarkable. Thus, their relevance is twofold: as individual artists and as a group. Studying them in this way reveals new complexities and conclusions about their work and about the ways in which families shared space and care at the end of the nineteenth century.

Chapter 3: 'Enchant and Vanish' : The Slade Stars of their Generation

'Gwen S. and I are painting me, & we are all three painting Gwen John,' Ida Nettleship wrote to her mother in the autumn of 1898.²³³ She had travelled to Paris with her friends Gwen John and Gwen Salmond in order to study with Whistler at his Académie Carmen. In this short quote, Nettleship describes the defining artistic practice of her and her friends' years as students at the Slade School of Art in London: making portraits of one another and of themselves. These three women became friends while studying at the Slade, starting in 1894. Their trip to Paris in 1898, during which they delighted in their independence and shared lodgings in Montparnasse, marked a first and important departure from their school days in London. They drew and painted each other regularly on this trip, as Nettleship recounts in her letter, continuing a practice they regularly employed while students. The only oil painting surviving from this period is Gwen John's *Interior with Figures* (c. 1898-99) (Figure 3.1), which depicts Nettleship and Salmond in the rooms they shared on Rue Froidveaux, in the opposite configuration of the model/artist arrangement described by Nettleship in her letter. In the painting, the two female figures make up the only areas of colour in an otherwise grey, neutral space. The room itself is painted in shades of grey and white and appears to have almost no furniture (as indeed their rooms did not). The thinness of John's paint application in the background allows the texture of the canvas to be clearly visible, giving a strong sense of materiality to the image. The pattern of the canvas echoes cross hatching, evoking the visual sense of a drawing. John has given more paint and time to the figures of the women, rendering them in a cosy communal moment of consulting a book. Her particular concern with the faces is evident. They are rendered more clearly and carefully

²³³ Michael Holroyd and Rebecca John, eds., *The Good Bohemian: The Letters of Nettleship John* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 71.

than any other aspect of the painting.²³⁴ Her decision to highlight the figures with colour furthers the sense that the painting is a portrait of these two individuals, rather than an interior scene or a study of figures. The faces are good likenesses, confirmed by the many other portraits drawn of and by the two women pictured. Notably, this painting features multiple figures, unlike nearly all of John's later images of solitary women. This distinction from her later work underlines the centrality of relationships to her life and practice early in her career. The painting also documents many of the elements of artistic production that John and her friends shared: living space, workspace, models, social networks, instructors, and educational institutions. Along with sharing physical resources, they also shared emotional support and encouragement, as well as critique of each other's work. These exchanges of tangible and intangible support were crucial to their creative output and their wellbeing. The portraits they made of each other formed another exchange, both of tangible images of selfhood during their late adolescence and young adulthood, a time at which their sense of themselves were still in flux, and also of intangible acts of service and validation of one another as individuals. Seeing themselves through each other's eyes offered the opportunity to learn about the way they were perceived by those they cared about, as well as the chance to learn from one another's work, during the potent period of their lives in which they felt themselves to be becoming artists.

Their independence in Paris was clearly something which each of them relished. Nettleship's letters to her mother during this time are full of descriptions of the eccentric landlady, the cheap meals they cooked for themselves, and the exciting difficulties of their daily lives. She wrote to her friend Mary Dowdall during this time, 'I think to live with a girlfriend & have lovers would be almost perfect. Whatever are we all training for that we have to shape

²³⁴ For a discussion of the ways in which this painting is composed in the manner of contemporary fashion plates, see Alicia Foster, 'Dressing for Art's Sake: Gwen John, the Bon Marche and the Spectacle of the Woman Artist in Paris,' in *Defining Dress: Dress as Object, Meaning, and Identity*, Amy Wilson and Elizabeth De La Haye, eds. (Manchester University Press, 1999), 114-127.

ourselves & compromise with things all our lives?²³⁵ This sense of freedom and fulfilment with her life exactly as it was, and disdain for making traditionally respectable choices, is decisively modern. John's portrait of Nettleship and Salmond (Figure 3.1) is a celebration of this intimate independence. It is also an illustration of the logistical support the three women provided one another in embarking on this trip. John was initially unable to join Nettleship and Salmond for financial reasons. Salmond offered to pay her fees for Whistler's atelier, allowing John to join the trip. Nettleship's mother travelled with the girls initially and helped them to find suitable lodgings, again providing support not only to her own daughter but to her friends. Though by 1898 it was not unusual for young women to travel abroad in groups, such trips still required resources and significant time and planning to make a reality. John's father had been hesitant to allow her to attend the Slade and was even more so to allow her to spend time abroad. With the support of her friends and their families, she was able to do so.

Student Legacies

John, Salmond, and Nettleship were part of a larger group of friends at the Slade that also included Ursula Tyrwhitt and Edna Waugh (later Clarke Hall), who will join them as the chief subjects of this chapter. We have greeted them on their first foray into the world beyond school but will now return to the genesis of their friendship in London four years earlier. Though some of these women's surnames changed soon after their departure from the Slade due to their marriages, I have chosen to refer to them in this chapter by the surnames they used while at the Slade. Other systems of nomenclature, such as using their first names, are not suitable because they generate a sense of informality, and of course because Gwen Salmond and Gwen John share a first name. Edna Waugh's naming creates the most complexity, for not only did she marry first, while still a student at the Slade, but she also produced most of her work under the

²³⁵ Holroyd and John, *The Good Bohemian*, 76.

name Edna Clarke Hall, not to mention writing an autobiography, the manuscript of which is cited extensively in this chapter, under that name. For this reason, Clarke Hall is the exception to my rule and will be called by her married surname throughout the chapter. As Ursula Tyrwhitt married a cousin who shared her birth surname and Gwen John did not marry, only Ida Nettleship and Gwen Salmond will be called by names different to those they went by after their marriages (they became Ida John and Gwen (Lady) Smith). When mentioned, John's brother Augustus John will be referred to by his full name to avoid confusion.

This chapter focuses on a group of five women, not a dyadic relationship between two friends or partners like those of the case studies in chapters one and four. This presents distinct research challenges similar to those encountered in my analysis of the Alma-Tadema women in the previous chapter. Firstly, both the number of surviving artworks and the quantity of written records about each of these women varies dramatically. John's paintings have been collected by major museums around the world, and many of her letters have been preserved by the National Library of Wales. Many of Nettleship's letters were preserved as well and have been published by her descendants. Very little work of hers survives. Though Clarke Hall destroyed much of her early work, she was so prolific that a great deal still survives, and many of her sketchbooks, poetry notebooks, and the manuscript of her autobiography are preserved by the Tate. Salmond and Tyrwhitt left far fewer traces. It has been almost impossible to find any work at all by Salmond, and no personal papers have been traced.²³⁶ Some of Tyrwhitt's later works survive, often because they were kept by family members, and many of the letters she received have been absorbed into the collected papers of those they were sent by. For example, her letters from Gwen John now form part of the Gwen John papers at the National Library of Wales. Letters written by Tyrwhitt, or other such personal documents, are far harder to find. Her own

²³⁶ Three very late works (up to the 1940s) are reproduced in Alison Thomas's *Portraits of Women: Gwen John and Her Forgotten Contemporaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), which confirm that Salmond began working again after her separation from her husband, but they do not shed light on her early artistic development and are currently in private collections.

collection of artworks, many of them by her friends from the Slade, was donated to various museums around the UK, most generously to the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, and offers insight into the network of artists she knew and valued. Nevertheless, this imbalance and variety of historical traces left by each of these women complicates my effort to analyse them as a group. Any such effort must be flexible, as no group is made up of identical individuals who share the same relationship with each other member of the group. I am influenced by the attitudes of some scholars of queer studies, who have articulated ‘nonoppositional modes of relationality,’ or those in which a binary between individuals or ideas is not present.²³⁷ In this case, my approach has been to treat the group as a single unit while its members studied at the Slade, and then to assess the impact of this time together on individual members after they dispersed. In other words, I read the work that they made while at the Slade as representative of all five of them, not just the artist whose hand moved the pen across the paper.

The lack of surviving works and written documents related to these women is exacerbated by my focus on the very earliest stages of their artistic careers. This problem is not unique to these women, nor to the Slade, but is commonly confronted by those researching young artists. Young artists were less likely to preserve materials relating to themselves and their work before achieving any kind of professional renown, and particularly while still students who were growing into their mature artistic styles and priorities. While this circumstance is equally true for all five of the artists discussed here, it nevertheless adds to the difficulty of accurately examining their work made while students at the Slade and immediately after. As a result, the works discussed here are almost entirely works on paper, and they should be understood as representational of a larger body of work, now lost. The analytic approach of addressing these women as a group rather than individuals offers one solution to the problem of missing work, as

²³⁷ Brian Glavey, *The Wallflower Avant-Garde: Modernism, Sexuality, and Queer Ekphrasis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 19.

the works that do survive become representative of the group rather than a single artist. In this way, the collective experiences and visual languages of the group are equally revelatory of each member's work and experience. As these five women were students during this period, meaning a significant portion of their work was the result of the same assignments, models, and teaching, my approach is especially apt. Taking the group's works as collaborative and paradigmatic of their collective ethos counteracts the imbalances between the survival of each individual's works and elevates the centrality of their community in their mutual artistic practices.

This approach can potentially serve to erase members of a group by privileging the work of other members as emblematic of that group. Scholarship of famous artistic groups of a similar era, such as the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (PRB) several decades earlier, has sometimes elevated the work of one or some artists at the expense of others. In the case of the PRB, the work of Rossetti has often come to stand for the work of the group, erasing the complexities of styles and subject matter amongst the other members.²³⁸ In the case of the women who are the subject of this chapter, however, my approach does the opposite. Rather than privileging the work of one artist over the others, I allow the work of all the artists to speak for those who have been erased or forgotten. Rather than elevating a single spokeswoman, I am placing all the women on equal ground. It is the case for so many women artists of this period that little or none of their work survives, which is not necessarily indicative of their relative talent, success, or historical relevance. The question of how to include such artists in the art historical narrative without the possibility of visual analysis of their work remains a challenging one and continues to make many women artists more difficult to study, and therefore understudied as a group. This chapter takes my relational, tessellating methodology into new ground. It is experimental and intends to investigate, through practice, the ways in which studying collectives rather than

²³⁸ For more on Rossetti, see Lisa Tickner, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (London: Tate, 2003); Julian Treuherz, Elisabeth Prettejohn, Edwin Becker, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003).

individuals can rehabilitate the art historical identities of those artists who did not leave many traces.

Though only John is much remembered today as a successful artist, all of these women except Nettleship continued to work throughout their lives. Tyrwhitt studied in Europe and at other schools in London, including Walter Sickert's, and exhibited at the NEAC extensively. Clarke Hall drew obsessively throughout the early years of her marriage and began exhibiting again in the 1920s after a mental breakdown, and even more often after the death of her husband in 1932 (she also published a book of poems at this time). Salmond's work is little known at all today, but the information that does exist about her suggests that she continued to work up to her marriage in 1912 and again after her husband left her in 1922. Nettleship was so constantly pregnant and short of money after her marriage that she was not able to work. It is tempting to argue that because few of these women enjoyed much memorable renown as artists, compared to their fellow male students at the Slade, revisiting and rehabilitating their work is irrelevant. But this erasure of the contributions of women artists who were unable to follow the conventions of artistic practice established by their male peers, or chose not to, is an erasure of a significant population of artists. Studying the careers of women who were unable to achieve the same type of success as men because of the barriers of inequality helps to complete the full history of art, and in this case, the history of the Slade. In the case of the women discussed here, as well as many of their peers, the work they produced was considered aesthetically 'feminine,' and therefore also lesser.²³⁹ In remaining outside the aesthetic tides of Modernism and creating work that was figurative, small in scale and medium, and had subject matter that was domestic, these artists were written out of the burgeoning discipline of Art History.²⁴⁰

²³⁹ For more on the idea of the 'feminine' in art, see Pollock, *Differencing the Canon*; Janet Wolff, 'The Feminine in Modern Art: Benjamin, Simmel and the Gender of Modernity,' *Theory, Culture & Society*, 17, no. 6 (2000): 33-53.

²⁴⁰ For more about the way the discipline was constructed around formalist, male-only narratives, see Griselda Pollock, *Woman in Art: Helen Rosenau's Little Book of 1944* (London: Yale University Press and Paul Mellon Centre, 2023).

All these women maintained a practice of drawing and painting one another while studying together at the Slade, and many carried this preference with them long past their student days. John wrote to Tyrwhitt in 1910, more than a decade after they left the Slade, in advance of Tyrwhitt's visit to John in Paris, 'Do you think we could paint each other or get a model between us? I would of course much rather paint each other, but perhaps you wouldn't.'²⁴¹ This continued interest in depicting close friends in portraiture, and therefore also being depicted by them, is key to their self-fashioning as artists. The interior life of their portrait subjects is of interest to each of these women as much as the physical details of their faces. Foregrounding their friendships with one another is equivalent to foregrounding their friendship with their portrait subjects, a potent intimacy with clear implications for their artistic output. Their artistic methodologies prized friendship, and so my decision to do so in my methodology for studying and critiquing them is well-made.

Though the group remained in touch all their lives, some more intimately than others, their friendship was at its zenith while they attended the Slade. Despite differing amounts of surviving archival material, it is important to note that several members of this group left behind significant correspondence, from which I have already quoted. Edna Clarke Hall, Ida Nettleship, and Gwen John's letters have all been preserved to a remarkable degree. Unlike the other case studies in this thesis, these five women never all lived together, and those who did share living quarters did so for brief periods during their friendship. This means that they had ample need to send one another letters, and therefore there is more written record of their expressions of feeling toward each other. Not only does this bring to life the love between these women, but it also offers an important window into the affective language used by women of this generation, class, location, and social milieu towards their friends. This is a critical element of this chapter,

²⁴¹ Ceriden Lloyd-Morgan, *Gwen John: Letters and Notebooks Selected from the Gwen John Papers at the National Library of Wales* (London: Tate Publishing in association with The National Library of Wales, 2004), 53.

which takes a more affective tone throughout than the others in this thesis. The influence of these five women on each other's lives and works is particularly palpable as care. This element of artistic friendship is implied in chapters one and two, and takes a slightly different form in chapter four, but in the case of this generation of women at the Slade it takes centre stage. In her autobiography, written at least thirty years after she left her studies, Clarke Hall wrote, 'Lovely things enchant and vanish - if they blow away let them go without tears - with light regret which in itself is delight. Only when they change and become ugly need we grieve. These Slade friendships were a joy.'²⁴² Clarke Hall's poetic phrasing underlines her acceptance of the natural divergence of friends over the course of one's life, as well as her deep and continued appreciation for her Slade friendships, even if they have since 'blown away.' The artistic careers of these women were born collectively through the experience of seeing themselves through the eyes of their friends, deepening their sense of individuality and interiority. This practice enabled them to imagine their 'subjectivit[ies] dispersed among [their] friends,' creating a truly collaborative collective of women.²⁴³ In other words, their artistic practices enabled them to create identities and senses of self that were constructed communally.

The Slade School

The Slade School of Art was founded in 1871 based on a financial bequest from Felix Slade. It was conceived as part of University College London (UCL), which had been founded in 1826 as the first university in London and the first university in Britain to be entirely secular. The Slade

²⁴² Edna Clarke Hall, *The Heritage of the Ages*, (unpublished manuscript, undated, Tate Archive), 30. This document will be cited throughout this chapter and requires further explanation. It is described as Clarke Hall's autobiography in Tate's catalogue and in Alison Thomas's book about this group of women. However, Thomas later learned that this manuscript is an amalgamation of sources compiled by Clarke Hall's great-niece and her husband, Clare and Peter Peeters, and Mary Fearnley Sander, her companion in her old age. Using Clarke Hall's journals and tape recordings of her telling stories about her life, the Peeterses and Sander wrote *The Heritage of the Ages*. The original sources are in the Tate Archive but are uncatalogued and not available for public consultation. These circumstances do not dilute the relevance of this source for giving colour to Clarke Hall's life but do alter the categorisation of the manuscript as an 'autobiography.'

²⁴³ Glavey, *The Wallflower Avant-Garde*, 20.

admitted women students on equal terms with men from its founding, and UCL awarded degrees to women from 1878, making it the first university to do so in Britain, though not the first to allow women to attend. At the Slade, women quickly outnumbered male students, and this trend continued throughout the Slade's history, except for 'ex-service bulges' after the two world wars.²⁴⁴ Before its founding, most women in Britain and, to an extent, the United States, travelled to Paris to study in the mixed-sex academies and ateliers there, as Swynnerton and Dacre did and as Ethel Sands and Nan Hudson did, who will be discussed in the following chapter. Indeed, some Slade students still went on to do so, following in the footsteps of their foremothers. However, previous generations of female Victorian artists shared a different educational experience, and the existence of the Slade's co-educational mission fundamentally shifted the outlook for British artistic education and therefore, British art.

From the beginning, the school followed Felix Slade's wishes to 'encourage the young, specifying under 19,' through the generous awarding of scholarships.²⁴⁵ The scholarships were competitive, and were by no means won by all or even many students. In the 1990s, Stephen Chaplin was enlisted by UCL to attempt to put together a narrative history of the Slade. The result was his *Slade Archive Reader*, which is more of a detailed summary of the contents of the school's archive than a narrative history, but which nevertheless provides a detailed history of the school. In it, Chaplin describes the appeal of the Slade to nineteenth-century women thus:

The School, though expensive, provided a secure, University based education for young women, (compared with the private establishments), in a safe area, (compared with the earlier, Strand, site of the Government Female School), near to some London termini, willing to take beginners (unlike the RA [Royal Academy]), directed by a well-known Academician. What was offered could legitimately be seen as a general education (unlike all competitors). Though no entrance examination was put in place except for the Scholarship, the implied academic ethos and high fees precluded the lower classes from attending (unlike the government South Kensington and Branch Schools);

²⁴⁴ Stephen Chaplin, *Slade Archive Reader*, Special Collections, University College London, MS ADD 400, 1998, 5.

²⁴⁵ Chaplin, *Slade Archive Reader*, 63.

and there was no hint of Design or certification for the (lowly) teaching profession (again unlike South Kensington).²⁴⁶

This combination of factors resulted in an ethos of respectability as well as serious artistic study that made the school attractive to young women and to their families. Its focus on very young students also made it notable among art schools, and meant that the student population, while not exclusively made up of teenagers, was mostly characterised by adolescents who posed less of a threat of impropriety to young women students. Being attached to UCL placed it within a larger university system, unlike most other art schools, at a time in which many universities were opening their doors to women, and during which university attendance was rising. The Slade was thus uniquely placed to become a nexus of educated, middle-class, young women.²⁴⁷ Amongst other things, this had the notable consequence that most students at the Slade, by virtue of their age and/or class, were not actively engaged in the sale of their art, though many, if not most, had the ambition to become professional artists. In his memoir of his time as an art student at both Westminster School of Art and the Slade in the 1890s, Alfred Thornton noted that at Westminster ‘the atmosphere was very different from that of the Slade, as most of the students had to make a living from their work.’²⁴⁸

The concept of ‘professionalism’ was in active development in this period and is central to the way these students understood themselves and their identities.²⁴⁹ Higher education was ‘the creator of merit, human capital, [and] professional expertise’ in English society, in which the conceptual importance of meritocracy was solidifying.²⁵⁰ For Slade students, their education was both a way of gaining the hard skills of being an artist as well as of obtaining the socially

²⁴⁶ Chaplin, *Slade Archive Reader*, 67-8.

²⁴⁷ For more on women at the Slade, see Yu Menting, *London's Women Artists, 1900-1914: A Talented and Decorative Group* (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2020).

²⁴⁸ Alfred Thornton, *The Diary of an Art Student of the Nineties* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, 1938), 16.

²⁴⁹ See Harold Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society: England since 1880*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002) for more on the concept of professionalism at the turn of the century.

²⁵⁰ Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society*, xii.

accepted credentials required to claim the identity of ‘artist,’ both to others and to themselves. In this way, the Slade was a particularly formative experience for the students who attended—they entered its halls as teenagers and exited as artists. This transformation in identity was clearly impactful on an emotional level as well as a professional one. For women at the Slade, this emotional impact was heightened by the fact that their experience of *becoming* artists via this formal process of education and professionalisation was not available to their mothers’ generation. It is notable that amongst the women of this chapter, even those who never made a living from their art continued to identify themselves as artists for the rest of their lives; the identity they had acquired at the Slade was, for them, hard-earned and permanent.

The ‘well known Academician’ who directed the Slade in this period was Frederick Brown RA, the third director of the Slade. He followed Alphonse Legros, director between 1876 and 1892, who followed Edward Poynter, director from the school’s opening to 1876. Brown came from a teaching post at the Westminster School of Art and instigated a policy at the Slade to allow women to draw from the undraped model with the same privileges as male students. This caused a significant increase in the number of female students, resulting in a student population that, by the turn of the century, saw men outnumbered three to one by women.²⁵¹ At the dinner to mark the occasion of Brown’s arrival at the Slade, women sat side by side with men for the first time at such a function.²⁵² Brown held the title of Slade Professor and therefore directed the school, but he was joined as teacher by Henry Tonks, a former surgeon who had studied under Brown at Westminster, and Philip Wilson Steer, one of the founders of the NEAC. Of these three men, Tonks was the most striking character, known for his harshness and the frequency and ease with which he made his students cry. Mabel Culley, a student at the Slade from 1898, wrote in her diary that ‘Mr. Tonks taught us in a unique way: he gave us a great deal

²⁵¹ Michael Reynolds, *The Story of an Art School 1871-1971*, Slade School of Fine Art Archive, unpublished manuscript presented to the Slade School of Art Archive in 1975, 112.

²⁵² Thornton, *The Diary of an Art Student of the Nineties*, 20.

of Anatomy, and made marvellous drawings on the side of one's board in explanation. He refused to teach painting, saying 'You can't teach colour.'²⁵³ This phrase has been repeated often to characterise Tonks' teaching method. His focus was on clean lines and draughtsmanship. In his history of the Slade, Reynolds noted that one of Tonks' favourite 'gambits' with female students he considered 'cocky or idle' was to 'ask if they could sew or cook, and if they said they could, he would tell them: "Well, go home and sew. You'll never learn to draw."²⁵⁴

This dynamic seems to have done nothing to deter women from attending the Slade, nor to have sent them away earlier than they intended. Perhaps there was a degree to which women students appreciated the harshness of Tonks's critiques of their work and work ethics, because they perceived them to be the result of his taking them seriously. Brown and Tonks certainly supported their students long after they became alumni. When Tonks returned from working as a war artist in the Great War, he found Clarke Hall in a state of immense distress having just endured a mental breakdown. He took a leading role in recuperating her with the help of her husband and a psychologist, Henry Head, and remained a staunch supporter of her talent and wellbeing some twenty years after she had left the Slade.²⁵⁵ Brown owned John's famous *Self Portrait* (1902) (Figure 3.2) from the time it was made, even before it was first exhibited at NEAC, and passed it down to his niece, Ellen, from whom it was purchased by Tate.²⁵⁶ These examples demonstrate the sincerity of the admiration held by Tonks and Brown for Clarke Hall and John, and indeed for many of their students, despite the intensity or harshness of their teaching methods.

²⁵³ Cited in Reynolds, *The Story of an Art School*, 117.

²⁵⁴ Cited in Reynolds, *The Story of an Art School*, 119.

²⁵⁵ Max Browne, 'Edna Clarke Hall (1879–1979) and Wuthering Heights,' *The British Art Journal* 16, no. 2 (2015): 108–118, p. 114.

²⁵⁶ Cecily Langdale, *Gwen John: With a Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings and a Selection of the Drawings* (New Haven: Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art by Yale University Press, 1987), 135.

Culley described the rhythm of student days at the Slade in her diary, giving a sense of the pattern of instruction for students in the '90s. 'You were lucky if you got more than one criticism a day,' she wrote.

We drew from plaster casts from 10 to 4, with a short interval for lunch [...] At 4 we went to the Life Room for 'Short Poses,' quick studies of 5 or 10 minutes. Later on you got permission to draw in the Life Room a day at a time, and you might send in drawings of hands and feet and of a head for Professor Brown to see [. . .] So you were gradually promoted to full time in the Life Room.²⁵⁷

Male and female students worked together while studying plaster casts in the Antique Room, but separately in their own respective Life Rooms.²⁵⁸ This focus on the Life Room as the pinnacle of study was another feature of Brown's tenure at the Slade. Unlike his predecessors and other art schools in London, who required students to spend longer periods on casts, he promoted new students to the Life Room quickly and encouraged them to become comfortable drawing from life. He also encouraged students to draw quickly, as opposed to his own alma mater, the Royal Academy, at which students might spend up to forty hours on a single drawing.²⁵⁹

The Slade had thus become, by the 1890s, a vibrant school of art with a dynamic student body. The generation of students who entered the school around 1894 have become emblematic of the impact the school had on early twentieth-century British art, because so many of them became major figures in the various artistic movements of the decades after 1900 and because their association with one another was formed at and by the Slade. Their artistic identities were moulded as much by the formal teaching of the Slade as by the shared experience of being turned into 'artists' through the rigorous and idiosyncratic structures of the institution. The five women I have identified as a firm group for the purposes of this chapter existed within a larger

²⁵⁷ Cited in Reynolds, *The Story of an Art School*, 116.

²⁵⁸ Cited in Reynolds, *The Story of an Art School*, 116.

²⁵⁹ Annette Wickham, 'The Schools and the Practice of Art,' in *The Royal Academy of Arts: History and Collections*, Robin Simon and MaryAnne Stevens, eds. (London: Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art by Yale University Press, in association with the Royal Academy of Arts, 2018), 435.

social circle of Slade students, which included Augustus John, Ambrose McEvoy, Mary Edwards, Albert Rotherstein, Louise and Michael Salaman, and Grace Westry, among others. The smaller group of five has previously been identified by Alison Thomas as a nexus of the larger group and includes the women of the group about whom the most is known today.²⁶⁰ Some number of them are mentioned over and over again in descriptions of the Slade at this time. In his history of the Slade, Reynolds describes the way the Johns ‘became the focus of a circle of the most brilliant of these girls. They included Edna Waugh (now Lady Clarke Hall), Ida Nettleship (who became John’s first wife), Mary Edwards (who married McEvoy), Grace Westry, Louise Salaman, Ursula Tyrwhitt and Gwen Salmond (later the wife of Sir Matthew Smith).’²⁶¹ In her autobiography, Edna Clarke Hall wrote that ‘At the Slade I was surrounded by a generation of students who were brilliant or had arresting personalities. Amongst these were Ida Nettleship and Gwen Salmond, Augustus and Gwen John, Ambrose McEvoy, Ursula Tyrwhitt, Albert Rothenstein, Louise Salaman, Mathew Smith and later on William Orpen.’²⁶² And in her diary, a fellow student, Wynne George, mentioned three of them in a row, noting that ‘I think I. Nettleship is simply sweet - so picturesque. Miss Salmond makes me laugh. A girl named Gwen John asked me if my name was ‘Tubby.’ Then sketched me munching an apple.’²⁶³ John, Nettleship, Clarke Hall, Salmond, and Tyrwhitt are the most consistently mentioned together, and have the most surviving traces of their relationships, in the form of artwork and personal papers. They provide, therefore, the most efficacious lens through which to assess the relationship between female friendship and the Slade.

²⁶⁰ Thomas, *Portraits of Women*.

²⁶¹ Reynolds, *The Story of an Art School*, 113.

²⁶² Clarke Hall, 23. This characterisation is misleading: Mathew Smith did not attend the Slade until 1905, when Clarke Hall and her friends had left. William Orpen, on the other hand, did overlap with them at the Slade.

²⁶³ Cited in Reynolds, *The Story of an Art School*, 131.

Student Prizes and Competitions

The Slade operated around a system of prizes and competitive scholarships, as did most art schools in the period. Women were well represented amongst winners of prizes from the beginning at the Slade. Amongst our group of women, Clarke Hall was the most decorated by the Slade. Her painting of the set subject for the summer composition prize, the Rape of the Sabines, won second place in the 1897 competition (1897) (Figure 3.3).²⁶⁴ First place was won by Maxwell Balfour's execution of the same subject (1897) (Figure 3.4). The division between first and second place was unusual—ordinarily, just one student received the whole prize. Alison Thomas posits that the decision was made because the competition was intended for submissions in oil. Clarke Hall made her painting in watercolour, creating an unusual issue for the judges, who solved it by dividing the prize, awarding Balfour £6 for first place and Clarke Hall £4 for second, rather than the usual £10 prize.²⁶⁵ The subject of the Rape of the Sabines is strongly associated with Rubens, whose painting of it forms part of the founding collection of the National Gallery (probably 1635-1640) (Figure 3.5). It provides obvious strengths as a subject for an art school competition—male and female bodies in various states of undress, emotion, and body position—yet it is also, fundamentally, an image of mass rape. Particularly for an institution so associated with its co-ed student population, the subject is quite shocking.

Clarke Hall's painting, which now only survives in a black and white photographic reproduction, is a dynamic and almost chaotic composition, overflowing with contorted figures and a sense of motion. In a retrospective 1907 publication entitled *The Slade: Drawings and Pictures by Several Past and Present Students of the Slade School*, in which Clarke Hall was the only female Slade alumna mentioned, her sister Rosa Waugh assessed the painting as 'not so complete, not so logically subordinated to a general scheme, as Mr. Balfour's,' but she says that 'the groups are all

²⁶⁴ Thomas, *Portraits of Women*, 12.

²⁶⁵ Thomas, *Portraits of Women*, 12-13.

full of “go” and of great variety.²⁶⁶ She also notes that Clarke Hall makes an ‘attempt’ to express individual emotion on the faces of her figures.²⁶⁷ This review, written a decade after the paintings were made, offers a helpful articulation of the system of values at play in assessing student work at the Slade. Balfour’s painting is indeed more logically composed—the grid he drew onto the canvas to aid in laying out his composition is still visible through the oil paint in the finished work. His canvas is not stuffed with figures, nor does it communicate a strong sense of the emotions of the scene. Clarke Hall’s, in contrast, is striking in its willingness to grapple with the horror of the subject. As her sister notes, she focuses on the emotionality of the faces of her figures.

Placing Clarke Hall’s work alongside the work of her nearest competitor, in this case male, in the context of such a gendered subject provokes a discussion of the relevance of the identity of the artist. All students at the Slade would have made, or had the opportunity to make, compositions of this subject in the summer of 1897, including Clarke Hall’s friends. Taking Balfour’s work and Clarke Hall’s as representational examples of the work of male and female students, it is possible to extrapolate different emotive and aesthetic tones of approach to the composition. Clarke Hall embraces the violence of the subject. The figure at the very centre of the picture, shown curving backwards over the crouched figure of an attacker, her pale torso entirely exposed, is a jarring motif of vulnerability. The physicality of the attack on this figure and those around her is visceral, with figures lifted from the ground, contorted around one another, and striking each other. The emotions on the faces of the figures range from the fierce defiance of the woman in the bottom left corner, who looks out at the viewer an intense gaze as a hand wraps around her torso, to the open-mouthed terror on the face of the woman beside her, who appears to be falling to the ground. In her autobiography, Clarke Hall recounted

²⁶⁶ Rosa Waugh, ‘Edna Clarke Hall’ in *The Slade: Drawings and Pictures by Several Past and Present Students of the Slade School*, ed. R. Schwabe (London: Richard Clay and Sons, 1907), 23-24.

²⁶⁷ Waugh, 23-24.

modelling all these female figures herself on her mother's bed in front of a mirror.²⁶⁸ This anecdote adds colour to the striking difference in artistic experience for a female artist and a male artist approaching this subject. The image of Clarke Hall contorting herself in various ways to represent the many victims of rape in her painting is a disturbing one.

In Balfour's work, there are fewer figures present and none of them are nude, making the painting feel less like a knot of writhing bodies. Here, it is the male faces of the attackers that are most detailed. Two helmeted figures on the right side of the picture have clearly visible faces, one of them smirking as he carries his victim away. In the centre-left section of the painting, a man with a bare chest and an animal-skin vest stands unobstructed, gazing over his shoulder open-mouthed at the scene behind him, his left hand holding his own victim on the ground below him. Without the nudity and accompanying vulnerability it communicates, this image is more readily legible as a battle scene than a scene of rape and abduction. In part this legibility is due to the more detailed and restrained brushwork in Balfour's work, as opposed to the looseness and vitality of Clarke Hall's. It is likewise easier to decipher Balfour's work due to our ability to view it in colour as opposed to the difficulty of discerning detail in watercolour in greyscale. Notwithstanding, Balfour's painting is decidedly less affective or dynamic than Clarke Hall's work. His work is more easily understood as part of the legacy of Rubens' composition, while Clarke Hall's can be placed in better conversation with Eugene Delacroix's work of the same subject (c. 1850) (Figure 3.6). Both artists approach the scenes with looseness and a dynamic sense of movement.

Another of Clarke Hall's student compositions, entitled *Atalanta*, depicts a scene that might be categorised as a fete champetre (1899) (Figure 3.7). The mythological story of Atalanta traditionally centres around a boar hunt, a foot race, and the transformation of Atalanta and her husband into lions by Zeus, none of which is depicted here. The scene is filled entirely with nude

²⁶⁸ Thomas, *Portraits of Women*, 13.

women, save a single satyr, who lounge or romp about a woodland meadow setting. It is unclear which figure is Atalanta herself—the lounging woman in the foreground is the most obvious choice, for her size and central placement, but she has no other distinguishing features. Before the major plot points of Atalanta’s myth, she was a devotee of the virgin huntress goddess Artemis, living among women in isolation. Clarke Hall seems to have chosen to depict the heroine in this part of her life, amongst a community of women. We could also read the scene as depicting Atalanta’s footrace, making her one of the two leaping figures in the background. This image is dated to 1899 and held in the UCL Museum’s collection of Slade drawings. Alison Thomas references a similar image, *Study for Atalanta*, which Clarke Hall exhibited at NEAC in 1901. It is not clear whether the two images are the same, or whether she revisited this theme multiple times. The one pictured here could certainly be called a study, as the right-hand margin is filled with strokes and jottings of colour, in practice, perhaps, for a final work. Regardless, the watercolour that survives serves to confirm Clarke Hall’s style of representing female nudes, the bodies here echoing the diverse contortions seen in her *Rape of the Sabines*, though in this case communicating a joyful whimsy rather than horror.

Though no other summer composition works by members of the group survive, we know that Salmond won the 1896 competition for her work, *Descent from the Cross*.²⁶⁹ In her diary, Wynn George recalled that, ‘Miss Salmond got the prize. When the Pro’ gave it out she looked as cool as a cucumber. All the men clapped and cheered. Hurrah for the Girls.’²⁷⁰ This rather delightful anecdote is revealing of Salmond’s own reputation at the school as well as the culture between the sexes. Clearly, she was well-liked by her fellow students as well as her teachers. Likewise, the support from the men for her victory in the competition indicates a lack of ill-will towards the women students, who did consistently win prizes and scholarships. Indeed, Salmond

²⁶⁹ Thomas, *Portraits of Women*, 18

²⁷⁰ Quoted in Reynolds, *The Story of an Art School*, 131.

had won a scholarship the previous year, making her and Clarke Hall both recipients of the Slade's two highest prizes. In his obituary of her in the *Times* over sixty years later, Augustus John wrote that Salmond's 'early compositions were distinguished by a force and temerity for which even her natural liveliness of temperament had not prepared us.'²⁷¹ Part of the reason these five women are consistently linked in contemporary and more recent writing about them is because they were considered the best talents of their generation at the Slade. The evidence of Salmond and Clarke Hall winning both a summer competition and a scholarship, both significant achievements, highlights this, and further demonstrates the importance of the collective ambition and talent of the group. Not only did they share visual style and artistic values, but they also shared a standard of achievement which encouraged them individually and collectively.

Slade students could also compete for the figure drawing prize. In 1898, the prize went to William Orpen for his *Seated Male Nude* (1898) (Figure 3.8). As the prize winner, this image sets a standard for the expectations of figure drawing at the Slade in the 1890s. Orpen's drawing has a loose, unfinished quality, with a complete focus on the torso and limbs of the figure. The extremities and face are vaguely rendered, but the posture and muscular tone of the model are carefully drawn. Nettleship's *Standing Male Nude* survives (1895) (Figure 3.9), and though it is not clear whether this drawing was made for the figure drawing competition, it is a complete work.²⁷² In the upper right corner, it is inscribed 'Competition,' strongly suggesting that it was indeed entered in the figure drawing competition. The figure in Nettleship's drawing has his genital area covered with fabric, unlike in Orpen's drawing, raising questions about the parameters of the

²⁷¹ Augustus John, 'Lady Smith,' 1 February 1958, *The Times* (London).

²⁷² The drawing is inscribed in the upper right corner 'Ida NETTLESHIP?' leading to obvious questions as to the certainty of the attribution to Nettleship. UCL Museum maintains the attribution, which I use here, but I note that it is not documented who or when this inscription was made and therefore the attribution to Nettleship remains uncertain. The inscription appears to have been written by two hands - first 'Ida' and then 'NETTLESHIP?' - suggesting that perhaps it was signed 'Ida,' with the surname added later. It is dated to 1895, when Nettleship was enrolled as a student.

‘undraped’ nude model and women’s access to it.²⁷³ Even with this handicap, Nettleship’s drawing is exceptional. The figure is firmly outlined with thick, dark line. His knees and neck show particular attention to verisimilitude, with neatly rendered dimensionality. The whole drawing exudes a confidence and cleanness of execution, though the right side of the figure does have traces of earlier lines which have been erased. Viewed alongside Orpen’s drawing, the darkness and ferocity of Nettleship’s lines are striking, as is her obvious command of the human form. Like the comparison between Clarke Hall and Balfour’s paintings of the Rape of the Sabines, comparing Orpen’s work with Nettleship’s reveals a difference in modernness. Orpen’s drawing is a conventional work in the tradition of the Old Masters, while Nettleship’s has a real sense of being a rendering of a modern man. The figure’s hairstyle and facial hair look contemporary to 1890s’ London, as does his rather scrawny body. Orpen’s figure, in contrast, has a blurred and non-specific face and a traditionally muscular form. He strikes a pose in the tradition of Michelangelo’s *Sistina ignudi*, situating Orpen as an inheritor of Renaissance visual language and motifs. This pattern of Nettleship and Clarke Hall, and therefore, using my methodology of collectivity, their friends, creating student work that is notably more modern in its rendition than their male peers is striking. While this pattern did not remain for all the artists in these examples, notably Orpen, for the duration of their careers, the fact that it can be identified in the earliest days of these artists’ careers further underscores the reality that simply attending the Slade was a hard-won and modern experience for these women, in a way that it was not for their male peers. While these women were not the very first generation to attend the Slade, nor the first to have access to co-educational art schools in England and abroad, the experience was still in its infancy compared to the centuries-long heritage of standardised art training and access to intuitions male students inherited. While it is not correct to infer from this

²⁷³ The meaning of ‘undraped’ in the context of the Slade is a semantic question that deserves further study. The drawings that survive from this period suggest that women’s access to the male nude was still limited, as shown in Nettleship’s ‘nude,’ despite claims that both sexes had full access to life models.

set of circumstances that women students were all painting in a modernist style and men were not, it is an interesting pattern visible in student work.

Because these works were made for student competitions, it is highly likely, if not certain, that the other women of the group also made works of the same subjects or in the same manner, for competitions in different years. Thus, although these are untraced today, understanding those that do survive as representative of the group allows us to glean a fuller appreciation for the contributions of these women to the Slade as students. We can extrapolate that each of these five artists made paintings for each summer composition prize. Thus, using the above examples, there would have been five *Descents from the Cross* and five *Rapes of the Sabines*. We cannot know what they looked like or how they differed in style and presentation, but we can be fairly certain they were created. Likewise, it is likely that each woman made a figure drawing for the figure drawing competition each year. Again, the details of these drawings are not known, but their existence is highly likely. With this knowledge, based on the fact that the women were students working within the expectations of the Slade, as well as the analysis of those works that do survive, a richer picture of the artistic output of these women emerges.

Outside the Classroom

Outside of their time at the Slade, the women went on holidays together often around England and Wales, in order to get away together and also to sketch new environments. Clarke Hall, Nettleship, and Salmond went on at least two holidays together to the seaside between 1895 and 1897: one to Wales, on which they were joined by Clarke Hall's sister Rosa Waugh, and one to Suffolk. The holiday to Wales was planned well in advance, and the three artists brought a male model down from London with them because, according to Clarke Hall, 'Ida wanted to study the colour of flesh in sunlight.'²⁷⁴ They abandoned the model soon after they arrived because he had

²⁷⁴ Clarke Hall, *Heritage of the Ages*, 27.

a strange manner and made them uncomfortable and returned to drawing one another.

Nettleship described the holiday thus to her friend Dorothy Salaman: 'We had a life fit for queens and princesses, except that they don't do work, do they? We ran into the sea without garments - Hush whisper it not [...] It was most beautiful [...] We were very merry, and oh I *did* enjoy it all.'²⁷⁵ This is a delightful quote for many reasons, evoking the joy with which Nettleship shared time with her friends. But the critical element of this description is her claim that they lived like 'queens and princesses' but that they also worked, unlike real royal women. This firm claiming of their time not as a regular holiday but a working trip is notable, as is the implied paradox, from Nettleship's perspective, between working and fun. For her and her friends, the two were not mutually exclusive.

Their trip to Suffolk, interestingly, was unplanned. Clarke Hall wrote in her autobiography that she remembered one day Nettleship 'was troubled and wanted to get away to think things out and asked Gwen Salmond and me to go with her to Aldeburgh.'²⁷⁶ They took the train that day and spent the night walking up and down the beach alone, after sneaking out of their boarding house. These escapes as an unchaperoned group of artists allowed Nettleship, Clarke Hall, and Salmond to expand their horizons as artists. They had access to new subject matter and the freedom to create without the structure of school. Their freedom to travel in this way reflects the respectability associated with the Slade and the women they encountered there from the perspective of their families, who allowed them to travel together. The language they use to describe these trips, particularly the trip to Suffolk, indicates the level of support they relied on each other for. That Nettleship's solution to feeling 'troubled' was to 'think things out' in the company of her closest friends demonstrates the role these women played in each other's personal lives as well as their artistic lives.

²⁷⁵ Holroyd and John, *The Good Bohemian*, 48.

²⁷⁶ Clarke Hall, *Heritage of the Ages*, 21.

Nettleship and Clarke Hall were especially close friends during this period. Clarke Hall referred to her as her ‘first real friendship’ and ‘a gladness caught from youth,’ writing in *Heritage of the Ages*, ‘how dearly I loved her! She was so great and so altogether above any kind of meanness. How we confided in each other and how we stood by each other!’²⁷⁷ Around the time that this drawing was made, Clarke Hall was weighing the decision of whether or not to marry William Clarke Hall, who had been a family friend since she was a child. Nettleship’s letters to her document her firm encouragement to Clarke Hall to continue her work and to feel confident in her own feelings about the situation. ‘All you must dream of thinking of is your work,’ Nettleship wrote, ‘Your work and your pleasure. Mr. Hall understands [...] It is sheer nonsense to think of loving a person continuously or at all, in the right way, for years to come.’²⁷⁸ Though she did marry William Clarke Hall a year later, Nettleship’s ongoing encouragement to listen to one’s own wishes and needs laid the foundation for Clarke Hall to continue working throughout her marriage, even when her work was not intended for exhibition. In another letter from around the same time, Nettleship wrote,

I suppose I have all good and beautiful wishes for you. But first and foremost comes this one, that you may have got on, [...] and worked jolly hard and be able to draw, to draw strongly and understandably this time next year. In comparison that is with this year.²⁷⁹

Nettleship referred to the personal strength required to prioritise one’s art as being ‘a man for a time.’²⁸⁰ Obviously aware of the specific hurdles facing women like herself and her friends, Nettleship articulated her strategy for facing them in these letters, and probably in conversation with her friends as well. This sharing of concerns and tools for managing them was invaluable for these women as they moved through a world dominated by men.

²⁷⁷ Clarke Hall, *Heritage of the Ages*, 21.

²⁷⁸ Holroyd and John, *The Good Bohemian*, 42.

²⁷⁹ Holroyd and John, *The Good Bohemian*, 39.

²⁸⁰ Holroyd and John, *The Good Bohemian*, 42-43.

Around this time, Gwen John made a drawing of a group of her friends in the flat she shared with her brother and sister on Fitzroy Street (1897-1898) (Figure 3.10). They are grouped around the fireplace working, and outside the window two figures are visible. The figure leaning on the fireplace is Augustus, and grouped around him are Clarke Hall's sister Rosa Waugh, the Johns' sister Winifred, and Michael Salaman. The figures walking outside the window have been potentially identified as John and Ambrose McEvoy, who may have been romantically involved at this time.²⁸¹ The painting is loosely done in watercolour, and the composition is not well balanced or arranged. It is obviously a sketch, and it does capture a sense of the conviviality of the space and group of people in it. Clarke Hall remembered that 'there were occasional drawing evenings with volunteer models taken from among ourselves' in the Johns' house on Fitzroy Street, which this work seems to be a depiction of.²⁸² It might be aptly termed a 'conversation piece,' which became a compositional style that John's peers at the Slade revisited, particularly William Orpen. The back of the drawing has an inscription by Clarke Hall which reads 'given to me by Gwen John, 1896-7? Edna CH.' This demonstrates that not only were these women in the habit of making portraits of one another, but that they also exchanged them at the time of making them. That this drawing survives, now in the collection of the University College London Museum thanks to Clarke Hall's bequest, suggests that these exchanges or gifts were meaningful and treasured enough to be kept for many years.

Portraits of Each Other

As discussed earlier in this chapter, portraiture was a central element of the artistic practices of this group of women, placing them within a long art historical tradition. One of the earliest surviving works from a member of the group during their student period is Clarke Hall's 1897

²⁸¹ Lauren Elkin, 'The Room and the Street: Gwen John's and Jean Rhys's Insider/Outsider Modernism,' *Women* 27, no. 3 (2016): 239-264, p. 249.

²⁸² Clarke Hall, *Heritage of the Ages*, 24.

portrait of Ida Nettleship (etched in 1922 based on a drawing from 1897) (Figure 3.11), although the surviving image is an etching made in 1922 based on the 1897 drawing. The drawing exemplifies the stylistic qualities prized by Tonks and Brown at the Slade: simple, firm lines with very little shading. Nettleship gazes off to one side, looking thoughtful and at ease in the presence of the artist. It is a flattering image, and the cheerful wistfulness in Nettleship's eyes suggests the affection between the two women. The perspective from which the artist views her subject is intimate, creating the sense of shared space. Nettleship is seated and at ease, her hands clasped together, and the artist is level with her, as if she is sitting beside her. It is also a flawed image, clearly the work of a young student. The figure's eyes are asymmetrical, with the left eye crowding strangely in towards the nose, confusing the perspective. The picture thus becomes both a portrait of a friend and also a portrait of the young artist at this moment in time. It captures her potential and her lack of finessed skills as a draughtswoman. It is notable that Clarke Hall reproduced her early drawing with these faults intact some twenty years later, although it is impossible to know exactly how much the etching differs from the original drawing without access to it.

In 1898, the year they travelled to Paris, John and Nettleship each drew one another, leaving two portraits that also survive today. It is unclear exactly when these works were completed, so we cannot say with certainty that they were done while the women were in Paris together or before they left England. They represent another example of exchange of images, in this case of representations of one another. Both drawings are sketchy and have an informal feeling to them, though John signed hers, suggesting that she considered it to be a finished work. John's work (1898) (Figure 3.12) is made up of a darker, more complete rendering of Nettleship as well as a mirror image on the bottom left of the page. It was probably an initial sketch or draft. The mirroring effect of the two opposite images evokes the sense of the two artists sketching one another, creating mirrors in which each could regard their own visage through the eyes of their friend. Nettleship's portrait of John (c. 1898) (Figure 3.13) is rough to the point of

illegibility everywhere except the face of the sitter, which is carefully shaded and detailed.

Nettleship's interest in this work was entirely on the visage of her friend, and, by extension, on rendering her spirit and individuality. John gazes downward, almost as if she is at work on her own drawing while being drawn. The intention of the artists of each of these works is as much to study the specific human face as it is to create a likeness of a beloved friend, pointing again to the way in which the emotional support and artistic rigour these friendships provided were inherently interwoven.

John's c. 1898-1899 painting with which I began this chapter, *Interior with Figures* (Figure 3.1), also depicts two of her friends, and is the only oil painting that survives which falls into this category. The influence of Whistler, the master who brought the women to Paris, is clear here in the pale, washed-out look that characterises the interior space and the pastel hues of the two figures. John's painting recalls Whistler's *The Artist in His Studio* (c. 1865-1866) (Figure 3.14), which shares the neutrally coloured and detailed backdrop and two female figures of this painting, with the addition of the male painter who looks out at the viewer, raising an eyebrow.²⁸³ Even the colours of the dress worn by the figures in John's and Whistler's paintings echo one another, with the figure on the left wearing white and the one on the right in light pink.

Whistler's image offers an alternative view of the artist's studio to John's. Here, the artist is visible in the space he paints, along with his companions/subjects, while John does not include herself in her painting, thereby precluding it from being read as a 'studio' painting. In Whistler's painting, his own face is the only one of the three figures to be clearly delineated. John's interest in her friends' likenesses, rather than Whistler's almost complete focus on the paint itself, is a key difference between the two artists, and suggests a different set of personal and artistic values at play in these works, namely a divergence between the prioritization of the formal versus the

²⁸³ For more on Whistler and his influence, see Anna Gruetzner Robins, *A Fragile Modernism: Whistler and His Impressionist Followers*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007).

interpersonal. Yet the shared visual styles of the two works emphasise both the way in which John was still a student when she painted this portrait of her friends—still evolving through the styles of her teachers en route to establishing her own—and the seriousness of her engagement with the leading avant garde styles of the artistic Anglosphere.

Whistler's school was dominated by women, and he famously preferred his female students to the men, eventually not deigning to criticise the men's work at all.²⁸⁴ The school was short-lived, and Whistler was widely considered a poor instructor, but Nettleship, John, and Salmond's admiration for him was not dimmed during their time studying with him. In an addendum to one of Nettleship's letters to her friend Michel Salaman from this period, Salmond wrote 'Unlike Nettleship I, though improving, am coming to the conclusion I shall never draw. Whistler's [academy] is worth living for.'²⁸⁵ However, in Augustus John's obituary of Salmond, he wrote that he doubted that 'Gwen's ungovernable bravura was likely to accord with the American's meticulous methodicity and I doubt if such divergent talents could ever be successfully coordinated.'²⁸⁶ Without more of a record of her experience from Salmond herself, it is not possible to know whether Augustus's assessment was apt, but it helps to fill out a sense of the personalities at play amongst the group in Paris.

Self-portraits

Alongside these portraits of one another, the women made many portraits of themselves in the same style. In Clarke Hall's early self-portrait from 1896 (1896) (3.15), she draws herself in a legible interior space. She sits at a table in front of a bookcase at work drawing. Her hand is visible on the table in the act of drawing the portrait itself, loosely rendered in a few strokes of her pen. The use of wash and cross-hatched strokes of pen and brush are characteristic of Clarke

²⁸⁴ E. R. & J. Pennell, *The Life of James McNeill Whistler* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1911), 373-88.

²⁸⁵ Holroyd and John, *The Good Bohemian*, 70.

²⁸⁶ John, 'Lady Smith.'

Hall's work, both early and later in her career. She drew another portrait of herself in 1899 that is much simpler, and more in the Slade style seen in the portraits made by her friends (c. 1899) (Figure 3.16). Like in her first, she draws herself gazing directly at the viewer/artist. This later work lacks the setting of the first, and instead focuses entirely on the subject. Clarke Hall's eyes are wide and detailed, though slightly off-kilter and asymmetrical, similar to the way she had drawn Nettleship's eyes in her earlier portrait of her (Figure 3.11), though less glaringly so. She looks up out of the image, raising her eyebrows slightly, as if shy, but the strength of her gaze counteracts any sense of bashfulness. Her head is held with assuredness, but the expression of her mouth almost suggests she is holding back tears. She has a complex and yet at the same time ambivalent face. In shifting from ink and wash in her early portrait to graphite in this one, the tone of the image is softened. The shape and detail of Clarke Hall's face is more visible through the shading and sense of light and shadow. Comparing the two images, there is a clear sense of growth and evolution in the three student years between them, both artistically and personally.

Nettleship's self-portrait (c. late 1890s) (Figure 3.17) is especially striking, and a notable completion of the set of portraits of her by John and Clarke Hall. Unlike in the portraits made of her, Nettleship gazes directly off the paper at the viewer, and at herself, the artist. Her gaze is firm and unyielding, almost aggressive in its intensity. She looks straight forward, neither up nor down, from beneath a slightly furrowed brow. She has an intensity and focus about her that grips the viewer and gives the portrait a striking ferocity. She has treated her face with much more care than the rest of the figure and picture space, making it stand out even more. As in her portrait of John, Nettleship uses more shading than her friends, and more than was conventional for Slade students, resulting in a darker visage that is more three-dimensional and textured than a line drawing, like Clarke Hall's, would allow. The traces of the depressions under Nettleship's eyes, the texture of her slightly concerned brow, and the depth and curve of her lips and chin stand out, and her use of shading also gives a sense of light coming from the top left of the picture space. Nettleship's eyes are the most detailed of all, and clearly are the focus of the image.

With these three portraits of Nettleship, we can again employ the methodology of extrapolating that similar sets of portraits probably existed of each of these women. We have pieces of some of them—Clarke Hall's self-portraits, Nettleship's portrait of John—but they are not complete. We also have the written records of their practice of drawing one another which have already been cited earlier in this chapter: Nettleship's description of Salmond drawing her and John, and John's mention to Tyrwhitt of wanting to draw each other when she visits. Based on the consistency of these women's practice of making portraits of each other, it is very probable that they made similar sets of portraits of each other like this one of Nettleship, made up of a self-portrait and several portraits of the same woman by her friends. They form a sort of set of interlacing circles of portraits, evoking the subject through many settings of eyes, often including her own. Although, again, it is impossible to know exactly what these portraits looked like or when they were made, we again can be fairly certain that they existed. This knowledge offers a fuller sense of the ways in which all five women made work during this period and allows the Nettleship circle of portraits to stand for the works of the rest of the women. Adding these works to the student works we know probably existed—the summer compositions and the figure drawings—creates a much richer oeuvre for each of the women whose works have been lost. Salmond, none of whose work from this period has been traced, becomes a figure with a wealth of early work - some of which we can explicitly name, including the *Descent from the Cross* and the portrait(s) of Nettleship and John made in Paris, and the rest of which is brought into focus through the works of her friends. She rises from obscurity and inscrutability encircled by her friends.

New Women

Of this group of women, only John left behind oil self-portraits that survive today. Her earliest known oil self-portrait was completed in 1900 and is now in the National Portrait Gallery in London (1900) (Figure 3.18). It has been used as an image that exemplifies the 'New Woman' of

the 1890s. As her friends did in their self-portraits on paper, John paints herself gazing directly at the viewer. She has a firm, confident expression, almost a smirk. Her face is not idealised, and the lines under her eyes are clearly rendered, as in Nettleship's portrait. Here, John paints the whole upper half of her body, rather than just her head or bust. Her body language, with her right hand placed on her hip and her body seeming to turn away from the viewer, as if she is on her way somewhere outside the bounds of the canvas, adds to her sense of zest and independence. Her body does not fit into the canvas, creating a feeling that she cannot be contained by it and is expanding out into the world according to her own terms. Comparing this image with John's earlier portrait of Nettleship offers a similar sense of progress to the comparison between Clarke Hall's two self-portraits. Though the portraits are different in scale and intention, it is still clear that in the two years between them John has significantly advanced in her confidence and singularity as an artist. Her portrait shares the intense gaze common across those by and of her friends, creating a sense of a conversation between them in the broader context of their circular exchange of portraits.

As discussed in the Introduction, the concept of the New Woman was central to constructions of womanhood in the 1890s. As it disseminated through visual culture, representations of the New Woman proliferated in various guises. Images in the mass media of women smoking and cycling signalled the New Woman as much as intensely focused portraits that imbued their subjects with fortitude did.²⁸⁷ John's famous self-portrait combines these two strains of visual language. Her confident body language and casual contemporary dress reference illustrations of the New Woman, yet her careful and focused rendering of her face is serious and indicative of her individuality. This discourse in which this portrait is engaged comes into clearer view when the painting is placed in conversation with other, similar works from the same period.

²⁸⁷ Meaghan Clarke, 'Sex and the City: The Metropolitan New Woman,' in *The Camden Town Group in Context*, Helena Bonnett, Ysanne Holt, Jennifer Mundy, eds. (London: Tate Research Publication, 2012).

Sargent's double portrait of Mr. and Mrs. I.N. Phelps Stokes is a particularly striking comparison (1897) (Figure 3.19). The central female figure echoes John's pose and style. Though their respective attire is not identical, both women wear bow ties, blouses cinched at the waist with thick black buckles, and blooming sleeves that accentuate their shoulders. Both women's hair is parted in the centre of their heads and drawn tightly back above their ears. Most arrestingly, both women pose with one hand on their hip. Sargent's figure holds a boating hat in her other hand, giving her a sporty look, while John has a dark shawl looped over the arm that she places on her hip, suggesting that she might be dressed for indoor pursuits. Painted within three years of each other, the consistent visual language between these two works elucidates the ways New Women were being represented in fine art. John's insertion of herself into the role of New Woman in her portrait, placing herself in conversation with paintings like Sargent's as well as the newsprint caricatures that proliferated, demonstrates her and her friends' engagement with the debate over women's role in the modern city and the ideal ways of performing femininity.

Feminist art historian Deborah Cherry has written that female artists associated with the avant-garde or Modernism were significantly less likely than their less radical peers to be politically active or associated with politics.²⁸⁸ The five discussed in this chapter certainly did not make their politics publicly known nor did they relate them to their work as artists. Some scholars have argued that the New Woman was less inclined to female friendship because she was focused on independence as the route to female freedom and happiness.²⁸⁹ Yet John and her friends directly contradict this claim. For them, and by extension their peers, their friendships and their independent lifestyles had a symbiotic relationship. Their support of one another enabled each of them to live more independently than social strictures normally allowed. By attending the Slade, and later travelling abroad, they lived and worked independently from their

²⁸⁸ Cherry, *Beyond the Frame*, 151-153.

²⁸⁹ See Cosslett, *Woman to Woman*.

families. By providing one another with emotional and material support, they felt less driven into marital partnerships immediately upon coming of age. They modelled ways of existing as modern artists and women for one another and learned from their fellowship with each other.

After the Slade

After leaving the Slade, the lives of Clarke Hall, Nettleship, Tyrwhitt, John, and Salmond diverged in form and substance, though they remained friends. Clarke Hall and Nettleship both quickly got married – Clarke Hall in 1899 to William Clarke Hall and Nettleship in 1901 to John's brother Augustus. Clarke Hall moved to the outskirts of London and then to rural Essex, where she spent most of her time alone while her husband worked in London. Nettleship and Augustus moved to Liverpool so that Augustus could teach, and Nettleship had her first son a year after her wedding. Tyrwhitt continued painting, studying with various teachers, and travelling, having the luxury of not having to worry about earning money. She married a cousin in 1913. Salmond also continued working and painting until her marriage to artist Matthew Smith in 1912, though few traces of her life during this time remain. John, likewise, continued to work in London, moving through a succession of damp and unpleasant flats, before taking an extended journey by foot through France with her friend Dorelia McNeill in 1903, and then relocating permanently to Paris in 1904.

In the years following their time at the Slade, those who kept working continued to make portraits of themselves. Clarke Hall drew a study of herself as Catherine Earnshaw (c. 1900) (Figure 3.20), the fictional heroine of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1848), in an early iteration of what would become a lifelong obsession with illustrating or creating work inspired by that novel. This work marks a departure from Clarke Hall's earlier self-portraits, which focused on capturing a likeness and communicating a sense of the artist's selfhood. Here, by using herself as a model for someone else, Clarke Hall distances herself from the self-portraitist's goal of capturing a sense of self and instead explores an escape from her own life into that of the

character she has drawn. The figure she draws here no longer gazes firmly out at the viewer as in her earlier self-portraits, but instead looks down at the ground, her face almost completely hidden. The clothes depicted in the work were found by Clarke Hall with Slade student Mark Gertler, whose father was a furrier, in second-hand clothes shops in the East End. The old muslin dresses, bodice, breeches, and gamekeeper's coat they found became Cathy and Heathcliff's uniforms in Clarke Hall's drawings of them from then on, often worn by Clarke Hall herself in order to get a sense of how they hung on a real body.²⁹⁰ The kinship Clarke Hall described feeling with *Wuthering Heights* from the time of her marriage until late in her life was profound. The loneliness and isolation she felt after leaving London, and the loss of fulfilment after leaving the Slade, found resonance in the bleak and hopeless narrative of Brontë's novel.²⁹¹ In her autobiography, she wrote, 'I had such a strong feeling for it, I seemed to work under a spell [...] My obsession with *Wuthering Heights* was so persistent that for years these drawings used to slide out of my mind with complete ease.'²⁹² This ongoing artistic practice defined the rest of Clarke Hall's life, and was a unique and private creative outlet for her. Though some of these works were exhibited later in her life to acclaim, the bulk of the drawings were made in the isolation and depression of the first decade of her marriage. During this period, Clarke Hall remembered, one night she burned all the work she still had from the Slade, 'making a bonfire of old mental lumber.'²⁹³ This destructive urge has left us with few traces of her early work and is indicative of just how low she sank into the 'doldrums,' as she called them, after her marriage. It also means that the *Wuthering Heights* drawings are the earliest and largest collection of finished works by Clarke Hall that remain intact today, though they are now dispersed among museum collections and private owners. Clarke Hall's use of herself as model for both Cathy and Heathcliff, or, more accurately, her performance or embodiment of the characters, is distinctive

²⁹⁰ Thomas, *Portraits of Women*, 90-91.

²⁹¹ For more on this series of drawings, see Browne, 'Edna Clarke Hall (1879-1979) and *Wuthering Heights*.'

²⁹² Clarke Hall, *Heritage of the Ages*, 50.

²⁹³ Clarke Hall, *Heritage of the Ages*, 102.

in its paradoxical equation of and separation between Clarke Hall's personal experiences and the two characters.

In contrast to Clarke Hall's donning of a fictional identity in her drawings of herself, John's 1902 self-portrait (Figure 3.2) is more direct and assertive even than her 1900 self-portrait (Figure 3.18). Her body and head face squarely facing out of the canvas, and she looks towards the viewer, though without the same enticing sense of engagement held by the earlier portrait. As in that portrait, there are no details to the space in which the figure in the painting exists - merely a dark coloured flat background. John's clothing places her in contemporary Britain, as her outfit in the 1900 self-portrait also did, but nothing else does. Her later style is starting to become clear in the oval face, sense of flatness to the paint application, and the softening palette.²⁹⁴ She was becoming more interested in the formal aspects of representation, while remaining incredibly penetrating in her self-representation.²⁹⁵ These two self-portraits, by John and Clarke Hall, demonstrate the way in which they have both grown out of their Slade styles and have begun to be influenced by their different life paths. John is moving into an interest in modernist ways of using paint and composition, and Clarke Hall towards a fictional, imaginative universe that she places herself inside. Their shared foundation did not result in a lifetime of shared styles or visual languages, but it did leave them both with an indelible interest in the female form and the communication of an interior sense of self on the canvas.

Though the women's lives and works diverged as they grew older, they remained in touch and influenced by one another for decades. John and Tyrwhitt's intimate relationship is preserved in the letters they exchanged regularly throughout their lives, though only John's letters to Tyrwhitt survive. The two women regularly encouraged each other to continue their

²⁹⁴ The influence of Whistler on John's work, especially on her commitment to a cohesive palette early in her artistic process, is described in detail by Alicia Foster in her new biography of John. See Alicia Foster, *Gwen John: Art and Life in London and Paris* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2023).

²⁹⁵ Maria Tamboukou, 'Farewell to the Self: Between the Letter and the Self-Portrait,' *Life Writing* 12, no. 1 (2015): 75-91, p. 78.

work. In 1904, John wrote to Tyrwhitt, 'I wish you would paint a little - you have more talent than any other girl I know.'²⁹⁶ Later, John references Tyrwhitt doing the same for her, saying on 13 November 1908, 'I have just read your letter again and your advising me to work and not care has made me want to try to. I think that is a beautiful idea, that we dig out the precious things hidden in us when we paint - and quite true.'²⁹⁷ They used each other as sounding boards for their self-doubt and their creative ambitions. John wrote to Tyrwhitt in 1910, 'I cannot imagine why my vision will have some value in the world - and yet I know it will. Yours is so much more that of an artist that I cannot imagine why mine will count at all by the side of yours.'²⁹⁸ The tone of competition implied here demonstrates the way that the two friends used one another as inspiration and as peers against whom to measure their own skill and artistic mettle. Indeed, treating one another as equally serious artists validated their own status as professional artists.

In 1907, on one of Tyrwhitt's visits to John in Paris, she made a sculpted portrait of John in terracotta (c. 1907) (Figure 3.21) in the studio of Auguste Rodin, who employed John as a model and with whom John was infatuated.²⁹⁹ The portrait is a remarkable continuation of the practice of these women of making portraits of each other. Tyrwhitt's artistic practice has evolved significantly since her Slade days, both stylistically and, obviously, in medium. She worked chiefly in watercolours, not terracotta, but her venture into three-dimensional work with this piece is indicative of her willingness to continue to grow and experiment artistically. This portrait is a recognizable likeness of John, and shares some of the stylistic qualities of John's own self-portraits: an oblong quality and an interest in slender, ovular shapes in the face. The imprints of Tyrwhitt's fingers on the hand-modelled object create a sense of line, echoing the earlier drawn portraits of her friends of each other.

²⁹⁶ Lloyd-Morgan, *Gwen John*, 28.

²⁹⁷ Lloyd-Morgan, *Gwen John*, 48.

²⁹⁸ Lloyd-Morgan, *Gwen John*, 53.

²⁹⁹ For more on John's relationship with Rodin, see Foster, *Gwen John: Art and Life in London and Paris*, particularly chapter 6.

The other particularly close pair of friends within this group of five, Nettleship and Clarke Hall, were separated by their respective marriages and then, in 1907, by Nettleship's death after the birth of her fifth child. Clarke Hall continued to consider Nettleship her first 'real friend,' and wrote about her in her autobiography and her many notebooks full of poetry decades after her death. One poem, entitled 'O Ida!,' was probably written in the 1930s:

O Ida my dear! How long since you died
 Since you called me your darling
 And 'child willow-eyed'
 'Tis the willows bring back that
 Sweet little to mind.
 As they quiver their green
 And turn grey in the wind
 With the things that have been
 They turn grey in the wind
 But the old loves stay green
 And forever are kind.³⁰⁰

Clarke Hall was likely in her sixties when she composed this poem and was experiencing a renaissance in her creative life after the death of her husband in 1932. This love letter to her long-dead friend offers a clue to the way in which this friendship continued to nourish Clarke Hall's creative work and emotional wellbeing long after she no longer had access to Nettleship herself, nor the compelling environment in which they met.

Interestingly, Clarke Hall's own opinion of herself as an artist ebbed and flowed over the course of her life. In her autobiography, written in the 1930s, she wrote

I would sometimes feel very lonely and long for the old Slade days when we were all drawing together; these happy times seemed gone forever. Unlike Augustus John and some others who by that time had already become famous, I had somehow retired from public view and, naturally, the contacts with my fellow students had diminished through the years. This however did not in any way affect my feeling as an artist...³⁰¹

³⁰⁰ Clarke Hall, sketchbook, 8226.1.25, Tate Archive.

³⁰¹ Clarke Hall, *Heritage of the Ages*, 60.

Prefacing this, in 1907 she wrote in a letter to Augustus John just after Nettleship's death, 'there is a kinship between us, for we are both artists. It is true I have failed in so proving myself to the world, so as far as the world counts.'³⁰² Her use of the word 'failed' here implies that she is disappointed in her lack of success as a professional artist which would, one assumes, have 'proved to the world' that she is an artist, as she considers herself to be. This failure does not alter, for Clarke Hall, her true and permanent identity as an artist, which was formed at the Slade and which, as she says in the former quotation, nothing can alter. Clarke Hall quotes Augustus's 1958 obituary of Gwen Salmond, who was Lady Matthew Smith when she died, as having written about the so-called 'Grand Epoch' of the Slade:

'in talent as well as in looks the girls were supreme. But these advantages for the most part came to nought under the burdens of domesticity which loomed ahead for most of them and which, even if acceptable, could be for some almost too heavy to bear [...]'³⁰³

Augustus's frustrating awareness of the burdens of domesticity that prevented his friends and wife from pursuing the careers they trained for together at the Slade, yet his lack of acceptance of his and his male peers' own responsibility for placing these burdens entirely on their wives grates. But he is quite correct in his assessment of the barriers facing his female fellow artists.

The theme running through the lives and work of these five women – Clarke Hall, Tyrwhitt, Nettleship, and the two Gwens – is an exploration of and grappling with changing meanings of femininity and ways of being a female person who is also an artist. In many ways, their work was explicitly feminine, as previously discussed – small-scale portraits of women, and later still lifes, flower paintings, and landscapes for Tyrwhitt and Salmond, and portraits of children for Clarke Hall. Yet in others, it was distinctly unusual. The gravity that they accorded their female subjects, even in those early student works, is arresting. They diverged in the ways

³⁰² Clarke Hall, *Heritage of the Ages*, 60.

³⁰³ Clarke Hall, *Heritage of the Ages*, 37.

they lived out their definitions of womanhood, but all shared a fascination with the interiority, depth, individuality, specificity, complexity of women. Fundamentally, their shared beginning as artists celebrated individuality and strength of self. Viewing their student works from a relational perspective rather than an individual one gives rise to a new understanding of their collective inception as artists. In allowing the surviving works of each artist to represent the work of the group, we are able to understand the breadth and seriousness of the early output of these women, and the ways in which it was formed by their communion with one another and the structures of their education at the Slade. The structure of a shared education allows me to piece together lost parts of these artists' early work in a unique way. Retracing their circles of portraits, their competition works, and the rhythm of learning at the Slade breathes life into the scattered drawings and letters that survive. Though I have pointed to isolated examples of their work after the Slade, there is significant scope for further research on these women, particularly Clarke Hall, Salmond, and Tyrwhitt, whose lives were long but quickly forgotten.

Chapter 4: Inside and Outside: The Shared Homes of Nan Hudson and Ethel Sands

Across a wide, verdant meadow rippling with golden highlights, a large white house rises up from the grass amongst the trees. Surrounded by a sea of the warm hues of autumnal leaves, it seems to shine in the late afternoon sun. Anna Hope ‘Nan’ Hudson’s *Newington House, Autumn, Oxfordshire* (1913) (Figure 4.1) is a portrait of the home she shared with her life partner, Ethel Sands. In her painting, the house glows a bright white, like a beacon of perfection. It seems to emerge from a series of ivy-covered stone walls that criss-cross through the centre of the picture, almost like battlements. Two outbuildings are visible on the right side of the painting: a small hut with a chimney at the terminus of the stone wall on the right, and a larger red roof appearing between the trees above the walls. These structures surrounding the house give it a sense of purposeful isolation and protection from intruders. From the vantage point of the viewer, it is not clear how one might reach Newington. There is no obvious way through the walls that separate us from it, no path across the meadow, no obvious entrance to the structure in our line of vision. Even the windows, though flooded with white sunlight, are obscured by impasto and the suggestion of glare. This unreachability implies that the house and its residents possess enviable respectability and exclusivity. It gives the building an aura of mystery. The steeple of a church pokes out above the roof of the house, at first glance appearing as if it rises from the house itself, adding to the sense that Newington is a sacred and sequestered island floating in a sea of green grass. Despite its enticing glow, it is protected from both physical intruders and the intruding eyes of viewers.

Hudson and Sands lived at Newington for part of each year from 1898 until 1920. They chose the house for several reasons. For Sands, it was a comfortable, reliable home for her much younger brothers to return to between the school holidays after the death of their parents. It was also large enough to host glittering house parties and a steady stream of guests, and near to the houses of friends. Roger Fry painted a group of guests, possibly including Sands or Hudson, on

the rear porch of Newington (1919) (Figure 4.2), offering a window into the way the house's many artistic guests experienced it. For Hudson, it was an escape from the ceaseless social demands of London. For both women, it was their home base—a constant during several decades of regular moves and demanding social lives. Like all the houses they called home during their lifetimes, Newington was a compromise that balanced the preferences of both partners and was therefore a reflection of their relationship.

Both women's oeuvres are heavily focused on depictions of built environments; Hudson is more concerned with painting the exteriors of buildings or landscapes, and Sands with the interiors. This pattern is based on their extant works, which are a small fraction of their total output. As in my discussion of the Alma-Tadema women in Chapter 2, my conjecture about the pattern of their works is an educated assumption that must be tempered by the knowledge that so little of their work either survived or was recorded. Most of their works were destroyed in the Blitz when their London home was bombed and their French home vandalised, and many that were sold during their lives to private individuals are untraced today. Only five works by Hudson and between seventeen and nineteen by Sands are currently located, making the project of forming conclusions about their methods of working difficult. Any historical study must be guided by the materials available to study. However, not only are works of these subjects the objects that have survived, but they are also the most interesting works to compare with the goal of seeing these two artists' work in conversation. As many of their surviving works depict the homes that they lived in together, seeing these spaces via both residents' perspectives offers the viewer a much more comprehensive understanding not only of how these spaces looked, but how they were experienced by Hudson and Sands. Looking at their paintings of the inside and outside of their homes in concert makes the slipperiness of their conception of domestic space clear.

The purpose of this chapter, like my previous chapters, is to use the relationship between these artists to elucidate both of their careers, in a context in which limited visual analysis is

possible. In this case, extensive archival material does survive from Sands, despite a lack of surviving artistic work, due to the prominence of her family and the wealth of her descendants. Like the research challenges faced in Chapter 2, this material is limited by the fact that Sands and Hudson shared a home for most of their lives. While they travelled apart regularly and wrote letters to one another at these times, much of their relationship was not recorded. As with the Alma-Tademas, this means that the evidence used throughout this chapter about them is anecdotal. Many works by both artists that do survive are not dated, making it difficult to establish a chronology of styles. The chronological boundaries of this chapter are thus 1900 to the start of the Second World War, with the works of their French home, the Chateau d'Auppegard understood to have been made sometime after 1920, when it was purchased, and before 1945. Both women were American, but I am including them in this dissertation on British artists because they worked, lived, and exhibited mostly in England, and sometimes in Paris, but never America.³⁰⁴ Additionally, at the period in which they lived and worked, the British Empire was near its zenith. The conceptualisation of Britishness extended far beyond the boundaries of Great Britain, and though the Empire no longer included the United States, the ability of wealthy white women from the greater Anglosphere like Hudson and Sands to assimilate into British society was not difficult.

Much of the scholarship that currently exists about these two artists focuses on the nature of their relationship. In her seminal biography of Sands, published in 1977, Wendy Baron wrote

Nan and Ethel answered each other's emotional needs and loved each other with a violent passion which gradually matured into the greatest possible affection in later life. It is, however, misleading to interpret their love in stereotyped Lesbian terms. Their mutual roles were not rigidly defined but constantly adapted to the needs of the moment. Although Nan was sterner and more dominant, and Ethel more home-loving, their partnership was not an attempt to reproduce a masculine-feminine relationship. They were

³⁰⁴ The porous and changing nature of the fields of 'British' and 'English' art history has been written about often in the past decade. Many of these re-evaluations have been grounded in postcolonial theories. For a rich overview of the many perspectives in the field, see Johns, 'There's No Such Thing as British Art.'

basically two independent, individual women with many tastes and interests in common, whose mutual love and understanding rescued them from the loneliness of spinsterhood.³⁰⁵

This last sentence in particular, claiming that their relationship ‘rescued them from the loneliness of spinsterhood,’ has been held up as an example of the limitations of scholarly engagement with same-sex relationships that predate today’s categories of sexuality and complex language to describe queerness. This description from Baron says much more about her own feelings about ‘stereotyped Lesbians’ and traditional ‘masculine-feminine relationships’ than it does about the relationship between Hudson and Sands. Nevertheless, the difficulty of describing their relationship in terms that are respectful of the two women’s own self-identification but also recognise the ways in which language around queerness has evolved over the past century remains a key hurdle to delving deeper into their work.³⁰⁶ In this chapter, I will use the terms ‘partner’ and ‘queer’ to describe the relationship between Sands and Hudson. I choose ‘queer’ for its broad encompassing of non-heterosexual forms of relationship or sexual identification. Sands and Hudson are not recorded as describing themselves as lesbians, though they moved in social circles which contained people who did, or at least who spoke more openly about homosexuality. Remarkably, Virginia Woolf recorded in her diary in 1923 that it was Ethel Sands who first suggested to her that Vita Sackville-West, was a ‘pronounced Sapphist’ who might ‘have an eye on [her].’³⁰⁷ Clearly, lesbian relationships were not taboo for Sands to mention, at least in the company of people like Woolf who she knew accepted sexual openness. Class is also key—

³⁰⁵ Wendy Baron, *Miss Ethel Sands and Her Circle* (London: Peter Owen, 1977), 35. This biography of Sands is the main source of information about her life currently in print, and is based on her collected papers, most of which are now in the Tate Archives. It will be cited throughout this chapter. Its limitations are acknowledged: it is nearly fifty years old and the attitude of the author is outdated and homophobic. It remains useful as a chronicle of the events of Sands’s life and will be cited for this purpose.

³⁰⁶ For more on art and homosexuality over time, see Christopher Reed, *Art and Homosexuality: A History of Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

³⁰⁷ Woolf, *Diary*, Volume 2, 293.

Sapphism amongst the ‘enlightened’ upper classes that included Woolf and Sands functioned altogether differently from queerness or ‘inversion’ outside this sphere.

Yet Baron argues in her biography, ‘outside this enlightened coterie [Bloomsbury], the spectacle of two women friends living together was accepted as the sorry consequence of their failure to find husbands. Given the plainness of Nan and Ethel this diagnosis was readily acceptable.’³⁰⁸ This rather cruel characterisation does not seem to hit on the truth, but nor does an outward lesbian identity. The stereotype of the lesbian woman in the early twentieth century was highly specific and closely associated with Modernism. Performative rejection of respectability and femininity in favour of mannish eccentricity and artistic self-presentation were key.³⁰⁹ This lack of distinction between sexual identity and the social performance of lesbianism is characteristic of twentieth-century understandings of homosexuality and queerness. It is unsurprising that Sands and Hudson did not recognise themselves in the term, given their tastes and personalities. The opacity of their relationship is not just a result of historical distance, but, I argue, intentional. It was not an accident that these two women existed without labels during and after their lives. They retained power in mystery, and were able to do so because of their wealth, respectability, and social position.

In her literary analysis of the writings of queer figures from this period, Heather Love develops a methodology of ‘trac[ing] the characteristic gesture of refusal or shrinking’ in work by those who ‘choose isolation, turn toward the past, or choose to live in a present disconnected from any larger historical continuum.’³¹⁰ She identifies the problem of present-day historians ‘reaching out to queer historical figures who may be turning their backs on us.’³¹¹ Love’s methodological identification of this challenge is helpful in seeking language with which to

³⁰⁸ Baron, *Miss Ethel Sands*, 129.

³⁰⁹ For more on twentieth century lesbian identities in Europe, see Diana Souhami, *No Modernism Without Lesbians* (London: Head of Zeus, 2020).

³¹⁰ Love, *Feeling Backward*, 25, 8.

³¹¹ Love, *Feeling Backward*, 25.

describe the opacity of Sands and Hudson's relationship. The conundrum of recognising the love between them, striving to see the ways in which it made an impact on their social and artistic identities, while also respecting the way they chose not to participate in a 'radical' or socially progressive discourse about sexuality is hardly unique.

Jodie Medd's analysis of the scandals precipitated by changing definitions and awareness of lesbianism in this period similarly offers more encompassing methodologies for looking back at queer women. 'Moving away from the question of the ontological (who was the lesbian?),' she writes, 'to the operational (how did the suggestion of lesbianism culturally function?) moves us beyond discussions of lesbianism as a marginalized (or even "foreclosed") identity and toward an awareness of how scandalous sexual suggestions matter and mean.'³¹² Thus the spectre of lesbianism must be understood to permeate the lives of Sands and Hudson in life and after death, with or without their permission. Their lack of identification with it was not due to their lack of awareness of it. This nuance is critical to reconstructing their creative lives. By identifying their refusal to be slotted into a contemporary lesbian identity as well as the cultural function of lesbianism during their lives, the complexity of their positionality—indeed the unresolvable opacity of it—becomes clear. With this perspective, I reappraise their work.

This final chapter of my dissertation expands my research area and points towards future work that can be done on relationships between women artists. Although I consider Sands and Hudson to be a queer couple, I also consider them friends. While I would argue that most successful romantic partnerships have a central element of friendship, it is particularly true in the case of these two women. Because of the ambiguity of their relationship to contemporaries, many people viewed them as friends. They therefore not only lived out a friendship as an element of their private relationship, but they were also seen to be living one publicly. I acknowledge that there has been a trend among both historians and laypeople of assuming that

³¹² Jodie Medd, *Lesbian Scandal and the Culture of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 4.

women who lived together were just friends or roommates, which has contributed to the erasure of queer relationships in the past. However, the complex social dynamics at play in the period mean that the perception of friendship is relevant to my analysis of these two women. As I articulated in my introduction, and have reiterated throughout this thesis, friendship as conceived in this project is an inherently ambiguous and overlapping category of relationship. By calling Hudson and Sands ‘friends’ I am not erasing their queerness but rather exploring another facet of their relationship. In so doing, I hope to broaden the way that queer relationships and friendship can be understood as crossing into one another, and to push against stereotypes of radical, performative lesbianism in the early twentieth century, building on the work of Love and Medd.

This is also the latest case study chronologically in this dissertation. The social climate for women in relationships with other women was significantly altered by the time of Sands and Hudson’s shared homes and respective careers compared to that experienced by Annie Swynnerton and Susan Isabel Dacre in the first chapter. The intention of this dissertation is not to offer a detailed socio-historical analysis of the dramatic evolution in public understandings of gender and sexuality between the 1870s and 1920s, but to ascertain the ways in which the art of the women examined herein reflects their relationships with their friends. Nevertheless, the differing experiences of the artists discussed in this dissertation demonstrate the ways in which these larger social shifts were experienced by women artists over this period.³¹³

At Home Together

Sands and Hudson were both born into significant wealth. Both women were American, lost their parents as young women, and with the financial inheritance and freedom from oversight that they received from those circumstances, chose to live in Europe. They met while studying

³¹³ See the review of literature on relationships between women in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries in the Introduction to this thesis.

art in Paris in 1894. Sands was twenty-one and Hudson twenty-five. Sands had grown up almost entirely in London, while Hudson was raised in New York and moved to Paris after the deaths of her parents. Over the course of the first few years of their relationship, Sands's life was disrupted and nomadic. She lost her mother in 1896, eight years after the sudden death of her father after a riding accident. Although she became the de facto parent of her two younger brothers, her inheritance was held in trust until her middle brother Mahlon Sands came of age. Thus, although she did not lack financial security, she was limited by the constant need to have her plans and financial decisions approved by the American uncle who administered the trust.³¹⁴ She travelled often during this period between family members' homes in America and England, as well as the homes of friends. These years of travel are recorded in the hundreds of letters exchanged between Sands and Hudson, beginning almost immediately after they met in 1894. The letters that survive are mostly from Sands to Hudson, and their ever-changing stationery as she moved from house to hotel to another house conveys the frenetic, itinerant pace of her life in the years after her parents' deaths.

She shared an apartment with Hudson on the Avenue d'Antin in Paris from about 1898 until 1905, and leased Newington House in England from 1898.³¹⁵ This marked the beginning of a more settled time in her life, and the beginning of a lifetime of sharing one or several homes with Hudson. Like many women artists in this period (and earlier), Hudson and Sands were able to pursue art full time because of their wealth. In the context of Edwardian London, many of their contemporary female artists also enjoyed high class status. Not all were as rich as Hudson and Sands, but the majority came from middle- and upper-class families with connections, generational wealth, high levels of education, and cultural capital. Despite that fact, Sands and Hudson's possession of wealth resulted in their artistic careers being viewed as 'amateur' because

³¹⁴ Baron, *Miss Ethel Sands*, 39-45.

³¹⁵ Baron, *Miss Ethel Sands*, 60.

they had no need to sell their work (though they still did). The avant-garde Modernism coming out of post-Impressionist Paris self-reflexively prioritised the grit and effervescence of modern urban life in the public eye – both as seen and depicted by the artist and as lived by him. The inability of women to participate equally in this flaneur-led artistic lifestyle is well-established.³¹⁶ In the case of Hudson and Sands, the lack of performance of a working-class identity, or interest in it, contributed to their relegation to amateur status by their male peers.

Sands first exhibited work in Paris at the Salon d'Automne in 1904. She had submitted work for exhibition before but had not been successful. Hudson exhibited work the following year in the same place, following several years of unsuccessful submissions as well. Both artists' early training was undertaken in Paris, and their presence at the leading venue for French Modernist painting demonstrates how fundamental this period was to the development of their aesthetics. Though their social ties were strongest in England, their artistic inheritance was French. In particular, the influence of Fauvism is clear in the bright pastel and neon colour palettes used in the early work of both artists. This aesthetic was carried on throughout their careers, even as trends in English art moved in other directions. Their work remained indebted to, and in conversation with, the Fauves, Pierre Bonnard, Edouard Vuillard, and the broader legacy of French Post-Impressionist painting.³¹⁷ Their aesthetic attitudes of embracing visual delight and the decorative potential of Modernism were sometimes deeply at odds with their English contemporaries.

In 1906, they decided to take a permanent house in London and forgo the Paris apartment. They moved to 42 Lowndes Street, near Belgrave Square, and fully re-entered the London social scene as well as the art world.³¹⁸ The same year, the two women met Walter

³¹⁶ See Griselda Pollock, 'Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity' in *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism, and Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 1988), 50-90, and Cherry, *Beyond the Frame*.

³¹⁷ For more on the Fauves, see Sarah Witfield, *Fauvism* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1997); for more on Bonnard, see *Pierre Bonnard: The Colour of Memory* (London: Tate Publishing, 2019); for more on Vuillard, see Guy Cogeval, *Édouard Vuillard* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, Washington, 2003).

³¹⁸ Baron, *Miss Ethel Sands*, 60.

Sickert by chance in a restaurant in Paris.³¹⁹ He realised that Hudson was the creator of a painting he had greatly admired at that year's Salon d'Automne: *La Canal de la Giudecca* (now lost).³²⁰ This meeting was the start of a close friendship between Hudson and Sickert, and to a lesser extent Sands and Sickert, that would last until Sickert's death in 1942. Sickert's return to London from France in 1905 corresponded with Hudson and Sands's move to the capital, and they were swept into his energetic forays shaking up the contemporary art scene there. In 1907, Hudson and Sands became founding members of the Fitzroy Street Group, a loosely organised artistic group headed by Sickert. Members paid dues which contributed to the rent of rooms in Fitzroy Street where the members would meet to share their work and discuss it together, often inviting guests to meetings to see the work as well. Sickert wrote to Hudson in 1907, 'Of course you understand that henceforth you are hostess in Fitzroy Street and I hope you will behave as sich [sic].'³²¹ His statement demonstrates the position of Hudson and Sands in the group as both artist members but also patrons of sorts, invited because they could be counted on to pay their dues and play hostess at meetings. It also indicates the contradictory nature of the friendship between Sickert and the two women. There was clearly affection between them, as they maintained a friendship for decades and provided care for each other. But Sickert regularly patronised, denigrated, and insulted Sands and Hudson. He considered them frivolous and was overt in his desire to capitalise on their money. While a certain degree of criticism between artist friends is natural, indeed necessary, Sickert's regular disparagement of Hudson and especially Sands's work is significant. He treated the many women in his life, including his wives and many female art students, with similar disdain. But his treatment of Hudson and Sands is unique considering that, unlike most of the other women he knew, they had significant social capital in London.

³¹⁹ For more on Sickert, see Peters Corbett, *Walter Sickert* (London: Tate Publishing, 2001); Robins, *Walter Sickert: Drawings: Theory and Practice: Word and Image* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1996).

³²⁰ Baron, *Miss Ethel Sands*, 63.

³²¹ Walter Sickert to Nan Hudson, 1907, Tate Archive TGA 9125/5, no.34.

Sands in particular was known in London society as a hostess first and foremost. She was extremely well-connected, as her parents had been before her, and invitations to her parties, lunches, and events of any kind were in high demand. Her position as society hostess has led her to be compared to Lady Ottoline Morrell more often than to any working artist.³²² This is particularly noteworthy because other female artists who moved in similar circles in London and were successful hostesses seemed to have been less constrained by this responsibility and moniker. Vanessa Bell, for example, was better able to confine her hosting duties to purposeful gatherings of artists, such as her Friday Club events, and preserve her primary identity as artist rather than hostess.³²³ By all accounts, Sands relished her social prowess and was genuinely skilled at bringing together interesting people, facilitating conversations and meetings, and generally fuelling a sparkling social discourse. This skill is easily rendered invisible behind the veneer of the personalities who frequented Sands's receptions, but it should be recognised for its value to London society and to Sands herself.

London Interiors

The earliest work by Sands that survives from this London period is her painting titled *The Chintz Couch* (c. 1910-1911) (Figure 4.3), now in the Tate collection. Like most of Sands's work, it is an image of a domestic interior space without figures. This emptiness is striking for many reasons, but particularly so in the context of her status as hostess extraordinaire. It is very probable that the space depicted in the painting is her own home, either in London or Oxfordshire. The Chintz fabric of the couch was an unconventional and old-fashioned choice and was an element of Sands's interior design that was remarked upon by her guests. Bell described their household

³²² For more on Morrell, see Sandra Jobson Darroch, *Garsington Revisited: The Legend of Lady Ottoline Morrell Brought up-to-Date* (Barnet: John Libbey Publishing Ltd., 2017).

³²³ For a biography of Bell, see Frances Spalding, *Vanessa Bell* (London: Papermac, 1984). For more recent scholarship on her, see Rebecca Birrell, *This Dark Country: Women Artists, Still Life and Intimacy in the Early Twentieth Century* (London: Bloomsbury Circus, 2021), and Jonathan King, "A bit frivolous?" *Vanessa Bell, Charleston, and the Motherly Affiliations of Queer Domesticity*, PhD. Diss., (University of York, 2022).

as having an ‘excessive elegance and eighteenth century stamp.’³²⁴ The use of such ‘old-fashioned’ decor, particularly things which were associated with the Victorians, enjoyed a renaissance in the 1910s, when the temporal distance between its first fashion and the present was ‘precisely at the distance where unconsciousness has set in,’ according to Roger Fry.³²⁵ The chintz couch pictured here is a two-seater or a love seat, with space for only two people to sit. The suggestion of closeness and intimacy held in the object adds to the tension created by the emptiness of the space.

The other objects in the work can also be read for deeper meaning. The calla lilies in the vase on the right side of the painting are bright and clearly delineated. Calla lilies represented ‘magnificent beauty,’ according to nineteenth-century flower dictionaries.³²⁶ They are exotic flowers in England, having been native to sub-Saharan Africa, and must be cultivated in greenhouses and would therefore would have been signs of wealth to display in the home. The six framed artworks on the wall behind the couch are difficult to make out. The central work directly above the couch seems to depict a nautical scene, with a large, light-coloured triangle shape in the centre suggested the sail of a boat. The works appear to be prints or some other form of work on paper, given the white matting and written labels visible on the works beside the calla lilies.

In the painting, the space of the room is uncomfortably condensed into the foreground. We cannot see the bottom edge of the couch, nor make out the floor. There is no way to enter the space, or even to imagine a figure occupying it. It would be impossible for a person to sit on the couch without their legs poking out of the picture. The rhythmic repetition of gold, white, and robin’s egg blue throughout the composition is aesthetically pleasing but furthers the sense

³²⁴ Vanessa Bell to Roger Fry, 21 July 1912, in Regina Mahler, ed., *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell* (New York: Bloomsbury, 1993), p.121.

³²⁵ Roger Fry, ‘The Ottoman and the Whatnot,’ in *Vision and Design* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1920), 26-30, p. 27.

³²⁶ *The Language of Flowers* (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1857), p. 10.

of it being an unreal space, as if seen through a colour filter or lens. If a person walked across the canvas, would they turn blue and gold, too? Like Hudson's depiction of the exterior of their Oxfordshire home, this painting is characterised by a sense of unreachability. The room that houses the chintz couch is on display, but it is not available to be entered or known intimately.

William Orpen's work of the same year, *The Model* (1911) (Figure 4.4), provides an illuminating comparison with Sands's work.³²⁷ In Orpen's work, a nude female model sits on a dark blue couch, reclining and gazing out at the viewer. To her right, the artist depicts himself sitting in a hard wooden chair, cigar in mouth, sketching the model on paper held on an easel in front of him. The making of this work, we can imagine, was similar to the making of Sands's: the artist sat in front of a couch in his or her home or studio and painted it. But in Orpen's work, the obvious difference of the addition of his own figure as well as that of a model fundamentally alters the purpose and feeling of the image. Looking at it alongside *The Chintz Couch* throws into relief the emptiness of the interior space in the latter, and the strangeness of it. In Orpen's work, the interior space is accessible: the floor is visible, and the model's bare feet rest upon it. The depth of the space is legible, making it obvious how she and Orpen would move around it. There is also a potent comparison to be made between Sands's work and the empty interiors of Gwen John's oeuvre, briefly mentioned in the previous chapter. John's works, which also depicted her home repeatedly, are characterised by a sense of intimacy. They function as portrait-like depictions of John's private and personal space. The frequency with which she revisits the subject demonstrates its resonance for her, as does Sands's constant returning to her home as subject. But the contrast between John's work, such as *A Corner of the Artist's Room in Paris* (c. 1907-1909) (Figure 4.5), with its warm tones, open window, and inviting and accessible surfaces, and *The Chintz Couch*, with its flat unreachability, is stark.

³²⁷ For more on Orpen, see Robert Upstone, *William Orpen: Politics, Sex & Death* (London: Philip Wilson, 2005).

The question of whether to read this unreachability as concealing great depth or as a symptom of shallow emptiness plagues the viewer of Sands's work, and it also plagued her friends in life. Woolf, with whom Sands became close friends in the 1920s but was friendly with throughout her years living in London, wrote a short story inspired by Sands in 1929 called 'The Lady in the Looking Glass.' In the story, the narrator describes the determination of the character of Isabella, who represents Sands, 'to conceal what she did not wish to be known.' Woolf describes her dazzling social life and beautiful home, and her delight in both.³²⁸ At the end of the short story, Isabella moves into the light and her true self is revealed: 'She stood naked in the pitiless light. And there was nothing. Isabella was perfectly empty.'³²⁹ This is a scathing conclusion about the emptiness of Isabella and her life, and by extension Sands. The story is, of course, just that: a story, from which only so much biographical information can be gleaned. But it is revealing that even a close friend found Sands so opaque and possibly vapid. Baron writes a similar, though less harsh, characterisation in her biography: 'Painting, for Ethel, was a hymn of delight and praise for beautiful things. She had the taste and money to surround herself with beauty; her paintings extended the scope of these privileges. She had no complex pretensions.'³³⁰ In other words, her paintings were just as pretty as they look, just like the rest of her life. Taking a more critical approach in her recent analysis of the artist, Rebecca Birrell describes Sands's paintings as depictions of her 'gilded cage.'³³¹ She advances the argument that the paintings describe a life spent striving to disguise her queerness behind a veil of respectability. Nicola Moorby takes the opposite stance:

For Sands the home was not a place of introspection, confinement or angst, but somewhere she felt free and at ease. The care with which she decorated and then pictorially represented her home is evidence, not of repressive

³²⁸ Woolf, 'The Lady in the Looking Glass,' in *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Susan Dick (London: Hogarth Press, 1985), 223-4.

³²⁹ Woolf, 'The Lady in the Looking Glass,' 224.

³³⁰ Baron, *Miss Ethel Sands*, 168.

³³¹ Birrell, *This Dark Country*, 99.

conformity, but of individual expression and a confident modern interest in the domestic sphere.³³²

The variety of these readings underlines the enigmatic nature of Sands's work. Returning to *The Chintz Couch* with these contrasting readings, none seem to fully suffice. Rather than appearing like a 'gilded cage' that traps the artist inside, the painting seems to keep the viewer out. The artist is not inside the painting, the way Orpen is inside his. In her analysis of post-Impressionist paintings of interiors by artists like Edgar Degas and Sargent, Susan Silauskas writes that these works 'gave shape to the containment that defined interiority, yet at the same time breached its pictorial and psychological frame by actively soliciting the engaged response of the viewer.'³³³ Sands engages in the same active tension between private and public space through her visual description of an un-enterable room in her home that she has put on display for viewers. The space she depicts seems to be private, yet by painting it, it becomes public. Though the viewer cannot enter it in an embodied way, it is still revealed visually. The 'breach' of the conception of interiority from the presence of the viewer is an active choice. Thus, although the painting is not a cage that keeps the artist in, it is also not an image of freedom and ease, in Moorby's words, nor a 'hymn of delight,' in Baron's. The slipperiness of space and depth of colour communicate far more than just a pretty room.

When read in conversation with Hudson's painting of Newington, it becomes clearer that the work has a protectiveness about it, like Hudson's. Whether that is driven by a desire for covetable exclusivity or defensive shutting out, or both, is an ongoing question. There is an inherent paradox present in the attempt to depict privacy in a painting—by painting something, it becomes an object to be viewed by others. This tension animates these paintings of shared domestic space. The two women clearly communicate their love for their homes through their

³³² Moorby, 'Her Indoors: Women Artists and Depictions of the Domestic Interior.'

³³³ Susan Silauskas, 'Psyche and Sympathy: Staging Interiority in the Early Modern Home,' in *Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture*, ed. Christopher Reed (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1996), 65-80, p. 64.

paintings, as they return to the subject again and again. But they also maintain a refusal to offer it up to be claimed or understood by viewers. Looking at the works together disrupts earlier readings of them individually and more clearly elucidates their complex themes.

Next to Camden Town

Because of their relationship with Sickert, whose reputation in art historical scholarship and in life has been far more substantial, the work of Sands and Hudson has often been judged against his and that of the Camden Town Group.³³⁴ The ethos Sickert bestowed upon the group of grittiness, ‘modernity,’ and a rejection of anything aesthetic or amateur, traditionally excludes the bourgeois domesticity depicted by Sands and Hudson. Sickert considered their proclivity to paint their own homes and possessions ‘amateurish,’ writing

Your own tastes in dress & your personalities should be banished as much as possible from your *oeuvre*. ‘Parler de soi c’est ce qu’il y a de moins fort’ Flaubert says [To speak of oneself is of the least significance] [...] There is a constant snare in painting what is part of your life.³³⁵

This belief was central to Sickert’s artistic ideology and was hugely influential amongst London artists of this period. Indeed, it might be said to be a foundational tenet of many post-Impressionist movements throughout Europe. The misogyny of this outlook cannot be overlooked. As Griselda Pollock outlined in her seminal essay, ‘Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity,’ the Modernist desire for images of public spaces, working-class individuals, crowds, or people of ill repute, precluded women from easily participating in the Modernist discourse.³³⁶ Women who wished to remain respectable could not venture into grimy Camden Town apartments and paint their residents, as Sickert did. Nor was their experience of ‘modernity’ based on encounters with these urban reference points in the same way. For Sands and Hudson,

³³⁴ For recent scholarship on the Camden Town Group, see Katya Nadine Johnson, ‘Portraits of Modern Life: The Camden Town Group and Working-Class Women Subjects,’ *The British Art Journal* 20, no. 1 (2019): 74–81.

³³⁵ Walter Sickert to Ethel Sands, undated [?1913], Tate Archive TGA 9125/5.

³³⁶ See Pollock, ‘Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity.’

their ability to furnish their homes according to their ever-changing tastes, to host an array of cultural luminaries, to travel regularly through Europe and North America, and to remain unmarried and independent were all tangible signifiers of modern life. Their paintings reflected these things, rather than the tropes of male modernism.

Hudson's painting *The Visitor* (undated) (Figure 4.6) is undated, but it was very likely painted between 1908 and 1915, roughly contemporaneous to the circa 1910 painting of Hudson by Sickert, *Miss Hudson at Rowlandson House* (c. 1910) (Figure 4.7). The light palettes, brushwork, composition and interest in light in these two paintings are very alike, as are their choice of a subject: a solitary, well-dressed woman in a well-appointed interior. Hudson's work is richly textured, with a concern for the materiality of her brushstrokes over a detailed visual description of the titular visitor. Small and intimate, the painting is filled with light and the play of it on different surfaces. Sickert's painting is likewise heavily concerned with light and the reflectivity of different textures, such as the exceptionally shiny round table in the centre of the picture and more matte floorboards. The importance of the context of the space to Sickert's portrait of Hudson is notable. Her body is cut off by the shining, reflective surface of the table, and the lines of the panelling on the wall are as clearly rendered as the details of her outfit. It is as if the portrait would not be complete without the details of Hudson's social position, as communicated by the decor of the interior space she occupies. Baron describes this Sickert painting as 'the climax of the Camden Town period' because of its complete focus on formal qualities, balance of paint and brushwork.³³⁷ The comparison between the two works emphasises the centrality of the formal innovations of Sickert and the Camden Town group over the gritty urban subjects that are often the primary association with the group, as well as the obvious stylistic similarities between Sickert and Hudson's work. It also reveals the falsity of Sickert's self-construction as a participant in the working-class lifestyles he often painted. Despite often being cash-poor, he

³³⁷ Baron, *Miss Ethel Sands*, 118.

came from a middle-class background and was more, or at least equally, at home in the tasteful interiors frequented by Sands and Hudson than his Camden Town studio.

When Sickert formally founded the Camden Town Group in 1911, Sands and Hudson were excluded. The group was made up almost entirely of members of the Fitzroy Street Group, of which they were founding members, but women were not welcome. J.B. Manson, another member of the Camden Town Group, wrote to Esther Pissarro that this decision was taken because of the ‘disinclination of the group to include Miss S[ands] & Miss H[udson] of Fitzroy Street in the list of members.’³³⁸ This explicit naming of Sands and Hudson as reasons for the all-male policy is harsh and seems to be a scapegoating strategy taken by the group, as other evidence suggests that there was a wider array of ‘amateur’ women whom various male members of the group wished to exclude, including Esther Pissarro. The decision to offer up Sands and Hudson as excuses for the all-male rule must have been personally hurtful and publicly embarrassing for both artists. It also raises the question of whether the decision was motivated by homophobia. Though none of the language used by members of the group suggests this directly, the naming of only these two women and not any of the other female ‘amateurs’ who may have influenced the decision draws attention to their difference from the excluded artists who were wives and lovers of male members of the group. As demonstrated by the comparison between Hudson and Sickert’s paintings from around this period, her work, along with that of Sands, was very much engaged in the same stylistic and aesthetic questions as Sickert’s and the Camden Town members. Considered in the context of Sickert’s patronising attitude towards the two artists, this scapegoating further underlines the way in which these two women were considered amateur, disposable members of their artistic community.

The Camden Town Group only lasted until 1913, when it was amalgamated with the still-active Fitzroy Street Group to form the London Group, thus reintegrating Sands, Hudson, and

³³⁸ J.B. Manson to Esther Pissarro, 23 November 1911, Tate Archive TGA 806/2/6.

other excluded artists.³³⁹ The short-lived nature of the group and its basis on principles of post-Impressionism that were already in use suggests that ‘the heyday of Camden Town painting was over by the time the Camden Town Group was born,’ according to Baron.³⁴⁰ Despite this reality and the many artists in the circle of the official Camden Town Group who were not allowed to be members, it is the group that has traditionally received scholarly attention and been given credit for the developments in British painting that it championed but did not invent.

Sands’s painting *Tea with Sickert* (c. 1911-1912) (Figure 4.8) is one of her most well-known, because it is her relationship with the more famous artist, however fraught, that has kept her from falling into complete art historical obscurity. Like in *The Chintz Couch*, the physical space inside the picture is inaccessible. The same themes of psychological discomfort caused by the discontinuity of space are present here. The viewer peers into a teatime scene from above, as if looming behind the sofa on which a figure wearing a hat sits across from the figure of Sickert in the opposite corner. This female figure has generally been identified as Hudson, but it is more likely that she is Christine Angus Sickert, the woman he married in 1911, or another unknown female guest. It is unlikely that Hudson would be sitting in her own parlour wearing a hat, which were worn when out of the home, and it is equally unlikely that this chintzy, decadent interior is not Sands and Hudson’s home.³⁴¹ Although this painting is populated by figures, they are hazy and decentralised. Sickert’s face is readable, and his identity is clear from the title, but he is hardly the subject of the painting. The female figure, whatever her identity, blends into the furniture and is decorative in the way that the teacups on the table are decorative. Both figures become part of the furniture they occupy—rather than clarifying for the viewer how the space in the

³³⁹ Wendy Baron, *Perfect Moderns: A History of the Camden Town Group* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2000), 63.

³⁴⁰ Baron, *Perfect Moderns*, 46. Baron’s position as both the only biographer of Sands and as the chief historian of the Camden Town Group in the late-twentieth century complicates her scholarship on Sands. Baron’s positionality has guided her appraisal of Sands to be situated disproportionately in the context of Camden Town.

³⁴¹ The hypothesis that this figure is Christine Sickert was made by Anna Greutzner Robbins in a talk given at Bowdoin College in April 2021, due to the figure wearing a hat indoors and it being unlikely and improper for a resident of a house to wear a hat when hosting guests.

picture is occupied and should be read, they further confuse it. The subject of the painting remains the space itself, rather than the people in it. The parallels with Camden Town painting are evident here, as well. The bright, neon red colour outlining the female figure's hat calls to mind Harold Gilman's *Mrs. Mounter at the Breakfast Table* series (exhibited 1917) (Figure 4.9) and the brushy blue paint handling is reminiscent of Spencer Gore's London scenes like *Down the Garden* (1912) (Figure 4.10).³⁴²

Although this painting is an interesting document of Sands's friendship with Sickert, it is also a fascinating depiction of her in action as a hostess. We can read the strange, disconnected yet impossibly crane-like vantage point as an embodiment of the artist's experience as hostess. Her focus on every part of the gathering in equal measure, with the tea itself in the centre of the painting, is a window into the way she was attuned to the details of hosting guests. The way the figures seem to blend into the sturdy, bold chairs and sofa suggests a certain interchangeability, as if the furniture is the constant stage for a rotating cast of guests. The dark blue outlines around the edges of the arms and bases of the chairs give them a permanence that the wispiest figures of Sickert and guest do not possess. This is a radical reading of this painting on two levels. First, it connects Sands's identities as artist and hostess without considering either inferior. Second, it appraises the painting on a formal level rather than as a document of a social network, as has usually been done previously.

Finding Auppegard

In early 1920, Hudson located a chateau in northern France that she fell in love with: the Chateau d'Auppegard. Sands sold Newington House, and the couple moved their countryside base from Oxfordshire to Normandy. They had both spent most of the Great War in the region

³⁴² For more on Harold Gilman, see Neil Walker, ed., *Harold Gilman: Beyond Camden Town* (Nottingham: Djanogly Gallery, Nottingham Lakeside Arts and Chichester: Pallant House Gallery, 2018). For more on Spencer Gore, see Robert Travers, *Spencer Gore and His Circle, with special focus on John Doman Turner* (Richmond: Piano Nobile, 1996).

working as nurses, and their return was in line with Hudson's long-term preference for France over England. From this point on, they divided their time between their French home at Auppegard and the London address they had moved to in 1913, 15 Vale Avenue in Chelsea. The majority of the paintings that survive from Sands's oeuvre are interior scenes of Auppegard, painted sometime between 1920 and the Second World War, when Auppegard was vandalised and looted.

These works share a palette and style that make them easy to read as a series or a cohesive group. They are painted with soft brush strokes that give the pictures a blurry, subdued atmosphere. They are chiefly characterised by rosy pinks and aqua blue-greens, furthering the pastoral, pastel aesthetic. These works, many of which are now in the collection of the Guildhall Museum in London, underline the distinct French-ness of Sands's style and education.³⁴³ She was initially trained in Paris and first exhibited there, and her return to the country as a home and subject for her pictures later in life brings this full circle. French painters of domestic scenes such as Vuillard and Bonnard are apt comparisons for Sands's work in this period, and indeed throughout her career. Like the later works of Bonnard and Vuillard, by the 1920s Sands's paintings can be viewed as noticeably old-fashioned.³⁴⁴ Some of her works from Auppegard, such as *Bedroom Interior, Auppegard, France* (undated) (Figure 4.11) and *Girl Reading on a Sofa, Auppegard, France* (undated) (Figure 4.12) do not have the qualities of disrupted or unreadable spaces that characterised her earlier works. Here, the interiors are 'fatally pretty,' to use Bell's description of Sands's and Hudson's work.³⁴⁵ They are soft and uncritical.

³⁴³ Many of these paintings are probably incorrectly titled by the Guildhall Museum. See, for example, *Interior at Portland Place, London* (undated), in the Guildhall's collection. Sands lived at Portland Place in the 1890s until the death of her mother, before she began painting. It is extremely unlikely that this painting depicts Portland Place – the paint handling and details of the interior align with Sands's much later Auppegard paintings. The Guildhall does not have any records related to the acquisition of their collection of works by Sands, according to conversations with curator Katty Pearce in October 2021, that might help clarify the source of these titles or resolve any inaccuracies within them. This issue would benefit from further research with the cooperation of the Guildhall Museum curatorial department.

³⁴⁴ For more on Bonnard's singular place in the history of Modernism, see Guy Cogeval and Isabelle Cahn, *Pierre Bonnard: Painting Arcadia* (Munich, Prestel, 2016).

³⁴⁵ Vanessa Bell to Roger Fry, 21 July 1912, in Mahler, *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, p.121.

Others from this period are much less so. In *Double Doors, Auppegard, France* (undated) (Figure 4.13), Sands explores the layers of space rippling out from a seated figure at the centre of the work. In the foreground, a pink doorway with panelling outlined in green stands ajar. Through the door, an empty room is visible with blue wallpaper covered in flourishes. There are domestic items visible along the edges of the viewer's vision into the room: a table, an ewer, the leg of a chair that appears to be draped in clothes. Through the door at the far end of this room, a third room is visible. In the doorway, partly hidden behind the wall, a figure sits in a chair. She is turned away from us and appears to be holding something in her hands—perhaps a newspaper she is reading. Her hair is grey, and her clothes are beige, distinguishing her from the pastel colours of her surroundings. The walls of this room are also decorated with a florid pattern. The effect of this journey through space to reach this solitary figure is similar to those of both Sands's and Hudson's earlier works: the space is revealed to the viewer, yet it is also still hidden. The figure does not acknowledge the viewer, or perhaps in turning away she actively rejects the intrusion into her space. She is probably Hudson, given her position at the heart of the home and her greying hair, which echoes Sands's other depictions of Hudson at Auppegard. The protection of two doorways and two accompanying sets of walls places her at the heart of the home. With no windows or exterior views visible, it is as if she has wrapped domestic space around herself three times over. This sense of wrapping space is forwarded by the tactility of Sands's paint handling. Again, the home takes on a dual meaning of personal succour and protection from the outside world. The nuance of the layering of these meanings gains physical representation here in the literal layering of spaces.

In her only surviving painting of Auppegard, Hudson also echoes her earlier visual language in describing her French home. *Chateau d'Auppegard* (after 1927) (Figure 4.14) is a view of the exterior of the house. While compositionally very different, it shares many of the themes of Hudson's painting of Newington House (Figure 4.1). In this work, the viewer is much closer to the building and the full structure is not visible. We see one wing of the house on the left side

of the picture, and a single-story loggia extending from it into the right side of the picture. In the foreground, a gravel path leads from the house towards the viewer on the right, bordered on the left by a low hedge, behind which flowers and plants flourish. There is no visible entrance to the house. The foliage blocks the view of one possible doorway on the bottom right of the building, though it may only be a window, like the window to its left. There could be an entrance within the loggia, between the two columns, but the space is so dark that it is not possible to make out any doorway. Thus, this house, like *Newington*, is not accessible to the viewer. It is painted sympathetically and attractively, albeit in rather grey tones, conveying a sense of the Hudson's tenderness for her home. But she does not offer the space to the viewer to inhabit, nor does she share her own manner of existing in the space by rendering it in a way that could be entered. Unlike her painting of *Newington*, *Auppegard* is not positioned as a shining beacon upon a hill. It does not have a sense of exclusivity, perfection, or aspiration. Yet it is still protected from intruders and intruding eyes in this work, wrapped in plants and shadows in a manner that parallels Sands's depiction of Hudson wrapped in room after room.

The continuation of the dichotomy between Sands's and Hudson's choice of perspective to depict their home remains striking, with Sands continuing to exclusively paint the interior of their homes, and Hudson the exterior, well into their middle age. Again, this claim must be qualified by the fact that the subjects of their lost works are not known, but the pattern is replicated throughout their careers, including in paintings of subjects other than their homes. Of the other four known surviving paintings by Hudson not yet mentioned in this chapter, three are of the exteriors of buildings: *Lamb Inn, Wallingford* (c. 1912) (Figure 4.15), *Harbour, Northern France, Honfleur*, (undated) (Figure 4.16), and *The Red Chateau* (undated) (Figure 4.17). These works are all undated, though it is possible to link them to the broader periods of Hudson's life when she was living near Wallingford or Normandy. Of the nineteen named works Hudson exhibited at the New English Art Club, all but three have titles that describe a place or a

building.³⁴⁶ In contrast, only one known work potentially by Sands depicts the exterior of a building: a watercolour of the entrance to Newington attributed to her (c. 1900-1910) (Figure 4.18). Of the only three works she exhibited at NEAC, none depict the exterior of a building or landscape, either.³⁴⁷ Based on this, I consider the pattern of interior versus exterior views of their homes to be relevant to a full understanding of their relationship and attitude towards the visual representation of their homes.

When remarked upon in existing scholarship, the two artists' different approaches to painting their homes has sometimes been read biographically, with Sands as the outgoing hostess in Britain and Hudson as more of a recluse who preferred to stay in France.³⁴⁸ Though harder to discern now, given the mismatch in amounts of surviving work, Hudson was also seen as the more serious artist, and Sands as more interested in her social pursuits.³⁴⁹ Taken together, these assessments of the personalities of the artists give rise to the reading that Sands painted interiors of her homes because she was more open, social, and vivacious, and therefore created images of her home that welcomed the viewer into it. In contrast, Hudson painted exteriors because she was more private and unwilling to share her intimate world. However, as my analysis of their work throughout this chapter has demonstrated, these readings of the two women's paintings are overly simplistic and unhelpful. Even if the characterisations of each artist are true, their paintings do not neatly slot into 'open' and 'closed' categories. Rather, they both offer a conflicted and inscrutable lens through which to view a shared home. Reading their work separately makes it significantly more enigmatic than reading it together. Only by drawing out

³⁴⁶ Baile de Laperriere, *The New English Art Club Exhibitors 1886-2001*, vol. II, 275-76.

³⁴⁷ Baile de Laperriere, *The New English Art Club Exhibitors 1886-2001*, vol. IV, 84.

³⁴⁸ See popular writing about them for general audiences, such as Lydia Figes, 'The socialite and the introvert: the shared life and art of Ethel Sands and Anna Hope Hudson,' *Art UK*, 4 July 2019.

³⁴⁹ See Baron, *Miss Ethel Sands and Her Circle*, particularly discussions of the friendship between Hudson and Sickert and their long correspondence. Sickert regarded Hudson as the better artist and as his peer, while Sands was seen as more frivolous.

this parallel urge to depict their homes but also hide them does the nuance of that representational modality come into focus.

Queer Domesticity

The most enigmatic and yet, in some ways, the most direct of all of these images of their homes is *Morning* (undated) (Figure 4.19), by Sands. The painting is not dated and was sold at auction in 2013 to an unknown buyer. It depicts a softly lit bedroom with a large, dark wood four-poster bed with a red canopy. Laying in the bed reading is a dark-haired woman. Her hair is loose, and her white nightdress slips off her right shoulder, leaving it exposed to the light. The room is lived-in and cosy, with a colourful quilt covering the bed, a well-trodden purple rug on the floor, a piece of pale blue fabric draped over the bedside table, and a bright green stained-glass lamp resting atop it, none of which match. The unoccupied side of the bed is not so rumpled as to look obviously recently vacated, but nor does the lopsided pillow or the crinkled sheet folded over the quilt look untouched. No written documents about this painting are known to exist, so we must read it with the knowledge that does exist about the artist's life. It is most likely that the woman in the bed in this painting is Hudson. There would be little reason for Sands to be in a bedroom with anyone else, such as a houseguest, in this state of undress, and even less for her to paint them in such an environment. It is unlikely that the figure is the artist herself, firstly because she had light-coloured hair throughout her life, unlike the figure here, and secondly because the inconvenience of painting this composition with oneself as the model would be very great. Based on the dark, heavy decor and the cream or lilac colour of the walls, this painting was probably made at Newington. It does not have the blue-green panelling or floral wallpaper of Auppegard, nor the clear, bright light that characterises Sands's paintings of the house. The master bedroom at Newington matches the layout and lighting of this painting, evidencing this

claim (see Figure 4.20 for the author's photograph of this room).³⁵⁰ Although the painting appears to show windows on the right side of the room, which does not match any room at Newington, Figure 4.20 shows that the light effects rendered in the painting are produced by closing the shutters of the window nearest the bed and opening those further away, causing the light to fall diagonally across the room.

This painting has a much different feeling to Sands's empty interiors. The space of the room does not feel closed off. Instead, the whole foreground may be entered and moved through by the viewer. Indeed, the bed functions like an island about which one could perambulate unencumbered. The bed itself is less accessible—although the space around it makes sense, the thick dark footboard and posts around the bed close it off to the viewer. The red canopy above and the matching red skirt below the bed distinguish it from the ceiling and floor, separating it from the rest of the room. The figure lying in it is separate, too: safely ensconced in her own little world. It is as if the part of the home to be protected has shrunk down to the bed itself, as opposed to the whole building, in Hudson's works, or whole rooms, in Sands's other works. This vital and most sacred space is the heart of the shared home. The painting can therefore be read as a radically queer image of the bed shared by two women. It is the only such document that survives by either woman of their shared bed. The intimacy of the painting is shocking in its quiet softness. It is an understated painting, easy to overlook, like many of Sands's and Hudson's works. But it is this quality which makes it so radical.

It is difficult to look at *Morning*, in the context of Sands's and Hudson's social and artistic milieu, and not compare it with Sickert's (in)famous paintings of women in beds. His *Camden Town Murder* series is a gruesome, grim depiction of a woman lying nude in bed.³⁵¹ In each of the various iterations of the scene, a woman lies nude in a dishevelled, wrought-iron bed. A male

³⁵⁰ The author wishes to extend her thanks to the Nettleton family, who occupy Newington House at the time of writing, for allowing her access to the house.

³⁵¹ For more on this series, see 'Walter Sickert: *The Camden Town Murder* and *Tabloid Crime*' in Tickner, *Modern Life & Modern Subjects*, 11-47.

figure either stands beside her, gazing down at her, or sits on the bed beside her. In *L'affaire du Camden Town* (1909) (Figure 4.21), the most violent of the series, the viewer is positioned at the foot of the bed, looking at the female figure stretched out across the mattress. The angle means that her vaginal area is fully exposed at the centre of the painting, recalling Courbet's *L'Origine du Monde* (1866, Musée d'Orsay).³⁵² Sickert's depictions of women in bed in paintings like this one reduce them to props in his larger narrative about the vulgar depravity of modern London. He uses the shock value of their nudity to reference the tabloid-ification of crime and the breakdown of traditional class and gender roles. These paintings join a long art historical legacy of women in beds, which includes other famously controversial works like Manet's *Olympia* (1863, Musée d'Orsay), as well as classical works like Titian's *Venus of Urbino* (1534, Uffizi Gallery).³⁵³ In this context, Sands's painting of Hudson takes on added weight. While Sands is not painting a nude figure, she still positions herself within a rich and serious legacy of painting. The quotidian nature of this work contrasts with the monumentality of those previously mentioned. Rather than making a claim about beauty, femininity, or class, this painting is about a single relationship between artist and subject. In that intense focus, mundanity and vulnerability meet.

The only other known image made by Sands of Hudson is *Nan Hudson Playing Patience at Auppegard, France* (undated) (Figure 4.22). The figure of Hudson in this painting is obviously older than the woman in *Morning*. She has light grey coiffed hair and a slim form. The whole painting is dominated by the blue and gold tones that Sands used so often to paint Auppegard. Hudson sits in a striped armchair in front of a table on which cards are laid for a game of Patience. She gazes down at them, her head in her hand, contemplating her next move. Though this work is less explicitly queer than *Morning*, it is still deeply intimate. Hudson looks fatigued

³⁵² For more on Courbet, see Michael Fried, *Courbet's Realism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

³⁵³ For more on this painting, see Rona Goffen, *Titian's "Venus of Urbino"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

and frail, and totally at ease. Her left hand is extended to move a card, but there is not a strong sense of movement in the painting. She looks still, almost frozen. Her eyes and mouth are blurry, as if they have been caught in a moment of movement. It makes her expression difficult to read—are her eyes looking down at the cards, or straight in front of her? Is her mouth curving upwards in a smile, or is it distorted by the pressure of her cheek resting on her hand? The uncertainty of Hudson's face precludes the painting from being read as a portrait. It is, like all Sands's works, a picture of an interior—in this case, an interior containing the figure of Hudson. Like *Morning*, the painting is not about the details of Hudson's form, but about the place she occupies within their home. The colours Sands uses to paint Hudson's garments echo the colours of the surrounding room. Her dress is pink, the same shade used to render the places on the table and screen most illuminated by the lamp on the side table. The cuffs of her sleeves and collar of her dress are aqua blue, the same colour used to delineate the lines of the panelling on the walls behind her. She is intrinsic to the space, and therefore intrinsic to Sands's sense of home.

Old-Fashioned Modernism

The question of old-fashionedness is central to a discussion of these works, and indeed to any discussion of Modernism, which itself is defined by a frenzied drive towards progress. A practical conflict central to the Modernist project is embodied in its attitude towards domestic space. In her analysis of the cultural capital of interior decorating in Paris at the end of the nineteenth century, Lisa Tiersten writes that 'modernism rejected the traditional artistic sources of history and myth, and established the everyday, including the domestic interior, as both a site of aesthetic experience and an object of aesthetic scrutiny.'³⁵⁴ While not every scholar would define modernism, or Modernism, thus, this prioritisation of everyday spaces is central to shifting

³⁵⁴ Lisa Tiersten, 'The Chic Interior and the Feminine Modern: Home Decorating as High Art in Turn-of-the-Century Paris,' in *Not at Home*, ed. Reed, 18-32, p. 19.

trends in visual art, and to the work of Sands and Hudson. Women them, who embraced the design and decoration of their homes as a creative practice, were participating in this modernising trend. They were performing a new bourgeois identity by purchasing objects for homes that they had also purchased, as opposed to inherited. Possessions became markers of class status and individual identity in ways that were more specific and important as previous markers of status declined in potency. The intertwined nature of Modernism and Capitalism, and therefore between creativity and consumerism, has always been fraught. Tiersten goes on to explain the ways in which male modernists firmly maintained 'a rigid distinction between high art and decorative art, between the male and female spheres of artistic practice' in order to keep fine art from being subsumed by women shopping.³⁵⁵ Thus, according to Christopher Reed, 'in the eyes of the avant-garde, being undomestic came to serve as a guarantee of being art.'³⁵⁶

As has already been demonstrated by Sickert's opinion of Sands and Hudson, the two women's commitment to painting their own homes was not au fait with some leading strands of Modernism. Even more so, their commitment to decorating their homes with expensive, beautiful things bought with their own money was too overtly bourgeois and concerned with respectability and comfort. Sickert's poor opinion of their aesthetic tendencies is demonstrative of the way they fell between the cracks of the various avant gardes of their era into the obscurity of 'hostesses.' This fraught web of influences, class meanings, and aesthetic attitudes transcends the Camden Town Group or the trends of different strands of modernism in London or Paris and gets to the heart of the slippages in trends in visual culture in the Anglo-European sphere at the turn of the twentieth century. Hudson and Sands sat at the nexus of these fissures in the cultural fabric. Their home-making work, in the truest sense of the term, peaked with their acquisition and renovation of Auppegard. It was chosen without consideration of fashion or

³⁵⁵ Tiersten, 'The Chic Interior and the Feminine Modern,' 30.

³⁵⁶ Reed, 'Introduction,' in *Not at Home*, ed. Reed, 7-17, p. 7.

family ties, unlike Newington or their London homes, and it was purchased in a state of disrepair and then crafted exactly to their tastes. It represents the apex of their joint domestic creativity, and a disproportionate number of paintings of the house survive today. While it is not possible to know how the number of works made of Auppegard compares to the number of works made of their other homes due to the significant loss of works, it is clear that the house was an inspiration and site of productivity for Sands and, to a lesser extent, Hudson.

Nan Hudson Playing Patience is another example of Sands's distinctly backward-looking visual style. Love's analysis of the two-sided nature of queer modernity is helpful here, again: 'One must insist on the modernity of the queer; like any claim about modernity, though, the argument actually turns on backwardness—a backwardness disavowed or overcome.'³⁵⁷ Sands and Hudson did not disavow or attempt to overcome their 'backward' or old-fashioned aesthetic. Instead, they revelled in it. Their modernity, characterised by bourgeois domesticity and independent wealth and means, did not include a forward-looking attitude towards social change or sexual identity. It is tempting to read their lifestyle as a manifestation of respectability politics; in other words, that they lived in such a bourgeois, backwards-looking manner in order to promote the respectability of their relationship, or of their artistic careers. But nothing in their works nor their written archives suggests that their lived experiences were politically motivated. They *were* respectable, and their tastes and artwork reflect the way that they lived, their values, and their backgrounds. Not only do Sands's paintings engage with the modernity of domestic spaces, and the role of women in making them so, but these two works in particular also remind us how her works depict queer domestic spaces. Despite her respectability, Sands shared her home and life with another woman. These paintings, which reach back in time towards an

³⁵⁷ Love, *Feeling Backward*, 6.

Edwardian aesthetic rather than forward towards an abstract visual language, are still images of queer spaces.

Reading Sands's and Hudson's work in conversation gives us a holistic view of their homes, from within and without. Seeing the works of these domestic spaces as one body of images of a shared home reveals the complexity with which both artists portrayed their space. The opacity of their identities and true selves is reflected in these works. They do not offer some sort of key to the secret of who these two women were. Instead, they underline the intentional hiddenness and exclusivity of their inner sanctum. Their presentation of the space is at once guarded and intimate, exclusive and revealing—a tension that is more visible when the works are seen in concert. Not only do the works reveal patterns about one another when viewed holistically, they also underline the way the relationship between Hudson and Sands was a critical influence on the way they conceptualised space in their paintings. Over the many decades of their careers, they learned from and built on each other's methods of representing the home. Reading this collaborative working ethos and reading the dialogic inside-outside relationship between these two bodies of work is a two-way street: each becomes clearer and more potent through the acknowledgement and elucidation of the other.

Conclusion

Throughout these four case studies, a recurrent motif emerges of women painting alongside one another. The image with which I began the first chapter of Swynnerton and Dacre painting nearly identical vistas of the city of Siena, possibly standing on a steep path next to each other while they worked in situ, is echoed in the following chapters: Anna Alma-Tadema and Emily Williams standing on opposite ends of the Drawing Room in Townshend House as they each painted different views of it, the Slade women standing in a hypothetical circle, endlessly drawing each other, and Sands and Hudson sitting inside and outside, respectively, painting the homes they shared over decades. It is an emotive and evocative image of shared space, collaborative working, intimacy and influence. It is also an imagined image, in almost all these cases, arising from the practice of tessellating the works of each set of artists. This practice brings these artists to life in new and stereoscopic ways.

The method with which I have excavated new information about the artists in the preceding chapters is highly transferable. As I argued in my introduction, although all the artists discussed in this thesis are women, this methodology is applicable to artists of any gender. The many names I uncovered during my research of forgotten attendees of the Slade School, for example, or the other Manchester-based artists who studied at the Manchester School of Art with Swynnerton and Dacre, or lesser-known members of the Fitzroy Street Group, early London Group, and the other organised milieus of Edwardian London that Sands and Hudson cycled through, are almost endless. While I cannot claim that every one of these artists is worthy of study, nor that each of their lives were equally influenced and defined by friendship, this window into the many so-called ‘forgotten’ artists who might be recovered via this methodology is notable. While I have focused largely on lesser-known artists in this thesis, with the intention of rehabilitating their legacies and offering new insights about their work, this methodology is also not limited to the study of artists about whom little is known. Turning a relational gaze to canonical artists who have largely been studied in isolation is also productive. One who has

appeared in several chapters in this thesis is Sargent—often studied as a solitary artist, sitting outside the schools and -isms of post-Impressionist Europe and America, he lived a life rich with friends and social ties that influenced his personal and professional life. How might our understanding of his work expand with a renewed focus on these relationships?

Although I have argued that my methodology is not specific to women, my focus on women in this thesis does reveal themes that are specific to them in Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In particular, the porousness of temporality in their work and the diversity of ways with which they engaged with modern aesthetics is clear. While a significant reason many of these artists have not been well-remembered by art historians is the paucity of surviving material about them, another is their lack of conformity to the mainstream avant-garde aesthetic developments of early twentieth-century Britain. The relationship of this trend to gender is complex, as demonstrated throughout the previous chapters. It is partly to do with active exclusion on the grounds of sex, as seen in the case of Sands and Hudson's exclusion from the Camden Town Group, and partly to do with social expectations of women to perform domestic duties and conform to standards to socially accepted femininity. Other of these women had great success during their lifetimes and have been erased from our histories of art by sexist art historians after their deaths, like Annie Swynnerton and Laura and Anna Alma-Tadema. The myriad ways in which these dynamics play out across the case studies examined here point to the diversity of aesthetic languages being developed during this period.

The relational gaze of my methodology is, of course, useful not only as a research tool but also as a way to re-examine notions of collaboration in artistic contexts. As I stated in my introduction, collaboration has traditionally been understood as a concrete sharing or combining of efforts to produce a work of art. Expanding this definition to include acts of care, emotional intimacy, and shared spaces and subjects significantly broadens the scope for seeing collaborative elements in the work of many, if not most, artists. Tracing these networks of care and influence creates a rich web that allows the complexity of the development of an artist's work to be better

appreciated. One element of friendship that I have not examined fully in this thesis is competition and strife. Because of the lack of life-writing available by most of these women, it is difficult, if not impossible, to make claims about the details of their emotional ups and downs, including competitiveness and resentment. While I have framed their influence upon one another as a positive narrative, I cannot exclude the reality that relationships, particularly those in which professional success is a factor, can be messy. Competitiveness or disagreements does not in any way negate the influence of a relationship on an artist's work. However, this element of friendship between women deserves further research.

There is also scope for further research on the individual artists examined in this thesis. Those who remain mysterious, even with the help of the tessellated knowledge provided by their friends, might one day be revealed more fully: Emily Williams and Gwen Salmond, in particular, remain tantalisingly obscured by history but clearly were fascinating characters and talented artists. I hope that the archival work I have done to begin to draw them back into the light will be the foundation of further investigation, by myself and other scholars. Other artists are on the cusp of the canonical status that Gwen John has now achieved, and deserve monographic attention: Annie Swynnerton especially, but perhaps also Ethel Sands, Edna Clarke Hall and Laura and Anna Alma-Tadema.

Centring friendship is an exceptional way to reveal new ways of seeing, and it is well-suited to these four groups of artists whose lives were so defined by their relationships with fellow women artists. But it is in no way the only method with which to study these or any artists. Research methods themselves should be tessellated to form a nuanced and multidimensional understanding of any subject. The only artist in this thesis who has received significant art historical attention as an individual is Gwen John. Placing her within the scope of my relational methodology is still useful and reveals new ways of understanding her early career and her close relationships with her female friends. But the richness of knowledge that we have about her comes from the many different scholarly eyes that have been trained on her, from

various art historical schools of thought to biography to sociology. There is a narrative bent to the discipline of Art History, which is still a young discipline. We seek the newest best way to tell stories of art, moving through -isms in the same way we are taught art itself evolves linearly. Perhaps a deeper conclusion I can draw from my relational, puzzle-like methodology is the notion that this search for one method is not productive. The presence of many methods of research and many ways of seeing tessellate into a prism of knowledge that reveals the most fundamental truths. Concluding this thesis is a challenge, because it is really a beginning: an initial foray into a novel method of studying art and its histories. It is my hope that this work serves as a starting point for further innovation into research methods that centre relationality and collaboration of all kinds, in search of new understandings of art that reflect the interplay of intimacy and friendship with creativity.

Glossary of Characters

Chapter 1

Marie Bashkirtseff (1858-1884): Bashkirtseff was a Russian artist who studied at the Académie Julian as a teenager and young adult. She kept a detailed diary that has been a key primary source for scholars of women artists who studied in French ateliers in the second half of the nineteenth century. Bashkirtseff died at the age of twenty-five and never achieved fame as an artist.

Susan Isabel Dacre (1844-1933): Dacre was a British artist. She was born in Leamington and educated at the Manchester School of Art in her twenties. She travelled to Italy regularly with Annie Swynnerton. Her work was exhibited at the New English Art Club (NEAC), Royal Academy, and various galleries and exhibitions in London, Manchester, and abroad.

John Singer Sargent (1856-1925): Sargent was one of the most successful society portraitists of the Gilded Age. Born in Florence to American parents, he lived and worked in Italy, London, and the Northeast of the United States. Known especially for his portraits, he also painted landscapes, architectural studies, and genre scenes. His expatriate cosmopolitanism was a defining feature of his career.

Annie Louisa Robinson Swynnerton (1844-1933): Swynnerton was a British artist. She was born and raised in Manchester and studied at the Manchester School of Art in the 1870s. She travelled extensively in Italy and eventually moved to Rome after marrying Joseph Swynnerton. She was elected an Associate Royal Academician in 1922.

Frederick Swynnerton (1858-1918): Swynnerton was a successful British painter. He was born on the Isle of Mann and his brother, Joseph, married Annie Robinson Swynnerton.

Joseph Swynnerton (1848-1910): Swynnerton was a sculptor and the husband of Annie Robinson Swynnerton. He was born on the Isle of Mann and spent his adult life living in Rome.

Chapter 2

Anna Alma-Tadema (1867-1943): Anna was the daughter of successful painter Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema and his first wife, Marie-Pauline Gressin-Dumoulin de Boisgirard. She was raised in London by her father and stepmother, Laura. Anna studied art with her father and mother and became a successful artist, exhibiting in London and abroad.

Laurence Alma-Tadema (1865-1940): Laurence was the elder of the two Alma-Tadema daughters. She became a writer, political activist, and politician whose friends included Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll and Ignacy Jan Paderewski.

Laura Theresa Epps Alma-Tadema (1852-1909): Laura was the second wife of painter Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema. She was the daughter of Dr George Napoleon Epps, a prominent homeopathic practitioner. Laura trained as an artist from a young age with several of her sisters and continued her artistic career throughout her marriage.

Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema (1836-1912): Lawrence was one of the most successful painters of the Victorian age. He was born in the Netherlands and educated in Belgium. He made his name

painting classical antiquity. His second wife, Laura, and second daughter, Anna, also became successful artists.

Edmund Gosse (1848-1928): Gosse was an English critic, poet, and writer. He encouraged the careers of various artists and writers of his acquaintance. He was the brother-in-law of Laura Alma-Tadema.

Ellen 'Nellie' Epps Gosse (1850-1929): Ellen was the sister of Laura Alma-Tadema and trained with her as an artist in the studio of Ford Madox Brown. She was not able to continue her artistic career after her marriage to Edmund Gosse in 1875.

Tessa Gosse (1877-1951): Tessa was the eldest daughter of Edmund and Ellen Gosse.

Phillip Gosse (1879-1959): Philip was the only son of Edmund and Ellen Gosse. He became a writer and physician.

Sylvia Gosse (1881-1968): Sylvia was the youngest daughter of Edmund and Ellen Gosse. She became a successful painter and was associated with the Camden Town Group and the Bloomsbury Circle.

Emily Epps Williams (1841-1912): Emily was the second child and second daughter of Dr George Napoleon and Charlotte Epps. She trained as an artist as a young person, possibly with John Brett. She married a Mr. Williams and was widowed between 1861 and 1871. She was a successful painter, but very little information about her survives.

Amy Epps Pratt (1839-1913): Amy was the eldest child of Dr and Mrs Epps. It is possible she trained as an artist in her youth. She married Mr Charles Pratt, a wine merchant, and lived with him on the Isle of Wight.

Dr George Napoleon Epps (1815-1874): Dr Epps was a prominent writer and homeopathic doctor. He was particularly interested in treating curvature of the spine. He married Charlotte Ann Bacon in 1883 and had seven children, including Emily, Amy, Ellen, and Anna.

Ann C or Charlotte Ann Bacon Epps (c.1815-after 1881): Charlotte Epps, sometimes called Ann, was the wife of Dr Epps and mother of Amy, Emily, Franklin, Louisa, Washington, Ellen, and Laura.

Chapter 3

Edna, Lady Clarke Hall (née Waugh) (1879-1979): Clarke Hall was a British artist and poet. She was one of the twelve children of Benjamin Waugh, who was a prominent advocate for the reform of children's rights. Clarke Hall studied at the Slade School of Art in the 1890s and became friends with a prominent group of artists. She married William Clarke Hall at the age of 19 and struggled with her mental health and the challenges of pursuing an artistic career after her marriage.

Sir William Clarke Hall (1866-1932): Clarke Hall was the husband of Edna Clarke Hall. He was a magistrate and author and a good friend of her parents.

Augustus John (1878-1961): Augustus was a successful Welsh painter. He studied at the Slade School of Art with his sister, Gwen, and many other young British artists who would go on to

fame. He became famous for his unconventional domestic life and his obsession with living like, and painting, gypsies.

Gwen John (1876-1939): Gwen was a Welsh painter and the elder sister of Augustus John. Though he was more famous than her during their lives, she has begun to eclipse him since death. Gwen studied at the Slade School of Art before relocated to France, where she lived and worked for the rest of her life.

Ida Nettleship John (1877-1907): Ida Nettleship was the daughter of artist John Trivett Nettleship and costume designer Ada Nettleship. She attended the Slade School of Art, where she met Augustus John. They married in 190. Ida had five children and died after giving birth to the fifth in 1907.

Gwendolen Salmond, Lady Smith (1877-1958): Salmond studied at the Slade School of Art in the 1890s. She married fellow artist and fellow Slade alumnus Matthew Smith in 1912. He left her ten years later. Both their sons were killed serving in the Royal Air Force in the Second World War.

Sir Matthew Smith (1879-1959): Smith was a successful artist who studied at the Manchester School of Art, Slade School of Art, and with Henri Matisse in Paris. He was the husband of Gwen Salmond, although he permanently separated from her in 1922 to move to Paris with Vera Cunningham.

Ursula Tyrwhitt (1872-1966): Tyrwhitt studied at the Slade School of Art in the 1890s and under Whistler at the Académie Colarossi in Paris. She exhibited regularly at the New English Art Club. She married her cousin, fellow artist Walter Tyrwhitt.

Walter Tyrwhitt (1859-1932): Walter was the cousin and husband of Ursula Tyrwhitt.

Henry Tonks (1862-1937): Tonks was trained as a surgeon before retraining as an artist at the Westminster School of Art under Frederick Brown. He became a teacher at the Slade School of Art, though resumed his medical career during the First World War. He became the Slade Professor of Fine Art in 1918, holding the position until his retirement in 1930. He is considered one of the most influential art teachers in twentieth-century Britain.

Frederick Brown (1851-1941): Brown studied art in England and Paris. He was a founder of the New English Art Club, teacher at the Westminster School of Art, and Slade Professor of Fine Art from 1893-1918.

William Orpen (1878-1931): Orpen was an Irish artist who studied at the Slade School in the 1890s. He was a successful society portraitist and a prolific and dedicated war artist during the First World War.

Rosa Waugh Hobhouse (1882-1971): Hobhouse was the younger sister of Edna Clarke Hall. She studied at the Slade School in the 1890s and ran an art school herself with Gwen Salmond in the early 1900s, before becoming an activist espousing pacifism and voluntary poverty. She married Stephen Hobhouse in 1916. They lived and worked in the East End of London.

Maxwell Balfour (1874-1914): Balfour was a British artist who studied at the Slade School of Art in the 1890s.

Chapter 4

Anna Hope 'Nan' Hudson (1869-1957): Hudson was an American heiress, born and raised in New York. She moved to Europe at twenty-four, after the death of her parents, to study art. After meeting Ethel Sands in Paris, the two women established homes together in London, Oxfordshire, and Normandy. Hudson preferred France and spent most of her later life in Normandy until her home was vandalized during the Second World War.

Ethel Sands (1873-1962): Sands was an American heiress who was raised mostly in England. Her parents died when she was young, leaving her independently wealthy and responsible for the care of her two younger brothers. She studied art in Paris and London and established homes with her partner, Nan Hudson, in London, Oxfordshire, and later Normandy. Sands was one of the most famous hostesses of her generation, and this fame overshadowed her career as an artist.

Walter Sickert (1860-1942): Sickert was a German-English artist who worked principally in London. He studied briefly at the Slade School before moving to Paris to study under Whistler and then Degas. His career in London was successful and included the forming of various groups, most famously the Camden Town Group. He was chiefly concerned with depicting urban modernity.

Virginia Woolf (1882-1941): Woolf was one of the most important novelists of the twentieth century and a key member of the Bloomsbury Group. She was the sister of artist Vanessa Bell and a friend of Ethel Sands, who was the inspiration for one of her short stories.

Vanessa Bell (1879-1961): Bell was a Modernist painter and a key member of the Bloomsbury Group. She was the sister of Virginia Woolf. Bell founded the Friday Club group of artists, of which Edna Clarke Hall was a member, and the Omega Workshops, from which Hudson and Sands were excluded for their fatal prettiness.

Roger Fry (1866-1934): Fry was a painter, critic, and member of the Bloomsbury Group. He introduced Post-Impressionism to Britain and had a profound effect on modern British taste.

Figures



Figure 0.1. Annie Swynnerton, *S. Isabel Dacre*, c. 1880s. Oil on canvas, 70.3 x 51.9 cm, Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester.



Figure 0.2. Frederick Burr Opper, *The "new woman" and her bicycle - there will be several of her*, Illustration from *Puck*, v. 37, no. 954, (1895 June 19), back cover. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Chapter 1

Figure 1.1. Annie Swynnerton, *Town of Siena*, c. 1880s. Oil on canvas, 37.8 x 51 cm Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester.



Figure 1.2. Eliza Goodpasture, Photograph of Siena, summer 2019.



Figure 1.3. Susan Isabel Dacre, *Siena Italy*, undated. Oil on canvas, 30.48 x 20.32cm, private collection. Courtesy of Richard Taylor Fine Art.



Figure 1.4. Francis Dodd, *Portrait of Susan Isabel Dacre*, c. 1927. Oil on canvas, 63.5 x 73.2 cm, private collection, Courtesy of Richard Taylor Fine Art.

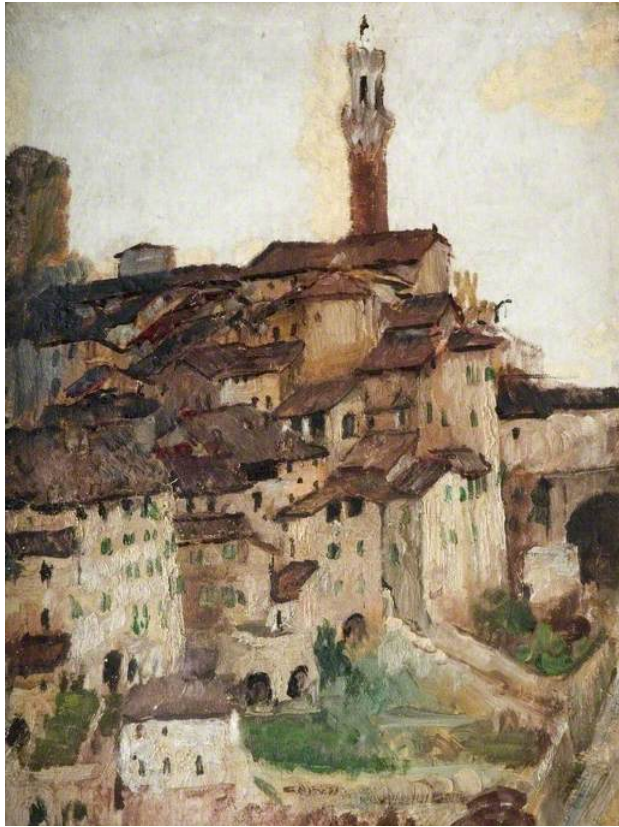


Figure 1.5. Annie Swynnerton. *Siena*, c. 1883-1910. Oil on canvas, 32.7 x 42.6 cm, Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery, Birmingham.



Figure 1.6. Susan Isabel Dacre, *Assisi from the City Walls*, undated. Oil on canvas, 53.8 x 64.8 cm, Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester.



Figure 1.7. Susan Isabel Dacre, *The Walls of Siena*, undated. Oil on canvas, 23.1 x 28 cm, Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester.

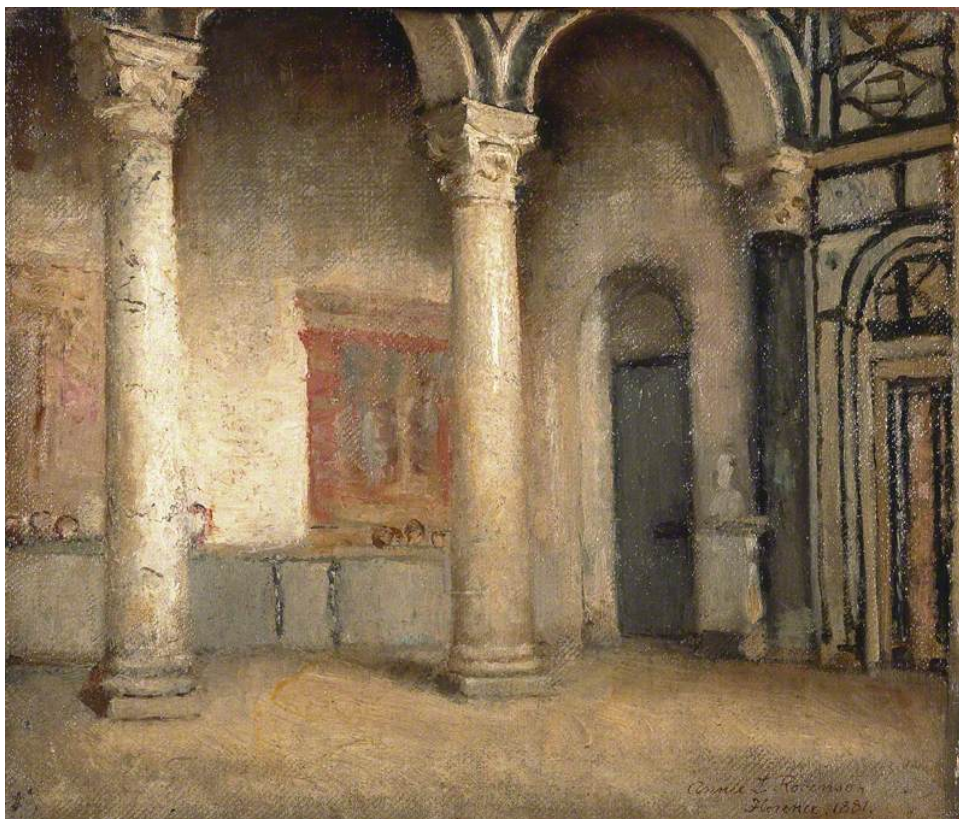


Figure 1.8. Annie Swynnerton, *Interior of San Miniato, Florence*, 1881. Oil on canvas, 26 x 30.4 cm, Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester.



Figure 1.9. Susan Isabel Dacre, *Gateway at Siena*, undated. Oil on canvas, 31.7 x 23.6 cm, Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester.



Figure 1.10. Annie Swynnerton, *Jebsa (Roman Lady)*, 1874. Oil on canvas, 76.2 x 102.0 cm, private collection. Courtesy of Richard Taylor Fine Art.



Figure 1.11. Susan Isabel Dacre, *Italian Girl with Necklace*, before 1884. Oil on canvas, 38.7 x 27.5 cm, Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester.



Figure 1.12. Susan Isabel Dacre, *Italian Child*, before 1884. Oil on panel, 32.1 x 23.9 cm, Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester.



Figure 1.13. Susan Isabel Dacre, *A Girl (Bertha Edgar)*, before 1884. Oil on canvas, 50.7 x 33 cm, Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester.



Figure 1.14. Susan Isabel Dacre, *Portrait of a Child*, undated. Oil on canvas, 90 x 70 cm, Salford Museum & Art Gallery, Salford.



Figure 1.15. Susan Isabel Dacre, *Portrait of a Girl*, undated. Oil on canvas, 90 x 58.5 cm, Salford Museum & Art Gallery, Salford.



Figure 1.16. Susan Isabel Dacre, *Little Annie Rooney*, 1898. Oil on canvas, 71.4 x 53.6 cm, Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester.



Figure 1.17. Susan Isabel Dacre, *Italian Women in Church*, undated. Oil on canvas, 76 x 61 cm, Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester.



Figure 1.18. Annie Swynnerton, *An Italian Mother and Child*, 1886. Oil on canvas, 125.8 x 73.5 cm, Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester.



Figure 1.19. Frederic Leighton, *Roman Peasant Girl*, 1840. Oil on canvas, 42.8 x 32.3 cm, Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester.



Figure 1.20. John Singer Sargent, *Head of a Capri Girl*, 1878. Oil on canvas, 22.9 x 25.4 cm, private collection, image from *Sargent in Italy*, Denver Art Museum, 2003, p. 55.



Figure 1.21. Annie Swynnerton, *Cupid and Psyche*, 1890. Oil on canvas, 147 x 91 cm, Gallery Oldham, Oldham.



Figure 1.22. Raffaello Sernesi, *Tetti al Sole*, 1861. Oil on cardboard, 12.3 x 19 cm, National Gallery of Modern and Contemporary Art, Rome.



Figure 1.23. Susan Isabel Dacre, *Portrait of Lydia Becker*, c. 1885-1890. Oil on canvas, 66.5 x 52.3 cm, Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester.



Figure 1.24. Annie Swynnerton, *Dame Millicent Fawcett, G.B.E., LL.D.*, c. 1889-1920. Oil on canvas, 82.7 x 74.0 cm, Tate, London.



Figure 1.25. Annie Swynnerton, *The Olive Gatherers*, 1889. Oil on canvas, 38.5 x 71 cm, Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester.



Figure 1.26. Susan Isabel Dacre, *Assisi from Perugia*, c. 1899. Oil on canvas, 30.6 x 38.1 cm, Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester.



Figure 1.27. Annie Swynnerton, *Italian Landscape*, c. 1900s. Oil on canvas, 84.3 x 119.1 cm, Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester.

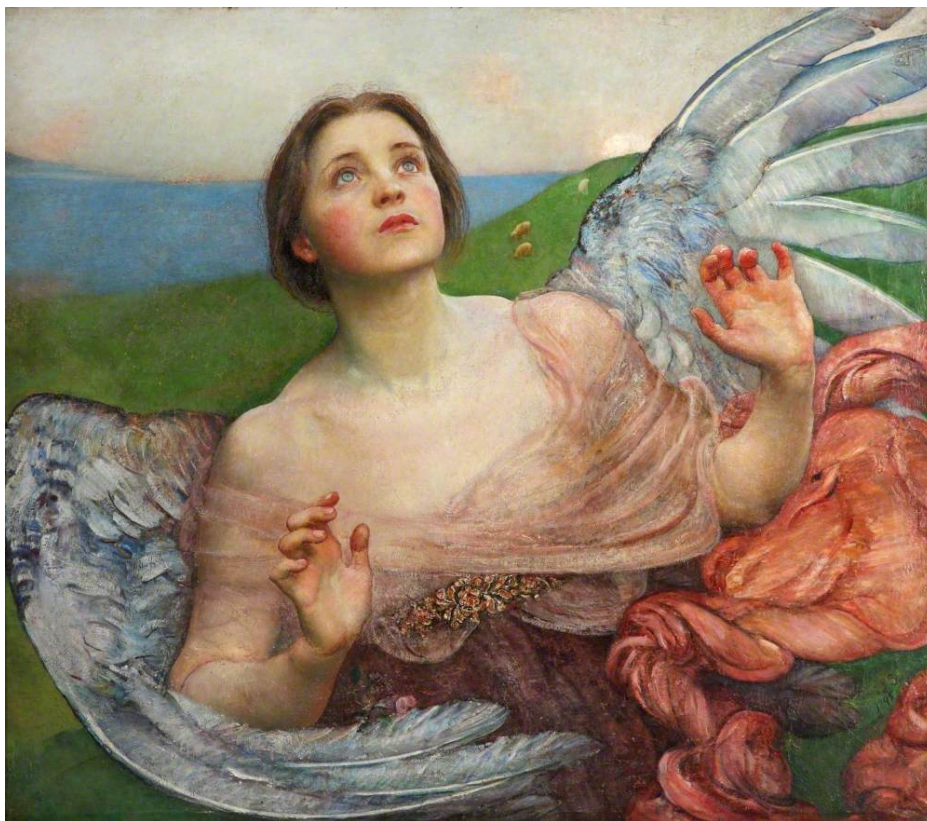


Figure 1.28. Annie Swynnerton, *The Sense of Sight*, 1895. Oil on canvas, 87.3 x 101 cm, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

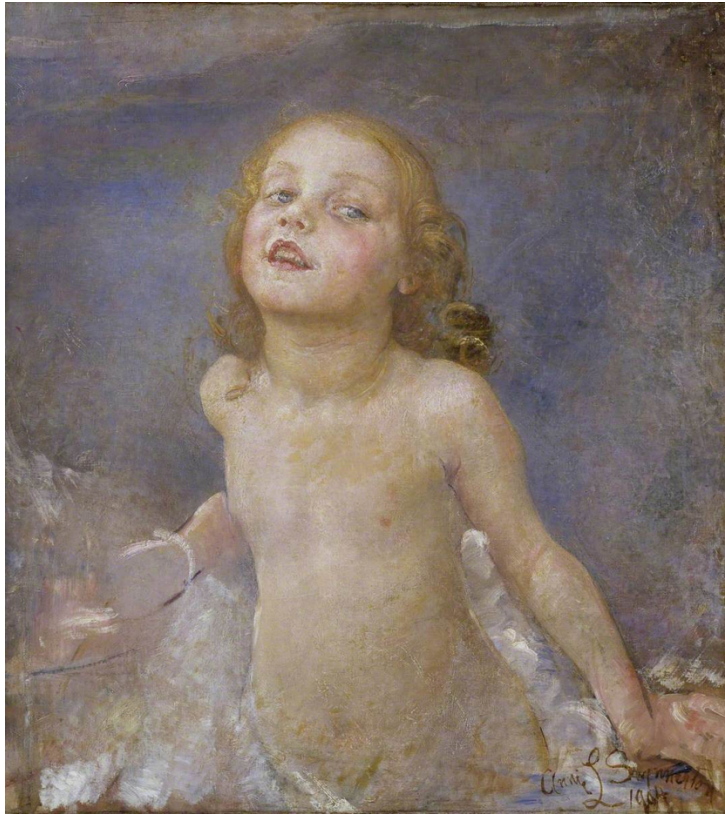


Figure 1.29. Annie Swynnerton, *New Risen Hope*, 1904. Oil on canvas, 57 x 51.9 cm, Tate, London.



Figure 1.30. Susan Isabel Dacre, *Tuscan Landscape*, 1901. Oil on canvas, 20 x 31cm, private collection. Courtesy of Richard Taylor Fine Art.



Figure 1.31. Annie Swynnerton, *Rain Clouds, Monte Gennaro*, 1904. Oil on canvas, 30.6 x 63 cm, Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester.



Figure 1.32. John Singer Sargent, *Campo San Agnese*, c. 1890. Oil on canvas, 65.0875 x 45.72cm, Davis Museum and Cultural Center, Wellesley College, Wellesley, Massachusetts.



Figure 1.33. John Singer Sargent, *Val d'Aosta*, c. 1908-10. Oil on canvas, 92.1 x 97.8 cm, Tate, London.



Figure 1.34. Susan Isabel Dacre, *The Paglia from Orvieto, Italy*, before 1912. Oil on canvas, 25.4 x 38.1 cm, Lotherton Hall, Leeds Museum and Galleries.



Figure 1.35. Annie Swynnerton, *Montagna Mia*, c. 1923. Oil on canvas, 112.3 x 183 cm, Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester.



Figure 1.36. Paul Cezanne, *Montagne Sainte Victoire with Large Pine*, c. 1887. Oil on canvas, 66.8 x 92.3 cm, The Courtauld Gallery, London.

Chapter 2

Figure 2.1. Anna Alma-Tadema, *A Portrait*, c. 1888. Oil on panel, 28 x 23 cm, private collection of Ömer Koc. Courtesy of Sotheby's (2013 auction).



Figure 2.2. Laura Theresa Epps (later Alma-Tadema) and Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *Self-Portraits*, 1871. Oil on panel, 27.5 x 37.5 cm, in frame 43 x 53.5 cm (closed) and 43 x 78 cm (open), Fries Museum, Leeuwarden – Collection Royal Frisian Society.



Figure 2.3. Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *A Family Group*, 1896. Oil on panel, 30.5 x 27.9 cm, Royal Academy of Arts, London.



Figure 2.4. John Brett, *Portrait of Laura Theresa Epps*, 1860. Watercolour and bodycolour on paper, 17.9 x 15.7cm, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.



Figure 2.5. Laura Theresa Alma-Tadema & Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *The Epps Family*, 1870-1871. Folding screen (oil on canvas with wallpaper & découpage), 183.3 x 472.2 cm, Victoria & Albert Museum.



Figure 2.6. Ellen Epps (later Gosse), *Portrait of Laura Alma-Tadema*, 1873. Oil on canvas, 77.5 x 63 cm, private collection. Courtesy of Christie's (2004 auction).



Figure 2.7. Ellen Epps (later Gosse), *The Hall in Townshend House*, 1873. Oil on canvas, 46.3 x 30.5cm, The Mesdag Collection, The Hague.



Figure 2.8. Emily Epps Williams, *The Drawing Room, Townshend House*, 1885. Oil on panel, 82 x 19 cm, private collection. Courtesy of Bonham's (2023 auction).



Figure 2.9. Emily Epps Williams, *The Studio, Townsbend House*, 1885. Oil on panel, 81.3 x 19 cm, private collection. Courtesy of Bonham's (2023 auction).

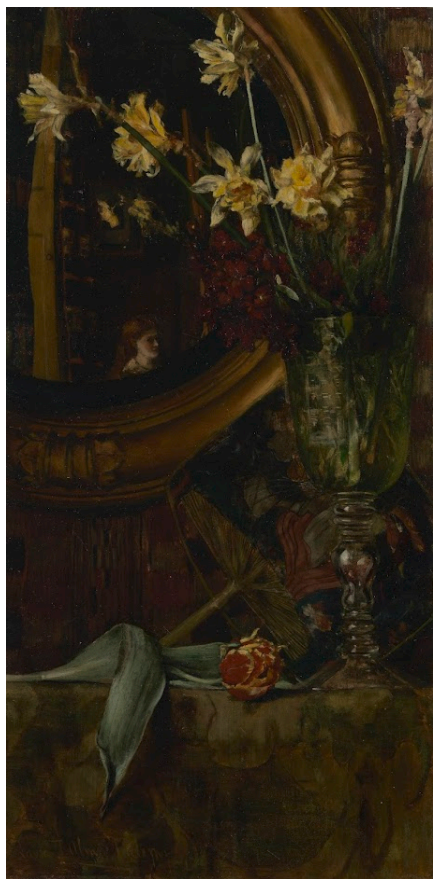


Figure 2.10. Laura Theresa Alma-Tadema, *The Mirror*, 1872. Oil on canvas, 61.8 x 31.4 cm, The Mesdag Collection, The Hague.



Figure 2.11. H. Scott, *The Dining Room*, engraving reproduced in *Modern Artists: A Series of Illustrated Biographies*, vol. 2, ed. F.G. Dumas, 1883, p. 22. Author's photograph.



Figure 2.12. Laura Theresa Alma-Tadema, *May I Come In?*, 1881. Watercolour with pencil, gum arabic, and scratching out on paper, 25.1 x 16.8cm, private collection. Image reproduced in Elizabeth Prettejohn and Peter Trippi, *Lawrence Alma-Tadema: At Home in Antiquity* (Munich: Prestel, 2016), p. 61.



Figure 2.13. Laura Theresa Alma-Tadema, *A Birthday*, 1884. Oil on panel, 38.1 x 23.2 cm, private collection. Image reproduced in Elizabeth Prettejohn and Peter Trippi, *Lawrence Alma-Tadema: At Home in Antiquity* (Munich: Prestel, 2016), p. 61.



Figure 2.14. Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *Miss Anna Alma-Tadema*, 1883. Oil on canvas, 113 x 78.5 cm, Royal Academy of Art, London.



Figure 2.15. Photograph of Lawrence, Laura, and Anna Alma-Tadema, labelled 'Lawrence Alma-Tadema - Laura - Anna - Studio Grove End Road.' University of Leeds, Brotherton Library, Special Collections, Gosse Family Archive. Photograph by the author.



Figure 2.16. 'Painters in their studios, III. – Two Fair Artists: Mrs. Alma-Tadema and Miss Anna Alma-Tadema,' after Charles Paul Renouard (1845–1921), *The Graphic*, 16 June 1888, p638. Image reproduced in Susie Beckham, 'Recovering Anna Alma-Tadema (1867–1943),' *British Art Journal* XXII, no. 3 (2021/2022), p. 37.



Figure 2.17. Laura Theresa Alma-Tadema, *Anna Leafing Through a Folder of Prints*, 1874. Oil on panel, 11.3 x 31.4cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



Figure 2.18. Anna Alma-Tadema, *Still Life with Wine Glasses*, 1883. Watercolour on paper, 22.2 x 37.6 cm, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.



Figure 2.19. Anna Alma-Tadema, *The Garden Studio*, 1886–1887. Pencil, watercolour and bodycolour, heightened with gum arabic and with scratching out on paper, 46.4 x 34.3 cm, The Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts.



Figure 2.20. Anna Alma-Tadema, *The Drawing Room, 1a Holland Park*, 1887, watercolour and bodycolour on paper, 27 x 18 cm. Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum, Bournemouth.



Figure 2.21. Anna Alma-Tadema, *The Drawing Room, Townshend House*, 1885, watercolour over pencil and pen and ink on card, 27.2 x 34 cm, Royal Academy, London.



Figure 2.22. Anna Alma-Tadema, *Girl in a Bonnet with her Head on a Blue Pillow*, 1902. Watercolour on paper, 36.6 x 26.4cm, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.



Figure 2.23 Anna Alma-Tadema, *At the Window*, 1908. Unknown materials, unknown dimensions, private collection. Courtesy of Art Renewal, via Christie's sale, 5 June 1981.



Figure 2.24. Anna Alma-Tadema, *The Closing Door*, 1899. Pencil and watercolour on paper, 27 x 35.5 cm, private collection. Courtesy of Christie's (2016 auction).



Figure 2.25. Designs for alterations and additions to a house for Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, 17 [now 44–44a] Grove End Road, London, 1885, RIBA Collections. first floor plan (RIBA98866). With author's addition of black box to indicate setting of *The Closing Door*.

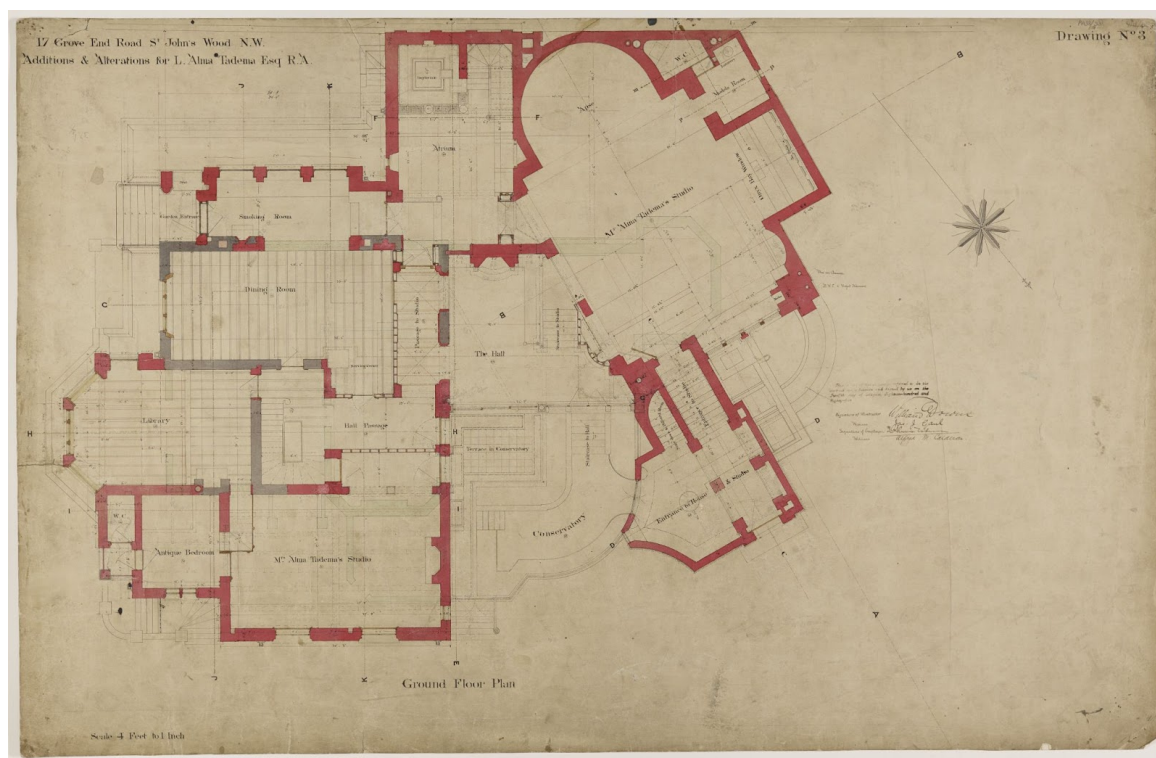


Figure 2.26. Designs for alterations and additions to a house for Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, 17 [now 44–44a] Grove End Road, London, 1885. RIBA Collections: ground floor plan (RIBA98076).



Figure 2.27. Laura Alma-Tadema's Studio at 17, Grove End Road. Photograph published in *The Architect*, 31 May 1889. Image reproduced in Elizabeth Prettejohn and Peter Trippi, 'Introduction: The Alma-Tademas' Studio-Houses and Beyond', *British Art Studies*, Issue 9, <http://dx.doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-09/prettejohn-trippi> (Accessed 3 April, 2024).



Figure 2.28. *The Studio*, Rudolf Dircks, in "The Later Work of Sir L. Alma-Tadema O.M., R.A., R.W.S.," in *The Art Annual* (supplement to *The Art-Journal*), London, 1910. Collection of University of Amsterdam, Bijzondere Collection.



Figure 2.29. Nicolaas van der Waay, *The Studio of Mrs Laura Alma-Tadema*, c. 1890-1891. Brush and grey ink, grey wash, heightened with white on paper, 38 x 25.5 cm, Museum of Friesland, Leeuwarden.



Figure 2.30. Laura Alma-Tadema, *Sweet Industry*, 1904. Oil on canvas, 36 x 35.6 cm, Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester.



Figure 2.31. Laura Alma-Tadema, *Airs and Graces*, c. 1871-1909. Oil on canvas, 56.5cm × w 41cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



Figure 2.32. Laura Alma-Tadema, *Satisfaction*, c. 1890-1899. Oil on panel, 65 x 44.5 cm, private collection. Image reproduced in Elizabeth Prettejohn and Peter Trippi, *Lawrence Alma-Tadema: At Home in Antiquity* (Munich: Prestel, 2016), p. 130.



Figure 2.33. Laura Alma-Tadema, *The Persistent Reader*, before 1909. Oil on panel, 58.4 x 44.5 cm, private collection. Courtesy of Sotheby's (2024 auction).

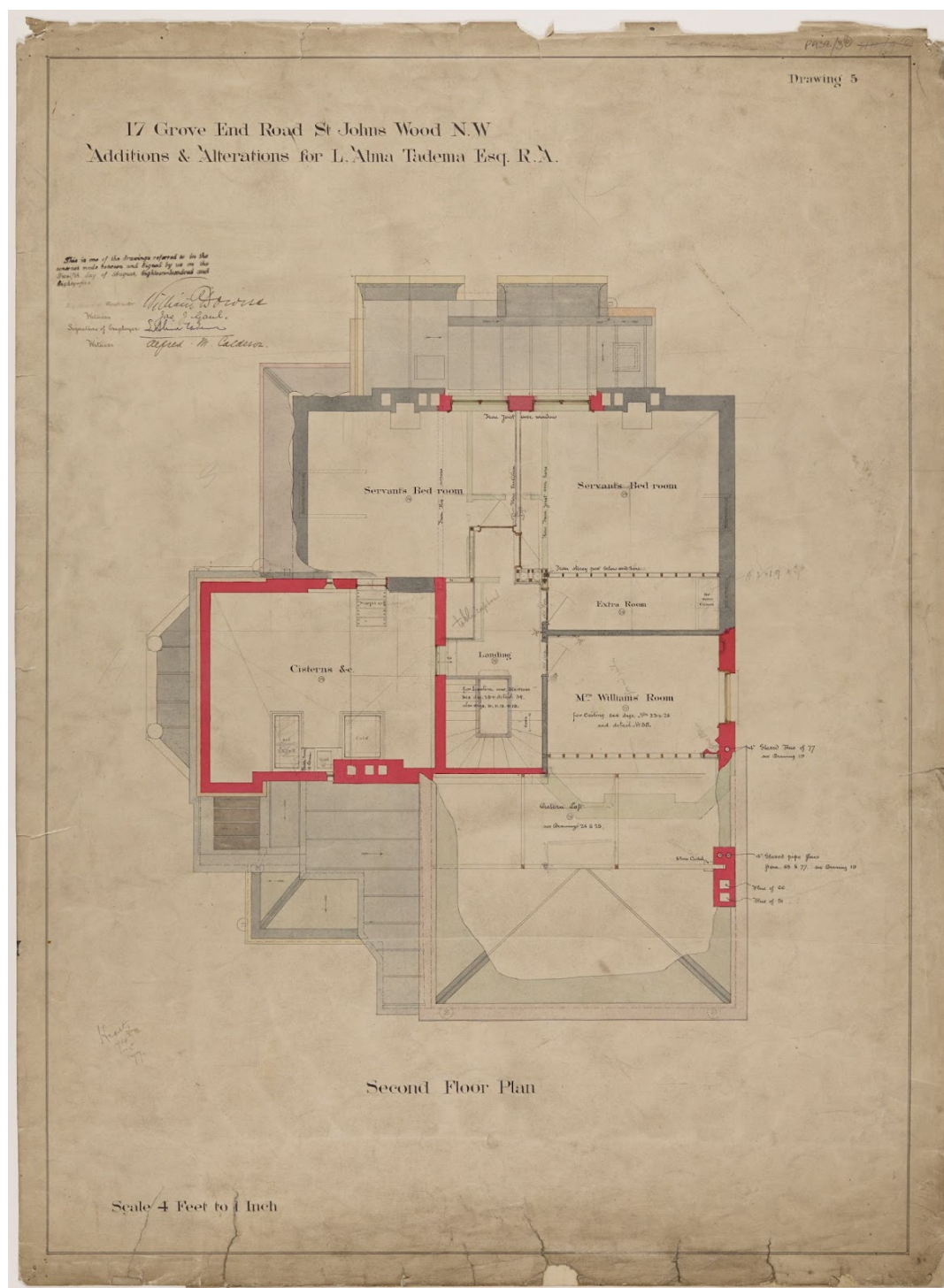


Figure 2.34. Designs for alterations and additions to a house for Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, 17 [now 44-44a] Grove End Road, London, 1885. RIBA Collections: second floor plan (RIBA98867).



Figure 2.35. Laura Alma-Tadema, *In an Italian Garden*, 1876. Oil on canvas mounted on mahogany panel, 25.4 x 17.2cm, private collection. Image reproduced in Elizabeth Prettejohn and Peter Trippi, *Lawrence Alma-Tadema: At Home in Antiquity* (Munich: Prestel, 2016), p. 67.



Figure 2.36. Anna Alma-Tadema, *The Idler's Harvest*, 1900. Oil on panel, 35.5 x 24.7 cm, private collection. Courtesy of Christie's (2007 auction).



Figure 2.37. Emily Epps Williams, *The Garden at St John's Wood*, with Anna Alma-Tadema, 1876. Materials unknown, dimensions unknown, private collection. Reproduced in Kathleen Fisher, *Conversations with Sylvia: Sylvia Gosse, Painter, 1881-1968* (London & Edinburgh: Charles Skilton, 1975), illustration section.



Figure 2.38. Ellen Epps Gosse, *Torcross*, 1879. Materials unknown, dimensions unknown, private collection. Reproduced in Kathleen Fisher, *Conversations with Sylvia: Sylvia Gosse, Painter, 1881-1968* (London & Edinburgh: Charles Skilton, 1975), illustration section.



Figure 2.39. John Singer Sargent, *In the Orchard*, c. 1885-1886. Oil on canvas, 61 x 73.7cm, private collection. Image courtesy of WikiArt, object details via the Catalog of American Portraits.

Chapter 3

Figure 3.1. Gwen John, *Interior with Figures* or *The friends*, c. 1898-1899. Oil on canvas, 46.0 × 33.4 cm, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.



Figure 3.2. Gwen John, *Self-portrait*, 1902. Oil on canvas, 44.8 × 34.9 cm, Tate, London.



Figure 3.3. Edna Waugh, *The Rape of the Sabines*, 1897. Watercolour (destroyed), image of photographic reproduction, Slade School of Art Archive. Photo by the author.



Figure 3.4. Maxwell Balfour, *Rape of the Sabines*, 1897. Oil on canvas, 80 x 139.7 cm, UCL Art Museum, London.



Figure 3.5. Peter Paul Rubens, *The Rape of the Sabine Women*, probably 1635-1640. Oil on oak, 169.9 x 236.2 cm, National Gallery, London.



Figure 3.6. Eugene Delacroix, *Rape of the Sabine Women*, c. 1850. Oil on canvas, private collection. Image courtesy of WikiArt.



Figure 3.7. Edna Clarke Hall, *Atalanta*, 1899. Pen, brush, and ink, 29.5 x 39 cm, UCL Art Museum, London. Photo by the author.



Figure 3.8. William Orpen, *Seated Male Nude*, 1898. Black chalk on paper, 59.5 x 38.8 cm, UCL Art Museum, London. Photo by the author.



Figure 3.9. Ida Nettleship, *Standing Male Nude*, 1895. Black chalk on paper, 60.3 x 38 cm, UCL Art Museum, London.



Figure 3.10. Gwen John, *Portrait Group*, 1897-1898. Pencil, red chalk, and watercolour on paper, 30.2 x 42.5cm, UCL Art Museum, London.



Figure 3.11. Edna Clarke Hall, *Ida*, etched in 1922 based on a drawing from 1897. Etching, private collection. Image courtesy of Alison Thomas, *Portraits of Women: Gwen John and Her Forgotten Contemporaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), figure 19, illustration section (unnumbered pages).



Figure 3.12. Gwen John, *Ida*, 1898. Collection of Joshua Conviser and Martine Convisier Fedyszyn. Image reproduced in *The Good Bohemian: The Letters of Nettleship John*, eds. Michael Holroyd and Rebecca John (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), p. 72.



Figure 3.13. Ida Nettleship, *Gwen John*, c. 1898. Private collection. Image reproduced in *The Good Bohemian: The Letters of Nettleship John*, eds. Michael Holroyd and Rebecca John (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), p. 72.



Figure 3.14. James McNeill Whistler, *The Artist in His Studio*, c. 1865-1866. Oil on canvas, 62 × 46.5 cm, The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago.



Figure 3.15. Edna Waugh, *Self Portrait*, 1896, location unknown. Image of photographic reproduction, Slade School of Art Archive. Photo by the author.



Figure 3.16. Edna Clarke Hall, *Self Portrait*, c. 1899. Pencil, 35 x 30 cm, National Portrait Gallery, London.



Figure 3.17. Ida Nettleship, *Self Portrait*, late 1890s. Private collection. Image reproduced in *The Good Bohemian: The Letters of Nettleship John*, eds. Michael Holroyd and Rebecca John (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), p. 67.



Figure 3.18. Gwen John, *Self Portrait*, 1900. Oil on canvas, 61 x 37.8 cm, National Portrait Gallery, London.



Figure 3.19. John Singer Sargent, *Mr. and Mrs. I.N. Phelps Stokes*, 1897. Oil on canvas, 214 x 101 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Figure 3.20. Edna Clarke Hall, *Self-study as Cathy or Seated Woman*, c. 1900. Pen and coloured wash on brown paper, 29.5 × 22.9 cm, Tate, London.



Figure 3.21. Ursula Tyrwhitt, *Head of Gwen John*, c. 1907. Terracotta (hand-modelled), 25.2 x 18 x 19.5 cm, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

Chapter 4

Figure 4.1. Anna Hope 'Nan' Hudson, *Newington House, Autumn, Oxfordshire*, 1913. Oil on canvas, 60.8 x 73.1 cm, Derby Museum and Art Gallery, Derby.



Figure 4.2. Roger Fry, *A Group at Newington House*, 1919. Private collection, shown by Phillip Mould in 2018. Courtesy of Previous Homewares.



Figure 4.3. Ethel Sands, *The Chintz Couch*, c. 1910-1911. Oil on board, 46.5 x 38.5 cm, Tate, London.



Figure 4.4. William Orpen, *The Model*, 1911. Graphite and watercolour on paper, 54 x 69.2 cm, Tate, London.



Figure 4.5. Gwen John, *A Corner of the Artist's Room in Paris*, 1907-1909. Oil on canvas, 31.2 x 24.8 cm, National Museum Cardiff, Cardiff.

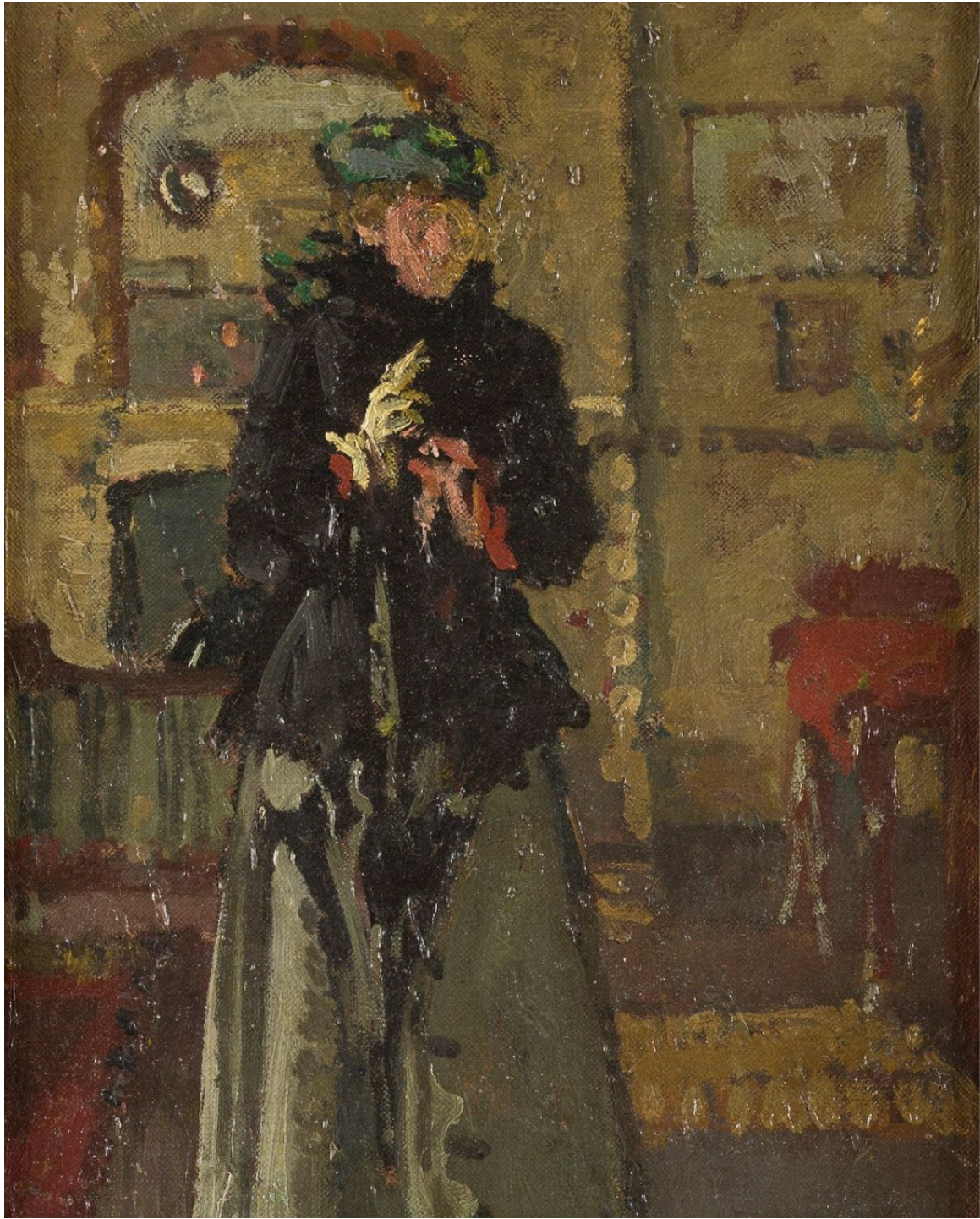


Figure 4.6. Anna Hope 'Nan' Hudson, *The Visitor*, undated. Oil on canvas, 37.5 x 24.8 cm, York Art Gallery, York.

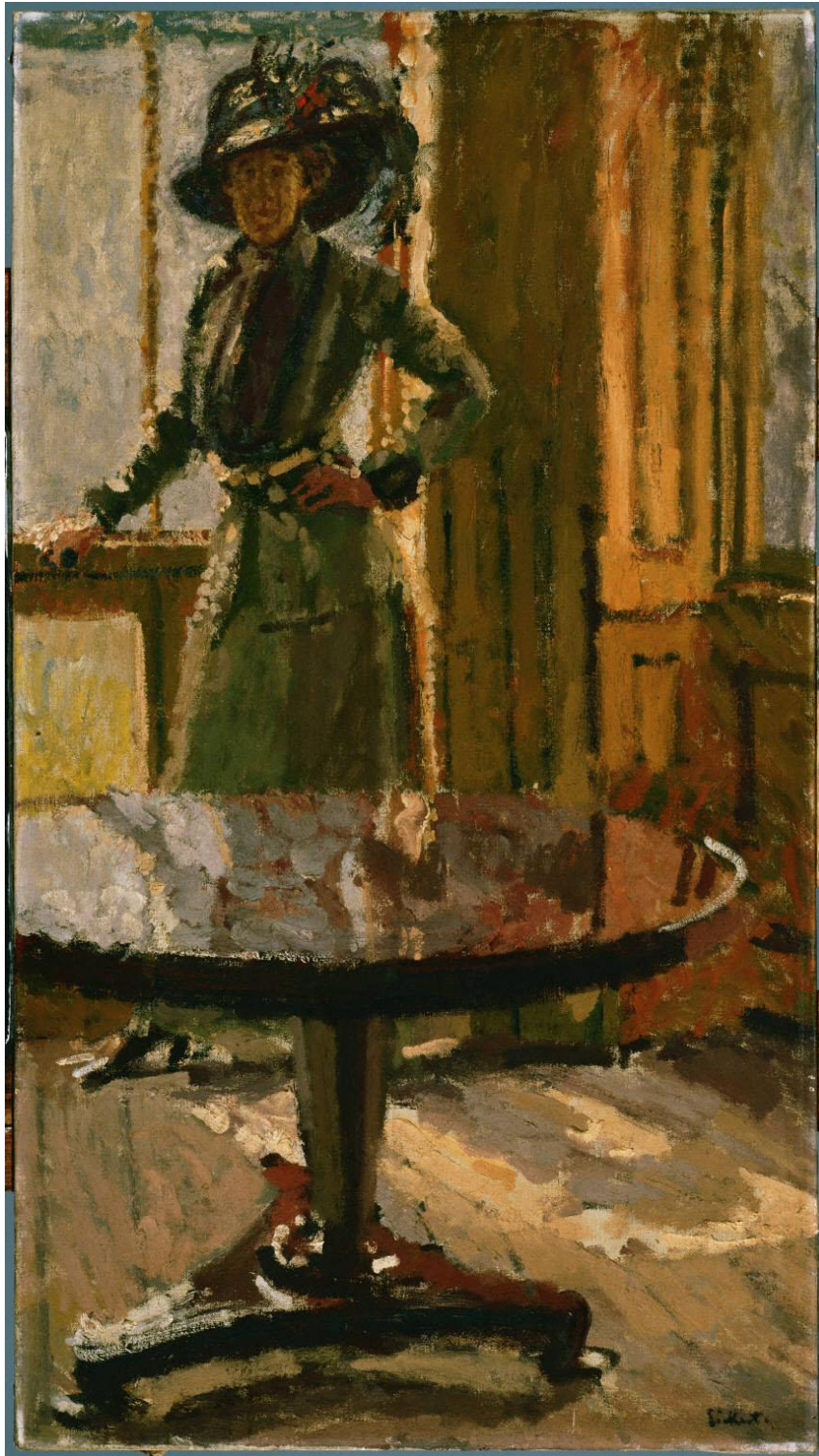


Figure 4.7. Walter Sickert, *Miss Hudson at Rowlandson House*, c. 1910. Oil on canvas, 91.44 x 50.8 cm, Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.



Figure 4.8. Ethel Sands, *Tea with Sickert*, c. 1911-1912. Oil on canvas, 61 × 51 cm, Tate, London.

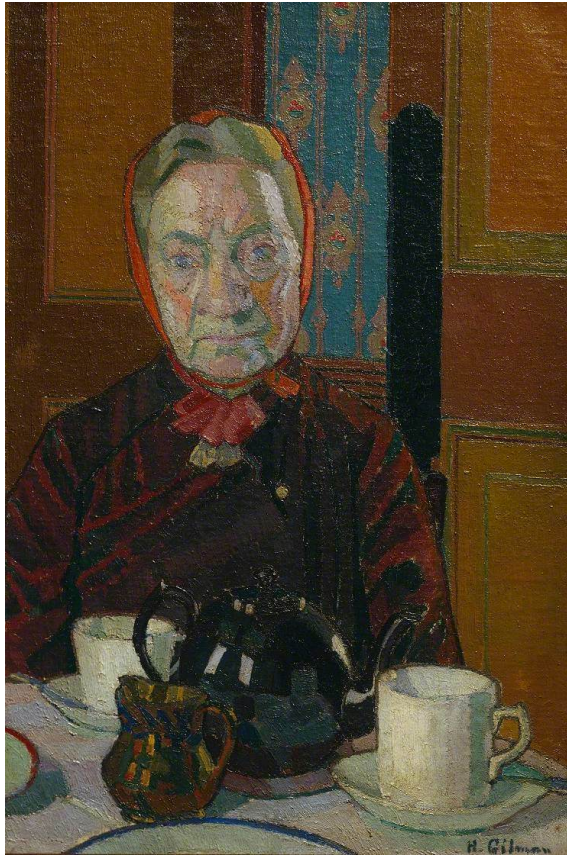


Figure 4.9. Harold Gilman, *Mrs. Mounter at the Breakfast Table*, exhibited 1917. Oil on canvas, 61 × 40.6 cm, Tate, London.



Figure 4.10. Spencer Gore, *Down the Garden*, 1912. Oil on canvas, 51 x 41 cm, Museum of London, London.



Figure 4.11. Ethel Sands, *Bedroom Interior*, Auppegard, France, undated. Oil on canvas, 60 x 48 cm, Guildhall Art Gallery, London.



Figure 4.12. Ethel Sands, *Girl Reading on a Sofa*, Auppegard, France, undated. Oil on canvas, 53 x 46 cm, Guildhall Art Gallery, London.



Figure 4.13. Ethel Sands, *Double Doors, Auppegard, France*, undated. Oil on canvas, 53 x 45 cm, Guildhall Art Gallery, London.



Figure 4.14. Anna Hope 'Nan' Hudson, *Chateau d'Auppegard*, after 1927. Oil on board, 46.2 x 38.2 cm, Tate, London.



Figure 4.15. Anna Hope 'Nan' Hudson, *Lamb Inn, Wallingford*, c. 1912, location unknown. Courtesy of Wikimedia.



Figure 4.16. Anna Hope 'Nan' Hudson, *Harbour, Northern France, Honfleur*, undated. Oil on board, 35 x 43 cm, Government Art Collection, United Kingdom.

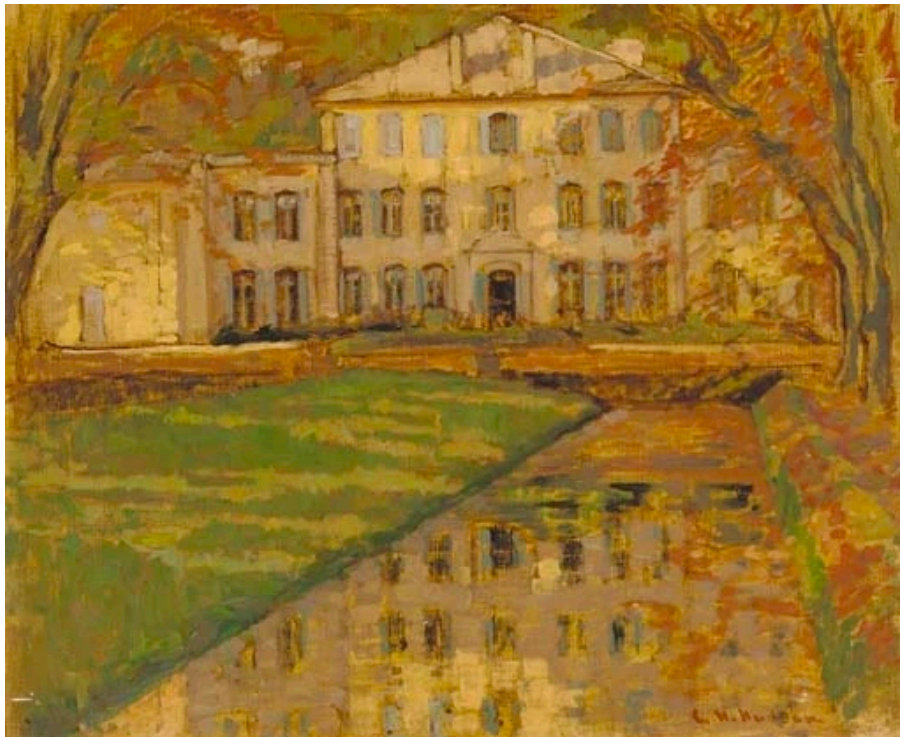


Figure 4.17. Anna Hope 'Nan' Hudson, *The Red Chateau*, undated. Oil on board, 45.8 x 54 cm, private collection. Courtesy of Christie's (2001 auction).



Figure 4.18. Ethel Sands (attributed), *The Entrance to Newington House*, c. 1900-1910. Coloured pastel, heightened with pencil, on pale buff paper, 39 x 39 cm, private collection. Courtesy of Invaluable.

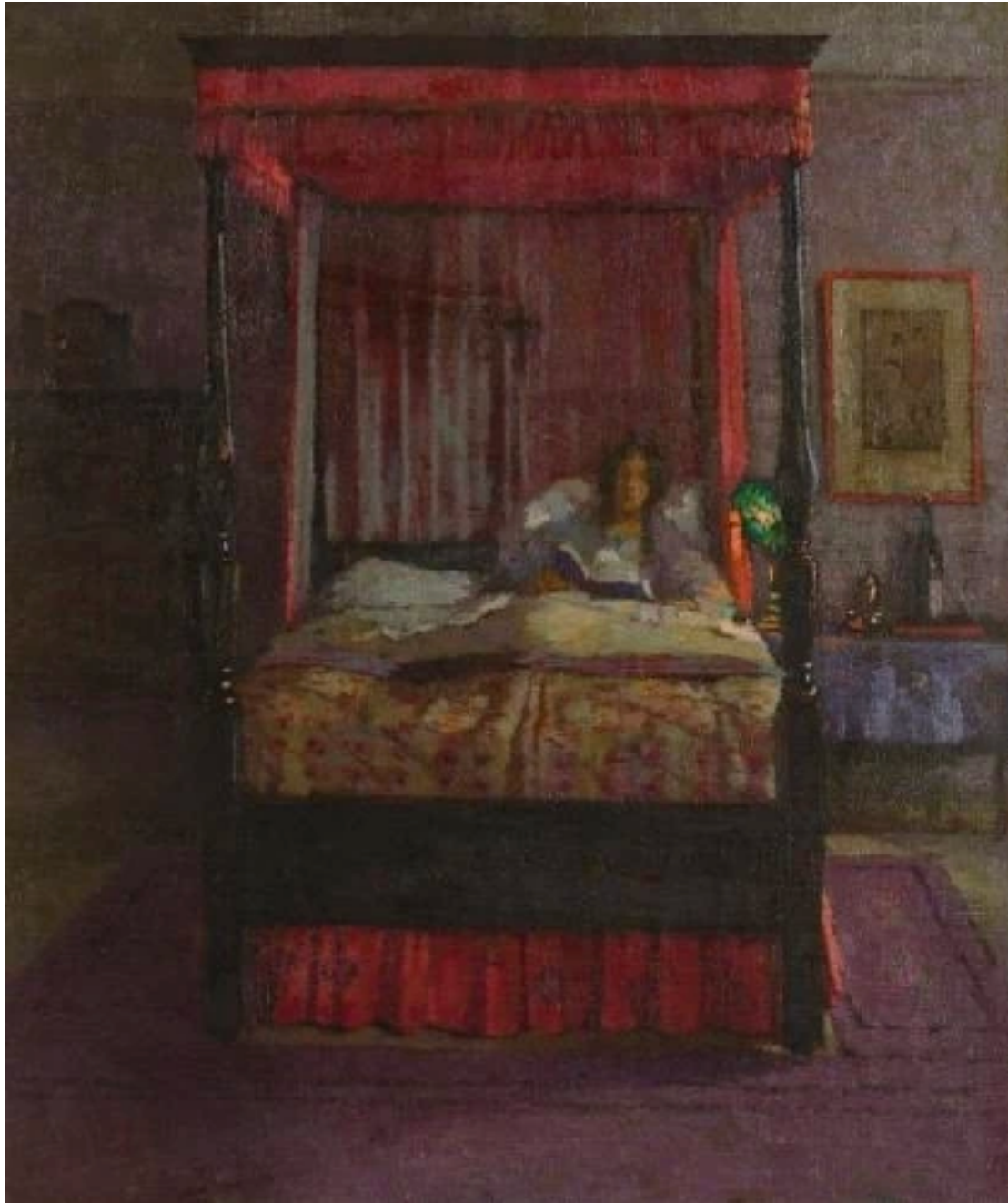


Figure 4.19. Ethel Sands, *Morning*, undated. Oil on canvas, 55.2 x 46.4 cm, private collection. Courtesy of Artnet.



Figure 4.20. Eliza Goodpasture, Photograph of the interior of the primary bedroom at Newington House, 2023.

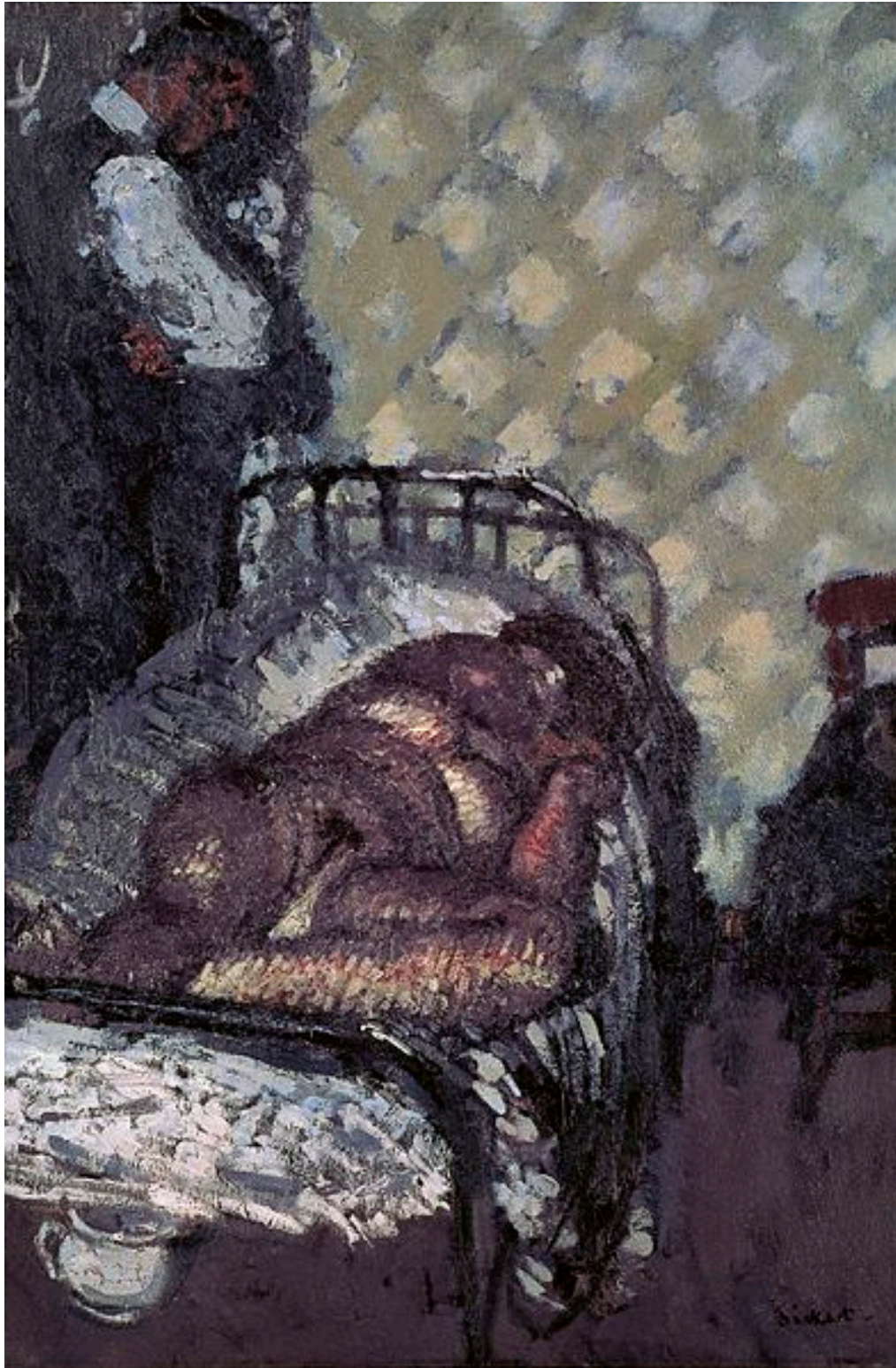


Figure 4.21. Walter Richard Sickert, *L'Affaire de Camden Town*, 1909. Private collection. Image reproduced in 'Walter Sickert: *The Camden Town Murder* and *Tabloid Crime*', Lisa Tickner, in *The Camden Town Group in Context*, eds. Helena Bonett, Ysanne Holt, Jennifer Mundy (Tate Research Publication, May 2012), <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/lisa-tickner-walter-sickert-the-camden-town-murder-and-tabloid-crime-r1104355>, accessed 21 February 2024. Courtesy of the Estate of Walter R. Sickert / DACS Photo and Photographic Survey, Courtauld Institute of Art, London.

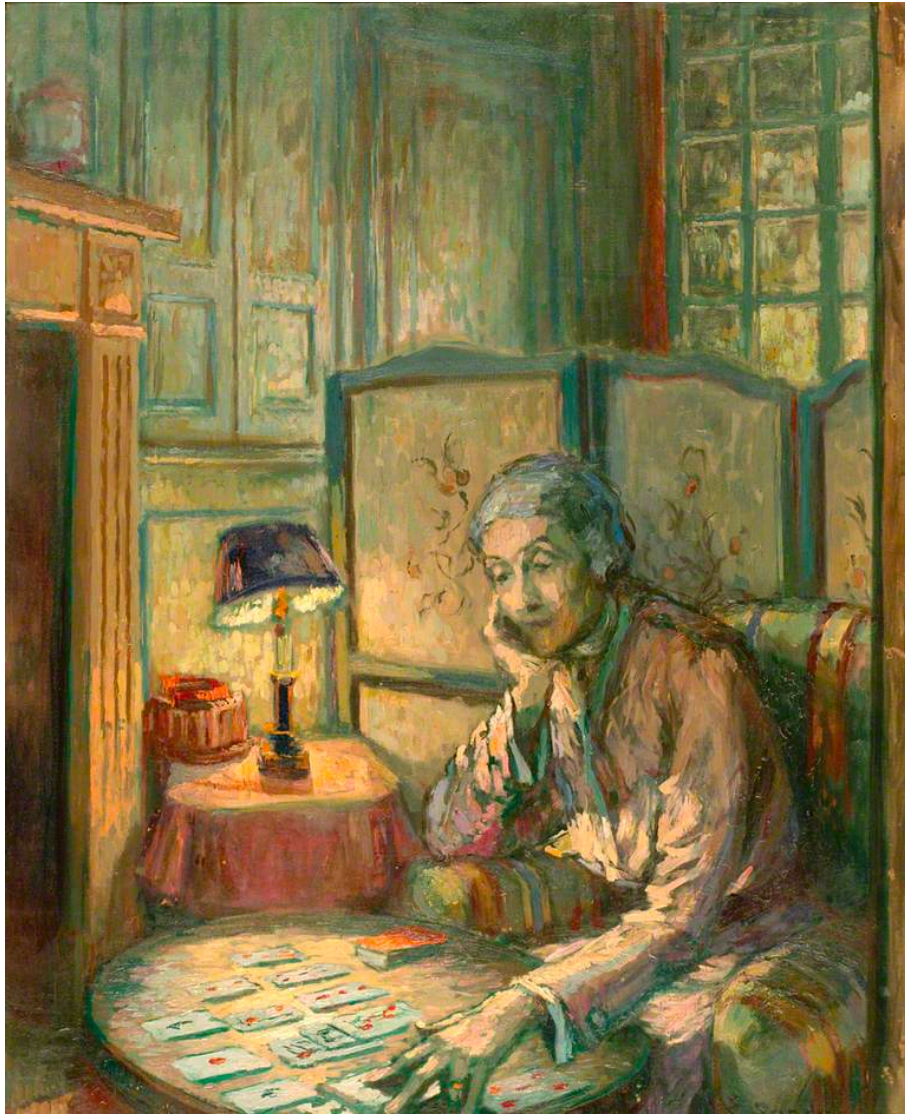


Figure 4.22. Ethel Sands, *Nan Hudson Playing Patience at Auppegard, France*, undated. Oil on canvas, 64 x 52 cm, Guildhall Art Gallery, London.

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