

Making Love / Making Work
The Sculpture Practice of Sarah Bernhardt

Volume I

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

The question this thesis asks is: What does it mean to make the statement ‘Sarah Bernhardt, sculptor’ based on a massive archive of text and image on one of the nineteenth and early twentieth century’s most famous actresses whose sculpture practice has often been dismissed as the work of a part-time amateur? In undertaking to answer this question, I have focussed entirely on what was required for Bernhardt to become a sculptor, to be a sculptor, and to remain a sculptor from c. 1869 until her death in 1923. I examine all these forms of evidence, together with the works Bernhardt produced, under the terms of sculpture history, and not those of biography or visual culture analysis, the usual rubric under which Bernhardt is considered. As such, the thesis aims to distil a substantive analysis and history of one practice of sculpture in nineteenth-century France.

The thesis is constructed by asking a series of seemingly simple questions: Did Bernhardt make work? Did she have a dedicated place in which to make work? How was she trained to make work? Did she exhibit and sell or otherwise distribute her work? These questions are answered by paying close attention, in turn, to: one work, the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* (1878, musée d’Orsay, Paris); Bernhardt’s studios and homes and the particular function these had as spaces of work and shared, creative and intimate same-sex sociality; and Bernhardt’s training and daily practice as a sculptor, her oeuvre, and exhibiting and sales strategies.

Fundamental to Bernhardt’s artistic practice was her relationship with the painter Louise Abbéma. I consider how the making of Abbéma’s bust and the reciprocal character of these artists’ relationship can be read for, and with, difference in a tripartite configuration of ‘living, loving, and working’. The method I use, scholarly lesbian desire, is informed by feminist art history and theory, the social history of art, and queer studies. This method seeks to explore the archive with, and for, desire in an effort to find new ways to research and write that are at once historically and theoretically rigorous and acknowledge the important cultural contribution that ‘lesbian’ makes to the histories of art.

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2: 9 Louise Abbéma, Sketch for *Le Déjeuner dans la Serre*, 1876, oil on canvas, 55 x 80 cm. Private collection, not located

2: 10 Anon., Group in the conservatory at avenue de Villiers [clockwise from middle left: Sarah Bernhardt; Georges Clairin; Mme Guérard; Louise Abbéma's mother, Henriette Anne Sophie Léonie Abbéma [née D'Astoin]; Louise Abbéma; Louise Abbéma's father, Émile Abbéma), c. 1877, reproduced photographic print, 7.4 x 6.5 cm. Original photograph not

located. Reproduced in *L'Art du théâtre* (1905) and *Le Théâtre et commoedia illustré* (June 1923) [as 'Une réunion intime dans l'Atelier de Sarah Bernhardt']

2: 11 Anon., Group in the conservatory at avenue de Villiers [Sarah Bernhardt, Émile Abbéma, Louise Abbéma, Mme Guérard, Georges Clairin], c. 1877, carte album photographic portrait print on albumenized paper from a collodion glass negative mounted on card, 16.5 x 10.8 cm. Laurence Senelick Collection of Theatrical Imagery, West Medford, MA

2: 12 Anon., Bernhardt and Abbéma as Pasha and Odalisque in the conservatory at avenue de Villiers, , c. 1877, carte album photographic portrait print on albumenized paper from a collodion glass negative mounted on card, 16.4 x 12.1 cm. BNF DAS

2: 13 Achille Melandri, Sarah Bernhardt at avenue de Villiers with a self-portrait bust [modeling tool in front of thigh], c. 1878-79, carte album photographic portrait print on albumenized paper from a collodion glass negative mounted on card. 16.5 x 11.4 cm. Houghton Theatre Collection, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA

2: 14 Achille Melandri, Sarah Bernhardt at avenue de Villiers with self-portrait bust [modeling tool between thighs], c. 1878-79, modern photographic print from an original collodion glass negative, no dimensions. BNF DEP

2: 15 Achille Melandri, Sarah Bernhardt at avenue de Villiers with self-portrait bust [modeling tool between thighs], c. 1878-79m, reproduced as Woodburytype photograph, 11.7 x 8 cm. Reproduced in *The Theatre* (1 July 1879)

2: 16 Achille Melandri, Sarah Bernhardt in her sculpture studio with *Médée*, c. 1878-79, reproduced photogravure of original carte album photographic portrait print on albumenized paper from a collodion glass negative, 15.2 x 10.1 cm. Reproduced in *My Double Life* (1907)

2: 17 Achille Melandri, Sarah Bernhardt at avenue de Villiers with *La Marchande des palmes*, c. 1878-79, reproduced photogravure of original carte album photographic portrait print on albumenized paper from a collodion glass negative, 13.9 x 10 cm. Reproduced in *Strand Magazine* (1904); *Ma Double vie* (1907); *Illustrated London News* (1907)

2: 18 Ernest de Liphart, Atelier-salon at avenue de Villiers, c. 1876-86, wood engraving of original black ink drawing, dimensions not known. Original drawing and engraving not located. Source of reproduction not identified. Source: copy in archive of the Comédie-Française

2: 19 Félix Lucas, 'L'atelier de peinture de Sarah Bernhardt' or 'Un coin de l'atelier', 1881, wood engraving of original black ink drawing, 27 x 22.2 cm. Original drawing and engraving not located. Reproduced in *La Vie moderne* (28 May 1881)

- 2: 20 Anon., 'L'Atelier de sculpture de Sarah Bernhardt' [boulevard Pereire], 1900, reproduced photographic print, 10.9 x 8.9 cm. Original photograph not located. Reproduced in *La Plume* (September 1900)
- 2: 21 Anon., 'Médée (statue), par Sarah Bernhardt' [sculpture studio at boulevard Pereire], 1900, reproduced photographic print, 12.9 x 8.9 cm. Original photograph not located. Reproduced in *La Plume* (September 1900)
- 2: 22 Anon., 'Figures décoratives d'un buste par Sarah Bernhardt' [sculpture studio at boulevard Pereire], 1900, reproduced photographic print, 9.1 x 6.5 cm. Original photograph not located. Reproduced in *La Plume* (September 1900)
- 2: 23 Anon., 'L'atelier de Sarah Bernhardt' [sculpture studio at boulevard Pereire], 1900, reproduced photographic print, dimensions not known. Original photograph not located. Reproduced in *Le Monde illustré* (7 April 1923)
- 2: 24 Rober, 'Un coin de l'atelier de sculpture de Mme Sarah Bernhardt' [boulevard Pereire], c. 1923, reproduced photographic print, 8.1 x 6.5 cm. Original photograph not located. Reproduced in *La Théâtre et comoedia illustré* (June 1923)
- 2: 25 H. Baude, 'Atelier de Sarah Bernhardt (midi)', 1888, engraving of original drawing, 13.7 x 17 cm. Original drawing and engraving not located. Reproduced in *La Revue illustrée* (1888) and *Art Journal* (1888)
- 2: 26 [?]H. Baude, 'Atelier de Sarah Bernhardt (nord)', 1888, engraving of original drawing, 17.5 x 23 cm. Original drawing and engraving not located. Reproduced in *La Revue illustrée* (1888) and *Art Journal* (1888)
- 2: 27 [?]H. Baude, 'Petit salon et store japonais', 1888, engraving of original drawing, 13.3 x 10.3 cm. Original drawing and engraving not located. Reproduced in *La Revue illustrée* (1888) and *Art Journal* (1888)
- 2: 28 Anon., 'Vue d'ensemble (fond)', c. 1890s, reproduced photograph, dimensions not known. Original photograph not located. Reproduced in *The Home of Sarah Bernhardt in Paris* (c. 1890s)
- 2: 29 Anon., 'Madame Bernhardt in her studio [boulevard Pereire, with bust of girl in progress], c. 1890s, reproduced photograph, dimensions not known. Original photograph not located. Source of reproduction not known. Source: cutting in Victoria and Albert Theatre Museum, London

- 2: 30 Anon., 'Mme Bernhardt's drawing-room' [boulevard Pereire, with *Bust of Victorien Sardou* in progress], c. 1890s, reproduced watercolour or photograph, 9.8 x 13 cm. Original photograph or watercolour not located. Reproduced in Jules Huret, *Sarah Bernhardt* (1899)
- 2: 31 Anon., 'Un côté d'atelier' [boulevard Pereire, with the *Bust of Régina*], c. 1890s, reproduced photograph, dimensions not known. Original photograph not located. Reproduced in *The Home of Sarah Bernhardt in Paris* (c. 1890s)
- 2: 32 Anon., 'Un coin d'atelier' [boulevard Pereire, with the *Bust of Jacques Damala*], c. 1890s, reproduced photograph, dimensions not known. Original photograph not located. Reproduced in *The Home of Sarah Bernhardt in Paris* (c. 1890s)
- 2: 33 Anon., 'Un coin d'atelier' [boulevard Pereire, with the *Bust of a Granddaughter or Young Girl/Simone*], c. 1890s, reproduced photograph, dimensions not known. Original photograph not located. Reproduced in *The Home of Sarah Bernhardt in Paris* (c. 1890s)
- 2: 34 Anon., Sarah Bernhardt in her library [boulevard Pereire, with Mathieu-Meunier's reduced marble *La Mort de Laiis*], c. 1890s, reproduced photograph, dimensions not known. Original photograph not located. Source of reproduction not known. Reproduced in Wildenstein, *Sarah Bernhardt and her Times* (1984)
- 2: 35 Georges Clairin, 'Regnault et Clairin dans une maison de Nanterre, aux avant-postes, 18 January 1871', 1871, reproduced pencil drawing, 7.4 x 9.7 cm. Original drawing not located. Reproduced in Armand Dayot, *L'Invasion, le Sièg, la Commune 1870-1871* (1901)
- 2: 36 [?]Lagraine, 'Le peintre Henri Regnault et Georges Clairin à l'entrée de la salle des deux sœurs à l'Alhambra de Grenade' [with Frédéric Auguste Laguillerme and Mauzaize], c. 1868, photographic print on albumenized paper from a collodion glass negative, 20.8 x 16 cm. Musée d'Orsay, Paris
- 2: 37 Georges Clairin, 'Mounted Guardsman with self-caricature of the artist on a letter to an unknown woman', c. 1883, brown ink on off-white laid letter paper, 20.4 x 13 cm. Private collection, not located. Source: archive of Shepherd Gallery Associates, New York
- 2: 38 Georges Clairin, *Portrait de Mlle Sarah Bernhardt, sociétaire de la Comédie-Française*, 1876, oil on canvas, 250 x 200 cm. Musée du Petit Palais, Paris
- 2: 39 Anon., 'Mlle Louise Abbéma, Le déjeuner dans le fond de l'aquarium', 1877, reproduced drawing, 6.7 x 11.3 cm. Original drawing not located. Source of reproduction not known. Source: INHA, Paris. Photo: © Miranda Mason
- 2: 40 Louise Abbéma, *Le Déjeuner dans la serre* [detail], 1877, oil on canvas, 194 x 308 cm. Musée des beaux-arts de Pau. Photo: © Miranda Mason

3: 1 Lagraine, Sarah Bernhardt with life-size plaster group *Après la tempête* (1876, not located), photographic print on albumenized paper from a collodion glass negative, mounted on card, with mount: 31.3 x 24.1; photograph only: 14.6 x 11.2 cm. BNFDAS

3: 2 Sotheby's, Reduced bronze version of *Après la tempête* (1876, height 73.7 cm. Founder not known. Private collection, not located), reproduced photograph, 14.8 x 14.6 cm in *Nineteenth- and Twentieth Century Sculpture*, Sotheby's, New York, 26 May 1994

3: 3 Anon., Reduced marble version of *Après la tempête* (1876, height 77 cm. Private collection, not located), reproduced photograph in unidentified publication, c. 1876, 11.7 x 8.9 cm. Original photograph not located

3: 4 Anon., Clay or plaster version of *Après la tempête* (1876, dimensions not known. Not located), photograph or reproduced photograph in unidentified publication, c. 1876, dimensions not known. Original photograph not located. Re-photographed for *Art nouveau, art deco* (1998) by Philippe Joffre, dimensions not known

3: 5 Sarah Bernhardt, '*Après la tempête par Sarah Bernhardt*', 1876, reproduced drawing, dimensions not known. Original drawing not located. Source of reproduction not identified. BNFDAS

3: 6 Sarah Bernhardt, *Statuette de Sarah Bernhardt* (1880, marble, height 49 cm. Private collection, not located), reproduced photograph in *La Gazette de l'hôtel Drouot* (18 May 2005) captioned '*Marbre: Sarah Bernhardt par Sarah Bernhardt elle-même*' and dated 1885, 10.8 x 3.9 cm

3: 7 Sarah Bernhardt, *Statuette de Sarah Bernhardt* [detail]

Fig.3:8 Camille Piton, '*Sarah Bernhardt's latest sculpture*', 1880-81, reproduced drawing, dimensions not known. Original drawing not located. Reproduced as front page of *The Art Amateur: A Monthly Journal Devoted to the Cultivation of Art in the Household* (January 1881)

3: 9 Camille Piton, '*Sarah Bernhardt's latest sculpture*' [detail of *Statuette of Sarah Bernhardt*]

3: 10 '*Ophelia*, sculpture by Sarah Bernhardt' (1880, plaster or marble bas relief, dimensions not known), reproduced photograph, 1880 or after, 10.1 x 15.1 cm, in Sarah Bernhardt, *My Double Life* (London: Heinemann, 1907). Original photograph not located

3: 11 Camille Piton, '*Sarah Bernhardt's latest sculpture*' [detail of *Ophélie*]

- 3: 12-15 Sarah Bernhardt, *Ophélie*, 1880, marble bas relief, 70 x 60 x 8 cm. Royal Theatre, Copenhagen. Photo: © Miranda Mason
- 3: 16 Sarah Bernhardt, *Ophélie*, 1880, marble bas relief [detail], 70 x 60 x 8 cm. Royal Theatre, Copenhagen. Photo: © Miranda Mason
- 3: 17 Atelier Nadar, Portrait of Roland Mathieu-Meusnier in studio scene with *La Mort de Laïs*, medallion in progress, sculpture tools, and other objects, after 1849, photograph, dimensions not known. BNFDEP
- 3: 18 Anon., Portrait of Roland Mathieu-Meusnier in old age, n.d., photograph, dimensions not known. BNFDEP
- 3: 19 Pierre Etienne Carjat (1828-1906), Portrait of Jules Franceschi, n.d., carte de visite photographic print on albumenized paper from a glass negative, 10.5 x 6 cm. Musée d'Orsay, Paris
- 3: 20 Roland Mathieu-Meusnier, *Bust of Pierre Hyacinthe Azais*, 1842, marble, 80 x 50 x 41 cm. Musée national du château de Versailles. Photo: © Miranda Mason
- 3: 21 Roland Mathieu-Meusnier, *Bust of Pierre Hyacinthe Azais* [detail], 1842, marble, 80 x 50 x 41cm. Musée national du château de Versailles. Photo: © Miranda Mason
- 3: 22 Roland Mathieu-Meusnier, *Bust of Jean-Bernard Rosier*, 1844, bronze, height 26 cm. Private collection, Béziers
- 3: 23-24 Roland Mathieu-Meusnier, *La Mort de Laïs*, 1850, marble, 120 x 164 x 66 cm. Jardin des Tuileries, Paris. Photo: © Miranda Mason
- 3: 25 Roland Mathieu-Meusnier, *Bust of Pierre Cartellier*, 1859, marble, 85 x 72 x 44 cm. Musée national du château de Versailles. Photo: © Miranda Mason
- 3: 26 Roland Mathieu-Meusnier, *La Mort de Laïs* (1859, reduced bronze, height 25.4 x width 33 cm. Private collection, not located. Reproduced on ewolfs.com. Original photograph not located
- 3: 27 Roland Mathieu-Meusnier, *La Mort de Laïs* [detail] (1859, reduced bronze). Reproduced photograph on ewolfs.com. Original photograph not located
- 3: 28 Roland Mathieu-Meusnier. *L'Orfèvrerie*, 1867, marble, height 195 cm. Cour carrée, musée du Louvre, Paris. Photo: © Miranda Mason

3: 29 Roland Mathieu-Meusnier, Monument to Antonin Lambert Thiboust with medallion portrait and allegorical figures, *La Comédie* and *La Littérature* [or *la Renommée*], 1868, stone and marble, height 208.5 x width 146cm, diameter of medallion 40cm. Montmartre cemetery, Paris. Photo: © Miranda Mason

3: 30 Roland Mathieu-Meusnier, Monument to Antonin Lambert Thiboust [detail of medallion portrait], 1868, marble, diameter 40cm. Montmartre cemetery, Paris. Photo: © Miranda Mason

3: 31 Roland Mathieu-Meusnier, Monument to Antonin Lambert Thiboust [detail of *la Comédie*], 1868, stone, overall dimensions height 208.5 x width 146 cm. Montmartre cemetery, Paris. Photo: © Miranda Mason

3: 32 Roland Mathieu-Meusnier, Monument to Antonin Lambert Thiboust [detail of *la Littérature*], 1868, stone, overall dimensions height 208.5 x width 146 cm. Montmartre cemetery, Paris. Photo: © Miranda Mason

3: 33 Roland Mathieu-Meusnier, *Bust of Félicien David*, 1880, marble, 86 x 62 x 43 cm. Musée national du château de Versailles. Photo: © Miranda Mason

3: 34 Roland Mathieu-Meusnier, Tomb of Mathieu-Meusnier with self-portrait, n.d., bronze medallion, diameter 50 cm. Montmartre cemetery, Paris. Photo: © Miranda Mason

3: 35 Jules Franceschi, Monument to Miecislav Kamienski, 1861, bronze, 120 x 183 x 92 cm. Père-Lachaise cemetery, Paris. Photo: © Miranda Mason

3: 36 Jules Franceschi, Monument to Miecislav Kamienski [detail], 1861, bronze, 120 x 183 x 92 cm. Père-Lachaise cemetery, Paris. Photo: © Miranda Mason

3: 37 Jules Franceschi, Monument to Miecislav Kamienski [detail], 1861, bronze, 120 x 183 x 92 cm. Père-Lachaise cemetery, Paris. Photo: © Miranda Mason

3: 38 Jules Franceschi, *Le Réveil*, 1873, marble, 133 x 61 x 80 cm. Musée des beaux-arts de Nîmes. Photo: © Miranda Mason

4: 1 Letter from Louise Abbéma to Alice Ducasse, n.d., black ink on paper, 20cm x 30cm. Fondation Custodia (coll. F. Lugt), Institut Néerlandais, Paris

4: 2 Louise Abbéma, *Portrait de Sarah Bernhardt, sociétaire de la Comédie Française*, 1876, oil on canvas, 230 x 140 cm. Reproduced in French and English versions of Bernhardt's autobiography, *Ma Double vie* (1907). Not located

4: 3 Louise Abbéma, *Le Sommeil de Diane*, 1881, oil on board, 103.5 x 138.5 cm. Reproduced in sale catalogue of Christie's, London, 8 June 2005. Private collection, not located

4: 4 Louise Abbéma, *Le Sommeil de Diane* [detail], 1881, oil on board, 103.5 x 138.5 cm. Reproduced in sale catalogue of Christie's, London, 8 June 2005. Private collection, not located

4: 5 Louise Abbéma, *La Chanson de l'après-midi*, 1885, oil on canvas, 150.2 x 220.3 cm. Reproduced in sale catalogue of Sotheby's, New York, 24 May 1995. Private collection, not located

4: 6 Louise Abbéma, Sketch for *La Chanson de l'après-midi*, c. 1884-85, oil on board, 35.5 x 43 cm. Reproduced in sale catalogue of Piasa, Paris, 13 December 2002 [incorrectly titled: 'Soirée chez Sarah Bernhardt']. Private collection, not located

4: 7 Louise Abbéma, Scene of her studio at rue Lafitte, c. 1884-85, oil on canvas, 50 x 64 cm. Private collection, not located. Source: invitation card in MOSD dossier Abbéma

4: 8 Léo de Leymarie, Louise Abbéma's mother in an unidentified room at rue Lafitte, 1884, carte album photographic portrait print on albumenized paper from a collodion glass negative, 16.8 x 11.7 cm. INHA, Paris

4: 9 Léo de Leymarie, Louise Abbéma's father in her studio at rue Lafitte, 1884, carte album photographic portrait print on albumenized paper from a collodion glass negative, 17 x 11.9 cm. INHA, Paris

4: 10 Léo de Leymarie, Louise Abbéma with her dog in her studio at rue Lafitte, 1884, carte album photographic portrait print on albumenized paper from a collodion glass negative, 16.9 x 12.2 cm. INHA, Paris

4: 11 Louise Abbéma, four watercolours of an unidentified woman and Anon., photograph of Louise Abbéma at the piano in her studio at rue Lafitte, n.d., 41 x 22.7 cm (with frame). Musée de la Vie romantique, Paris

4: 12 Louise Abbéma, 'Silhouette de femme' [possible preparatory drawing for *Portrait de Sarah Bernhardt*], c. 1871-76, pencil on paper, 14.2 x 8.8 cm. National Museum of Art, Bucharest

4: 13 Louise Abbéma, Portrait of Sarah Bernhardt, c. 1876, reproduced watercolour, dimensions not known. Source of reproduction not identified. Not located

4: 14 Louise Abbéma, Portrait of Sarah Bernhardt, c. 1876, reproduced drawing, dimensions not known. Source of reproduction not identified. BNFDEP

4: 15 Zag, 'No. 1. La première au catalogue des immémorables SARAH BERNHARDT du Salon: celle-ci par Mlle Abbéma', 1876, reproduced drawing, 20.2 x 13.5 cm. Reproduced in *Zigzags à la plume à travers l'art* (14 May 1876). BNF

4: 16 Anon., 'Mlle Sarah Bernhardt. Encore!', reproduced cartoon drawing, 10.8 x 4 cm. Source of reproduction not identified. INHA, Paris

4: 17 Louise Abbéma, *L'Amazone*, 1880, oil on canvas, 229 x 137 cm. Schlossmuseum, Gotha

4: 18 Louise Abbéma, Sarah Bernhardt nude, n.d., pastel on paper for a fan, dimensions not known. [?]Severin Wunderman Museum, Irvine, CA

Notes on the Illustrations

The name of an artist, photographer, or illustrator for each work reproduced here has, as far as possible, been tested against a number of archival sources and only then included. I use the designation 'Anon.' for existing reproduced material where the photographer/s or graphic artist/s responsible were not identified, bearing in mind that this term does not sufficiently convey the conditions of production in publishing, nor the possibility that such information might be possible, with further research, to establish. This is also the case with private images, and on one occasion I have made a viable suggestion as to authorship (fig. 2: 36).

Titles of artworks, photographs and graphic illustrations are given in italics only when this is the title designated at the time first produced, reproduced, or exhibited. They are all retained in French with the exception of portrait busts. These I re-title in English as *Bust of ...* providing the full name of the sitter. Titles in roman with quotation marks have been copied from description in contemporary literature. If either are lacking, I provide my own description in roman without quotation marks. I do not use titles given in posthumous literature as these are often inadequate or inaccurate.

Where I have not photographed an artwork or illustration, nor purchased a reproduction from the institution to which either belongs, I provide a copy of an existing reproduction from another source. These are often the only means of access to artworks or illustrative

material otherwise unavailable for study (for example, Abbéma's *Le Sommeil de Diane*, 1881; fig. 4: 3). Important locations, such as the interiors of Bernhardt's studios, are only accessible from artworks and reproductions because none of her studios have been preserved or reconstituted (as museums). When using this material, I provide as much information as possible on the date, type, and source of the images *as reproductions*. These are subjected to detailed scrutiny in order to test an existing description or provide one anew and to provide information about the physical image itself (medium, format, dimensions). All conclusions drawn can only ever be framed as 'almost definitely', 'very likely', 'probable', or 'possible'. For instance, *Après la tempête* as represented in figure 3: 1 is 'almost definitely' the life-size plaster exhibited at the Salon in 1876 and the dimensions I provide (estimated from the photograph) are 'probable'.

Sometimes the quality of an image or the information I am able to provide on it is very poor because of how material exists in the archive. Archives on Bernhardt often contain donated scrapbooks of periodical cuttings. The source of publication and date are often missing (fig. 2: 39). Such items can only be dated and their contents assessed approximately by scrutinizing elements within the image, font type of captions, etc. It would be a hard task to chase up every image that I have come across out of its original context and I have therefore also relied on those who compile archives, such as the team at the documentation service of the musée d'Orsay. Although an original photograph or drawing for reproduction may not yet have been 'found', I nonetheless refer to its existence, and current absence, designating it 'not located'.

I also use this phrase with artworks that are not in an identified public or private collection, and yet there is no record that they have been destroyed. Where a work has been sold at auction but its buyer not disclosed (even after enquiry), I note this as belonging to a 'private collection, not located'. As with the missing archival material, this takes the onus of absence away from the object, requiring that the desiring scholar go out and look for it.

Abbreviations

Archives

AMBA Pau	Archive du musée des beaux-arts de Pau
AM Étampes	Archive du musée d'Étampes
AMR	Archive du musée Rodin
AMVR	Archive du musée de la Vie romantique
AN	Archives nationales
AVP	Archive de la Ville de Paris
BHVP	Bibliothèque historique de la Ville de Paris
BMCF	Bibliothèque-musée de la Comédie-Française
BNF	Bibliothèque nationale de France
BNFDAS	Bibliothèque nationale de France, département des Arts du spectacle
BNFDEP	Bibliothèque nationale de France, département des Estampes et de la Photographie
BNFDMS	Bibliothèque nationale de France, département des Manuscrits
ENSBA	École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts
INFC	Institut néerlandais, Fondation Custodia (coll. F. Lugt)
INHA	Institut d'histoire de l'Art (coll. Gabriel Ferrier)
KBC	Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Copenhagen
MOSD	Musée d'Orsay, service de Documentation
PMVP	Photothèque des musées de la Ville de Paris
RAC KTK	Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Teater og Kapel
RMN	Réunion des musées nationaux

Texts

<i>DBF</i>	<i>Dictionnaire de biographie française</i>
<i>MDL</i>	<i>My Double Life: Memoirs of Sarah Bernhardt (1907)</i>



Prob. Roland Mathieu-Meusnier, *The Left Hands of Sarah Bernhardt and Louise Abbéma*, original model prob. 1878, bronze, length: 31 cm. Founder: C. Valsuani (est. 1909). Signed by both subjects.

Ownership history: Louise Abbéma in 1925; sale of Michel de Bry Collection, Paris, 1997; bought by Parisian lesbian cultural association, Janet & Co. Stolen in 1999. Not located. Not yet ...

Clay=Freedom

*Just take a face, my face if you like
And give it another name*

*Just take the shape in your strong hands
And make it another shape*

*Just take my shape in your arms
And let it form another body*

*Just take the prints from my fingers
And give me a new pair of hands*

*Just take your hands and hold my new face
To your face and call me the other name.*

Jackie Kay (*Life Mask* 2005)

*In my view, once you've been excited by a project, then inspiration comes from
concentration, hard work, organization and an alarm clock.*

Marguerite Yourcenar to Louis Nicolaou (27 January 1952)

Introduction Living, Loving, and Working: Sculpture and Scholarly Lesbian Desire

The question this thesis asks is: What does it mean to make the statement ‘Sarah Bernhardt, sculptor’ based on a massive archive of image and text (painting, cartoons, photographs, biography, feature articles in magazines, satirical journalism, and some art criticism) on one of the nineteenth and early twentieth century’s most internationally famous actresses and celebrities whose sculpture practice has often been dismissed as the work of a part-time amateur? In order to explore this problem, I focus on questions of what was required for Bernhardt to become a sculptor, to be a sculptor, and to remain a sculptor from c. 1869 until her death in 1923. I examine all these forms of evidence together with the works Bernhardt (1844-1923) produced under the terms of sculpture history, and not those of biography or visual culture analysis, the usual rubric under which Bernhardt is considered. As such, this thesis aims to distil a substantive analysis and history of one practice of sculpture in nineteenth-century France. The material I use and the methods required to work with it will contribute to the ongoing study of other nineteenth-century French sculpture practices precisely because of having to use, in the case of Bernhardt, scrupulous techniques of inquiry in order to extract the history of her sculpture practice from the morass of archival material on her as actress and celebrity.

This thesis is not about Bernhardt’s theatre career (biographies), Bernhardt as spectacle (McPherson 2001); as icon (Ockman 2001); as ‘femme fatale’ (Balk 1994); as art object (Bergman-Carton 2005); nor is it about generalities in nineteenth-century French cultural history, such as the star system (Nectoux 1986) or feminine theatricality (Berlanstein 2001). I do not consider her as ‘Fantastic’ (a play on the term ‘fantaisiste’; Roberts 2002). I am simply not interested in saying how busy she was or contesting this under the terms in which such statements were made during her lifetime (Wolff, *Le Figaro* 1879). I do not discuss her subversion of gender norms or presentation of ‘self’ in this manner (Bergman-Carton 1996; Ockman 2001, 2005; Roberts 2002). I refrain from listing her many possessions, other than artworks or objects related to her art practice, nor do I discuss her pets (combinations of

some or all are in most texts). This thesis is *not* about a heterosexualized iconography (for instance, reading Clairin's 1876 portrait of Bernhardt in the musée du Petit Palais as representing a 'decadent goddess' (McPherson 2001). I do not investigate her putative male lovers or her family history (biography, e.g. Gold and Fizdale 2001); or her Jewishness (Gilman 1993; Ockman 1995; Bergman-Carton 1996). These matters are more than adequately covered elsewhere as these references demonstrate. I avoid these issues wherever possible unless they assist with writing a history of her sculpture practice and because, on the whole, to consider them has obscured that practice. Finally, I do not consider contemporary fiction reportedly based on Bernhardt's activities (Félicien Champsaur, *Dinah Samuel*, 1882; Alphonse Daudet, *Le Nabab*, 1877), even though these concern sculpture practice and may offer veiled information on her actual practice. The character of fiction would require a kind of labour that, again, would distract from my purpose as a sculpture historian.

The thesis is constructed by asking a series of seemingly simple questions: Did Bernhardt make work? Did she have a dedicated place in which to make work? How was she trained to make work? Did she exhibit and sell or otherwise distribute her work? These questions have yet to be fully answered. I still need to conduct further archival research on Bernhardt if I am to produce a definitive study of her, as a single producer of sculpture in nineteenth-century France. But this need is endemic. The questions I have had to ask about Bernhardt might well be applied to countless other producers of sculpture in the period and therefore offer a way in which the history of the practice and production of sculpture as a 'whole' in this period can be approached.

The methods that I use are ones I have been forced to use in the absence of substantial archival material specifically on Bernhardt's sculpture practice. They have also been necessary because of the 'corruption' of the archival material that does exist by distracting forces: for instance, the detailed description of objects in her studio contributes to the exoticization of 'Sarah Bernhardt' but not to her history as a sculptor, despite when 'sculpture' is present in the room in question because it contains works by her, her equipment, tools, clay, plaster casts,

etc. My methods are: close reading of her works, detailed scrutiny of the space of the studio in order to identify and highlight the signifiers of sculpture practice; and a thorough analysis of the processes and procedures of how she went about making sculpture insofar as this is possible because of the limits to how they were recorded and how such records have been preserved.

Bernhardt is not alone in lacking an adequate history as a sculptor: my additional work on her teachers, Roland Mathieu-Meusnier (1824-96) and Jules Franceschi (1825-93) has resulted, so far, in no single image or verbal description of either man's studio. Both ran teaching studios and produced substantial bodies of work for the state, independent institutions such as theatres, and for private clients. Yet neither sculptor figures as 'significant' in the current landscape of the history of nineteenth-century French sculpture, let alone 'the history of art'.

My work on Bernhardt, her teachers, and her artistic colleagues (painters as well as sculptors) builds upon and adds to existing histories of French nineteenth-century sculpture. Anne Wagner's monograph, *Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux: Sculptor of the Second Empire* (1986), opened up the field to the idea that deciding that any sculptor is a singular artistic 'genius' is not a useful way to investigate the necessary processes and procedures required to make sculpture in a century that produced so much sculpture. Nonetheless, monographs on Rodin that follow this pattern are still useful because they demonstrate that when the notion of 'genius' is deployed, the rich archive that supports it, does produce detailed history. For instance, the work of Ruth Butler (*Rodin: The Shape of Genius*, 1993) provides detail on Rodin's training, or that of Albert Elsen (*In Rodin's Studio*, 1980), as a photographic and discursive essay, provides a thorough history of his studio practice. This product of scholarship, despite its different conditions and framing, is one that can be aspired to.

These book-length monographs sit alongside an ongoing project produced in and from the French museums that house much of the work produced in this period and the archival material that documents it; a project conducted since the 1970s under the auspices of curator-

scholars Anne Pingeot, Antoinette Le Normand-Romain, Laure de Margerie, Cathérine Chevillot, Hélène Pinet, and others. This scholarship consists of collecting and caring for artworks; conserving and compiling archival documentation; and directing researchers to other, vital, resources. It is disseminated largely through the exhibition of works, symposia, and publishing. Historical and discursive texts on nineteenth-century French sculpture are most often essay-length and appear in exhibition catalogues, as the proceedings of symposia, or in journals. Scholarship based in France has a counterpart elsewhere, mainly in the US, and again, active from the 1970s onwards; one recent example is the exhibition *Breaking the Mold: Sculpture in Paris from Daumier to Rodin* (October 2005 to March 2006) at the Jane Vorhees Zimmerli Gallery, Rutgers University.

Since the late 1980s feminist sculpture historians have investigated nineteenth-century sculpture made by women in France. Notable amongst this body of work is that by Claudine Mitchell on Camille Claudel (*Art History* 1989); Anastasia Easterday on women sculptors in France throughout the century (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of California, 1997); and Caterina Pierre on Marcello [Duchess Castiglione-Colonna] (*Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 2003). French art historian, Anne Rivière, is currently working on a long-term encyclopaedic project to document all women who produced sculpture in this period in France. It is only by continuing and expanding this project that the extent and importance of nineteenth-century French sculpture production and its practice can, and will, take its rightful place alongside that of painting in the same period, as is represented by the internationally renowned social history of art and feminist scholarship on painting in the nineteenth century in the work, for instance, of Griselda Pollock, T. J. Clark, and Tamar Garb.

My research into Bernhardt has raised some important questions about how to develop methods for studying sculpture production in nineteenth-century France, especially the work of sculptors who do not, or have not, attracted monographic treatment. Hence my focus on the *practice of making sculpture*: matters of training, the architecture and equipment of the

studio, technologies, labour, as well as exhibiting strategies, the art market, and, ultimately, how different artists accessed all these aspects of sculpture production.

Treating Sarah Bernhardt as a case study has further implications for how research into the larger field of nineteenth-century French sculpture production might be approached. In the thesis, I argue that the archive-based documentary and visual evidence I consider can be aligned with social, emotional, and personal investments by the sculptor in making work, and that these are inscribed in the work in ways that can be sensed and made sense of to the enrichment of our understanding of the sculpture. In the case of Bernhardt's *Bust of Louise Abbéma* (1878, musée d'Orsay, Paris), I argue that a close and detailed reading of the object itself demonstrates an erotic engagement between artist and sitter. The art historian's activity of reading works, researching and writing about them – the scholarship of sculpture history – is itself a mode of production. Thus the art historian also produces work: the subject of inquiry, which, in this case, is the historically and socially, as well as artistically, situated figure: 'Sarah Bernhardt, sculptor'. This too can be an act of loving engagement, with the object, the archive, and in writing. I call this methodology 'scholarly lesbian desire'. It has been the motor of my archival research and writing thus far and is, by necessity, persistent.

Scholarly Lesbian Desire

Scholarly lesbian desire does not (only) want to know if so-and-so (Bernhardt, Abbéma) was 'a lesbian'. Rather, deploying Teresa de Lauretis's model (*The Practice of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire*, 1994), it wants to find and discern traces of 'the conscious presence of desire in one woman for another' in artworks, writing, the archive – whatever these might be. De Lauretis's work is one of the two major underpinnings of this project because she writes of lesbian sexual structuring and desire as 'the *practice* of love'.

The other foundational work for this project is Griselda Pollock's notion and deployment of 'feminist desire and the writing of art's histories' (*Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the*

Writing of Art's Histories, 1999). I read Pollock's work on feminist desire as wanting to know how women made works of art, where, and, most of all, why. In other words, the task is to think about the *desire to make* sculpture, painting, or to write. As in Pollock's configuration of feminist desire, in a scholarly lesbian desiring mode of thinking, reading, and writing, both the subject of study and she who does the studying are implicated in desire that motivates living, loving, and working, as an artist, as an art historian.

Despite the grounding of this thesis in de Lauretis's work of re-reading psychic structuring *pace* Freud, Lacan et al, I am not using 'desire' in a purely psychoanalytical sense. But desire, and love, are used to frame my study of historical relations of same-sex intimacy, and networks of sociality and creativity in order to avoid the cul-de-sacs of current sexuality discourse obsessed with 'sex acts' and not the psychic and social structures that produce practices, inscriptions, texts, and (art) objects.

Part of the purpose of this thesis is to explore the notion that queerness, but specifically lesbian queerness can be written of *as if* it is transhistorical. Fantasizing this is not difficult, but imaging and writing it is complex given the debates that have raged recently in queer theory/studies and its previous incarnation as lesbian and gay theory/studies. I present this possibility by means of a piece of imaginative writing (Interview with a Bust) and by the recorded re-staging of a painting by Louise Abbéma (*Making Love Work: A Tableau Vivant on the Lesbian Love Boat*). Both forms are closely based on archival material, although I do not use academic referencing form in either. The academic material referred to, is presented and referenced in this Introduction and in the four core sections of the thesis. Some aspects of the Interview are my own invention, based on an educated guess.

Reading representations of and from the past, and assembling them with some kind of coherence, forms the substance of the art historian's archive. The broad domain of my archive is art practice from the past: primarily the sculpture practice of Bernhardt but also the painting practice of Louise Abbéma (1853-1927). Tied in with these histories is my dedicated

focus on the portrait bust in marble that Bernhardt made of Abbéma in 1878 and my desire to know how the bust might reference, more fully, an elusive recording of the two women's amorous liaison in oral tradition. In her lifetime Abbéma was a prolific artist whose practice, like Bernhardt's, was grounded in the vibrant artistic milieu of late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth century Paris. She was a well-known figure to French, British, and American publics. Her work was reviewed and reproduced in a range of cultural and social periodicals and, as was common practice for her contemporaries in the visual and performing arts, images of her were widely available. Unlike Bernhardt, Abbéma has virtually dropped from view since her death in 1927 and is now known only to specialists in nineteenth-century painting or given an appearance in brief entries in artists' dictionaries, and, significantly for this context, in the corpus of non-academic lesbian and gay history.

Such history has been rather loosely called 'recovery' work: historical figures are given their rightful place in the art historical canon or claimed as lesbians or gay men in history. This provides a genealogy of erotic same-sex relating outside dominant and well documented heterosexual social structures. It offers to the contemporary 'lesbian' or 'gay man' a sense of having a past. The method of compiling lists of 'lesbians and gay men' has, however, been sharply criticized in queer studies. Judith Halberstam takes up this critique when she writes:

The project for queer historians then, is no longer to find and document and record the presence of gay men and lesbians throughout history; rather it is to judge the meaning of sex in any given historical location and to trace the development of notions of identity and sexual selves from within discourses of acts and pleasures.¹

'Sex in any given historical location' then requires that these acts and pleasures be represented for them to become the proper objects of the queer historian.² However, in the late nineteenth century the sexologists Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds were known

¹ Judith Halberstam, 'Sex Debates,' in *Lesbian and Gay Studies: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Andy Medhurst and Sally R. Munt (London and Washington: Cassell, 1997), 327-40 (332).

² See Judith Butler on sexuality and gender as the 'proper objects' of study for lesbian and gay studies and feminism respectively; 'Against Proper Objects', *More Gender Trouble: Feminism Meets Queer Theory, differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 6:2-3 (1994), 1-26.

to flounder when faced with inadequate data on the specific activity they called ‘sexual inversion in women’.³ This problem is echoed in the histories on nineteenth-century same-sex relations between women where the lack of data on sex acts required other readings of same-sex relating and resulted in the romantic friendship/lesbian divide.⁴

Halberstam positions her work as a queer historian of female masculinity against that of another scholar, Terry Castle. She cites Castle’s claim that lesbians have always existed, arguing that “lesbian” is a term that ‘resonates for us [...] because we have come to see same-sex desire between biological females as a set of coherent terms’. In its place Halberstam offers a model of history-making she calls ‘perverse presentism’, a queer history that is ‘sensitive to historical change’ and can gain from thinking in more historically specific terms – ‘rather than just “lesbians”’.⁵

Two things interest me here. The first is that there is a perceived correct procedure for doing history – identitarian critique – and this method elicits disdain for the labouring (art) historian who finds, documents, and records; favouring instead the better equipped queer historian, who brings to bear his or her theoretically informed judgement and insight on what they find, as if just happening upon it. As Gayle Rubin has succinctly put it, ‘empirical work and descriptive work are often treated as some kind of low-status, even stigmatized, activity that is inferior to “theory” and, citing a friend of hers, that ‘[a]ll data are dirty.’⁶

³ Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds, ‘Sexual Inversion’ [1897], in *Nineteenth-Century Writings on Homosexuality: A Sourcebook*, ed. Chris White (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 94-104 (94-95).

⁴ The typically cited survey text on female friendship is Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* [1981] (London: Women’s Press, 1985), although I would argue that this is more subtle on issues of sexual practice than has been acknowledged.

⁵ Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), 54, 46, 48. The Castle reference is to *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 14.

⁶ Gayle Rubin and Judith Butler, ‘Interview: Sexual Traffic’, in *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 6:2-3 (1994), 62-99 (91-92).

My second interest in this debate is that Halberstam's argument is based on the claim that 'lesbian scholars cannot extricate themselves from contemporary understandings of lesbian identity'.⁷ This seems to me excessively reactive and punitive: in what sense can *any* scholar extricate themselves from a contemporary understanding of the terms they use? Halberstam's understanding of 'lesbian', both as scholar and historical subject, is itself historically specific, and reductive, referencing only one (reasonably) contemporary model, the 'woman-identified-woman' prevalent in the discourse of what is usually called 'seventies feminism'. This is hardly nuanced historical exegesis and I am inclined to resist jettisoning 'lesbian' (or for that matter 'homosexual') arguing that 'lesbian' brings a specificity which can guard against the potential for what Rubin has called a 'galloping idealism [that is] as disturbing as mindless positivism.'⁸

If this debate is representative within queer studies, which to some extent it is (I speak anecdotally here because of attendance at several queer conferences and from reading general texts), according to this new disciplinary format, 'lesbian' (or 'gay') is discounted as too singular, too historically specific, and because located in the *past*, (so-called 'seventies feminism'), not *modern* enough. 'Queer' becomes in this model more flexible, more *avant-garde*. But, adopting a more 'flexible' position against one deemed too singular, is to deny the intense debates that have taken place over the last thirty years to which 'lesbian' has contributed and laid itself open to continuous reconfiguration. 'Lesbian' (or gay, homosexual) has not reached its sell-by date but is still a viable means to qualify erotic female same-sex relating, desire, and the inscription of such desire in creative, social and psychic encounters, and objects, from the past, and in writing of them now. Wanting to find, document, and record how the material form of the marble portrait bust of Louise Abbéma emerged from acts and pleasures, attitudes and aptitudes, and the subjects who made it possible is the impetus I am calling scholarly lesbian desire.

⁷ Halberstam (1998), 50.

⁸ Rubin and Butler, 92.

The work of Laura Doan on ‘Sapphic modernity’ in Britain in the period prior and subsequent to the *Well of Loneliness* trial in 1928 also discusses the use of ‘lesbian’. Doan argues two things: that in England prior to 1928 ‘the terms “lesbian”, “homosexual”, “sexual invert”, or “Sapphist” often overlapped with one another and [...] did not generally connote a specific sexual behaviour, identity, or appearance’, adding that there was an absence of a ‘common cultural understanding of lesbianism, or a coherent and stable image of any formulation of “lesbian”’. She also argues that what was true for Paris in the nineteenth century (citing Rita Felski [1995], ‘the lesbian came to serve as an evocative symbol of feminized modernity’), was not the case for England and that ‘it is a mistake to presume too great an interconnectedness of national cultures in relation to a lesbian subcultural style’. This is a complex set of claims and Doan’s scholarship, investigating British press and personal accounts as her archival material, is immaculate. Doan argues that clothing (one focus of the study is the signification of ‘cross-dressing’) prior to 1928, and therefore before the homogenized concept known as the ‘lesbian’ emerged into and from discourse, did not produce such a figure before then. Moreover, she writes that ‘[w]hat clothing confirms for the cross-dresser and observer alike is not gender but gender’s status as fiction’. What happens in this kind of work (which I qualify as queer and transgender studies because of a self-claimed distance from ‘lesbian and gay’) is that in reading against notions of ‘lesbian’ that, as in Halberstam’s work, are allegedly anachronistic, what ‘falls through the holes of discursivity’ is precisely *pleasure* (Parkin and Prosser 1994). This mode of writing history (visual culture and literary analysis of ‘texts’) leaves out the erotic appeal that such clothing may have had for the wearer and the desire elicited in those whom she was interested in looking at her.⁹

⁹ Laura Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism: The Origins of a Modern English Lesbian Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), xvii, xx, 124, 94. The Felski reference is to *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 20. I am also concerned at ‘late-nineteenth-century France’ being represented in this cursory way. The treatment of Louise Abbéma in the press does not bear out the claim that negotiating ‘cross-dressing’ was an easy matter: for a start, wearing trousers was illegal. Abbéma’s clothing demonstrates the need for a more nuanced relationship to what this might constitute and I prefer to describe her attire as ‘masculinized’ (see Chapter 1).

It is not my intention to situate this thesis somewhere along a spectrum ranging from 'good' queer historian to 'bad' lesbian scholar or vice versa. The recommendation by Halberstam and others that the specificities of female same-sex relating be differentiated according to the signifying practices, social conditions, and knowledges of their historical time is an important one. Indeed, and perhaps ironically, it is my contention that 'lesbian' must be retained as a qualifier for erotic female same-sex relating, now, as a safeguard against possible erasure by a one-size-fits-all notion of queer. Richard Dyer warns against this in *The Culture of Queers* when he argues that although much of his analysis of queer, where this concerns material almost exclusively about male queerness 'could be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to lesbians, [...] no sexuality exists independently of constructions of gender and thus discussions of lesbian queer culture could never be collapsed into discussion of an overarching, ungendered queerness.'¹⁰ As a reminder, the specificity of 'lesbian' here is that which de Lauretis calls 'a sexual relation' that includes 'beyond any performed or fantasized physical sexual act the conscious presence of desire in one woman for another.'¹¹

Biddy Martin has put the case for making 'lesbianism articulate or articulable [...] intelligible through representation.' This she argues, is effected in Joan Nestle's writing where 'lesbianism [is] made differential, filled with desire, made part of a social fabric in which it operates no less or more visibly and significantly than other things and in which it nonetheless remains visible and able to articulate itself as desire and relation'.¹² This seems suggestive for the work of an art historian in dealing with images but does not mean that there is a simple corollary between representation, visibility, and acknowledgement of visibility. All are contested or contestable.

¹⁰ Richard Dyer, *The Culture of Queers* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 11-12.

¹¹ Teresa de Lauretis, *The Practice of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 284.

¹² Biddy Martin, 'Introduction' [1995], *Femininity Played Straight: The Significance of Being Lesbian* (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), 1-29 (9).

The question Halberstam raises of the historian and her archive is one I explore further in this thesis. In order to do this, I ask the following questions which are guiding principles for proceeding with (art) historical work, and the ethics of scholarship and writing. These are: why do we want to do this history, what is the fascination with calling historical figures 'lesbians' and 'gay men' even if these terms are anachronistic, what drives this work, and what are the effects of subjecting *this* desire to prohibition? Does the notion of 'lesbian' (or gay, or queer) as transhistorical help or hinder in understanding the dynamics of a relationship with past forms and concretizations of erotic same-sex relating?

Again, in order to proceed I want to clarify how I deploy the term 'lesbian' in this thesis, as a qualifier. The lesbian in scholarly lesbian desire is a modifier in the ablative and does not denote the substantive representing identifiable, historical individuals. In the ablative, 'lesbian' functions as the descriptor of a subject position without determining what this is, or how it should be, once, or for all time. Ablative is defined in the *OED* as 'the source whence an action proceeds, the cause or ideal source of an event, the instrument and agent or material sources of an action, the manner in which, and sometimes the place and time at which, anything is done'. As such, 'lesbian' describes a positionality. For the sculpture historian the best way to explain this is by analogy with the situation that occurs in (engaged) portraiture. Both artist and sitter engage with the making of the work and avoid the schismatic closure of active maker (the portrait is by so-and-so) and passive model (the portrait is of so-and-so). Summed up as 'by, with and from', scholarly lesbian desire in the ablative *cannot* avoid the specificity of the historical moment because it asks questions of the archive determined by an ethics of wanting to know (of an object, of a document): what, where, or who is this by, with and from?¹³ This is a means out of what I earlier called the cul-de-sac of obsessing only about

¹³ The desire to know is discussed by Teresa de Lauretis who writes about the first woman to be awarded a doctorate in Philosophy, Elena Lucrezia Cornaro, in 1678. She asks of Lucrezia, 'What pleasure or power or knowledge [might she have] derived from her studies, what desire, what madness most discreet did keep her wondering near the gates [to the University of Padua], we can only speculate on the basis of our own desire, our own knowingly ek-centric relation to language and history'; 'Feminist Genealogies: A Personal Itinerary', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 16:4 (1993), 393-403 (402).

sex acts (not that these are unimportant, but for some subjects the records on sex acts are fuller). In the ablativ, 'lesbian' has to be historically specific but it also allows thinking, reading, writing, and making to recuperate, or seek to recuperate, what has become lost in these scholarly struggles, the historical, social, and psychic workings of desire. Scholarly lesbian desire thus seeks to write desire into writing, as it goes along. This problem was recognized by Joan Parkin and Amanda Prosser in academic writing on lesbian sexual practice. They asked: how is it possible to 'avoid producing text about sex in which pleasure falls through the holes of discursivity, of our will-to-knowledge as academics?'¹⁴ This thesis is not about 'sex acts'. It is about desire and loving, and also about living and working, but, I agree, how is it possible to *write* about this? Can writing itself elicit pleasure?

Writing this History of Art: Another Way

Writing in this thesis takes more than one form, from the seemingly conversational and ludic Interview with a Bust to the dogged pursuit of detail in the copious footnotes. Neither is more pleasurable than the other, both were hard to write, both perhaps difficult to read, either because they can be misunderstood as the work of someone unable to do 'proper' art history or because, in different ways, they require the dogged attention of the reader to think along, and ask, why is this said now, like this?

All the writing in this thesis is based on a series of encounters: with the objects of study, and with the material of my archive. First and foremost is the encounter with the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* in the museum. Conducting an interview with this artwork, present as a representation (in my text) of a representation (the portrait bust) enables me to demonstrate that scholarly lesbian desire offers another way of thinking and producing (art) history. In these circumstances the bust becomes a point of confluence for a set of triangulated relations that exist between myself as scholar and my archive and, as I read it, between the historical players in this archive. This process of writing entails, on the one hand, the fantasmatic

¹⁴ Joan Parkin and Amanda Prosser, 'An Academic Affair: The Politics of Butch-Femme Pleasures', in *The Persistent Desire: A Femme-Butch Reader*, ed. Joan Nestle (Boston: Alyson, 1992), (442-50) 443.

projection onto the bust *as if it were* a blanked out surface onto which my desire to know and to tell of different ways of living, loving, and working is projected. But, I want to insist here that there is material substance to this fantasy: the issues raised with the bust have their grounding in art historical evidence and in the form and facture, as well as the history, of the bust itself. This object is also art historical evidence and therefore takes its place in the greater 'archive'. It is an effect of the specific historical and material circumstances that made it possible: of the relations of production of second-half nineteenth-century French sculpture and of a form of sociality in 1870s Paris that enabled its making to emerge from an erotic exchange between artist and sitter.¹⁵ It represents the inscription of past desire: this is what became evident to me, because of its affective power, when I looked at it. On becoming aware of the bust's affective power and how and why this worked on me, then I called it a beautiful object.

Writing this History of Art: Not Biography – Living, Loving, Working

Charting Bernhardt's sculpture practice and her love relationship with Abbéma in this thesis does not deploy the narrative format common to biographical accounts of a 'life'. I have read innumerable biographies of 'Sarah Bernhardt' which almost always repeat what the authors have read elsewhere, often in other second-hand accounts, without having tracked these tales

¹⁵ Lesbian erotic collaboration in creative production has yet to find a published literature. In a book containing thirteen chapters on 'creativity and intimate partnership' female and male same-sex love relationships are given only one case study each. Here 'lesbian' is represented by Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville-West. In the Introduction, the editors state that they 'have chosen to omit couples in which one person – however influential the other – is a "silent" (that is unrecognized) partner. Mentioning their exclusion of the non-sexual relationship of Gertrude Stein and Ernest Hemingway only begs the question 'Where are Gertrude and Alice?' Leading into their discussion of the only lesbian relationship in the book by discussing 'domestic [not creative] arrangements which are not bound by the model of heterosexual union' and lauding these as 'even more challenging in that gendered roles are often blurred', they also add that, in the case of Woolf and Sackville-West, 'the resultant 'new realities' of challenging *gender* roles 'were eased by the social freedom that accompanied upper-class status [Woolf?] and by a social perception that saw lesbianism as less threatening than homosexuality'. No evidence is cited on any of these issues and, of course, the erotic is, typically, absent in the configuration of lesbian as a domestic question of challenging gender; Whitney Chadwick and Isabelle de Courtivron, 'Introduction', in *Significant Others: Creativity and Intimate Partnership*, ed. Chadwick and de Courtivron (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993), 7-13 (9, 11-12).

back to a primary source or tested them against other forms of evidence. I do not claim authority for this thesis by such methods of repetition. My project is to develop a mode of doing and writing a history of sculpture, sculpture made by a woman, in France, (mostly) in the nineteenth century, who represents in the objects she made, a relation to desire, and in one object a particular relation to lesbian desire.

I do, therefore, deploy a configuration structured according to the modes of living, loving, and working with which to frame Bernhardt's activity as a sculptor and her love relationship with Louise Abbéma. How is this different to biography? I situate Bernhardt's sculpture making as a practice. Given the failure to produce any more than a few pages on her work (its objects or her practice) thus far, it is necessary to produce a detailed historical and chronological account of a number of aspects of how this practice functioned, in the sense of how, when, and where she made sculpture. For instance, I investigate when precisely, insofar as records permit, she rented her first studio at 11 boulevard de Clichy (c. 1874); when she had built, and moved into, her next home at 41 avenue de Villiers with the purpose-built, detached sculpture studio (during 1876); and when she moved in to her last home at 56 boulevard Pereire, where a previous 'grenier' now functioned as the sculpture studio (probably October 1887).

What is the relationship between living, loving, and working and how is this a useful alternative or foil to 'biography' but still a means to account for the history of this or any sculptor's practice? Does 'living, loving, and working' frame the scholar writing of this practice too? All elements in this configuration are experiential; no one activity takes precedence over another, and all contribute to 'making work'. As such, they constitute a dynamic set of relations the result of which is creative: a work in sculpture. To illustrate this: when making the bust, how Bernhardt lived (in a certain social milieu, in the presence of the sitter, with sufficient funds to make sculpture), how she loved (her affection for the sitter) and how she worked (by making portraiture in marble) resulted in the *Bust of Louise Abbéma*. The dynamics of these three strands extends to loving one's work. This is demonstrated in the

case of the bust, because of the affection Bernhardt then showed it by keeping it for herself, having her photograph taken with it, displaying it in various situations, and sending it for exhibition but not for sale. For the scholar, discerning this loving mode of working and having lived solicits a love of this work, of the object of study and its writing into art history.¹⁶ Manifesting either love (of someone, of a work, of work) is fundamentally a material process: it involves labour, in all the preparatory stages and supporting activities of making a bust and in making a bust of someone one loves. For the art historian, writing about this is also a material process, because objects and documents, and their pursuit, form the substance of the 'archive' and need to be laboured over.

The Archive

In biography, according to Robert Nye, all important primary documents are read in order to 'pierce the curtain, to see backstage into the secret life of its subject' and written up according to 'a series of developmental concepts [...] personality, motivation, growth, birth and death'.¹⁷ Nye proposes an 'antibiography' for his subject of research, Thomas Alva Edison, where documents are read across rather than through time 'as part of discourses'. This produces many 'Edisons'. In principle there are just as many 'Bernhardts' as there are 'Edisons' (no doubt more), and a few 'Abbémas' too.

But Nye's documents for his 'antibiography' are held together, and in a public collection. What happens when an archive is 'inadequate'? Despite its appearance of fullness - for instance in the plethora of images of Bernhardt - there is a notable emptiness for my reading purposes; there are very few primary documents to read at all on Bernhardt's practice as a

¹⁶ For another recent declaration of love for a work of sculpture, see John Henderson who declares his love for the external cement frieze on the Thorvaldsen Museum as follows: 'I fell for the bijou museum dreamed up there, on sight, no less, and now know it is a place I want to take those I love around', *The Triumph of Art at Thorvaldsen's Museum: Love in Copenhagen* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press and University of Copenhagen, 2005), 19. Henderson does not qualify the character of his love as I do here by my use of lesbian as modifier. I am grateful to Professor Elizabeth Prettejohn, University of Bristol, for kindly lending me her copy of this book.

¹⁷ Robert Nye, *The Invented Self: An Anti-Biography from Documents of Thomas A. Edison* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1983), 16.

sculptor or her amorous liaison with Abbéma. Archive material can be anywhere and nowhere, often lodged in inaccessible private collections or cited in secondary literature with no referencing system. This has been a problem for writing the history of living, loving, and working of history's and art history's Others: what happens when there is scarcely a scrap of material evidence (the all important 'documents') to call an 'archive'? How does the scholar find what is available and find ways to read and write this material *and* the experience of encountering it (or not)?

Establishing a series of documents and images as an archive and deciding on its structure is part of the endeavour to read and write history and art history with a difference. In this thesis I foreground Bernhardt's sculpture practice and her amorous liaison with Louise Abbéma in favour of other, more commonly thought of issues with regard to this archive: iconicity, theatricality, femininity. Assembling 'my' archive creates liaisons between the material evidence, not in order that another 'story' may be told, but in order to write a history that, so far, is sorely lacking. The process of this writing, which I call an ethics, is that it elicits difference from the same old story that (and it has to be said again) privileges artists who were men and one way (heterosexuality) of living, loving, and working over an/any other.

The Labour of the Art Historian

To reiterate: this thesis is an effort to demonstrate two things: that Bernhardt was a sculptor committed to her practice and that there existed a demonstrably erotic relationship between her and the painter Louise Abbéma evidenced (in the ablative) by, with, and from that practice by means of the production of portraiture in sculpture. Moreover, this was in a relationship of reciprocity with the practice of painting by Abbéma whose portraits of Bernhardt are considered here but in less detail. Both statements – that Bernhardt was a sculptor or that Bernhardt and Abbéma had an amorous liaison (or variations on this) – have been written many times before. The difference in this thesis is that I take these statements very seriously. This has meant some hard work.

Each art historical 'job' has its own material conditions determined by the period investigated, the cultural geography of the research area, the resources of the scholar and her institution. What is not obvious because it can be obfuscated by a scholarly technique that aims for a polished finished object is that the narrative of the scholar's labour is often left untold or at best hidden in footnotes which are by regulation an anti-narrative device. I make this hidden labour of the scholar more explicit (particularly in Chapters 1 and 3 which deal with the works in sculpture) and it is the character of the labour of making sculpture that has allowed me to think this. Just as a bust required the processes and skills of drawing, modelling clay, plaster casting, and marble carving and finishing, so the labour of researching nineteenth-century French sculpture (by Bernhardt and others) consisted of reading, travelling, writing letters, speaking French, buying camera equipment, learning about photography, crawling around in dusty store rooms and making lists, filing, scrutinizing, assembling archival material, and all are 'writing'. This too is a 'history', not my autobiography, but the history of my labour as a living, loving, art historical worker, not as a 'self'.¹⁸

Footnotes are one record of this labour and in this thesis they are extensive. As foundation (literally at the bottom of the page) they perform in relation to the finished 'text' as does base to superstructure in Marxist analysis of social and economic functioning, where the 'base' supports what bears down upon it and the forces (in construction of gravity) bear up to allow the weight above not to fall in on itself. Wherever possible, I have subjected each scrap of evidence to detailed scrutiny in order to make sure that in assembling this archive I can do justice to the sculpture practice and love relationship I write about. The footnotes are another form of 'evidence': their size indicates just how contested the archive is on Bernhardt, her teachers, and histories of same-sex desire, relating, and sociality. But they are, literally, the base to the superstructure of discursive history. Both impact on each other and are indispensable to each other in producing this history and their weight and physical solidity

¹⁸ For a discussion of self and other ways of writing, see Jeanne Perreault, 'Self/self?', *Writing Selves: Contemporary Feminist Autography* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 8-18.

demonstrate that this is a far more important sculpture practice in nineteenth-century France than has hitherto been acknowledged. Not only has a substantial body of work and its archive been brought into one place, how this has had to happen might offer a means to think about and write about the practice of others, even those whose lives and work have been gone over before.

No one activity in either area of (sculpture and art historical) production has priority over another. Neither form of work is done in isolation, although writing is certainly a very lonely task at times, perhaps more so (but I do not know this) than making sculpture with the presence of models, liaisons with praticiens, marble suppliers, hauliers, and so on. Some jobs never get done. For instance, records of Mathieu-Meusnier's sculpture production reveal that works were unfinished or destroyed; commissions were rejected or never materialized. Neither is my research absolute. There is still work to be done to keep my desire alive; I am happy with that.

I use seemingly ludic means to introduce my assembly and analysis of an archive that demonstrates the evidence for these statements. This does not mean I am not being serious. There is a feminist tradition of finding other ways to write art history. In *Differencing the Canon* Pollock composes a series of letters to curator, colleague, sister, mother, and feminist in order to represent her desiring engagement with the work of Mary Cassatt. The different social and personal positions of her correspondents allow Pollock to tackle the archive on and output of Cassatt using 'rambling thoughts about social difference' as much as she can announce her 'palpable jouissance' at seeing Cassatt's *The Mother's Kiss* (1890-91) beckoning to memories of her own, lived experience, and to discuss the politics of how exhibiting work in the past might have allowed Cassatt and her male counterpart Degas to 'share[..] a museum culture, a sense that you make art by working through art's resources and traditions'.¹⁹

¹⁹ Griselda Pollock, *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 226, 237. Engaging with a fantasmatic past is a risky business. In Françoise Sagan's novelistic correspondence with Bernhardt she demonstrates how such an effort can do little to clarify the desire of the writer and simply reiterate the same story as is told elsewhere. For

Lesbian Art History; Queer Art History

Is there a tradition of something one might call 'lesbian art history', art history modified as 'lesbian', or, lists of 'lesbian' artists? Yes, but it is thin on the ground. The only book-length work devoted to lesbian (rather than general homosexual) art history, of which I am aware, is a survey by the French scholar Marie-Jo Bonnet, *Les Deux amies: essai sur le couple de femmes dans l'art* (2000).²⁰ Other than this, 'lesbian' art or 'lesbian' artists are included in general histories of 'homosexuality in/and art' and a small handful of journal articles on painting. I am aware of three important surveys on homosexuality in/and art: Emmanuel Cooper, *The Sexual Perspective: Homosexuality and Art* (1986); James Saslow, *Passions and Pictures: Homosexuality in Art* (1999); and James Smalls, *Homosexuality in Art* (2003). The cover illustrations of all three are of male subjects, although these texts do discuss and illustrate work concerned with female same-sex activity. I am aware of only a handful of journal articles that can be qualified as 'lesbian art history'. What 'lesbian art history' means is complex and involves thinking about the subject position of the writer as well as the subject matter of the work discussed. This is why I need to write this thesis. But until now 'lesbian art history' is that which discusses the representation of 'lesbians' and of amorous or erotic interchange between more than one woman. Two essays are of note here: Dorothy M. Kosinski's 'Gustave Courbet's *The Sleepers*: The Lesbian Image in Nineteenth-Century French Art and Literature' (*Artibus et Historiae*, 1988) and Patricia Simons's 'Lesbian (In)visibility in Italian Renaissance Culture: Diana and Other Cases of Donna con Donna' (*Journal of Homosexuality*, 1994). Other texts do deal with

instance, Sagan claims to have been 'introduced to 'Bernhardt' by Jacques Chazot (a significant collector of work by, and concerned with, Bernhardt and donor to the musées de la Ville de Paris of his collection in his estate in 1995). She fails to question stories she has resourced for her correspondence claiming that Clairin was Bernhardt's lover and having 'Bernhardt' describe Abbéma in old age as 'look[ing] more and more like an old Japanese and less and less like an old admiral' and that '[s]he had always looked sexless, now she looked as though she was without rank as well', but that she 'was kind and considerate, as few people have ever been'. There are a number of sources for the comparison to a Japanese admiral, but none are Bernhardt. Rather, Sagan, sadly, borrows half-baked phrases from dubious sources and this really is putting words into a person's mouth when they are dead; *Dear Sarah Bernhardt* [1987], trans. Sabine Destrée (New York : Seaver, 1988), Epigraph [n.p.], 198, 226-27.

²⁰ For a social and literary history of lesbian in European culture, see Marie-Jo Bonnet, *Les Relations amoureuses entre les femmes XVI-XXe siècles* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1995).

lesbianism, even a lesbian erotic, in art but none claim (or are able to claim) the subject position 'lesbian' as I do here by coming out in this thesis, or more accurately by wearing my 'scholarly lesbian desire' on the page.²¹ Nor have I yet found a text (other than Kosinski) that explicitly positions the author as desiring reader of artworks rather than reading for lesbian desire in images. None of these texts discuss sculpture.

That job has been left, until now, to queering, or more accurately the discernment of male homoeroticism by (usually male) art historians who, some more explicitly than others, position themselves as queer. For instance, Jason Edwards's recent work on the sculpture of Alfred Gilbert, according to David Getsy, picks up on 'a visualization of youthful masculinity amenable to emerging definitions of homoeroticism' in the latter decades of the nineteenth century in Britain.²² In *Body Doubles: Sculpture in Britain 1877-1905* Getsy produces close readings of homoerotic potentiality in the sculpture of Frederic Leighton (*Athlete Wrestling with a Python*, 1877) and Hamo Thornycroft (*The Mower*, 1884).²³ Whitney Davis explores how Lord Ronald Gower's figure of Prince Hal on the *Shakespeare Memorial* (1888) 'under the questions of naturalism and allegory [...] and the particular social situation, a contemporary British homoeroticist subculture [...], were sedimented or submerged and integrated in the completed form'.²⁴ Although this work is useful in informing my project, as Dyer argues with regard to the 'culture of queers', discussions of lesbian queer culture could never be collapsed into discussion of an 'overarching, ungendered queerness'. In any case, this project is not, as I

²¹ Notable amongst texts that discuss a lesbian erotic is Heather Dawkins, *The Nude in French Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 51; Pollock (1999), 195-96.

²² David Getsy 'Introduction', in *Sculpture and the Pursuit of the Modern Ideal*, ed. David Getsy (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 1-10 (6) regarding Jason Edwards's 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Aesthete: Alfred Gilbert's *Perseus Arming* (1882) and the Question of "Aesthetic" Sculpture in Late-Victorian Britain', 11-38. See also, Jason Edwards, 'Alfred Gilbert's Aestheticism: Homoeroticism, Artistic Identity and the New Sculpture', *Visual Culture in Britain*, 2:1 (2001), 81-97, and "An Entirely Unimportant Deviation"? Aestheticism and the Critical Location of the Statuette in Fin-de-siècle England', *Sculpture Journal* 7 (2002), 58-69.

²³ David Getsy, *Body Doubles: Sculpture in Britain 1877-1905* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004).

²⁴ Whitney Davis, 'Lord Ronald Gower and the 'offending Adam'', in Getsy ed., (*Sculpture*, 2004), 63-95 (63-64).

have stated above, solely concerned with gender, its subversion, or transgression, but with the erotics of female same-sex desire and the inscription of that in sculpture.

This Lesbian Queer Art History

One element of the 'archive' that prompts (my) scholarly lesbian desire and provides the impetus to do art historical work in order to write the history of Bernhardt's sculpture practice and her love relationship with Abbéma is oral tradition. In the thesis I attempt to find ways to deal with the fragility of this form: to take it seriously and look for evidence that what has been said, without being written down by the originator of any statement but by someone who comes later, might index the material eroticism of two sentient historical figures, Sarah Bernhardt and Louise Abbéma. In 1981 an undated terracotta statuette by Ary Bitter (1883-1973) appeared for sale which represented two female figures enjoying the act and pleasure of cunnilingus; the sale caption explained that this was a representation of Sarah Bernhardt and Louise Abbéma making love. My investigations of this record of oral tradition so far have produced no further evidence and the claim that *this* work is of Abbéma and Bernhardt making love may be unfounded. But the *possibility* that Bernhardt and Abbéma made love was clearly in circulation in 1981 when the sale expert wrote the entry. I have yet to pursue this line of enquiry further.

What captured my attention more than this representation of a sex act by a male artist who may not have been known to either of the subjects represented was another 'oral tradition, not written down' (except by the person who told me this). According to the donor of a painting by Abbéma to the Comédie-Française in a letter written in 1990, this large oil on canvas work represented Abbéma and Bernhardt in a boat on the lake in the bois de Boulogne.²⁵ The painting is dated 8 July 1883 and according to the letter, written to explain the conditions of the donation, it also represented the day of the anniversary of the two women's 'amorous liaison'. Again, further inquiry has yet to reveal 'hard evidence' of this

²⁵ For a tale of lesbian seduction on a boat at la Grenouillère on the Seine, see Guy de Maupassant, 'La Femme de Paul', *La Maison Tellier* [1881] (Paris: Albin Michel, 1973), 253-86.

claim. There are no letters, diary entries, or other records that record 8 July as an anniversary for Abbéma and Bernhardt, only the painting itself bears this precision. How on earth is it possible to write art history about *this*? Again, I have been called upon (by the material of the archive) to deploy alternative means to produce scholarly inscriptions about work and works of art from the past. My response has been two-fold: to re-stage this painting in the bois de Boulogne and produce a set of images recording this event (allowing for some planning and things to ‘happen’ on the day) and, in tandem, to seek out the history (provenance) of the painting, which, as yet, is extremely thin (see Epilogue). In so doing, my work as an art historian is to test the claims of oral tradition, for instance this about Abbéma and Bernhardt’s amorous liaison, against the *only* concrete evidence there is: the painting itself.

Again, I ask (of myself, of this project), how can I write *this* history of art? In the Interview with the Bust I perform the desire to ask an object made in 1878 how it was made, what happened in the studio, how did Bernhardt learn to make sculpture, why did she want to, and so on. In *Archive Fever* Derrida expiates on the desire of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, a historian of the history of Judaism and translator of Freud, in his ‘Monologue with Freud’ published within *Freud’s Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (1991). The Monologue is addressed to Freud as a single letter but constituted, according to Derrida a ‘tête-à-tête discussion’ (with someone who is dead). It is written by a scholar (Yerushalmi) who at the same time as he inserts the fictive Monologue:

doesn’t want to renounce this alleged constative and theoretical neutrality which the classical scholar or historian claims as his norm, the position of his discourse here, in any case in the better part of his book and before the “Monologue”, is double, equivocal, unstable [...] and [d]oomed to denial, sometimes avowed in its very denial. [...] this “Monologue with Freud”, which resembles – or pretends to resemble – the beginning of an analysis and the declared confession of a transfer. Whether it resembles or pretends to resemble, this postscript undoubtedly carries, in truth, in its very fiction, the truth of the book. This is marked in particular in the trembling of a gesture and the instability of

a status; the historian refuses to be a psychoanalyst and also refrains from *not* being a psychoanalyst.²⁶

Foundational to this is Yerushalmi's desire to know, from 'Freud', the answers to certain questions: is psychoanalysis a Jewish science? The questions I ask of the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* are several but are the same as those of the chapters that follow: did Bernhardt make work? Did she have a studio? How did she train as a sculptor? What is the history of her ownership or exhibiting of work? What is the history of Bernhardt and Abbéma's amorous liaison? The format of an interview (two named speakers; questions and answers) and the fact that one participant is an artwork, the *Bust of Louise Abbéma*, and not a dead human being, differentiates my 'fiction' from that of Yerushalmi. But is there any valence for the Interview (and this form returns at the end of the *Tableau Vivant*) in Derrida's claim that Yerushalmi's "monologue" 'carries, in truth, in its very fiction, the truth of the book'?

If the Interview is recognized as something that has been written and rewritten, then the answer is, yes. The 'truth' of the archive is its instability. Some material that could have been there is absent – there is no doubt of that – where are any records of Bernhardt's submission of works to the Salon jury, for example? Material is 'corrupted', for instance journal articles that write of her studio invent works that did not exist or give works that did incorrect dates. There is only one letter (that I know of) to a praticien (the marble carver Bouillot) and one letter (inaccessible because in a private collection; it passed through a sale) in which Abbéma tells Bernhardt 'I love you and I kiss you'. The function of this other way of writing is not to make things up (although I do jest once; about Clairin's dress habits). But even this is not 'not the truth' but is designed to draw the reader's attention to the frequency with which the statement that introduces it is repeated and repeated (that Bernhardt and Clairin were lovers).

The truth of this thesis is not one of 'fact'; it is a question of trying to establish how one woman made sculpture in nineteenth-century France and why. Writing in this way because I

²⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* [1995], trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 55.

have researched these questions comes from my desire to know and to tell, as I stated above. This desire acknowledges another, past desire and both are lesbian in the respect that they are 'by, with and from' something that can be qualified as lesbian. For this I turn to the work of Teresa de Lauretis.

De Lauretis's *The Practice of Love* is a testimony to a long gestation and writing process in which the tenets of psychoanalysis have been grappled with in order to produce a text based on re-readings of Freud (and extensive reading of post-Freudian treatment of the 'lesbian'), which she names her 'passionate fiction'. De Lauretis works through this material and does so by attending to cultural products such as literature and film (twentieth-century). Just as her work is the theoretical model for this thesis (how is lesbian desire configured), so too her method of engaging with cultural production is my model. A large part of her project is to consider former models of 'lesbian', such as identification, in order to demonstrate that these do not consist in an adult, desiring exchange and transaction. De Lauretis considers two aspects of Freud's writing on perverse sexuality (which she argues underpins *all* sexuality): the fetish and narcissism, both of which I find useful for this thesis. The fetish, according to de Lauretis, can be re-read as signifier of desire in order that the lesbian sexual subject's choice of 'substitute' for the 'originally lost object' is a 'libidinally invested body-image, a body that can be narcissistically loved'.²⁷ For de Lauretis 'lesbian desire' is signified by the fetish and this, I argue in Chapter 1, is evident in the bust and Bernhardt's working and loving engagement with it. This is possible because it is a portrait *bust*.

A Lesbian Erotics of Portraiture

The thesis is an effort to explore the relationship between love and work as inscribed in artworks. This inscription is the *recognition* of a form of loving that finds a form in the portrait

²⁷ Teresa de Lauretis, 'Habit Changes. *Response*.', in *Feminism Meets Queer Theory*, ed. Elizabeth Weed and Naomi Schor (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), 315-333 (319). This is de Lauretis's response to a critique of the book by Elizabeth Grosz; both were first published in *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 6:2-3 (1994); Grosz, 'The Labors of Love. Analyzing Perverse Desire: An Interrogation of Teresa de Lauretis's *The Practice of Love*', 274-95; and de Lauretis, 296-313.

bust (and to a lesser extent in painting). Why the portrait bust? If, as de Lauretis argues, it is the partial body that is the emblem of lesbian desire, this part of a body signifies that, lesbian, desire. The bust is a (sculptural) fetish, the sign, in de Lauretis's configuration 'of both an absence and a presence' that signifies the displacement of desire and its resignification.²⁸ This does not mean that one cannot look at all of what is there; simply that something is 'missing'.²⁹ As part object then broken into parts by my photographs of details of the bust, the bust becomes a representation of the fetish, for me, the art historian looking for and with desire, and for the maker of the bust, Bernhardt, who chose this form in which to represent her desire and love. The details are all-important here and, moreover, must be seen: the *Bust of Louise Abbéma*, as my encounter with it and my photographs demonstrate, has to be looked at in the round to fully appreciate these details and the form and facture appointed them by the sculptor. Looking in this way elicits an erotic charge for the viewer as her gaze travels from the open shirt and jacket, around the neck, the collar, the coiffure, and notices the wisps of hair as they fall in- and outside of the collar. This facility is often denied the viewer, as busts are frequently displayed hard up against a vertical surface and thus can only be viewed two-dimensionally: on pedestals against a wall, in or on a cabinet, on a shelf or mantelpiece. This is how the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* appears in most of the photographs and paintings of Bernhardt's house. It is also how it appears in the individual photographs of it produced by the RMN with their blacked out background, although because there are several photographs, different views are provided separately. It is only in the Melandri photographs of the bust on a modelling stool (1878-79; figs 1: 34-35) and in Félix Lucas's drawing (1881; fig. 2: 5) that it can be considered as a piece of sculpture to be viewed in the round. This is because on a modelling stool is where a bust is *made* and including the sculptor with her tools (in

²⁸ De Lauretis (1994), 242.

²⁹ For a discussion of the portrait bust as both absent and present with regard to the subject represented, see Deborah Edwards on the tangible presence of the work and the absence of the subject. Edwards writes that 'in sculpture's capacity to occupy the spaces of the living body – to "replace" the (absent) subject in three-dimensional form [...] qualities of both absence and presence seem intensified'; 'Presence and Absence: Australian Portrait Sculpture', in *Presence and Absence: Portrait Sculpture in Australia*, ed. Deborah Edwards, exh. cat. (Canberra: National Portrait Gallery, 2003), 1-6 (4).

Melandri's photographs) directly indexes the process of making work. The gesture of the sculptor in the first of these photographs (fig. 1: 34) and her gaze in the second (fig. 1: 35), produce an erotically charged representation of the relationship between sculptor and work and therefore between her and the sitter for this bust. Lucas's drawing situates this object along with other works that represent a sculptor's practice (a clay bust in progress in a cloche and a plaster statue), her equipment (modelling stool and trestle), and therefore at the heart of one of the spaces where the sculptor made work. Melandri's photographs and Lucas's drawing *show that* now and this relationship of making and representing making implicates the viewer in a relationship to object and archive, ultimately, *demanding* that this history be written.

Just as sculpture is a material process, so too is this writing. The inscription of the 'conscious presence of desire of one woman for another' in a bust requires the scholar to come along, 126 years later, camera in hand, notebook in pocket, sun shining through the windows from outside, and fall in love with a piece of marble that has been worked up through the various stages of sculpture making and finished so that it shines in that sunlight, casts shadows upon itself and solicits a loving gaze and the hard work of scholarship in trying to find out anything about it.

Chapter Outline

The first chapter 'Making Love: Sarah Bernhardt's *Bust of Louise Abbéma* (1878), an Erotics of Beauty in Nineteenth-Century French Portrait Sculpture' tracks my process of falling in love with Bernhardt's marble bust. In order to articulate this, I deploy, and adapt, the work of Roland Barthes in *A Lover's Discourse* ([1977] 1979) and *Camera Lucida* ([1980] 2000), where I move towards calling this object 'beautiful' in a series of explorations of seeing and relating in an erotic lesbian register. This requires an in-depth reading of the bust in which Bernhardt's sculpture-making processes are considered in terms of the physical, social, and psychic investments any artist might have in making work; in this case because of an erotic love between the artist and sitter and their artistic collaboration in making work. Making this

portrait bust as an act of love is rooted in the necessary set of material conditions to produce it as a physical object: being a sitter and artist, observing the sitter, drawing, modelling clay, carrying out or arranging to carry out plaster casting and marble carving, providing the surface finish to the marble, as well as the general tasks of buying materials, tools and equipment, and running a studio. Bernhardt's acts of making love continued because she kept the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* for herself, displayed it in her home and exhibited it, probably only giving it away just before her death in 1923 by bequeathing it to Abbéma. The circumstances of the bust's production began from love between artist and sitter and, because of this, came to signify the sculptor's love of her work (object and practice). This set of events then has the capacity to induce the future love for the work by the investigating, and desiring, scholar, and it is this desire that prompts the extent to which this sculptor's history is explored and written.

Chapter 2, 'Home is where the Art Is: Sarah Bernhardt's Sculpture Studio', is based on the premise that no sculptor could sustain a practice for the length of time Bernhardt did (around fifty years) without adequate facilities. Bernhardt had three sculpture studios of her own from c. 1874 until 1923; the first rented, the second two in her consecutive homes on the avenue de Villiers and the boulevard Pereire in Paris. Bernhardt's dedicated sculpture studios were the subject of some, but very limited, textual description and visual representation during the 1870-80s, virtually none of which has been reproduced in recent literature or at exhibition. Far more attention was and, therefore, continues to be paid to a second room (in both homes) that served as studio and salon. Bernhardt used her atelier-salons for painting and some clay modelling, but their main function was to receive guests. Both atelier-salons are represented in a substantial archive of image and verbal description. This chapter scrutinizes all this available material in order to discern what I call a chronology and topography of the spaces of sculpture making. Despite the frequency with which material on Bernhardt's atelier-salons is reproduced and discussed in recent scholarship on her, none of this work has explained how these spaces operated as *working* studios, whether for sculpture or painting. My analysis of Bernhardt's studio homes therefore goes beyond the concept of the artist's domestic interior

and deploys extensive scrutiny for the signs of sculpture making and how these spaces were organized as working studios. This is instructive for the study of nineteenth-century French sculpture practice and production as a whole because the problems I have encountered (dating images or correctly identifying works referred to) are not those of the Bernhardt archive alone. The purpose of this work is to argue that the configuration and representation of any sculptor's studio needs careful investigation in order to see what the legacy of contemporary image and text can provide for the history of the places where work was made in this period.

To this I add the notion of Bernhardt's studio as, first, 'queer art space', then 'lesbian queer art space' because her most consistent and intimate artistic collaborators and colleagues were Louise Abbéma and the painter Georges Clairin. Clairin sustained a love relationship with fellow painter Henri Regnault until cut short by Regnault's death in the Franco-Prussian war in January 1871. Queer and lesbian queer art space contest the continual figuring of Bernhardt into heterosexual matrices of art production: the stories go that either she was taught by a male lover, became the lover of a male teacher, or was represented in art because she was a (sexualized) muse, femme fatale, icon, and so on.

Chapter 3, 'Making Work: The Sculpture Practice of Sarah Bernhardt' provides a material analysis of Bernhardt's sculpture practice: how she trained as a sculptor and made work. It also outlines the body of work she made and gives detailed readings of three individual works: *Après la tempête* (1876), *Statuette de Sarah Bernhardt* (c. 1880), and *Ophélie* (1880). Accounting for Bernhardt's sculpture practice is made difficult by the almost complete absence of documentary material on her daily practice from her period of training onwards. But this lack has forced me to think otherwise about how to write this sculpture history and approach what does exist differently than might be expected in the case of a figure who was, as I have already stated, a famous actress. Far from abandoning what might be called 'traditional art historical methods', it is precisely these that are required. This chapter is therefore concerned with the history of Bernhardt's training, her teachers, an analysis of her daily practice, and the (eventual) production of a catalogue raisonné and its analysis, presented in parts here.

Producing the catalogue has, in itself, been hugely instructive about the character of nineteenth-century French sculpture as a whole and the conditions of its documentation because of problems locating work, dating it, explaining how it was made, where exhibited, when and if sold, where distributed otherwise, and so on. Because ‘Sarah Bernhardt’ appears ‘different’ to the normal models of nineteenth-century French sculptors (whether male or female), her oeuvre has required an intensive process of investigation and scrutiny. But, in this chapter, I argue that it is not useful to treat her as an ‘exception’, but rather to learn from the methods a history of her practice and production demand in order to approach any sculptor’s history more diligently, by asking the same questions that have guided this research project. For instance, because Bernhardt could not attend the *École des beaux-arts* as a woman and yet did produce a body of work (seventy-seven separate works), how did she achieve this? If she managed it in the private studio of Mathieu Meusnier and Franceschi and thereafter in her own studio, and by collaborating with her artist friends, how can we begin to re-qualify the learning experiences of other sculptors in the period? How much do we really know about the studio teaching system in nineteenth-century France? What work is required to fill in this and so many other gaps in our knowledge of nineteenth-century sculpture practice in France?

Chapter 4 is entitled ‘A Pair of Vignettes on the Painting Practice of Louise Abbéma’, and concerns two portraits by Abbéma of Bernhardt, one in a riding outfit, the other a nude. Figured in most literature (biography, art history, visual culture) as a lifelong, faithful, admiring friend and official portraitist of Bernhardt I situate the two portraits (*Portrait de Sarah Bernhardt, sociétaire de la Comédie-Française*, 1876, not located; *Le Sommeil de Diane*, 1881, private collection, not located) as another act of making love and making work because they enact the reciprocity of the two women’s intimate and artistic relations. I do so by considering Abbéma’s studio as a space of work and sociality and by placing her as what I call a ‘dog-walking lesbian flâneuse who wore her lesbian heart on her sleeve’ based on evidence presented in contemporary periodicals. Although not a hugely useful or reliable account, one biographer who does consider Abbéma’s ‘sexual practice’ writes that she was, ‘according to

rumour, an avowed lesbian [...] but such a defect of character didn't bother Sarah in the least'.³⁰ The purpose of this chapter, which is necessarily far more cursory than I would like, is to contest such statements, based as they are on *no statement by Bernhardt* and put other possibilities in place that do use contemporary archival material as a resource.

The Epilogue, 'Making Love Work: A Tableau Vivant on the Lesbian Love Boat', is a record of the restaging of Abbéma's 1883 bois de Boulogne painting and of how I have, and plan to, investigate the history of this work. The last word in the thesis is given to the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* who in a reprise of the Interview questions my methods and motives in writing these artistic, erotic, and scholarly histories of desire and of living, loving, and working that desire.

Note on referencing system

The referencing system used is the *Modern Humanities Research Association Style Guide* (2002) with minor amendments. This guide does not allow for the complexities of referencing nineteenth-century periodicals which do not conform to a modern and standardized numbering system. Methods of binding older periodicals have often excised much referencing information. In order to write a more precise history of Bernhardt's sculpture practice and her intimate relationships, I provide all identifiable details about the date and the numbering of periodicals to which I refer. I also retain the standard abbreviated forms in French to describe these. For instance, an issue of the periodical *L'Art* is referenced to include the volume [vol.] (consecutive from inception), the 'année' (incremental year of publication), the part of a year [no.], the calendar year, and, when evident, the month of issue. This is also the case with other language periodicals, for instance, German-language publications.

All French words not italicized indicate that there is no adequate English equivalent with which to designate culturally specific activities and forms. Not italicising acknowledges the function of these signifiers in another discourse (Anglophone culture) of French nineteenth-century sculpture practice or culture. For example, 'praticien' in French can mean carver,

³⁰ Cornelia Otis Skinner, *Madame Sarah* (London: Joseph, 1967), 84.

plaster caster, or bronze founder in English and therefore conveys distinct conditions of sculpture production between the two countries; 'fumiste' was a form of writing, visual arts production, and performance specific to the second half of the nineteenth century in France and not elsewhere.

In French usage I conform to the capitalization conventions provided in Jacques Poitou (université Lumière de Lyons 2), 'Typographie: emploi de la majuscule', <<http://www.perso.univ-lyon2.fr/~poitou/Typo/t03.html>> [19 May 2007].

**Foreword/s Interview with a Bust: Chewing the Fat with Sarah
Bernhardt's Portrait of Louise Abbéma**

Preliminary Remarks

Telling people that I work on Bernhardt's sculpture elicits (on the whole) two responses. 'Do I make sculpture?' 'No, not enough time to do two jobs.' Or, more commonly, 'I didn't know she was a sculptor'. Both responses mark up the absence of an off-the-peg discourse with which to explain my practice as an art historian. I can, however, sum up my project as one that aims to produce an account of how one woman made sculpture in nineteenth-century France and that she made one work, the *Bust of Louise Abbéma*, exhibited at the Paris Salon in 1879 that appeals, in its material particularity, to what I call (my) scholarly lesbian desire.

There are a number of potential intellectual positions from where I could begin to configure a more elaborate explanation of what I am doing. Building a case study of 'Sarah Bernhardt' could be informed by, and inform, feminist interventions in art history, the social history of art, and queer studies. But attendance at the Association of Art Historians conference in Nottingham in April 2004 in the early days of this project left me feeling stuck between a rock and a hard place, rather than embraced by the loving arms of discrete domains within the greater disciplinary body of the humanities. At the roundtable of a session entitled 'Queering the Archive' the convener declared that the space of queering the archive wished to set itself apart from 'historical positivism' as well as 'unhook homosexuality from queer'.¹ This

¹ Gavin Butt, convener, and discussants, 'Queering the Archive,' *Association of Art Historians Conference*, University of Nottingham, 1-3 April 2004. See also Gavin Butt's report and analysis of the session: 'Finally, the session raised once more the important question of what we might be doing exactly in 'queering' the archive, and how this queering might be understood in relation to lesbian and gay sexuality and identity. A number of papers unhooked queerness from homosexuality and received iconographies of homoerotic representation, and identified it instead in relation to: the peculiar performance of 'silence' in Giorgio De Chirico's metaphysical paintings (Ara H. Merjan); the mournful attentions of the death-driven art historian (Alec Kennedy); and the 'chumly' relations between US art critics Harold Rosenberg and Clement Greenberg in the 1930s (Caroline A. Jones)'; 'Queering the Archive', *Bulletin* [Association of Art Historians], 86 (June 2004), n.p.

compounded my alarm at the absence of papers with lesbian subjectivity or subjecthood as their topic, and left me wondering where *their* queering might have escaped to. I asked about this absence and the response was that no such submissions had been made to the panel but, yes, 'lived experience' was a worthy focus of study. This only increased my worry: to associate lesbian with lived experience *and* advocate that we 'unhook homosexuality from queer' is problematic and highly charged in view of the larger scheme of this thesis. What is at stake here is that that any notion of 'lesbian' becomes consigned to the mere historical and constructed as non-, if not anti-, theoretical.

I had wanted to present this 'Interview with a Bust' as a stand-alone work, convinced that its format of exchange between scholar and speaking bust using Brechtian method would make evident the irony of any claim to historicity. I hoped the reader would marvel at just how useful *Verfremdungseffekt* still is as a practical method of making change: change in dominant and dominating discourse, in disciplining art history, and in the humanities under whose cover we all hover. But irony might also lie in how this could backfire on my integrity as a scholar. The interview, I was advised, might bear the brunt of the slur of a positivism incompatible with the necessary theoretical framework for art historical work. This would be to fall into the trap which Derrida perceives in Freud's joyous appraisal of archaeological methodology. He writes in *Archive Fever* of the moment marked by the:

nearly ecstatic instant Freud dreams of, when the very success of the dig must sign the effacement of the archivist: *the origin then speaks by itself*. The *arkhe* appears in the nude, without archive. It presents itself and comments on itself by itself. "Stones talk!" *Anamnesis* without *hypomnesis*! The archaeologist has succeeded in making the archive no longer serve any function. It *comes to efface itself*, it becomes transparent or unessential so as to let the *origin* present itself in person. Live, without mediation and without delay.²

So I took advice from an Old Mistress, rolled up my sleeves, and decided to bring the labour of my endeavours out in the open.

² Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever* [1995], trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 92-93.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's essay 'The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives' (1985) offers a position from which to state the necessity of doing historical work and, even more importantly, ensure that it is understood that this position is autocritical. Spivak's proposal is to 'document [...] and theoris[e] the itinerary of the consolidation of Europe as [...] sovereign and subject' in order to produce an 'alternative historical narrative of the "worlding" of what is today called "the Third World."' ³ I start by adapting Spivak's argument to suit my work, changing the following signifying elements: 'postcolonial critic of imperialism,' 'this essay,' 'the imperialist project.' I hope the adaptation is clear.

[T]he situation of the lesbian critic of the history of art undermines the argument [I return to this argument below]. The point of this thesis is to inspect soberly the absence of a text that can "answer one back" after the planned epistemic violence of the heteronormative project. ⁴

How does Spivak arrive at the position she calls the 'postcolonial critic of imperialism'? In the Interview I make a profoundly serious attempt to deal with the problem of textual absence, an absence similar to that which caused Spivak to ask: 'As the historical record is made up, who is dropped out, when, and why?' Spivak's account concerns the representation of the Rani of Sirmur and hers is a project of 'reading the archive [for] the pattern of exclusions that make the familiar function as such.' ⁵ But more than this, she declares her categorical desire even at the point where she has 'read' the archive and almost finished writing her essay. She wants to go to 'those hills' where the Rani of Sirmur lived in the early nineteenth century to perform an act of 'private piety.' She declares: 'I want to touch the Rani's picture, some remote substance of her, if it can be unearthed.' ⁶ Spivak's declaration of her desire is pertinent to my process of tracking the *Bust of Louise Abbéma*, both in my journeys to see the luminous marble

³ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives' in *Theory and History*, 24:3 (1985), 247-72 (247).

⁴ Spivak, 251.

⁵ Spivak, 270.

⁶ Spivak, 271.

substance of this work of art and in my efforts to track the bust's journey through production, exhibition, ownership, discourse, and history.

I want to elaborate on how Spivak arrives at what she calls 'the absence of a text that can "answer one back"' in order to indicate why I have chosen to enact a fantasy of scholarly lesbian desire by getting this stone to speak. Spivak moves through the arguments of Hayden White and Dominick LaCapra in order to mark the site of archival activity precisely as one of desire that pertains to the genealogy of the historian. Spivak's desire to know and read an archive derives, she claims, from a genealogy of the accident of birth and education in India providing her with a 'sense of the historical canvas, a hold on some of the pertinent languages that are useful tools for the bricoleur.'⁷ This is useful but problematic for a subject positioning I am calling one of scholarly lesbian desire: lesbian identification at 'birth' is a contested area of medical discourse (genetics). Instead I claim a genealogy of lived experience informed by an education in the academy and outside it. Reading Spivak's 'sense of the historical canvas' and 'hold on some of the pertinent languages' as the material practice of the historian, it is my purpose to demonstrate that a similarly material practice fuels my project: the method and model I call scholarly lesbian desire.

Spivak's critique of White notes his derision of historians who 'buried in the archives hop[e] by what they call a "sifting of the facts" or "the manipulation of data" to find the form of the reality that will serve as the object of representation in the account that they will write "when all the facts are known" and they have finally "got the story straight."⁸ Spivak favours White's admonition toward self-criticality, advising that any such 'construction of a fiction' should be "read". However, she also perceives a failure by White to deal critically with the institutionalised discipline of literary criticism he inhabits and lauds. Dominick LaCapra's position, she argues, also warns against insistent archivism but is 'bolder and more tempered'.

⁷ Spivak, 252.

⁸ Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1973); cited in Spivak, 248.

Spivak cites LaCapra: 'The archive as fetish is a literal substitute for the "reality" of the past which is "always already" lost for the historian . . . the archive is a stand-in for the past that brings the mystified experience of the thing itself – an experience that is always open to question.'⁹ Spivak goes on to explore the historian/archive relationship *pace* LaCapra and his critique of the transferential metaphor for this relationship. It is, he states, a 'useful critical fiction to believe that the texts or phenomena to be interpreted may answer one back and even be convincing enough to lead one to change one's mind.'¹⁰ This brings me back to my adapted citation from Spivak's essay. However aware one is of the critical fiction of a text that can 'answer one back', she argues, the 'situation of the postcolonial critic of imperialism undermines the argument' because there is precisely an absence of such a text. At this point I diverge from Spivak. The Interview demonstrates that there is not total material absence in the archive on the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* or on Bernhardt's sculpture practice as a whole. But there is erasure, denial, and cultural blinkeredness.

How can this then become productive, how can one write about this? If, in other histories, desire has been wiped clean from this material object and the practice that made it, then by interviewing the bust, getting this stone to speak, I am inscribing its surface with my fantasy engagement with the archive. In this encounter with an artwork that answers my questions, addresses my needs, becomes my friend, helps to form my thoughts, I am able to mediate the frustrating space of destroyed letters, heteronormative archival fantasy, or even what Spivak calls the 'linguistic nihilism' of deconstruction. What is at stake here? I am not aiming to 'get the story straight,' far from it, but is bending it equally naïve? What I am grappling with in this thesis is an archive that is both full and sparse at the same time. It needs to be read: for same-sex desire, for the labour of making work that is also making love, and, therefore, with scholarly lesbian desire. This can be lonely work: talking to a bust helps.

⁹ Dominick LaCapra, *History and Criticism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 92; cited in Spivak, 249.

¹⁰ LaCapra, 73; cited in Spivak, 251.

Looking for the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* took me to the musée d'Orsay in Paris in June 2003. This was no joyous journey; my grasp of French had faltered; the museum attendants claimed that 'Sarah Bernhardt was not a sculptor,' and the floor on which the bust is displayed was closed due to local government strike action. By this time my archive frustration was reaching fever pitch but help was on its way from a member of the Documentation team. She arranged for a sculpture curator to accompany me to the room where the bust is displayed and I was thus treated to a private view. The bust is encased in a Perspex vitrine within which it is set at 90 degrees to both Gérôme's painted marble bust of Bernhardt and Barrias's terracotta of Georges Clairin. The June light poured through the large windows of the museum overlooking the Seine. My pleasure in this intimate encounter dissipated upon hearing the curator's story that the museum's ivory copy of Lalique's 1896 medallion of Bernhardt, had been presented, she claimed, to 'Bernhardt's lover, the painter Georges Clairin.' If the dedication was 'proof' that Bernhardt and Clairin were lovers, then what of Abbéma's gilded silver copy of the same medallion which also bears a dedication? In the fraught encounter with the archive where some dedications get a mention and others do not, how was I to proceed? Particularly when the claim about the dedication on Lalique's medallion was not true.¹¹ But I was, and still am, tracking the history of this object and its making fuelled by scholarly lesbian desire. I was not about to give up so easily. I decided to ask the bust some questions.

Interview with a Bust

Miranda Mason Hallo and welcome to 'Making Love / Making Work', the thesis.

Thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed! The reason I wanted to interview you is because I've been really struggling with some issues in my work on Bernhardt's sculpture and

¹¹ I have viewed and photographed both medallions on each side. The dedication on the ivory copy in the musée d'Orsay actually reads 'A mon ami Georges Clairin / R Lalique' and was therefore a gift from Lalique to Clairin. The two men were friends (see an anonymous photograph c. 1900 in the collection at the musée d'Orsay of Clairin, Lalique and Picard entitled 'La table du mercredi, cours la Reine'). It is possible that Bernhardt did give Clairin a copy of the medallion as several were made, but it is not this one and there are no records of such a transaction. The gilded silver copy of the medallion in the musée du Petit Palais has the following inscription on the reverse: 'À Louise Abbéma, souvenir de ton [or 'son'] amie de toujours, 9bre [novembre] 1896 Sarah Bernhardt.'

the archive on it. Not just with how hard it is to gain some kind of picture of her practice as a sculptor but also because, I ... I ... well as a twenty-first century art historian I look at a piece of sculpture such as you where one woman (the artist) might have been, you know, with another woman (the sitter). Well, err, I guess I'm trying to say that I look for and read works like you with what I call *scholarlylesbian desire*.

Bust of Louise Abbéma Pardon? Could you speak more slowly, please, I am French. Or is it you that think you're a TGV?

MM [*more slowly*] Scholarly lesbian desire.

Bust Desire? Um, that sounds nice ... how can I help?

MM Well, it strikes me that as a work of art, a marble bust, you could just be a representation of a painter named Louise Abbéma made by a sculptor named Sarah Bernhardt. But I want to find a way to explain your affective power the first time I saw you, well, actually, the three times I've seen you, and the many times I've gazed at your image since. I want to see if it's just me or if there is a way to argue that you are the material substance, an artistic inscription of Bernhardt's desire – I mean Bernhardt the historical subject, as she lived, loved, and worked – and of Louise Abbéma's for that matter. I think you are that *now* – not just that you were that back in 1878 when you were made or in the years that followed when Bernhardt kept you in her home and was photographed with you. I want to find a way of establishing some kind of genealogical link, something transhistorical (yes, sorry), between the desire I claim is the reason, or at least the reasoning, for your making and my desire to know about it. Because without my desire to know and to feel pleasure in looking at, writing about you, *this* history of art would not exist. Boom, boom! It sounds so grandiloquent but ... Perhaps a good place to start would be with the material practice that made you, Bernhardt's work as a sculptor. A lot of attention is paid to her work as an actress but her sculpture and painting practice are palmed off onto psychobiography. In her time and since, she's

represented either as choosing sculpture as a hobby because she could never sit still, or doing it for attention, to show off. Hardly anyone credits her sculpture production with any serious intent even though she exhibited for years at the Paris Salon and across Europe, in the United States, sold her sculpture and applied for public commissions just like the rest of them. She just wasn't ever allowed to be one of the best of them.

Bust Yes. She trained with Roland Mathieu-Meusnier and a bit with Jules Franceschi. In their time they were well-known sculptors in Paris with a lot of public commissions, busts, and funerary monuments on their job sheets. It's not only women who have been written out of the history of art, Jules and Roly are hardly well-known figures now because of all that one man genius stuff, you know, 'Rodin, Rodin, Rodin! [*sings to the tune of the hymn 'Holy, Holy, Holy' (1826) by Reginald Heber (1783-1826), music by John Bacchus Dykes (1861)*]

Together [*rousingly*] ... Lord God Almighty!

Bust Move oeuvre, darling! No, but seriously, women were not able, sorry, not allowed, to enter the *École des beaux-arts* until 1897.

MM Did that matter though?

Bust Well, really you did have to learn in a private atelier with a master. Who took on female students, of course. Before '63 they were all independent and so, it sort of didn't matter. Roland took on women, so did Franceschi, and not just SB. Franceschi's teacher before him, François Rude, he probably had female students too. He was married to a history painter so I doubt if she let him get away with only having men in his studio ... Then of course the studios, the ones where you did the modelling and all that, they opened up in the *École* after '63. I mean, you could still learn sculpture outside the *École* but not going there, yes, it did matter. Not being able to go there, meant you were denied the milieu of a large art teaching establishment with all its facilities. Small studios didn't always have that many

resources in one place like the *École* did. There one was able to draw from casts, one had models of both sexes, a range of teachers, and all those other students around to bounce one's ideas off. One, not 'you'. It's quite important to know that 'one' didn't always mean 'you', you know, Abbéma, Bernhardt, you, if you'd been around in those days. It's important to remember that now. It was all a very competitive business; that's how you got on then and earned commissions. But competition was productive: it was how you made a living. Not going to the EBA didn't *prevent* women from becoming artists and making a living, it just affected the type and range of practice that was possible for them. And how hard they had to work to enter into that competitive arena where the boys had a head start ... That's why women artists – sculptors and painters – produced so many portraits – like me! – and self-portraits, of course. Where would you turn if you couldn't do, or had to find other ways to do, what was readily available to the lads?

MM Yes, I see. But is doing portraits such a bad thing? Like you say, look at you! Was a portrait bust not taken seriously? Was it always seen as a lesser kind of work?

Bust No, not always – it depended on who it was of and if that's all you, the artist, did. There was an issue, though, about what was accepted as the best kind of art, like you said. Again, that was about opportunities. Because women didn't attend the *École*, they couldn't get the scholarships to Rome and have access to the classical tradition at source. Now that was a huge disadvantage if you wanted your art production to be considered within the Western European tradition. Think of all that lot that went there in the 1850s and 60s. Stebbins and her crew ...

MM So what you're saying is that the Western European artistic tradition was really a male one?

Bust Sort of. There was this division: art could be 'virile' (that's boys to you) or 'féminin' (that's girls or big girl's blouses to you) and guess which one was thought of as better?! That's

why Abbéma was dubious about the Union of Women Painters and Sculptors, not because she didn't agree with women working together, far from it, but simply because it was immediately seen in the art critical press as lesser than the mainstream and might pigeon-hole you as 'a flower painter.' Of course, Abbéma was called a 'flower painter', because she was a flower painter. But the point is, she produced countless other images; portraits, advertising, those all important interior scenes, ones of the studio. Like the Impressionists did, but just not by a man, eh? *Déjeuner dans la serre*, the conservatory painting (fig. 2:11). That sort of thing.

MM So what about Bernhardt and you? How come you came to sit for Bernhardt?

Bust Hang on a minute ... I didn't sit for Bernhardt, Louise did. I'm the bust, she was the sitter. This isn't a *séance* we're having. I'm just a carved white marble representation of Louise Abbéma. So I can only speak *about* her.

MM Oh, I'm sorry. I was getting carried away there. I'll ask you again, then: How did the sitting for you happen? How did they first meet? Or see each other? Abbéma was about twelve or thirteen, wasn't she? I read about it, it started as some kind of school girl crush ...

Bust Well, no, actually. Abbéma was nearly eighteen. All those stories have got it wrong. She might have lied about her age, it is a bit confusing, I have to say, but I don't think that really happened until the mid-90s when she was in her mid-forties ... seems a bit daft to me to be worried about your age, but never mind ... Check out her birth certificate at the musée d'Étampes if you don't believe me ... Anyway, what happened is that she saw Bernhardt out and about at the Salon in 1871 – it was a bit of a cruising spot then, well, it was for the posh ones ...

MM Really? I thought they all just did the bars in Montmartre ...

Bust No, there were tons of places – the theatres, the bois de Boulogne. If you wanted to pull, you could go to anything from a brothel to a hat shop! Anyway, Louise didn't pull that day... but she did like what she saw. So she made a quick sketch of SB there and then and worked on it at home. Yes, that was one of the drawings (fig. 4:12). Sketching Sarah wasn't difficult for her, she went for a woman who could wear it well. Think about all that flippity-floppity train, the swish of the fabric in all that drapery; she liked that big-bow style. That's what the girls were into back then. Not to mention Sarah's luscious red-auburn, flowy, all-over-the-place-needs-controlling-by-a-loving-hand hair ...

MM Ooh! But, honestly, I thought it was all tailored jackets and stuff. That's how people today know that Abbéma was, you know, that way inclined. She wore all the shirt and collar business. They called it the Montmartre look, didn't they?

Bust Sure, that was one way of knowing and showing. But do you really think there's only one way of looking gorgeous? Is that what it's like now? Blimey! The twenty-first century must be a pretty boring place!

MM Well, no, it isn't. But if Bernhardt wore big long dresses and so did all those other women, how can you tell the difference?

Bust You have to look at how Abbéma represented her. Anyway, to get back to my story, in the correct order, if you don't mind. She worked up the sketch, asked for a sitting, and the result was the 1876 painting (fig. 4:2). Yes, that's the one, in the riding gear. It was Abbéma's coming out piece at the Salon, in more ways than one. She'd exhibited there for a couple of years but this was her big breakthrough into the art world. And, for those who were looking, you could just see the saucy turn of Bernhardt's body and that big bow just waiting to be undone, know what I mean? I guess that's why Henry James was a bit snide about the painting in the *New York Tribune* – he's not exactly the sort of bloke to understand. Mind you, some of the critics did pick up a bit on what was going on – the *Gazette des beaux arts* said that

Abbéma had shown Bernhardt as a ‘sort of Amazone about town’. Giddy up! That’s all I can say! Things had already been hotting up for them by this time; they’d met properly in 1874 and by ‘75 they made nuptial pendant medallions of each other (fig. 1: 25). And then came the sitting for me. It wasn’t hard for either of them to do, they talked sometimes, other times sat in silence, but there was an electricity between them that even Edison couldn’t have imagined.

MM Sounds good. Well, I have to tell you that when I first saw you at the musée d’Orsay I had a funny feeling, a kind of electric shock. Roland Barthes calls it the *punctum* – it’s that moment when you look at an image, he says, and something about it ‘rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces [you].’ It’s not that sort of interest where you just like something, you know, ‘Oh, that’s a pretty picture!’ sort of thing, but when you really, really *love* something ...

Bust [*Bust blushes*] Steady on, girl, I’m only a marble bust! Don’t you think you’re getting a bit carried away?

MM I know, but ... yes, I am, but, so what? It *was* like that; it was like a lightning bolt seeing you. And I *don’t* think it’s just me. And, anyway, don’t be so modest!

Bust Not just you? Modest? What do you mean?

MM Well, Barthes says when you have one of those *punctum* moments that, yes, it is something *you* add to the image. But that doesn’t mean there’s nothing already there to make it happen. I mean, you seemed to be saying this before about Abbéma’s 1876 painting of Bernhardt: she liked a girl that could wear it well and there was some kind of hanky panky going on. Why are you getting all cagey now?

Bust Well, I guess I'm so used to people not noticing me. I've been around for years now and no-one has said a single interesting thing about me. I've heard that I've been called 'mediocre', and that Georges bloomin' Bernier in the Wildenstein catalogue said I had, wait for it, 'a touch of sub-Carpeaux' charm. Humph! [*starts to sniff*]

MM Honestly, what do they know? Please, don't get upset. All I can say is that they can't have been looking very hard, let alone thinking very hard. That is really, really a meaningless comment whichever way you look at it. There is no point even trying to deconstruct it. Just you think about this instead: that first day I saw you, you looked fabulous, all shiny and luminous with your crystals glistening in the sun. I was there with you on my own – okay, I wish I had been there on my own – it was the glow of love, I'm telling you. It was really special. Apart from that sculpture curator who said the thing about the Lalique medallion ...

Bust What thing?

MM Oh, I was all excited about seeing you and she went and spoilt it all by saying that the ivory medallion by Lalique in the museum was given by Bernhardt to her lover Georges Clairin ...

Bust You what? That big Pompier poof?!

MM Really?! But everyone says he was Bernhardt's lover: it's in all the biographies, it's on the back of photographs of him in the library, I think I even heard it on the Today programme on Radio Four the other morning ... Are you sure he wasn't just going through a phase?

Bust Oh, please! Georges was Henri's boyfriend, son 'ami'. He followed him to Rome when Henri got the Prix, they went to Spain together in '68, and then set up home in Morocco, wink, wink (well, I would if I could). They shared a bedroom in Georges's flat in Paris during the war, cuddled up together out in the woods when they were on duty –

because they were cold – yeah, right! If Georgie said in his memoirs ‘Regnault et moi’ once, he said it a thousand times. Come on!

MM But what about that femme fatale portrait he did of Bernhardt in ‘76?

Bust It was him who was the femme fatale! That was his frock she was wearing. They wore the same size in dresses. Didn’t you know? I thought you said you’d been doing research?

MM Err, no, I didn’t know. But I read that Henri had a fiancée. So how *could* he and Georges be a gay couple?

Bust Of course they were a gay couple. They lived together, went everywhere together and were always happy! Except Georges wasn’t very gay when Henri got killed in the war, he was pretty cut up about that.

MM Em, I didn’t mean that kind of gay, well, I did mean that kind of *gay as well*. I meant queer.

Bust What, not feeling very well? Poorly all the time? No they were both strapping healthy lads.

MM No – gay, queer, homosexual. They were ‘together’, you know. They fancied each other, kissed each other on the lips, did the business. But now I’m wondering how could they be if Henri had a bloomin’ girlfriend?

Bust Oh, I see what you mean, is that what you call it now? Yes, they were having a ‘gayqueer’ relationship. But why are you so worried about Henri’s fiancée? Some men did that. They had to. Fam-lee and all that. Henri’s dad was one of those big Parisian bourgeois types. Henri was the only child-producing possibility in that family, and was expected to

follow suit, at least in the marrying way. I think he was alright being an artist. So he did what he had to and just pretended. Of course, he liked the girl, but it's not the same is it ... Look, Henri wrote a letter from Madrid about him and Georges. He said that he wanted to open a bar and that he and Jojotte (that's what he called Georges) would be the demoiselles of the place. They would have a bordello upstairs with 'cosmopolitan' types floating in and out and that it would be run by ladies of the night of all sexes, sizes, ages and colours. Is that a straight man talking? Come on!

MM I guess not. By the way, just to get back to a bit of art history, what happened to Abbéma's '76 painting? After all, that's the one Bernhardt chose to illustrate her *Memoirs*, and not Clairin's 'big girl's blouse' one, as you call it.

Bust I think it's in a private collection. Either that or lost. You know the score with women's art works. 'Oops, I left it in a car park,' that sort of thing.

MM Yes, like Lewis's *Cleopatra*. Left in a car park for goodness sake; look at the size of it! It's like the whole archive thing – 'Hallo! Life and work of Louise Abbéma! Where are you now?' [sighs]. But back to you. How many sittings did it take to make you, you know the sketching and modelling?

Bust Sorry, 'process of Sarah Bernhardt's sculpture production of the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* – no record of that'.

MM Well, were you made when she was still in the studio at Clichy? Or was it when she moved to avenue de Villiers and had that purpose-built sculpture studio made?

Bust 'Sorry, no record of that'. Sorry, I'm teasing you, that's mean of me. I was started in '77, so it was Villiers. Well, as I remember ... I'm getting on you know, my memory is not

always what it was and there are no-diaries-or-studio-journals-or-letters, or anything at all really, to remind me of the way we were ...

MM That's okay, 1877 is better than nothing. So, you're in the Orsay now. How did you get here?

Bust 'Sorry, no record of that'. Only joking! Promise. As you insist: all I know is I was bought at auction back in March 1978 from a private collector in Paris. For next to nothing, I hasten to add. Then another owner (I'm pretty sure I got sold again in October, ungrateful persons) wanted to ship me out of the country in 1986. At that time French museums were able to stop artworks at customs and buy them for the national collections. There I was on the border with Switzerland, it was June 1986, and that nice curator who's at the musée Rodin now came to the customs to inspect me. I have to say, I felt rather important. They wanted me, and so I was shipped back to Paris – where I belong, after all, *c'est chez moi là-bas*. Art Transit (nice lads, really) took me to the holding bay for acquisitions with Mlle Guise. Somehow my silver pedestal got lost along the way ... you didn't see it in Lons, did you, when you went looking for Jules's *La Fortune* in those thermal baths? Well, okay, maybe not, and I guess you have to let things go, and, like I say, I'm *chez moi à Paris*. But seriously, before that there is a long time when I don't know what happened to me. When she was dying Sarah asked her son Maurice to make sure Louise was left something in the will. So I left Bernhardt's place and went off to Abbéma's studio. She put me in a special cabinet on the wall so I could watch her paint (fig. 1:36). I stayed there until Louise died four years later of a broken heart [*sobs a bit*]. She'd known SB since she was eighteen and was still there at the end, by her bedside. She washed her body for the burial, you know ... [*goes quiet*]. She was getting on for seventy then, it's such a long time ...

MM Yes, it is. I am so sorry; I didn't mean to upset you. Let's change the subject. You got around when Bernhardt was alive though, didn't you? What was it, the Salon in '79, then London, New York, Vienna, back to Paris ...?

Bust No, it's okay, I've started so I'll finish ... Of course when Louise did die she had no-one left: Sarah was gone, Georges was gone, her parents had died years before. She didn't have any brothers and sisters, and Sarah's grandchildren weren't that keen on her (have a look at what Lysiane said about her in the biography). I don't know how she got on with Maurice himself. She'd been friends with Sarah's niece Saryta, another 'black sheep' of the family, painted her portrait back in '88. But she was dead too. And Louise's other girlfriends ... I don't know where they were then ... she was ... old ... it's not easy ... living on without people ... Anyway, I think I was bought by the expert for Louise's studio sale, a man called Victor le Masle. But how long he held onto me or if he gave me to his son, Robert, who was an art collector too, that I'm not sure.

MM So, you're saying that Abbéma died sad and lonely, a melancholy old lesbian?

Bust Okay, I was hamming it up a bit ... To go back to your question about the exhibitions ... No, I didn't go to London in '79. It was June and I was still at the Salon. And I didn't want to go to the exhibition in New York in 1880. You won't catch me with a load of New York bankers breathing their cognacky breath down *my* neck.

MM Stop exaggerating! There were women at the New York show too ... Emma Stebbins, Anne Whitney, they were all there ...

Bust Ha! Now who's exaggerating? You don't know that, you fibber!

MM Okay, maybe you're right. But Stebbins's brother, Henry (who was a merchant banker by the way), he was there, and you know what they say about lesbians, female-friends, whatever, and invisibility ... The guy from the *Times* wasn't exactly interested in the art, why should he notice a couple of women sculptors?

Bust Yes, so it might as well have been a load of old New York bankers, right? Well, as far as you can tell from reading, yes, you guessed it, the *New York Times*! Weren't there any feminist periodicals in the States then? They would have told it like it was if Emma, or Anne and Abby had been there ... Anyway, to get back to *my* story: I get sea sick. Vienna would have been okay because I could have gone on the train. Maybe I did go to Vienna? I can't remember now ... But all those shows, she mostly took the stuff there to sell in the early years, and I wasn't for sale. I did pluck up the courage to go to Chicago in '93. But then that was a women's do, so, a bit of alright, if you know what I mean. That show back in Paris in '81 – at first I wasn't too chuffed about that really. I thought it would be one of those men-only cercles with the bourgeoisie bleating on about male genius. But once I got there, and the lasses were there, I realized the meaning of 'les arts libéraux' ...

MM Oh, I see! Maybe 'plus ça change' isn't actually what we think it is, after all ... But in all this time didn't anyone notice that you were different, or so special? I mean the press used to go on about Abbéma and her hair, and strutting her stuff in those tight tailored jackets and tricorne hats or whatever, with her dog, of course. Fatma at first, then Paf, Flambeau, she always had a dog, usually the black caniche, 'badge of the tribade' as it was called. I really like the way she did all that right into old age ...

Bust At the time – mostly in the '70s, '80s, and '90s – Abbéma was noticed because she was a painter and therefore a public figure. Her works were exhibited a lot, she hung out with Sarah. Whether they liked it or not, they had to say something about her. They just didn't say anything about its function.

MM Function?

Bust Yes, wearing your desire on your sleeve, so to speak. It's difficult to mistake a gougnotte if she's got brass buttons all down her front!

MM Gougnotte?

Bust Yes. Garçonne, mannish woman. Sapphistico.

MM I see. And, like you say, Abbéma always did it with so much brass. She had the collars, the fob-watch, the knotted cravat, a tiepin. But what about you?! That upward sweep of your hair, those cheeky sideburns ...

Bust Kiss curls, darling ...

MM Sorry, kiss curls ... your neck framed by that upturned collar, the bunch of violets (and we all know what that means) spilling over your lapel caressing the soft-shadowed skin of your neck, those heavy lidded 'come on over to my place' eyes ...

Bust [*blushes again*] I guess I always try and look my best.

MM To go back to your life as an artwork ... I find it interesting that Bernhardt had you around a lot. It's you in those famous photos with the coffin. What was all that about?

Bust 'Til death us do part'. This was Louise and Sarah's way of showing the world, or at least the world that can be bothered to look, that they were together. Simple really.

MM It's funny because recently a scholar has drawn attention to the fact that this photo is sometimes cropped to cut you out ... and that happened at the time too. But even when you're not cropped out, not that many people mention that you are there ...

Bust Humph! Again.

MM And that's what I'm struggling with when it comes to having an archive. There are so many gaps – missing bits – and it's as if I'm imagining something that happened when it might not have ...

Bust But in the coffin photographs I am right there on the hearth, you could say at the heart, of Bernhardt's home.

MM Yes, you are. You're also in both the well-known 1879 Bourgoin watercolours (figs 2:5-6). There [*points*] on the sideboard. When I realised it was you I started to think about how you just pop up everywhere and what it would mean to map out those traces of you, your impress in this world. That doing this, and what it comes up with, could be *my* archive, or at least some, an important, part of it. There are the two photos of Bernhardt with you (figs 1:34-35). She's got her arm round you in one and is gazing into your eyes in the other, for goodness sake! And, of course, that drawing of the sculpture studio in 1881 (fig. 2:7). There you are right at the centre of her working sculpture studio. Your presence is so deeply inscribed in this enormously famous life. You are Louise Abbéma's portrait bust and if you are so inscribed into Bernhardt's life, at least often enough for someone like me to spot it, then all that stuff about Abbéma being a 'faithful friend' simply does not explain it.

Bust No, you're right, it does not explain it.

MM No, it doesn't explain it. It's more to do with a lack of interest in Abbéma as a painter, as a collaborator of Bernhardt, a historical figure of any merit whatsoever. It's so typical of doing the history of women artists – say a bit about them, and move on to the next one. How many times have Picasso's birth date, his birthplace, his nursery scribblings, his school dinners been discussed, eh?!

Bust Picasso, who's that?

MM Oh, no-one important. Anyway let's get back to you again. Did you enjoy going to the exhibition at the Jewish Museum in New York?

Bust I did actually. At first I thought it was going to be really uncomfortable and I was going to be packed off to the United States on my own. Last time I went at least I had *Ophélie* to keep me company even though she was a bit of a wet blanket. Mind you, she was used to keeping afloat on water (figs. 3:10-15) so that reassured me a bit ... And I have to admit, I was nervous about going on an aeroplane. I'd never been on one before.

MM I hope it wasn't too traumatic for you. You were safely wrapped up in a nice sturdy crate and guarded by a curator from Orsay, weren't you? Surely going to an exhibition is a bit more comfy than it used to be in the days when you they shoved a bit of straw round you in a wooden box? I know for sure that you of all people wouldn't want to arrive in the Big Apple looking like you'd just jumped off *The Haywain*.

Bust You're right, I was okay. I was just worried about it for ages before, you know, once you'd told me I was going. I thought my collar might get chipped or my flowers broken again. One of the petals on the violets got damaged before and they're not that easy to repair. Then I was worried about those trendy New Yorkers thinking I looked old-fashioned. It's not like I can get changed, you know, my appearance is, well, set in stone really.

MM Don't be daft. I came all the way from Leeds to see you and you looked fine. You're still as fabulous as ever. You are beautiful just the way you are and as far as I'm concerned you always will be. That butch look is pretty timeless, you know.

Bust 'Butch look' – what's that?

MM Oh, sorry, it's this 1950s term that the girls used about each other when they dressed up; shirt and tie, shiny shoes, Farrar's, that kind of thing.

Bust What girls? What are Farrar's?

MM Sorry, I'm getting ahead of myself here. Working class girls, in the United States and the UK. I'm not sure if it was only a city thing. It was like the Montmartre scene in your day. Farrar's are a make of men's trousers that the girls wore, well still do actually. They've got a neat little buttoned bum pocket and, I don't know, they just feel comfortable. They hang quite nicely if you've got larger hips (part of getting older, isn't it?). And the crease stays in well. The pockets are good as well, you can get all your change in them without it dropping out like it does if you wear trousers made for women and ...

Bust Hold your horses, dear. Aren't we supposed to be talking about me here, not your favourite type of trousers? Anyway, we didn't do the trouser thing, it was illegal. So you can't call us 'butch'. Well, not on the street anyway.

MM Okay, maybe not. But do you really think Abbéma wore a cravat in the same way as a straight woman?

Bust No, you're right. In fact not that many women did wear cravats back in the early days. I know a lot of the whole 'masculine' thing was taken over by straights in the 1920s – I saw that in Bernhardt's house in those few years just before she died and then when I went to rue Lafitte, Louise had a few straight friends that liked to look 'ambiguous'.

MM Yeah, just not ambiguous when you ask 'em out, right?

Bust Tell me about it! No, there is a difference. It might be the tie-pin; the kind of cravat, how you tie it; what sort of shoes have you got on, that kind of thing. It's in the details. That's what makes the difference, makes it different in our kind of fashion, you know?

MM Exactly! That's what I meant about the Farrar's, the deep pockets, the waistband ...

Bust Okay, okay, don't start all the fetishy-letishy stuff about trousers again. Just because you're allowed to wear them nowadays ...

MM Sorry. You're right, it's not fair. But it does help when I'm lying prostrate on the floor taking your picture. You're only 254 millimetres off the ground you know ...

Bust I know that! I have to spend all day looking at feet and ankles, and calves too, and shoes and boots, and socks, sandals, painted toenails ... don't look at me like that!... all day, every day! Just because you do it, doesn't mean everyone lies on the floor taking photos of me!

MM Well, maybe they will now. I've done my best to persuade the world, that you need to be put on a pedestal. So people can walk all around you and look at you again and again. Talking of which, what are you doing in August 2008? Would you like to come to the UK? You haven't been there before have you?

Bust Oh, I might be free, must just check my diary ...

MM Thought you said you didn't have a diary?

Bust Em ... [*blushes*]. Oh, okay, nothing. When can I come? Who will be there? What shall I wear? Does my bum look big in this? ... Yippee! I can't wait! But, will anyone else like me? Is it cold? Will you be there?

MM Of course, I'll be there. Please. Remember. Never forget. I love you.

THE END, AND, NOW, BEGINNING AGAIN ...

1 Making Love: Sarah Bernhardt's *Bust of Louise Abbéma* (1878), an Erotics of Beauty in Nineteenth-Century French Portrait Sculpture

1.1 Love at First Sight

'Gorgeous!'

Such was the outburst of language solicited (*sotto voce*) by my first sighting of the marble portrait bust of Louise Abbéma (1878) (figs 1: 1-4).¹ Unlike the chance circumstances which Roland Barthes allocates to the utterance of those accumulated fragments of language that constitute *A Lover's Discourse*, my amorous exclamation (not spoken aloud in the presence of an unfamiliar accompanying curator) occurred as the result of a planned research trip that sealed what has since come to resemble a successful, arranged marriage between scholar and white marble bust. My initial response to the aesthetic affect of the bust, formulated as a fragment of a lover's discourse, is instrumental to the methodology I call reading with scholarly lesbian desire and is grounded in its materiality and facture as a work of figural, portrait sculpture. In this chapter I explore how this is a contractual relationship that sets up the possibility of undertaking productive and non-normative readings of art objects and their archives in the art historical workplace. Reading with scholarly lesbian desire for, and with, difference alerts the discipline of art history that there is still (art) work out there that needs, indeed *demand*s, to be

¹ The title of the work in the Salon guide (1879) is *Portrait de Mlle. L. Abbéma* and its description is given as 'buste, marbre'. For reasons of clarity and elegance I refer to it in English initially by description (as 'the marble portrait bust of Louise Abbéma') and thereafter by the title, the *Bust of Louise Abbéma*. The object's genre classification 'portrait' is removed, synecdochally, from the title and shifted into the art historian's text. I also remove 'Mlle' and include Abbéma's first name in full. My changes to the title of the work reflect art historical and cultural changes between nineteenth-century France and the twenty-first-century Anglophone worlds informed by feminist art history practice amongst other things. I adopt this method of referring to this bust and all the busts I discuss. I also provide, where possible, the full last name of the sitter as this was often not supplied in the Salon guide. How my interventions are relevant to portraiture as a signifying practice is discussed below. In the case of other works of art, I use the title given by the artist and retain this in French, insofar as either is possible to establish. When a title is not given, I do one of two things. If a title has been provided at the time by someone other than the artist and is adequate to designate the work in question, I provide this in roman font in quotation marks. Where a title has been assigned by someone other than the artist and is inadequate or incorrect, I provide my description of the work using roman font without quotation marks.

done. Bernhardt's sculpture practice, despite her overdetermined presence in the social and cultural history of the last 150 years (as actress, celebrity, muse), has not received thorough and systematic art historical consideration.² The notion that the 'lesbian' (as modifier) might contribute to any aspect of Western art production and culture under the long reign of modernity is as yet unthought.³ It is, however, not unknown, only the unthought known.⁴ To

² A number of exhibitions since her death have or share Bernhardt as their subject. These tend to be curated in terms that consider Bernhardt as a celebrity or within the context of a larger artistic milieu. Although featuring several works of sculpture and painting, the focus is not solely on Bernhardt's artistic practice and no extensive catalogue raisonné has yet been published. The principal exhibitions are: *Sarah Bernhardt 1844-1923*, Ferrers Art Gallery, London, March and April 1973; *Pierre Cardin présente Sarah Bernhardt*, Espace Pierre Cardin, Paris, 31 March to 30 May 1976; *Sarah Bernhardt and her Times*, Wildenstein, New York, 13 November to 28 December 1984; *Stars et monstres sacrés*, musée d'Orsay, 19 December 1986 to 1 March 1987; *Sarah Bernhardt: Artist and Icon*, Severin Wunderman Museum [catalogue of museum collection donated by Severin Wunderman], 1992; 'Sarah Bernhardt: Femme Fatale', in *Theatergöttinnen: Inszenierte Weiblichkeit Clara Ziegler, Sarah Bernhardt, Eleonora Duse*, Deutsches Theatermuseum, Munich, 23 October 1994 to 8 January 1995; *Jacques Chazot: souvenirs d'un Parisien*, musée de la Vie romantique, Paris, 1 June to 30 August 1995; *Portrait(s) de Sarah Bernhardt*, Bibliothèque nationale de France [BNF], Paris, 3 October 2000 to 4 February 2001; *Sarah Bernhardt: l'enchanteresse*, musée national de Malmaison des Bois-Préau, Rueil-Malmaison, 4 March to 5 April 2003; *Sarah Bernhardt: The Art of High Drama*, Jewish Museum, New York, 2 December 2005 to 5 April 2006. Sales of major private collections are also a source of information on Bernhardt's oeuvre, notably *Sarah Bernhardt et son époque*, Chayette et Cheval, Drouot-Richelieu, Paris, 23 April 1997 [collection of Michel de Bry]. Exhibitions in Bernhardt's lifetime are considered in Chapter 3. Other art historical literature is usually in the form of artists' dictionary entries. The most thorough text to date is Jane Abdy, 'Sarah Bernhardt: French actress, sculptor and painter, 1844-1923', *Dictionary of Women Artists*, ed. Delia Gaze, 2 vols (Chicago and London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1997), I, 250-51. Bernhardt's sculpture practice is considered in two doctoral theses but, as this is not their sole focus, not extensively: Anne Jamault, 'Sarah Bernhardt et le monde de l'art', 4 vols (unpublished doctoral thesis, université de Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2000), I, 108-29, catalogue raisonné, vols II-III; and Anastasia Louise Easterday, 'Charting a Course in an Intractable Profession: Women Sculptors in 19th-Century France' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1997), 321-33. Other sales catalogues are a useful source for works by Bernhardt, although concrete art historical information on the works is scant and sometimes incorrect.

³ As a relevant example of this foreclosure in practice, see a recent exhibition and catalogue that highlights the under-emphasized cultural production centred around café and cabaret sociality in Montmartre in the last decades of the nineteenth century; *Montmartre and the Making of Mass Culture*, ed. Gabriel P. Weisberg, exh. cat. (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 2001). Despite the fact that lesbian-run cafés were a crucial part of the social scene in Montmartre and that lesbianism was the focus of a great deal of attention from writers and painters who frequented the district, no mention of this is given in any of the essays in this book, including Elizabeth K. Menon's 'Images of Pleasure and Vice: Women of the Fringe' (37-71) which discusses only prostitutes, bicyclists, and feminists (but not as if any might have been lesbian). The one reference to 'homosexuality' in the index is given for an essay by Michael L. J. Wilson entitled

give either issue adequate consideration in the face of a work such as the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* is a task that demands to be done.

'Gorgeous!' as substitution for Barthes's 'Adorable!' (the first figure of his *Lover's Discourse*) signals what he calls the 'lover at work'. In his introductory exegesis of the structure of, and in, *A Lover's Discourse* Barthes designates his collected amorous utterances as 'figures', understood not as those of rhetoric but as corporeal forms that grapple with the act of articulating desire; they are the 'body's gesture caught in action [... the lover] spends himself, like an athlete; he "phrases" like an orator; he is caught, stuffed in a role, like a statue'.⁵ Barthes's utterances that figure in speech a lover's bodily gesture are only 'like a statue', they do not respond to a statue (or bust). But Barthes does offer to this reader a theoretical time and place, and a mode, in which to undertake this art historical work. The figures that structure *A Lover's Discourse* form 'a discursive site: the site of someone speaking within [her]self, amorously, confronting the other (the loved object)' (3). This site becomes available for the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* to be the loved object, as to utter these figures requires only 'amorous feeling' and to have 'passe[d] through [the lover's] mind at a certain moment, [...] marked, like the printout of a code'. 'Each of us', and here is Barthes's gift to his reader, 'can fill in this code according to his own history; rich or poor, the figure must be there, the site (the compartment) must be reserved for it. It is as if,' he continues, 'there were an amorous

'Portrait of the Artist as a Louis XIII Chair' (180-204 [187]). This refers to a perceived fear that the male homosociality of Montmartre bohemianism might give rise to a 'penchant for "Greek love"' and the evidence given is Abel Truchet's drawing *Les Grecs* (c. 1895). Despite the author's claim that this homosociality excluded women, but required that 'the bohemians proclaimed their heterosexuality to excess', this does not explain the presence of four women in the image: a barmaid, a single woman with a fan, and a couple seated in intimate proximity. For lesbian sociality in Montmartre in this period and its relation to artistic and literary production see, Catherine van Casselaer, *Lot's Wife: Lesbian Paris 1890-1914* (Liverpool: Janus, 1986) and Leslie Choquette, 'Homosexuals in the City: Representations of Lesbian and Gay Space in Nineteenth-Century Paris', in *Homosexuality in French History and Culture*, ed. Jeffrey Merrick and Michael Sibal, *Journal of Homosexuality* [special issue], 41:3-4 (2001), 149-67.

⁴ Christopher Bollas, *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known* (London: Free Association, 1987), 281.

⁵ Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments* [1977], trans. Richard Howard (London: Cape, 1979), 3-4. Further references are given in the text.

Topic, whose figure was a site (topos). Now the property of a Topic is to be somewhat empty: a Topic is statutorily half coded, half projective'. Each fragment of discourse is but a 'modest supplement [...] to be made free with, to be added to, subtracted from, and passed on to others' (4-5).

'Gorgeous!' takes up Barthes's relay baton in order to configure the art historian's task as 'a lover's work', one that seeks to intervene in the topos of art history, or, more specifically here, sculpture history, in order to code this as an amorous, as well as scholarly, site.

'Gorgeous!' is the articulation of love at first sight for the art object in question. And I keep going back to see it again (can't get enough); I photograph the bust to have its image near me. The moment of utterance is circumscribed by the aesthetic affect of this sculptural portrait and my sustained viewing solicits the attribution of beauty to the object. This exchange between scholar and object leads to the pursuit of knowledge: I desire to know and articulate the bust's history. What were the conditions of its production: how was it made, why, and for whom? And the conditions of its exchange: was it sold, bought, bequeathed, and if so, to whom? What was the currency of transactions of making it, owning and exchanging it? Where was it seen, when, and how? What were, and are, the effects of its display? The challenge is to garner the terms of my engagement with the object, map its archive, and address the bust's narcissistic lament as voiced in the preceding 'Interview'. This constitutes my thesis.

But what are the conditions of Barthes's amorous discourse that facilitate a *scholarly* pursuit of reading with *lesbian* desire? There are many grounds on which Barthes's lover's discourse might be deemed inappropriate to a project that is about female homoeroticism grounded in the making and reception of sculpture. He simply does not deal with either issue in any tangible or specific way. But despite these viable misgivings, his rhetoric is, as Naomi Schor has claimed, seductive. This seduction lies in how, in *A Lover's Discourse*, Barthes negotiates a structural and situated *modus operandi* for articulating what Schor calls his 'aesthetics of Eros'. Barthes's 'discursive site' as the locus of 'someone speaking within [her]self, *amorously*, confronting the other (the loved object)' is the place where the 'fundamental person, the *I*'

has been restored (3). What appeals about *A Lover's Discourse* is that it shows *how*, in encountering the portrait bust made by Sarah Bernhardt of Louise Abbéma as loved object, I can also begin to articulate what I see as the inscription of an erotics of beauty, configured as lesbian, in nineteenth-century sculpture.

'But, it's a Boy!'

For Barthes, his words, the fragments of his lover's discourse, say both everything and nothing; they are the '*everything of affect*' and the 'zero degree of all the sites where my very special desire for this particular other [...] will form' (19). In order to designate the 'dazzling impression' of Paris one September morning or the memory of 'X' from the night before he finds only what he calls 'this rather stupid word: '*Adorable!*', perhaps in this usage more appropriately translated into English as 'lovely' or 'sweet' according to the current Collins-Robert French-English dictionary (2005), which points out that in English this is a far 'stronger' term and I will return to this later.⁶ In 'not managing to name the speciality of his desire for the loved being' (18), it is possible to argue that the inadequacy of language might have, in part, arisen from a social prohibition to declaring same-sex desire within the academic context in which Barthes was working and writing.⁷ For Barthes astutely sidesteps any evident gendering of his (human) object of love.

⁶ The *OED* does cite this 'increasingly trivial use' as 'charming, delightful.' Its stronger use is given as 'worthy of worship' and 'anything to which one is passionately attached'. In this respect I would wish to simply adopt Barthes's term, however, it is not in this case the 'stupid' word he claims it to be nor would it convey the 'triviality' of language uttered as arrested figure.

⁷ Scott Gunther argues that the 1960 law prohibiting public sex acts in France caused 'French homosexual groups to internalize the association of public sex with homosexuality.' In his doctoral thesis on the relation between juridical measures with regard to homosexual acts and homosexual politics, Gunther argues that 1968 sparked more 'radical' political movements compared to those of the 1960s or the later 1980s which were, broadly speaking, assimilationist; 'The Elastic Closet' (unpublished doctoral thesis, New York University, 2001), 193. However, the period when *A Lover's Discourse* was published points to a liminal period in this activity and social trends do not necessarily account for Barthes's production as characterized by its mainstream academic site of production. This might be another explanation for his unwillingness to 'come out' in text.

Barthes's method here has been taken up both in feminist and gay male analyses of his work. In *Reading in Detail: Aesthetics and the Feminine* (1987) Naomi Schor argues that by his 'insistence on a bizarre detail' in *A Lover's Discourse* Barthes challenges the detail configured as feminine and therefore devalorized in idealist aesthetics. But she also sees Barthes's erasure of the marks of sexual specification in the 'referential, contingent body of desire' (the body whose 'bizarre details' he describes) as a degendering.⁸ Elsewhere in 'Dreaming Dissymmetry: Barthes, Foucault and Sexual Difference' (1989) Schor calls attention to a French post-structuralist, and masculine, 'discourse of in-difference or of pure difference' *vis à vis* feminine specificity. This refusal to explore 'the pitch black continent of what patriarchal culture has consistently connoted as feminine and hence depreciated', she argues, leaves this a structure unchallenged and intact. Despite Barthes's appeal for feminists in his 'valorisation of the body and its pleasures' and of 'jouissance', Schor notes the resistance of some to what she calls his seductive and subtly persuasive rhetoric in view of the desexualisation that is the 'perverse effect of [his] sexually unmarked erotics'.⁹

Schor rests her argument on reading together *A Lover's Discourse*, *S/Z*, and 'The Fashion System' in order to provide a generalised statement about Barthes's complicity in this discourse of indifference. In these texts there are clear signs that Barthes employs a method he admits to in *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* (cited by Schor) when he writes that 'he [Barthes] often resorts to a kind of philosophy vaguely labelled *pluralism*'.¹⁰ But there are other issues of indifference at stake here. Differentiating between rather than homogenizing the three texts Schor cites, how would the requirement to gender his loved object (as female) be relevant for *his lover's* discourse, accumulated, as he declares at the outset, from readings, conversations with friends, and his own life? This would trap his '*Adorable!*' in an alien heterosexual erotics. Surely there is irony in having to 'resort to' a methodology of avoidance through

⁸ Naomi Schor, *Reading in Detail: Aesthetics and the Feminine* (New York and London: Methuen, 1987), 97.

⁹ Naomi Schor, 'Dreaming Dissymmetry: Barthes, Foucault, and Sexual Difference', in *Coming to Terms: Feminism, Theory, Politics*, ed. Elizabeth Weed (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 47-58 (49).

¹⁰ Schor (1989), 48.

generalization (pluralism) at the same time as valorizing, as Schor argues, the erotic *detail* to such an extent. This irony emerges from Barthes's struggle with language and the very matter of that struggle, same-sex desire.

Schor does read what she calls Barthes's 'insistence on a bizarre detail' as sexually marked. Noting three instances in *A Lover's Discourse* of 'the detail which has the vocation of a fetish for Barthes [the phrase is his]', Schor connotes his return to the spread of the loved one's fingers in a V whilst holding a cigarette as 'an erotic gap, a sort of icon of castration' that signifies the exclusion of the feminine.¹¹ In a footnote Schor cites but does not discuss a review of *A Lover's Discourse* by Richard Sennett for the New York gay magazine *Christopher Street* where he writes: 'I do not want to leave you with the impression that *A Lover's Discourse* is a neutered book. It is clearly about love between men.'¹² What Schor calls the 'erotic gap' in Barthes might be other to the 'icon of castration' (the signifier for a heterosexual model of erotics).

As Schor so lucidly points out in discussing his work as an aesthetics, 'what we have in Barthes is an eroticization of aesthetics, or, better, an aesthetics of Eros. And Eros resides in the detail, because the detail is always at least partially sited in a real body'.¹³ This is borne out in how his lover's work changes when the object of his utterance '*Adorable!*' concerns the city of Paris or a human love object. For the 'dazzling impression' of Paris that is '*adorable*' is a 'host of perceptions [...] the weather, the season, the light, the boulevard, the Parisians out walking, shopping'. These generalized scenic elements have none of the specificity of 'X' who represents for him what he says 'the Greeks called *charis*: "the sparkle of the eyes, the body's luminous beauty, the radiance of the desirable being"' (18). Here Barthes's '*Adorable!*' is transfigured into a different register in the texture, substance, and attention he renders in his amorous exclamation ('*Adorable!*' is now perhaps more appropriately translated into the stronger English meaning of 'adorable' after all, for it is here that he attains a level of

¹¹ Schor (1987), 95-96.

¹² Cited in Schor (1989), 250, n. 7; no publication details given.

¹³ Schor (1987), 96.

worshipful exuberance at his loved object's perfection, or, 'charisma', from the Greek *charis* that he cites).¹⁴ For Barthes insists on the 'speciality' of the lover's desire for the 'special', human object of his love (and not when speaking of his love for Paris) repeating this five times within the section devoted to the loved other's body. Intimated in his insistent questioning, the Barthesian lover achieves a level of tacit knowledge, what Peter Dormer calls the 'practical know-how' gained from doing and re-doing something,¹⁵ in this case from the process of falling, and staying, in love with the other and the continued attention that this demands.

That this special body is a same-sex, male body can, I argue, be gleaned from Barthes's use here and in *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* in a discussion of the pornographic and erotic photograph of ancient Greek signifiers of desire: *charis* and *kairos*.¹⁶ In her Introduction to *The Age of Grace: Charis in Early Greek Poetry* Bonnie MacLachan claims that '[n]o serious reader of early Greek poetry can avoid the fact that *charis* dominates the literary portrayal of life during the archaic age.' Used for a multitude of objects and situations (including beautiful women, triumphant soldiers, appropriate and noble behaviour and speech, celebratory feasts, the loved one in poetry, or the victorious athlete), MacLachan asserts that 'it would seem that for the early Greeks *charis* was present at all the high moments of life.' Rooted in the Indo-

¹⁴ In its theological usage the *OED* cites 'charisma' as a 'free gift or favour specially vouchsafed by God; a grace or talent' and in its non-theological usage as a twentieth-century application by Weber to denote '[a] gift or power of leadership or authority; aura. Hence, the capacity to inspire devotion or enthusiasm', both deriving from the Greek *charis* meaning 'grace, favour'. The *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologicae Classicae [LIMC]* gives 'charis' as meaning 'charm, favour or gratitude' and as the singular of 'charites' who are the female cult figures known in Roman times (and hereafter in Western art) as the Graces; Evelyn B. Harrison, 'Charis, Charites', *LIMC* (Zurich and Munich: Artemis, 1986), III:1 [Atherion-Eros], 191-93. For a discussion of the co-option by patriarchal philosophical culture of the archaic cult figures of the Charites personifying 'feminine/female forces or principles with privileged relations to life, death and change' see Griselda Pollock, 'The Grace of Time: Narrativity, Sexuality and a Visual Encounter in the Virtual Feminist Museum', *Art History*, 26:2 (2003), 174-213 (esp. 186-91).

¹⁵ The context of Dormer's writing is craft skill; Peter Dormer, 'What is Craft Knowledge?', *The Art of the Maker: Skill and its Meaning in Art, Craft and Design* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 10-24.

¹⁶ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* [1980], trans. Richard Howard (London: Vintage, 2000), 57-59. Further references are given in the text.

European *gher- meaning ‘pleasure’ this was more than the passive receiving of enjoyment but a pleasure ‘that was mutual [and] reciprocal’ and therefore ‘social in its setting’.¹⁷ MacLachan points out that *charis* as the analogy of the ‘reciprocal exchange of gifts and favors’ in twentieth-century scholarship (on social anthropology, sociology, economics and archaeology) is insufficient to capture its full resonance in archaic poetry. For instance, in the encounter with beauty (most apposite for Barthes and my work here) *charis* designates a process: it is ‘applied to the beautiful object that arouses a response, and to the response itself.’¹⁸

Ancient Greek appreciation of beauty was associated with light: according to MacLachan ‘sparkling beauty was erotically attractive to the Greek eye’.¹⁹ This fits Barthes’s gloss of the term, but which particular Greek praise of *charis* might Barthes have been referencing when he cites it as “the sparkle of the eyes, the body’s luminous beauty, the radiance of the desirable being”? A clue is offered in *Camera Lucida* when he discusses a self-portrait photograph by Robert Mapplethorpe entitled ‘Young Man with Arm Extended’. The pleasure afforded by this photograph is found in its depiction of what Barthes here calls ‘the *right moment*, the *kairos* of desire’ (59). According to MacLachan’s citations from archaic poetry both *charis* and *kairos* occur in Pindar’s *Encomia* fragment 123 entitled ‘For Theoxenos of Tenedos’. Here *kairos* signifies for Pindar the ‘due season/ [...] the ripening of youth’ when the young male object of his desire is particularly attractive to the poet and is endowed with and endows *charis* as is evidenced by ‘the rays of light that flash from the eyes of Theoxenus’.²⁰

That others discern the body of luminous beauty for Barthes as a male body has already been noted in the citation from Sennett’s review of *A Lover’s Discourse*. This is taken up in gay studies by Pierre Saint-Armand. Rather than iconic of castration, Saint-Armand reads

¹⁷ Bonnie MacLachan, *The Age of Grace: Charis in Early Greek Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 3-5.

¹⁸ MacLachan, 11.

¹⁹ MacLachan, 34.

²⁰ Pindar, *Encomia*, frs 123.1-2 and 123.2-3, cited in MacLachan, 59, 66.

Barthes's erotics as 'the effort to deflate the phallic model' in his avoidance of either penile or anal sexuality in favour of a corporeal pluralism where 'the body multiplies its erogenous surface into so many sensitive zones'. Here Saint-Armand usefully cites Barthes that 'sex will be taken into no typology (there will be for example, only *homosexualities*)'.²¹ Saint-Armand is concerned to free male homosexual transaction from the hard muscularity valorized as liberational in D. A. Miller's *Bringing out Roland Barthes* (1992), comparing Barthes's project instead with that of Luce Irigaray to think (feminine) sexuality in terms of 'a plural, a different body' with a 'multiplicity of genital erogenous zones.'²² For Barthes, in Saint-Armand's view, 'sex is *pensive*; it is full of sense but [he] keeps it in reserve, by not annulling itself with coded satisfaction'. But in situating Barthes's eroticism as soft not hard, as pertaining to surfaces, not the 'depth' of penetration, Saint-Armand is in effect only offering two homosexualities – genital or non-genital (and this is apparent in his gloss of Irigaray). Represented through sex acts or their absence this does not explore Barthes's writing as the means to articulate the eroticism of homosexual *desire*. And, if 'sex' is present in Barthes, it is 'sex' as represented in writing: the 'voluptuous suspension' that Saint-Armand perceives in Barthes text signals the lover's *discourse* – what the lover can say about the loved object and experience of loving, rather than the 'real thing' as act or event.

'That's my Girl!'

There is a case for the efficacy of Barthes's application of *charis* to the loved object as an appropriate mode in which to conduct my scholarly, lesbian reading of the *Bust of Louise Abbéma*.²³ Barthes's erotic appreciation extends to both a human love object ("X" from the

²¹ Pierre Saint-Amand, 'The Secretive Body: Roland Barthes's Gay Erotics' in *Roland Barthes*, ed. Mike Gane and Nicholas Gane, 3 vols (London: Sage, 2004), 1, 339-54 (348, 350); citation from Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* trans. Richard Howard (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1986), 69.

²² Saint-Armand, 348; citation from Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 63-64.

²³ Jane McIntosh Snyder notes the close association of *charis* in the poetry of Sappho with the goddess Aphrodite and in wedding songs to describe the bride. She also argues that its use in the verbal form *chairo* 'must, to the Greek ear, have resonated with at least some of the same overtones of erotic reciprocity' suggested by the noun form *charis*. Despite the male/female context in which Sappho

night before') and the artistic representation of a human as love object (photo by Mapplethorpe). In both cases Barthes's lover's discourse is mapped onto a model of relating (he loves 'X' and he loves Mapplethorpe's photograph) where the reciprocity of *charis* is elaborated through the pleasure that it, as quality of the loved object, brings. This exchange occurs in the domain of aesthetics (of Eros): he is not especially interested in discussing the referent of Mapplethorpe's photographic portrait (which is in fact a self-portrait). When discussing a photograph of his mother, central to his thesis on photography in *Camera Lucida* (which will be discussed below), however, it is as a referential portrait that this image resonates. In this case it is not the aesthetic that predominates in Barthes's discussion (despite the work's affect) but what might be called the 'archival'. This is not to sever the aesthetic from the archival in Barthes's work and further discussion of his methodology in *Camera Lucida* will clarify this. Rather it is to suggest that there is a dialectic between the aesthetic and archival in portraiture.

In his essay 'Fictions of the Pose: Facing the Gaze of Early Modern Portraiture' Harry Berger Jr flags up the possibility of this dialectic in his critique of twentieth-century mainstream art historical treatment of early modern portraiture. This scholarship, he argues, falls into the trap of 'converting the image to an allegory of the archive or of the painter'. 'Character' is read into the image from the social attributes and status of the sitter as recorded in formal or archival sources or is attributed as the achievement of an artist's representational and painterly ability.²⁴ Exemplified by Albert Elsen in his commentary on Rembrandt's portrait of Jan Six, this mode of reading art works and writing their history is, Berger argues, drawn from information in the archive on the sitter's social status (as businessman, politician, and poet) and the 'stock of qualities attributed to these types'. Instead, Berger posits a method of approaching portraiture where the portrait is read as 'the representation of the act of portrayal and thus depend[s] less on the archive and more on the image.' Richard Brilliant has

uses *charis*, Snyder notes Sappho's special attention to the bride; *Lesbian Desire in the Lyrics of Sappho* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 83-87.

²⁴ Harry Berger Jr, 'Fictions of the Pose: Facing the Gaze in Early Modern Portraiture', *Representations* 46 (1994), 87-120 (87-88).

also argued that '[t]here is great difficulty in thinking about pictures, even portraits by great artists, as art and not thinking about them primarily as something else, the person represented.'²⁵ The curators of a recent exhibition at the Henry Moore Institute in Leeds, *Return to Life: A New Look at the Portrait Bust*, suggest that even this mode of engagement might be denied the historical portrait bust. Marginalization of the genre means that '[i]t seems much easier to view a portrait painting, either as a representation of an individual or as a work of art, than a sculpted portrait'. However, the possibility of viewing the portrait bust *as a work of art* beyond the recommendation to 'engage in some of the visual and perceptual explorations' that allow what they call 'face-to-face dialogue' is not taken up in this catalogue, despite its luxuriant photographic representations of the works and their details.²⁶ James Holderbaum's entry 'Portrait Sculpture' in the exhibition catalogue for *The Romantics to Rodin: French Nineteenth-Century Sculpture from North American Collections* (1980) is the most thorough survey for this period but nonetheless still rests on stylistic and formal analysis as achievements of the sculptor's ability.

Berger's alternative model of reading portraiture is, he argues, as 'an index – an effect and representation – solely of the sitter's and painter's performance in the act of portrayal [where] the act becomes both the referent of the image and its cause' ('index' here references Charles

²⁵ Richard Brilliant, *Portraiture* (London: Reaktion, 1991), 23. This tendency is evident in my choice of nomenclature: to call this the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* rather than *Portrait de Mlle. L. Abbéma* (see note 1) is to veer towards this conflation of referent and image, which I had to work against in writing the introductory 'Interview with a Bust'. See also John Gage who argues that the history of two-dimensional portraiture has been construed as the move from earlier idealization in painted portraiture to the authentic and naturalistic likeness of photographic portraiture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the latter at the expense of the aesthetic valuation of the photographic object; 'Photographic Likeness', in *Portraiture: Facing the Subject*, ed. Joanna Woodall (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 119-30.

²⁶ Penelope Curtis, Peter Funnell and Nicola Kalinsky, 'Introduction', in *Return to Life: A New Look at the Portrait Bust*, ed. Curtis et al, exh. cat. (Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2001), 7, 8. I take up the question of artistic photography of sculpture later in this chapter when I discuss my own photographic images of the bust. Deborah Edwards acknowledges the importance of the role of photography in the exhibition catalogue *Presence and Absence: Portrait Sculpture in Australia*, exh. cat., (Canberra: National Portrait Gallery, 2003).

Peirce's model signs).²⁷ This shifts attention to the artist and sitter's activity in the act of portrayal and to the activity of posing (no less historically situated than information on social status). Portrait images, Berger argues, 'provide visualizations of [...] ego ideals' that combine both individualization and idealization by means of a 'mimetic idealism'. A portrait 'indexes a *normative* act of portrayal' thus representing 'the three-way diachronic transaction between painter, sitter, and observer in a purely fictional field.' This, Berger calls, 'the fiction of the pose'.²⁸

This approach to portraiture is extremely useful for my project in allowing for the diachronic relationship between myself as scholarly lesbian reader and the bust's maker and sitter.²⁹ Where I would contest (mildly) Berger's concern with the limits of reading an image through the archive is by flagging up differences in the substance of what we are reading for and therefore of notions of the 'archival'. Berger's subject matter is Early Modern painted, and official, portraiture that served the needs of a dominant class's self-representation; his notion of the archive consists of 'formal sources'. The *Bust of Louise Abbéma* had a public function in that it represented in a public arena (the Salon, other exhibitions, Bernhardt's home, and in published images) a sitter who was an artist and in the public eye elsewhere through self-representation in photographs, attention from the press and the display and sale of her work in public art spaces. But the conditions of making this bust are grounded in an intimate relationship between Bernhardt and Abbéma that was to last fifty years and went beyond both the commission of a portrait and the studio setting in which it was made. This relationship is, however, not well documented in any conventional sense of record keeping. My archive differs both in substance and significance from the 'formal sources' mooted by Berger in his critique of Elsen, consisting of a wide and disparate range of material and method: photographic images, letters, references in sales catalogues to letters, unreferenced sources in

²⁷ Berger, 89.

²⁸ Berger, 94-99.

²⁹ For a discussion of portraiture as index of a performative event in which the players are the lesbian writer Gertrude Stein and the heterosexual artist Pablo Picasso, see Robert S. Lubar, 'Unmasking Pablo's Gertrude: Queer Desire and the Subject of Portraiture', *Art Bulletin*, 79:1 (1997), 56-84. Lubar reads Picasso's painting of Stein's face as a mask-like visage as an effacement of queer desire.

biography, dedications on artworks, the ownership of artworks by each other, reading between the lines of 'official' sources, and so on and so on.

I suggest that reading with scholarly lesbian desire produces a fuller picture of the image by working in the register of both the aesthetic and the archival. Where Berger's methodology is useful is in foregrounding the requirement of an aesthetic engagement with portraiture. Producing a reading of the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* that is aesthetically engaged relies on considering it in terms of facture and materiality. But it also attends to the specific conditions of the genre in 1870s France, its representational conventions, display, and the means of production in sculpture practice all of which Bernhardt was subject to as an artist and Abbéma as her sitter. With this in mind, I aim to argue that sculptural portraiture is a site of aesthetic affect where desire, otherwise unspoken as such, might be inscribed.

This extends the pleasurable reciprocity that viewing the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* brings to a third dimension – that of the artist/sitter transaction. This is enabled because as figural sculpture the bust has both a 'real' corporeality in its three-dimensional physicality and materiality as carved marble and an 'unreal' or representational corporeality in that it stands in for another body (part), it is a portrait of the historical figure, Louise Abbéma. My affection for this object engages with the immediate sense of its physical and material qualities and how it might 'represent' a *charis*-endowed desiring transaction of portrait making between one historical figure (Sarah Bernhardt/Louise Abbéma) and another (Louise Abbéma/Sarah Bernhardt). Reading for this, I argue, is enabled by the naturalistic but idealized mode of portraiture that Berger calls 'mimetic idealism', one specifically articulated in the bust of Abbéma through a sculptural syntax with its three dimensionality, attention to structure, form, and surface finish.

In order to substantiate my claim I return to Barthes's account of his amorous engagement in *A Lover's Discourse* as the model for an art historical process whereby my scholarly desire (aroused in the register of the aesthetic) reads for affirmation of same-sex desire between two

historical figures (and therefore in the register of the archival). This bust represents precisely the overlap and interplay of these two registers and with it the possibility of a loving scholarship. Barthes writes:

I encounter millions of bodies in my life; of these millions, I may desire some hundreds; but of these hundreds, I love only one. The other with whom I am in love designates for me the speciality of my desire.

This choice so rigorous that it retains only the Unique, constitutes, it is said, the difference between the analytical transference and the amorous transference; one is universal, the other specific. It has taken many accidents, many surprising coincidences (and perhaps many efforts), for me to find the Image which, out of a thousand, suits my desire. Herein a great enigma, to which I shall never possess the key: Why is it that I desire So-and-So? Why is it that I desire So-and-So lastingly, longingly? Is it the whole of So-and-So I desire (a silhouette, a shape, a mood)? And, in that case, what is it in this loved body which has the vocation of a fetish for me? What perhaps incredibly tenuous portion – what accident? The way a nail is cut, a tooth broken slightly aslant, a lock of hair, a way of spreading the fingers while talking, while smoking? About all those *folds* of the body, I want to say that they are *adorable*. *Adorable* means; this is my desire, insofar as it is unique: ‘That’s it! That’s it exactly (which I love)!’ Yet the more I experience the speciality of my desire, the less I can give it a name; to the precision of the target corresponds a wavering of the name; what is characteristic of desire, proper to desire, can produce only an impropriety of the utterance. Of this failure of language, there remains only one trace: the word ‘adorable’ (the right translation of ‘adorable’ would be the Latin *ipse*: it is the self, himself, herself, the person) (20).

My engagement with this bust as amorous transference is specific (I love it), unique (and only it) and, as for Barthes, is known, although can never be fully articulated, because it (somehow) matches my desire. Despite the enigma of this desire, the loved other is there, open to amorous interrogation; Barthes explores the other’s detailed features, speaks of the other’s body, seeks intimate knowledge of the other, comes to know the other, all the while claiming language inadequate to the task of articulating this desire. Writing again of this problem in what was probably the last essay before his death, ‘One Always Fails in Speaking of What One Loves’, Barthes perceived the struggle in Stendhal’s writing on his beloved Italy where what he produced was ‘a kind of daubing, a scribbling, one might say, which expresses both love and the impotence to express love, because this love suffocates by its very vivacity.’ For Barthes Stendhal’s Italy is the Winnicottian transitional object, the ‘still shapeless space of

fantasy, of the imagination, of creation.³⁰ The lover's discourse emerges from the effort required to give that space shape, in how Barthes charts the move from his paying attention to 'So-and-So' to articulating the details of the 'loved body', to revealing nothing other than 'the self', himself, his desire, if only in bits. The *Bust of Louise Abbéma* and its facture, and how I account for it in language, take up that space of fantasy, emerging into the landscape of consciousness as details and their effects that beckon my desire and require art historical attention.

'Isn't she Beautiful?'

I will return to this articulation of details later. For now, substituting 'Gorgeous!' for Barthes's '*Adorable!*' is to situate as amorous Topic this encounter with a work of sculpture in an oppositional mode, or even in Barthes's terms as a (deliberately) 'stupid word', as he first claims for 'adorable' ('adorable' as the English 'lovely' or 'sweet'). Given by the *OED* in its colloquial form as 'an epithet of strong approbation', 'Gorgeous!' is the figural representation of the bust's aesthetic, emotional, and erotic affect on the occasion of that first encounter (love at first sight) where my sense of it was one of witnessing and experiencing blissful perfection (I adored it). Using this colloquial term in the first instance (I deal with its more standard usage below, 88) is an attempt to demonstrate how this appreciation does not register on two counts: in terms of desire as anything other than heterosexual (man for woman) and (further to the aesthetic appreciation of sculptural portraiture discussed above) in art historical notions of beauty (a bust; woman as art object for man to see). Susan Sontag argues that 'A definition of the beautiful was no more (or less) than a commendation of the beautiful'.³¹ But no commendation of the beautiful is neutral. In the *OED* 'beauty' refers to 'such combined perfection of form and charm of colouring as affords keen pleasure to the sense of sight' or that quality 'which charms the intellectual or moral faculties, through

³⁰ Roland Barthes, 'One Always Fails in Speaking of What One Loves' [1980], in *The Rustle of Language*, ed. François Wahl (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 296-305 (303). I am grateful to Dr Barbara Engh, School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies, University of Leeds for this reference.

³¹ Susan Sontag, 'An Argument about Beauty', in *Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences*, 131:4 (2002), 21-26 (22).

inherent grace, or fitness to the desired end' and concretely to 'a beautiful person or thing; esp. a beautiful woman [my emphasis]'. A glance at the cover illustrations for some of the recent literature on the newly invigorated debate on beauty as the site of aesthetic approbation in what can loosely be called art production (painting, sculpture, film, photography) demonstrates how this is co-opted into an assumed heterosexual (or occasionally a male homoerotic) paradigm of making and viewing. Aesthetic approbation is closed to the lesbian subject coded as a 'masculine woman': she is simply never represented in this debate.³² Therefore the same goes for her representation in an artwork as beautiful and to the art historian reading such a representation with scholarly lesbian desire. These illustrations are as follows: Francette Pacteau, *The Symptom of Beauty* (1994) [Shirley Eaton in a still from the 1964 film *Goldfinger*]; James Kirwan, *Beauty* (1999) [detail of photograph of Audrey Hepburn by unspecified photographer]; Elizabeth Prettejohn, *Beauty and Art* (2005) [detail from Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *Bather of Valpinçon*]; and Alex Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History* (1994) [*Belvedere Antinous*].³³ Literature on what might be called 'lesbian beauty' in art production is non-existent: contemporary sociological study, however, has provided a forum in which to discuss the aesthetics of the conjuncture of 'lesbian' and 'beauty' but the literature on this is limited.³⁴

³² For a discussion of codes of masculinity in the representation of the lesbian subject in early twentieth-century Britain, see Esther Newton, 'The Mythic Mannish Lesbian: Radclyffe Hall and the New Woman', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 9:4 (1984), 557-75.

³³ I do not argue that these images have no appeal for the desiring lesbian subject, but simply that they are not supplied for this purpose. See also my discussion below on erotic 'lesbian' images in French nineteenth-century art.

³⁴ For a sociological study of 'lesbian beauty norms' based on written submissions, the proceedings of seminars, collective discussion in workshops, and analysis of personal ads all involving lesbian and bisexual women in California, United States in the late 1990s, see Jeanine C. Cogan and Joanie M. Erickson eds, *Lesbians, Levis and Lipstick: The Meaning of Beauty in our Lives* (Binghamton, NY: Harrington Park Press, 1999). Cogan and Erickson argue that 'lesbian beauty norms clearly are broader than traditional beauty norms, encompassing a wider range of sizes, shapes, ethnicity and styles'; 'Introduction', 1-9 (2). They also refer to 'dominant cultural beauty standards' (which I would further qualify as Western and heteronormative). Cogan and Erickson's analysis leads them to define lesbian beauty norms as 'holistic'. They state that the results of their study indicate that '[h]olistic beauty encompasses all parts of a woman; her self-image, intelligence, humor and a capacity for empathy and love are as important to a lesbian's "look" as her physical attributes'; Cogan and Erickson, 2. My discussion of the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* does not, and cannot, adhere to this paradigm;

My discussion of the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* thus takes place under strained circumstances. In the first instance I share Barthes's methodological problem of 'not managing to name the speciality of his desire for the loved one' in that shift from a pre-linguistic sense of this object's beauty to the cognitive appreciation of that sense (thinking) and then its articulation in language, the 'writing' of the aesthetic.³⁵ And again, I might commend this bust as 'beautiful' in that it 'suits' my desire but this requires not only a shift in contemporary perceptions of historical portrait sculpture but also that the terms of this articulation of beauty are borrowed, if not wrested, from another's grasp.

Salon criticism in 1879 illustrates how these issues played out in the treatment of portrait busts in general and this work in particular. Sculpture was almost always reviewed after painting and was subject to an internal hierarchy in its treatment by the critics, with monumental and ideal works receiving attention first. Busts were usually treated collectively at the end of a sculpture review, although they might on occasion be mentioned individually if an artist had been singled out for commentary on a monumental or ideal work.³⁶ Most writers

it is after all an inanimate object made in the past. Nonetheless, Cogan and Erickson's retention of the signifier 'beauty' and how – when this concerns the lesbian subject – it is differentiated from cultural norms of feminine beauty is relevant here. A useful working definition of how to approach notions of beauty is provided in an essay by Tania N. Hammidi and Susan B. Kaiser. They state that '[b]eauty is often formulated a singular image, system, or narrative. Missing from these formulations are conceptualizations of personal desire, agency, and affiliation with community aesthetics' and moreover that 'current understandings of beauty [...] implicitly assume heterosexuality'. The notion of 'doing beauty' is one that involves 'lesbians' abilities to re-frame and reclaim beauty'; Hammidi and Kaiser, 'Doing Beauty: Negotiating Lesbian Looks in Everyday Life', in Cogan and Erickson, eds, 55-63 (55). While these are not terms I would use to identify Abbéma's activity, I nonetheless find the notion of 'doing beauty' a useful one in terms of the choices Abbéma made with regard to her clothing, jewellery and pose in photographs. Similarly, by producing a bust of Abbéma, Bernhardt was 'doing beauty' because making the bust was a material and temporal activity. Further analysis of lesbian texts, such as the fiction and poetry of Joan Nestle, Audre Lorde, and Adrienne Rich would be useful here.

³⁵ Discussion with Professor Fred Orton, 5 December 2005. The reference is Paul de Man, 'Phenomenality and Materialism in Kant', *Aesthetic Ideology* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 70-90.

³⁶ No analysis of art criticism of sculptural portraiture in nineteenth-century France has yet been undertaken. Richard Wrigley notes a prejudice against portraiture amongst critics under the ancien

noted a large number of busts and commentary was usually short, such as ‘excellent’ or ‘a good piece of sculpture’. Where analysis was more detailed the critique tended to be couched in gendered terms according to the sex of the sitter suggesting that the success of a portrait relied on the artist following gendered, and therefore appropriate, conventions of representation.³⁷ Eugène Véron in *L’Art* praised Alexandre Falguière’s *Bust of Mme. C. H.* for ‘a certain elegance of arrangement’, the ‘remarkably supple’ hair and the ‘very delicately modelled’ neck.³⁸ Although attributes of execution, this praise suggested that these achievements of the sculptor were suited to the subject. Similarly, a portrait of the admiral Coligny by Mme. de Beaumont-Castries had, according to Paul de Saint-Victor, critic in *L’Artiste*, a suitably ‘craggy and austere resemblance’ thereby ‘bringing to life the soul of the hero martyr’.³⁹ In this critique the notion of ‘likeness’ in portraiture signified a qualitative resemblance according to gendered norms of appearance both in the physicality of the sitter and their effects (coiffure, clothing, decoration, attributes). Success in achieving likeness was read as the result of the sculptor’s skill in rendering suitably ‘feminine’ or ‘masculine’ texture to the sitter’s representation.

In the case of critical attention to Bernhardt’s *Bust of Louise Abbéma* ‘likeness’ (as a condition of idealizing portraiture that also deployed a measured degree of naturalistic effect) and the

régime although (and, depending on the class of viewer, perhaps because) popular among the Salon public; *The Origins of French Art Criticism: From the Ancien Régime to the Restoration* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 303. No bibliography of Salon criticism for the period after 1851 has yet been published. However, for a series of case studies in later nineteenth-century art criticism in France, see Michael R. Orwicz, ed., *Art Criticism and its Institutions in Nineteenth-Century France* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1994).

³⁷ For a discussion of the feminization of women’s art practice as ‘l’art féminin’, especially in painted portraiture in the late nineteenth century, see Tamar Garb, *Sisters of the Brush: Women’s Artistic Culture in Late Nineteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 143-52. For the gendering of late nineteenth-century painting and painters (both female and male), see Anne Higgonet, ‘Imaging Gender’, in *Art Criticism and its Institutions*, ed. Michael R. Orwicz, 146-61.

³⁸ ‘Une certain élégance d’arrangement, les cheveux ont une remarquable souplesse et le cou est très délicatement modelé’; Eugène Véron, ‘La Sculpture au Salon de Paris, 1879’, *L’Art: revue hebdomadaire illustré*, vol. 17, 5e année, no. 2 (1879), 270-80 (274).

³⁹ ‘Une ressemblance creusée et austère, et en qui revit ka grande âme du héros martyr’; Paul de Saint-Victor, ‘Souvenirs du Salon de 1879: Sculpture’, *L’Artiste*, t. 2 (August 1879), 73-77.

artist's ability to achieve it upset these gendered norms of representation and production.⁴⁰ In the German weekly art review periodical, *Kunstchronik*, Hermann Billung claimed that the two busts by Bernhardt displayed that year (*Busts of Louise Abbéma and Miss H...*) were 'mostly the work of the assistant who carved the finished product [and ...] they had lost a lot of the softness in the original modelling'.⁴¹ It is not clear how this was judged given that plaster models for these works were not exhibited at the Salon or elsewhere and there are no records of studio visits by critics, including Billung himself, whilst the busts were being modelled, cast, or carved. The suggestion here is that the busts had lost the *feminine* softness deemed appropriate to the gender of the sitters and were deficient of the necessary skill for representing likeness in sculptural portraiture.⁴² In the *L'Art* Véron asserted that the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* was 'well modelled, resembling the sitter in its general outlines, but certain

⁴⁰ The bust was reviewed in the *Gazette des beaux-arts*, *L'Art*, and *Kunstchronik*, but not mentioned in *L'Artiste* or *L'Illustration's* Salon reviews.

⁴¹ The full excerpt runs: 'The ever busy dilettante Sarah Bernhardt gives herself too much credit, for both her works this year, portrait busts of the female painter Louise Abbéma and a Miss H., are mostly the work of the assistant who carved the finished product. One cannot do everything at the same time. Unfortunately, they have lost a lot of their softness in the original modelling [Die vielgeschäftige Dilettantin Sarah Bernhardt schreibt sich entschieden zu viel zu, denn ihre beiden diesjährigen Arbeiten, Porträtbüsten der Malerin Louise Abbéma [sic] und einer Miss H., sind überwiegend das Werk des Gehülfen, der sie fertig meisselte; man kann nicht auf allen Gebieten zugleich tätig sein. Leider haben sie dadurch viel von der Weichheit des ersten Entwurfes verloren]'; Hermann Billung, 'Der Pariser Salon, IV), *Kunstchronik*, Jahrgang 14 (2 October 1879), 751. My thanks are due to Dr Claudia Sternberg, School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies, University of Leeds for help with this translation.

⁴² It has been suggested that the bust entitled *Miss H.* is the bust of Mlle de Hocquigny (1874) which was for sale at *The Paris Salon*, Christie's, New York, 11 March 1997. This is unlikely given that the name of the sitter is given in English in the Salon guide and that *L'Art's* description of the bust simply does not match with the illustration of the *Bust of Mlle Hocquigny* in the Christie's sale catalogue. *L'Art* wrote that 'with [the bust's] large hat and head thrown back it was particularly provocative [avec son grand chapeau et sa tête rejetée en arrière prend un air singulièrement provocant]'. Instead I would identify *Miss H.* as the other bust for sale at Christie's in February 1997 and now (January 2006) for sale at an art dealer's in Newport, RI identified there as the 'portrait bust of an actress'. *L'Art's* criticism also condemns the *Bust of Miss H...* as lacking feminine 'softness' implying that the sitter may well have been an actress or a courtesan. No records on this work are extant. Another bust of a female figure with a large hat is seen in a photograph of Bernhardt in a room identified as in her summer home at Belle-Île-en-mer, therefore dated after c. 1895. It is unlikely to be the *Bust of Miss H...* as the head is not 'thrown back', although, of course, precisely what 'thrown back' means depends on who is throwing their head back and under what social protocols of decorum.

exaggerations made the figure too heavy and old looking and therefore it appears too masculine.⁴³

Excluding the bust from aesthetic approbation because ‘too masculine’ for the representation of the physiognomy of a female sitter was reflected in negative treatment of Abbéma’s appearance as portrayed in the distorting mirror of satire and caricature. Here, I argue, writers and artists opted to represent her *as if she were a man*. I distinguish here between a sexual reassignment of Abbéma by others ‘as a man’ and her own self-fashioning as a masculine woman. I will discuss the *erotic* appeal of both Abbéma’s physicality and masculine self-fashioning later in this chapter when I attend to how this is represented in details of the bust in both arenas and in how they are interrelated. For now I can only consider how caricature from the 1870-80s represented Abbéma by means of a perceived, indeed often imagined, physicality, as well as through a mode of dress that relates to the critique of the bust in *L’Art* as ‘too masculine’. Neither her physicality nor her mode of dress fitted the typologies of ‘beauty’ or ‘woman’ and were therefore disallowed in conjunction with each other in representations of Abbéma.

In Henri Demare’s (1846-88) caricature published in *Le Grelot* on 18 February 1883 Abbéma is represented as the artist of a collection of scenes depicting Bernhardt’s various cultural

⁴³ ‘Celui de Mlle. Abbéma, par Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt, est bien modelé, ressemblant dans ses lignes générales, mais avec certains grossissements qui alourdissent et vieillissent la figure en lui donnant un aspect trop masculin’; Eugène Véron, ‘La Sculpture au Salon de Paris, 1879’, *L’Art*, vol. 18, 5e année, no. 3 (August 1879), 11. It is not clear if Abbéma’s erroneous birth date was established in 1879, but she was twenty-three and not eighteen as subsequent texts claimed (this error is repeated in almost all posthumous texts on her). A copy of Abbéma’s birth certificate and death certificates are in the AM Étampes (the death certificate is also incorrect). The *Gazette des beaux-arts* paid Bernhardt a backhanded compliment by claiming that her ‘two portraits of women which were just like any other busts [deux portraits de femmes qui ressemblent à d’autres bustes]’ but this comment was aimed at designating Bernhardt’s oddity rather than engaging with her art work; Arthur Baignères, ‘Le Salon de 1879: La Sculpture (troisième et dernier article)’, *Gazette des beaux-arts*, 2e sér. vol. 20 (1879), 146-54 (152).

activities (fig. 1: 5).⁴⁴ It is possible (or even likely) that this drawing is based on a photograph by Benque & Cie (probably sold as a portrait image) due to the same alignment of the face and certain identical details in wisps of hair (fig. 1: 6).⁴⁵ In this photograph Abbéma wears a tailored, well-fitting jacket (just visible as such in the crook of her left arm), a waistcoat with pin in the open space of the turned down jacket collar, a starched white standing collar, posy of flowers, and fob watch. The homosexual journalist and poet Jean Lorrain (pseud. Paul Duval, 1855-1906) wrote a feature article entitled 'Le Fils du Rajah: une étude sur Louise Abbéma' based on a claimed visit to Abbéma's studio. Having cited a long passage, allegedly spoken by Abbéma, in which she lists all the things and people she 'loves', Lorrain continues with a description of how she was dressed:

And, charming, there she stood, her hands in her pockets, squeezed into a man's grey woollen jacket, the pale profile of a bird of prey perched atop the high, stiff collar, her shirt front sparkling with a horse-shoe studded with sapphires; she who had just held forth in such a resplendent and excessive tone professing her beliefs with such a lot of noise about nothing, turned towards a superb creature with a red mane of hair and the tragic visage of a Scandinavian heroine. The latter rose from the divan and sat herself down with aplomb at the piano [...]⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Demare worked for a number of satirical periodicals and set up his own, *L'Etrille*; Marcus Osterwalder, *Dictionnaire des illustrateurs 1800-1914* (Paris: Hubschmid & Bouret, 1983), 302.

⁴⁵ Benque & Cie were based at 33 rue Boissy d'Anglas, Paris.

⁴⁶ 'Et charmante, sanglée dans une veste d'homme en drap grise, le pâle profile d'un oiseau de proie posé sur le carcan en hauteur du faux-col, le plastron blanc épinglé d'un fer à cheval à clous de saphirs, celle qui vient, debout, les mains dans ses poches, de débiter d'un si beau ton de crânerie cette profession de foi tintamarresque, se tourne vers une superbe créature à crinière rousse, au masque tragique de jeune dieu scandinave. La fait lever de son divan, l'installe de force au piano [...]', Jean Lorrain, 'Le Fils du Rajah: étude sur Louise Abbéma', *Le Courrier français* (c. 1887), 8. The woman who played the piano was the singer Augusta Holmès. This passage is cited in abbreviated form in Philippe Jullian's biography of Lorrain where he fails to include, amongst others, the opening words of the passage, 'et charmante'; *Jean Lorrain: ou le Satiricon 1900* (Paris: Fayard, 1974), 198. Lorrain was probably homosexual and appeared to have been a friend of Bernhardt. Despite the disparaging tone of Lorrain's commentary on her appearance and the very unlikely citation he provides from her beforehand, it is difficult to work out his position in terms of 'friendship' with regard to Abbéma. Professor Leslie Choquette, Assumption College, Worcester, MA, informed me that Lorrain treated Liane de Pougy in a similar manner in his writing, despite their friendship. Choquette adds that Lorrain's writing on homosexual men was 'scarcely more flattering'. This could therefore be a question of what we would now call 'self-hatred' or, again according to Choquette one of 'being able to write about such things only in a harshly critical register'; email from Leslie

Lorrain insists on the tightness of Abbéma's clothing creating an image of the masculine woman imprisoned and uncomfortable in men's clothes, failing to mention that the close fit of Abbéma's jacket undoubtedly accentuated her curvaceous, and therefore 'feminine', figure as can be seen in a portrait photograph from the studio of Ferdinand Mulnier (c. late 1870s) (fig. 1: 7).⁴⁷

I have found no records that demonstrate if Abbéma bought her clothes ready-made or had them made by a personal tailor. Although Abbéma wore the costume of the Amazone, the cut of her jackets, skirts, and shirts are not the same as those illustrated in fashion histories or contemporary publications on fashion or images of other Amazones. Given also that she wore accoutrements that other women did not, such as waistcoats, cravats, and a tricorne hat (in later life), Abbéma's clothing is more individualized than what might have been produced as ready-made wear for the Amazone. Moreover, all her clothing is very close-fitting and this would indicate made-to-measure. It is likely, therefore, that she employed a tailor. According to Angie Harrison (freelance wardrobe mistress), Abbéma's clothes were most likely measured up and cut by a woman used to making men's garments. It may also be that Abbéma did buy some elements of her attire ready-made, for instance her cravats or that she bought existing clothing and had it altered. The actual sewing may have been carried out by factory or

Choquette, 8 March 2007. Lorrain was not the only homosexual man to malign Abbéma in print; Robert de Montesquiou made various efforts to disparage her same-sex activities. Given both men's claims to intimacy with Bernhardt and Bernhardt's erotic intimacy with Abbéma, this is puzzling. However, even though Lorrain claimed friendship with Bernhardt, and she with him, he later wrote a disparaging novel (*Le Tréteau*, 1906) with the protagonist allegedly modeled on her. Lorrain also wrote on the geography of lesbian sociality in 'Les pères saphistes', *Dans l'oratoire* (1888), 49-50 and 'L'inassouvie', *L'Echo de Paris* (17 November 1890), cited in Nicole G. Albert, 'De la topographie invisible à l'espace public et littéraire: les lieux de plaisir lesbien dans le Paris de la Belle Époque', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 53:4 (2006), 87-105 (91).

⁴⁷ According to the Bottin directory Ferdinand Mulnier had his studio in the boulevard des Italiens from 1857-71; cited in Elizabeth Anne McCauley, *Industrial Madness: Commercial Photography in Paris 1848-71* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994). McCauley's study only covers the period up until 1871, Mulnier's address after this time therefore requires checking in the Didot Bottin trade directory for Paris after this date.

home workers.⁴⁸ By the 1870s and 80s tailored jackets for women were regarded as suitable, and fashionable, outdoor wear. Often used for walking or riding (when it was called the costume of the Amazone), these were frequently worn in conjunction with the newly invented blouse, which was, in conjunction with this type of jacket, finished off like a shirt with stiff standing collar and cuffs. Women also wore fob watches on the exterior of their jackets.⁴⁹ In fashion plates for such wear the models adopted demure poses concomitant with acceptably feminine deportment. The difference with Abbéma in Lorrain's description (assuming this to be accurate) and elsewhere is more than simply that she adopted a masculinized mode of dress (whether the clothing was 'men's' or 'women's') but that she 'had her hands in her pockets'. Not just metaphorical but actual self-assurance is signified in her costume and how she chose to wear it. Together with her direct engagement with the viewer, Abbéma cuts a very dashing and commanding figure in portrait photographs that show her in unusual, but not exceptional, masculinized tailored guise. Abbéma was either rather coy about fashion in a letter from her published in *Minerva*, or, she acknowledged implicitly that her mode of attire was not acknowledged as 'fashion'. She stated in 1925 that 'fashion is a stupid thing! Because, how can one admit that a woman who is gifted with good taste (and an independent temperament) would be so like a 'Panurge sheep' [follow trends] as to make of

⁴⁸ According to Christopher Breward 'the production of fashionable dress in the modern period [is] a more complex and interlinked chain' in which made-to-measure and ready-made were not that clear-cut from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. Breward is discussing dresses here and it is not clear if his outline of the history of making clothes from around 1850-1920 (when a dressmaker would do the cutting and work-room employees or piece-workers the sewing) refers to other garments. Middle-class women themselves or their servants also made clothes; *Fashion* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 53. Marie Simon describes this outfit as the 'costume-tailleur' which comprised a long skirt, jacket, and long-sleeved shirt and originated from the English couturier Redfern; *Fashion in Art: The Second Empire and Impressionism*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (London: Zwemmer, 1995), 75. According to Valerie Steele, the riding costume was a 'quasi-masculine ensemble' and 'due to the complicated cutting and tailoring of the suit, it was usually made by (male) tailors who specialized in riding habits'; *Paris Fashion: A Cultural History* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 171-72. Steele does not provide any evidence of this and I am inclined to favour Angie Harrison's suggestion that it was a woman who measured up her client and cut the cloth.

⁴⁹ Doreen Yarwood, *The Encyclopaedia of World Costume* (London: Batsford, 1978), 38, 107, 246-48.

her personal aesthetic something abstract enough to not wear what she wants on her own back'.⁵⁰

In Demare's image where the entire body is represented the suit is a lighter colour than Benque's photograph and the velvet covering on the lapels and the cut of the front portion of cloth suggest a man's morning coat, the trousers making this a three-piece suit.⁵¹ Although reference is made in her private correspondence (unfortunately undated) to dressing up in Pierrot trousers, I have tracked down only two images where Abbéma is both shown below the waist and wearing trousers rather than her usual long, narrowly-cut skirt.⁵² Both are self-portrait pencil drawings in the guise of a Buddha found in her pocket-sized sketchbook (c. early to mid-1870s) and were not in public circulation.⁵³ In order to wear trousers in public (and here she is represented in a public role as Bernhardt's official portraitist) Abbéma would have had to obtain a 'permission de travestissement' from the police.⁵⁴ Similarly, in Demare's drawing Abbéma appears to have short hair due to the way in which this is drawn in vertical strokes on the left side of her head and curls up below and behind her left ear. It is not clear that Abbéma ever actually cut her hair short in 1883, or at any time. In the photograph Abbéma's hair is *worn* short but not *cut* short as it is tied back behind her head and simply not

⁵⁰ 'La mode est une chose stupide! Car, comment admettre qu'une femme douée de goût (et d'un tempérament plutôt indépendant) soit assez «mouton de Panurge» pour faire abstraction de son esthétique personnelle et ne porter que ce qu'elle voit sur le dos de tout le monde', Louise Abbéma, 'La Mode', *Minerva* (15 November 1925), n.p.

⁵¹ Given the prohibition in France on women wearing trousers, the three-piece suit in this representation of Abbéma signifies 'men's' clothing even if worn by a figure who is identifiably a woman.

⁵² 'Louise Abbéma à Marguerite [Durand]'; sale catalogue cutting from a private collection; AME, dossier Abbéma. It is not clear why the commissioners of the auction have identified Durand as the recipient. The tutoiement of the letter indicates that she was well known to Abbéma.

⁵³ These are two small self-portrait pencil sketches as a Buddha (one entitled 'Boudhabbma') in her sketchbook in the collection of the musée d'Étampes.

⁵⁴ See van Casselaer on Rosa Bonheur and others, 39-46. Steele notes that Georges Sand wore men's clothing in public but did not gain permission to do so. She also claims that trouser-wearing by women was the domain of erotic art, the cocotte, and the women in the demimonde who wore trousers in order to 'titillate their clientele'. Trouser-wearing was, she claims, done in the 'spirit of make-believe'; Steele, 164. Steele fails to consider if some of the women reported to have been seen wearing trousers at 'licentious public balls' in Paris may not have been heterosexual.

visible due to the angle of her pose and the position of the photographer. Demare's image picked up on aspects of Abbéma's masculinized self-fashioning and, by adding imagined details, presents her as if she were a man, insofar as trousers and short hair would signify that for a contemporary audience.⁵⁵ Not all writers found Abbéma's attire strange, nor did they designate it 'uncomfortable', as did Lorrain. An article in *Fémina* claimed that 'Abbéma had never changed, retaining the look of a gamin, with her short hair, her tight-fitting jacket, and her narrow skirt', qualifying this appearance as her 'boyish allure'.⁵⁶

Using the Benque photograph as a template, Demare's image retains the appeal of its subject's self-assured masculine self-fashioning. This is not the case in two further caricatures (figs: 1: 8-9). In a caricature of 1887 by Caran d'Ache (Emmanule Poiré, 1859-1909) and Manuel Luque, published in their album, *Peintres et chevaux*, Abbéma is shown next to her easel which houses a large canvas of Bernhardt, possibly in role. In another, undated ink sketch by Jean Saurel (pseud. Jehan Testevuide, 1873-1922) – which was cut out and stuck into Abbéma's

⁵⁵ A caricature by Alfred Grévin in *Les Parisiennes* (1872) was captioned 'It's fun to be a man!' showing a woman, her curvaceous shape apparent from her pose and open jacket but wearing trousers, jacket, hair cut short, and smoking; illus. Steele, 165.

⁵⁶ 'Abbéma n'a point changé, elle a gardé cette apparence de gamin, avec ses cheveux courts, sa jaquette collante et sa jupe étroite. Avec cette allure de garçon [...]'. The writer had just cited Séverine's (editor of *La Fronde*) 'amusing sketch' of Abbéma as follows: "not tall, slim, with jerky movements, and her hair cut short at the back, Louise Abbéma, at first glance, gives the impression of a small monk decked out in petticoats [...] but a small Jansenite monk" ['Séverine a fait d'elle cette esquisse amusante: "Pas grande, mince, la geste scandé, la nuque courte, Louise Abbéma, à première vue, donne l'impression d'un petit abbé affable de cotillons [...] mais d'un petit abbé janséniste"']; Anon., 'Mlle Louise Abbéma', *Fémina* (1 May 1903), 519. I have not located this much-cited characterization by Séverine who did write about Abbéma elsewhere but did not include this information; 'Mlle Louise Abbéma', unidentified publication, BNFDEP, Coll. Laruelle, Ne 63, t. 123, Louise Abbéma, D040688. The illustrative photograph in *Fémina* shows Abbéma's hair brushed back (apart from her characteristic fringe) and, possibly, cut above the shirt collar, but, given the quality of the reproduction, this is almost impossible to ascertain. I think it very unlikely that Abbéma cut her hair short, although she clearly always wore it tied up, again, as if cut short. According to the autobiography of the actress Simone (Mme. François Ponché), Abbéma had a 'Japanese hair-style' but she does not clarify if this was contemporary or historical; Simone, *Sous de nouveaux soleils* (Paris: Gallimard, 1957), cited in van Casselaer, 48. Angie Harrison has noted that the manner in which Abbéma's hair is tied up may be indicative of a male Japanese haircut as seen in costuming for Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado*. I am very grateful to Angie for her advice on this and all other matters concerning costume.

sketchbook – she is shown smoking a cigarette.⁵⁷ Both representations give Abbéma substantial facial hair, in the form of a full beard and pronounced sideburns respectively. Here a male hormonally-induced attribute is grafted onto Abbéma’s face representing her as utterly alien to the image of Woman (Caran d’Ache and Luque’s drawing emphasizes this as alien by dressing her in a skirt).⁵⁸ Photographs of Abbéma from the 1870s until the 1920s do not suggest that she actually had any substantial facial hair or allowed it to grow. Nor are there any records of Abbéma donning false facial hair in order to ‘pass’ as a man or of being ‘caught out’ doing so, although it is, of course, a possibility.⁵⁹ Rather, in both these images an art surgical intervention typical of caricature robs her of the ease evident in the Demare image demonstrated, wittingly or not by the caricaturist, in the flourish of her brush with which the figure of the artist announces ‘Louise Abbéma pinxit’. In Caran d’Ache and Luque’s image Abbéma is represented with a glum facial expression and stiffly held body. In that by Saurel the tight grip of her lips on the cigarette she is smoking and her barely open eyes again connote grimness of demeanour. What is striking about these images in comparison to other images of Abbéma’s self-fashioned self (portrait photographs and self-portrait paintings and drawings which I will consider later, and, of course, Bernhardt’s portrait bust) is that (like Lorrain’s textual description) they show Abbéma as *uncomfortable*. The addition of facial hair

⁵⁷ Testevuide worked for *Le Rire*, *Le Monde illustré*, *Le Sourire*, and other periodicals; *Dictionnaire des illustreurs 1800-1914*, 1040-41.

⁵⁸ The trope of Abbéma ‘as a man’ also appeared in a satirical play Georges Feydeau and Maurice Desvallières. A butler and a journalist discuss whether a painting is by Abbéma or Hobbéma (a male painter). On declaring that the work is by a woman, the reporter opts for Hobbéma; *Le Ruban*, II.7, repr. ‘Corpus littéraire Étampois’, <www.corpusetampois.com/cle-feydeau-rubanabbema.html>. This website (webmaster: Bernard Gineste) contains a substantial amount of material on Abbéma and is updated regularly. The musée d’Étampes (Abbéma’s birthplace) also has a substantial collection of works by, and material relating to, Abbéma’s art practice. The same play on words using the name of the male artist Hobbéma was included in a disparaging spoof dictionary entry, as follows: “A”: Abbéma (Louise), née en 1855. Son nom rime à Hobbéma. Son talent, à quoi rime-t-il? ; Anon., ‘Abbéma’, *Petit Bottin des lettres et des arts* (Paris: Giraud, 1888), 1.

⁵⁹ For a discussion of passing as an unhelpful term because of the assumption of ‘a self masquerading as another kind of self’ whereby the ‘successful pass may cohere into something akin to identity’, see Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), 21. Halberstam also illustrates facial hair adopted by dyke kings for performance purposes in the 1990s, figs 32-34. For a history of passing women see Julie Wheelwright, *Amazons and Military Maids: Women Who Dressed as Men in the Pursuit of Life, Liberty and Happiness* (London: Pandora, 1989).

therefore acts to cover over the represented subject robbing her of a representational agency demonstrated in these other images. It is this which makes her *seem* unattractive and not any actual aspect of Abbéma's physiognomy, clothing, attributes, or mode of self-presentation.

Since her death attention to Abbéma or her artistic practice, with some notable exceptions, is usually cursory, provided in artists' dictionaries and literature about Bernhardt.⁶⁰ The fullest treatment to date of her work as a whole and of aspects of her biography is given in a master's thesis from the University of Paris in 1993. However, despite an inviting chapter sub-heading – 'Une femme à l'allure masculine' – the author, Olivia Droin, discusses what she calls a 'flattering' portrait of Abbéma in *Figures contemporaines* (1896-1908) in much the same terms as the satire or caricature outlined above focussing on Abbéma's facial features. Droin cites at length the appreciation of Abbéma's 'expressive face', 'energetic and regular features', 'delicately arched eyebrows', 'black eyes shining with intelligence and sparkling full of spirit', and 'friendly and slender smile' as signs of her 'honesty and loyalty'. Drawing attention to Abbéma's family background (she was the maternal great-granddaughter of the actress Louise Contat and comte Louis de Narbonne) the writer claimed that her 'Bourbon profile' attested to her 'distinction as a native Frenchwoman and strength of character.'⁶¹ Droin tells her readers that this writer, whom she identifies as Armand Silvestre, has been 'too kind, as, to tell the truth, the artist's face was rather unattractive' and his use of such a coded description conceals from the reader her 'hooked nose and big ears' neither of which 'imperfections of

⁶⁰ In a detailed consideration of Abbéma's large oil on canvas, *Le Déjuener dans la serre* (1877, musée des beaux-arts de Pau), Pollock discusses Abbéma's dress code in her self-representation in the painting in terms of lesbian eroticism; 'Louise Abbéma's *Lunch* and Alfred Stevens's *Studio: theatricality, feminine subjectivity and space around Sarah Bernhardt, Paris, 1877-1888*' in *Local/Global: Women Artists in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Deborah Cherry and Janice Helland (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 99-120. Garb refers to an article in which Abbéma expressed ambivalence about the women-only exhibitions of the Salon de Femmes run by the Union des femmes peintres et sculpteurs; 38.

⁶¹ 'Visage expressif'; 'traits énergiques et réguliers'; 'l'arc délicat des sourcils, des yeux noirs rayonnants d'intelligence et pétillants d'esprit, brillent d'un singulier éclat'; 'un aimable et fin sourire'; 'la franchise et la loyauté'; 'le profil à la ligne bourbonienne'; 'atteste la distinction native et la fierté du caractère', cited in Olivia Droin, 'Louise Abbéma', 2 vols (unpublished master's thesis [DEA], université de Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne, 1993), I, 21.

physique' fit 'a model of beauty' but are at best 'interesting or original'.⁶² If Abbéma really did have 'big ears' then the 'enlargements' that *L'Art* complained of might make Bernhardt's bust competent as a work of portrait sculpture in producing a mimetic likeness of her sitter but never one that could be called beautiful because this likeness did not accord with a gendered typology of idealized representation when the sitter was a woman.

Abbéma's 'big ears' or her portrait as 'too masculine' constitute and typify an obdurate refusal to conjoin 'beauty' with the representation of the masculine woman and the lesbian subject configured as such. This does not allow either for an artist whose desiring gaze might have represented this physical and self-fashioned otherness as beautiful in a portrait bust, or the desiring gaze of the art historian who calls it so. Recent interest in the processes and effects of the attribution of beauty, disappointingly, also refuses to think beauty according to different visible criteria or ways of seeing. In *Beauty and Art* Elizabeth Prettejohn asks '[w]hich works of art have been called beautiful, and why?' begging the question of which works of art have not been called beautiful and why not.⁶³ Francette Pacteau investigates the *mise-en-scène* of the attribution of 'the beauty of the woman' (in psychoanalytic terms) as symptomatic but limits her analysis to images 'made by and for men'.⁶⁴ In 'Feminist Pleasure and Feminine Beautification' published in a special issue of the feminist philosophy journal *Hypatia* devoted to feminism and aesthetics, Ann J. Cahill writes (in a footnote) 'Of course not all beautifiers are women, and not all gazers are men. However, in the dominant heterosexual discourse, the objectifying male gaze – even when adopted by women! – judges the beautiful woman in

⁶² 'Le portrait est assurément flatteur. Il est d'autant plus aimable, qu'à dire la vérité, le visage de l'artiste était plutôt ingrat. Ce qualificatif habile de "profile à la ligne bourbonienne" dissimule en fait un nez busqué qu'équilibrait de très visibles oreilles. A proprement parler, il s'agit beaucoup plus d'un visage que l'on qualifierait d'intéressant ou d'original, que d'un modèle de beauté'; Droin, 22. The citation is from 'Louise Abbéma', *Figures contemporaines: tirées de l'album Mariani*, 11 vols (Paris: Fleury, 1896-1908), I, n.p. The photocopy in MOSD, dossier Abbéma notes the author as J. Uzanne which I have yet to confirm. I have not identified the source of Droin's claim that the author was Silvestre.

⁶³ Elizabeth Prettejohn, *Art and Beauty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 9.

⁶⁴ Francette Pacteau, *The Symptom of Beauty* (London: Reaktion, 1994), 18.

terms dictated by male desire.⁶⁵ What horror is foreclosed by Cahill's exclamation mark here? Despite the consideration given to the notion of beauty and its histories (including within feminist analysis), no account moves beyond the existing repertoire of viewer and object as engaged in a heterosexual transaction. This means that the conditions of what Sontag calls beauty's commendation and the terms of 'beauty' itself are not fully investigated. The notion of an erotics of beauty not 'dictated by male desire' is thus deemed inconceivable within art history or the broader remit of visual culture.

It is important here to say that this 'erotics of beauty' as lesbian is on a different register to those codes of representation prevalent in eroticized images of two women in various degrees of engagement from soporific companionship to athletic sexual activity by male artists from the second half of the nineteenth-century onwards, particularly in France. I think here of work in painting and drawing by Gustave Courbet, Félicien Rops, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, and Auguste Rodin and works in sculpture by Rodin, Victor Rousseau (fig. 1: 10), and Ary Bitter (1883-1973).⁶⁶ I am not ruling out the erotic appeal of these images outside their probable intended audience of the heterosexual male.⁶⁷ In the case of Bitter's terracotta statuette, *Les Deux amies* (fig. 1: 11), though, the appeal has been less in what the work 'represents' (a sex act) and far more that it is claimed, in a 1981 sale catalogue, to depict Bernhardt and Abbéma making love.⁶⁸ But, although finding this work and the narrative

⁶⁵ Ann J. Cahill, 'Feminist Pleasure and Feminine Beautification', *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 18:4 (2003), 42-64 (62, note 10).

⁶⁶ For a survey of such imagery, see Marie-Jo Bonnet, *Les Deux amies: essai sur le couple de femmes dans l'art* (Paris: Blanche, 2000).

⁶⁷ For an appraisal of one work, see Dorothy M. Kosinski, 'Gustave Courbet's *The Sleepers*: The Lesbian Image in Nineteenth-Century French Art and Literature', *Artibus et Historiae*, 9:18 (1988), 187-99. Kosinski cites the appeal of this work as a 'highly erotic, intensely sensual depiction of lesbian lovers [...] a magnificent and compelling work' but adds that this is underscored by its commission for a male collector of erotica, Khalil Bey.

⁶⁸ This information was included in the caption in the 1981 catalogue when the work came up for sale in Paris. Although I have not tracked down the expert for this auction, I have contacted Bitter's granddaughter who informed me that this information about the work as a portrait of Bernhardt and Abbéma did not come from the family and was 'very probably false'; email from Sophie Ryckelynck, 6 January 2005. Given the interest that such 'gossipy' snippets of published information have for this

provided by the catalogue has been an exciting addition to my archive, it is not the representation of a sex act between two women that alone might constitute an erotics of beauty in a sculptural object. 'Sex' is not depicted in the bust, but nor is it a chastened image. It is my concern to explore how I can situate this portrait bust as erotic with the modifier 'lesbian'. Here I take on Teresa de Lauretis's explanation that:

the term *lesbian* refers to a sexual relation, for better or for worse, and however broadly one may wish to define *sexual*. I use this term in its psychoanalytic acceptation to include centrally – beyond any performed or fantasized physical sexual act, whatever it may be – the conscious presence of desire in one woman for another.⁶⁹

Bitter's sculpture might represent 'lesbianism' but it does so under the conditions of an artist/model transaction that falls outside a lesbian sexual relation. To call a portrait bust of one woman by another 'Gorgeous!', or beautiful, is to situate that sexual relation within a dynamic creative process where artist and sitter represent their mutual *desire* for all (those who want) to see.

Before finally moving on from 'Gorgeous!' as an initial epithet, I will consider how, reading this utterance can be further useful (as was the case with Barthes's 'adorable') for articulating the erotics of beauty I read for in this bust. In its more formal usage in the *OED* 'gorgeous' is given to mean 'adorned with rich or brilliant colours; sumptuously gay or splendid; showy, magnificent' (referring to the dress of persons and the decoration of rooms) or 'dazzling' (of phraseology and literary colouring). As a portrait in white marble this might seem inappropriate, for it lacks rich or brilliant colours and its form as a portrait bust is restrained rather than elaborate. But this initial approbation solicits a devoted attention to the bust's fabric and facture as my photographs will demonstrate. Viewing and making operate

history of art, I am curious as to why such claims are so readily discounted in the absence of any hard evidence. What is this need to deny that which one does not actually know?

⁶⁹ Teresa de Lauretis, *The Practice of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 284.

dialectically as the details of the bust, produced by the sculptor of her portrait subject, render a wealth of affect possible. This dialectic is what I go on to call in this chapter ‘making love’.

1.2 Making the Next Move

Getting to Know You

Again, how to proceed? Already the *bricoleur*, I continue to borrow in order to fashion a discursive mode for talking about lesbian desire in the processes of viewing and making of sculpture.⁷⁰ At times this can become ungainly where the sutured edges of disparate or seemingly inappropriate elements of discourse become all too obvious. There is no final version of scholarly lesbian desire or its erotics of beauty, just drafts and redrafts of possibilities. The work of ‘reading with scholarly lesbian desire’ with its mode of borrowing is interventionist, rather than appropriational, its function, to enable something to be said that I have not found elsewhere, but only glimpsed in the dull weave of a homogenising cultural fabric. In the next section of this chapter I work through an operational technology of what I called earlier the ‘dialectic of the aesthetic and the archival’ using as an aide Barthes’s model of the *punctum* and *studium*. In order to situate an erotics of beauty in sculpture studies I also make use of Alex Pott’s analysis in *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History* (1994) of Winckelmann’s eighteenth-century texts on beauty and antique sculpture where Potts discerns a desiring homosocial engagement that verges insistently towards the homoerotic. In order to situate this as lesbian I also draw on Teresa de Lauretis’s model of ‘perverse desire’ in *The Practice of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire* (1994) where she re-reads Freud’s master discourse in order to formulate a model that accounts for a lesbian sexual structuring outside the frame of heterosexuality.

To rely on Barthes’s model of the two elements he calls the *studium* and *punctum* in his essay on photography, *Camera Lucida* requires a certain level of displacement, for it is not a

⁷⁰ Spivak states the requirement that the postcolonial historian become a *bricoleur* in the face of an archive fraught with loss and bias; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ‘The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives’, *Theory and History*, 24:3 (1985), 247-72 (252).

photograph that I am dealing with here but sculpture (although my photographs of this sculpture are crucial to my reading process). How the *studium* and the *punctum* function provides a scenario where aesthetic affect and archival endeavour meet in a move from love at first sight to devoted attention. This model consists for Barthes firstly of a 'field' where:

what I feel about these photographs derives from an *average* affect, almost from a certain training. [...] it is *studium*, which doesn't mean, at least not immediately, 'study', but application to a thing, taste for someone, a kind of general, enthusiastic commitment, of course, but without special acuity. It is by *studium* that I am interested in so many photographs, whether I receive them as political testimony or enjoy them as good historical scenes: for it is culturally (this connotation is present in *studium*) that I participate in the figures, the faces, the gestures, the settings, the actions (26).

The second element, that signals Barthes's rapture with the photograph, he argues,

will break (or punctuate) the *studium*. This time it is not I who seek it out (as I invest the field of the *studium* with my sovereign consciousness), it is this element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me. A Latin word exists to designate this wound, this prick, this mark made by a pointed instrument: the word suits me all the better in that it refers to the notion of punctuation, and because the photographs I am speaking of are in effect punctuated, sometimes even speckled with these sensitive points; precisely, these marks, these wounds are so many *points*. This second element which will disturb the *studium* I shall therefore call the *punctum*; for *punctum* is also: sting, speck, cut, little hole – and also a cast of dice. A photograph's *punctum* is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me) (26-27).

Readers of Barthes have enthusiastically taken up the *punctum* in a number of ways that signal its aptness for my project. It is the 'royal way to an artistic medium's specificity' (Schor) or the 'ideational representative' of the drive and therefore of the workings of desire (Pacteau, *pace* Victor Burgin).⁷¹ Where I differ from these interpretative accounts is not in a lack of enthusiasm for the *punctum* (for I too have been pierced by Eros's arrow) but in how they are

⁷¹ Schor (1987), 94; Pacteau, 169. The reference to Burgin is: 'Diderot, Barthes, Vertigo', *The End of Art Theory* (London, 1986), 126-27.

articulated at the cost of the crucially co-present *studium*.⁷² It is not difficult to see why this might have happened, for Barthes himself sets this up as a binary order. He writes: '[t]he *studium* is that very wide field of unconcerned desire, of various interest, of inconsequential taste: *I like/I don't like*. The *studium* is of the order of liking, not of *loving*; it mobilizes a half-desire, a demi-volition' (27). The *studium* refers to those photographs of which Barthes says: 'I am interested in them (as I am interested in the world), I do not love them' and that he proceeds to analyze in terms of how they 'speak' to him, what they teach him (41). The *punctum*, however, strikes like lightning, avoids analysis and, like the loved object of *A Lover's Discourse* resists naming; it is not, as is the *studium*, coded. For 'what I can name cannot really prick me. The incapacity to name is a good symptom of disturbance', Barthes declares, 'the effect is certain but unlocatable, it does not find its sign, its name; it is sharp and yet lands in a vague zone of myself; it is acute yet muffled, it cries out in silence' (51-53). The question then arises of under what conditions does the *punctum* release its affective power? Not always in the process of looking, Barthes claims, despite its 'clarity': 'however immediate and incisive it was, the *punctum* could accommodate a certain latency (but never any scrutiny)', it could do its work after the event and, he adds, 'work [...] within me'. This perhaps is how the *punctum* proves so appealing, particularly for the notion of an aesthetics of Eros, for this is the site of affect.

Here I take up Barthes's earlier statement here that the condition of the *punctum* is its 'co-presence' with the *studium* in order to argue that the dichotomy of scholar/lover whose domains are either the *studium* or the *punctum* cannot be sustained and, indeed, is not sustained in his own account. Barthes admits as much later in the book when he says '[a]t the time (at the beginning of this book: already far away) when I was inquiring into my attachment to certain photographs, I thought I could distinguish a field of cultural interest (the *studium*) from that unexpected flash which sometimes crosses this field and which I called the *punctum*' (95-96). For it is now that Barthes specifies the *punctum* not as material form (the entire

⁷² I will come back to this as a wounding in my discussion of de Lauretis's notion of perverse desire and lesbian sexuality.

photograph, a figure within it, a detail) but as intensity, which he signifies as 'Time, the lacerating emphasis of the *noeme* ("that has been"), its pure representation.' What pierces him now is that 'by giving me the absolute past of the pose, the photograph tells me of death in the future.' Most poignantly this occurs in his viewing of the principal photograph in question, one of his mother aged five in a Winter Garden. For this reminds him of her recent death and therefore the intensity of his notion of 'time' is also one of *timing* as the *punctum* then becomes the register of his loss *now*. Here the lightning strike for Barthes is that viewing this photograph when he does confirms his knowledge that this (loss) was to be, and, that it has been. But this unsettles the binary order of the *punctum/studium*. For now Barthes does scrutinize the image *because of the punctum* and *he works on it* just as it has worked on him. He writes:

If I like a photograph, if it disturbs me, I linger over it. What am I doing, during the whole time I remain with it? I look at it, I scrutinize it, as if I wanted to know more about the thing or the person it represents. [...] I want to outline the loved face by thought, to make it into the unique field of an intense observation; I want to enlarge this face in order to see it better, to understand it better, to know its truth [...]. I believe that by enlarging the detail "in series" (each shot engendering smaller details than at the preceding stage), I will finally reach my mother's very being. [...] I decompose, I enlarge, and, so to speak, I *retard*, in order to have time to *know at last*. [...] Alas, however hard I look, I discover nothing: if I enlarge, I see nothing but the grain of the paper: I undo the image for the sake of its substance; and if I do not enlarge, if I content myself with scrutinizing, I obtain this sole knowledge, long since possessed at first glance: that this has indeed been: the turn of the screw has produced nothing (99-100).

The 'nothing' that Barthes speaks of here is his understanding of the photographic image as the space shared by two statements: 'it is not there' and 'but it has indeed been', an understanding of what he 'already knew' but that beyond the *punctum* moment required the *process* of his working on the image, or what I argue is that element he calls the *studium*. For although he calls the *punctum* 'an addition: it is what I add to the photograph and *what is nonetheless already there*', *how* does this addition take place? His intellectual curiosity figures his desire (for the lost object) and demands scrutiny after all. What was revealed in the flash of

the *punctum* moment is now translatable (after the all of the *punctum*) as the articulation of loss: this is the 'nothing' *produced*.

And this production is no less operable in the erotic image. Barthes's distinction between the erotic and the pornographic image (which I follow in the notion of an erotics of beauty) is that the erotic image contains a 'blind field'. He writes: 'the erotic photograph [...] (and this is its very condition), does not make the sexual organs into a central object; it may very well not show them at all; it takes the spectator outside its frame, and it is there that I animate this photograph and that it animates me. The *punctum*, then, is a kind of subtle *beyond* – as if the image launched desire beyond what it permits us to see [...] not only toward the fantasy of a *praxis*, but toward the absolute excellence of a being, body and soul together'. For Barthes this is where the photographer 'has found the *right moment*, the *kairos* of desire' (59).

Here the order of liking and loving intermesh, not in the image itself, but in Barthes's engagement with it. Barthes claims that in the moment of the *punctum* he withdraws from the 'blah-blah' of the *studium* with its required mode of scrutiny to 'allow the detail to rise of its own accord into affective consciousness' (54, 55). But the field of the *studium* (his interest in photography, his intellectual engagement, his writing) is the material condition for the *punctum* (his poignant realization that his mother is dead; his enjoyment of the partial male nude by Mapplethorpe). Despite his claim that 'however hard I look, I discover nothing' Barthes at last finds what he calls the 'luminous shadow' of the image and in capturing this in the image of his mother as a child, the provincial photographer was 'making permanent [...] the truth for me'. This 'truth' is for Barthes that 'in the love stirred by Photography' he discovers pity, for the realization of his own loss. This engenders his desire and, despite his remonstrance, requires a process of inquiry. What else is this than scholar becoming lover, and lover scholar?

How to Make Love

The co-presence of the *punctum* and the *studium* provides an operational technology of reading with scholarly lesbian desire. Embarking on doctoral research (*studium*) fields the lightening flash of an amorous epiphany in the register of the aesthetic (*punctum*). As love at first sight, this fuels the intellectual desire to know and write 'about' (from Old English *onbutan*, on = in, on, *butan* = outside of) the *Bust of Louise Abbéma*, supplementing its aesthetic affect with history. This section will explore how writing this sculpture history is a form of making that relates to the processes of making a sculptural portrait bust. In between these two activities lies the object, which in its materiality solicits affect (itself a material condition) and this provides the substance for the mode Barthes calls one of addition to what is already there. My art historical process has provided a further material supplement to this scenario: a set of slide film images of the bust, including a number of close-up details, taken on three different occasions and under different external conditions.⁷³

I therefore return to Schor's analysis of the detail in Barthes and how it functions reciprocally both as 'the privileged point of contact between reader and text' and the locus of his 'aesthetics of Eros'.⁷⁴ Initially this seemed to offer me an analysis that I could 'apply' to my encounter with the bust particularly in light of how my engagement with it proceeded as I

⁷³ My first visit to view the bust was in the early afternoon in June 2003. I was accompanied by a curator in order to have access to the room as it was closed. I photographed the bust inside its vitrine. As far as I am aware there is no tinting of the glass either in the vitrine or in the window it faces, nor is there any nearby artificial lighting. During this session I included Jean-Léon Gérôme's bust of *Sarah Bernhardt* (1896) and Ernest-Louis Barrias's bust of *Georges Clairin* (1875) in some of the images, but not the other works housed in the vitrine entitled 'La Vie Parisienne'. By my second visit I had acquired a macro lens suitable for close-up shots. This visit took place in the late afternoon in September 2004 during public opening hours. Few people came into the gallery and I was able to get reasonably close to the bust (about 20cm from its frontal and right view). The third occasion on which I photographed the bust was in October 2005 in the early afternoon on a Monday when the gallery is closed to the public. It was removed from the vitrine but remained within the same series of gallery rooms under the same lighting conditions (northern light). This was made possible by Laure de Margerie at the museum to whom I am extremely grateful. I have viewed (but not photographed) the bust on other occasions, including in the gallery at the Jewish Museum where no natural lighting was present. I am extremely grateful also to Claire Harbottle, School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies, University of Leeds, for acute and insightful attention to, and indispensable advice on, my work in photographing the bust.

⁷⁴ Schor (1987), 96.

looked through the lens of my camera in order to take ever more detailed images of it. But on returning to Barthes's texts this was not an absolute model: not all details in Barthes's texts are erotic, nor is the *punctum* always a detail. In a photograph of Robert Wilson and Philip Glass by Mapplethorpe, Barthes discerns the affect of the figure of Wilson as *punctum*: 'Wilson' he explains, 'holds me, though I cannot say why, i.e. say where' nor can he say, in detail, from where (52-53). Barthes, to be sure, Schor argues, does configure the *punctum* as 'very often a "detail", i.e. a partial object' and in *A Lover's Discourse* it is the detail of the V in the spread fingers of the loved other (as discussed above, 64) where she locates an erotic *punctum* that 'figures emblematically his aesthetic project'.⁷⁵ As I argued above, what is missing from Schor's analysis despite her observation that his 'aesthetics of Eros [...] resides in the detail, because the detail is always at least partially sited in a real body' (96) is that this is always in a same-sex, male body when it is erotic. To be fair, Barthes refuses to name his desire as homosexual, even claiming that an evidently homoerotic gesture (the hand of a young sailor on the thigh of another man in a photograph by Nadar) does not constitute the expected *punctum* because it can be named (as 'aberrant') (51). But this does not exclude the same-sexed male body, for without it, either whole or in detail, as locus of the erotic *punctum* there is no aesthetics of Eros in Barthes. And this aesthetics requires Barthes's own male body as the locus of affect. For the *punctum* is not only located in the image ('the photographs I am speaking of are in effect punctuated, sometimes even speckled with these sensitive points'), 'a photograph's *punctum* is that accident which pricks me' (26-27).

I want to argue now that there is 'aesthetics of Eros', or what I call an 'erotics of beauty' that is 'lesbian', at work in the *Bust of Louise Abbéma*. This erotics of beauty is evident because of the coalescence of the *punctum* as intensity of affect and revelatory material form (details) in my viewing of the bust whereby those details become vivid for me. I now consider these details and their making might have been vivid for Bernhardt and Abbéma in the portrait making transaction. As Shearer West has put it, the portrait 'reminds us of the encounter between

⁷⁵ Schor (1987), 96.

artist and sitter'.⁷⁶ As Bernhardt kept the bust for herself (although she did exhibit and reproduce images of it) I read this transaction as distinct from a more 'professional' arrangement where the artist was commissioned by a paying client to produce a portrait for public display. Within the portrait transaction the artist requires intimate knowledge of her subject and the subject reveals something intimate of herself to the artist. I suggest that this intimacy is registered in this bust as a process of 'making love': its details are the material indices of a desiring relationship between Bernhardt and Abbéma in and beyond the studio setting. This corporeal part object, the portrait bust, represents in a material and concrete form (built to last) the effort to prolong or regain an experience of loving and having loved that cannot be reconstituted in any actual or original form but that has been lost. (This is what renders Ary Bitter's statuette, *Les Deux amies* pure conceit.) For this to become thought and known, I argue, requires my desiring lesbian scholarship which as I write it also constitutes a process of 'making love'. As the register of this loss, the details of the bust have (as they do for Barthes in the real body) the 'vocation of a fetish'. I will take up a discussion of this later in the chapter when I consider Teresa de Lauretis's notion of the fetish in lesbian sexual structuring as representing the disavowal of the loss of 'a libidinally invested body-image, a body that can be narcissistically loved [...] the subject's own lost body'.⁷⁷

1.3 "Where's your Evidence?!"

My first viewing of the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* came during a strike in Paris of public service workers. The room in the musée d'Orsay where it is displayed was closed to the public. However, as scholar, I was allowed privileged access (for a short time) in the company of a watching curator. The bust is currently housed in a two-tiered vitrine situated in front of the

⁷⁶ Shearer West, *Portraiture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 41.

⁷⁷ Teresa de Lauretis, 'Habit Changes. Response.', in *Feminism Meets Queer Theory*, ed. Elizabeth Weed and Naomi Schor (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), 315-333 (319). This essay was published in response to a critique of *The Practice of Love* by Elizabeth Grosz, 'Labours of Love: Analyzing Perverse Desire (An Interrogation of Teresa de Lauretis's *The Practice of Love*)'. Both were first published in *More Gender Trouble: Feminism Meets Queer Theory, differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 6:2-3 (1994); Grosz, 274-95; and de Lauretis, 296-313. Grosz's essay was also reprinted in *Space, Time and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 155-71.

large north-facing windows that overlook the river Seine. In the intimacy of this brief, and fantasmatically one-to-one, encounter I was 'held' by this artwork as it dazzled me. The early afternoon June sunlight flooding through the windows from an almost cloudless sky suffused the white marble with a breathtaking luminosity and provided optimum conditions for the *punctum* to do its work. My outburst of 'Gorgeous!' matched Barthes's '*Adorable!*' as signalling evidence of both an object endowed with *charis* ('the sparkle of the eyes, the body's luminous beauty, the radiance of the desirable being') and the pleasure that this confers (figs 1: 1-4).

Finding Marble: 'Crazy about You ...

This account opens my discussion to the materiality of the bust and the history of the use and signification of white marble in the practice and viewing of figural sculpture in nineteenth-century France. White marble, according to the entry on sculpture in the *Grand dictionnaire du XIXe siècle* (1865-90) [hereafter *Grand dictionnaire*] was suitable for 'delicate and poetic' subjects.⁷⁸ This was part of an 'unwritten rule' that the sculptor Marius Chaumelin claimed had been respected by the ancients and modern sculptors alike: 'Images of gods, women and poets should be cut in marble; statues of warriors and politicians should be made from bronze.'⁷⁹ Interestingly, the unidentified author of the entry chose to reinforce this rule with the words of a poet, man of letters, and republican politician, Henri de Lacretelle (1815/16-99), rather than another sculptor or an art critic. Lacretelle declared that marble 'has the sparkle, the luminosity, the purity of poetic genius', continuing, 'its milky whiteness calls forth the kisses of the sun and the ravages of time, jealous of all beauty. That is to say it is

⁷⁸ 'Le marbre [convient] aux sujets délicats et poetiques [sic]', Anon., 'Sculpture', *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle*, ed. Administration du grand dictionnaire universel, 17 vols (Paris: Larousse, 1865-90), XIV, 432-37 (433-34). Volumes I-XV were completed in 1865-76 and two further supplements, vols XVI and XVII, were published in 1878 and 1890 respectively. No additional entries were made for sculpture, indicating that the explanation in vol. XIV was still valid for the editors later in the century. Further references in the thesis are to *Grand dictionnaire*.

⁷⁹ 'Il est un principe de l'art statuaire qui n'est écrit dans aucun traité d'esthétique, mais que les grands artistes de l'antiquité et des temps modernes ont presque toujours respecté. Ce principe pourrait se formuler ainsi: Les images des dieux, des femmes et des poètes doivent être taillées dans le marbre; les statues des guerriers, des politiques, doivent être faites en bronze', Maurice Chaumelin, *Alliance républicaine de Saône-et-Loire* (n.d.); cited in 'Sculpture', *Grand dictionnaire*, XIV, 434.

suitable for translating the celestial, the ideal, to represent those whom one loves and one prays to'.⁸⁰

Chaumelin's 'unwritten rule' was in fact far from unwritten, as the notion that white marble was best suited to producing the highest sculptural form – the ideal figure – was founded on the writing of aesthetician and art historian, Johann Joachim Winckelmann, in his analysis and history of ancient Greek and Roman art. According to Winckelmann in *The History of Ancient Art* (1764) '[a]s white is the color which reflects the greatest number of rays of light, and consequently is the most easily perceived, a beautiful body will, accordingly, be the more beautiful the whiter it is.'⁸¹ Winckelmann's interdiction on the representation of ideal corporeality informed the doxa of those writers on sculpture Charles Millard categorises as 'academic neoclassical' in nineteenth-century France – including Antoine Quatremère de Quincy (archaeologist and art historian, 1755-1839), David d'Angers [Pierre-Jean David] (sculptor, 1788-1856), Toussaint-Bernard Éméric-David (archaeologist and art historian, 1755-1839), Henry Jouin (art historian and critic, b. 1841) – and was inculcated in the rules adhered to in the teaching rooms of the École des beaux-arts, the epicentre of sculptural practice in France for most of the century.⁸² Andreas Blühm asserts that this doxa, which he calls 'Neo-classicism's "white" ideology', still holds sway in art history. In an essay on the history of the use of colour in sculpture, he argues that '[o]ur definition of sculpture as

⁸⁰ 'Le marbre a les étincelles, les rayonnements, la pureté du génie poétique. Sa blancheur laiteuse appelle les baisers du soleil et les morsures du temps jaloux de toute beauté. Il convient, pour traduire ce qui est céleste, ce qui est idéal, pour représenter ceux qu'on aime et ceux qu'on prie', Henri de Lacretelle, proceedings of the Mâconnais commission (no source or editor), 'Sculpture', *Grand dictionnaire*, XIV, 434. For a more recent example that includes citations from poets when discussing white marble, see Eugenia Parry Janis who quotes Byron's *Childe Harold*, IV:161 on the *Apollo Belvedere* as 'The god of life, and poetry, and light / The Sun, in human limbs arrayed, and brow / All radiant ...'; 'Fabled Bodies: Some Observations on the Photography of Sculpture', in *The Kiss of Apollo*, ed. Jeffrey Fraenckel, exh. cat. (San Francisco: Fraenckel Gallery and Bedford Arts, 1991), 9-22 (10).

⁸¹ Johann Joachim Winckelmann, 'Color', *The History of Ancient Art*, trans. G. Henry Lodge [Boston, 1880], 308; cited in *Neoclassicism and Romanticism 1750-1850: An Anthology of Sources*, ed. Lorenz Eitner (New York: Harper and Row, 1989), 15.

⁸² See Charles W. Millard, 'Sculpture and Theory in Nineteenth-Century France', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 34:1 (1975), 15-20 (15).

artistically formed volume in black (bronze) or white (marble) is based on the canon of the 18th century' as it was available to Winckelmann prior to archaeological discoveries of polychrome ancient Greek sculpture and therefore that the ensuing standards of judgement on sculpture are 'the result of visual "restrictions"'. Blühm argues that in terms of the appreciation of polychrome sculpture (at the time of writing in 1996) 'the majority of even the most recent scholarly publications are still under Winckelmann's spell'.⁸³

As advocate of white marble as the material for the *most* beautiful sculptural bodies, Winckelmann was anti-colourist insofar as beauty was deemed an essence (and not just a matter of appearance) and therefore a question of form, or, as I see it, of substance. He did consider the possibility that non-white skin colour and sculpture were beautiful, just not as beautiful as white marble.⁸⁴ What Winckelmann does not say (nor does Blühm in his critique of him) is that when the 'rays of light' do their work in order to demonstrate heightened beauty, this requires the *differentials* of form in three-dimensional sculpture and the result is to highlight some areas of the white marble surface whilst throwing others into shade.⁸⁵ This distinguished sculpture, and most importantly for Winckelmann ideal sculpture, from painting. There the application of colours to a flat surface (prior to Modernism) only simulated *chiaroscuro* and was therefore, not substantial, but illusionistic. Similarly, without the focus on form (achieved through differential whiteness) sculpture might become pictorial.

I will take up this question of what I see as the ambiguity of colourism in Winckelmann's praise of white marble shortly. For now I underscore the significance of the statement by

⁸³ Andreas Blühm, 'In Living Colour: A short history of Colour in Sculpture in the 19th Century', in *The Colour of Sculpture 1840-1910*, ed. Andreas Blühm and Penelope Curtis, exh. cat. (Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 1996), 11-60 (12, 14).

⁸⁴ He wrote: 'A traveller assures us that daily association with Negroes diminishes the disagreeableness of their color, and displays what is beautiful in them; just as the color of bronze and of the black and greenish basalt does not detract from the beauty of the antique heads'; cited in Eitner, ed., 15.

⁸⁵ It also relies on the amount of light being controlled. For instance a bright but cloudy day is often better for photographing white marble and when using flash this needs to be deflected rather than directed straight at the object in order to prevent 'white out'.

Lacretelle that white marble was not only most suitable for elevated subjects (gods, poets), but for *those whom one loves*. This aspect of the conventions in using and viewing white marble supports the *punctum* moment of 'love at first sight' as one of adoration for the bust in which the object seems perfectly represented. If Bernhardt was adhering to these conventions (she owned a copy of the *Grand dictionnaire*), then within the portrait transaction it signals a dual representational possibility: that she was portraying someone 'whom she loved' and doing so in an idealized, or adoring, manner. As the *viewer* of her own work (because viewing is part of making as well as its result) this evokes, transferentially, Barthes's '*Adorable!*' from *A Lover's Discourse* in the face of a loved object and what or whom (the object choice) it represents. Bernhardt's making of the bust according to this sculptural convention recalls, in my reading, his explanatory exclamation 'this is my desire, insofar as it is unique: 'That's it! That's it exactly (which I love)!' (20).

This is some heady claim that might provoke the question of my subtitle for this section – "Where's your evidence?" – particularly in view of the fact that virtually no archival information concerning Bernhardt's theoretical approaches to sculpture and her quotidian practice exists (see Chapter 3). But these are the conditions of reading with scholarly lesbian desire; that 'evidence' in the usual art historical understanding of 'documents' is lacking or in short supply or may not have been sought out in previous considerations of a body of work. What makes reading with lesbian desire *scholarly* is precisely to want to find *any* 'evidence' and to subject it to scrutiny despite its limitations within the economy of the making of this bust. In one short, undated letter to her praticien, Jules-Ernest Bouillot, now tucked away in the Kongelige Bibliothek [Royal Library] in Copenhagen Bernhardt indicates that she paid him for some marble and employed him to carve her work.⁸⁶ The letter does not give the identity

⁸⁶ 'Voici Cher Monsieur Bouillot la somme de marbre pour mon groupe. Commencez vite et travaillez bien je vous en prie. C'est pressé. J'irai vous voir d'ici une huitaine pour les deux cents et quelques francs [qui] restent sur le petit buste. Sarah Bernhardt.' Sarah Bernhardt til Mr B(ouillot), n. d., Palsbo Ec., Royal Library, Copenhagen. Bernhardt's handwriting is notoriously difficult to read and this letter was not fully transcribed by the Royal Library. However, the addressee was either deciphered by an archivist or additional information may have been available to the collector from whom it was bought in 1954 (Arthur Palsbo 1878-1967). No records remain concerning this. My

of the works in question (a group and a bust) nor the source or specification of the marble as a guide to identifying how Bernhardt might have chosen the material for the *Bust of Louise Abbéma*. However, because of its preponderance in French nineteenth-century sculpture it is likely that the bust is made from Italian marble from the Apuan Alps (known as Carrara marble).⁸⁷ Studies of the collection at the National Gallery of Art in Washington indicate that among a sample of works by Rodin, Carpeaux, and Dalou produced between 1857 and 1909 Carrara marble dominated, although Greek Pentelic and Turkish Afyonite were also identified.⁸⁸ Didot Bottin's commercial yearbook and almanac for Paris in 1870 lists French and Belgian marble for bulk sale as well as that from Carrara but it is the latter which dominated the market in Paris.⁸⁹

What was the lure of white marble that attracted adoration, including my own for this bust? In Graeco-Roman statuary unpainted white marble finished by polishing was, due to its crystalline composition as metamorphosed limestone, valued for its perceived ability to transmit light. Metaphorically, *marmarizô* (from *marmaros*, 'shining stone') was a verb of light in ancient Greek.⁹⁰ Winckelmann's views on this have already been stated above. Charles Blanc (1813-82), twice government minister for the fine arts and founder of the *Gazette des*

thanks are due to Cathérine Chevillot, archivist and curator at the musée d'Orsay for help in finalizing my full transcription of this letter. I consider Bouillot's role as *praticien* in greater depth in Chapter 3.

⁸⁷ I am very grateful, again to Cathérine Chevillot, and to Hélène Susini, conservationist at the musée d'Orsay, for inspecting the bust for me. Chevillot informed me that the type of marble was 'very probably an Italian marble, without being able to be more precise' ['très vraisemblablement d'un marbre italien, sans qu'il soit possible d'être plus précis']; email from Cathérine Chevillot, 30 June 2006. The sale catalogue for the auction held at Drouot in Paris on 21 March 1978 in which the bust was sold identifies the material as 'Carrara marble'.

⁸⁸ Katherine A. Holbrow and Shelley G. Sturman, 'Appendix: Analysis of Nineteenth-Century French Marbles', in *European Sculpture of the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Ruth Butler and Suzanne Glover Lindsay (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 475-80 (477). Nicholas Penny also writes of the re-opened Greek quarries in the nineteenth century that 'enjoyed some success'; *The Materials of Sculpture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), 57.

⁸⁹ Didot Bottin, *Annuaire-Almanach du commerce de l'industrie, de la magistrature et de l'administration* (Paris: Didot Bottin, 1870), 1106.

⁹⁰ MacLachan, 66.

beaux-arts in 1859, declared in his *Grammaire des arts du dessin* (1870) that Parian marble, due to its well rounded and shining grains, sparkled with an 'optical vibration'.⁹¹

Fabio Barry distinguishes two types of whiteness as understood by the Romans in their perception of white marble that are useful for my discussion here. He cites the grammarian Servius: 'it is one thing to be shining – *candidus* – that is to be bathed in a certain shining light, and another to be white – *albus* – which is to approach pallor [absence of colour]'. Barry locates this differential whiteness in the types of marble used to make the *Via Labicana Augustus*. The toga, fashioned from Italian Carrara marble, 'gleams white' while Augustus's flesh, 'since Parian has much finer crystals and is partially translucent in sunlight [...] glows warmly and seems to emit light'. In this instance, for Barry, the toga that gleams is *albus* and the flesh of Augustus that glows is *candidus*. The hierarchy of this distinction between *candidus* as absolute white and *albus* as relative white is, as Barry argues, evident in the connotative meaning in contemporary English of 'candid' as truthful or pure. But this also makes *candidus* a relative quality exemplified by the fact that the marble of Augustus's flesh is, according to Barry, not just any Parian marble but 'the most refined quality called *Lychnites* (or "lamp-like") – it is *whiter* than the white of *albus*'.⁹² Similarly, in the analysis carried out at the National Gallery of Art, Washington certain samples of the Carrara marble tested (from Carpeaux's *Neapolitan Fisherboy* [1857- after 1861] and *Girl with a Shell* [1863-67]) were singled out as appearing 'harder and more translucent' and linked to a type of Carrara marble known as *campanino* from Pescina and thus elevated to the relative status of having signified greater purity and truth.⁹³

⁹¹ Charles Blanc, 'Marbre', *Grammaire des arts du dessin: architecture, sculpture, peinture* (Paris: Renouard, 1870), 381-82.

⁹² Fabio Barry, 'A Whiter Shade of Pale: Relative and Absolute White in Roman Sculpture and Architecture' (unpublished conference paper delivered at 'Revival and Invention: Sculpture and its Material Histories', Henry Moore Institute, 13-15 October 2005, université de Bruxelles). My thanks are due to Fabio Barry, Columbia University, New York, for kindly giving me a copy of his paper.

⁹³ Holbrow and Sturman, 477.

The elevated status of white marble in the nineteenth century was tied to a tradition of making sculpture in which, according to the *Grand dictionnaire*, its 'other' was bronze, the material 'without transparence, without warmth; its opacity is cold, almost menacing; it is inhospitable to light' and was therefore suitable for all that is 'tough, terrible, to represent those who are active and who fight'.⁹⁴ For the German philosopher Herder the 'other' of white marble was sculpture that had had colour applied to it. In 1778 he voiced an objection that was to be debated throughout the nineteenth century as archaeological finds uncovered more and more ancient polychrome sculpture (both applied and integral polychromy). Herder argued that although colour was so effective in painting, it made a statue 'ugly rather than beautiful' as beauty in sculpture was a question of form and (applied) colour detracted from form.⁹⁵ In order to discuss these oppositions in terms of their obvious participation in a racialized and gendered epidermal schema, I turn to Richard Dyer's treatment of two-dimensional images in *White* (1997).⁹⁶ Whiteness, according to Dyer's analysis of photography, painting and the cinematic image is conceived of as both superior and 'non-raced', and as a trope of idealized femininity that reached its apotheosis as doctrine in the nineteenth century (therefore in both cases as relative but also absolute whiteness).⁹⁷ Idealized white femininity, particularly on screen, is represented as the object of desire whilst the figure of masculinity (who is 'darker') represents *he* who desires.

So if the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* 'dazzled' me, might this be because of its relative whiteness? Was the bust only beautiful because it shone in contrast to its co-exhibits of colour – the painted marble *Bust of Sarah Bernhardt* (c. 1895-97) by Jean-Léon Gérôme and the terracotta

⁹⁴ 'Le bronze est sans transparence, sans chaleur; son opacité est froide, presque menaçante; il s'assombrit encore à la lumière [...]. Il convient pour traduire ce qui est rude, ce qui est terrible, pour représenter ceux qui agissent et ceux qui luttent', 'Sculpture', *Grand dictionnaire*, XIV, 434.

⁹⁵ 'Weil Farbe nicht Form ist, weil sie also dem verschlossenen Auge und tastenden Sinne nicht merkbar wird, oder merkbar sogleich die schöne Form hindert', Johann Gottfried Herder, 'Plastik: Einige Wahrnehmungen aus Pygmalions bildendem Traume' (1778); cited in Blühm, 14.

⁹⁶ Charmaine Nelson discusses the use of white as the 'privileged signifier of race' in 'Edmonia Lewis's *Death of Cleopatra*: white marble, black skin and the regulation of race in American neoclassical sculpture', in *Local/Global: Women Artists in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Deborah Cherry and Janice Helland (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 223-44 (230-32).

⁹⁷ Richard Dyer, *White* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 1.

Bust of Georges Clairin by Louis-Ernest Barrias *Georges Clairin* (1875) (fig. 1: 12)?⁹⁸ Did the bust require its co-exhibits of colour in order to become the transcendental, absolute white of the adored object (like that of Dyer's screen goddess and the Parian marble flesh of the divine Augustus)? Was I, as Andreas Blühm declares of the anti-colour brigade in nineteenth-century art criticism, prejudiced against coloured sculpture and therefore 'under Winckelmann's spell' of a 'Neo-classical "white" ideology'?⁹⁹ Gerald Ackerman construes the use of colouration in Gérôme's bust of *Sarah Bernhardt* as contributing to the 'unflattering realism' that shows her in her fifties: her 'skin is ageing and losing its elasticity; her cheeks sag slightly, the skin under her chin is flabby.'¹⁰⁰ Andreas Blühm's description of the bust for the more

⁹⁸ Antoinette Le Normand-Romain and Jean-Luc Olivié state that in his marble sculptures Gérôme painted onto a wax basecoat; see 'La Polychromie', in *La Sculpture française au XIXe siècle*, ed. Anne Pingeot and Philippe Durey (Paris: RMN, 1986), 148-59 (153). In a late painting *Self-Portrait painting the masks of The Ball Player* (c. 1902, musée municipal Georges Garret, Vesoul) Gérôme shows himself with brush, palette and stick in hand 'at work' painting the attribute masks in vibrant colour. It is not clear from these sources or from the catalogue information at the musée d'Orsay which type of paint Gérôme used. Also there is a distinction in the thickness of paint applied on different surfaces of his sculpture, for instance between the hair and clothing of Bernhardt and the figurine of Melpomene and their flesh. Most frequently application of paint to flesh is referred to as tinting. According to Andreas Blühm the bust of *Sarah Bernhardt* is 'one of the few Gérôme sculptures to retain its original colouration'; 'Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Sarah Bernhardt*', *The Colour of Sculpture 1840-1910*, 182. In 1981 Gerald M. Ackerman argued that the colouration of the bust has faded except for the hair and lips and that slight green shadows are still on the cheeks based on comparison with 'old photographs', see *Jean-Léon Gérôme 1824-1904, peintre, sculpteur et graveur: ses oeuvres conservées dans les collections publiques et privées* (Vesoul: Ville de Vesoul, 1981), 149. This view is reinforced by an anonymous curator's note on a photocopy of an undated postcard of the bust in the Gérôme dossier in MOSD. This is difficult to fully ascertain as the photograph may have been manipulated. However, Ackermann does cite Gérôme on two of his working methods in polychrome sculpture. Firstly, for *Tanagra* (1890, musée d'Orsay) he commissioned agents to find a suitable marble to receive the pigment and secondly he is cited as saying that the pigment on his *Pygmalion and Galatea* was not expected to last more than ten years; Ackerman, 136, 140. A plaster version of the bust painted to simulate bronze and formerly in the collection of Sarah Bernhardt was in circulation in the art market in the 1970s and again in from the 1990s. It most recently came up for sale at Sotheby's in London in July 2005. I am grateful to Cathérine Chevillot, archivist and curator and to Hélène Susini, sculpture conservationist, both of the musée d'Orsay for inspecting the bust of Clairin following my enquiry concerning the patina. Both agree that no additional layer, patina or paint was added to the bust. In Susini's opinion the slight reddish tinge of the bust may be due to 'une coloration qui aurait imprégné la terre soit par migration depuis une couche éliminée ensuite, soit en raison du passage d'un cire colorée ou dégradée'; email from Cathérine Chevillot.

⁹⁹ Blühm, 14, 12.

¹⁰⁰ Ackerman, 149.

recent exhibition *The Colour of Sculpture 1840-1910* puts a slightly more flattering spin on the bust's realism as having a 'sense of immediacy and presence'.¹⁰¹ However compelling this work is though, I have to admit, I cannot call it beautiful. Why?

Gérôme's bust defies the classicizing abstraction of white marble as the material of ideal form by its applied colouration in the hair, tinted flesh, lips, and costume – the emblems of its 'immediacy and presence'. Thus none of the bust's features are the sublimated ones of adoration. Moreover, the bust's time bound resemblance to Bernhardt in its evocation of her age at the time of making, excludes it from being endowed with the *charis* of an idealized and youthful likeness. In short, it does not dazzle. But is this really only because it is not white? I go back to Dyer here. Although he does not make reference to the use of white marble in the history of sculpture, Dyer does argue that the whiteness of idealized white women in the cinematic image does not shine as might be the case for different skin colour under different conditions of lighting or of skin covered in toil-induced sweat (or of a waxed and pigmented sculpture). Instead idealized white women are, he argues, 'bathed in and permeated by light. It streams through them and falls on to them from above. In short, they glow.'¹⁰²

What is the affective dimension of this distinction in relation to the bust as a work of sculpture, or rather as the work of sculpture (by the sculptor)? Writing in the 1930s Adrian Stokes argued that limestones and marbles gleam *and* glow due to their compact granular composition and the finish they are given. Polished marble might glitter but due to its structural granular compactness the glow of diffused light wins out. In comparison to the 'hard or glassy light' of granite, Stokes argues, marble is radiant, its interior illuminated by this glow.¹⁰³ There is an interesting dialectic here in terms of the locus of the origin of affect: if the bust gleamed in the June light this would constitute a surface effect, if it glowed, if light appeared to emanate from within it, this gave its radiance substance.

¹⁰¹ Blühm, 'Jean-Léon Gérôme', 182.

¹⁰² Dyer, 122.

¹⁰³ Adrian Stokes, 'The Stones of Rimini' [1934], in *The Critical Writings of Adrian Stokes*, 3 vols (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), I (1930-37), 181-301 (202-03).

Needless to say there is no light inside marble, rather optimum conditions of ambient light are required for light to *appear* to emanate from within it. Viewing the bust in an exhibition space without natural daylight (*Sarah Bernhardt: The Art of High Drama*, Jewish Museum, New York) in November 2005 was a different experience. In certain of the Réunion des musées nationaux's photographs of the bust and that illustrating a 1978 sale catalogue (figs. 1: 13-15) the use of a black background and artificial lighting conditions make the contrasts in the material of the bust flatter and more brutal diminishing the subtle gradations seen in daylight conditions as well as much of the visible texture of the polished marble.¹⁰⁴ What I am concerned with here, though, is to argue that the effect of white marble (gleaming or glowing, or both) also depends on the labour of the sculptor and not on the colour or type of marble alone. In *The Technique of Greek Sculpture in the Archaic and Classical Periods* Sheila Adam describes the 'beautiful surface so characteristic of Greek work' as 'a surface which does not shine with a superficial gloss but glows from long and patient rubbing with abrasives.'¹⁰⁵ This is given a further, erotic, turn in Leopoldo Cicognara's rather poetic appraisal of Canova's distinct technique of finishing the marble (with abrasive tools and materials) that became responsible for its affect:

All the senses are delighted in a way that is easier to experience than describe [...] the chisel is the last tool that comes to mind, for if statues could be made by caressing marble rather than by roughly carving and chipping, I would say that this statue has been formed by wearing down the surrounding marble by dint of kisses and caresses.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ *Sarah Bernhardt: The Art of High Drama*, Carol Ockman and Kenneth E. Silver, Jewish Museum, New York, 2 December 2005 to 2 April 2006. The catalogue, of the same title, is edited by Ockman and Silver.

¹⁰⁵ Sheila Adam, *The Technique of Greek Sculpture in the Archaic and Classical Periods* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1966), 78.

¹⁰⁶ Letter written in 1813 cited in Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 43 from G. Pavanelli and G. Romanelli, eds. *Canova*, exh. cat. (Venice and New York, 1992). The comment by Cicognara concerns a representation of *Paris* by Canova.

As three-dimensional cut and polished marble, the bust's form and differences in its surface finish make its 'whiteness' function as relative within the work as well as without it. No pigment has been added to the bust but there is distinction between its parts. I go back here to Blühm's argument that analysis of sculpture since Winckelmann has been too black and white and that a 'true acceptance of colour in 19th-century sculpture still lies ahead.'¹⁰⁷ This is a rather schematic analysis of what is usually derided as nineteenth-century 'academicism' reducing its aesthetics to a formulaic opposition of white vs. black or colour.¹⁰⁸ As Antoinette Le Normand-Romain and Jean-Luc Olivié point out, this opposition is not always straightforward. For instance, Quatremère de Quincy, they argue, was hostile to polychrome sculpture in his theoretical text *De l'Imitation* (1823) but favourable in other contexts, praising the group *Patrie s'appuyant sur la Liberté et l'Église* for the Panthéon for its 'richness of colour'. Moreover, they add, 'the term colour is sometimes ambiguous: it does not always refer to polychromy, but is sometimes used for the warmth or liveliness that derives from the "use of the infinitely powerful and nuanced range of the effects of colour or shadow"' [my emphasis].¹⁰⁹ Shadow, as the juxtaposition of light/absence of light, requires sculptural form, i.e. its three-dimensionality, to produce visual difference when viewing across the planes of any work of sculpture as I argued above in relation to Winckelmann's claim for the beauty of figural sculpture. Alex Potts has drawn attention to how Canova perceived the effects his working methods in surface finish and couched them in colourist terms. Citing his secretary, Melchior Missirini, in conversation with Canova, the sculptor had claimed: 'now I shall make use of the rasp in such a way that I shall manage to achieve without colour the very effect of colour and

¹⁰⁷ Blühm, 14.

¹⁰⁸ Neither is the entire issue of 'neoclassical', 'academicism' etc. For instance, James Holderbaum writes that critics in the second quarter of the nineteenth century regarded the colossal white marble *General Condé* by David d'Angers as 'the decisive harbinger of French High Romanticism'. Admittedly, Holderbaum's discourse on sculpture is one of the superiority of the plastic (modelling) over the glyptic (carving) and is written according to a model of art history based on competing styles; 'Portrait Sculpture', in *The Romantics to Rodin: French Nineteenth-Century Sculpture from North American Collections*, ed. Peter Fusco and H. W. Janson, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum, 1980), 336-51 (39).

¹⁰⁹ Le Normand Romain and Olivié, 148; citation from Jules Salmson, *Entre deux coups de ciseau: souvenirs d'un sculpteur* (Paris: Lemerre, 1892), 256.

make it [the statue] more beautiful and brilliant than it is as you see it now [tinted with *acqua di rosa*] even though afterwards it will be white.’¹¹⁰

As Potts argues this passage refutes the ‘often rather indiscriminate celebrations of [Canova’s work] as a return to the classical simplicity of ancient sculpture’, pointing out that the anxiety that such colourism aroused was due to Canova’s cultivation of ‘a feminised grace and seductiveness at the expense of a true male austerity and simplicity of plastic form.’¹¹¹ Not harsh realism with its attempted replication of features, this ‘seductiveness’ derived from differentials in surface finish that simulated warm flesh naturalistically and tempered the abstraction of idealized line with a difference Canova called the ‘effect of colour’.

Is this the royal way to the practice of a scholarly lesbian Pygmalion whereby the sculptural object *itself* comes to life as the erotic body that ‘multiplies its erogenous surface into so many sensitive zones’ (Saint-Armand, 350)? But if, as I argue, this bust inscribes physical affection between artist and sitter through its erotics of beauty (where the sculptural skill of the maker meets the subject’s physicality and self-fashioning), then why only show this in a partial body, a portrait bust? I turn now to my images of this partial body in order to consider this bust as a (sculptural) fetish, the sign, de Lauretis says, ‘of both an absence and a presence’ that signifies the displacement of desire and its resignification.¹¹²

... and so I Press Your Picture to My Lips’

Dazzled by the bust on first view I returned on two further occasions (under different daylight and display conditions (figs 1: 16-17; outside the vitrine) making a series of photographic slide fragments of this already-fragment of an absent body (figs 18a-s). Was the production of so many images the sign of a compulsion to re-capture that *punctum* moment of intensity in the

¹¹⁰ It is not clear from the commentary of Canova or Missirini what he did with his rasp other than ‘suffuse[.] it with that inspiration which is felt in the heart’ and making ‘a painting of it’; Potts (2000), 43; citation from G. C. Argan, *Antonio Canova* (1968-69), 120.

¹¹¹ Potts (2000), 45.

¹¹² De Lauretis (1994), 242.

presence of the bust or a hope that I could induce the *punctum* as detail to rise again (and again) into my affective consciousness (*Camera Lucida*, 55)? Could I really hope to capture the *punctum* with my camera lens and see it as I scrutinized these images afterwards on my light box? Or was I, like Barthes in his scrutiny of the photograph, ‘undo[ing] the image for the sake of its substance’?

Since the late 1980s a number of important texts and exhibitions have dealt with the history and signification of the photography of sculpture since its inception in Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre’s eponymous image of sculptural plaster casts on a window sill transferred onto a sensitized metal plate in Paris in 1837.¹¹³ Caught between its dual status as document or artwork, the photograph of sculpture has provoked a fascinating discussion of the viewing of sculpture through the filter of photography’s re-presentation of it. Eugenia Parry Janis’s essay in the catalogue for an exhibition at Jeffrey Fraenkel’s gallery in San Francisco in 1991 calls photographs of sculpture ‘recreations’ that are ‘less a record than a re-examination of the work’ which can vary according to photographic conditions (lighting, camera equipment, framing, distance etc).¹¹⁴ Janis claims a Pygmalion role for the viewer of photography of sculpture as it ‘reveals undreamed-of sides of the conjuring mind in its power to elucidate private lives lodged within dormant materials’. For the photographer of figural sculpture this process is an intimate, but ultimately delusional one, where sculpture and photographer are imbricated in the picture maker’s psychic drama. But the one who suffers from this drama is

¹¹³ This was followed shortly by photographs of casts of sculpture by Hubert, Hippolyte Bayard, and Henry Fox Talbot. For a useful general history, see: Jean-Claude Lemagny and André Rouillé, eds, *A History of Photography: Social and Cultural Perspectives*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). Catalogues from significant recent exhibitions on photography and sculpture are: Dominique Païni and Michel Frizot, eds, *Photographie / Sculpture* (Paris: Centre national de la Photographie, 1991); Fraenkel, ed; Geraldine A. Johnson, *The Very Impress of the Object: Photographing Sculpture from Fox Talbot to the Present Day*, exh. cat. (Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 1995); Joanne Lukitsch, *Thomas Woolner: Seeing Sculpture through Photography*, exh. cat. (Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2005). Two important collected essays are: Dominique Païni and Michel Frizot, eds, *Sculpteur-Photographe: Photographie-Sculpture* (Paris: Marval and musée du Louvre, 1993) [actes du colloque organisé au musée du Louvre, 22-23 novembre 1991]; and Geraldine A. Johnson, ed., *Sculpture and Photography: Envisioning the Third Dimension* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

¹¹⁴ Janis, 11, 12.

the viewer: for although the image ‘simulates tactile values’ looking must suffice and the object represented, Janis argues, ‘remains something forever beyond our reach’.¹¹⁵

Written as the catalogue essay for Fraenkel’s private San Francisco exhibition and sale gallery, Janis’s somewhat baroque account is offset by Mary Bergstein’s more austere critique of the photography of sculpture for its use in museum archiving and art historical teaching and publication. In ‘Lonely Aphrodites: On the Documentary Photography of Sculpture’ Bergstein posits that as ‘representations of representations’ photographs of sculpture ‘define their own realities’.¹¹⁶ Much the same argument as Janis, then, except that for Bergstein this is not a eulogy on the merits of the photography of sculpture as art, but a critique of its questionable role as documentary. She situates her argument in terms of the material transformation that occurs as a result of the photographic process: ‘[d]rained of its physical presence, [sculpture’s] density, mass, and textural qualities are replaced with representations of those qualities in the cool play of light on sensitized paper or the hot translucent glow of the colour slide projected with electric light.’¹¹⁷ Bergstein further cites an art educational pamphlet by Violette de Mazia on the duplicitous nature of the slide image where ‘everything has been so sugarcoated, made so easy of access and so appealing in color and glow’.¹¹⁸ Bergstein argues that de Mazia, like Donald Preziosi, is troubled by this ‘quasi-cinematic matrix’.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Janis, 11, 18.

¹¹⁶ Mary Bergstein, ‘Lonely Aphrodites: On the Documentary Photography of Sculpture’, *Art Bulletin*, 74:3 (1992), 475-98 (475).

¹¹⁷ Bergstein, 479.

¹¹⁸ Violette de Mazia, *The Lure and Trap of Color Slides in Art Education: The Time Released Venom of Their Make-Believe, A Repast in Five Courses Followed by Entertainment and Postprandial Musings Hosted by the Proud Possessors’ Club* (1986); cited in Bergstein, 480. As I choose to continue to use slide film in my archive and presentations despite its imminent demise in the forefront of art history, this discussion is relevant. For recent debate on slides vs. digital imagery, see College Art Association, *CAA News*, 29:5 (2004), esp. Christine Sundt, ‘The Case for Digital Images’, 1, 38-39; and Christopher Howard, ‘From Slide to Scan: The Visual Archive’, 3.

¹¹⁹ Bergstein, 498. Here she cites Preziosi’s misgivings about the art history slide as ‘always orchestrated as a still in an historical movie’; *Rethinking Art History: Meditations on a Coy Science* (1989), 73.

Bergstein also criticizes the mode of close-up photography now prevalent in art publications as ‘more emotionally charged than the original’ with particular condemnation reserved for photographs of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century sculpture by David Finn as ‘flagrantly falsifying’. In his close-ups, Bergstein argues, Finn ‘dematerializes form’ and his composition is ‘dimensionless’ because of his remit to produce ‘expressionistic’ photography. Due to his ‘patently modernist interpretation of sculpture’ the vision of sculptors Donatello, Michelangelo, and Bernini is, for the viewer of these photographs, ‘compromised, if not falsified’.¹²⁰ I agree with Bergstein that the ‘photographic image inflects, transforms, or even consumes the sculptural subject’ and am therefore not positioning myself as an apologist for Finn whose discursive tone (but not his images) in *How to Look at Sculpture* (1989) I do find nauseating with its unquestioned male heterosexual and homosocial gaze.¹²¹ But, to me, Bergstein and de Mazia’s critique of the duplicity of documentary photography of sculpture smacks of the criticism dished out to Canova’s sculpture as representing ‘feminised grace and seductiveness at the expense of a true male austerity and simplicity of plastic form’ (Potts 2000, 45). It is as if a ‘truthful’ photograph of sculpture (and Bergstein does recognize this as an impossibility) should not have certain – attractive – material qualities (such as warmth and colour).¹²²

¹²⁰ Bergstein, 493. She illustrates these points with Finn’s images of Michelangelo’s *Rondanini Pietà* and Bernini’s *Rape of Persephone*. In the case of the *Pietà* the camera is angled almost at 180 degrees to the frontal plane accentuating the roughness of the marble finish in one area. She describes this photographic view as ‘express[ing] a disorientation nearing delirium’ and as virtually undecipherable even to ‘an expert in Renaissance art’, 494. However, she too decontextualizes the image by isolating it from the series Finn produces for his book, *How to Look at Sculpture* (New York: Abrams, 1989). Finn’s photographs are most often used in glossy art history monographs.

¹²¹ Bergstein, 481.

¹²² This is not the only criticism of documentary photographs of sculpture by Bergstein but the one relevant here. A useful approach to Finn’s work might be that taken by Jean-René Gaborit who advises that publications should provide precise information in their photographic credit section, such as the date of the shot, the lighting conditions, type of lens used, any additions used such as backdrops or platforms, and any later retouching of the image; ‘Le miroir trompeur’, in Païni and Frizot, eds (1993), 25-31. I consider photography of Bernhardt’s sculpture and Bernhardt in photographs with her sculpture at the end of this chapter and again in Chapters 2 and 3.

Having intended these images as ‘documents’ for the purposes of recording the materiality and facture of one work in Sarah Bernhardt’s sculptural oeuvre, in my making and scrutiny of them something else occurred. Photographing the bust in detail required new tools, expensive materials, advice from a photography professional, physical contortions to photograph it close up while in the vitrine (it is about 20 cm off the floor) and the courage to ask permission for it to be removed from the vitrine in order to photograph it again. Although I balk at some of the tropes Janis uses in her essay (for instance, ‘the conjuring mind in its power to elucidate private lives lodged within dormant materials’ – I am not giving Louise Abbéma, or Sarah Bernhardt, the kiss of life here) her notion of ‘the photographer’s privileged connection with [her] subject’ is interesting.¹²³ Not quite the fantasmatic space of a pretend cinema, looking at my slides of the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* on a light box with an 8x loupe nevertheless comes close. Viewable because of light passing through the image, these slides appeal due to their ‘color and glow’ (de Mazia) and this, like the bust itself, also seduces me. I therefore want to ask here, why does the pleasure of this scrutiny preclude scholarly inquiry? What I am exploring here is the imbricated functioning of sculpture as it is viewed (now) and as it was made (then) and therefore the *possibility* of knowing how it might have been viewed then.¹²⁴ I am couching this in the terms of a lover’s discourse in order to read for the inscription of (lesbian) desire in sculpture. But what is any less insistent or attentive, and therefore less scholarly, about asking of a sculptural object, as Barthes does of his loved object in *A Lover’s Discourse*, ‘Why is it that I desire So-and-So? Why is it that I desire So-and-So lastingly, longingly? Is it the whole of So-and-So I desire (a silhouette, a shape, a mood)?’ (20).

¹²³ Janis, 11. Janis assumes the photographer as male and the sculptural love object, usually, as female and therefore situates this relationship in a wholly heterosexual matrix. Bergstein avoids gendering this relationship at all.

¹²⁴ Malcolm Baker discusses the interpretative strategy deployed by Michael Baxandall for talking about sculpture which Baxandall calls the sculpture’s ‘arc of address’ as one where ‘concern with technique and material [...] intersects with his similarly constant preoccupation with the conditions and circumstances of viewing’. This takes account of (although in a somewhat sublimated form) the approach of the spectator; Baker, ‘Limewood, Chiromancy and Narratives of Making’, in *About Michael Baxandall*, ed. Adrian Rifkin (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 36-68 (51).

I therefore situate my viewing, image making and reading of the bust and its details as counterpart in the process I call 'making love' to Bernhardt's work as a sculptor in making a portrait bust of the artist, Louise Abbéma. An explanatory word before I proceed: according to the *Grand dictionnaire* there were two words for 'sculptor' in nineteenth-century French: 'sculpteur' for a carver of hard materials, possibly only a craftsperson, and 'statuaire' for a modeller and finisher of works (which were then to be cast by a founder [forgeron] or cut in stone by a praticien [or ciseleur]) and who was therefore an artist.¹²⁵ Typically, Bernhardt's chief function as a sculptor in making this bust would have been its modelling and providing finish to the surface of the marble, although she would also have organized the plaster casting, choice of material and bulk carving (but of course no records survive to give in evidence). That this was typically expected of a sculptor (but a point of criticism for a sculptor who was a woman) is borne out by the German periodical *Kunstchronik*'s critique of the busts of *Louise Abbéma* and *Miss H.*, cited above (77) as 'mostly the work of the assistant who carved the finished product' and subject to a loss of 'softness in the original modelling. As Anastasia Easterday argues, the rubric of a sculptor's practice was a conflicted issue in the discourse of sculpture production in the second half of the nineteenth century.¹²⁶ This is demonstrated in images of sculpture studios and workshops. For example, regarding the job of finishing off a work in marble, whereas Rodin is shown giving the final touches to a bust (fig. 1: 19),

¹²⁵ In addition, according to the *Grand dictionnaire*, more recently 'sculpture' rather than 'statuaire' (here meaning 'statuary') had come to encompass work in 'all the branches of art working in relief and using more or less hard material to make representations of living beings or ornament of pure invention [dans le langage courant [...] le mot *sculpture* est beaucoup plus employé que celui de *statuaire* et sert à designer indifféremment toutes les branches de l'art qui consiste à reproduire en relief et au moyen d'une matière plus ou moins durable les formes d'êtres vivants ou des ornements de pure invention]'; 'Sculpture', *Grand dictionnaire*, XIV, 432. The term 'statuaire' to signify sculptor is now regarded as a literary term, according to *Le Petit Robert* (2004).

¹²⁶ Easterday writes that there were sculptors for whom 'it was not uncommon [...] to take no interest whatsoever in the condition of their work at that stage of production [approving or reworking a finished product], there was also a 'large contingent of critics who valued the sculptor's complete involvement in production', suggesting this was also a mode of working for contemporary sculptors, and adding that these 'conflicting views wove their way into critical writing on sculpture and aesthetics', 122-24. An essential reference on this issue is Anne Middleton Wagner, *Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux: Sculptor of the Second Empire* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), esp. 29-62.

another photograph of praticiens carving in their workshop (fig. 1: 20) indicates that the marble has a high level of finish in substantial areas of the body, head and face, implying that the sculptor would have no, or very minimal, finishing work to do (that is, of course, if these images depict actual working events). Conflicted issue notwithstanding, the dominant *discourse* in French theoretical texts, manuals, and art criticism on a sculptor's practice was largely one of modelling and surface finish with other tasks underplayed or left unmentioned.¹²⁷

'Here's Looking at You!'

The processes of Bernhardt's sculpture practice form the subject of Chapter 3 and I will discuss these texts in greater depth there. In order to consider this portrait bust according to an 'erotics of beauty' construed in its making and viewing, I turn to a sculpture manual from a slightly later period written by the French born and educated sculptor and teacher Édouard Lanteri and published in English in Britain. In *Modelling* (1902) Lanteri positioned the sculptor's work of modelling in relation to the affective power of a portrait bust.¹²⁸

Conceived as a sequence of well-ordered and methodical additions of material (clay) after a sustained period of study, the aim of modelling the construction of the sitter's anatomy was 'beauty of style'.¹²⁹ Apprehension of that beauty of style, or affect, followed the method of the bust's making in reverse: the viewer would be able to 'retrace' the sitter's 'character, their way of living and thinking' and do so by perceiving the bust as 'a collection of instants'.

¹²⁷ The tasks of making sculpture are discussed in more depth in Chapter 3.

¹²⁸ The first two volumes (1902 and 1904) of Lanteri's original three-volume work have been reprinted, unabridged but slightly revised, as *Modelling and Sculpting the Human Figure* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1985) from which all citations are taken. Lanteri (1848-1917) was born in Auxerre and first trained in Paris with Aimé Millet and attended the Petite école de dessin. Later, in the 1860s, he worked for François-Joseph Duret and attended the ateliers of Pierre-Jules Cavalier and Eugène Guillaume at the École des beaux-arts. In 1872 he moved to London to work for Joseph Edgar Boehm and in 1880 succeeded Jules Dalou as instructor in modelling at the National Art Training School, South Kensington; *Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), XXXII, 544-45.

¹²⁹ Arthur Beale argues that modelling is a process of addition and subtraction and would be better thought of 'in terms of the flexibility of the material involved rather than addition', 'A Technical View of Nineteenth-Century Sculpture', in *Metamorphoses in Nineteenth-Century Sculpture*, ed. Jeanne Wasserman, exh. cat. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 29-55 (29).

This, Lantéri argued, was what allowed for ‘a great part of the attraction, of the unconscious admiration we feel before them [portrait busts].’¹³⁰

Lantéri’s thesis on the making of portraiture as the imbricated processes of modelling and viewing recalls Berger’s discursive model of the portrait transaction. As a reminder: Berger argued that the portrait is ‘an index – an effect and representation – solely of the sitter’s and painter’s performance in the act of portrayal [where] the act becomes both the referent of the image and its cause’ and that this invokes ‘the three-way diachronic transaction between painter, sitter, and observer in a purely fictional field.’¹³¹ The reason I reference this work on painted Early Modern portraits is that it allows my reading of this bust to shift the terms of the portrait transaction away from Lantéri’s notion of the viewer’s appreciation as one of apprehending the sitter’s ‘character’ or the artist’s genius whilst still retaining his model of how this occurs (in sculpture) as a ‘collection of instants’. Rather, what I am reading in this bust’s ‘collection of instants’ are the indices (effects and representation) of a mode of relating that I call lesbian, activated in an erotics of beauty.

The choice of pose for the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* (fig. 1: 1) consists in a quarter profile together with a very slight downwards incline of the head, the latter more evoked by the cast of the eyes than due to any substantial movement or flexing of the neck on the horizontal plane.¹³² The subtlety of this movement is demonstrated by comparing it with the turn of the head in Abbéma’s drawing of the bust for publication in the 1879 Salon review in *L’Art* (fig. 1: 21). Here a frontal view shows the sitter in full left profile, perhaps because of the type of drawing (an outline sketch). In his advice to the sculptor of a bust Lantéri recommended finding the ‘pose that is most natural’ to the sitter and would allow for the portrayal of their ‘character’.

¹³⁰ Lantéri, 56.

¹³¹ Berger, 89. Holderbaum posits a similar model of this relationship which he calls ‘the communicative give-and-take in the triple colloquy of sitter, artist, viewer’; however, he does not call attention to this as a fiction, 37.

¹³² The quarter-profile is seen in the Capitolian *Dionysus*, although the incline of the head is greater than in the *Bust of Louise Abbéma*. The use of the quarter-profile and its significance requires further research.

This, he advised, required one session of careful measurement as well as a period of sustained observation (carried out over several sessions) that took place for some time before the portrait could begin.¹³³

A short biography of Abbéma by Georges Lecocq, published as part of a series on painters and sculptors, used a studio interview with Abbéma to tell the story of how ‘the two artists established a profound friendship where the most sincere affection joined the most intense admiration without damaging this friendship’.¹³⁴ There is no similar record in the archive, textual or object based, of the process and events involved in Bernhardt making this bust: for instance a schedule of sittings; input from fellow artists including her sculpture teacher Roland Mathieu-Meusnier; or preparatory drawings, a rough sketch, a more finished clay maquettes, and a plaster cast of the bust. However, I have located a small oil painting by Abbéma of Bernhardt previously unknown in Bernhardt studies that was painted in 1875 and dedicated to Mathieu-Meusnier (figs 1: 22-24) that shows Bernhardt sculpting a bust in her studio. It is as a conceit that I suggest that this was Abbéma making a portrait of Bernhardt making a portrait of Abbéma, although a satirical account of this as possibility does exist.¹³⁵ In this small painting Bernhardt is modelling a bust in clay and from Abbéma’s rough brushwork it is only possible to say that the reasonably substantial bulk on the crown might be long hair tied up and that the shape of the nose in profile (fig. 1: 24) accords in general outline with that of the bust and a bronze portrait medallion of Abbéma made by Bernhardt in 1875 (fig. 1: 25).¹³⁶ In 1876 the satirical journal *Zigzags à la plume à travers l’art* [hereafter *Zigzags*] featured

¹³³ Lantéri, 56.

¹³⁴ ‘[U]ne profonde amitié s’établit entre les deux artistes et l’affection la plus sincère vient se joindre chez elles à l’admiration la plus vive, sans la détruire’; Georges Lecocq, *Louise Abbéma* (Paris: Libraire des bibliophiles, 1879), 13-14.

¹³⁵ Anon., ‘Ateliers d’artistes: l’atelier de Sarah Bernhardt’, *Zigzags à la plume à travers l’art*, 3 (14 May 1876), 7, 10. I discuss this article and other satirical texts on Bernhardt’s sculpture practice in greater depth in Chapter 3.

¹³⁶ The medallion belongs to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston who name it as a self-portrait by Bernhardt and date it 1878. The inscription reads: ‘A Mon Amie Louise Abbéma, Sarah Bernhardt 1875’. The work was sold as a portrait of Abbéma in Paris in 1978 as part of the collection Terrier. Boston bought it at a sale by Sandorval & Co. in New York in 1989. The misreading of the date is probably due to the serpentine way in which the figure ‘5’ is written (more like an ‘s’). The facial

an article on Bernhardt's studio in which the journalist depicted the artistic friendship of Bernhardt, Abbéma and Georges Clairin in the following passage:

Who made all these paintings and medallions that decorate the walls here? They are by Clairin, and the Mlles Louise Abbéma and Sarah Bernhardt. These artists form a bit of a trio: what their friends call the Society of the 'Finger in the Eye' ['Le Doigt dans l'Oeil'], in other words a mutual admiration society. We couldn't possibly count how many of their images are on these walls. While Sarah Bernhardt is making a bust of Louise Abbéma, the latter paints a picture representing her friend and Clairin sits in the corner making a sketch called 'Sarah Bernhardt wresting Louise Abbéma from the Hydrean grip of impressionism!'¹³⁷

Given the satirical slant of *Zigzags*, this is not 'evidence' either that the scenario was actually witnessed by the journalist or that the art works involved relate to the objects I mention here. However, whether this is the report by a witness of an actual event, or an assemblage of other forms of evidence, or even the writer's imaginings, it allows for the *possibility* of the kind of productive interchange I suggest in Abbéma's small studio portrait. Although the bust was

features, hair, and clothing indicate to me that this is a portrait of Abbéma. I also argue this on the basis of claiming it as part of a pendant pair with the 1875 bronze medallion by Abbéma of Bernhardt (various copies). My working catalogues of Bernhardt's sculpture and Abbéma's painting indicate several other incidences of doubt in the identification of portraiture. On this as a medallion of Abbéma, see also Carol Ockman, 'Was she Magnificent? Sarah Bernhardt's Reach', in *Sarah Bernhardt: The Art of High Drama*, ed. Carol Ockman and Kenneth E. Silver (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), 23-73 (47, note 29).

Regarding the bust in progress in the painting by Abbéma, Bernhardt's *Bust of Régina* [her sister] was cut in marble in 1875 therefore it is unlikely to represent her, although the apparent height of the bust and torso might suggest it. A terracotta bust of a girl, Miss Nina Moulton (private collection, London), was also made in 1875 but the nose is not the same shape. Two different 'Bustes de Femme', both dated 1878 (one musée Carnavalet, the other private collection), also do not display the bridged nose of the model in Abbéma's painting. A photograph by Melandri of Bernhardt in her studio in 1878-79 shows her with a self-portrait bust but, again, the nose is straight and the angle of the head is of a more downward cast. Of course, this might not be a representation of Bernhardt with a specific work.

¹³⁷ 'De qui sont les tableaux, les médaillons qui garnissent les murs? De Clairin et de Mlles Louise Abbéma [sic] et Sarah Bernhardt. Ces artistes forment un trio nommé par leurs amis: la Société du *Doigt dans l'oeil*, autrement dit, d'admiration mutuelle. Nous nous refusons à compter combien de fois leurs images s'étalent sur les murs. Pendant que Sarah fait le buste de Mlle Abbéma, celle-ci brosse une toile représentant son amie, et Clairin croque dans un coin: "Sarah Bernhardt arrachant Louise Abbéma à l'hydre de l'impressionisme!" ; 'Atelier de Sarah Bernhardt', *Zigzags*, 10 (1876). See Chapter 2 for further discussion of the putative 'Société du doigt dans l'oeil', 58-59.

dated 1878 by Bernhardt in its finished marble, work had begun some time before. In 'Chronique française', the news pages of the journal *L'Art* in 1877 (month not identified), editor Eugène Véron announced that 'Mlle Sarah Bernhardt will exhibit the bust of Mlle Abbéma this year'.¹³⁸

If the bust was finished in 1878 but work on it had begun some considerable time before, and Bernhardt had already made a portrait medallion of Abbéma in 1875, then in terms of Lantéri's pedagogical advice she had had the opportunity to make lengthy observation of her subject and find the 'pose that is most natural' to Abbéma. Given the existing relationship between the two women, early preparatory work could have happened under a number of different circumstances before the more formal sittings for modelling the full-size bust. Bernhardt may also have used photographs to assist her. But, as I stated above, no records exist of this process of observation and making. Lantéri's recommendation to find the most *natural* pose was part of the doctrine that naturalism in structure, form and finish would reveal the true character of the sitter to a putative viewer. It is not my concern here to discern Louise Abbéma's true character, although I will consider how naturalistic devices in sculpture can be read. Instead I read this portrait according to Berger's notion that what is represented is 'the act of portrayal'. Therefore my question is not 'Was this the 'most natural' pose for Abbéma?' but, 'what act of portrayal does this portrait bust (including its pose) represent, and how (what act of making)?'

I turn now to further portrait photographs of Abbéma made for sale or publicity purposes in the 1870s or early 1880s and her self-portrait painting and drawing. These do not provide 'proof' that Bernhardt got it right but will contribute to my argument that the 'act of portrayal' is an act of making by both artist *and* sitter. The portrait photographs of Abbéma by Benque, Mulnier, Boissonas et Taponnier (figs 1: 6-7, 26), and the series by the Nadar studio (figs 1: 27-29) usually represent a more horizontal gaze than the bust sometimes directed to

¹³⁸ 'Mlle Sarah Bernhardt [...] exposera cette année le buste de Mlle Abbéma', Eugène Véron, 'Chronique Française', *L'Art*, vol. 8, 3e année, no. 1 (1877), 264.

the side but more often directed straight out of the image at the putative viewer (when the portrait is frontal). In painted and drawn self portraiture from this period Abbéma herself reproduced this characteristic, horizontal, often direct, gaze (figs 1: 30-31). However, in two of the series by the Nadar studio Abbéma's gaze is cast downwards likening her pose to that of the bust (figs 1: 32-33). This averted, downwards glance arrested in the stasis of the image could signify contemplation or modesty within nineteenth-century representational norms that idealized their subject in terms of an appropriate attribute of their character, or what I prefer to think of as an activity (fig. 1: 18a).¹³⁹ But, then as now, these norms are gendered and their representation as such in an image would require further signification within the work.

As signifier of contemplation the bust's pose would situate its sitter within the idealized topos of the intellectually engaged artist/thinker/writer, a site usually reserved for the representation of a male subject. Were the pose of the bust a representation of the more mundane (feminine) modesty this would require that the gaze of the sitter to be not only *self*-absorbed, but, furthermore, take up the viewer's gaze and keep both within the frame of the image. In the bust Abbéma is shown looking beyond the orbit of the image, or outside of herself, at something else (fig. 1: 18b). In the knowledge that the sitter is a painter, this looking away obviates modesty, instead representing her socially, as an artist. But, what I explore here, within the fiction of this pose, is that Abbéma is still being looked at.

... You Sexy Thing!

One of the striking features of Abbéma in all the photographic portraits of her, whether her eyes are cast downwards or not, is the heaviness of the lids and eye arch musculature, acutely noticeable in the bust because of its downwards gaze (figs 1: 18c-d). As one of Abbéma's idiosyncratic facial features, Bernhardt's sculpturally naturalistic detail here and elsewhere

¹³⁹ Unlike the 'tête d'expression' exercises required of students at the *École des beaux-arts* where the expression of an instant of emotional reaction was depicted, this pose signifies the activity of a known sitter over a longer time period thereby typifying their behaviour or 'character'.

tempers the general idealizing effect of the bust achieved in its pose and general outline. It also attests to a level of intimate knowledge in the encounter between artist and sitter acquired through the process of preparation that Lanteri had recommended; one of careful looking. This looking was not only that of study for the purposes of making sculpture but imbued with mutual desire: Bernhardt's as the one looking and Abbéma's as the one soliciting that look.¹⁴⁰

The pose of the bust conveys the artist's studious preparation to the viewer. For in frontal view it structures the viewer's looking to follow a sinuous movement from the top knot of hair at the crown of the head, down the firmly defined curvature of the fringe, along the oblique profile of nose, the lips and chin, to the V-shaped outline of the neck in torsion framed by the upturned open collar, and ending with the folds of the wide, knotted necktie and the posy of flowers spilling across the clothing and its opening to the body. If the bust's naturalistic detail demonstrates Bernhardt's studious preparation for the bust, its structure also attests to her skill as a sculptor in depicting a sitter's anatomy (the foundation of training in figural sculpture): the outline of the skull beneath the tied up hair (both, fig. 1: 1), the line of the firm jaw and mound of the chin (fig. 1: 18e); the curvature of the forehead and clear definition of the brow (fig. 18f), the prominent undulating nose (fig. 1: 18g); the muscularity of the neck in torsion (fig. 1: 18h); the crisp delineation of an ear with its curves and hollows (fig. 1: 18i). The heavy lids of the downward gaze are built onto this structure, along with the bold texturing of the coiffure and spread fringe, the delicately incised tuft of hair at and below the temple, the deeper cutting for the hair of the eyebrow (fig. 1: 18j), the closed but supple

¹⁴⁰ In *A Lover's Discourse* Barthes describes his process of amorous looking in the 'The Other's Body: corps / body': 'Sometimes an idea occurs to me: I catch myself carefully scrutinizing the loved body [...]. To scrutinize means to search: I am searching the other's body, as if I wanted to see what was inside it, as if the mechanical cause of my desire were in the adverse body ... (I was looking at everything in the other's face, the other's body, coldly: lashes, toenail, thin eyebrows, thin lips, the luster of the eyes, a mole, a way of holding a cigarette; I was fascinated – fascination being, after all, only the extreme of detachment – by a kind of colored ceramicized, vitrified figurine in which I could read, without understanding anything about it, *the cause of my desire*'); 71-72 (71). In sketching the bust for *L'Art* Abbéma was also inscribing her own looking into this scenario because looking was required in order to draw with the level of accuracy she attained.

and full lips (fig. 1: 18k). Bracketed at each end of a vertical traverse by the double knots of tied hair (fig. 1: 18l) and necktie (fig. 1: 18m), the view along the frontal plane of the bust, and further looking around its mass, invite a lingering contemplation in a series of arrested moments of those features and attributes that Bernhardt fashions in her representation of Abbéma.

But any viewing is also determined by Abbéma, for what is seen in this artwork is her pose too, as its sitter, and her choices in the visible presentation of self to be looked at: the arrangement of her hair, the upturned collars of the shirt or blouse supported by that of the jacket, the voluptuous knot of the wide necktie, and the posy of violets spilling over the collar and onto the neck.¹⁴¹ I have already discussed how Abbéma's self-fashioning was that of the

¹⁴¹ I am grateful to the gardeners who responded to my request for help in identifying the flowers on a BBC gardening message board at <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/mbgardening/>>. According to Judy Grahn 'purple or lavender is the Gay color'. This she attributes to an oral tradition first conveyed to her by her first female lover in the United States in 1959. Grahn tracks a history of the signification of the colours purple and lavender in European and Native American cultural history. She writes that, within ancient Greek myth and poetry, the purple or lavender coloured flowers, narcissus, hyacinth and pansy, were attached to stories of same-sex love. Bunches of violets (part of the viola family as is the pansy) were, she claims, 'worn by both men and women in sixteenth-century England to indicate that they did not intend to marry'. Unfortunately, Grahn does not provide evidence for this claim but she does refer to the powers attributed to the pansy in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer's Night Dream* (c. 1595-96) as signifying 'a flower that changes a person's sexual inclinations'; Judy Grahn, *Another Mother Tongue: Gay Words, Gay Worlds* [1984], rev. ed. (Boston: Beacon, 1990), 6, 8. I am grateful to Judy Grahn for contacting me following a request for further information. There is only a tentative link to the fact that in a different century and country Abbéma wore (possibly purple) violets as a signifier of same-sex desire. In the absence of any further scholarship on this matter, I can only suggest it here. I have consulted a number of books from this period in France on the language of flowers. If the violets represented on the bust were indeed purple, various meanings are possible, including modesty, chastity and hidden qualities. According to one manual, a bunch of violets that were surrounded by leaves, as is the case for those on the bust, represented 'hidden love' ['amour caché'], Emma Faucon, *Nouveau langage des fleurs* (Paris: Lefèvre, 1869), 168. Some manuals cite poets in order to substantiate meanings already given by the writer or to present meanings not given explicitly. This mode of writing allows meanings with sexual connotations to be presented at one remove from the primary author. For instance, a poem by 'Parny' (probably Évariste Desiré de Forges, vicomte de Parny (1753-1814) is cited in Pierre Zaccone (1817-95), *Nouveau langage des fleurs avec la nomenclature des sentiments dont chaque fleur est le symbole et leur emploi pour l'expression des pensées* (Paris: n.publ., n.d.), 112. It reads as follows: 'Vous vous cachez, timide violette, / Mais c'est en vain, le doigt sait vous trouver, / Il vous arrache à l'obscur retraite / Qui recérait vous appas inconnus ; / Et destinée au boudoir de Cythère, / Vous renaissiez sur un trône de verre, / Où vous

masculine woman. Not all masculinized clothing worn by women in the later decades of the nineteenth century signified that the wearer was erotically interested in other women; was wearing her heart on her sleeve, as it were. However, Abbéma's 'Sapphic' or lesbian liaisons with Bernhardt and other women are known of from contemporary sources and later histories.¹⁴² Count Robert de Montesquiou-Fezensac (1855-1921), friend of Bernhardt and

mourez sur le sein de Vénus.' This has possible sexual connotations with regard to female genitalia sought out by the hand of another person identified not by gender but only as 'the finger' ['le doigt']. 'Cythère' [Cythera] refers, in two versions of Greek myth, to the home of Aphrodite/Venus (either her first home when born from the waves on the island's shore or a later home when born elsewhere). In Parny's poem Aphrodite appears in her Roman incarnation, Venus, as the keeper of the location where one would wear a posy of violets ('le sein de Vénus', presumably referring to a woman's breast or chest). According to the *Grand dictionnaire* in poetry 'Cythère' is the 'allegorical patron of Love' (citing Voltaire and Millevote) and a 'voyage to Cythera' implies 'abandoning oneself to the pleasures of love', V. No association with Sappho is provided. However, in other contexts the island of Cythera is associated with Sappho as the poet of Aphrodite. For a carefully plotted history of Cythera in painting, music, and ballet in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France that includes reference to Sappho, see Georgia Cowart, 'Watteau's "Pilgrimage to Cythera" and the Subversive Utopia of the Opera-Ballet', *Art Bulletin*, 83:3 (2001), 461-78. Cowart situates the earlier ballet *Le Triomphe des arts* (1700) by La Motte, Guillaume-Louis Pécour, and Michel de La Barre as a precedent for Watteau's painting, *Pilgrimage to Cythera* (1717). In the ballet the second entrée is dedicated to Sappho. In the painting two female figures, one winged, the other a sphinx, are, she writes, 'perhaps related to the resurrection of Sappho'; 473. Cowart argues that in the ballet some of the politically subversive meanings of deploying Cythera that she reads for were 'lost to later generations'. But the association with Sappho may not have been, even when not mentioned, as is the case in the *Grand dictionnaire*, V, 736-37. If Sappho was a known inhabitant of the island because she was the poet of Aphrodite/Venus, then it is possible to argue that this poem with its posy of violets might have had connotations of Sapphic, i.e., female same-sex, eroticism. This would depend on who was wearing the posy and to be seen by whom. For the direct association of Sappho with female same-sex desire in nineteenth-century France, see note 142. Together, the 'hidden love', a type of sexual practice implied by fingers searching out the violets, and the unstated reference to Sappho in Parny's poem might suggest that, for some female wearers of posies of violets in the second half of the nineteenth century in France, this was indeed a message conveying same-sex erotic desire. However, according to Leslie Choquette Cythera was often differentiated from Lesbos (i.e. in a hetero/homo binary). But there was 'migration' by courtesans from Cythera to Lesbos, according to Jean Lorrain. Direct references to lesbians and violets are found in Lorrain's 'Le printemps a Lesbos' (1891) and Virmaître, *Le Paris impur* (1894). I am very grateful to Professor Choquette for her help with clarifying this poem and providing references to violets in a lesbian context; email from Leslie Choquette, 8 March 2007.

¹⁴² For a fictional account of Bernhardt's Sapphic liaison with Abbéma see, Félicien Champsaur, *Dinah Samuel* (1882). Surprisingly, Abbéma and her relationship with Bernhardt do not get a mention in Marie Colombier's *The Life and Memoirs of Sarah Barnum* [1883] (1884). According to Roger Picard, Bernhardt's granddaughter claimed that 'Sarah was certainly attracted by pretty women and by Louise, who was not pretty'. This claim does not appear in Lysiane Bernhardt's biography and I have

Abbéma¹⁴³, did not hesitate to declare the existence of ‘l’Abbémania de gougnotte’ and write a sonnet in honour of her preference for female lovers.¹⁴⁴ If Abbéma’s masculinized attire –

been unable to find its exact location to date. Picard also notes the presence of Bernhardt, Abbéma and Abbéma’s parents in Abbéma’s painting *Le Déjeuner dans la serre* (1877), ‘Louise Abbéma, peintre’, unpublished manuscript, AM Étampes. See Chapter 2 for further discussion of this painting. Some posthumous texts on Abbéma mention relationships with other women. Cécile Ritzenthaler rather tantalizingly claims that Abbéma ‘was said to have liaisons with most of the models who posed for her and a full-blown Sapphic relationship with the actress Sarah Bernhardt’, but does not specify with whom else; *L’École des beaux-arts du XIXe siècle: les Pompiers* (Paris: Mayer, 1987), 12. Abbéma is also mooted by Giovanni Lista as one possibility for the mysterious ‘grande dame’ with whom the dancer Loïe Fuller had her ‘first important homosexual relationship’. Fuller used the phrase ‘Great Lady’ in her autobiography in a passage excised by the editor. According to Lista, Fuller met Abbéma in 1893 at a reception given by the American ambassador to Paris, Jefferson T. Coolidge in March 1893. She also painted her “in one of her most original poses” [citation unreferenced]. Lista also proposes the comtesse Wolska and Mme Yterbe as possibilities for the ‘grande dame’. He also refers to Abbéma as ‘Bernhardt’s unofficial mistress’; Giovanni Lista, *Loïe Fuller: danseuse de la Belle Époque* (Paris: Somogy, 1994), 169-70. A note in the AM Étampes regarding Abbéma’s painting *Dans les fleurs* (donated by her to the museum) claims that some consider that the model was ‘une des amies intimes de l’artiste’, a sales assistant at the department store of Duvelloy, for whom Abbéma painted fans for sale. The curator at the museum, Sylvain Duchêne, also told me this but could not remember where he had heard or read it. I am grateful to M. Duchêne for such a warm reception at the museum.

¹⁴³ There is evidence that Abbéma received two social invitations from Montesquiou in 1901, suggesting that they were or became friends or acquaintances; Abbéma to Montesquiou, c. 30 May 1901, BNFMS, NAF 15050, Vie de Robert de Montesquiou, LIX, fol. 55; Abbéma to Montesquiou, c. 20 June 1901; and, as above, NAF 15051, fol. 8. The treatment of women by Montesquiou, Lorrain, and other homosexual men is a complex issue that requires further investigation and thought.

¹⁴⁴ The full citation runs: ‘l’Abbémania de gougnotte! Une forme de variations sur l’avé Maria de Gounod dont Baudelaire aurait dit: “Frères, est-il besoin de vous en donner les raisons?”’, BNFMS, NAF 15051, fol. 13, Vie de Robert Montesquiou, vol. 41. The use of Abbémania could imply that women were ‘mad about Abbéma’ or that Abbéma was a ‘crazed lesbian’. ‘Gougnotte’ is included in Alfred Delvau’s *Dictionnaire érotique moderne* [1866], repr. (Geneva: Slatkine, 1968) as a slang word for a woman erotically interested in other women and not men. Delvau gives the following, second-hand definition: “Fille ou femme qui abuse des personnes de son sexe”, dit M. Francisque Michel – qui par pudeur, manquent de clarté; la gougnotte est une fille qui ni jouit qu’avec les filles, qu’elle gamahuche ou qui la branlent; une gougnotte préfère Sapho à Phaon, le clitoris de sa voisine à la pine de son voisin’; 211-12. Montesquiou reinforces his declaration that Abbéma is a ‘gougnotte’ by referring to Baudelaire’s poem ‘Lesbos’ (1850) included in the collection *Les Fleurs du mal* (1857). According to Gretchen Schultz, this poem was ‘one of the first works identifying Sapphism with lesbianism’ and ‘celebrates the island of Lesbos as a sensual feminine world and a place of poetic creation’, ‘French Literature: Nineteenth Century’, in *glbtq: An Encyclopedia of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Culture*, ed. Claude J. Summers, <www.glbtc.com/literature/french_lit2_19c.html> [28 January 2007]. Schultz’s overview of literature concerned with ‘representations of same-sex eroticism’ is excellent as are many of the historical entries in the Encyclopedia because they are both scholarly and kept up-to-date in a way not possible in print material that requires an expensive publishing process. Montesquiou uses the title

insofar as it is visible in this bust and can be linked to images of her which show it more fully – attests to what Martha Vicinus calls ‘an imaging of a desire’, as I argue it does, *how* was this erotically coded in this bust?¹⁴⁵

and author of a work in music in order to create an epigram for Abbéma whereby he can join her name with the word ‘gougnotte’. In other words, ‘*Ave Maria*’ sounds like ‘Abbéma’ and ‘gougnotte’ sounds like ‘Gounod’. Without researching in proper detail the history of Gounod, the caricaturist Moloch published a drawing of him in a monk’s habit, suggesting the ‘Abbé’ in ‘Abbémania’ might also have some personal significance for the composer. I am very grateful to Dr Claudine Mitchell, School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies, University of Leeds for clarifying this phrase and suggesting also that Montesquiou may have chosen a work about the Virgin Mary because this would imply a female figure ‘not penetrated by the masculine sexual organ’; email from Claudine Mitchell, 27 January 2007. I am also grateful to Dr Alexandra Parigoris, School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies, University of Leeds, for discussing the connotations of Montesquiou’s epigram about Abbéma with me. Montesquiou’s sonnet is titled ‘Abîme’ [referring to Abbéma, this translates as ‘abyss’, also as ‘ruin, despair’]. I retain ‘Abîme’ from the original and it runs as follows: ‘No, nothing is for sure, one day said Catullus / The vice we call Sapphic that we find among us, / The one that instead of a him wants a her in its place, / Yes, that too has its off days and times it cannot face / When for them trying to get it up just does not pay / And they might even begin to swing the other way. / We know that Sappho went off with Phaon the sailor, / Those were no sister’s kisses that he used to nail her, / And he took her away from those girls in sweet Attys her home, / Who together in twos, let’s say, lose their way as the fields they do roam. / Abîme, who for years has never been coy / About having a girl instead of wanting a boy, / Abîme did something I swear made me so scared I felt sick, / She came over to me and took hold of my ... hand. [Non, rien n’est absolu, disait un jour Catulle; / Le vice qui, chez nous, sapphique s’intitule / Et consiste à metre *elle* à la place de *lui*, / A des soirs de relâche et des matins d’ennui / Qui souhaitent parfois de connaître autre chose / Que l’effort sans effet et que l’effet sans cause. / Sapho fut infidèle et Phaon le passeur, / Dont l’étreinte n’était pas celle d’une soeur, / La reprit à la douce Attys, à ses compagnes, / Qui s’en allaient à deux errer dans les campagnes. / Abîme, qui depuis des ans a le renom / D’avoir une compagne au lieu d’un compagnon, / Abîme, je vous jure, amis, m’a pris la main, / Et ce geste m’a fait, j’avoue, une peur bleue]’; Montesquiou, *Les Quarante bergères: portraits satiriques en vers inédits de Robert de Montesquiou* (Paris: Librairie de France, 1925), n.p. Again, I am grateful to Claudine Mitchell for discussing the subtleties of translation in this poem; email from Claudine Mitchell, 11 April 2007. Abbéma’s views on the sonnet are not recorded but may not have been hostile. Although she had cut out and glued Saurel’s image of her with sideburns into her sketch book, this does not, of course, mean that the sonnet or Saurel’s image were not insulting. Similar humour was directed at Bernhardt by means of caricature, for instance by the Hydropathe group and others in fumiste literature. In Bernhardt’s case I have not found any circumstances in which she responded to this particular form of journalistic coverage.

¹⁴⁵ Martha Vicinus, ‘Fin-de-Siècle Theatrics: Male Impersonation and Lesbian Desire’, in *Borderlines: Genders and Identities in War and Peace 1870-1930*, ed. Billie Melman (New York: Routledge, 1998), 163-92 (167). Although Vicinus discusses the Fin-de-siècle and the activities of the circle of women around Natalie Barney and Renée Vivien, this erotic signalling is relevant to 1870s and 80s France (and for Abbéma until her death in 1927). For dress codes amongst the lesbian community in the Breda [Montmartre] quarter in Paris as ‘curly hair worn short, a stiff collar, man’s jacket, wool frock

As a head, neck and partial shoulders, the bust is the fragment of a whole, a synecdoche of the body. This recalls Barthes's distinction between the erotic and pornographic image in *Camera Lucida* where the erotic image is that of a partial body which does not show the 'all' of the sexual organs but 'takes the spectator outside its frame [...] as if the image launched desire beyond what it permits us to see' (59). It occurs in the bust by means of the coincidence of flesh and clothing in the neck (fig. 1: 18h). With the head turned to the sitter's right a large surface area of the neck on its left is on view, displaying Bernhardt's representation of taut bodily flesh receding gradually to an interior where it meets clothing as the neck curves round into the nape and down into the shoulder (fig. 1: 18n). This required deep, but careful, cutting by the sculptor (and her praticien carver) in order to represent how in this ever narrowing space the folds of muscle come to rest against the firm frame of the upturned collars of shirt and jacket – this provided by the masculinized costuming of the sitter. For Naomi Schor the gaps between the fragments of his text are those metaphoric 'portals of desire' that so delight Barthes in a clothed body.¹⁴⁶ This is the passage she deploys:

Is not the most erotic portion of a body *where the garment gapes?* In perversion (which is the realm of textual pleasure) there are no "erogenous zones" (a foolish expression, besides); it is intermittence, as psychoanalysis has so rightly stated, which is erotic: the intermittence of skin flashing between two articles of clothing (trousers and sweater), between two edges (the open-necked shirt, the glove and the sleeve); it is this flash itself which seduces, or rather: the staging of an appearance-as-disappearance.¹⁴⁷

coat, and dress of "androgynous" cut', see Choquette, 156. For further discussion of the history of masculinized attire as erotically coded for women when worn by women, see Newton; Wheelwright; Rudolf Dekker and Lotten van de Pol, *Frauen in Männerkleidern: Weibliche Transvestiten und ihre Geschichte* [1989], trans. Maria-Theresia Leuker (Berlin: Wagenbach, 1990), esp. Chapter 3, 'Sexualität', 67-91; Joan Nestle, ed., *The Persistent Desire: A Femme-Butch Reader* (Boston: Alyson, 1992); Mandy Merck, 'Transforming the Suit: A Century of Lesbian Self-Portraits', *Perversions: Deviant Reading* (London: Virago, 1993); de Lauretis (1994); Halberstam; Marie-Hélène Bourcier, 'Des "femmes travesties aux pratiques transgenre: repenser et queeriser le travestissement"', in *Femmes travesties: un "Mauvais genre"*, ed. Christine Bard and Nicole Pellegrin, *Clio: Histoire, femmes et sociétés* [no. exc.], 10 (1999), 117-36.

¹⁴⁶ Schor (1987), 96.

¹⁴⁷ Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* [1973], trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), 9-10.

On the bust's right side, in contraposto, the slackened musculature of the neck hovers against a greater stretch of the fabric of the shirt collar, acting both as cover and enticement to touch what is behind in the touching thus evoked. The collar on the bust is different to the short, stiff collar in the photographs of Abbéma by Benque and Mulnier (figs 1: 6-7) because it encases the neck more being higher and more flexible. But its flexibility also allows more of the opening V to be seen than the more constricted, although shorter, collars of the Benque and Mulnier photographs, thus being more inviting to the body within. Moreover, the type of collar on the bust and its V opening is shared only by the Nadar photographs and Abbéma's 1876 self-portrait painting: it is not repeated in any other images of her which all display the stiff, short, and upright collar. The part of Abbéma's body (the neck and the V immediately below the neck) revealed by this more flexible collar was, in general, closed off from view.¹⁴⁸ But the collar in the bust is also slightly shorter than those of the Nadar photographs and the 1876 self-portrait both of which extend up to the jaw line and over its juncture with the neck. From a side view it is possible to see how the form of the collar invites this touching as it folds forwards and down in its front section in a gesture of supplication (figs 1: 18h, o). It is also at this 'portal of desire' that a Canovan seductiveness in the representation of both flesh and clothing give what he called the 'effect of colour' in order to make the work 'more beautiful and brilliant'. Construed as the differentials within the form and finish of the marble, this 'effect of colour' is apparent in the near translucence of the shirt collar, juxtaposed with the scintillating evocation of the texture of skin in the neck (fig. 1: 18p). And, in this juxtaposition of the translucent 'glow' of marble fashioned to simulate fabric and the 'gleam' of the crystalline particles of Carrara marble finished to represent the surface of flesh, the bust evokes Barthesian *charis*: "the sparkle of the eyes, the body's luminous beauty, the radiance of the desirable being" (*A Lover's Discourse*, 18).

¹⁴⁸ I am grateful to Angie Harrison for discussing this with me and pointing out that Abbéma kept this part of her neck and upper chest covered, unusual at the time for female attire.

As threshold between clothing and flesh, a 'portal of desire', the outline of the collar is transgressed in the concatenation of wisps of hair that fall away from the bust's main coiffure. Moving the view around the head, these become ever more wayward; from the controlled curl of the tuft below the temple, to the more substantial locks that cascade over the firm line of the shirt collar and its reinforcing jacket collar at the nape (figs 1: 18q-s).¹⁴⁹ As I have already stated, this 'shirt' may have been a man's shirt (adjusted or not for Abbéma) or a 'sporty' woman's blouse. What makes this an erotically coded form of masculinized attire in the bust, is precisely evoked by the sculptor, for the collar's crisp, 'starched' outline allows these stray strands of hair, with their combination of formal substance and delicate incision, to fall inside and outside of the clothing in the evocation of an erotic exchange between one (woman) and an other (fig. 1: 18q). The representation of the neck in the bust recalls Saint-Armand's Irigarayan reading of Barthes's erotics as, when and where, 'the body multiplies its erogenous surface into so many sensitive zones'. This eroticism is, however, not refused, in 'voluptuous suspension', as Saint-Armand claims for Barthes, but given a representational form in the concrete materiality of marble. To raise my earlier question then – 'What act of portrayal does this portrait bust represent? It represents, in the materiality and aesthetics of sculptural surface and form, an 'erotics of beauty'. As such this act of portrayal (between sitter, artist, and required reader) is an act of 'making love'. In this reading, the bust exceeds its 'sub-Carpeaux charm' (Interview with a Bust) in becoming the palimpsest for the inscription of a lesbian, desiring relation.¹⁵⁰

1.4 Living, Loving, Working

¹⁴⁹ For a comparative erotics of masculine attire in the twentieth century, see Joan Nestle writing on the butch-femme experience in 1950s New York, who writes that 'the erotic essence of the butch-femme relationship was the external difference of women's textures [...] I loved my lover for how she stood as well as for what she did. Dress was a part of it: the erotic signal of her hair at the nape of her neck, touching the shirt collar; how she held a cigarette; the symbolic pinky ring flashing as she waved her hand [...] all these gestures were a style of self-presentation that made erotic competence a political statement in the 1950s; 'Butch-Femme Relationships: Sexual Courage in the 1950s', *A Restricted Country* (London: Sheba, 1988), 100-09 (104).

¹⁵⁰ This comment is given in a caption to the illustration of the bust in Georges Bernier, 'Sarah and the Visual Arts: A Disconcerting Love Affair', *Sarah Bernhardt and her Times*, exh. cat. (New York: Wildenstein, 1984), 15.

Viewing the bust, making images of it and my reading consequent to both constitute a claim that this object represents through its 'erotics of beauty' a sculptural index of a desiring and loving relation between Bernhardt and Abbéma that I code as lesbian. But, other than my reading of the bust and the muted, circumstantial evidence of its archive, what support can I garner in which to ground my claim and offer scholarly lesbian desire as another way to approach the practice of nineteenth-century sculpture, one that produces different readings of its works? So far no text on sculpture theory or history that I know of has considered this approach even a possibility, although there is a parallel and growing literature on male homoeroticism in sculpture.¹⁵¹ There is a substantial corpus of feminist art historical texts on nineteenth-century painting which also yields some, although limited, queer or lesbian attention. However, none include any substantial or sustained attention to female homoeroticism in sculpture.¹⁵²

Earlier I claimed that this 'corporeal part object, the portrait bust, represents in a material and concrete form [...] the effort to prolong or regain an experience of loving and having

¹⁵¹ Alex Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994); Jason Edwards, 'Alfred Gilbert's Aestheticism: Homoeroticism, Artistic Identity and the New Sculpture', *Visual Culture in Britain*, 2:1 (2001), 81-97; Edwards, "An Entirely Unimportant Deviation"? Aestheticism and the Critical Location of the Statuette in fin-de-siècle England', *Sculpture Journal* 7 (2002), 58-69; Edwards, 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Aesthete: Alfred Gilbert's *Perseus Arming* (1882) and the Question of "Aesthetic" Sculpture in Late-Victorian Britain', and other essays in *Sculpture and the Pursuit of the Modern Ideal*, ed. David Getsy (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 11-38; David Getsy, *Body Doubles: Sculpture in Britain 1877-1905* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004). In 'Winckelmann Divided: Mourning and the Death of Art History', Whitney Davis argues that Winckelmann 'manages the erotic almost entirely offstage [...] for the reader' although not in his own lived experience as a sodomite. Davis's essay is concerned with Winckelmann's recognition and attempt at reconciliation of art history as fundamentally split in which he writes the 'interminable oscillation' between the subjective and the objective in his art history as the 'acknowledgement of loss, an interminable mourning' (for the lost objects of the history of art). Davis's concern is epistemological and he focuses less on Winckelmann's formal analysis of specific works of art, although such analysis is one aspect of the art historical 'split'; *Journal of Homosexuality*, 27:1-2 (1994), 141-59.

¹⁵² On painting, see Bonnet; Kosinski; and Heather Dawkins, *The Nude in French Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), with some attention to sculpture in Bonnet. These texts do not, however, explicitly position their authors as desiring readers rather than reading for lesbian desire in images.

loved that cannot be reconstituted in any actual or original form but that has been lost' and that, further to this, '[a]s the register of this loss, the details of bust have [...] (as they do for Barthes in the real body he writes of) the "vocation of a fetish"'. As a reminder: Barthes interrogates his lasting and longing desire for the loved other, asking 'what is it in this loved body which has the vocation of a fetish for me? What perhaps incredibly tenuous portion – what accident?' (*A Lover's Discourse*, 20). I want to explore this Barthesian fetish, located for him in or as the 'folds of the [loved] body', and in their detail, as the signifier of loss. In order to shift from a male homosexual to a lesbian homosexual desiring field I take this up in accordance with Teresa de Lauretis's re-reading of the Freudian fetish and how this relies on another possible re-reading – that of 'On Narcissism' (1914) – in her model of lesbian sexual structuring (a series of readings and re-readings as well as writing that she calls a 'passionate fiction') in *The Practice of Love* (1994).¹⁵³ Here is the link between love and desire where 'theory' and its practice intercept one another so that 'desire' as practised becomes love and the practice of love is to desire. I also situate this in the field of sculpture studies by reading de Lauretis together with the work of Alex Potts on Winckelmann's erotic aesthetics in his analysis of ancient Greek sculpture.

De Lauretis begins her re-readings from the premise that in Freud's 'The Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality' (1905) *all* sexuality might be read as constitutively perverse because the 'notions of a normal sexuality [...] derive from the detailed consideration of the aberrant, deviant, or perverse manifestations and components of the sexual instinct or drive (Trieb)' (1994; xi-xii). She supports the efficacy of the fetish as signifier of lesbian desire by working through Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit and their notion of the 'mobility of desire' in their essay 'Fetishisms and Storytelling' (*The Forms of Violence*, 1985). According to Bersani and Dutoit, Freud's theory of desire is "intrinsically fetishistic" because it is, de Lauretis adds, 'dependant on an internalized, primary, and absent object of desire for which all others are merely derivative substitutes'. For Bersani and Dutoit, therefore, the fetish is a "fantasy-

¹⁵³ Further references to *The Practice of Love* (1994) and de Lauretis's response to Grosz's critique of the book (1997) are given in the text.

phallus” in which “the first term of the equation is lost, or unlocatable, and in any case ultimately unimportant” (1994; 222-25). For de Lauretis this means that the process of disavowal ‘that detaches desire from the paternal phallus in the fetishist can also occur in other subjects’ and the lesbian sexual subject’s choice of ‘substitute’ for the ‘originally lost object’ is thus freed from the tyranny of the paternal phallus as signifier of desire (1994; 227). The ‘fantasmatically “lost object” of perverse, lesbian, desire, de Lauretis contests, ‘is neither the mother’s body [as some models of pre-oedipal lesbian sexuality would have it] nor the paternal phallus [as the masculinity complex would have it], it is the subject’s own lost body’ (1997; 319). Thus, in de Lauretis’s perverse reading of the castration complex and fetishism, what is disavowed in the fetish is a ‘libidinally invested body-image, a body that can be narcissistically loved’. The adult lesbian subject can thus assume the position of ‘*being-in-desire*’ by means of the fetish (1997; 319). For de Lauretis, *lesbian* desire, that ‘of one woman for another’, is signified by the fetish as the ‘desire for [the other woman’s] desire’ – an object choice if you like, and not the sameness of identification (1994; 251).¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ Mine is an ‘uncritical’ reading of de Lauretis’s text for the purposes of discussing desire in the sculptural transaction. However, *The Practice of Love* has received considerable criticism on a number of theoretical fronts. I only have time to summarize them very briefly here. The precursor to *Practice of Love* was de Lauretis’s essay, ‘Sexual Indifference and Lesbian Representation’ (*Theatre Journal*, 40:2 [1988], 155-77), and de Lauretis revises her conclusions from this essay in the book. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick publishing at the same time as *Practice of Love* was therefore only able to critique the 1988 version of de Lauretis’s essay. Because Sedgwick is such a major figure in queer theory I include her here. She writes that ‘Teresa de Lauretis popularized the term “sexual indifference” [...] to denote the problematic of sexual *undifferentiation*, lack of gender difference, in male homosexuality and lesbianism.’ So far so good. Sedgwick’s main gripe with de Lauretis is that she has taken ‘a word with a perfectly good meaning of its own’ and subjected it to ‘compulsive, pointless English-French punning’. There are many things to say about this short passage in Sedgwick’s book but the two main points I want to raise are that this is a rather back-handed way to raise the issue of the ‘vernacular’ meaning of indifference with regard to libidinal cathexes, as she does, and it is frankly unfair to reduce de Lauretis’s lengthy, complex, and intellectually and historically situated discussion of her use of the term to a telling-off about the correct dictionary definition. I suspect a deeper indifference is at play in this text, namely to the issue of ‘lesbian’ which de Lauretis is trying to work through in her essay and in *The Practice of Love* that followed; Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (London: Routledge, 1994), 81. Responses to the book have been varied, from the dismissive to the engaged. Sheila Jeffreys, in a review, writes that that ‘what is really puzzling to this reader is why a lesbian should seek a model of lesbian sexuality in the writings of a hostile Victorian male’ despite the thirty-year history of feminism’s, at times troubled but productive, engagement with Freud. De Lauretis ably points this out in her response published in the same article; Sheila Jeffreys with a Reply by Teresa de Lauretis,

It is important for my argument that it is as sign – as the *representation* of ‘being-in-desire’ – that the fetish operates because it ‘*stands to* disavow the lack or loss, to represent the object that is missing but narcissistically wished for [my emphasis]’ (1997; 328). As representational support for her argument, de Lauretis considers (amongst others) the figure of Stephen Gordon in Radclyffe Hall’s *Well of Loneliness* (1928) for whom, in a mirror scene in the novel, the fetish is signified in the visibility of her masculine dress and accoutrements that cover over the narcissistic wound of the ‘originally lost object’ (again, the subject’s own lost body – the phallic body that the mother did not love – and not the phallus). Within this schema the ‘lure of the mannish lesbian’ (*pace* Newton) functions for de Lauretis as a dual transaction: ‘the fetish of masculinity is what both lures and signifies desire for the female body, and what in her lures her lover, what her lover desires in her *and with her*’ (1994; 243).

De Lauretis provides a psychosocial structure here that enables me to read, as one example, the upturned collar of Abbéma’s masculinized self-fashioning as a fetish, the erotic signifier of same-sex desire, and posit it as the bearer of desire for both historico-fantasmatic figures, Sarah Bernhardt and Louise Abbéma. But what would permit me to read the upturned collar

‘Perverse Desire and the Modern Lesbian’, *Women’s History Review*, 5:2 (1996), 281-88. Judith Halberstam makes short shrift of *The Practice of Love* devoting only three pages to this major contribution to lesbian and feminist theory in *Female Masculinity*. Again, this is an anti-psychoanalytic account that fails to acknowledge the complexity of de Lauretis’s argument, focussed as it is on *desire* in the psychoanalytic sense. Halberstam therefore misreads, for example, de Lauretis’s reading of Stephen Gordon in Radclyffe Hall’s *The Well of Loneliness*. Halberstam claims that de Lauretis locates the dynamics of a scene in the novel (in front of a mirror) as one where Stephen ‘mourns her lack of femininity’. In this passage in *The Practice of Love*, de Lauretis actually argues that ‘the body she desires, not only in Angela but also autoerotically for herself, the body she can make love to and mourns for is a feminine, female body’ and that, in the autoerotic, this is a paradox because ‘it is precisely her masculine, phallic body which bears the mark of castration and frustrates her narcissistic desire’ (213). Acknowledging that this is the stuff of psychic and desiring structuring is not the remit of Halberstam’s work; she claims that ‘obviously in her own life, John [i.e. Radclyffe Hall] did not experience her own masculinity as a lack’ and she reads de Lauretis’s words cited here as Hall’s narrative and not as a scene read by de Lauretis; Halberstam, 102, 104. Elizabeth Grosz’s critique of the book and de Lauretis’s response, see below. For de Lauretis’s most recent work to address the question of lesbian, see her lecture on Monique Wittig, ‘When Lesbians were not Women’, *labrys, études, féministes*, n.s. (2003), 1-17.

of the bust, or the bust itself, as a fetish and the bearer of lesbian desire? As a portrait representation, this is doubly removed from the (lost) original object of desire. I have argued above that Bernhardt and Abbéma's transaction in the act of portrayal was one of 'making love', reliant upon Bernhardt's looking in her studious preparation and making of the bust and upon Abbéma's presentation of self to be looked at within that transaction, as well as one beyond the studio setting. How I read this as desiring is through the representational means both Bernhardt as sculptor and Abbéma as sitter deployed in the 'act of portrayal'. This was initially conveyed to me in the *punctum* moment of 'love at first sight' for the bust. Through a close reading of its form and details I qualified its affective power as an 'erotics of beauty'. But the affect exercised by the bust occurs specifically within a *sculptural* economy. De Lauretis's representational support for her model of lesbian desire is found in the realm of film and literature. In order to re-locate de Lauretis's model and configure it within the language of sculpture, I therefore turn to a text in which the erotic affect of sculpture in a same-sex arena is discussed, Alex Potts's *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History* (1994).¹⁵⁵ In his reading of Winckelmann's erotic aesthetics of the sublime and the beautiful, Potts too works with the Freudian structures of the fetish and narcissism (but not perversely).

Before getting to his discussion of an erotics of sculptural form I need to track Potts's manoeuvres in his analysis of Winckelmann's aesthetics of the sublime and the beautiful. Potts first points to a 'puzzle' in Winckelmann's readings of the *Niobe* and the *Laocoön* where 'he exemplifies the sublime style by a female figure [...] and the beautiful by a male one'. This was in contradistinction to Edmund Burke's influential *A Philosophical Enquiry unto the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757) in which the sublime is masculine and solicits admiration; the beautiful is feminine and solicits love [in a heterosexual mode] (114). However, despite Winckelmann's insistence on a theoretical distinction between the sublime and the beautiful, Potts discerns in his readings of statues of male figures, such as the *Apollo Belvedere*, the interweaving of the two: Winckelmann is overpowered (sublime) by the statue and seduced (beautiful) by it. For Winckelmann (cited in Potts) the Apollo's lips bore

¹⁵⁵ Further references to Potts (1994) are given in the text.

‘disdain’ but his mouth was ‘one from which voluptuous desire flowed to the beloved Branchus’ (Apollo’s boy lover). This was not exceptional: earlier eighteenth-century praise of the statue also called erotic attention to its beauty (although sometimes this perception was projected onto an imaginary female viewer) as well as its ideal heroism. However, according to Potts, it was Winckelmann who intensified this duality into a ‘single intensely homoerotic drama acted out by the male spectator’ (123-25).

As the player in this drama, Potts reads Winckelmann’s articulation of the sublime as the ‘classic Freudian fetish’ (142): whereas in the female figure (*Niobe*) this signified a (typical) sociosymbolic repression of the feminine, in the statue of the male figure (*Laocoön*), about which Winckelmann is measurably more eloquent, the fetish is figured as a sadomasochistic ‘intermingling of erotic pleasure’ with ‘traumatic self-annihilation’ (Potts’s reconfiguration of Freud’s notion of castration) (143). In his articulation of the beautiful in male figures, notably the Belvedere *Antinous*, Potts’s reading of Winckelmann’s attraction is more benign: *Antinous* was ‘not just a thing to be gazed at for delectation, but also a subjectivity with which the spectator would identify’ (129). Looking at the self-absorbed figure Winckelmann could, in view of social prohibitions on same-sex erotic practice in eighteenth-century European society, ‘bracket [...] out any tensions that might arise from imagining an explicit erotic interchange between the viewer and the figure before him’ (152-53). But, he adds, the statue’s narcissistic self-absorption also functions as ‘an erotic incitement heightening the figure’s appeal as a displaced or distanced object of desire’, here citing Freud’s claim that ‘another person’s narcissism has a great attraction for those who have renounced part of their own narcissism and are in search of object-love’ (153). The difficulty with citing this passage here (*pace de Lauretis*) is that it refers to the secondary narcissism of what Freud calls the ‘most beautiful’ women whose need does not ‘lie in the direction of loving, but of being loved’ (*SE* 14: 89). Configured in a heterosexual encounter where the narcissistic woman is

appreciated 'for aesthetic reasons' by men, using this model here feminizes the object of Winckelmann's male homoerotic gaze.¹⁵⁶ I will return to this.

I now consider Potts's mapping of Winckelmann's erotic aesthetics of sculpture onto classic Freudian structures in the light of my reading of the bust as a (lesbian) fetish but one that requires the language of sculpture in order to be (more fully) articulated. Potts argues that in his articulation of the beautiful and the sublime Winckelmann negotiates a 'paradox' in ideal aesthetics in his looking at and writing of the beautiful body in sculpture: Winckelmann both insists on a work's ideal oneness by his notion of 'flowing contours' and, at the same time, on describing in detail its constituent parts. For Potts, the 'suggested dissolution of fixed form in flowing contour fosters a "narcissistic" fantasy in which the recalcitrant externality of the sculptural object melts away and seems to be modulated to the subtlest stirrings of the viewer's desire' (172). But, the ideal contour is also the 'point of convergence of a number of different fetishizations of the human figure as beautiful form'. For Potts, this fetishization, as both avowal and disavowal, negotiates the problem of both eroticizing an ideal figure in sculpture and keeping at bay the potential for this to translate into desire for a 'real' body, in other words an outright and corporeal homosexual desire for a male body. For Winckelmann, therefore, the beautiful contour is 'radically split – simultaneously coldly abstract and vividly sensual, inanimate and living' (172).

¹⁵⁶ I am very grateful to Anna Johnson for pointing out this discrepancy to me. I also want to thank Anna for the many, many months we spent reading de Lauretis's work together. Also on this point, see Wendy Leeks's review of Potts on Winckelmann in 'What's Love Got to do With it?', *Oxford Art Journal* 19:1 (1996), 103-06. Leeks notes (*pace* Elizabeth Grosz in *Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction* [London and New York: Routledge, 1990], 127) that in analyzing Winckelmann's reaction to the *Apollo* Belvedere Potts makes a 'heterosexual presumption' because of his recourse to the Freudian model of anaclitic narcissism. She writes that '[i]f applied to the *Apollo* Belvedere, this interestingly codes the statue as an effeminate body whose aloofness acts as a seduction'; Leeks, 105. Where I diverge from Leeks is in her suggestion that Winckelmann's responses to antique statues do not constitute 'homosexual activity' because there is only Winckelmann and rock. This, she argues, makes his responses a 'solitary' activity, only possible in fantasy, and therefore masturbatory; Leeks, 106. My own scholarly, desiring engagement with the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* demonstrates that a relationship in fantasy is also a *practice* (of love) and therefore a model for female homosexual relating in, as well as outside of, fantasy.

It is in this paradox that Potts now offers the possibility of the *sculptural* fetish beyond phallic literalism (although not beyond heteronormativity). He writes:

Fetishization is meant here in a post-Freudian sense, referring to a process whereby an object is fixed in psychic fantasy as both the disavowal and recognition of a deeply disturbing threat to the integrity of the self. At issue is more the structure of fantasy involved than Freud's particular insistence that such a threat is essentially a fear of castration, and the fetish a more or less literal symbolization of the penis and its threatened absence (172).

For Potts the psychic fantasy of fetishization 'involves a distinctively split fixation on objects' (273: note 53). Here he is at pains to distance himself from a tendency in psychoanalytic literature to 'project a male incapacity to overcome the fear of castration evoked by the female body as somehow a particularly homosexual problem', rather defining the "problem" involved as one that has to do with a narcissism and anxiety over sexual difference fundamental to all male psychic identity' (272, note 38).¹⁵⁷ The problem with this argument is that it is grounded in a heteronormative reading of the possibilities in Freud's essay 'On Narcissism', and, yes, I will get there.

Back to the bust and its sculptural economy of an erotics of beauty: in their curves and outlines, the neck *and* collar in the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* resonate with those contours in Winckelmann configured by Potts as the '*point of convergence* of a number of different fetishizations of the *human figure as beautiful form* [my emphasis]'. The emphasis here is designed to suggest that the fetishizing contour of Potts's reading is precisely seen to be at work in this conjuncture of neck and collar in the *Bust of Louise Abbéma*. The contour of Abbéma's body part is supported by the collars of shirt and jacket and in this convergence the

¹⁵⁷ Potts cites in support for this argument Whitney Davis's discussion in 'HomoVision: A Reading of Freud's "Fetishism"', *Genders* 15 (1992), 82-118. De Lauretis picks up on another aspect of Davis's essay: she argues that Davis's reading of fetishism 'misrepresents as a specific quality of fetishistic desire what is in fact a quality of all desire – its being subject to "continual sexual disillusionment and repetition"'. However, de Lauretis does concur with Davis's figuring of the "fetish-effigy" ("the many transient external objects which could attract a fetishist's erotic interest" and also an "absolute first impression, with no past and no future") as 'an apt interpretant' of the fetish as signifier (266-67).

contours of the shirt and jacket invite contemplation of that (partial) *body*, and the Barthesian beyond of the rest of the body, as beautiful form. This is, of course, not the 'same' as the contours in Winckelmann's human figure as beautiful form because for him the exemplar is the ideal nude. The *Bust of Louise Abbéma* with its contemplative pose and use of white marble, whilst idealizing under the terms of a classical education in sculpture, counterpoises this idealization with naturalistic detail, as I have described above. However, because this is a *portrait bust* and it represents a partial body – head, neck, shoulders – the contour of the collar and neck represent the acknowledgement and absence of a body in its wholeness, or, as fetish, the disavowal of the loss of 'a libidinally invested body-image [...] that can be narcissistically loved'. The making of that collar and neck by means of the artist/sitter transaction peculiar to Bernhardt and Abbéma is evidence of the inscription of lesbian desire.

I take up now my earlier engagement with Potts's deployment of narcissism in his analysis of Winckelmann's appreciation of the ideal male nude. My concern, however, is to investigate narcissism *vis à vis* the bust as marking the acknowledgement and disavowal of the loss of a 'body-image [...] that can be narcissistically loved'. In *The Practice of Love* de Lauretis reads 'On Narcissism' as describing a 'male homosexual narcissistic object-choice and 'certain forms of feminine heterosexual object-choice (or object-love) that seem to be anaclitic, in that they display an object-relation, but are actually narcissistic in that the object in question is either part of the subject's own body (her child) or a reminder of her own pre-pubertal masculine identification' (1994; 187). This leaves the lesbian subject stuck in a non-space where the only possibility of object-love is one (according to the neo-Freudian psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan, Jacqueline Rose, and Mary Ann Doane) where 'the lesbian must imagine herself a man in order to desire' (189). But Freud's heterosexualized, although undoubtedly schematic, opposition of feminized narcissistic object-choice (determined as ego-libido) and masculinized anaclitic object-choice (determined as object-libido) is problematic, de Lauretis says, according to Laplanche and Pontalis. They write that in 'On Narcissism' 'it is in "complete object-love of the attachment type" that Freud observes "the marked sexual overvaluation which is doubtless derived from the child's original narcissism and thus

corresponds to a transference of that narcissism to the sexual object.” Conversely,’ they add, ‘he describes the case of “narcissistic women” [...whose] need lie[s not] in the direction of loving, but of being loved”’. Here Laplanche and Pontalis ask whether this ‘does not display a subject seeking to reproduce the child’s relationship to the mother who feeds it – an aim [...] characteristic of the *anaclitic* object-choice’.¹⁵⁸

De Lauretis responded in 1997 to a critique of *The Practice of Love* by Elizabeth Grosz in which Grosz praised de Lauretis’s quality of work but doubted the valency of psychoanalysis suggesting that ‘perhaps it is time that the amount of energy and effort feminists, lesbians and gays have invested in psychoanalysis might be better invested in other theoretical approaches and intellectual endeavours.’¹⁵⁹ As well as defending her re-reading of psychoanalysis, de Lauretis took up an issue she recognized was unresolved in her book.¹⁶⁰ This issue is ‘the relation of fetishism to narcissism in perverse desire’, because perverse desire is configured in the book as ‘the loss of a narcissistically invested body-image that threatens the ego with a loss of being and prompts the defense process of disavowal’ (1997, 329-30). In this configuration ‘the narcissistic’ (i.e. that which is narcissistic; I use this to signal its constitutive aspect in desire) accords with Freud’s notion of primary narcissism (and therefore infantile autoeroticism) and not the secondary (adult) narcissism he designates as ‘specifically feminine’ (1997, 29). However, and herein lies the potential for revision de Lauretis offers in favour of a notion of perverse (lesbian) desire, Freud is ‘characteristically ambiguous in his theory of narcissism’. Freud, she argues, bases this theory on ‘a distinction between ego-libido and object-libido (or ego instincts and sexual instincts)’. She continues, ‘at times the distinction is given as an opposition, while at other times they are said to coexist side by side.’ De Lauretis offers the coexistent version as favourable for a model of lesbian sexuality but insists on maintaining Freud’s *distinction* between ‘ego-libido or narcissistic disposition and the object choice component of sexual desire’ in order that what she calls lesbian ‘sexual structuring’

¹⁵⁸ Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, ‘Narcissistic Object-Choice’, in *The Language of Psychoanalysis* [1967], trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (London: Karnac, 1988), 258-60 (259).

¹⁵⁹ Grosz, 162.

¹⁶⁰ De Lauretis (1997), 315-33. Further references are given in the text.

(i.e. a socio-sexual subjectivity ‘permanently under construction’) does not figure either as feminine identification or originary bisexuality as it does in the writing of Freud or Lou Andreas-Salomé. This is crucial in order to ‘account for why or how particular object-choices are made by each individual’ and is ‘usefully maintained,’ she argues, ‘when one is concerned to articulate the sexual difference between lesbian and heterosexual female desire’ (1997, 330).

I can offer representational support for de Lauretis’s insistence on a distinction between the ego-libido (or narcissistic) and object choice components of lesbian desire (what might in the vernacular be called love of self and love of other) in my two final images in this chapter. Both show Bernhardt in her studio with the recently finished *Bust of Louise Abbéma* (figs 1: 34-35); the second image is visible only as a tiny reproduction in the top right hand corner of the photo-collage. They were commissioned from Achille Melandri as part of a larger series in 1878-79.¹⁶¹ As images of the ‘sculptor + artwork’ Melandri’s photographs represent iconically the imperative of this distinction. Commissioned by Bernhardt in the mode of what I call extended self-portraiture, she, the sculptor, is shown next to a portrait she has made of a woman whom she loved and who also loved her.¹⁶² The body of the sculptor and her sculpted

¹⁶¹ Melandri’s dates are not available but he was active in the 1870-80s as a photographer in Paris. More details are provided in Chapter 2.

¹⁶² In her analysis of the photographic representations of Bernhardt which ‘function [as] spectacle, providing a sort of simulacrum of the theatrical experience’ Heather McPherson also argues for Bernhardt’s agency in this image production. She writes: ‘[a]lthough Bernhardt posed for the camera as subject, she nevertheless controlled the resulting photographic discourse and its dissemination, thus operating in what has been termed the “directorial mode”’; McPherson, *The Modern Portrait in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 93. Where I differ from McPherson is in insisting that images of Bernhardt as sculptor (or painter) be considered apart from, as well as part of, her greater iconographic corpus. One immediate way this is possible is by specifying that the photographs by Melandri were commissioned by Bernhardt and taken in her own home thereby making this an economic as well as discursive ‘directorship’. McPherson figures images of Bernhardt as painter (or sculptor) only within the frame of her ‘star aura’. For her the Melandri photograph of Bernhardt with palette and brush in front of ‘one of her own paintings’ (she does not specify which) means that ‘in this portrait she synthesizes the theatricality of the stage with the theme of the artist in the studio, underscoring the common performance paradigm’, adding that ‘as contemporaries observed, Bernhardt was always on stage’; McPherson, 97. My argument is that any

corporeal representation of a sitter are therefore in a relationship of differentiation within the same frame. A (lesbian) relationship of primary to secondary narcissism is thus represented through Bernhardt's demonstration of the sculptural practice of *making* love. Separately, they show Bernhardt in radically differentiated poses and the bust from a slightly different angle but in both cases in right profile. Neither image has been recently reproduced: the collage in March 1905 in a feature article in *L'Art du théâtre* (fig. 1: 35) and the full-sized photograph in Huret's biography of Bernhardt in 1899 and *La Quinzaine* in c. 1904-07 (I have not located an original *carte-de-visite* or other format photograph). This is not the case for two further images by Melandri where Bernhardt is pictured with a self-portrait bust in the same outfit and setting (both are included in the collage in the second row from the bottom).¹⁶³ Again, two versions of the same scenario, these images are widely published in a variety of formats and contexts and are almost always given as (most times undeclared) evidence of Bernhardt's 'narcissism' – here understood as the unambiguous, feminine, heterosexualized secondary narcissism deployed in popular usage.¹⁶⁴ Bernhardt's flamboyant self-fashioning in a white silk trouser suit is the most remarked feature in discussions of these images, the self-portrait bust acknowledged only to provide support for this way of framing the actress as sculptor.

portrait of the artist in a studio is a theatricalized image. Therefore to read only Bernhardt in this way is to fall victim to the myth of feminine theatricality *vs.* male authenticity when it comes to figuring the artist in the studio. This is why I prefer to view Melandri's photographs as 'extended self-portraits' because they are images commissioned by an *artist* of herself and her work.

¹⁶³ Some sources claim this as a bust of Bernhardt by Rodin and a letter (albeit twenty years later) from Rodin to Roger Marx mentions a 'tête de Sarah Bernhardt', À Roger Marx, [Paris ou Meudon, fin avril 1898], *Correspondance de Rodin 1860-99*, ed. Alain Beausire and Hélène Pinet, 3 vols (Paris: Musée Rodin, 1985-86), I, letter 266. My enquiry to the curator at the Rodin museum in Paris resulted in this being a work by Rodin as doubtful; email from Antoinette Le Normand-Romain, 28 November 2005. However, neither is there any sound evidence that this is a self-portrait bust, although it is likely. The work is not currently in circulation, if indeed it was ever cast in plaster, terracotta, or bronze, or cut in marble. An unbaked clay model is unlikely to have survived.

¹⁶⁴ McPherson, for instance, writes that the 'frequent photographic sessions may have catered to [Bernhardt's] vanity and narcissism'. Although McPherson is not using the Freudian structure of narcissism directly here, nonetheless her deployment of this term is linked to how she situates Bernhardt in the star system, which is 'essentially feminine because female stars are the most "fabricated, the most adored, and the least real"'; 94; citation from Edgar Morin, *The Stars*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Grove, 1960), 103). McPherson adds that '[f]emale stars are the object of masculine attraction and a feminine cult' thus siting this kind of 'narcissism' firmly in a heterosexual mode; 94, note 86.

Why have the images of Bernhardt with the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* never been reproduced? What other stories do these photographs tell of her relationship with Louise Abbéma and of her sculpture practice? I will take up the question of how these images represent Bernhardt's sculpture practice in Chapters 2 and 3, but for now I wish to return to my claim that these images might represent de Lauretis's idea of a distinction, or what I discern as the co-existence a differentiation, between the ego-libido (or narcissistic) and object choice components of, specifically, lesbian desire. In the first of these images with the bust (fig. 1: 34) Bernhardt leans in relaxed contraposto with her feet crossed at the ankles against the sculpting trestle, her right arm lightly embraces the finished, carved bust and rests on the trestle's platform. In her right hand which curls around the bust's right shoulder she holds a small marble-carving chisel poised as a pointing implement rather than in the usual grasp of a carving action. Her left arm is held along the length of the left-hand side of her torso, her hand supported by the left hip as she holds the hammer in her grasp but pointing downwards to the floor. It is not clear if Bernhardt was a left-handed sculptor but this handling of tools (both in the opposite hands to a right-handed sculptor and in different positions to those required for carving) indicate the sculptor in repose, after the job is done. In the second image Bernhardt is close to the bust and faces it (fig. 1: 35). Her left hand, possibly still holding the lump hammer, is crooked to rest on her waist, her right hand, also possibly holding the chisel, but this is difficult to see in such a small and relatively obscured image, rests across the front plane of the trestle without obscuring the view of the bust because this sits on a small marble pedestal on the trestle. Bernhardt's 'difference' from the bust is clearly visible in Melandri's albumen print photograph because of the distinction in colouration between artist and object. While the bright, white, freshly carved marble is the 'same' as Bernhardt's suit, it is different from the darker colouration of her flesh tones and hair. Melandri's two photographs show the sculptor and her sculpture in a way that differentiates Bernhardt, maker of a bust of another woman, from that bust and therefore from that other woman, Louise Abbéma, who is represented through sculptural portraiture as the object of her affection. Bernhardt's gestures show her engagement with her work; she either gently embraces the bust or looks directly at

it. In admiring and showing affection for something she has made and in this something being the representation of an other woman whose difference is marked by its doubly removed representation in a photograph of a sculpted bust, these images demonstrate not identification but, through the bust as fetish, an intense moment of desire inscribed in a relationship between sculptor and sitter.

1.5 ‘Can I see you again?’ Towards Everlasting Love

Bernhardt kept the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* after she had made it and shown it at the Paris Salon in 1879. She later sent it to an exhibition in Paris at the cercle des Arts libéraux in July 1880 and the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. Neither were sales exhibitions, unlike others organized by Bernhardt in Europe and the United States, indicating that she never intended to sell this work. It is likely that Bernhardt kept the bust until her death and then bequeathed it to Abbéma, who was drawn in her studio by the periodical illustrator Pierre-Jean Poitevin, the bust behind her in a cabinet on the wall (fig. 1: 36).¹⁶⁵ The bust was dispersed in the sale of Abbéma’s studio in December 1927 and does not appear again (in the history that I have been able to track thus far) until 1978 in Paris.

During Bernhardt’s ownership of it, however, in addition to the Melandri photographs shown here, the bust appears in several other images of Bernhardt’s homes and studio in the period c. 1878-81. The bust’s presence in these representations provides the impetus, in the next two chapters, for my investigation of Bernhardt’s sculpture practice and the conditions under which it took place. The bust is, therefore, not only an emblem of desire within the fifty-year relationship that existed between its maker and sitter it becomes the facilitator of the social history of a practice.

¹⁶⁵ *Succession de Mlle Louise Abbéma, artiste peintre, chevalier de la Légion d’Honneur*, Henri Gabriel, hôtel Drouot, Paris, 14-15, 19 December 1927.

2 Home is where the Art Is: Sarah Bernhardt's Sculpture Studio

Looking for, finding, and tracking the *Bust of Louise Abbéma*, as it appears in representations of the spaces occupied by Bernhardt, provides it with a history, locating the site of its production and establishing Bernhardt's subsequent ownership and display of it. But pursuing this object also enables a history of Bernhardt's sculpture practice to be written. In other histories of Bernhardt selective visual and textual representations of her 'studio' and 'home' are invoked as yet another stage setting for the spectacle of the busy actress prone to excess in all things and are not explained adequately as the *place* of a sculptor.¹ My interest in the bust's location in time and place foregrounds that the spaces where it was depicted were those that sustained the material conditions and social relations Bernhardt required in order to make sculpture. The bust's mobility – its appearance in different images of different times and places – instigates a line of enquiry into a larger corpus of visual and textual material that represents the differentiated and overlapping spaces of and within Bernhardt's studios and/or homes. The aim of this enquiry, and of this chapter, is to explain how these spaces might have functioned and been organized specifically as the site of sculpture production.

In general, treatment of Bernhardt's sculpture practice and where it might have taken place has been biographical. There is, and generally always has been, one way of telling the story

¹ Biography, exhibitions, and recent academic literature broadly conceived as visual culture analysis conform to this schema established in the French and foreign press in the mid-1870s. Anne Jamault's thesis on Bernhardt's general involvement in the visual arts provides a more careful chronological and geographical analysis of her homes in Paris, Normandy, and Brittany, basing this on textual analysis of land registry documents and some contemporary written sources. Jamault frames her analysis by citing Jean-Michel Nectoux: 'the splendour of the star is inscribed in a way of life but even more permanently in the architecture and decoration of the star's home. The "house" becomes an emblem of the star. Its construction and decoration are [...] a striking means of manifesting the star's personality [la splendeur de la star s'inscrit, certes, dans son train de vie, mais aussi, et plus durablement, dans l'architecture et les aménagements de sa demeure. La "maison" devient emblématique de la star. La construire ou l'aménager [...] c'est aussi une manière éclatante de manifester sa personnalité]'; 'Maisons d'Artistes', in *Stars et monstres sacrés*, ed. Jean-Michel Nectoux, exh. cat. (Paris: RMN, 1986), 20-28 (21). Architectural style, interior decoration, and Bernhardt's collection of art objects become determinants of Bernhardt's personal taste as a 'star' and her surroundings are not considered in any depth as productive for her own art practice, whether sculpture or painting; Jamault, 'Intérieurs d'Artiste', 'Sarah Bernhardt et le monde de l'art', 4 vols (unpublished doctoral thesis, université de Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2000), I, 163-232.

of Sarah Bernhardt's homes and studios, and that is to connect how they were configured and represented to her work and status as an actress and celebrity, and not as a professional artist. Few accounts fail to mention that Bernhardt made sculpture, but no account has yet provided a sculpture history of her practice. The all important question of a sculptor's need for a studio has not been dealt with in terms specific to the requirements of material art production. In order to write this chapter I therefore scoured archives and secondary publications for every text I could find that mentioned anything at all to do with Bernhardt's sculpture practice and for images of her studios and domestic interiors, seeking the ever elusive bigger picture. I encountered problems: although the archives hold a hefty amount of material on Bernhardt, much of it requires further work. Photocopied periodical articles might have incomplete details of publication and recourse to original sources is necessary. Published images are assembled as cuttings pasted into scrapbooks with no, or inaccurate, details of date or location of publication. Stand-alone photographs and paintings are not provided with details of their production and circulation. When these form part of a series, they are not always seen together. These problems, amongst others, determine how much of the material encountered in the archives is bereft of a context which might determine the scope of possible analysis.

My project involves two methodological caveats in how I approach the material discussed in this chapter as the evidence for one aspect of the history of Bernhardt's sculpture practice. Firstly, I sidestep any major discussion of Bernhardt's homes and studios in terms of material culture. Contemporary accounts of these spaces were keen to convey a wealth of objects, many of them classified, along with their owner, as both decorative and exotic. Recent accounts have focussed on reading these accounts in terms of Bernhardt's iconicity. I have nothing further to add to this. My purpose is to extricate and foreground only aspects of Bernhardt's surroundings that are relevant to the production of sculpture. This may seem an artificial screening-off of what is represented in text and image on Bernhardt's homes and studios, but is, I argue, a necessary first move in laying the foundation for establishing Bernhardt's work (practice and production) as a sculptor. It is

also a critical intervention: just because a contemporary eyewitness might list a series or wealth of objects (making only passing reference to an element of sculpture production equipment) does not mean that that what they describe is all that was there. Many factors affect how any re-presentation of the site of sculpture production occurs: the author's access to space, their selective vision, what they remember, or how they edit their account according to their perceived audience. This brings me to my second caveat. I will not provide any substantial comparative analysis between where Bernhardt made sculpture and the studios of her contemporaries. Collections and analysis of images of sculptor's studios during the second half of the nineteenth century in France are available.² To simply lay these next to those of Bernhardt's would not do justice to the different circumstances under which any one sculptor worked, nor to the complexities of how a workplace might be represented. Further collation and analysis would be required of this material and I cannot do that here. My efforts concentrate on determining the conditions of one practice according to how it is possible to gather, assess and explain a body of archival material. I begin this process with representations of *Bust of Louise Abbéma* as one possible point of access to this material.

Not mentioned in any descriptive accounts, the bust is represented in a number of images of 41 avenue de Villiers, Bernhardt's home and studio from 1876 until 1886. In addition to the two images which I showed at the end of Chapter 1 (figs 1: 34-35), the bust features in

² Specifically on the sculptor's studio, see Philippe Durey, 'L'atelier du sculpteur vu par les peintres' and Hélène Pinet, 'L'atelier du sculpteur vu par les photographes', in *La Sculpture française au dix-neuvième siècle*, ed. Anne Pingeot and Philippe Durey, exh. cat. (Paris: RMN, 1986), 4-9 and 10-25. For general studies of artists' studios in the second half of the nineteenth century including those of sculptors, see Jacques Lethève, *The Daily Life of French Artists* [1968], trans. Hilary E. Paddon (London: Allen and Unwin, 1972); John Milner, *The Studios of Paris: The Capital of Art in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988); Bob Haboldt, ed., *Portrait de l'artiste: images des peintres 1600-1890: catalogue des tableaux et dessins anciens et de photographies du XIXe siècle*, exh. cat. (Paris: Bob Haboldt Gallery, 1991). Collections of photographs of sculptors' and painters' studios can be found in the musée d'Orsay, musée Carnavalet, and BNFDEP. For a useful analysis of early twentieth-century images of sculptors' studios, including some in France, see Jon Wood, 'Close Encounters: The Sculptor's Studio in the Age of the Camera', in *Close Encounters: The Sculptor's Studio in the Age of the Camera*, ed. Stephen Feeke and Penelope Curtis, exh. cat. (Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2001), 8-27.

another two photographs by Achille Melandri part of a series produced in avenue de Villiers in 1878-79 but not given titles at the time.³ Now seen without the signifiers of sculpture production (modelling stool, sculptor with tools), the bust sits on a mantelpiece below which Bernhardt is laid out in a coffin (figs 2: 1-2). The bust also appears in two watercolours by Marie-Désiré Bourgoïn (1839-1912) (figs 2: 3-4), one of which was titled *Atelier de Sarah Bernhardt* in a mounted photographic reproduction of the painting (fig. 2: 4).⁴ Dated 1879,

³ The spelling of Melandri's name differs in contemporary and subsequent literature; sometimes 'Melandri', at others 'Mélândri'. When capitalized it usually does not include the acute accent. I follow the spelling provided by his studio stamp on the reverse of some of the images of Bernhardt [Melandri] except when quoting the titles of written sources which give the alternative spelling. The series consists of those photographs reproduced in the photo-aquarelle collage (fig. 1: 35) and several others. They represent Bernhardt's sculpture and painting (with or without her), her stage roles and her domestic life. Cross-referencing architectural features, artworks and other objects within the images and with other sources means it has been possible to locate the production of these in avenue de Villiers during 1878-79. Some individual photographs by Melandri are also mounted as cabinet cards and some secondary sources claim these were sold as multiples. See, for example, Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale, *The Divine Sarah: A Life of Sarah Bernhardt* (New York: Knopf, 1991), 134. Although I do not rule this out, I have found no direct evidence of sales and located no more than two copies of any one image mounted on card. Many appeared only within publications. The earliest published version of a Melandri photograph I know of is one of those with Bernhardt's self-portrait bust in Anon., 'Portraits: Mdlle. Bernhardt', *The Theatre: A Monthly Review and Magazine*, n.s., vol. 2 (1 June 1879), 282-85 (282). The same image was drawn by Ernest de Liphart for reproduction in *La Vie moderne: journal hebdomadaire illustré, artistique et littéraire*, 3e année, no. 22 (28 May 1881), 349 [hereafter *La Vie moderne*]. Photographs by Melandri do not appear again until the late 1890s onwards. Posthumous literature on Bernhardt tends to reproduce the following images: stage roles, those with the coffin, Bernhardt with her painting, *La Marchande des palmes*, and with her self-portrait bust. Little is known about Melandri. He was a photographer and painter active in Paris in the 1870-80s and his studio was at 19 rue Clauzel in the 9th arrondissement. He specialized in portraits, photography of art and photo-aquarelles. At some point another photographer called Poirel based himself at the 'Maison Melandri' and produced a photoengraving of one of the 1878-79 series (Bernhardt with *La Marchande des palmes*) and reissued it in his own name. The *Hydropathes* claimed Melandri as a member featuring him in their journal with the obligatory caricature by Cabriol on the front page; Paul Vivien, 'Melandri', *Les Hydropathes*, 1e année, no. 12 (25 June 1879), 1-2. Vivien's biography noted Melandri's contribution to the satirical journals *Tintamarre* and *Le Grelot*. The project for Bernhardt was not his only one outside his studio: a photograph of Paul Signac and friends was taken at the Chat Noir cabaret c. 1882, see Françoise Cachin, *Signac: catalogue raisonné de l'oeuvre peint* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), 347, fig. 6.

⁴ The photographic reproduction (a print on albumenized paper from a collodion glass negative) is in BNFDEP, Kc 164, t. 7: Pièces sur les arts, VII, L'artiste et l'atelier 1861-1899 (1), R 11,000. Bourgoïn's signature ['D. Bourgoïn'] and the title are inscribed on the lower portion of the mount. The photograph is chamfered at the corners to simulate insertion in the mount but is actually glued to its surface. The dimensions are: with mount, 31.8 x 24.8 cm; print only, 25.4 x 20.2 cm. I am

each shows a panoramic view of a large room in avenue de Villiers where art making – both sculpture and painting – is depicted. The bust is displayed on a sideboard in the far right-hand corner of the room along with other works of art and decorative objects within the *mise-en-scène*. Finally, the bust is featured in a drawing by Félix Lucas that illustrated an article on Bernhardt's studio in *La Vie moderne* in 1881.⁵ Titled 'L'Atelier de sculpture de Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt', the drawing is signed by Lucas and annotated 'Un coin de l'atelier de sculpture' (fig. 2: 5). The bust is placed centrally within a partial view of a conservatory, again on a square black plinth on a modelling stool as it appears in Melandri's photographs (figs 1: 34-35). It shares this space with a life sized plaster model of a male nude on a sturdy wooden trestle situated just inside the bounds of the conservatory. A clay bust of a young girl in a cloche is located on the other side of the threshold to the conservatory within the room from which this scene is viewed and drawn.

Already this small set of images that locates the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* in time and place raises a problem symptomatic of the archive of image and text on Bernhardt's studios and homes. Uncertainties about dates and titles, puzzling composition and content, as well as questions about how the spaces in these images relate to one another signal a difficulty in establishing a

grateful to Sylvie Aubenas, BNFDEP for information on the methods of reproduction of the photographs and other print material in the collection discussed in this chapter. BNFDA also holds a photographic reproduction of Bourgoïn's watercolour where Bernhardt is shown with *Après la tempête*. The photograph is again glued on to the mount but without chamfered corners and the mount is not signed or titled. The circulation of these reproductions is not known. This version of Bourgoïn's watercolour was reproduced by photoengraving by Ruckert for Jules Huret's biography, *Sarah Bernhardt* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1899), in both the French and English editions. Ruckert is not listed in any dictionary of illustrators.

⁵ Gustave Goetschy, 'Ateliers et vitrines: Mlle Sarah Bernhardt', *La Vie moderne*, 3e année, no. 22 (28 May 1881), 344, 347-49. *La Vie moderne* began publication in April 1879 as an illustrated weekly review of visual art, literature, and theatre, initially under the editorship of Émile Bergerat then, at the end of 1880, under the publisher Georges Charpentier. From the outset Bernhardt, Abbéma, and Clairin were part of the large team of artistic collaborators who provided illustrations and Clairin was still contributing in 1899. Art critic Armand Silvestre reviewed the Salon (over several weeks as was customary in the Parisian periodical press) and exhibitions in Paris by independent groups; the société des Aquarellistes, the cercle des Arts libéraux, cercle de l'Union artistique and others. *La Vie moderne* held exhibitions on its premises: the first was a solo show by Abbéma in May 1879. Bernhardt received coverage in the sections on theatre, visual arts, and social life which was, in general, favourable towards her.

temporal and spatial logic to the site(s) of Bernhardt's sculpture production. Together these images depict at least two different locations within 41 avenue de Villiers that seem to show the site of sculpture production: a conservatory, called a 'sculpture studio' or 'a corner of the sculpture studio', and a large room where Bernhardt is seen, tools in hand, with a reduced version of her 1876 group *Après la tempête* on a modelling stool. Referred to in Bourgoïn's other watercolour as the more general 'atelier', this room is also figured as a painting studio from which all signs of making sculpture are absent. But if Bernhardt had already finished *Après la tempête* three years before, is this a sculpture (or painting) studio after all or simply decked out only for the purposes of representing Bernhardt as an artist? In that case, what is this space and its significance? Can this be determined from its furnishing and a decorative scheme that includes the *Bust of Louise Abbéma*? Equally, as neither Bernhardt, her tools, nor any materials are present in Lucas's drawing, is the conservatory a sculpture studio or not? Turning back to the two photographs by Melandri where Bernhardt is shown with the bust on a modelling stool, where is this? Is this the large atelier of Bourgoïn's watercolours or is it the conservatory called a sculpture studio in *La Vie moderne* where Lucas's drawing appeared? Or might it be another space altogether, perhaps the room adjacent to the conservatory glimpsed in Lucas's drawing? How is this a scene of sculpture production if the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* is a work in marble and therefore inappropriately placed on a modelling stool? What is the significance of the co-presence of the bust and Bernhardt in a coffin as objects on display in Melandri's other tightly cropped compositions? What room is this and what happens here? Closer inspection of one version of this photograph (fig. 2: 2) reveals a clay bust in a cloche on the left. What does this scenario have to do, if anything, with the production of sculpture? Could it be that all these images represent distinct areas within a 'sculpture studio' – and therefore aspects of sculpture production – more broadly conceived in terms of physical and social space? After all, avenue de Villiers was specifically built as a studio home. Is Bernhardt's 'sculpture studio' thus conceived the same as, or different from, others in this period in France?

Many more questions can be asked of this set of images alone. What they point to is the need for a rigorous art historical approach within Bernhardt studies in order to make sense of how she produced sculpture. Under the rubric of Bernhardt as spectacle figured by excess in all things, adequate consideration of Bernhardt as a sculptor has been missing. My research reveals a substantial body of archival material, both visual and textual, on the distinct spaces of Bernhardt's various studios and homes. Some of this material has been ignored (for instance Melandri's photographs of Bernhardt with the bust and the Lucas drawing) whilst other material that better fits the notion of Bernhardt's feminine theatricality on stage and off has been endlessly reproduced (the Bourgoïn watercolours, the photographs that include Bernhardt in a coffin). I do not deny that images in which Bernhardt is represented 'as a sculptor' (such as the Bourgoïn watercolour or Melandri's photographs with the bust) might be informed by skills she learnt on stage. But my interest is to establish what locations these images represent because Bernhardt determined her surroundings in such a way that enabled her to successfully make sculpture. This requires fuller attention to a range of material available in the archive.

Biography and the literature of a generalised cultural analysis of spectacle or feminine theatricality have not asked questions that would establish a simple temporal and spatial logic within and across representations of Bernhardt's studios and homes. For instance, descriptions of one location (address) have been used to refer incorrectly to another.⁶ I also do not deny that the material of the archive – its production and how it is now organised – is complex,

⁶ This already happened from an early stage of posthumous literature on Bernhardt. An article by Alphonse Mucha published shortly after her death claimed to be about avenue de Villiers. As Mucha did not meet Bernhardt until c. 1893-94 this is simply not possible; 'Mes Souvenirs sur Sarah Bernhardt', *Paris Prague*, 1^e année, nos 6-7 (1 May 1923), 24-25. In a recent, more reliable study of Bernhardt (in that citations are at least referenced, unlike in most biographies), Mary Louise Roberts qualifies Bernhardt's last home on the boulevard Pereire as 'overwrought'. Excerpts from six different journalistic accounts are cited in the text and another six referenced in footnotes. Of the latter, two date from the period before Bernhardt moved in to 56 boulevard Pereire in c. 1887 – an article by Félicien Champsaur from October 1878 and another by Denoizel, dated 31 October 1885 (I am uncertain of the dating of this latter article, which requires checking in the dossier where it is kept in the BHVP); Roberts, *Disruptive Acts: The New Woman in Fin-de-Siècle France* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 187, notes 112-17.

contradictory, incomplete, and therefore confusing. It is all these things. Depending on who produced visual imagery and verbal description, when, and for what purpose, this material can be inclined to marginalize Bernhardt's sculpture practice. As my few questions about images that feature the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* indicate, the very least this topic demands is a sense of chronology and topography, the standard fare of art history. Only then can Bernhardt's studios and/or homes – and how they have been represented – be subject to the kind of analysis that could construe them specifically as the materially and socially productive spaces of making sculpture.

2.1 Art Historical Method: Chronology and Topography

Ascertaining the precise dates of Bernhardt's beginnings as a sculptor in order to determine the location of her early production is difficult. Her autobiography, *My Double Life: Memoirs of Sarah Bernhardt* [*Ma Double vie: mémoires de Sarah Bernhardt*; hereafter *MDL*] (1907), and authorised biographies by others (Jules Huret [1899] and Lysiane Bernhardt [1945]) are not specific about these two distinct but interrelated aspects of the early period of her sculpture career.⁷ Earlier, short biographies published prior to these texts included a story that first

⁷ Bernhardt's autobiography covers the period up until her return from her first American tour in 1881; *My Double Life: Memoirs of Sarah Bernhardt*, no trans. (London: Heinemann, 1907) [hereafter *MDL*]. According to a feature article on Bernhardt in 1888 she had already commenced writing her memoirs at the time this article was published but they were not due to appear for another four years; Maurice Guillemot, 'Chez Sarah Bernhardt', *La Revue illustrée*, 3e année, vol. 5 (15 January 1888), 74-81 (78). However, the autobiography was not published until later when it was serialized, first in English as 'The Memoirs of Sarah Bernhardt' in *The Strand Magazine* (vols 27-28, nos 160-68 [April to December 1904]) and in French as 'Sarah Bernhardt: mes mémoires' in *Je sais tout: magazine encyclopédique illustré* (February to July 1905). In a discussion of the construction and method of *Ma double vie* (using the original French text) Victoria Tietze Larson argues that Bernhardt 'can be shown to conform to the "patriarchal" autobiographical paradigm quite as often as she departs from it'. Her analysis of the book concludes that Bernhardt represented her life in dramatic form as a series of "tableaux vivants" in which she 'literally "pictures" for her readers [...] themes in the story of her life'. In short, Bernhardt's autobiography 'stages' her life in the same register as she performed in the theatre. Larson's analysis relies on selecting incidents related by Bernhardt that were indeed dramatic but does not include her work as a sculptor. While the notion of Bernhardt staging tableaux vivants is a useful one in reading, for instance, actual images illustrated in the book (Melandri's coffin photograph is an obvious one), it does not contribute towards producing a history of her practice and production as a sculptor which is my intention here. Perhaps more important is that Larson's approach is typical both of literature during Bernhardt's lifetime and since – which draws attention

circulated in 1879-80. This claimed that Bernhardt initially showed an interest in sculpture in 1869 when she sat for a bust by Roland Mathieu-Meusnier in the role of Zanetto in François Copée's *Le Passant* in which she debuted in January that year. No precise timing of the sitting or series of sittings is given, although the bust was completed and exhibited in plaster at the Paris Salon the following year. According to this story, Bernhardt immediately decided to take up sculpture and went home that night to make a medallion of an aunt. The narrative continues with a list of works exhibited at the Salon, the first (incorrectly) dated four years later in 1873.⁸

time and time again to an on- and off-stage dramatic mode of behaviour – but none of which adequately explains how she managed to produce so many works of art. For this reason, I use *MDL* as a record of her practice and do not pursue analysis of it as a literary form in any depth. See Victoria Tietze Larson, 'Staging a Life: Narrative Strategies in Sarah Bernhardt's *Ma double vie*', *Auto/Biography Studies*, 16:2 (2001), 175-98 (177, 185-86). Several biographical accounts also exist of Bernhardt by those who knew her late in life in some capacity. Huret, a journalist, claims that his was written as the result of accounts by Bernhardt given at her invitation. Lysiane Bernhardt asserts in her preface that her grandmother requested that she write 'a book about me' offering to provide her with 'certain objects and certain documents'; *Sarah Bernhardt: My Grandmother*, trans. Vyvyan Holland (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1945), 8. My interest in these texts is not in asserting the authenticity of one narrative over another. However, both use Bernhardt's collection of press cuttings and visual imagery not commonly found elsewhere. These are likely to be from Bernhardt's own collection and therefore constitute a useful archive, although mediated by publication in the biographical format.

⁸ One version appeared in the article in the London theatrical periodical *The Theatre* published shortly before Bernhardt's tour there with the Comédie-Française; 'Portraits: Mdlle. Bernhardt', *The Theatre* (1 June 1879), 282-85. Another was published in New York, again shortly before a tour, in F. Ridgway Griffith's *Authorised Edition of the Life of Sarah Bernhardt* (New York: Carleton, 1880). Griffith's biography was, he assured his readers, 'compiled from the most authentic sources' including, for this aspect of her life, the theatre critic Francisque Sarcey. Sarcey wrote a short biography of Bernhardt in January 1876 in which he gave a brief outline of how she began to make sculpture but does not mention a year or the relationship with Mathieu-Meusnier; 'Sarah Bernhardt', *Comédiens et comédiennes* (Paris: Librairie des bibliophiles, 1876), 1-27 (24-25). Griffith's version of the story contains a further inaccuracy: he claimed that Mathieu-Meusnier's bust was of Bernhardt in the role of the Queen in Victor Hugo's *Ruy Blas* but Bernhardt did not appear in this play until 1872. Mathieu-Meusnier produced a silvered bronze medallion of her in the role during the play's revival in 1879. British art journalist Alice Meynell cited the story later in a feature article derived entirely from other sources; 'Madame Sarah Bernhardt', *Art Journal*, n.s., vol. 9 (1888), 134-39 (138). Bernhardt also repeated this story in a much later interview but did not specify 1869; however, the story is consistent with those that refer to Mathieu-Meusnier making her bust; Jacques Daurelle, 'Les Violons d'Ingres: Sarah Bernhardt', *Le Figaro* (22 September 1897), 4. If there is an 'original' version of the Mathieu-Meusnier story, I have not yet located it. This is just one illustration of the difficulties in the Bernhardt archive: many texts are plagiarized from other sources and the corpus as a whole is riddled with inconsistencies.

Typically anecdotal and written up to a decade after Bernhardt's apparent speedy initiation, this story provides no information on how a four-year leap (actually five) between an interest aroused and the production of a finished work acceptable to the Salon jury was achieved. Clara Erskine Clement's later version of the story in *Women in the Fine Arts* (1904) suggested how and where this might have been possible by adding that Bernhardt, having made the medallion, consulted Mathieu-Meusnier and 'took a studio', but she provided no details or chronology of these events. Clement wrote her dictionary by supplementing information from unidentified newspapers and magazines with a questionnaire circulated to the artists in which she asked for details of their studies, awards won, and the titles of their principal works. Bernhardt returned the questionnaire and may have confirmed 1869 as the year she began to make sculpture, but Clement could also have gleaned this from her published sources.⁹

No work remains to confirm this date: Bernhardt's earliest located sculpture is a plaster medallion of Mme Guérard, a childhood neighbour and lifelong friend, signed and dated 1872.¹⁰ It is possible that this story about a first encounter with Mathieu-Meusnier that prompted Bernhardt to immediately make sculpture is simply wrong. But there is still a need

⁹ Clara Erskine Clement, 'Prefatory Note' and 'Sarah Bernhardt', *Women in the Fine Arts: From the Seventh Century BC to the Twentieth Century AD* (New York and Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1904), n.p., 41-43. Clement may have used French or English language sources such as Griffith's edited life cited above.

¹⁰ The medallion was included in the 1997 sale of the former collection of Michel de Bry (which included another eleven sculptures attributed to Bernhardt) and was one of three listed as portraits of 'la gouvernante Madame Guérard'; the others were dated 1874 and 1894. None were reproduced in the sale catalogue. According to the sale expert (Jean-Pierre Camard) the other two medallions were shown at an exhibition of de Bry's collection in 1976 and reproduced (*Pierre Cardin présente Sarah Bernhardt*, Espace Pierre Cardin, Paris, 31 March – 30 May 1976, 29). These reproductions are very poor and it is not possible to confirm likeness or the dates given; see *Sarah Bernhardt et son époque*, Chayette et Cheval, Drouot-Richelieu, Paris, 23 April 1997, 35. Sales and exhibition catalogues can prove unreliable (for instance the incorrect attribution of works) but because many works by Bernhardt circulate only in the private market and access is not always possible I rely here on this catalogue for dating. Guérard cared for Bernhardt during childhood and they remained close for most of Bernhardt's adult life. The last mention of her I have found is in June 1896 in Reynaldo Hahn, *Sarah Bernhardt: Impressions*, trans. Ethel Thompson (London: Matthews and Marrot, 1932), 19.

to establish where she did first make sculpture whether in 1869 or 1872. If, according to the 1869 story, Bernhardt asked Mathieu-Meusnier for some clay (tools are not mentioned), where was the 'home' she went to in order to model the medallion? Or, if she did not make her first work of sculpture until 1872, where did this happen? Accounts of Bernhardt's early sculpture practice during and after her lifetime are typified by the fast-track trajectory of the 1869 story and Clement's dictionary and therefore compress or ignore a vital period in which she was able to progress from initiate to Salon exhibitor. There is an absence of publicly available, contemporary visual and textual evidence of the likely locations of Bernhardt's sculpture production during the period 1869 to 1876. Given the attention paid to Bernhardt's studios and homes from 1876 onwards, it is essential to argue that these were not set up simply on a whim and that the knowledge Bernhardt had already acquired of the required working environment for a sculptor was brought to bear on how these were organized.

Bernhardt's autobiography, in which she relates some events in her early sculpture career, is one source of information on where she lived and may have worked prior to renting a purpose-built studio. This text is problematic for the sculpture historian because its chronological ordering is weighted towards her theatre performances. Other episodes are woven into the narrative, but specific dates are difficult to establish. Bernhardt's collection of press cuttings as used by Huret to relate the chronology of her theatre career usually provides more accurate dates and can therefore supplement the narrative in her autobiography. From these sources it is possible to ascertain that Bernhardt was living at 16 rue Auber in 1869 and that, probably late that year, her apartment was gutted in a fire and her belongings, including paintings of her mother, father, and sister were destroyed. Bernhardt moved into another apartment at 4 rue de Rome in late 1869 or early 1870 where she continued to live until 1876.¹¹ Depending on when the sitting with Mathieu-Meusnier occurred prior to him depositing the finished bust for exhibition at the Salon in March 1870, her possible first effort

¹¹ In the interim she stayed briefly with her mother and at an apartment in the rue de l'Arcade. The land registry includes no records for 4 rue de Rome therefore it is not possible to give the precise dates of when Bernhardt lived there nor a physical description from this source.

in sculpture could have taken place at any one of four addresses. If the 1872 medallion was her first work, this could have been made at the rue de Rome apartment. However, it is also likely that Bernhardt worked during this early period in the studios of Mathieu-Meusnier and Jules Franceschi who taught her, as was standard practice for someone undergoing sculpture training. In line with Salon regulations, Bernhardt provided the names of her teachers for the published guides in the years she exhibited (Franceschi was listed in 1874 only). This is the only formal record of her transaction with either master but a hint that Bernhardt may have worked in the studio of Mathieu-Meusnier is provided by the actress Marie Colombier in her pseudo-biography of Bernhardt, *Les Mémoires de Sarah Barnum*, published late in 1883.

Although a vicious and slanderous attack on Bernhardt because of a falling out in 1881, the two had been fellow students, colleagues, and friends since the 1860s.¹² Colombier wrote that ‘in the studio of Mathias Moulin [Mathieu-Meusnier] she [Sarah Barnum/Bernhardt] had acquired a taste for death’s-heads’.¹³ This is tenuous evidence to say the least that Bernhardt spent time working in a master’s studio, but recourse to Colombier is required in the absence of Bernhardt’s or any other account of where she made sculpture before she acquired her own purpose-built studio facilities.¹⁴ There are no confirmed associations with other sculptors during this period and therefore Bernhardt’s experience of working in Mathieu-Meusnier’s

¹² According to Marie Colombier’s autobiography they performed together in *Les Enfants d’Édouard* in the théâtre de la Tour d’Auvergne in 1861, presumably because both were students at the Conservatoire de Musique et déclamation in Paris. Colombier does not refer directly to being a fellow student of Bernhardt at the Conservatoire but mentions Bernhardt’s mother in the context of her own time there; *Mémoires: fin d’Empire* (Paris: Flammarion, 1898), 6, 102-03. Recent biographers Gold and Fizdale claim that Colombier’s account of Bernhardt’s mother’s apartment in the early 1860s in *Sarah Barnum* ([1883]; 1884) was eyewitness. They also cite a letter from Bernhardt to Colombier dated August 1869 but the source of the letter is not referenced; 27, 89-90.

¹³ Marie Colombier, *The Life and Memoirs of Sarah Barnum* [1883], trans. Bernard Herbert (New York: Munro, 1884), 73. The book is an inflammatory and disturbingly anti-Semitic work written to damage Bernhardt’s personal and professional reputation in which she is figured as lascivious, gluttonous, alcoholic, and profligate.

¹⁴ Other than the Paris Salon guides, there are no records of Bernhardt’s working relationship with Jules Franceschi. It is therefore not clear how they met or how Bernhardt decided to learn sculpture from him. He is mentioned in an article about Bernhardt’s son’s birthday party in 1880; Nemo, ‘Actualitiés’, *La Vie moderne*, 2e année, no. 11 (13 March 1880), 175-76.

(and Francheschi's) studio would have provided her with essential knowledge of the space, lighting, and equipment needed to set up on her own.¹⁵

This uncertainty, or possibility of more than one location for the site of Bernhardt's sculpture production, continues until the middle of the 1870s despite the formal record of her address in the Salon guides. Bernhardt exhibited her first work at the Salon in 1874 and for that year and the next provided her home address of 4 rue de Rome. It was only in 1876 that she gave that of the studio she rented at 11 boulevard de Clichy. Salon regulations did not stipulate if the address supplied should be a sculptor's home or studio (if these were different).¹⁶ A biography published in 1942 by Louis Verneuil (1893-1952) – a playwright who worked with Bernhardt in the 1920s and was married to her granddaughter, Lysiane Bernhardt, from 1921-23 – claims that Bernhardt first rented her studio at boulevard de Clichy in 1873 because her apartment in the rue de Rome was 'too small for her to work there comfortably'. No evidence or specific reasoning is given for this precise date which is included in a typically compressed and sketchy account of Bernhardt's early sculpture career. Verneuil may have learned this from Bernhardt but, even so, relies on her accurate recall nearly fifty years later and faithful recording on his part another twenty years after that.¹⁷

The 1862 land registry for 11 boulevard de Clichy records that Bernhardt rented a studio there but no date is given, although, as this was updated with a new document in 1876, this

¹⁵ Mathieu-Meusnier's bust is the earliest reliably dated work in sculpture of Bernhardt. A bust in wax was illustrated in *Je sais tout* in 1904 and dated 1870 but because this is not located the attribution cannot be confirmed. The next dated work is the medallion by Abbéma in 1875. From 1876 Bernhardt sat for other sculptors more frequently.

¹⁶ The guides were published as *Explications des ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, architecture, gravure et lithographie des artistes vivants* and edited by the Direction des Beaux-arts, Ministère de l'Instruction publique et des beaux-arts. They have been reprinted as *Catalogues of the Paris Salon 1673 to 1881*, ed. H. W. Janson (New York and London: Garland, 1977). Future references to Salon guides (up to 1881) refer to this reprint. Page numbers are not provided as the guides were organized within the separate genres alphabetically by artist last name.

¹⁷ Louis Verneuil, *The Fabulous Life of Sarah Bernhardt*, trans. Ernest Boyd (New York and London: Harper, 1942), 100. Verneuil wrote two plays in which Bernhardt appeared in the 1920s.

suggests that her occupancy began before then.¹⁸ Recourse to the chronology of Bernhardt's autobiography supports an earlier date than that recorded in the Salon guide but only approximately and by inference. Bernhardt's first mention of her sculpture practice – also compressed and sketchy – runs as follows:

I then decided to take a studio and devote myself to sculpture. As I was not able to use my intelligence and my energy in creating roles at the theatre, as I wished, I gave myself up to another art, and began working at sculpture with frantic enthusiasm. I soon made great progress, and started on an enormous composition, *After the Storm* (251).

Bernhardt describes her daily routine in the studio and concludes by stating that Émile Perrin, the director of the Comédie-Française, and the cause of her frustration at not having sufficient work in the theatre, then offered her a role in Octave Feuillet's *Le Sphinx*. This would locate the time she rented the studio in boulevard de Clichy prior to the premiere of *Le Sphinx* in March 1874 and therefore, possibly, in 1873. Bernhardt continues to outline a period after the production of *Zaire* (August 1874) when she made a series of busts and later describes a visit by Perrin to her studio to offer her the lead in *Phèdre* which premiered in December 1874 (256-57, 264). The chronology of Bernhardt's account is, at times, confusing: having mentioned the portrait of her sister as the last in this series of busts, she then tells the story of her sister's death which, according to interment records at Père-Lachaise had already occurred in May 1874.¹⁹ Also confusingly, Bernhardt picks up

¹⁸ AVP, cadastre de 1862, boulevard de Clichy. It is difficult to interpret this document because of the sketchy way information is recorded. It is possible that the rent Bernhardt paid (1200 francs) was assessed in 1874 which might support my claim that she rented the studio that year. I am extremely grateful to Richard Jacques for obtaining all the land registry documents and information used in this chapter. Richard's kindness, diligence, and intelligent approach to this material in helping me to interpret it have been absolutely indispensable to my research.

¹⁹ Registre de la concession de la famille Bernhardt au Père-Lachaise, 1208 P (1873), provided as an appendix in Jamault. Another difficulty lies in the chronology Bernhardt provides of this series of busts. The dates of the two that can currently be located, *Busts of Miss Moulton* (1875) and *Mlle Hocquigny* (1874), do not accord with Bernhardt's listing. *Miss Moulton* is not inscribed with Bernhardt's usual majuscule signature (before 1900) but the sitting is recorded and described by the mother of the sitter in a letter to her own mother in May 1875; Lillie de Hegermann-Lindencrone, *In*

the story of making *Après la tempête* at the later time of her debut in *L'Étrangère* (February 1876), stating 'I had just commenced, in my studio in the Avenue [sic] de Clichy a large group' (275).²⁰

Despite these difficulties with Bernhardt's account, it is feasible to suggest that rue de Rome was not the likely location of her sculpture production for 1874 and therefore 1875, the years given in the Salon guide. She does not directly refer to producing sculpture there, describing it only as sunny and very small with two drawing rooms, a large dining room and a tiny bedroom (149, 257). But rue de Rome is a grey area before 1873-74. If Bernhardt only *devoted* herself to sculpture by renting a studio, this does not rule out the possibility that she had made sculpture at home in the rue de Rome before this, an idea supported by Verneuil's statement that her apartment was too small for her to work there comfortably. Again, Bernhardt may have worked in the studio of Mathieu-Meusnier (and Franceschi).

Other than Bernhardt's own sparse description of the apartment in the rue de Rome, no reliable accounts or images of the physical surroundings have, as yet, come to light.²¹ The only existing account is that provided retrospectively by Lysiane Bernhardt in 1945.²² In the course of relating an anecdote about a visit by Alexandre Dumas *fils*, who, she claimed was delivering a manuscript on 19 July 1870, Lysiane Bernhardt writes that 'in the drawing-room Dumas curiously examined a canvas on which Sarah was working' (78).

the Courts of Memory 1858-1875 from Contemporary Letters (New York and London: Harpers, 1912), 443-45.

²⁰ This could be because 'I had just commenced' has been badly translated in the English version. According to *The Times*, the work took two years to complete and this is more likely given its scale.

²¹ A gossipy and derogatory biography of Bernhardt published in 1879 claimed to describe the apartment but only referred to stuffed vultures holding skulls in their talons, a grimacing skeleton, a coffin in the bedroom, a monkey, and litters of puppies and kittens; Clément Clément, *Esquisses d'aujourd'hui: Sarah Bernhardt* (Paris: Derveaux, 1879), 45-46. Even if Clément had visited the apartment, there is no information in his account on the layout or its use as a studio.

²² Further references to Lysiane Bernhardt's biography are in the text.

Although figured as the site of art production (painting not sculpture), her emphasis is on the decorative scheme of the room and how it was populated. She describes it as follows:

The apartment in the Rue de Rome was a picturesque jumble. It already contained many of the heterogeneous objects which grew in volume during her turbulent life: objects given her by various people, or bought by Sarah in all the four quarters of the globe. Sarah was more interested in the shape or the colour of a curio than its origin, its antiquity or its value, and although some of these souvenirs were precious or rare, others were frankly hideous. Sarah Bernhardt had an intense dislike of period style in furnishing a room. In 1870 her apartment contained Dutch sixteenth-century furniture, copper bowls and particularly vases, for which she always showed a great predilection. [...] Bright-coloured silks were draped over the backs of the chairs; she had inherited from her mother a taste for striped materials, acquired in colonial bazaars or from the great silk merchants of Paris or Amsterdam, or from those itinerant merchants who wander about the world.

She also conformed to the taste of the period. A queer [*cocasse*] taste, tending to confusion. She hated bare walls and uncovered floors [...]. So the floors were covered with pile carpets, oriental rugs and furs on which lived and frolicked Sarah's "familiar" (77).

Lysiane Bernhardt goes on to list these animals (dogs, cats, pumas, cockatoos, parrots) as well as a profusion of flowers and the overriding smell of scent. I have found no other evidence that attests either to this visit or the milieu described.²³ Anomalies exist in this account that render the passage suspect as a description of Bernhardt's home in July 1870. For instance, she would not have been able to buy objects 'in all four corners of the globe' as her first trip outside Europe did not take place until 1880. In any case all Bernhardt's possessions had recently been destroyed in a fire, if we are to believe her own account. Nor does the topography of the apartment match that in Bernhardt's autobiography: later in the passage Lysiane Bernhardt claims that an animal 'bounded out of the room through the door hangings' in response to someone calling from the courtyard suggesting that the room in question was on the ground floor (78); according to *MDL*, rue de Rome was either a first floor or an 'entresol' (between ground and first floor) apartment.

²³ Although she had worked with Alexandre Dumas *père* in 1868, Bernhardt did not appear in a play by Alexandre Dumas *fils* until May 1876 when she played Mrs Clarkson in *L'Étrangère*. Bernhardt's first mention in her autobiography of her relations with Alexandre Dumas *fils* is during the rehearsals for *L'Étrangère* (272-74).

Is this how Bernhardt represented rue de Rome in 1870 to her granddaughter fifty-three years later? And did Lysiane Bernhardt record her grandmother's account accurately twenty-two years later when she published the biography? Answers to these questions are impossible to determine. I want to suggest that Lysiane Bernhardt was staking her claim in the posthumous representation of her grandmother and that the anomalies in her account were mediated by the requirements of the genre and its market. In the absence of any contemporary accounts or images of rue de Rome, to know what others did not was the stuff of authentic biography and would sell more books. This passage is structured within the biography as the template for her later mention (but not elaboration) of how avenue de Villiers appeared in 1878 where, she declared, 'the peculiar style of the Rue de Rome manifested itself in even more magnificent fashion' (99). The uncanny appearance of objects and animals that Bernhardt may not yet have owned is more likely to be Lysiane Bernhardt's retrospective pre-empting of contemporary accounts of Bernhardt's later homes and studios. By presenting, already in 1870, exoticizing and feminizing motifs that were to recur, Lysiane Bernhardt claimed privileged knowledge of a consistency in Bernhardt's environment.²⁴ In amongst the 'picturesque jumble' of pumas and parrots, furs and oriental rugs, vases and flowers, however, the canvas examined by Dumas *films* – signifier of Bernhardt's art production – becomes incidental.

Even if it were not suspect, Lysiane Bernhardt's account does not establish that rue de Rome was a likely site of sculpture production for Bernhardt prior to 1873-74. Beyond the sources already discussed (Bernhardt's autobiography and Verneuil), this can only be suggested as a possibility. The earliest confirmation of a location for Bernhardt's sculpture production concerns the studio she rented on the boulevard de Clichy, probably in 1873-74 and appeared even later. This studio was the subject of three verbal accounts in 1876.

²⁴ This passage has been used without question and enthusiastically in subsequent literature on Bernhardt; again in order to establish a pattern to her taste and habits. It is either cited directly or paraphrased. See for example, Cornelia Otis Skinner, *Madame Sarah* (London: Joseph, 1967), 82-83.

The first is by the theatre critic Francisque Sarcey in a biography of Bernhardt written in January. Other than signalling that Bernhardt's studio was well-known, he said only that it was 'one of the most coquettishly arranged studios in Paris' and that 'the prettiest piece of furniture in the studio was the mistress of the place' giving little clue as to whether he actually visited the studio or about its physical conditions as a place of sculpture production.²⁵ Two further accounts are more helpful. Both were written by satirical journalists. Pierre Véron included a chapter, 'Monsieur Sarah Bernhardt', in his collection of literary sketches *Les Coulisses artistiques* claiming to be the result of visits to artists' studios.²⁶ Véron was not an art journalist but contributed to a number of serious and satirical journals – *L'Illustration* and *Le Monde illustré* as well as *Journal amusant* and *Charivari* of which he became editor in chief. In May 1876 an unnamed contributor to *Zigzags à la*

²⁵ '[U]n des ateliers les plus coquettement arrangés qu'il y ait à Paris; et le plus joli meuble de cet atelier, c'est encore la maîtresse du logis', Sarcey (1876), 24-25. The dating of Sarcey's account and the fact that he claims it was well-known suggest Bernhardt had been renting the studio before January 1876.

²⁶ Pierre Véron, 'Monsieur Sarah Bernhardt', *Les Coulisses artistiques* (Paris: Dentu, 1876), 131-40. Véron pre-empted the later designation of Bernhardt as 'Monsieur' in the journal of the cercle des Hydropathes which was edited by Émile Goudeau and published from January 1879 until May 1880. I have not established any connection between Véron and the Hydropathes but would not rule this out. Based in Montmartre, the Hydropathes organised meetings that included performance and readings by poets and writers. Visual artists (usually caricaturists) were also members. Hydropathe meetings were the precursors to events held at the Chat Noir and those organised by the Incohérents group. The Hydropathes' journal was characterised by satire and caricature but was also a vehicle of self-promotion for the group. Bernhardt featured in many of the issues and in April 1879 was presented as a member of the group with the usual front page caricature by Cabriol (Georges Lorin) in which she is depicted in the white trouser suit she wears in the photographs by Melandri. In an accompanying poem Lorin figured Bernhardt as a 'lovely boy [joli petit bonhomme]' and a 'great man [grand homme]' and claimed that 'he' was therefore a member of the group, which was male-only; 'Chapeau bas!' and 'Monsieur Sarah Bernhardt', *Les Hydropathes*, 1e année, no. 6 (5 April 1879), 1-2 (2). For a study of the Hydropathes, see Phillip Dennis Cate, 'The Spirit of Montmartre'; Daniel Grojnowski, 'Hydropathes and Company'; and Olga Anna Dull, 'From Rabelais to the Avant-Garde: Wordplays and Parody in the Wall-Journal Le Mur', in *The Spirit of Montmartre: Cabarets, Humor and the Avant-Garde, 1875-1905*, ed. Phillip Dennis Cate and Mary Shaw, exh. cat. (New Brunswick, NJ: Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, 1996), 1-93 (esp. 19-22); 95-109, 199-241. In view of the gendered composition of the group, Dull claims that '[m]embership was guaranteed only to those women who were well recognized as artists, such as Sarah Bernhardt, whose glorious acting career seemed ground enough for acceptance in the group of the Hydropathes', 226. I have found no indication that Bernhardt did associate with the group and, given the satirical slant of the journal and their disparaging coverage of her as actress, artist and public figure, this is highly unlikely.

plume à travers l'art published an article entitled 'L'Atelier de Sarah Bernhardt'.²⁷ Although light-hearted, *Zigzags* was concerned to provide coverage of events and news on both art and theatre in Paris. The Salon was reviewed over several weeks, as was customary in newspapers and more serious art journals. Several works were caricatured and artists who received awards were lampooned (including Bernhardt who was given an honourable mention for *Après la tempête*). However, *Zigzags* also provided statistics of visitors to the Salon, reviews of books, news of the competitions at the École des beaux-arts, and listings of exhibitions in Paris. Bernhardt was a favourite topic, appearing in six out of eight issues between May and July, either because of her own work or portraits of her by Abbéma and Clairin. Although Bernhardt and *Après la tempête* appeared in several caricatures, none represented an identifiable studio setting that would correspond with the article published on 14 May.²⁸ The only certain and located visual representation of the studio at 11 boulevard de Clichy is a small painting by Louise Abbéma dated 1875 in which Bernhardt is represented at work on a bust (fig. 1: 22).²⁹ In a private collection since it was made, this painting has not been publicly available as a resource within the archive on Bernhardt.

²⁷ Anon, 'L'Atelier de Sarah Bernhardt', *Zigzags à la plume à travers l'art*, no. 3 (14 May 1876), 7, 10. The article claimed to be taken from *Le Figaro*. Some articles were copied from other sources, usually 1-2 weeks later. I have not located this article in *Le Figaro* during the month prior to its appearance in *Zigzags*. *Zigzags* was edited by Ernest Chesneau (1833-90) and published from April 1876 until September 1879. Chesneau was an Inspector of Beaux-arts (July 1869 to September 1870) as well as a critic and historian of art who published widely from the 1860s onwards. He was also involved in the Union centrale des beaux-arts appliqués à l'industrie. Neither the *DBF* (ed. Roman D'Amat and R. Limouzin-Lamothe, 17 vols [Paris: Letouzey, 1933-], VIII, 1038), nor the *Grand dictionnaire* (IV, 32) mention his connection with *Zigzags*. The contributing team consisted of caricaturists Zag and Brac and writers Zig, Broc, Bric, d'Enfance, and Z. I have not been able to locate any further information about this team and there is no study of *Zigzags* of which I am aware.

²⁸ On 7 May in a centre-fold cartoon by Zag entitled 'Après la tempête ou la mer agitée – drame sculpté par Mlle Sarah Bernhardt', the group was pictured on stage at the Comédie-Française either side of which was an angel and a scroll naming playwrights and sculptors. One of the angels echoes Zag's caricature of Clairin's portrait of Bernhardt the same week in the thinness of the figure and the long, serpentine train of the dress. On 4 June Bernhardt was shown at an easel but this was a plein air scene.

²⁹ A drawing by Abbéma entitled 'Onze boulevard Clichy' is listed by Jamault and Droin both of whom state that it was exhibited at *La Vie moderne* in 1899; Jamault, 'Index des dessins et gravures', III, 1413; Olivia Droin, 'Louise Abbéma' (unpublished master's thesis, université de Paris 1, Panthéon-Sorbonne, 1993). I have searched the journal for 1899 and not found mention of this or any

Bernhardt described her studio at 11 boulevard de Clichy only as ‘modest’, equipped with a piano, and a place where she received visitors (256). According to the Salon guide, the sculptor Ernest-Louis Barrias (1841-1905) had a studio in the same building in 1872. From 1873 to 1876 11 boulevard de Clichy was the address provided for between ten and fourteen painters, apart from Bernhardt and, in 1876, another sculptor, Marguerite de Saint-Priest.³⁰ Véron described the building as ‘the sort of house associated with artists’, evident from the ‘monster windows’ on the opposite side of the courtyard to the entrance, and a place where ‘the paintbrush and the chisel rule’. He also included a chapter in his book on the top-floor studio of the painter Feyen-Perrin and it is also likely, because of the internal layout he presents, that he did visit the building.³¹ The land registry describes

exhibition at their premises that year, nor have I found a catalogue that corresponds to this date. Abbéma’s 1879 exhibition at *La Vie moderne* was reported in the journal and elsewhere but a full list of works is not available in order to check if this might have been when the drawing was shown. An undated image by a photographer known only as Lagraine shows Bernhardt behind the life-size plaster model of *Après la tempête* (fig. 3: 1). The photograph is tightly framed around the work and the background is blacked out. Although the location can therefore not be determined, this may have been taken in the studio in boulevard de Clichy. Lagraine was a former servant of Georges Clairin and Henri Regnault but neither gives his first name. He does not appear in any dictionaries of photography in nineteenth-century France. A later, retrospective painting of Bernhardt at work on *Après la tempête* was reproduced in the April 1905 issue of *Je sais tout* when Bernhardt’s memoirs were serialised. One of a number of illustrations by René Lelong (1871-1938), Bernhardt is shown in her white trouser suit (which did not appear in contemporary images until 1878) with her group on a large platform working from a seated model. Not only is the composition suspect (the model has her back to Bernhardt even though she is meant to be modelling the face), this painting is untraced and no date is visible on the reproduction. Lelong was active from the 1890s and his watercolour paintings may have been produced specially for reproduction in *Je sais tout* and therefore shortly before 1905.

³⁰ Boulevard de Clichy had been extended eastwards in 1864 from its existing junction with rue Blanche along boulevard Pigalle to the junction with rue des Martyrs. See Jacques Hillairet [pseud. Colonel A. Coussillan], *Dictionnaire historique des rues de Paris*, 2 vols, 2nd edn (Paris: Éditions de minuit, 1964), I, 357-59 (358). Milner dedicates a chapter to this street in *The Studios of Paris* and includes a section on the ‘unusual figure’ of the ‘tragedienne turned sculptress’ but relies on one biography (Verneuil 1942) in order to discuss her occupancy of no. 11; 141. In any case the focus of Milner’s study is the 1880-90s. According to the Salon guides for 1873-76 anything between seven and fifteen other addresses on the street were used by artists, although the majority were painters.

³¹ ‘Voilà bien l’aspect d’une maison à fréquentations artistiques’; ‘ces grandes diablesses de fenêtres’; and ‘[t]out pour le pinceau ou le ciseau’, Pierre Véron, ‘Feyen-Perrin’, *Les Coulisses artistiques*, 46. In later verbal description of Bernhardt’s homes and studios it is clear that some writers did not visit but copied from the published accounts of others. This is most evident in English language publications

three buildings, two erected in 1861 and another in 1864. Of these, one was two-storey and included a studio, specified as that of a sculptor, with additional first floor living accommodation and the sculptor Saint-Priest is the recorded tenant of this for 1875. A second, five-storey, building was located on the far side of the entrance courtyard and included sixteen studios specified as those of painters. Only some of the names and dates of occupancy accord with the Salon guide listings but the land registry's method of recording such information does not appear complete. Bernhardt is included as a tenant of this building and occupied a studio situated on the ground floor to the right of the entrance door into the building. According to the land registry this comprised the studio, a room with a fire, and a toilet.³²

Véron confirmed this location but had little to say about the internal configuration of space, able only to mention 'the first room serv[ing] as some kind of hallway' and that, from the entrance, Bernhardt could be seen 'battling away with the group which will be exhibited at the 1876 Salon'.³³ This glimpse suggests that Véron did not enter beyond the threshold, if at all. Most of the chapter is taken up with Véron's fascination, typical of press coverage of Bernhardt from the mid- to late 1870s, that she could practice sculpture at all, being both a busy actress and a woman. In order to reason this out, Véron genders the sculptor, her work and her studio, as masculine (hence his title '*Monsieur Sarah Bernhardt*'). Accordingly, once Bernhardt 'crosses the threshold of the sanctuary where she models clay, it is a man who holds the chisel' and the studio had none of the 'elegant

but may be the same for French sources. See, for example, Meynell on boulevard Pereire (*Art Journal* [1888], 134-39), which is almost directly copied from Guillemot, *La Revue illustré* (15 January 1888), 74-81.

³² The property also included shop units and its owner, Charles Wallet, was resident; AVP, cadastre de 1862, boulevard de Clichy. 11 boulevard de Clichy still exists but the courtyard is inaccessible and it is difficult to assess if the composition of the property and its layout remain unchanged. The façade reveals only one indication that the building was used by artists: full-length windows in a section of the mansard roof.

³³ 'Une première pièce sert en quelque sorte de vestibule. Du seuil, vous apercevez la sociétaire de la Comédie-Française s'escrimant sur le groupe qui va figurer au Salon de 1876', Pierre Véron, 137.

refinements of the boudoir' but was the place of a 'worker too busy to be bothered about the trappings of finery and what a studio *should* look like'.³⁴

Beyond qualifying Bernhardt's studio as a masculine and workmanlike space, Véron failed to say anything further about what it looked like. *Zigzags*'s article 'L'Atelier de Sarah Bernhardt' provides further information on the studio's layout and contents. The writer claimed to have visited the studio and been shown round by Bernhardt and, given the detail provided, this is possible. He confirms the ground floor location and claims that the studio consisted of three rooms. Only two are specified, as follows: '[t]he room on the right is where the actress of *L'Étrangère* paints or sculpts according to whatever takes her fancy. The room on the left is the junk room housing all the old plaster casts which inspire artists.'³⁵ *Zigzags*'s journalist goes on to describe the room on the right in more detail. This, he said, was where Bernhardt worked. What he sees and his conclusions about this are markedly different from Véron. His description runs as follows:

Take away from Bernhardt's studio the three turntables and the four easels, the boxes of colours and those twenty tools indispensable to the sculptor and you would have, well, a very pretty boudoir with its walls covered in old tapestries and a hodgepodge of feminine bibelots. The carpet is soft, the sofa is comfy. Here and there, medallions, frames, sketches, a peacock feather parasol, a thousand and one exotic objects are very tastefully displayed all around. It was virtually impossible to budge with all those bibelots piled up everywhere and it was hard to imagine where the group which is now at the Salon had managed to find its privileged place amongst all this elegant mess.³⁶

³⁴ '[D]ès qu'elle a franchi le seuil du sanctuaire où elle pétrit la glaise, c'est un homme qui tient l'ébauchoir'; 'des raffinements d'élégance rappelant le boudoir'; 'c'est tout bonnement la demeure d'un travailleur, trop occupé pour se soucier des effets de mise en scène', Pierre Véron, 131, 138.

³⁵ 'C'est dans la pièce de droite que l'interprète de *L'Étrangère* peint ou sculpte, selon sa fantaisie. La pièce de gauche sert de débarras et renferme toute la série des vieux plâtres dont s'inspirent les artistes', 'L'Atelier de Sarah Bernhardt', *Zigzags* (14 May 1876), 7. It is unclear what the third room might be: it could simply be the toilet described in the land registry or it could be an entrance room not mentioned in the land registry but described by Véron. If there were rooms to the left and right, some kind of lobby might be expected.

³⁶ 'Retirez de l'atelier de Sarah Bernhardt les trois selles, les quatres chevalets, les boîtes à couleurs et les vingt instruments indispensables au sculpteur, vous aurez un boudoir assez joli, ma foi ! avec ses murs recouverts de vieilles tapisseries et son fouillis de bibelots féminins. Le tapis est doux, le canapé moelleux. Ça et là, les médaillons, les cadres, les esquisses, l'ombrelle en plumes de paon, les mille

Why the discrepancy between a space with ‘none of the elegant refinements of the boudoir’ and a ‘very pretty boudoir’? *Zigzag*’s account, written in May, is in accordance with that of Sarcey from January, who designated the studio as ‘coquettish’, although whether he saw the studio cannot be confirmed. Given that Véron’s account dated from around the same time (before 20 March when *Après la tempête* had to be deposited at the Salon), it would seem unlikely that a time lapse in which Bernhardt substantially changed the decoration of her studio would explain these differences. It is possible that these journalists were describing two different rooms as Bernhardt may also have worked in the room housing the plaster casts and been spotted there by Véron. Or, if she only worked in one room, perhaps Véron’s view was restricted because he only glimpsed the interior through one, or possibly two, doorways and could not see beyond what this framed. Either option suited: just as Bernhardt could not be a woman when she made sculpture, this space *had* to be sparsely furnished and lack any signs of femininity (‘the elegant refinements of the boudoir’) in order to be a sculptor’s studio. Maybe the journalist from *Zigzags* exaggerated about the ‘hodgepodge of feminine bibelots’ and ‘thousand and one exotic objects’ with their power to prevent his movement. The presence of signs of femininity (those of a ‘very pretty boudoir’) took on such proportions only after the turntables, easels, and tools had been imagined away and cancelled out the medallions, frames, and sketches as further signs of art production. These writers saw Bernhardt in her studio, possibly in different rooms, but nonetheless amongst signs of her sculpture production (physical activity, plaster casts, modelling stools, tools) and her works (Véron: *Après la tempête*; *Zigzags*: a female bather, a portrait of an old woman, the *Bust of Régina*). Yet just to say this was not enough; both commentators had to intervene before presenting the studio at 11 boulevard de Clichy to their readers. Uncomfortable with femininity (a woman, her

menus objets exotiques, sont disposés avec goût. Seulement, tant de bibelots ont été accumulés là, qu’il était, paraît-il, impossible de remuer, quand au milieu de cet élégant fouillis trônait le groupe qui est actuellement au Salon’, ‘L’Atelier de Sarah Bernhardt’, *Zigzags* (14 May 1876), 7, 10.

belongings) and the production of sculpture being found in the same place, one changed the sex of the sculptor while the other effectively removed all her art-making equipment.

Can Abbéma's painting of Bernhardt working on a bust add anything to these verbal descriptions of the physical space of the studio at 11 boulevard de Clichy? A bit. Does it shift the conception of Bernhardt's studio beyond the framework of *boudoir/not boudoir* in *Zigzags*'s and Véron's accounts and therefore become a place where a sculptor who was a woman did belong? Yes. Dated 1875, this is a small work (25 x 15.3 cm) showing only the corner of a room and cannot therefore confirm the layout of three rooms given in *Zigzags*. Nor does it indicate which of the two main rooms described in that journal it might represent: no plaster casts are visible but nor are luxuriant furnishings and the profusion of decorative objects. Either set of objects may have been located beyond the frame of the painting or in another room: the size of this work (likely because it was a gift) and Abbéma's choice of a confined view keeps the information conveyed to a minimum.³⁷ Representing part of the whole, this painting nonetheless contains the necessary information about a space where Bernhardt made sculpture and invited friends. Unlike Véron, *Zigzags*, and Sarcey – who struggled to see a sculptor in her studio (and saw instead a man, a *boudoir*, or a piece of furniture) – Abbéma conveys the arrangement of this space as suitable for its occupant and both purposes.

The all important provision of light is crucial in this painting: it falls along the full length of the bust and its extent (and therefore the height of the window opening) is conveyed in the glints and gleams of white and grey on the back and train of Bernhardt's dress located at an acute angle to the plane of the wall that houses the window. Bernhardt has the right equipment with which to model and properly conserve a bust in progress (modelling tool, stool, protective cloths, a bucket of water), easy access to her material (her pile of clay is on a table), and sufficient room to move around her work. Shown full-length and in

³⁷ Bernhardt's activity shown is also kept to a minimum: no model is present and she is shown only in direct contact with the bust working on its detail.

profile, Bernhardt faces her work, occupying the centre of the image (some additional height accommodates the painting on the wall behind). The train of her long, black dress stretches across the dust sheet to the left of the image and the flowing curve of the fabric at front knee height suggests the forward position of one leg in order to balance her body in relation to the bust and sustain the concentrated work she carries out on the neck with the small modelling tool in her right hand. Elements of decoration in this scene – wood-panelled and plastered and painted walls, a large plant, a gilt-framed picture of the figure of a woman, the possible carpet or tiling seen in Abbéma's loose blue and red brushstrokes partially covered by the dust sheet – suggest a level of conviviality required to receive guests and make them comfortable. Lacking the smoothness and precision of some of Abbéma's later work, this painting shows the sculptor at ease in a dual space of work and sociality, her studio.

That these were connected, and productively so, in determining the constitution of Bernhardt's studio is indicated by Abbéma's dedication of the painting to Mathieu-Meusnier from 'son amie'. According to *Zigzags*, Mathieu-Meusnier was at 11 boulevard de Clichy during the journalist's visit and Abbéma 'never leaves her friend's side' implying that she too may have been present in May 1876.³⁸ As artists, the studio was familiar territory, common to all three. As friends, Abbéma's painting of this studio in particular establishes the importance of mutual social relations, artistic collaboration, and exchange between Bernhardt, herself, and Mathieu-Meusnier. These relations sustained the work Bernhardt is shown doing in her studio. The dedication to Mathieu-Meusnier is a tribute to the person whose teaching had enabled her to become a sculptor. The painting itself testifies to Abbéma and Bernhardt's collaboration in producing this tribute and is one of the earliest records of a continued relationship in which they were both artist or sitter. The

³⁸ 'Mlle Abbema [sic], elle ne quitte guère son amie', 'L'Atelier de Sarah Bernhardt', *Zigzags*, (14 May 1876), 10.

exchange of artworks as gifts was reciprocated by Mathieu-Meusnier who gave reduced marble copies of his 1850 ideal work, *La Mort de Laïs*, to both women.³⁹

My recent discovery of Abbéma's painting has been a welcome addition to the diminutive archive on 11 boulevard de Clichy. Although it does not add a great deal to the accounts by Véron and *Zigzags* in terms of the overall physical layout and contents of the studio, it

³⁹ It is difficult to say when Mathieu-Meusnier may have given *La Mort de Laïs* to Bernhardt and Abbéma. Three photographs of Bernhardt's study at boulevard Pereire (where she lived from 1887 until her death in 1923) show the statuette on the mantelpiece. One was published in 1895 in an at home interview probably conducted in November 1894 but was attributed to 'La Photographie nouvelle, Paris' and may therefore have been an existing press agency image; Edward John Hart, 'Illustrated Interviews No. XI – Sarah Bernhardt', *The Strand Magazine*, vol. 9 (April 1895), 526-36 (527). The second was included in one of a series of special issues of *La Plume* in 1900 consisting of articles on Bernhardt by different authors and edited by Gustave Kahn, 'Sarah Bernhardt' [part 2], *La Plume*, 12 année, no. 276 (15 October 1900), 625-40 (625). The third is from a series that dates from c. 1893-1900 and is reproduced in Janis Bergman-Carton, "A Vision of a Stained Glass Sarah": Bernhardt and the Decorative Arts', in *Sarah Bernhardt: The Art of High Drama*, ed. Carol Ockman and Kenneth E Silver, exh. cat. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), 99-124 (109, fig. 12). I am grateful to Dr Janis Bergman-Carton, Southern Methodist University, Dallas for informing me that this photograph had been in the collection of the University of Texas, Austin but had been mislaid and was reproduced for her essay from Wildenstein (1984). Photographs from an unidentified English language publication and stored as cuttings by the Theatre Museum, London show Bernhardt in the same clothing; Theatre Museum (Victoria and Albert Museum), London, Bernhardt Personal Box, 7, folder 4-5. *La Mort de Laïs* appears on a shelf in an undated photograph of Abbéma in her studio, reproduced in *Portrait de l'artiste* (cat. no. 48; former collection of E. Maurice Bloch, original photograph in musée Carnavalet). Abbéma and Mathieu-Meusnier were photographed ten years later in 1885, probably in Abbéma's studio, attesting to the longevity of their friendship, although as I have not seen this photograph, I cannot confirm the exact date or location; sale title not identified, hôtel Drouot, Paris, 2 July 1982, lot 109; MOSD, dossier Sarah Bernhardt. Mathieu-Meusnier probably made a bronze sculpture of Abbéma and Bernhardt's entwined hands in 1878. This work was stolen in 1999 from the collection of Janet et Co in Paris, an organisation committed to collecting objects and material representing historical lesbian culture who bought it at the auction of the collection of Michel de Bry; *Sarah Bernhardt et son époque*, 23 April 1997, as 'Les mains enlacées', lot 220. It has not been recovered and I have only seen a photograph of it. Signed by Abbéma and Bernhardt, Mathieu-Meusnier's authorship and the date are given in Abbéma's obituary in the feminist newspaper *La Fronde* on 30 July 1927. Abbéma owned the work in 1925: see Ludovic Bron, 'Eventail d'intimes: Louise Abbéma', *Sarah Bernhardt: quand-même* (Paris: La Pensée française, 1925), 77-81 (80). The sculpture was cast, according to the catalogue, by 'Valsuani'. Claude Valsuani opened his foundry in 1908 in the fourteenth arrondissement of Paris. His brother, Attilio, also opened a foundry in the city but not until c. 1926; Elizabeth Lebon, *Dictionnaire des fondeurs d'art: Paris 1850-1950* (Perth: Majon, 2003), 256-61. In the absence of any other evidence, I cannot explain this discrepancy, nor have I established the sculpture's history prior to 1925.

expands the possibility of how information that was provided by Bernhardt's contemporaries in a number of contexts can be read. Bernhardt's collaboration in the production of this image is crucial and becomes a feature of the visual imagery produced in greater quantity of her subsequent studio homes in the avenue de Villiers and boulevard Pereire. This is not to say that Bernhardt's contribution to the representation of her studio in visual imagery makes these pictures more valid than verbal descriptions by others: all these sources require scouring for signs of what they represent and how. What characterises the archive on Bernhardt's later homes and studios, though, is that there is more of it.

Of all the spaces occupied by Bernhardt – whether as homes, studios or both – the property she had built on the avenue de Villiers is the best documented. This is fortunate for the sculpture historian, because the time she lived there (1876-86) was also her most productive as a sculptor. Land registry documents, a freehand architectural drawing of the exterior, paintings and photographs of the interior and entrance, and verbal description of the courtyard and various rooms within, all contribute to the possibility of producing a fuller chronology and topography of the site of Bernhardt's sculpture production, material and social.

Land registry documents indicate that Bernhardt bought three parcels of land (238, 18, and 25 square metres respectively) between June 1875 and January 1876 on the corner of avenue de Villiers and rue Guyot (renamed rue Fortuny in 1877) in the plaine Monceau quarter in the north-west outskirts of Paris.⁴⁰ Incorporated into the city in 1860 as part of the new 17th arrondissement, the area was largely undeveloped and new or expanded avenues and boulevards (boulevard Malesherbes was opened in 1861) meant that suitable sites were available for the construction of spacious dwellings many of which would be the

⁴⁰ AVP, cadastre de 1862 and cadastre de 1876, rue Fortuny, D1P4, carton 460. The property, once built, shared two addresses, 37 rue Fortuny and 41 avenue de Villiers, and is referred to by both street names in literature on it. Apart from cited sources, I use 41 avenue de Villiers as this is how Bernhardt provided her address for the Salon guides.

purpose-built studio homes of wealthy artists.⁴¹ Bernhardt commissioned Félix Escalier (b. 1843), an architect and painter, to design such a dwelling – known as a ‘hôtel particulier’ or ‘hôtel privé’ – on the site and, according to her autobiography construction was underway in the second half of 1875.⁴² In 1876 Bernhardt was the registered owner of the new construction suggesting that this is the year she moved in, although no month is specified in the land registry. Once in residence, a separate pavilion building was added the following year. In September 1877 *La Semaine des constructeurs* published an article on Bernhardt’s hôtel once the entire ensemble was complete, calling the quarter ‘that totally

⁴¹ For the development of the plaine Monceau area, and the avenue de Villiers in particular as the ‘densest concentration of art and wealth in Paris’, see Milner, 171-85 (172). As stated above, Milner’s survey covers the 1880-90s and he does not always specify the dates of construction or occupancy of the properties in the area that he mentions. Hillairet is a useful resource for the streets in the area and some dwellings, but, again, dates of construction and occupancy are not always given. Also, a full chronology of the development of particular streets is not always clear. François Loyer, *Paris XIXe Siècle: l’immeuble et la rue* (Paris: Hazan, 1987) provides a thorough survey of the urban development and architecture of Paris in the century but its scope does not allow each street and building to be covered. Due to lack of time, I am unable to make a thorough assessment of the history and development of avenue de Villiers and rue Fortuny in the 1870s by recourse to archival material other than that which concerns Bernhardt. Any mention of her studio home being situated within an artistic milieu is based primarily on my assessment of Salon guides and concerns those artists with whom she did or may have had contact.

⁴² According to *MDL*, Escalier was the son-in-law of Regnier, an actor and colleague of Bernhardt at the Comédie-Française (269). He was also a friend of Clairin, sharing a painting studio with him in the late 1860s; Gustave Goetschy, ‘Ateliers et vitrines: Georges Clairin’ [part 1], *La Vie moderne*, 3e année, no. 41 (8 October 1881), 651-53 (653). He studied architecture and painting at the École des beaux-arts under Louis-Jules André and Élie Delauney respectively, exhibited both aspects of his work at the Salon, entered architectural competitions for public buildings from early in his career and worked on painted decorative schemes for public and private buildings. His architectural repertoire included châteaux and hôtels in Paris and abroad. See Edmond Augustin Delaire, *Les Architectes élèves de l’École des beaux-arts*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Librairie de la construction moderne, 1907), 1407-08; Michel Fleury, Anne Dugast and Isabelle Parizet, *Dictionnaire par noms d’architectes des constructions élevées à Paris aux XIXe et XXe siècles*, 5 vols (Paris: Service des travaux historiques de la Ville de Paris, 1990), II, 47. Loyer discusses the renaissance of the hôtel particulier during the Second Empire of Louis-Napoléon (1852-70) and Haussmannization of Paris of which the development of the plaine Monceau was one aspect. Although modelled on former aristocratic dwellings, mid-nineteenth-century hôtels particuliers were a more compact agglomeration of distinct spaces and tended to lack the large courtyard and outbuildings of their earlier classical counterparts. Nonetheless, the hôtel was a single occupancy building that was larger and more prestigious than a dwelling in an apartment block [immeuble]; Loyer, 327-39. Loyer does not discuss studio homes which, as the case of Bernhardt will demonstrate, differ slightly from this general model. I have not established any details on the construction companies who carried out the building work.

artistic part of new Paris'.⁴³ In 1876, the year she moved in, Bernhardt's artist neighbours on avenue de Villiers included friends of Georges Clairin: the sculptor Ernest-Louis Barrias and painter Ernest-Ange Duez who shared premises at number 39 and the painter Roger Jourdain based, that year, at number 23.⁴⁴ Duez was to join Clairin and others as part of the team of painters who decorated the house.

This was an early project for Escalier who continued to design private hôtels in the wealthy west and north-west Paris from the late 1870s onwards; plans and elevations of some were published in architectural journals.⁴⁵ Unfortunately, no such architectural drawings were published of Bernhardt's hôtel but *La Semaine des constructeurs* reproduced a freehand 'artist's impression' drawing by Toussaint of the property viewed from both frontal aspects; rue Fortuny facing south-east and avenue de Villiers facing north-east (fig. 2: 6). Together with the accompanying article and land registry details, it is possible to ascertain some aspects of the construction and distribution of space (layout, area dimensions, and approximate height) as well as the basic function of elements within the property, including those areas used as studio space.

⁴³ A. Dupuis, 'Hôtel de Mlle Sarah Bernhardt', *La Semaine des constructeurs* (September 1877), 102-04.

⁴⁴ Jourdain shared number 23 with another painter Maurice Poirson. It is not clear if these properties were rented artists' studios or the studio homes of one or more individuals, nor have I established when they were built. According to Geneviève Lacambre during 1876 and 1877 Jourdain acquired a plot next to Bernhardt from the painter Jadin (also a friend of Clairin) and, by exchange, with Bernhardt on which he had a studio home built; *Les Ateliers d'artistes* (Paris: Hachette, 1991), 33. He gave this address (number 43) for the Salon guide but only in 1878. Lacambre states that the registered owner of number 43 from 1878 was the painter, Guillaume Dubufe, although it is not clear when he took up residence. Unlike most of Bernhardt's former property at 41 avenue de Villiers, this building still exists and is now the musée national Jean-Jacques Henner, bought by the artist's niece in 1921 and donated to the city in order to house a collection of his work. According to the museum's leaflet, this was also designed by Félix Escalier, although I have been unable to pursue archival records in order to establish this; Anon., 'Musée national Jean-Jacques Henner', pamphlet, n.d. Escalier's works are listed in Fleury et al, but the hôtel particulier for Jourdain is given as 53 avenue de Villiers. In 1879 and 1881 Jourdain listed his address as numbers 55 and 23 respectively. 43 avenue de Villiers houses a large, two-storey studio on the first floor with a wooden balcony similar to that shown in Bourgoin's watercolour of Bernhardt's atelier. The ground floor rooms including a conservatory are currently being refurbished and are not accessible for inspection.

⁴⁵ Examples of these in Paris were published in *Le Moniteur des architectes* (1887) and *La Construction moderne* (1891); MOSD, dossier Escalier.

The general construction of both the main house (situated on the corner) and the separate 1877 addition (on rue Fortuny) consisted of dressed stone quoins, pilasters, door and window jambs, with brickwork infill and carved stone window pediments or arches, corbelling, cornices, and balustrading. From Toussaint's drawing, the main house appears to consist of two distinct sections above basement level. The first, situated directly on the corner, was higher and three-storey with a slated and zinc mansard roof that accommodated the upper floor. The second (to the right of this in the drawing) was on the avenue de Villiers side only and may have been three or two-storey. This also had a slated mansard roof but was topped in the middle with a glazed upper section (not visible in the drawing).⁴⁶ The external wall seen in this latter section housed a large, two-storey opening in three sections composed of one large, upper segmental arched window and two smaller flat arched windows below that opened onto a shallow, wrought-iron balcony.⁴⁷ The separate building on the rue Fortuny side was one storey, again with a mansard roof that

⁴⁶ I am not absolutely certain about the distribution of sections of the building over three and two storeys in the absence of full architectural plans, elevations and sections of the building. The land registry gives the following structure: basement, ground floor, first floor, second floor and the distribution of rooms in each but does not give the overall area of each floor. Although the drawing shows two heights, it is not certain that the section on the avenue de Villiers side is therefore only two-storey. Not all of the building can be seen and the two small windows above cornice height suggest a third storey in this area as well.

⁴⁷ The verbal description in the *Semaine des constructeurs* conflicts with the drawing: Dupuis wrote that '[t]he two windows which we see above the large window opening onto a shallow, cast-iron balcony are on the same level as the studio and give views onto the avenue [les deux fenêtres que nous voyons au-dessus de cette baie, ouvrant sur un balcon à grille de fer peu saillant, sont de plain-pied avec l'atelier et donnent des vues sur l'avenue]'; 103. Judging from the drawing these must be the two windows with a balcony below [au-dessous] the large arched window in this wall. Three views of the interior of this room show the large opening but it does not extend to floor level. In both Bourgoïn's watercolours that include the avenue de Villiers side of the room (figs 2: 3-4) only the large, upper window is shown; the area beneath appears walled in and has a piano beneath sill height. This is also the case with an undated drawing by E. de Liphart. 'Sarah Bernhardt dans son atelier', again showing this aspect of the room but with other objects stacked in front of the wall below sill height (Liphart produced several drawings of Bernhardt for *La Vie moderne* but I have not located this drawing in the journal during 1879-82, nor established if Liphart worked for other journals. A copy of the drawing is in BMCF. I am unable to explain these discrepancies: it is possible that the lower openings were blocked soon after 1877 or that Toussaint, Bourgoïn, or Liphart might have not represented this area accurately.

continued with a framed glass structure giving additional height. This had two large semi-circular arched openings whose upper limit exceeded wall height (cutting in to the vertical plane of the mansard roof): a window on the north-east side and a doorway opening on to rue Fortuny.

The provision of overhead lighting and large windows in two areas of the property indicate two separate studio spaces. The first of these, incorporated in the main house, was only accessible through it. According to *La Semaine des constructeurs* access was gained through the stone pillared gateway on rue Fortuny which led into a courtyard. To the right, a set of balustraded stone steps led up to doorway into the main house.⁴⁸ This opened into a two-storey hallway, on the left of which was a stairway to the upper floors. Straight ahead was the entrance to a 63 square metre, two-storey high studio to which the skylight and large

⁴⁸ Several photographs exist of these entrance steps: two of Bernhardt with her son, Maurice; one of Maurice alone; two (possibly more) of Bernhardt with the homosexual Robert de Montesquiou (1855-1921), one of which has an additional, unidentified figure present, both dressed in the costume of Zanetto in Copée's *Le Passant*; and one of Bernhardt alone in this costume. All those in the costume of Zanetto are by Melandri and are part of the 1878-79 series. One of those in which Bernhardt appears with the son show her in the same suit as Melandri's photographs of her with the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* and is probably part of Melandri's 1878-79 series. Another, of Bernhardt and Maurice, reproduced in Huret (1899) is by Melandri although the costume of both is different and Maurice is said to be aged eleven (dating the image as 1876, although this cannot be confirmed). The photograph of Maurice alone shows him wearing the same clothing as this last image and is therefore likely to also be by Melandri. These photographs have appeared in a number of contexts. Those which show Bernhardt alone, or with Montesquiou, in the costume of Zanetto were produced as mounted portraits either individually or as part of the Melandri collage (fig. 1: 35). The photographs with Montesquiou belonged to him, two of which are now in the musée d'Orsay. The circulation at the time they were made of these and the mounted portrait of Bernhardt alone is not known. The photographs of Bernhardt with her son appeared much later than they were made: one in Huret (1899) and the other (in which Bernhardt is in the trouser suit) in a feature article on Bernhardt in 1905; Georges Bourdon, 'La Vie merveilleuse de Madame Sarah Bernhardt', *L'Art du théâtre*, no. 51 (March 1905), 37-48. Some images in these contexts came from other publications or were reproduced artworks; however, I would suggest that these photographs of Bernhardt with her son and others (see later) were private images that she provided for both publications. The photograph of Maurice Bernhardt alone was reproduced in Georges Bernier, ed., *Sarah Bernhardt and her Times*, exh. cat. (New York: Wildenstein, 1984) but no source is given. Abbéma's 1880 painting, *L'Amazone* (oil on canvas, 229 x 137 cm) which she sold to the Grand Duc de Saxe Coburg in 1883 and is still in the Schlossmuseum, Gotha, shows the same set of steps to the main house. This is documented in a letter Louise Abbéma to Grand Duc de Saxe Coburg, 1 February 1883, INHA, *Autographes d'artistes* (coll. Gabriel Ferrier), Louise Abbéma, peintre, carton 1, 88.

window overlooking avenue de Villiers belonged.⁴⁹ This studio was linked to other rooms in the house: on the right an internal staircase led to Bernhardt's bedroom and below this, on ground floor level, a doorway led into the dining room which had French windows opening onto a balcony. It is these two rooms that occupy the chamfered corner of the house visible in Toussaint's drawing for *La Semaine des constructeurs*.

The second studio area was the separate pavilion on the other side of the entrance courtyard to the main house. This was one-storey (but given extra height by the slated mansard roof with its glazed upper section) and measured 56 square metres. Not visible in the drawing is a small conservatory on the south-west side of this studio measuring 16 square metres which led into a garden. An underground passage linked the main house and this studio providing access, according to *La Semaine des constructeurs*, during wet weather. It may be, however, that the conservatory was the principal access from the house as the only ground floor doorway directly into this building was on the street and not conveniently placed other than to dispatch artworks or receive deliveries of materials and other equipment. Together the courtyard and garden measured 70 square metres but I have been unable to work out the exact distribution of this space: it appears as though the conservatory did not stretch for the entire length of the pavilion studio to which it was

⁴⁹ Two years later the anonymous writer of a feature article in the British journal *The Theatre* described a route into the house involving a small antechamber before the hallway was reached; 'Portraits: Mdlle. Bernhardt', (1 June 1879), 285. The description of two different decorative schemes implies that the antechamber was a separate room or at least a distinct area within the hallway. The same distinction between a hallway and antechamber appeared in another article in a British publication but the sequence of these spaces is less clear. See, Edmond Hodgson Yates, 'Mdlle. Sarah Bernhardt in the Avenue de Villiers' [c. 1879; reprinted from *The World*], *Celebrities at Home*, 3 series (London: The World, 1877-79), III, 159-69 (159). I have not established the exact date of Yates's original article in *The World*, nor if it was reprinted exactly. Both authors implied they had visited the premises as they relate conversation with Bernhardt, but there are similarities between the two suggesting repetition from each other or other sources altogether. The distinction between hallway and antechamber is not specified in Dupuis's article in *La Semaine des constructeurs* or the land registry documents. Another article in 1880 in a French journal refers to the hallway itself as an 'antichambre' and also does not imply two spaces but it is not clear if this author visited despite his claims to have done so; Master Fish, 'Les Grandes petites dames: Sarah Bernhardt [sic; part 1]', *Le Boudoir: gazette galante*, 1e année, no. 7 (11 July 1880), 74-75 (74).

attached, but the entire area of the courtyard itself and any land behind this studio or adjacent to the main house are not visible and there are no plans to indicate the boundaries of the entire plot.⁵⁰

Was there a difference between these two studio spaces? The land registry called the studio in the house an 'atelier d'artiste' and the separate pavilion simply an 'atelier'. In *La Semaine des constructeurs* Dupuis made a further distinction, calling the studio in the house an 'atelier de peinture' and the separate pavilion an 'atelier de sculpture'. Their difference was supported by Dupuis's description of the decorative scheme of the two studios: the painting studio had an elaborate beamed ceiling, a 'very beautiful, Renaissance wooden fireplace', and a wealth of 'artistic riches' including Bernhardt's 1876 portrait by Clairin. The sculpture studio was, on the other hand, 'of extremely sober decoration; the only thing that attracts the eye is a stone carved fireplace with a mantelpiece built from

⁵⁰ The 1877 pavilion studio is still in existence as '35 rue Fortuny' but was substantially altered in 1891. In 1886 the Eudoxie Dervillé, widow of marble merchant Cyr-Adolphe Dervillé, bought the property from Bernhardt and five years later the Dervillés extended the pavilion studio and added another building in the courtyard area, designed by Jules Chéret (a painter and architect). This was reported (wrongly as being commissioned by Bernhardt) in H. Raison, 'L'Hôtel de Mme Sarah Bernhardt, rue Fortuny, à Paris', *La Semaine des constructeurs* (6 June 1891), 595-97. Raison only discussed the new building and a drawing indicated only the right-hand side of the extended studio pavilion as it appears today. Visual inspection of the exterior of the current building compared to Toussaint's 1877 drawing shows that it was extended sideways (to the right) and upwards. A first floor replaced the existing slated and glazed mansard roof and a new mansard roof added a second floor. The sideways extension of the building included a new doorway and the large doorway on rue Fortuny visible in Toussaint's drawing was converted into a window. A sale catalogue of the internal fittings of 35 rue Fortuny included a fireplace and sculptures by Emmanuel Frémiet, all added by the Dervillés ('Hôtel particulier de Sarah Bernard [sic], ancien hôtel Dervillé', Etienne Libert, Paris, 28 February 1970). These alterations are discussed in Antoinette Le Normand-Romain, 'Hôtel Sarah Bernhardt puis Dervillé', in *Champs-Élysées, faubourg Saint-Honoré, plaine Monceau*, ed. Yvan Christ (Paris: Veyrier, 1982), 275-80. Although I think an 1891 conversion is likely, two aspects of it puzzle me: because of substantial alterations to the stonework (for instance around the current window, formerly a doorway, on rue Fortuny), the additional height and width to the building is difficult to explain unless the building was considerably reduced in height for this work to take place. Also, I cannot explain why, how or when the pillar to the left-hand side of the former doorway on rue Fortuny was reduced in width (seen by comparison to Toussaint's drawing). I have not found or consulted any further documents that might explain this. In any case, it seems that the current configuration of this building in terms of layout and internal fittings are too radically different from the studio Bernhardt had built in 1877 to give any indication what it was like.

corbelled brickwork'.⁵¹ These descriptions recall the distinction made about the studio at boulevard de Clichy which, according to Pierre Véron, lacked 'the trappings of finery' and was the masculinized space of a 'worker' and yet, according to *Zigzags*, was 'a very pretty boudoir' full of decorative objects. In that case it was impossible to determine if two separate rooms had been viewed, but the type of space perceived and how it was arranged decided for those writers if Bernhardt could – as a woman – make sculpture there.

Abbéma's painting of Bernhardt at work provided a different perspective on an environment which, although primarily the space of sculpture-making, was also suitable for receiving guests and included objects other than the basic equipment of the sculptor.

Dupuis's article, aimed at an audience interested in architecture and building, was concerned with the precise layout and specific function of each physical space in the new hôtel. However, although the two studios were, according to him, differently arranged and had distinct functions (painting and sculpture) it is also clear from his account (and the land registry records) that they were integrated to different degrees within the hôtel as a home: the separate sculpture studio in the courtyard had a conservatory attached and entry to the painting studio was gained through a hallway and linked to Bernhardt's bedroom and the dining room. This brings me back to the material with which I opened this chapter. Some of the images that include the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* at different times in different places can now be matched to rooms identified in Dupuis's layout. But these images, and other visual and verbal representations of avenue de Villiers, demonstrate a complex, differentiated, and overlapping use of space which is not conveyed by Dupuis, perhaps because it was not obvious when he visited or was irrelevant for the scope of his account. For instance, the 'atelier' of Bourgoïn's 1879 watercolours (the painting studio for Dupuis) was shown as the site of both painting and sculpture production (figs 2: 3-4). According to Lucas's drawing (fig. 2: 5), the conservatory (whose function Dupuis did not mention) was

⁵¹ '[U]ne très belle cheminée renaissance'; 'richesses artistiques'; and 'd'une extrême sobriété de décoration: seule une cheminée en pierre sculptée attire le regard, encore le manteau est-il composé de briques apparentes posées en retrait d'un rang sur l'autre]', Dupuis, *La Semaine des constructeurs* (September 1877), 103, 104.

part of the sculpture studio. Several photographs and a painting by Abbéma also show the conservatory to be a prime site of social importance whereas this goes unmentioned in verbal accounts of avenue de Villiers; for the writers of these accounts only the large studio in the house performed a social as well as art productive function. Many images and verbal descriptions indicate the importance to Bernhardt of collecting artworks and displaying them in several areas of the house. The scope of my description and analysis of the avenue de Villiers hôtel therefore includes two sets of integrated spaces that were core areas of art production generally, and sculpture production in particular, more broadly conceived in material and social terms. Other rooms are not considered because I have found no substantial indication that they were significant in terms of Bernhardt's sculpture production.⁵²

In order to proceed I need to clarify how I will refer to and approach these studios and why. I will retain Dupuis's use of 'sculpture studio' for the pavilion in the courtyard as this is how it is referred to in all other sources that represent it. Because of the different ways the studio in the main house has been represented and referred to elsewhere, I will not use Dupuis's designation of 'painting studio', but will call this the atelier-salon. The differentiated and overlapping use of space that I have just outlined means that, although physically separate, both areas were important for Bernhardt's sculpture practice to different degrees and in different ways. In order to pursue certain lines of thought I will need to think of these core areas and the activities that occurred within them as, at times, separate and, at others, linked. Description and analysis is also determined firstly by how these spaces have been represented within single or across several images or verbal descriptions and secondly by the function of these representations.

⁵² The main building also included a kitchen and storeroom in the basement; another room and office on the ground floor; and further bedrooms, a laundry room; bathrooms and toilets on the first and second floors. These rooms are an unknown quantity as far as Bernhardt's art production was concerned. According to the sources below, Bernhardt kept a skeleton in her bedroom which she may have used for anatomical study, but there is no indication that its location was significant.

Verbal description of the sculpture studio was paltry, no more than that provided by Dupuis. Most visitors to avenue de Villiers (actual or claimed) saved their ink for descriptions of the atelier-salon, sometimes the entrance hallway in the main house where they sat and waited or, occasionally, the bedroom. It may be that few visitors actually saw the sculpture studio as only two of the accounts that I have located described it.⁵³ Even Gustave Goetschy, author of the article which Lucas's drawing illustrated, focussed on the atelier-salon and avoided writing about the sculpture studio on the basis that it 'only contained sculpture equipment, a few seats and some flowers.'⁵⁴ An earlier article in *Le Boudoir: gazette galante* in July 1880 by a journalist known only as 'Master Fish', also preferred to describe the atelier-salon and Bernhardt's bedroom. The sculpture studio merited attention only by comparison to the atelier-salon – it was 'as high but more severe and less ornate'. The objects listed there were a bust in progress and plaster casts of heads, legs and hands along with long fighting swords all hanging on the walls.⁵⁵ No account mentioned the adjoining conservatory.

This lack of interest and poor detail provided by verbal accounts of the sculpture studio is compensated for in visual imagery, which represents this core area more fully, particularly

⁵³ In an earlier article in *La Vie moderne* about Bernhardt's holiday home at Sainte-Adresse in Normandy, the author claimed that 'everything has been said about this Parisian interior, about the two studios [tout a été dit sur cet intérieur parisien, sur les deux ateliers]', although I have found no written evidence of this; S. -J. 'Sarah Bernhardt, Architecte', *La Vie moderne*, 1e année, no. 29 (25 October 1879), 461-62 (461).

⁵⁴ '[I]l ne contient guère que l'attirail du sculpteur, des sièges et des fleurs', Goetschy, *La Vie moderne* (28 May 1881), 348.

⁵⁵ '[A]ussi haut que l'autre, mais plus severe, moins orné', Master Fish, 'Les Grandes petites dames: Sarah Bernhard [sic; part 2]', *Le Boudoir: gazette galante*, 1e année, no. 8 (18 July 1880), 87. The identity of 'Master Fish' is unknown. The article was sensationalist and gossipy but did provide detail of layout and some contents that can be confirmed elsewhere. However, certain claims of the author are suspect: the sculpture studio window was described as a doorway and the identity of bust in progress, said to be of Félicien David, is not confirmed by any existing work or reference to this portrait elsewhere. It is therefore difficult to tell if the writer visited or gleaned his information from other sources. The bedroom was also described in Pierre Loti, 'jeudi, 25 mars 1880', *Journal intime 1878-1881* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1925), 119-20 and mentioned in S. -J, *La Vie moderne* (25 October 1979), 461. It is, of course, possible that Master Fish was Pierre Loti, although his journal does not mention the sculpture studio.

as a productive workspace that also had other, social uses that supported Bernhardt's sculpture production. Because Félix Lucas's drawing published in *La Vie moderne* in May 1881 (fig. 2: 5) provided a view of the conservatory from an adjoining room, it is now clear from the layout described above that this was drawn from within the sculpture studio. Earlier, in 1877, Bernhardt had already commissioned Marie-Désiré Bourgoïn to paint a watercolour of this room (two years before those of the atelier-salon) clearly titled 'L'Atelier de sculpture de Sarah Bernhardt' (fig. 2: 7). Architectural elements visible in Bourgoïn's watercolour – the joists for a mansard roof, the large semi-circular arched window, and the stone and brick fireplace confirm it as the sculpture studio described by Dupuis and illustrated from the outside by Toussaint in *La Semaine des constructeurs*.⁵⁶ Elements within each image also confirm these rooms as adjacent locations: Lucas's drawing shows the sculpture studio's mansard roof timbers; the curtaining of the large opening between the two rooms, clearly visible in his drawing, is glimpsed on the left of Bourgoïn's watercolour; and the same pattern in the tiled floor indicates their shared boundary.

Were both these rooms therefore synonymous with the sculpture studio? Bourgoïn's watercolour is the panorama of a single room defined as 'the sculpture studio' showing the draped window necessary for controlling light and an array of sculptural objects and equipment. The unfinished standing female nude (possibly with a crouching figure below and therefore likely to be *Médée*) on the sturdy rotating trestle is seen with the protective cloths required for work in progress. The small table in front of the left side of the window accommodates a figure statuette, which is probably, from the pyramidal structure, the

⁵⁶ There is one confusing aspect to Bourgoïn's watercolour. According to the layout of the sculpture studio ascertained from Toussaint's drawing of the exterior, the wall on the right in Bourgoïn's watercolour should house the large doorway opening on to rue Fortuny as the same wall supports the timbers of the mansard roof and there appears to be insufficient space for an intervening lobby area. Given that Bourgoïn shows a panorama of the entire room apart from the glazed section of the roof, the absence of this doorway is difficult to explain. No photographs of this entire interior exist in order to make a comparison but it is possible that Bourgoïn's watercolour was not a totally accurate depiction of the layout because the commission was to show a working sculpture studio and enough elements were included to convey this.

maquette or a reduced model for *Après la tempête* (1876), a pile of clay or rags, and a modelling tool. In the far right-hand corner of the room a working platform for modelling large works has been used to store plaster casts; one a classical bust, the other the torso of a female figure with truncated arms. Against the right-hand wall a large timber construction leans against the wall, chocked by the trestle and statue in progress but this is not an object of studio equipment.⁵⁷ The presence in Lucas's drawing of works indicating three stages of sculpture production (clay, plaster, and finished marble) situated within the conservatory and at the liminal area of the large opening between it and the sculpture studio, along with his annotation, also suggest a place of work even if only an additional area or one set up for the purpose of the drawing. Together these two images produced in 1877 and 1881 demonstrate (more than) adequate and appropriate space in which to work according to the scope of Bernhardt's practice during this period when she made busts and life-size figures. What they contain attests to a sculpture practice achievable, in progress, and achieved.

The sculpture studio and conservatory, however, had another use, unnoticed in verbal accounts perhaps because those who wrote about Bernhardt's home did not see the entire space, passed over it quickly in their haste to describe the more fully stocked atelier-salon, or were not invited there. Claims by Dupuis and others that the sculpture studio was 'sober' or 'severe' were made in comparison to the atelier-salon but Bourgoïn's painting does show some signs of decoration and comfort: clustered around the fireplace is a red, velvet-covered chair on the left hand side, a rug, and a rocking chair; on the opposite wall is a framed picture, below it a large houseplant in a pot. Other objects – lamps, a small frame – are seen in the room and, as in Bernhardt's studio at boulevard de Clichy, the walls are wood panelled, plastered and painted, and the floor, although modest, has a decorative finish, probably tiling or mosaic.

⁵⁷ Behind the small table is a glass and wrought iron canopy in which there appears to be a small monkey (Bernhardt had several pets at this time). The timber construction may have been a climbing frame for the monkey to reach the shelf created by the cornice at wallplate level.

No images or accounts describe the studio in use but a painting by Abbéma and three photographs show the adjacent conservatory as the site of a particularly intimate sociality for Bernhardt and certain key figures in her network of friends. Lucas's drawing of the conservatory from the sculpture studio shows only one side of this small additional building giving a view through an archway, possibly into the garden, in the southerly direction of the rue Fortuny boundary of the property.⁵⁸ Abbéma's, *Le Déjeuner dans la serre*, exhibited at the Salon in 1877 and acquired in 1878 for the musée des beaux-arts in Pau shows the other, north-facing side of the conservatory (fig. 2: 8).⁵⁹ Paul Mantz of *Le Temps* called the setting for this painting 'a conservatory which is almost like a Salon' but his interest was in Abbéma's ability to represent light falling from above not the precise location. Neither he nor any other critic recognized it as part of Bernhardt's home.⁶⁰ Again, the critics were not especially interested in who was in the painting: only one news item about the forthcoming Salon in 1877 announced that Abbéma had 'represented herself on this canvas surrounded by her father, her mother and some friends.'⁶¹ From left to right the full scene in the painting

⁵⁸ I am not certain if this archway was a direct exit to outside: there are mural paintings of Japanese female figures beyond it, nor is there any obvious door.

⁵⁹ The painting was acquired after it was exhibited at the exposition des amis des Arts de Pau in 1878 after some discussion amongst the committee responsible for purchases on its merits. Abbéma accepted an offer of 2000 francs and the painting was first shown in the museum in 1880; AMBA Pau, dossier Abbéma.

⁶⁰ '[U]ne serre qui est presque un salon', Paul Mantz, 'Le Salon', *Le Temps* (27 May 1877), 1. I am not certain if Abbéma and Mantz knew each other in 1877 although they were friends after this time. Abbéma made a dry point portrait of Mantz in 1879 which was published in Alfred Levasseur, ed., *Croquis contemporains* (Paris: Cadart, 1880). A series of letters dating from 1880 indicate that their relationship was close. In a letter thanking him for a positive review of her work, Abbéma addressed Mantz as 'mon bien aimé ami Paul'. Louise Abbéma to Paul Mantz, 7 June 1880 (papiers Paul Mantz), INHA, Autographes d'Artistes (coll. Gabriel Ferrier), Louise Abbéma, peintre, Carton 1, 88.

⁶¹ Eugène Véron, 'Chronique Française', *L'Art*, vol. 8, 3e année, no. 1 (1877), 264. The location of this painting as Bernhardt's home is discussed in three recent sources: Philippe Comte, *Ville de Pau, musée des beaux-arts: catalogue raisonnée des peintures* (Pau: Musée des beaux-arts de Pau, 1978); Le Normand Romain (1982), 276, and Griselda Pollock, 'Louise Abbéma's Lunch and Alfred Stevens's Studio: theatricality, feminine subjectivity and space around Sarah Bernhardt, Paris, 1877-1888' in *Local/Global: Women Artists in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Deborah Cherry and Janice Helland (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 99-120.

includes a male figure, possibly the playwright Emile de Najac, Abbéma's mother (Henriette Anne Sophie Léonie Abbéma), an unidentified girl, Abbéma's father (Emile Abbéma), Sarah Bernhardt and Louise Abbéma herself. Abbéma's dog is in the middle foreground of the painting.⁶²

Confirmation of the location comes from viewing the painting together with other visual sources. A preparatory oil sketch for the scene with no-one present (fig. 2: 9) shows the same furnishings: the couch on the right with a canopy above decorated with an ensemble of different fabrics, a shield, medallion, and spears; a drawn curtain, also on the right; the table (this time empty) with its two cloths; and the surrounding of luxuriant vegetation.⁶³

⁶² The posthumous literature on this painting is consistent about the identity of de Najac, Abbéma's parents and Bernhardt but differs on the identity of Abbéma and the child. The first discussion I have located of the identities of the figures in the painting is in *Le Parisien chez lui au XIXe siècle 1814-1914*, ed. Jean-Pierre Babelot, exh. cat. (Paris: AN, 1976), 138-39 in which Abbéma is identified as Bernhardt's sister and it is suggested that the child might be Bernhardt's son, Maurice. Comte repeats this but does not mention the child; n.p. A more recent source says that Abbéma is her own sister, Jeanne, and does not discuss the child but this could be a misreading of the earlier texts; Dominique Lobstein, 'Louise Abbéma', *Dictionary of Women Artists*, ed. Delia Gaze, 2 vols (Chicago and London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1997), I, 163-65. Pollock discusses the failure to identify Abbéma in recent literature on the painting and the possible identity of the child; 100-01, 105. I have not yet confirmed the identity of de Najac in the absence of another image of him nor have I been able to establish if the child might have been associated with him. The only child that I know of who might have been associated with Bernhardt or Abbéma at this time is Clairin's niece, Mlle. de Villeneuve, who in a portrait of 1875 (musée des Arts décoratifs, Paris) also has blonde hair. A drawing by Clairin and Henry Scott (1849-84) of an outdoor lunch scene published to illustrate an article about Bernhardt's tour of the French regions in September 1880 shows a very similar figure of a child with a large bow leaning in to a table; illustrated in Le Souffleur, 'Carnet du Souffleur', *La Vie moderne*, 2e année, no. 38 (18 September 1880), 594-97 (596). The child appears to be the same height in both images and therefore may be a different person altogether or Clairin may have echoed elements of Abbéma's painting of a lunch scene.

⁶³ This oil sketch appeared in the exhibition at Ferrers Gallery in London in 1873 and then for sale in Paris in March 1874. According to the Paris catalogue it is signed and dated 'Louise Abema [sic] 1876'. This is confirmed by Jane Abdy, former owner of the Ferrers Gallery; telephone conversation with Jane Abdy, 3 January 2007. Both catalogues state that it was a representation of Sarah Bernhardt's winter garden. It is not clear how this information was obtained, and I would prefer to ascertain the date myself by inspecting the painting which is poorly reproduced in both catalogues and neither a date nor a signature is visible. I have yet to locate this work. This date does not accord with the land registry which states that the pavilion building and conservatory were added in 1877 and these sales catalogues may have read the date incorrectly. However, the fact that *Le Déjeuner dans la serre* would have been presented for exhibition at the Salon by 20 March 1877 does mean that perhaps

This sketch provides additional information about the room: the wall at the rear of the scene is masonry and only the upper section is glazed. This structural arrangement and elements of the decoration present in both paintings also appear in three photographs of the conservatory which extend the view of the room upwards to include a draped glass roof: one of these depicts a similarly intimate scenario around a table (fig. 2: 10), the other two are taken with the table and seating removed and a curtain pulled across behind as a backdrop to the scenes shown (figs. 2: 11-12). In the first of these photographs (fig. 2: 10) the participants in the scene are (clockwise from bottom left): Émile Abbéma, Sarah Bernhardt, Louise Abbéma, Georges Clairin, Mme Guérard and Henriette Abbéma. The same figures, apart from Henriette Abbéma, appear in the second photograph (fig. 2: 11) and in the third only Abbéma and Bernhardt are present (fig. 2: 12). None of these photographs are reliably dated and the space could have been rearranged over time or within a short time according to different uses. Nonetheless, this area of the conservatory had a specific use during Bernhardt's occupancy of 41 avenue de Villiers.⁶⁴ The photographs show the same space of relaxed intimacy in Abbéma's 1877 lunch scene and confirm that this area of the house was for close friends only. Bradley Collins has written of the conservatory as an intimate space in other paintings in the 1870s. He writes of Alix-

the land registry was not correct. This is a large painting and would have taken some time to complete suggesting a sketch in 1876 is possible. This puts the land registry into question but it may be that the building was not registered immediately on completion or aspects of it were not finished until 1877.

⁶⁴ The photograph around the table was published in two later sources. The first was Bourdon, *L'Art du théâtre* (March 1905), 40. This article also reproduced the Melandri collage (the only publication to do so) and other photographs of avenue de Villiers not published elsewhere suggesting that Bernhardt provided these from her private collection for the article. The second was in a posthumous special issue on Bernhardt in *Le Théâtre et commoedia illustré* in June 1923. Here the image was titled 'Une reunion intime dans l'atelier' and incorrectly dated 1875. The publication thanked various individuals, including Abbéma, for the loan of photographs and it is likely that the wrong date was due to incorrect recall on the part of the owner at the time. Its current location is unknown. The photograph of Bernhardt with Emile Bernhardt, Abbéma, Mme Guérard, and Clairin on the rug is in the Laurence Senelick Collection of Theatrical Imagery, West Medford, MA. The photograph of Abbéma and Bernhardt as Pasha and Odalisque is in BNFDAS and I am extremely grateful to Carol Ockman and Kenneth E. Silver for bringing these last two images to my attention in by exhibiting them in *Sarah Bernhardt: the Art of High Drama*, New York, December 2005. The Pasha Odalisque description is Ockman's and I retain it in this thesis.

Louise Enault's *Consolation* (1870s) as an example of how '[m]uch more than a greenhouse, the conservatory could be a luxuriously decorated and intimate locale - a secluded indoor area conducive to private rendezvous.'⁶⁵

Although Abbéma's painting was exhibited publicly and bought for a permanent public collection, the location and full identity of the figures were never discussed and these private photographs are required in order to fully understand the implications of the scene depicted. What is so striking about all these images is the close physical intimacy between Bernhardt and Abbéma.⁶⁶ In *Le Déjeuner dans la serre* their bodies are so close they seem to touch; the same is the case for the photograph around the table where Bernhardt stands for the picture leaning in towards Abbéma who is seated. In the playful image of Bernhardt above her friends on the carpet, it is Abbéma to whom she is closest and in the last

⁶⁵ Enault's painting was formerly thought to be by Alfred Stevens, Bernhardt's painting teacher in the 1870-80s. In 1985 Alfred Stevens's signature was removed during a cleaning process to reveal that of Enault. Bradley Collins also illustrates Stop's (Pierre Gabriel B. L. Morel-Retz, 1825-99) caricature of Manet's 1879 painting *In the Conservatory* with the following reasoning. He writes: '[s]o strong was the association of a conservatory with the scene of an assignation or seduction that it set the tone for Stop's caricature'; 'Manet's *In the Conservatory* and *Chez le Père Lathuille*', *Art Journal*, 45:1 (1985), 59-66 (59). Manet's painting shows a heterosexual married couple which Stop transposes into the scene of a seduction of a young woman by an older man. Nonetheless, Stop retains the heterosexual bent of the interchange in Manet's painting. For further discussion of Manet's paintings of conservatories, see Pollock, 101-02.

⁶⁶ This is reflected in a caricature of the painting entitled 'Le déjeuner dans le fond de l'aquarium' in an unknown publication. The scenario of luxuriant vegetation is repeated but, apart from a semi-visible male figure lurking amongst the leaves, only the figures of Abbéma and Bernhardt have been represented and are accompanied by a large fish, seahorse and other aquatic creatures; INHA (coll. Gabriel Ferrier), *Autographes d'Artistes, Louise Abbéma, peintre, carton 1*, 88. The male figure represents a voyeuristic intruder in this clearly sexualized rendering of Abbéma's work. For discussion of male voyeurism and 'sapphic tableaux vivants' in Parisian brothels, see Leslie Choquette, 'Paris-Lesbos: Lesbian Social Space in the Modern City, 1870-1940', *Proceedings of the Western Society for French History: Selected Papers of the 1998 Annual Meeting*, ed. Barry Rothaus (Nevada: University of Colorado Press, 1998), 122-32 (127). This requires further investigation and discussion. See also Choquette's 'Degenerate or Degendered? Images of Prostitution and Homosexuality in the French Third Republic', *Historical Reflections: Réflexions historiques*, 23:2 (1997), 205-28).

photograph of the two women alone the eroticism of an orientalized and gendered role-play is all too apparent.⁶⁷

Despite the inclusion of elaborate decorative elements, these three photographs, show the sumptuous surroundings of Abbéma's painting to be perhaps more makeshift or at least more mobile than first appears. Without the photographs it would be hard to figure *Le Déjeuner dans la serre* as the same room shown in Lucas's drawing of the conservatory apart from a glimpse in the left of Abbéma's painting of similar vertical glazing. This was a small room – 16 square metres compared to the sculpture studio's 56 square metres. Abbéma's was a big painting of a small area. On the other hand, Bourgoïn's watercolour of the sculpture studio was a much smaller painting of a much larger area in which, if anything, the view of the room was compressed. Nonetheless, these were connected parts of the same core area in which the proximity of physical space, used differently by Bernhardt, demonstrated the necessity for each use of the other activities that took place there: art making and intimate, even erotic, sociality. The link between these two uses was Louise

⁶⁷ For discussion of Orientalism as bisexual and lesbian camp in the case of Pierre Loti and *fin-de-siècle* lesbians in Paris respectively, see Emily Apter, *Continental Drift: From National Characters to Virtual Subjects* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999). Apter discusses Bernhardt's on-stage orientalism as a role model for Loti in the 1870s and, later, her lesbian admirers around 1900. For the latter Bernhardt's 'exotic roles, coupled with her celebrated transvestic performances [...] rendered the "Sarah Bernhardt type" a crucible of identification among the amazons of 1900'; 155. Apter argues that 'like Loti' Bernhardt was photographed in the role of Cleopatra with 'an adoring female attendant at her knee' both assuming orientalist personae for the camera; 137. But unlike Loti, Bernhardt was a professional actress producing, in this context, publicity images to enhance her stage career. In terms of Bernhardt's off-stage sexual empowerment through the acting out of Orientalism, Apter includes Bernhardt in a list of performers and public figures who 'expanded the performative parameters of historic stereotype by moving their larger-than-life thespian personae into the choreography of everyday life' but does not provide an example of Bernhardt doing this; 139. Although the photograph of Abbéma and Bernhardt is unknown in the literature on Bernhardt outside Ockman and Silver's catalogue, Bernhardt's relationship with Abbéma is often documented. This is not considered by Apter despite her discussion of Bernhardt in the context of sapphic performativity and lesbian sexuality. Ockman discusses the photograph in the context of Abbéma and Bernhardt's relationship where as Pasha and Odalisque they 'knowingly invert heterosexual norms [...] perform[ing] their intimate relationship for the camera as a playful transgression of the typically feminized Orient'; Carol Ockman, 'Was She Magnificent? Sarah Bernhardt's Reach', in *Sarah Bernhardt: The Art of High Drama*, 23-73 (47, 51).

Abbéma: in one scenario she was present; in the other (Lucas's drawing), her finished portrait was prominently displayed as a sign of Bernhardt's accomplishment in making sculpture.

This brings me back to the photographs by Melandri of Bernhardt with the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* whose location I wanted to determine at the beginning of this chapter. Three other photographs in the Melandri series from 1878-79 also show Bernhardt with her sculpture: two with a self-portrait bust in clay or plaster (figs. 2: 13-15) and another with the same life-size female standing nude, identified as *Médée*, that appears in Bourgoïn's 1877 watercolour (fig. 2: 16).⁶⁸ Another two, one of which I illustrate here, show Bernhardt in front of her painting, *La Marchande des palmes*, on a large easel (fig. 2: 17). In the larger image of Bernhardt with the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* (fig. 1: 34) the only other discernible elements of the room are a curtain on the right, a bare floor partially covered by a rug, heaps of unidentifiable cloth, and a couch or chair behind the modelling stool. Some of the surrounding elements in the two photographs with the self-portrait bust and that with the painting are different, but the same couch or chair is there in the background on the left of all these photographs suggesting the same location. In all these photographs by Melandri the light falls on to Bernhardt and her work from the right and above. Because of this and the curtain in the photograph of Bernhardt with the *Bust of Louise Abbéma*, these photographs might have been taken just within the sculpture studio at the opening into the conservatory, which as Bourgoïn and Lucas's images demonstrate were separated by a curtain. Although in the image with *Médée* the background is virtually imperceptible, the

⁶⁸ The work was identified as *Médée* in Bernhardt's autobiography where it was published for the first time in 1907. The composition of the work differs in some aspects from the one in Bourgoïn's watercolour but this could be due to the time difference or, again, inaccuracy in Bourgoïn's representation. I know of one mounted version of this photograph (in a private collection in London) and, as with the other photographs by Melandri, its circulation is not known. However, the fact that it was not published until 1907 in the autobiography suggests it was a single image probably belonging to Bernhardt. A later photograph of a more complete, plaster version of *Médée* in Bernhardt's sculpture studio at boulevard Pereire was published in 'Sarah Bernhardt [Part 1], *La Plume*, 12e année, no. 274 (15 September 1900), 577-592 (581). The photographs of boulevard Pereire in this publication (see also note X above) were very likely to have been produced specially for *La Plume* and therefore some time shortly before this date. I know of no completed version of *Médée*.

same strong light suggests the well-lit location of the sculpture studio and conservatory. In any case, the size of this work and its fragility as an unfinished clay model would have made moving it to another location difficult.

However, images and accounts of the atelier-salon indicate that this too was used for the production of sculpture and Melandri's photographs with the busts and the painting on an easel could therefore have been taken there, the strong lighting provided by the large window opening onto avenue de Villiers and from the skylight above. An undated drawing by Ernest de Liphart, a co-contributor to *La Vie moderne* along with Bernhardt, represents the area underneath this window where Melandri might have conducted the session (fig. 2: 18). Liphart's drawing shows the side of the atelier-salon from which Bourgoïn's 1879 watercolours were painted as filled with signs of art production: a covered bust in progress on a modelling stool and bucket for clay or water beneath, a plaster standing figure, and easels with paintings in progress.⁶⁹ Bourgoïn's 1879 watercolours of the atelier-salon (figs 2: 3-4) also represent this room as the site of sculpture and painting production and verbal accounts also attest to seeing sculpture tools, busts and paintings in progress there in 1879 and 1880.⁷⁰ Some of the visual images of this room show Bernhardt with finished works (Melandri's photographs with the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* and Bourgoïn's painting with *Après la*

⁶⁹ I have not yet made a firm identification of the plaster standing figure. It may be a figure by Bernhardt or Saint-Marceaux's *Arlequin* mentioned by Goetschy as the stance and clothing of the figure are similar, although the object held by the figure is differently placed to this work.

⁷⁰ Yates, 160; 'Portraits: Mdle. Bernhardt', *The Theatre* (1 June 1879), 285; Master Fish, *Le Boudoir* (11 July 1881), 75. One account claimed that Bernhardt made sculpture in the atelier-salon in front of an audience of visitors, although the story was a retrospective, second-hand account that gave no details of the work in question and was unlikely to be her main method of working. Joseph-Napoléon Primoli, 'I remember something that was told to me sometime ago [...]. It was in her studio at the avenue de Villiers, everyone was there all around her with their tongues hanging out, while she, in her fantasy rapin costume, was sculpting [je me souviens de ce mot qu'on m'a conté il y a quelque temps ... C'était dans son atelier avenue de Villiers, ils étaient tous là autour d'elle, la langue dehors, tandis que dans son costume de rapin fantaisiste elle sculpter]', 'Journal 1893: Rome, 13 February 1893', *Pages inédites: recueillies, présentées et annotées* (Rome: Edizioni Storia et Letteratura, 1959), 30. A watercolour by René-Raoul Griffon belonging to Bernhardt was sold at her death and entitled *Intérieur de Sarah Bernhardt en 1877. Le Salon* but is not located.

tempête) and Bernhardt's collaboration in producing these visual images indicates the importance for her of representing the atelier-salon as a workspace.

Considered together this material on avenue de Villiers suggests that Bernhardt may have sometimes worked on busts in the atelier-salon but that her principal site of sculpture production was the sculpture studio in the courtyard with its adjacent conservatory. It also seems likely that Bernhardt's painting activity was mostly conducted in the atelier-salon as few signs of this are present in any of the representations of the sculpture studio and conservatory area. Because Bernhardt had a separate sculpture studio in avenue de Villiers it might be sufficient to argue that this demonstrates the required conditions for the sculpture she produced during the period she lived and worked there (1876-86). But if she also used the atelier-salon for making sculpture this needs to be considered along with other aspects of the use of this space important to her practice, for instance her collection of artworks. Unlike the sculpture studio and conservatory, the atelier-salon provided the public face of Bernhardt's practice because it was the place where she received visitors who were not amongst her intimate group of friends and these were the people who represented it. Sometimes its use as studio space was eclipsed in representations of it because it was also a salon and more importantly the salon of an actress. Even fellow sculptor Lord Ronald Gower described Bernhardt's studio in May 1880 only as 'full of precious stuffs, plants and – rubbish.'⁷¹ The sailor and writer Pierre Loti's (1850-1923) much cited visit to Bernhardt in May 1879 mentioned 'strange and precious objects brought from all corners of the Orient', bunches of flowers and 'a divan embroidered with Chinese chimeras with golden claws and the large leaves of the hothouse plants' above.⁷²

⁷¹ Entry for 5 May 1880 in the diary of Lord Ronald Gower (unpublished manuscript transcribed by Philip Ward-Jackson). I am very grateful to Philip Ward-Jackson for providing me with a copy of his transcript.

⁷² '[O]bjets étranges et précieux, apportés de tous les coins de l'Orient; partout les gerbes de fleurs rares'; and 'un divan brodé de chimères chinoises aux griffes d'or; des plantes de serre étendent, au-dessus', Loti, 'jeudi, 28 mai' and 'vendredi, 29 mai 1879'; 80, 83. Interest in Loti's visit in secondary sources concerns who he saw at Bernhardt's home, his later description of her bedroom (25 June or March 1880) and how he presented himself to her in a sailor's costume. Loti's letters to

When the British journalist Edmond Hodgson Yates saw this room he struggled over how to represent it. First he described his wait in the hallway ‘frescoed with paintings of Chinese life’ and the antechamber with ‘an immense painting of the hostess in riding costume’ (actually Abbéma’s 1876 portrait of Bernhardt).⁷³ Then he wrote of his entry to the atelier-salon as follows:

But is it a drawing-room or is it a studio? Here there is more room than ever for confusion of idea. It is a very broad, very lofty, lit both by the cathedral-window

his friend Lucien Jouselin in which these visits are also discussed are in the collection of Pierre and Jacques Loti-Viaud and are cited in Gold and Fizdale, 216-218. No further information about the atelier-salon is given. Gold and Fizdale discuss Loti’s association with Bernhardt including the dedication (never published) of his novel *Aziyadé* (1879) to her. They also tell a story about how he presented himself at her house wrapped in a carpet echoing Cleopatra’s presentation to Caesar and claim that thereafter they became ‘intimate friends’; Gold and Fizdale, 217. The carpet story is repeated in Apter’s discussion of theatricalized Orientalism involving both Loti and Bernhardt; 137. I have found no confirmation of the story elsewhere. Bernhardt owned several books by Loti and her copy of *Le Mariage de Loti* (1898) contained a hand-written dedication from him (*Bibliothèque de Mme Sarah Bernhardt* (première partie), 25-27 June 1923). She too dedicated a copy of her novel *Petite idole* (1920) to Loti as follows: ‘A Pierre Loti, l’ami le plus lointain mais le plus proche de mon coeur’; Alain Quella-Villéger and Bruno Vernier, ‘Dictionnaire biographique des principales personnes citées’, in Pierre Loti, *Soldats bleus: Journal intime 1914-18*, ed. Alain Quella-Villéger and Bruno Vernier (Paris: Table Ronde, 2004). I am unable to establish the extent of the intimacy of their friendship from these sources and much material on Loti is in private collections which I have not yet pursued. With regard to Bernhardt’s interiors and the possible influence of Loti, Jamault suggests that he may have contributed to the decoration of rue de Rome with objects from all four corners of the globe (170, note 12), but the two probably did not meet until 1877 or 1878. Loti was famed for his travels in North Africa, Turkey, and Asia and much of his writing concerns this. Much of the decorative scheme in his home at Rochefort and his collection of art works derived from these travels, for instance in 1877 he decorated one of the rooms as a Turkish salon, however, I cannot establish a secure enough link that would suggest Bernhardt was influenced by Loti in her own choice of décor. For Loti’s relationship with the Orient as writer and collector, see Solange Thierry and Jérôme Godeau, eds, *Pierre Loti: fantômes d’Orient*, exh. cat. (Paris: Paris musées, 2006). The exhibition was held 27 June to 3 December 2006, musée de la Vie romantique, Paris.

⁷³ Yates, 159-60. The identity of this painting is confirmed in two other sources. One is Griffith who uses the passage from Yates’s text about avenue de Villiers almost verbatim but adds Abbéma as the author of the painting, 23. The second is in a short biography of Bernhardt’s career by Félicien Champsaur in ‘Sarah Bernhardt’, *Les Hommes d’aujourd’hui*, no. 7 (25 October 1878), n.p. Champsaur’s account only describes objects he sees that were in the hallway of avenue de Villiers and it is unclear if he visited any other part of the house although he does discuss Bernhardt’s works in progress at that time. His article was reused in two further publications in 1880 with some minor adjustments: ‘Sarah Bernhardt’, *Les Contemporains: journal hebdomadaire*, no. 28 (1880) and ‘Sarah Bernhardt’, *Revue moderne et naturaliste*, 3e année, no. 1 (January 1880), 3-8.

aforesaid and by a skylight – in consequence a studio. It is tapestried in velvet – a drawing-room then. It contains easels, unfinished pictures, busts in the rough – studio; daintily-fashioned chairs, *fauteuils*, satin couches – drawing-room; vases big as sentry-boxes, which may have come direct from the sale of furniture and effects of the leader of the Forty Thieves – drawing-room again, if you like, but a drawing-room of Brobdingnag. And to add to the variety of effects, towering tropical plants enough for Kew, and a fireplace worthy, in breadth and depth, of the kitchen at Windsor Castle. In truth, it is the home at once of an amateur of pictorial art, and of the greatest living actress in France – that is to say, the greatest in the world.⁷⁴

Yates's difficulty with the dual use of the atelier-salon at avenue de Villiers had already been encountered at Bernhardt's studio in the boulevard de Clichy. The journalist from *Zigzags* found it difficult to see 'feminine bibelots' together with busts, tools, and the equipment of a sculptor. Similarly, Lysiane Bernhardt's description of the apartment at rue de Rome (although retrospective and possibly inaccurate in terms of location) included an easel that became insignificant in the setting of a feminized and exoticized decorative scheme. Neither account privileged what they described as a place where material art production took place. This was more difficult in avenue de Villiers because it was purpose built as a studio home and Bernhardt's practice as sculptor and painter had expanded. Despite his apparent confusion, Yates's account, more detailed than those of Gower and Loti, referred to the room's dual use and to the art objects he saw there. As well as work in progress his inventory included Clairin's painting of Bernhardt and one of her busts 'after the manner of Carpeau [sic]'.⁷⁵ Other accounts of avenue de Villiers and images provide further detail on the decorative scheme and artworks in this area of the house.

The references to the decorative scheme and Bernhardt's collection of artworks in these texts help to situate her within an artistic community in Paris. Bernhardt's participation in an artistic community did not arise, as it did for other artists, from an education at the *École des beaux-arts*. Rather, Bernhardt's access to such a community and her knowledge of art was gained through a variety of other means: her private training (which I discuss in

⁷⁴ Yates, 160.

⁷⁵ Yates, 160, 166, 167.

Chapter 3), being the subject of portraits, viewing art, owning it, and reading about it. According to Bernhardt's autobiography she collaborated with the team that provided decorative painting for the property in the hallway, bedroom, and dining room (269). This included Georges Clairin, Félix Escalier (the architect), Ernest-Ange Duez, Georges (or Louis b. 1861) Picard (b. 1857), Ulysse Butin (1837-83), Emmanuel Jadin (b. c. 1845), Philippe Parrot (1831-94), and Abbéma.⁷⁶ No records of any economic transactions remain of this arrangement but Bernhardt had already established a working relationship and friendship in 1875 with Abbéma and Parrot, in 1876 with Clairin, and Duez was a neighbour on the street in 1876.⁷⁷ Few details of specific decorative works are known: only 'scenes from Chinese life' (seen by Yates and others) in the hallway, an *Aurore* on Bernhardt's bedroom ceiling by Clairin, and some scenes in the dining room of 'symbolic kitchen boys and landscapes' by Abbéma, Clairin, and Clairin's friend Ulysse Butin.⁷⁸ Of

⁷⁶ Bernhardt does not mention Abbéma as part of the team but does credit her contribution as cited in Lysiane Bernhardt's biography, 97. Several of these were already Clairin's friends.

⁷⁷ In addition to Abbéma's painting of Bernhardt in her studio at boulevard de Clichy in 1875, she also made drawings of Bernhardt that year. Abbéma and Bernhardt probably met in 1874 (see Chapter 4 for further details). Parrot produced a portrait of Bernhardt in 1875 which was exhibited at the Salon and belonged to Emile de Girardin until 1880 when it was left to the Comédie Française in his will. The first available record of Bernhardt's artistic relationship and friendship with Clairin is the portrait he painted in 1876 (musée du Petit Palais). Georges Bernier mentions that Bernhardt regularly collected wounded soldiers from Buzenval for treatment at a hospital she ran in the Odéon theatre during the Franco-Prussian war and that this is where Clairin served with Henri Regnault in January 1871 when Regnault was killed but there is no evidence that Clairin and Bernhardt met in this way; Bernier, 'Sarah and the Visual Arts: A Disconcerting Love Affair' in *Sarah Bernhardt and her Times*, 7-64 (23). A sketchbook of Clairin's appeared for sale in a document annotated as 'Catalogue Berès 1936' and included pencil sketches of Bernhardt, her home, her dog, and her sculptures. This may give some indication of an early encounter between the two, but, unfortunately, I have not been able to trace the sketchbook; MOSD, dossier Clairin. I have made enquiries to the curator of drawings at the musée du Petit Palais regarding a Clairin sketchbook held there, but have yet to receive a response.

⁷⁸ Colombier (1884), 78-79; S. -J. *La Vie moderne* (25 October 1879), 461. The Parisian restaurant L'Escargot Montorgueil currently houses another ceiling painting that Clairin provided for Bernhardt. According to the restaurant's self-produced guide and the image they provide shows 'cherub chefs [angelots cuisiniers]'. The inscription below the scene describes this as 'painted by Georges Clairin for the dining room of Sarah Bernhardt' but the guide does not indicate whether this was at avenue de Villiers or boulevard Pereire and there is no other reference to this work in any text I have yet found. See Xavier d'Aleyrac de Coulange, 'Petit historique de l'Escargot Montorgueil',

all the sources on Bernhardt's interiors the article in *La Vie moderne* where Lucas's drawing of the sculpture studio was published is the most comprehensive inventory of artworks Bernhardt owned at this time. Another drawing by Lucas of a corner of the atelier-salon (fig. 2: 19) shows that by 1881 Bernhardt owned a reduced version of Antonin Mercié's *David* (1873). Goetschy also listed René de Saint-Marceaux's *Arlequin*, reductions of *Jeanne d'Arc* (Salon 1870) by Henri Chapu, and *Voltaire* by Jean-Antoine Houdon as well as statuettes in bronze, silver, jade, and ivory, the Clairin portrait, Jules Bastien Lepage's 1879 portrait and a small painting by Edouard Détaillé.⁷⁹ Other than listing some of Bernhardt's own works (finished or in progress) no other account mentioned her ownership of sculpture. Paintings were noticed, for instance Clairin's 1876 portrait appeared in most accounts of the atelier-salon and some accounts mentioned her 1876 portrait by Abbéma which hung in the hallway and a work by Doré. These were not presented as part of an art collection. Yet for any artist the ownership of works by others including those exchanged as gifts was an important aspect of their own practice and Bernhardt's collection of artworks by her contemporaries signaled her interest and involvement in the work of others.

My stated aim at the beginning of this chapter was to establish how and when Bernhardt's studios and homes were organised by her or functioned as the site of sculpture production. Several issues have emerged that can be thought of as patterns, firstly in the use of space, and secondly with regard to how that space is represented. In boulevard de Clichy the studio comprised two rooms, and possibly an entrance hall. In addition to its function as a sculpture studio, this was also where Bernhardt entertained friends. In avenue de Villiers this dual function was expanded over a larger area of the house in two core areas. The studio in the courtyard – the primary sculpture studio – was, and remains, less well-known. The adjoining conservatory was used as a place for intimate meetings with close

unpublished pamphlet, n.d. I am very grateful to Professor Carol Ockman, Williams College, MA for sending me this guide.

⁷⁹ Goetschy, *La Vie moderne* (28 May 1881), 348.

friends. The atelier-salon and its entrance hallway were the 'public face' of Bernhardt's home where other visitors were received and this was the area of the house that they usually represented in their accounts. Looking for evidence of Bernhardt's sculpture practice requires that the archive and its material be scoured for signs of this practice. This involves resisting the temptation to dwell on material that contains a wealth of detail on her interiors, most of which turns out to be irrelevant to making sculpture and effects only the generalized picture of someone – a woman, an actress, a celebrity – according to the same notions of theatricality and femininity that governed her work on stage. There is no doubt Bernhardt contributed to this, after all that was her day job. For instance, the photographs by Melandri of Bernhardt in a coffin are theatrical but of all the objects Bernhardt could have displayed in this tightly cropped image taken in the atelier-salon, she chose the *Bust of Louise Abbéma*, as much because it was her portrait of someone she loved and was loved by as it was the sign of her achievement as a sculptor.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ This photograph is discussed by Ockman and in her earlier work on Bernhardt. She points out that the photograph is often cropped to exclude the bust in subsequent reproductions of it. She argues that 'Bernhardt's placement of the bust of Abbéma above her coffin turns her companion into a guardian figure at the crossroads of mortality and immortality, policing the threshold between life and death'; Ockman (2005), 51-52. I have identified four versions of this scene, including one that was cropped in the original photograph. However, it is probably the case that some subsequent uses of the photographs that do include the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* may have been cropped. For the cropped original version of this photograph, see agence Roger-Viollet, image no. 23973-19. This has been mounted on Melandri card, indicating that it was an alternative version of the scenario. I do not reproduce this image here but it is tightly cropped around the confines of the coffin – the mantelpiece, the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* and the clay bust in the cloche on the left are not visible; the only other objects that can be seen are the floor, part of the small table to the left of the coffin and the background wall hanging. As such, any cropping changes the scene from one in which Bernhardt is figured in relation to her work in sculpture and specifically her work of Abbéma in sculpture in order to become the sole focus. I concur with aspects of Ockman's reading of this (set of) images as an important indicator of the two women's intimate and artistic relationship. I add to her reading that the specific importance of the *bust* in this photograph is as a signifier of Bernhardt's sculpture practice and that this is inextricably bound up with her love relationship with Abbéma. Making (as an act of) love is thus tied to making work and both are essential aspects of the history of Bernhardt's sculpture production and practice as a whole. For another suggestion about the significance of the placement of the bust (which was not its siting in other images of avenue de Villiers), see Interview with a Bust.

The material discussed above covers most of the first half (1877 to 1881) of the ten-year period that Bernhardt occupied avenue de Villiers. This was the most intensive period of her sculpture production. It was also the time during which she most participated in producing visual material that foregrounded her sculpture practice: she commissioned the Melandri and Bourgoïn series and, probably through her involvement as a contributor to *La Vie moderne*, Lucas and Liphart's illustrations of the two studios were published. After 1881 avenue de Villiers appeared in only two more watercolours, again by Bourgoïn, in which Bernhardt was seen painting a female model in the atelier-salon.⁸¹ 1880 had been a turning point in Bernhardt's work in the theatre: she left the Comédie-Française for the second and final time and from then on worked independently, mainly at theatres she leased. It is also the year that Bernhardt embarked on her first lengthy tour outside France, visiting the

⁸¹ Both paintings by Bourgoïn show Bernhardt in the same scenario in the atelier-salon (on the internal wall side, opposite the large window) painting a female model in Japanese costume with one slight difference: in one image the model looks towards Bernhardt, in the other she faces ahead looking beyond her. The current location of either painting is unknown. One (model facing forwards) appeared for sale at Christie's in New York in 1994 as 'L'Atelier de Sarah Bernhardt' [sic], watercolour on paper (52.2 x 70.7 cm), signed and dated 'D. Bourgoïn / 85', *Nineteenth-Century European Paintings, Drawings, Watercolours and Sculpture*, 25 May 1994, figs 20, 23. The other (model with her face turned to Bernhardt) exists only as a photographic reproduction: in Lysiane Bernhardt's biography, as a photographic print in BNFDEP (Na 237, gd. fol. 795, no. 103) and by the caisse nationales des Monuments historiques (NA 237-795). In BNFDEP it is listed as a photograph by Nadar (no negative exists and I am uncertain about this attribution) and is titled *Atelier de Sarah Bernhardt*. Bourgoïn's signature and, possibly, the date '85' are visible. Nectoux suggests that the model dressed in Japanese costume may be Abbéma. I think this likely (in both cases), but the poor quality of this photograph of a painting, my photocopy of the version for sale at Christie's in 1994, and the absence of either original painting, make it difficult to confirm; *Stars et monstres sacrés*, 58-63 (60), cat. no. 103; photograph illustrated, 17. Abbéma is (wrongly) credited in posthumous literature as appearing in two other images (a photograph of the atelier-salon at boulevard Pereire and another, probably of Clairin's studio at Bernhardt's home in Belle-Île-en-mer), but this does not rule out that she may be the model in Bourgoïn's watercolours. Bourgoïn painted the studios of other artists and the number of images in Bernhardt's series suggests they were commissioned by her. The early history of ownership of any of this series is unknown, although the inclusion of reproductions of two of the five in Bernhardt's and Lysiane Bernhardt's biographies suggest Bernhardt, a family member or a friend may have owned them. A painting by Bourgoïn entitled *L'Atelier de Sarah Bernhardt* was sold in 1888 but it is not clear which image this was; E. Bénézit, *Dictionnaire critique et documentaire des peintres, sculpteurs, dessinateurs et graveurs de tous les temps et de tous les pays par un groupe d'écrivains spécialistes français et étrangers*, ed. Jacques Busse, 14 vols (Paris: Gründ, 1999), II [hereafter Bénézit].

United States from October 1880 until May 1881.⁸² This was to be followed by later, extensive tours in Europe, the Americas, North Africa, and Australia. Despite being away from home for extended periods, Bernhardt nonetheless continued to make sculpture, although on a lesser scale. This she did at her next home on the boulevard Pereire.⁸³

The precise details of Bernhardt's move from avenue de Villiers to boulevard Pereire are not clear. According to the land registry, avenue de Villiers was bought in 1886 by Eudoxie Dervillé, widow of marble merchant Cyr-Adolphe Dervillé, although, as usual, the month is not specified.⁸⁴ This would seem to indicate that Bernhardt lived in avenue de Villiers until 1886 and therefore continued to work in her studios there. However, she provided a different address – 15 rue Saint-Georges – for the Salon guides in 1885 and 1886. Unfortunately, because the land registry documents for this property have been rendered illegible due to moisture damage, this cannot be confirmed as her residence, or as a care of address, for these two years.⁸⁵ Nor is it possible to ascertain, if Bernhardt did live there, whether or not the property had studio facilities for making sculpture given that she exhibited a bust in the Salon for both these years.⁸⁶ Bernhardt embarked on a lengthy

⁸² Bernhardt's first professional trip outside France was her visit to London from the end of May to July with the Comédie-Française. In 1880 she again travelled to London independently and to Brussels, Copenhagen, and the French regions.

⁸³ Having made around 37 works by the time she moved in to boulevard Pereire, thereafter she made less than 20, including some in her studio at her summer home in Belle-Île-en-mer from the late 1890s.

⁸⁴ AVP, cadastre de 1876, rue Fortuny, D1P4, carton 460.

⁸⁵ Ernest Pronier claims that Bernhardt 'lived for a time in a furnished apartment in rue Saint-Georges [habite quelque temps un appartement meublé rue Saint-Georges]' having had to sell her hôtel on the avenue de Villiers. Analysis of his chronological system situates both events during the first half of 1886. Pronier's is the best referenced biography of Bernhardt to date but he does not cite a source for this particular information. Given that he published in 1942, he may have had access to the land registry for the property prior to the current damage setting in. However, he may simply have used the Salon guides; Pronier, *Une Vie au théâtre: Sarah Bernhardt* (Geneva: Jullien, 1942), 88. The sale of the hôtel at avenue de Villiers was mentioned as having occurred recently in the *Grand dictionnaire*, XVII. I have not yet investigated the press in Paris at this time to establish this for certain. This volume of the *Grand dictionnaire* may have been published in 1886-87: I have yet to establish exact dates of publication for all the volumes.

⁸⁶ In the Salon of 1885 Bernhardt exhibited a plaster bust entitled *Henriette* and a marble bust of *Mars enfant*, and in 1886 a marble bust entitled *Mlle de ****. Prior to this Bernhardt had always exhibited

tour of the Americas in April 1886 and did not return until May 1887, which at least accounts for the approximate date she moved into her next, and last, home at 56 boulevard Pereire. Bernhardt did not buy this building, or at least not immediately. Erected in 1884, it was leased in October 1887 to her agent Maurice Grau who then sub-let it to Bernhardt from 1 January 1888, although Bernhardt had probably taken up residence in October 1887 prior to any exchange of legal documents between the two.⁸⁷ The overall ground area of this property was much larger than avenue de Villiers (a total of 474 square metres compared to 281 square metres) and consisted of three main areas: the main house, an adjoining conservatory to the rear of this building, and a pavilion in the courtyard area. The only drawings of any architectural composition of the building are a tiny thumbnail sketch of the boundaries of the main house and conservatory in the land registry and two small sketches of the façade.⁸⁸ Unlike the property at avenue de Villiers built on a corner, most of the hôtel at boulevard Pereire was not visible from the street and the drawings of the façade give no clues as to the internal layout. In addition to this the land registry does not define any room specifically as a studio as was the case with avenue de Villiers.

recently made works indicating that she would have needed a studio during these years. Despite providing a different address, this may have continued to be the studio at avenue de Villiers until she embarked on tour in April 1886 given that Bernhardt's occupancy and use of the property at rue Saint-Georges is impossible to establish. However, it is also possible that some or all these works had not been made recently. Bernhardt exhibited a bust entitled *Bellone enfant* in her exhibition in London in June 1879 which may be the same work as *Mars enfant*. A marble version of *Henriette*, if the same work in a different medium, was exhibited at the Salon of 1888. Therefore it is feasible to suggest that she did not make sculpture at all in 1885-86 and therefore did not need studio facilities.

⁸⁷ AVP, cadastre de 1876, 2-160 boulevard Pereire, D1P4, carton 863. The building was owned by Louis Cantin and the land registry outlines this sub-letting arrangement. Insofar as I can interpret this document, it is possible that ownership passed to Cantin's widow in 1891 and that Bernhardt may have become the owner in 1893 but the method of recording changes of ownership is sketchy. The first account of a visit to boulevard Pereire was published at the end of November but concerned Bernhardt's preparations for her birthday party (23 October) and her arrangement of the atelier-salon suggesting that she may have moved in fairly recently; Jean Lorrain, 'Une Visite chez Sarah', *L'Événement* (30 November 1887), n.p. She mentions Grau as her agent in the interview recounted in Lorrain's article but not the sub-letting arrangement for the property. I have been unable to establish why and precisely how this occurred.

⁸⁸ The first of these was published in Guillemot, *La Revue illustrée* (15 January 1888), 76. The second is reproduced in a recent biography titled 'Sarah Bernhardt's hôtel in Paris' alongside an account of the house at avenue de Villiers but no source is given; Joanna Richardson, *Sarah Bernhardt and her World* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), 60.

I am therefore more reliant on verbal descriptions and images of the internal space at boulevard Pereire in order to establish the layout, composition, and use of space for studio purposes. Several lengthy journalistic accounts of boulevard Pereire appeared in the French and British press in the 1880s and 1890s and the memoirs of visitors appeared later, after Bernhardt's death in 1923. Apart from two painted portraits of Bernhardt there -- by Graham Robertson in 1899 and Walter Spindler in 1890 -- the remaining visual material on boulevard Pereire consists of engravings and photographs which were used to illustrate journalistic articles and biographies or published separately as visual essays of the internal space. Analysis of this material reveals a similar pattern to the use of space as at avenue de Villiers: a separate sculpture studio and an atelier-salon serving as a public showpiece room where signs of sculpture production indicate that some work was also conducted. Unlike the archival corpus on avenue de Villiers there are no images similar to those of the conservatory that might be taken to represent a private space shared solely with intimate friends.

How and under what circumstances boulevard Pereire was represented generally in contemporary verbal and visual material affects how its use as the site of sculpture production can be presented. As a general rule, Bernhardt seems to have contributed less directly to this process than she did at avenue de Villiers, although her participation was nonetheless required (she had to provide access to her home, was interviewed several times, and posed for photographs).⁸⁹ Patterns established in the representation of avenue de Villiers became more accentuated at boulevard Pereire. The relative lack of attention given to the sculpture studio is even more apparent here: there are no verbal descriptions of it by others, it is only alluded to by Bernhardt at quite a late date (1910) and photographs did not appear until 1900 and after Bernhardt's death. On the other hand, verbal description of the atelier-salon and the wealth of detail provided increased as did the number of visual representations. Although signs of Bernhardt's sculpture production at

⁸⁹ I am uncertain as to whether the portraits by Robertson and Spindler were commissioned by her.

boulevard Pereire are evident in both verbal and visual material produced in the 1880-90s of the atelier-salon, the primary emphasis became the celebrity's home or the celebrity at home (depending on whether or not Bernhardt herself was included) and, more than ever before, this concerned the decorative scheme: huge inventories on the wall and floor coverings, furnishing, decorative objects, and animals were found in verbal accounts.⁹⁰ At avenue de Villiers Bernhardt herself had often been represented as a sculptor and painter within an environment equipped to varying degrees for both activities. Now Bernhardt's presence was less often, or less specifically, associated with any obvious material activity: several images show her simply standing or seated, some of the time contemplative, at other times engaged with a putative viewer, herself a decorative object within the milieu.⁹¹ Nonetheless, it is possible to glean something about where and therefore how Bernhardt made sculpture at boulevard Pereire.

In 1910 Bernhardt claimed, or the interviewer claimed on her behalf, that the atelier-salon was not where she made sculpture. She is cited as follows: 'I don't work in this room [...]

⁹⁰ The most elaborate accounts tended to be journalistic articles, sometimes reproduced in collected publications. Not all were first-hand accounts but copied from earlier sources. I list them as follows: Lorrain, *L'Événement* (3 November 1887), n.p.; Guillemot, *La Revue illustrée* (15 January 1888), 74-81; Meynell, *Art Journal* (1888), 134-39 [copied from Guillemot]; Louis Germont [Rose-Thé], 'Madame Sarah Bernhardt', *Loges d'artistes* (Paris: Dentu, 1889), 351-64 (probably copied from Guillemot, see below); Jules Huret, 'Chez Sarah Bernhardt', *L'Écho de Paris*, (17 January 1891), republished in Huret (1899), 123-28; Alphonse Mucha, 'Mes Souvenirs sur Sarah Bernhardt', *Paris Prague*, 1^e année, no. 6 (1 May 1923), 24-25 (claims to be about the house at avenue de Villiers but actually concerns that at boulevard Pereire). The memoirs and journals of visitors to boulevard Pereire also gave (less lengthy) descriptions of their visits and the decorative scheme; see, for instance, Nellie Melba (May or June 1889); W. Graham Robertson (c. 1889); Edmond de Goncourt (1893); and Jules Renard (1896); Melba, *Melodies and Memories* (London: Butterworth, 1925), 40; Robertson, *Time Was: The Reminiscences of W. Graham Robertson* [1931] (London, Melbourne and New York: Quartet, 1981), 109-10; Edmond de Goncourt and Jules de Goncourt, *Journal: mémoires de la vie littéraire*, ed. Robert Ricatte, 22 vols (Monaco: Imprimerie nationale, 1956-58), 179-82; and Renard, *Journal 1887-1910*, ed. Léon Guichard and Gilbert Sigaux (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), 310-12.

⁹¹ Bergman-Carton discusses Bernhardt's engagement with the decorative arts as a patron and consumer but also in terms of her creative manipulation of her own image in a way that plays with the dialectic of art and decoration where the latter is the degraded term and associated with female gender; 99-124. Although there are areas of overlap between my project and Bergman-Carton's, I am concerned to investigate how discussions of Bernhardt's decorative scheme in contemporary literature and since can steer one away from discussing her work as an artist.

I'm too easily disturbed in here. I have a second studio [atelier] on the other side of the courtyard a proper shambles where nobody but me is allowed. It's there that in a simple smock I model my clay and mix plaster.'⁹² It is impossible to say if Bernhardt had used this room as her sculpture studio since she took up residence at boulevard Pereire. The first images that might constitute the room described as a 'proper shambles' only appeared in 1900 in a feature article in *La Plume* and these were not accompanied by any explanation other than the caption of one photograph as 'atelier de sculpture de Sarah Bernhardt' (fig. 2: 20). The other two were titled according to the works shown (figs 2: 21-22).⁹³ A further two photographs of this room were published within a few months of Bernhardt's death, one called the 'sculpture studio', the other simply the 'studio' (figs 2: 24, 23). Apart from the close-up image (fig. 2: 22), all these images show the same view of a room containing modelling stools, a large trestle, plaster casts for copying, and, across these images collectively, several works by Bernhardt, probably her plaster models rather than finished works. This appears to be a fairly high room but with no overhead light source, unlike the sculpture studio at avenue de Villiers. The single view for the purpose of the photographs suggests that the light source comes from the opposite end (where the photograph was taken from) which may be the window seen in the photograph of a detail of the *Bust of Victorien Sardou* (fig. 2: 22).⁹⁴ This room of bare masonry walls, a large oven structure (which seems to be unused), an additional small stove, and a large collection of plaster casts stored on shelves or hung on the walls is markedly different to the sculpture

⁹² 'Ce n'est pas dans cette pièce que je travaille [...] j'y serais trop souvent dérangée. J'ai un second atelier, de l'autre côté de la cour, véritable capharnaüm où personne que moi ne pénètre. C'est là qu'en simple blouse je pétris ma glaise et gâche mon plâtre', 'Anon., 'Violons d'Ingres! Comment Sarah Bernhardt devint sculpteur', *Lecture pour tous* (1910), 118-124 (119).

⁹³ 'Sarah Bernhardt', *La Plume* (15 September 1900), 583, 580, 581.

⁹⁴ Two further images of Bernhardt with the plaster *Bust of Edmond Rostand* were published c. 1919. The close cropping of both images and their poor quality make it difficult to establish where this might have been taken. In one a window is partially visible on the right and is lower and more elaborate glazed than the window seen in the photograph of *Victorien Sardou* suggesting it might have been taken in the atelier-salon rather than the sculpture studio. However, images of this bust seem to appear across quite a time span: in a photograph dated c. 1895 Bernhardt is shown modelling the bust outdoors with Rostand present, but she is also shown working on it in Louis Mercanton's film *Sarah Bernhardt à Belle-Isle* (1912). It is therefore difficult to use these photographs to draw any conclusions about the use of space for sculpture production.

studio at avenue de Villiers. Despite claims that the latter was 'sober' or 'severe', it showed signs of sufficient comfort for social use and adjoined a conservatory that was clearly used and equipped for intimate encounters with friends. At boulevard Pereire Bernhardt had to adapt to an existing building and make use of the available space and, of the rooms in the pavilion across the courtyard outlined in the land registry, this sculpture studio was probably the one described as a 'grenier à fournage [storeroom with furnace]'.⁹⁵

Bernhardt's explanation of this room as the only place she made sculpture is not straightforward. None of the photographs show any work in progress or materials, only finished works, but this could simply be that none were underway or that Bernhardt worked under the window at the other end of the room. The evidence suggests that, contrary to Bernhardt's claim in 1910, she did or had made sculpture in the atelier-salon. As at avenue de Villiers this formed part of a core area of the house with similar multiple uses. Here the core area also consisted of three rooms: a central, small salon to the right of which on entering was a dining room and to the left the large atelier-salon. Two sets of images demonstrate the suitability of the atelier-salon as a studio and the way it was used. The engravings published with an article by Maurice Guillemot's in the *La Revue illustrée* in 1888 illustrate two ends of the large atelier-salon and a view into it from a room he described as a small salon (figs 2: 25-27).⁹⁶ Modelling stools with possible works in

⁹⁵ It is not clear if this 'grenier' was on the upper floor as the word currently translates as 'attic' derived from the use of a room under the roof in which to store grain and other agricultural produce. The secondary use of 'grenier' as a place to store items one does not wish to throw away was current in French by the eighteenth century. Because Bernhardt stored large-scale work there (*Médée*) it is possible that this was a ground-floor room. See, 'grenier' in *Dictionnaire culturelle en langue française*, ed. Alain Rey, 4 vols (Paris: Dictionnaires le Robert, 2005), II, 1445-46. Other rooms in the building were: a coach room, stables and two unidentified rooms with fireplaces. An undated painting by Clairin shows Bernhardt in the role of *Mélanide* in a walled garden courtyard with a dog. This is likely to be a 'real' garden scene rather than a stage set because of the elaborate planting schemes, ashlar walling, a gothic summer house and so on. Moreover, Bernhardt did not play this role in Maeterlinck's play, *Pelléas et Mélisande* (opened London, July 1904), but rather the male character, Pelléas opposite Mrs Patrick Campbell's *Mélanide*.

⁹⁶ Alice Meynell described this room as 'private ground, adorned with some objects of Art of public interest', *Art Journal* (1888), 139. However, as Meynell's article was plagiarized from Guillemot (*La Revue illustrée*, 15 January 1888) and she had not visited the property it seems that she misinterpreted

progress are seen in all three of these engravings. A set of photographs of the atelier-salon published as *The Home of Sarah Bernhardt in Paris* by Taber Bas Relief (after 1893) accord with a description in Jean Lorrain's article (in 1887) of a 'huge studio', five metres high and with a 'glazed dome' (fig. 2: 28).⁹⁷ Two further images show work in progress: the first is a photograph from an as yet unidentified publication of Bernhardt in front of the clay model of a bust of a young girl (fig. 2: 29), the second, is a reproduced photograph or watercolour in Huret's biography showing the unfinished *Bust of Victorien Sardou* (fig. 2: 30).⁹⁸ In January 1888 the journalist Maurice Guillemot saw 'a wooden stool [that] holds a work in progress, a clay model hardly sketched out, next to it the sculptor's tools'.⁹⁹ During the late 1880s, the British artist and writer Graham Robertson encountered

his description of the room as an 'intimate museum'. Guillemot's reasoning for this description was because it contained a bust of her sister Régina (by Bernhardt), a bust of Bernhardt, and one of Maurice (by Mathieu-Meusnier); *La Revue illustrée* (15 January 1888), 78. There is one further complication: a later article by Louis Germont in *Loges d'artistes* described the small salon as 'tout intime', 354. Germont's article has a similar structure and most of the content is the same as Guillemot's. It is therefore likely that Germont plagiarized Guillemot's article. However, there are significant, and confusing, differences. Guillemot's article, published in January 1888, maintains that Bernhardt was present during his visit and she is accordingly incorporated into descriptions and the illustrations of the surroundings. Germont claims that he was let into the house by Abbéma because Bernhardt was not yet back from a trip away. He locates his visit as sometime shortly before the birth of Bernhardt's granddaughter (Simone) in the middle of 1889 and the book was printed in May 1889. The layout Germont describes in 1889 is different to that of Guillemot: instead of the north to south sequence of atelier-salon, small salon, dining room, Germont instead gives the sequence small salon, atelier-salon, dining room. I cannot explain these discrepancies, nor am I able to establish a definite relationship between the two texts. I have no evidence to suggest that Guillemot and Germont was the same person as is suggested in Roberts, 316, note 118. Even if this were the case, these discrepancies would still require explanation. The small salon was later designated a vestibule in a photograph published in Huret's biography. The land registry included a vestibule but only one 'salon'.

⁹⁷ Lorrain, *L'Événement* (3 November 1887), n.p.; Huret (1899) also said of this room that 'light falls from above through a canopy of colourless silk'; 127. The land registry included a conservatory ['jardin d'hiver'] as well as a salon on the ground floor. This is not mentioned as such in any verbal description of the property. It may correspond to the atelier-salon with its glazed, domed roof but it is impossible to be certain about any of these correspondences.

⁹⁸ This is held in the Theatre Museum collection in London and comes from an English language publication, possibly *The Studio*. I have checked 1896-99 issues of this publication but not located it in these years.

⁹⁹ Guillemot, *La Revue illustrée* (15 January 1888), 78. Within the article Guillemot records Bernhardt discussing a work in progress that includes the figures of 'un amour' and 'la mort'.

Bernhardt at work on a group with which she was dissatisfied and which he helped to destroy.¹⁰⁰ This evidence for the atelier-salon as the site of sculpture production is thinner than that for avenue de Villiers. But it still demonstrates that adequate material conditions under which to produce sculpture existed at boulevard Pereire. Bernhardt produced less sculpture by the time she lived at this address and made a less concerted effort to represent it as the site of sculpture production. But the signs of that production are nonetheless there.

The atelier-salon and the small salon or vestibule also performed the function of displaying Bernhardt's finished works and those of others. The Taber Bas Relief photographs contain her busts *Régina* (1874), *Damala* (1889), and *Petite fille* (1893) (figs 2: 31-33). In the small salon was a bust of Bernhardt's son Maurice by Mathieu-Meusnier and a marble of herself (unidentified). The sale of Bernhardt's estate included some of her sculpture collection: works by Fix-Masseau, Mercié, and Gérôme, as well as *Régina*, *Damala*, and a reduced marble version of *Après la tempête*.¹⁰¹ In all the images that show the fireplace end of the atelier-salon Clairin's 1876 portrait still took pride of place and again was commented on by visitors.

In her boulevard de Pereire residence Bernhardt had an additional space that we can associate with her sculpture practice: the library. Used on two occasions to interview her, images of this space reveal desks, a collection of books (obviously), and sculpture.¹⁰² In one such photograph Bernhardt is seen in contemplative mode (as with some images of the atelier-salon) but this time she is looking at a statuette that she holds in her hands (fig. 2:

¹⁰⁰ W. Graham Robertson, *Time Was: The Reminiscences of W. Graham Robertson* [1931] (London, Melbourne and New York: Quartet, 1981), 109-10. Robertson also mentions the figures of Love and Death suggesting this was the same work. To my knowledge, no finished work that includes these figures currently exists.

¹⁰¹ *Succession de Mme Sarah Bernhardt*, 11-13 June 1923.

¹⁰² Huret (1899) describes his first visit to boulevard Pereire in January 1891 when he went upstairs to meet her in the study, 128. Another interview for *Le Figaro* was also conducted in this room; Daurelle, *Le Figaro* (22 September 1897), 4. Neither provides a description.

34). Janis Bergman-Carton reads this photograph in terms of Bernhardt's 'creative manipulation of the dialectic of statuette and statue: talent versus genius, miniature versus monument, decorative versus art, artistic consumer versus contemplative aesthete' in which the first of each of these polarities are a degraded term, female gender. Bergman-Carton identifies the figure on the mantelpiece as Mary Magdalene. She problematizes Bernhardt's position in relation to the Magdalene. She argues that because, in this image, Bernhardt wears a loose-fitting gown rather than the usual figure-hugging dresses, it is more difficult to think of her in terms of the sinful self-display of the actress, suggesting instead an association with saintly modesty.¹⁰³

But, and this is what needs emphasizing here, what Bergman-Carton identifies as an image of the Magdalene is, in fact, a reduced marble version of Mathieu-Meusnier's *La Mort de Laïs* (the full-size plaster was shown at the Salon in 1849).¹⁰⁴ Because this photograph is part of a series that I have been unable to locate, it is not dated, but another photograph of the library also showed this work and was published in 1894, two years before Mathieu-Meusnier died. Tracking the works Bernhardt owned is difficult: for instance the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* does not appear after 1881 and it is impossible to know if Bernhardt continued to own it until passing it on to Abbéma at her death. Similarly, if Bernhardt's estate included a marble version of *Après la tempête*, had she owned this since 1876 and, if so, why was it never mentioned or featured in images? It can only be surmised that Bernhardt came to own a copy of *La Mort de Laïs* because Mathieu-Meusnier gave it to her as a gift. My interest in this photograph is that Bernhardt's ownership of a gift from her sculpture teacher demonstrates the importance of this relationship to her (and him). Pictured in the same frame as the Magdalene, Bernhardt can be discussed as sinful/not

¹⁰³ Bergman-Carton, 123.

¹⁰⁴ *Laïs* was a fifth-century BCE courtesan imprisoned by the Greeks in Corinth and mentioned in Pausanias and Plutarch. She was stoned to death at the altar of her patron goddess Aphrodite Melainis in Thessaly. See *Nineteenth-Century French and Western European Sculpture in Bronze and Other Media*, ed. Marie Busco, exh. and sale cat. (New York: Shepherd Gallery, 1985), 88. This is an early, neoclassical work by Mathieu-Meusnier for which his future wife, Adèle Gompel, modeled. Information from Claude Levacher, personal communication, 19 October 2005.

sinful because she was an actress. Pictured in the same frame as *La Mort de Laïs*, Bernhardt's primary association is as a sculptor. Bergman-Carton does not avoid Bernhardt's art practice. She discusses Bastien Lepage's 1879 portrait of Bernhardt in profile contemplating a statuette, probably of Orpheus. She argues that this is a 'gesture of respect' on the part of Bastien Lepage because he 'pays homage to the actress as decorative art, but also as contemplative artist'. This raises several questions (not confined to Bergman Carton's treatment of Bernhardt as an artist). Why not choose to discuss an image in which Bernhardt is shown with her own work? Or when Bernhardt is represented with her own work, why is the primary emphasis on Bernhardt's showmanship, for instance, with regard to one of the photographs by Melandri with a self-portrait bust, as Bergman Carton puts it, her 'self-aware play – her identity as actress, artist and work of art.' Bernhardt, she continues, poses, the sculpture is a 'mirrored reflection of the actress [my emphasis]'. Yes, Bernhardt was an actress; yes, she was skilled at posing. But what sculptor in *his* studio does not pose for photographs?¹⁰⁵ Why not talk about when the bust was made (and it's a self-portrait, of course it's a mirrored reflection) or ask whether it was ever finished? Sculpture is brought into Bernhardt scholarship only to be evacuated from it. Or so it seems. Aside from demonstrating Bernhardt's education as a sculptor through her relationship with her teacher Mathieu-Meusnier, the photograph with *La Mort de Laïs* in her library leads to an enquiry into her reading habits. According to the sale of the library after her death, Bernhardt owned art journals, exhibition guides, biographies of artists, and art historical texts. She learnt to be a sculptor and she read about art.

¹⁰⁵ Hélène Pinet writes that 'one must not forget that the practice of portraiture has close links to theatrical representation, the model, more or less active, plays a role and contributes to his or her image [il ne faut pas oublier que la pratique du portrait entretient des rapports étroits avec la représentation théâtrale, le modèle plus ou moins actif joue un rôle et agit sur son image]'; in *La Sculpture française au dix-neuvième siècle*, 25. See also Evelyne Saëz and Elvire Perego who write of images of (painters') studios that 'one will understand how the studio is something mid-way between an art gallery, a fashionable salon, a cabinet of curiosities and a laboratory of the imagination, the 'genius loci', metamorphoses into a sort of theatrical device [on comprendra ainsi que l'atelier, à mi-chemin entre la galerie d'art, le salon mondain, le cabinet de curiosités et le laboratoire de l'imaginaire, le 'genius loci', se métamorphose en une sorte de dispositif théâtral]'; 'Ateliers en vue', in *Portrait de l'artiste*, 115-122 (116).

The purpose of this chapter has been to demonstrate that because Bernhardt had a location in which to make sculpture – the ‘studio’ in its various forms – this is a basis from which the character of her output can be considered. I stated at the outset that I would not consider Bernhardt’s studio in relation to a norm of sculptors’ studios in the second half of nineteenth-century France: any studio depended on what work a sculptor (or painter) did. Each representation of a ‘studio’ is mediated by the requirements of its function. Who commissioned the image? What will it be used for? What I have attempted here is to assemble available verbal and visual material on Bernhardt’s studio and subject it to an analysis that will explain how she organized any one space as a studio that was adequate to the level of her production and the tasks she performed insofar as it is possible to say what these were. She needed space, light, equipment, and tools. She provided herself with these once she had decided to take up sculpture seriously beyond her initial contact with Mathieu-Meusnier that led to her training and maturation as a sculptor.

Bernhardt’s Studio as Queer-Art-Space

So far I have made reference to the importance of Bernhardt’s relationship with Mathieu-Meusnier (and Franceschi). In Chapter 3 I undertake a more detailed discussion of the training period Bernhardt undertook with her masters and of how she functioned subsequently as an exhibiting sculptor who sold her work. Before that, I want to consider in more depth an issue which has arisen during my discussion of material on Bernhardt’s studios and homes, namely that the studio was not only the site of material production of sculpture, but also the locus for Bernhardt’s relationships with her artist friends. Of these, the two with whom Bernhardt socialized and worked most consistently since the mid-1870s were Abbéma and Clairin (1843-1919).¹⁰⁶ Both had clearly identifiable same-sex amorous inclinations. Because of Bernhardt’s involvement with Abbéma and Clairin and because of their importance to each other’s art practice, I want to frame Bernhardt’s studio where she displayed works by and of

¹⁰⁶ See note 77 for the first record of Bernhardt’s contact with Clairin.

both artists and where she was pictured with them as 'queer-art-space'.¹⁰⁷ By this I mean the conjuncture of a place where art is made, together with that place's hospitality to the difference of non-normative models of living, loving, and working. In other words, queer-art-space is where art making is possible outside the two typical, and heterosexualized, models provided by nineteenth-century art historical legend: female model/ male artist or female student/male teacher.¹⁰⁸ Occupied by Louise Abbéma and Bernhardt's bust of her (either in the process of its production or during its afterlife on display), representations of Bernhardt's studio and home can also be construed as the differentiated site of a *lesbian* queer-art-space. Within this thesis, this is never out of the frame. I began this chapter with images that feature the bust. But, whereas my entire thesis is permeated by the desire to demonstrate the potentiality of lesbian differentiation in the production of nineteenth-century sculpture, the

¹⁰⁷ Bernhardt had several female and male friends or acquaintances with same-sex amorous inclinations who undoubtedly contributed to what I am calling the queerness of her social and cultural milieu, for example: Augusta Holmès, Liane de Pougy, Ella Wheeler, Robert de Montesquiou, Jean Lorrain, W. Graham Robertson, Oscar Wilde, Pierre Loti, Reynaldo Hahn, Marcel Proust, Lord Ronald Gower, Louis Verneuil, Maurice Rostand, and others. I cannot consider these relationships in any depth; this wider queer sociality is the subject of another thesis. I also do not investigate other love relationships that Bernhardt (or Abbéma) may have had with other women. My interest is primarily in Bernhardt's art production, hence the focus only on Abbéma and Clairin. Catherine van Casselaer remarks on Bernhardt's same-sex relationships: Augusta Holmès was 'one of Sarah's close friends' and Abbéma, figured as unequivocally lesbian, was an 'all but permanent fixture in Sarah's household'; *Lot's Wife: Lesbian Paris 1890-1914* (Liverpool: Janus, 1986), 44-48. As in other sources that allude to the queer sociality of Bernhardt's milieu, this possibility is assigned as one element in a generalized narrative of Bernhardt's social unconventionality and not investigated in detail. Support for Bernhardt's social and intellectual milieu as significantly queer is found in her library. Wheeler had written a love poem dedicated to Bernhardt in *Poems of Passion* (first published 1883) and Bernhardt owned a signed copy. The library was also stocked with a range of books by de Pougy, Loti, Lorrain, and Montesquiou, and she owned copies of Pierre Louys's *Les Chansons de Bilitis* (1895) and Camille Flammarion's *Uranie* (1889). The content of Bernhardt's library is not considered in any account of her life or work. Bernhardt's copy of Lorrain's *Sensations et souvenirs* (1895) has recently appeared for sale at Christie's. His dedication to her on the first page reads: 'l'amie la plus chère et la plus sûre que j'ai recontrée, à l'être humain le plus près de mon rêve et de mon coeur'; *Importants livres et manuscrits*, Christie's, Paris, 15 May 2007, lot 5470. Clearly, how Bernhardt solicited such apparently 'passionate' utterances from homosexual men, needs investigation. But, again, there is not room to do it here.

¹⁰⁸ I discuss the heterosexualization of the woman student/male teacher model in relation to Bernhardt and Gustave Doré in Chapter 3.

queer-art-space populated by the three-way liaison of Bernhardt-Abbéma-Clairin is my dedicated subject now.

The closeness of Bernhardt, Abbéma and Clairin and the artistic productiveness that resulted from their liaison was noted early on by the satirical magazine *Zigzags* in 1876. *Zigzags's* journalist wrote in the article on Bernhardt's studio that '[t]hese artists form a bit of a trio: what their friends call the Society of the "Finger in the Eye", in other words a mutual admiration society' and he described a studio scenario (Bernhardt's) in which they made artworks of each other and further works were on display on the walls. This 'Society' was featured again in Paul Mahalin's *Les Jolie actrices de Paris* (1878) in which Bernhardt was designated 'Présidente'. Mahalin described a 'Society' certificate which featured an image with Bernhardt in the centre, her head 'encircled by a nimbus', and Abbéma and Clairin on either side of her both in 'admiring poses' (the medium is not specified).¹⁰⁹ Above the rays of the nimbus was a banner bearing the inscription "Modesty for others, but for us only pride / That's the motto of the Society of the Finger in the Eye".¹¹⁰ No explicit mention is made in

¹⁰⁹ '[L]a tête ceinte d'un nimbe'; and 'dans un pose admirative, le peintre Clairin et la peintresse Abbéma', Paul Mahalin, 'Sarah Bernhardt', *Les Jolies actrices de Paris* (Paris: Tresse, 1878), 177-80 (179)

¹¹⁰ «Modestie pour autrui, mais pour nous-même orgueil / C'est la devise du Doigt dans l'Oeil». Mahalin claims that the society's certificate included amongst a garland of iris and jasmine at the feet of the three figures the following lines of verse by Raoul de Najac: Je vais (et j'en crève d'orgueil) / Aux accents mesquins de ma lyre, / Ignorante foule, te dire / Ce que c'est le Doigt dans l'œil. / Fermer l'oreille à la critique / Mépriser l'insolent bourgeois, / Tous réunis n'être que trois, / Et, séparément, être unique ... / Puis s'écrier: «Nous sommes fiers!» / Mais qu'importe si cela choque ! / De la gloire de notre époque / Chacun de nous forme le tiers. / Etre deux femmes, plus un homme / Egaux tous les trois devant l'Art: / En outre penser qu'on se nomme / Abbéma, Clairin et Bernhardt ; / Posséder le double avantage / De pécher par la quantité, / En brillant par la qualité, / Du cœur ainsi que du visage ; / Au rimeur franchissant le seuil / Avoir toujours la main tendue ... / Ô foule ignorante salut / Je t'ai montré le Doigt dans l'œil'; Mahalin, 179-80. Books from this period on the language of flowers are in general agreed that iris connoted either good news or a message and (white) jasmine, kindness. It is not clear if these were the intended meanings in Mahalin's description. See, for example, Emma Faucon, *Nouveau Langage des Fleurs* (Paris: Lefèvre, 1869), 106, 108. I do not think this society existed. Its source is not known other than being recorded by the *Zigzags* journalist and Mahalin. There may have been some basis for concocting the society and its motto from the mottos Bernhardt and Abbéma used on their personalized writing paper, 'Quand-même' and 'Je veux' respectively. Both passages concerning the 'Society' are cited and discussed in Jamault (105-08)

either account of an erotic aspect to any of the three as individuals or to their relationship in any possible combination (all three; Bernhardt and Clairin; Abbéma and Clairin), although this is hinted at between Abbéma and Bernhardt in *Zigzags* because of the physicality represented by the journalist's Georges Clairin who makes a sketch entitled 'Sarah Bernhardt wrestling Louise Abbéma from the Hydrean grip of impressionism!'¹¹¹

Other literature, both of the time and since, rarely attends in any depth to this personal intimacy and artistic collaboration between Abbéma, Bernhardt and Clairin as a three-way relationship. For the most part, Abbéma and Clairin are figured in relation to Bernhardt individually and mostly in a diminutive role, as in the putative certificate for the 'société du Doigt dans l'œil [Society of the Finger in the Eye]'. They are, variously, her official portraitist (both), her friend or *intime* (both), her devoted admirer (both, but usually only Abbéma) or her lover (sometimes both, usually Clairin). The claim that either was Bernhardt's lover occurs only in posthumous literature. With regard to Clairin, it is typically represented in

and Droin (33-36) who both appear to believe that an actual society was formed by the three artists. Jamault writes that '[b]y strengthening their alliance and using self-mockery, they were attempting above all to find a means to ward off their detractors and critics. This led them, in the first instance, to make images of each other and then, later, to create a society in which they were the only participants' ['En multipliant les liaisons et en pratiquant l'autodérision, ils cherchent avant tout un moyen de se prémunir des railleries et des critiques. Cela les conduit dans le premier temps à se représenter mutuellement, puis, dans un second temps, à créer une société dont ils sont les seuls représentants'] (105). Jamault argues that this marked them off from their avant-garde contemporaries and gives this as one reason why such artists did not paint portraits of Bernhardt. Droin is less explicit about the real-life existence of the society and more suggestive about its allegorical significance. Having written of Bernhardt's 'utter self-satisfaction' as '[i]n truth a character trait shared by all three friends' and also of an 'egocentrism taken to the extreme by the three accomplices', she adds that this was an amusing way the three could thumb their noses at their critics all the while allowing the artists to 'integrate perfectly into a world which was theirs whilst conserving the spirit of independence necessary for the deployment of their talents' ['cette pointe autosatisfaction [...] était assurément l'une des similitudes qui unissait les trois amis'; 'l'égocentrisme poussé à l'extrême des trois compères'; 'un amusant pied de nez qui permettait à ses auteurs de s'intégrer parfaitement au monde qui était le leur, tout en conservant l'indépendance d'esprit nécessaire à l'épanouissement leur talent'], 33, 34, 36.

¹¹¹ It is possible that the full verbal expression ('se fourrer le doigt dans l'œil jusqu'au coude', 'to stick one's finger in one's eye right up to the elbow' signifying 'to be kidding oneself' [Collins-Robert French-English dictionary] or 'getting something quite wrong' [Dr Claudine Mitchell]) might have had sexual connotations because of the aspect of penetration involved.

Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale's recent, and well received biography, *The Divine Sarah: A Life of Sarah Bernhardt* (1991). They write: 'They [Bernhardt and Clairin] began as lovers, and, as was often the case with Sarah, ended up as fast friends.' They also add that the two painted portraits of Bernhardt by Clairin and Abbéma shown at the Salon in 1876 were 'by a young man and an even younger woman, both of whom were said to be in love with her.'¹¹²

I have already argued that a love relationship *between* Abbéma and Bernhardt is signalled by the aesthetics of what I call an 'erotics of beauty' in the materiality and facture of the bust. This is grounded in the premise that the artist-sitter transaction in portraiture is collaborative and

¹¹² Gold and Fizdale, 134; 135. Gold and Fizdale probably base their claim concerning Clairin on two biographical sources. The first of these is a transcribed biography of the actress Thérèse Berton in which she claims that Clairin 'had been [Bernhardt's] admirer for years but it was not until 1879 that she yielded to his persistent pleadings and became really intimate with him.' However, Berton also locates the 'affair', that lasted only a few months, both at the time of the decoration of Bernhardt's home at avenue de Villiers (1876) and just before her first tour in the US (October 1880). Other chronology and details in this biography are inaccurate rendering its reliability suspect; *Sarah Bernhardt as I Knew Her: The Memoirs of Madame Pierre Berton*, ed. Basil Woon (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1923), 195; 207-11. The second source is probably Verneuil's biography in which he writes that 'Georges Clairin, most faithful of all, who, having first been received as a lover, afterward became the portraitist in ordinary and in extraordinary, as well as the devoted daily friend, of Sarah, in whose shadow he happily passed his entire life, almost without leaving her, for forty-five years'; 101. I am uncertain if there is any gay subtext to Verneuil's statement that Clairin was 'not married' or that he was 'faithful' to Bernhardt given the anecdotal involvement of gay men with the theatre. Gold and Fizdale claim that '[l]ittle is known about the life of Clairin' despite more than adequate biographical coverage in contemporary journalism, literary vignettes, and Clairin's edited memoirs, *Les Souvenirs d'un peintre*, ed. André Beaunier (Paris: Charpentier, 1906). Since its publication in 1991 Gold and Fizdale's text has been a major source for factual information on Bernhardt history. It is clear from the acknowledgements that the authors conducted extensive primary research with the help of Mme Colette Monceau and Mme Liliane Ziegel (I am extremely grateful to both researchers for sharing much useful archival material on Bernhardt with me). However, I agree with Heather McPherson that the book is 'marred by its sensationalist tone and inadequate documentation of sources'; 'Sarah Bernhardt: Portrait of the Actress as Spectacle', *The Modern Portrait in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 76-116, note 3. I add to this that Gold and Fizdale's use of primary sources is critically inadequate to the point of being misleading. See Chapter 3 for their claim that Gustave Doré was one of Bernhardt's sculpture teachers. Colombier is the contemporary source most likely to have mentioned Clairin as a lover but does not include him on 'Barnum's' long list of male lovers. Renamed as Lerin, his character was 'but a friend' whom 'Sarah' prevented from marrying due to jealousy. It remains a possibility that the conjuncture of 'but a friend' with a man who was not married connoted Lerin's homosexuality. See below for a more explicit suggestion of Clairin's homosexuality by Colombier. She does not mention Abbéma; Colombier (1884), 78-79.

therefore that the erotics of beauty of an artwork is the result of mutual, if unspoken (but *not* unconscious), loving consent, rather than the infatuation of one party being 'in love' with the other.¹¹³ I also put the case for the art historical value of oral tradition in Chapter 4 when I discuss Bernhardt and Abbéma's amorous liaison as figured and celebrated in Abbéma's untitled, anniversary painting of the two women on the lake in the Bois de Boulogne (1883). This is supported by an analysis of the painting and a discussion of the source of the oral tradition.

As for the claim that Clairin was 'in love with' Bernhardt or that they had been lovers, I refute this.¹¹⁴ Instead, I argue that Clairin's love interests lay with men. This is most evident in an early relationship with fellow-painter, Henri Regnault (1843-71), which, in order to establish that the friendship between Clairin and Bernhardt existed outside a heterosexual contract, I will now consider. I also discuss other aspects of Clairin's biography and artistic output that point towards his homosexuality and away from the spurious claim that he and Bernhardt were lovers at some (unspecified) time in the 1870s. This requires a deviation from direct attention to Bernhardt's studio and home but is necessary in order to substantiate my claim that it can be framed as 'queer-art-space'. The fullest recent account of the relationship between Clairin and Regnault is given in Hollis Clayson's *Paris in Despair: Art and Everyday Life*

¹¹³ Gold and Fizdale add that 'whatever the favours [Bernhardt] granted Louise Abbéma, they were potent enough to keep the painter happily in thrall for almost fifty years'; 134. Cornelia Otis Skinner writes that Louise Abbéma 'was also, according to rumour, an avowed lesbian, but such a defect of character didn't bother Sarah in the least' and that she was a 'fixture in the 'Court'; 84. With regard to Bernhardt and Abbéma as lovers, Bernier writes that 'the liaison of Louise who was a militant lesbian and Sarah was notorious. As the years went by, their relationship changed and Louise always remained one of Sarah's closest and most devoted friends.' He adds that '[Abbéma's] relationship with Sarah was common knowledge'; Bernier, *Sarah Bernhardt and her Times*, 16, 127. Bernier does not reference a source for this statement, which, incidentally, uses signifiers contemporary to 1984 and not 1870s France ('militant lesbian').

¹¹⁴ Claims that Clairin and Bernhardt were lovers are ubiquitous: on a visit to the BNFDEP to view photographs of Clairin, one was inscribed on the reverse with a statement that he and Bernhardt had been lovers. No evidence was provided or referenced despite this photograph being an important element of the Clairin archive. This is but one example of a pervasive misrepresentation. Confronted with so many such examples, I have concluded that blindness to Clairin's homosexuality and a compulsion to make Bernhardt rampantly heterosexual is an institutionalized failure on the part of the practice of cultural history. Harsh words, but this is my observation of the evidence.

under Siege 1870-71 (2002) in a chapter that explores Regnault's Orientalist painting produced in the last 3-4 months of his life.¹¹⁵ In taking up Clayson's account as a starting point for my claim about Clairin, I also discuss how, as an example of reading evidence, her approach to the material on Regnault and Clairin's relationship prioritizes dominant, heterosexual models of relating and marginalizes others, even when alternative, homosocial and homoerotic, ways of living and loving are brought into the purview of her art historical analysis.

Clayson's book is a history of the short, war-time period in Paris in 1870-71 and one aim of the chapter on Regnault is to elicit readings of two paintings that he produced probably in October or November 1870 (*Haoua, intérieur de Harem* and *Hassan et Namouna*). Clayson lays out the terms of her critical intervention as investigating, in tandem, 'the social, psychic, and aesthetic dynamics of the interconnectedness of Regnault's everyday life, his Orientalist and portrait practices, and his romance with Geneviève Bréton', adding (four pages before the end of a 38-page chapter) that the relationship with Clairin also 'deserves further attention' (268). As historical and biographical background to this short period, Clayson outlines Regnault's travels as follows. After taking up his Prix de Rome residency in spring 1867 he returned to Paris for five months and then back to Rome at the end of 1867. He then set off to Spain in late 1868, made a brief return to Rome in spring 1869 to complete his envoi, and returned to Spain later in 1869 before moving on to Tangier in December 1870 and finally returning to Paris to enlist in the war against Prussia in August 1870 before his death in combat on 19 January 1871. This trajectory is gleaned from a number of textual sources: several contemporary and subsequent biographical texts, including that by Regnault's friend,

¹¹⁵ Hollis Clayson, *Paris in Despair: Art and Everyday Life under Siege 1870-71* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 234-72. Further references to Clayson are given in the text. Clairin and Regnault's relationship was consistently noted as an intimate friendship in contemporary accounts of Clairin's life and work and this continues in subsequent biographical entries on both men in artists' dictionaries and exhibition or sales catalogues. See, for example, J. Uzanne, 'Clairin', in *Figures contemporaines, tirées de l'album Mariani*, 11 vols (Paris: Fleury, 1896-1908), IV, n.p. Bénézit (1999) claims erroneously that Clairin was Regnault's student.

Henri Cazalis published in 1872, Regnault's edited letters (1872), Clairin's memoirs (1906) and Bréton's journal (first published in 1985).¹¹⁶

Although only one of Regnault's several involvements that determine her possible readings of his war-time Orientalist painting, the structure of Clayson's chapter does not situate the relationship with Clairin as a primary one. Nonetheless, she draws attention to the closeness of this relationship. Describing Clairin as Regnault's 'Pylades' [the male companion of Orestes] and 'best friend', Clayson tells how Clairin travelled with him to Spain on his second trip there in 1869, 'joined' him in Tangier thereafter, and shared a bedroom with him at the Clairin family home on the rue de Rome when they returned to Paris. She also illustrates a drawing by Clairin showing the two men sleeping huddled together in their barracks at the front at Nanterre (fig. 2: 35). Clayson therefore does not dismiss what she calls Regnault's 'deep friendship' with Clairin, allowing for the possibility that Regnault 'considered this bond to exceed even the framework of the fraternal' (268). To this end she cites a letter to their friend Ulysse Butin in September 1869 in which Regnault talks of how he and Clairin are to become godparents to Butin's young daughter. Requesting that the child be called by both his and Clairin's first names with the addition of the diminutive '-ette', he wrote:

When one of us dies, the little Georgette-Henriette will lose only half of her godparentage. Well, you see, my friend, I prefer that to being a father. We will have a daughter whom we will love very much [...] (269).¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Regnault's death in battle and his previous, early success at the Salon rendered him a war hero and the subject of several biographies in French and English in the period immediately after his death. Those that Clayson considers and that I take up here for the purposes of elaborating on the history of Regnault and Clairin's relationship are: Henri Cazalis, *Henri Regnault: Sa vie et son oeuvre* (Paris: Lemerre, 1872); Henri Regnault, *Correspondance de Henri Regnault*, ed. Arthur Duparc (Paris: Charpentier, 1872); Philip Gilbert Hamerton, 'Henri Regnault', in *Modern Frenchmen: Five Biographies* (London: Seeley, Jackson and Halliday, 1878), 334-408 [although this is likely to be sourced from the French biographies]; Clairin; and Geneviève Bréton, *"In the Solitude of My Soul": The Diary of Geneviève Bréton*, ed. James Smith Allen, trans. James Palmes (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994). Clayson's chronology and the details of Regnault's travels are necessarily brief as the background to the focus of her discussion. Recourse to the above texts reveals a more detailed itinerary which I discuss below with regard to the travels in Spain and Morocco as a joint venture on the part of Regnault and Clairin.

Clayson reads this letter as evidence of Regnault and Clairin's 'close and stable collectivity' (269).¹¹⁸ However, a problem arises when she puzzles over how the two men's relationship might be configured in view of Regnault's betrothal to the Parisian diarist and publisher's daughter, Geneviève Bréton. Clayson describes this as a 'romance' and Regnault becomes 'a love-struck young man'. This is a complex issue requiring some preliminary explanation of the history of the betrothal and how it was represented. The sources for Regnault's relationship with Bréton are primarily the latter's diary and the posthumous biographical accounts provided by Cazalis, Duparc, and Clairin. Of these, Bréton's journal was specifically edited by her shortly before her death in 1918 as a history of the relationship.¹¹⁹ Bréton and Regnault met in Rome in June 1867 and spent time together during Regnault's five-month long return trip to Paris from July to December that year. During this period Bréton records how her friend, the painter Nélie Jacquemart, pointed out Regnault's romantic interest in

¹¹⁷ 'Or le jour où l'un de nous deux mourra, la petite Georgette-Henriette ne perdra que la moitié de son parrain. Eh bien, vois-tu, mon ami, j'aime mieux cela que d'être père. Nous aurons une fille que nous aimerons bien, et un papa et une maman de plus à aimer', Henri Regnault to Ulysse Butin, c. September 1869, Regnault, 305. I have deleted the final section of Clayson's translation which is rendered incorrectly as follows: 'and [she will have] one papa and one mama extra to love her' instead of 'and [we will] also [have] a father and mother to love as well'. Clayson dates this letter 12 September, although it is not dated in Duparc's edition but comes after a letter given this date.

¹¹⁸ She also adds that Regnault thought of Clairin 'as a friend on the footing of a spouse' (269), however, this is due to the incorrect translation of the last section of the letter to Butin.

¹¹⁹ The US editor of the diary, James Smith Allen, provides an outline of its complex preparation for publication. In an undated note from Bréton to her son Jean-Louis Vaudoyer she wrote that the purpose of the journal should be to 'make known an unrecognized side of Henri Regnault – his young and charming affirmations, the tender and sensitive qualities of his soul – since only the inspired painter and military hero are still remembered.' Bréton therefore began to edit the notebooks some time before her death 1918 in order that the published version should read as a history of her relationship with Regnault, beginning with their meeting in Rome in June 1867 and ending with the aftermath of Regnault's death. This involved substantial cutting and the insertion of letters exchanged between the two. Once donated to the BNF by Vaudoyer, further editing was carried out, according to Bréton's precise instructions, by her granddaughter, Daphné Doublet-Vaudoyer. The French publishers also insisted on yet further cuts and therefore only half of the material covering the period 1867-71 appeared in the French version published in 1985. Smith Allen then checked this text against the original notebooks in order to render a 'more faithful version of the work as Bréton had revised and edited it before her death'; 'A Note on the Text', in Bréton, xxix-xxxii.

Bréton.¹²⁰ However, after Regnault's return to Rome in December 1867 and during his subsequent stays in Spain and Morocco, the only known contact between the two consisted of two letters and a short, two-day visit by Bréton (with Jacquemart and her father) to Regnault and Clairin when these two were living in Granada in May 1870.¹²¹ It is not until October 1870 after his return to Paris that Regnault proposed and, after some deliberation on the part of Bréton's parents, was accepted. After this time Regnault visited Bréton frequently when not on military duty and several letters were exchanged between the two. Bréton recorded these and conversations between them in her diary, including one occasion when Regnault declared to her, 'I love you so much'.¹²² Although Cazalis and Duparc claim that the engagement had been on the cards for some time before October 1870, they do not provide any specific indication of the relationship as ongoing in the period between Regnault's departure from Paris in December 1867 and his return in August 1870 nor is it mentioned within the chronology of their accounts until this later date.¹²³ Similarly, Clairin's account of the relationship is an insertion into a general biography of Regnault at this late stage.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ In an entry for 23 November 1867 Bréton transcribes a conversation with Jacquemart in which the latter claimed that "[a] long time ago [...] I saw that the unhappy boy adored you" (29). The Brétons' friend and landlord, Alexandre Bida, also a friend of Regnault and a fellow artist, also commented on the relationship, asking why Bréton would not marry Regnault and claiming that she should "Never love and artist!" (30). Jacquemart's relationship with Bréton was complex. In December 1868 Bréton records that her mother advised her that the friendship with Jacquemart was 'not well regarded' and the following month Bréton declares that 'the world [...] suspects] this profound attachment' (62, 66). The quality of this suspicion was not elaborated on. Bréton later claimed (in August 1870) that Jacquemart had 'never cared for [Regnault]' that she 'saw an awful jealousy mixed with hatred in [Jacquemart's] face' (111). Jacquemart's attitude to Regnault is not supported in Bréton's earlier accounts of relations between all three either in Paris in 1867 or during the visit to Granada in May 1870.

¹²¹ Regnault wrote to Bréton's mother from Rome on 9 December 1867 and on 2 July 1868 'a letter arrived from Regnault' (probably addressed only to Geneviève Bréton). Arrangements for the visit to Granada are not provided in the diary. It took place on or shortly after 18 May 1870; Bréton, 34-35, 55, 88-94. Clairin mentions this visit, but dates it incorrectly as 1869; Clairin, 176.

¹²² Bréton, 149.

¹²³ Cazalis writes that the circumstances of the war 'hastened the engagement already decided upon for some time before [hâtèrent ces fiançailles depuis longtemps résolues]', 97. However, any prior arrangement is not included in his biography before August 1870. Duparc inserts the following passage into his edition of Regnault's letters in January 1870: '[a] marriage, for which he had hoped and prayed for some time, had just been decided for him and in between the arduous days he spent as a soldier, he made plans with his fiancée to travel and for their dreams of happiness' ['(u)n mariage

There is no doubt that a commitment was made by Regnault – after all he proposed marriage and, according to Bréton, discussed a future together when they would travel to Morocco, Egypt, and India as had long been his intention in order to continue his education as an artist. My purpose is to point out here how Regnault's betrothal to Bréton is difficult to qualify and its full circumstances difficult to ascertain because of how it is mediated by both posthumous biography and Bréton's viewpoint in her edited journal.¹²⁵ I simply want to question the priority afforded it over the relationship with Clairin. Whereas the relationship with Bréton can be declared a 'romance', the character of Regnault and Clairin's relationship remains unknowable, only determined in relation to the heterosexual arrangement of Regnault's betrothal to Bréton. Clayson figures this through her reading of Regnault's painting:

Musing on the completely speculative idea that the fervent homosocial link between the two [Regnault and Clairin] may have had an erotic character – or even the likelihood that Regnault's emotional ties to Bréton and Clairin may have been of equal intensity and consequence for him – returns us to *Hassan et Namouna* [1870] and its beautiful, muscular Moor. (271)

She now suggests that 'Regnault's invention of a figure of such striking male beauty might indirectly instance his own (possibly unconscious) vulnerability to or interest in the person of his close friend, Georges Clairin' (271).

que ses vœux appelaient depuis longtemps, venait d'être décidé pour lui, et entre les rudes journées que réclamait son métier de soldat, il faisait avec sa fiancée des projets de voyages et des rêves de bonheur'); Duparc, in Regnault, 397-98. It is not clear how to interpret Duparc's statement that the engagement 'had been decided for him'.

¹²⁴ Clairin's reticence is framed by his claim that Regnault liked to keep the details of his intimate life close to his chest. He states that the arrangement rendered Regnault's 'joy deep and absolute' ['sa joie était profonde, absolue'], Clairin, 176.

¹²⁵ Regnault's relationship with his father (Victor Regnault) and siblings (his mother died in 1866) during this time needs further investigation given the possibility that he might have been under pressure to get married and reproduce. His father's biographer wrote that Henri was the only one of his four children to escape mental illness ['fatalité morale']; Berthelot, cited in Hamerton, 407. I have been unable to locate the original text by Berthelot in any French library databases. Clairin wrote that Victor Regnault was 'a vigorous and wilful man and also very severe in his demands' ['un homme énergique et volontaire, et même d'une extrême dureté dans ses exigences']; 144.

There is insufficient space here to do justice to Regnault's complex intimate life and his oeuvre and I will not undertake an alternative, queer reading of *Hassan et Namouna*. Nor can I consider Clairin's life and work in the detail it deserves.¹²⁶ Proper study of the Regnault-Clairin liaison, with due attention to each individual, their intimate relationship, their respective families, the network of friends they shared, and the work they produced both singly and together is the subject of a different project to mine.¹²⁷ However, I do want to

¹²⁶ A catalogue raisonné and critical analysis of Clairin's work would be a welcome addition to the history of French nineteenth-century painting. He produced a substantial number of theatre-based subjects other than his portraits of Bernhardt and was a prolific Orientalist. He worked on several collective ventures including the decorative scheme for Charles Garnier's Paris and Monte Carlo Opéras.

¹²⁷ There are several possible lines of approach. A fuller investigation of Regnault and Clairin's embrace of an Orientalist aesthetic in their work and domestic life in Spain and Tangier is warranted. Ockman has already suggested that a 'deliberately homoerotic inversion of Orientalist paradigms' would warrant investigation in the work of Clairin and Regnault; Ockman (2005), 51, note 30. See above for comment on the treatment of the connection between homosexuality and orientalism in France by Apter in *Continental Drift*. There was a cluster of male friendships between Clairin and Regnault and others based on their education at the École des beaux-arts and involvement in the Parisian art scene. This included: the painters, Ulysse Butin (1837-83, student of Pils and Picot); Ernest-Ange Duez (1843-96, student of Pils); Paul Mathey (1844-1929, student of Cogniet, Pils, Mazerolle and Oury); Alexandre Bida (1823-95, student of Delacroix); the architect, Charles Garnier (1825-98, student of Leveil and Lebas). Some produced portraits of each other (e.g. Mathey's painted studio portrait of Clairin, c. 1885, musée d'Hazebrouck; Bida's pencil drawings of Clairin, Regnault and Garnier in uniform (illustrated in Clayson, 262-63, figs 179-81). These networks need considerable research before claims can be made as to these men's homoerotic interest in each other. Regnault met the Spanish painter Mariano Fortuny (1838-74) in Rome and greatly admired his work; see Regnault, 145 and Hamerton, 400-01. Fuller investigation of Clairin and Regnault's friendship with women is also warranted. The men knew and worked with the sculptor Marcello (Adèle d'Affry, the Duchess Castiglione-Colonna, 1836-79) in Spain in 1868 and Rome in 1869. See the biographical literature on Regnault and Caterina Y. Pierre, "A New Formula for High Art": The Genesis and Reception of Marcello's *Pythia*, *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*, 2:3 (2003), <http://19thc-artworldwide.org/autumn_03/articles/pier> [21 August 2005]. Clairin painted Marcello in her studio (1871, musée d'art et d'histoire, Fribourg), probably in Fribourg when he visited her after Regnault's death early in 1871. Both men were also friends with the singer and putative lesbian Augusta Holmès who was the female model for Regnault's *Thétis apportant à Achille les armes forgées par Vulcain*, his Prix de Rome painting in 1866. Clairin's later artistic friendships include that with René Lalique (1860-1945). Two copies of Lalique's medallion portrait of Bernhardt made to commemorate 'Sarah Bernhardt Day' in December 1896 are dedicated to Clairin as follows: 'A mon ami Georges Clairin. René Lalique' (ivory version, musée d'Orsay; silver version, private collection). He also went to Italy in Spring 1889 with Jean-Léon Gérôme, Edouard Détaillé, and

question the timidity with which Clayson approaches any suggestion that Regnault's relationship with Clairin was erotic or her claim that it might only have been as important, but never *more* important, than Regnault's heterosexual and proto-judicial arrangement with Genevieve Bréton.¹²⁸

I want to read the same evidence that Clayson discusses and present other material in order to tip the balance of how this complex set of relationships might be read in a way that does not prioritize a heterosexual contract. Although Clayson's account of Regnault's time in Rome, Spain and Morocco is brief, it is crucial to the paintings she discusses that he made in Paris late in 1870. Because she considers Regnault's work as the result of his individual efforts, his travels are presented, in the most part, as if undertaken alone or, at best, with Clairin tagging along. Clairin and Regnault had met when students in 1861 at the *École des beaux-arts* and had already undertaken a decorative project together along with their friend Édouard Blanchard.¹²⁹ Although the first period in Rome (March to July 1867) was not spent with Clairin, every other journey that Regnault made was with him and planned as such. Having tracked the chronology and itinerary or location of their travels and residencies carefully, I can establish that three periods in Spain (August 1868 to March 1869; August to December 1869; March to May 1870), a return visit to Rome (March to July/August 1869) and two

François Flameng, visiting Florence and probably Venice and Padua. See Gerald Ackerman, *Jean-Léon Gérôme 1824-1904, peintre, sculpteur et graveur: ses oeuvres conservées dans les collections publiques et privées* (Vesoul: Ville de Vesoul, 1981), 150.

¹²⁸ Clayson mentions in a footnote that she has received questions regarding the homoeroticism of the figure of Hassan in Regnault's painting. With regard to her readings of the 'beautiful, muscular Moor' having 'exhausted its possible meanings' including 'romantic heterosexual love' she does posit that an acknowledgement might be needed of a 'vector of desire in the form of the artist's own possible attraction to such an alluring male torso'. However, she avoids denoting this in terms of an explicit same-sex erotics, suggesting only that it might be conducted 'in the spirit of grasping the potential for a metaphorical bisexuality or genderlessness in Regnault's artistic vision' [my emphasis]. Such a reading would be confined to the realm of 'passionate [but not necessarily erotic] male friendship' about which Clayson laments the lack of scholarship in this period; 271, note 122. For an essay on passionate male friendship in the nineteenth-century United States, see Donald Yacovone, 'Abolitionists and the "Language of Fraternal Love"', in *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America*, ed. Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 85-95.

¹²⁹ Regnault, 37.

spells in Morocco (December 1870 to March 1871 and May to August 1871) were in fact joint ventures by Regnault and Clairin.¹³⁰

How Regnault and Clairin lived and worked in Spain and Morocco together is key to configuring the significance of their relationship and the work they produced. The evidence suggests that Regnault and Clairin were as indispensable to each other in their artistic development as what they saw, drew, and painted, in Italy, Spain, and Morocco.¹³¹ For instance, the first trip to Spain begun in August 1868 resulted in a six-month stay in Madrid. Both had letters of recommendation in order to copy in the Prado, they rented a studio together in November which they decorated 'with an Oriental luxury', held parties there attended by gypsy singers, and even became joint godfathers to a gypsy child.¹³² A letter from

¹³⁰ Again, a greater network of friendships requires investigation here as the two men were not alone for the entirety of their travels. Clairin was accompanied by the painter Roger Jourdain when he met Regnault in Burgos en route for Madrid in August 1868 and the group met up with another friend Lockroy. Whilst living in Madrid, Clairin and Regnault worked in the Prado with the sculptor Marcello and a painter the comtesse de Nadaillac. Their journey from Rome via Alicante and Majorca to Granada in August 1869 included [Frédéric Auguste] Laguillierme [b. 1841] and they met Mauzaise at the Alhambra (fig. 2: 36). Clairin's memoirs are the only source for these activities with friends within the group of texts I have consulted; none are mentioned by Cazalis, in Regnault's correspondence, or by Bréton (although a letter from Regnault to Marcello is cited in his correspondence). Clairin discusses Laguillierme and Mauzaise. He writes that Laguillierme [sic] was a pensionnaire at the Villa Medici in Rome and an engraver. Mauzaise had also been a student of Picot but was now a photographer and the son of the painter Mauzaise who worked on the decoration of the Louvre; Clairin, 109. According to Bénézit this is Jean Baptiste Mauzaisse [sic] 1784-1844). Mauzaise is not listed in any of the standard dictionaries of artists or photographers but may be the artist, Henry Mauzaise who illustrated Bernhardt's holiday home, Villa de la Solidtude, Sainte Adresse, Normandy for the *Sarah Bernhardt Souvenir: the Authorized Catalogue of her Paintings and Sculpture* (New York: Art Amateur, 1880), n.p.

¹³¹ Clairin's atelier sale after his death attests to the enormous importance of the time spent travelling and living with Regnault in Spain and Morocco in 1868-71. The large number of paintings and sketches that Clairin produced and kept until his death suggest that these were both an artistic and personal record of time spent with Regnault; *Atelier Georges Clairin*, 1920.

¹³² It is Regnault who describes the studio in Madrid as such ['un bel atelier que nous avons meublés avec un luxe oriental']; Henri Regnault to Mme de Sainsbris, 27 November 1868, 222. Details of these as joint ventures are most easily gleaned from Clairin's memoirs. For instance, although much of Regnault's correspondence uses the first person plural when talking of his activities, he sometimes refers only to himself. For instance, in a letter to his father he wrote only that he became a godparent to the gypsy child. The same event is described as follows by Clairin: 'a little boy was born. It was

Regnault to friends indicates the character of the life the two men shared in Madrid in February 1869:

The academy has made me miss out on a great opportunity to make my fortune, your fortune, if you put some money into it. But I've got some great ideas anyway. I wanted to set up a cafe in Madrid decorated by Bibi and Jojotte [Clairin]. We'd have Andalucian dancers, as well as Andalucian singers and guitarists and Jojotte and I would be the demoiselles of the bar. There'd be a bordello upstairs with lots of cosmopolitan types coming and going and whores of every sex, size, age and colour. Two *réaux* for a drink. What a beautiful dream that is!¹³³

This letter is crucial because it indicates in a way not considered elsewhere how Regnault's dream of an ideal life in Madrid was grounded in same-sex intimacy and eroticism that were to be played out in public – he and Clairin would be the joint 'demoiselles' in a bar open to all comers. Crucially, it would require artistic collaboration: Clairin and 'Bibi' (so far unidentified) were to provide the painted decoration that surrounded the hosts of the bar, their workers and their guests.

There is further evidence of the importance of artistic collaboration for Regnault and Clairin. Whilst in Madrid they produced a painting together; *L'Enfant de Vallecas, copie d'après Velázquez*

decided that we, Regnault and I, would be his godparents [un petit garçon venait de naître. Il fut décidé que nous en serions, Regnault et moi, les parrains]'; 86.

¹³³ 'L'académie me fait rater une belle affaire, ma fortune, votre fortune à tous peut-être si vous versez des capitaux. J'ai de belles idées pourtant. Je voulais monter à Madrid un café, décoré par bibi et par Jojotte avec danseuses andaloux [sic], chanteuses et guitarreros andaloux tambien, Jojotte et moi demoiselles de comptoir. Bordel au premier, avec population flottante et cosmopolite, putains de tout sexe, de toute taille, de tout âge, de toute couleur. 2 réaux par consommation – quelle beau rêve!', Henri Regnault to unknown friends, INFC (coll. F. Lugts), Autographes d'artistes français du XVe au XIX siècle, S 263. 'Jojotte' was Clairin's nickname, given to him, according to Clayson by Regnault's family; 245. Correspondence between Clairin, Regnault, and Marcello also reveals that the three used familiar names with each other: Clairin was 'Geogotte', Regnault was 'Riquet' and Marcello was 'Miettita'; catalogue entry for Clairin's painting of Marcello in Henriette Bessis, *Marcello Sculpteur* (Fribourg: Musée d'art et d'histoire de Fribourg, 1980). Some of Bernhardt's biographers claim that she named him Jojotte (also spelt 'Geogotte') but this affectionate name was already in use.

(1868, musée de Louviers).¹³⁴ As two young painters keen to learn from the sixteenth-century Spanish court portraitist, this joint work was an interesting deviation from the usual studious and solitary copying for correction by a master during this period of Regnault's Prix de Rome award which Clairin clearly shared on an unofficial basis.¹³⁵ Their travels to Spain in 1869 yielded further personal and artistic rewards at the Alhambra where they were photographed together outside the entrance to the Sala de las Dos Hermanas with their friends Laguillierme and Mauzaize (original title: *Le peintre Henri Regnault et Georges Clairin à l'entrée de la salle des deux soeurs à l'Alhambra de Grenade*, fig. 2: 36).¹³⁶ Their shared jubilation at the building was conveyed in a co-authored letter to friends in October 1869: '[i]t is too beautiful and like all difficult things it is incredible. All our colours seem like mud in comparison to what is in front of our eyes'.¹³⁷ Similarly, the domestic and working arrangements in Tangier were a joint venture. Regnault travelled ahead to Tangier in mid-December 1869 and was joined by his servant, model, and photographer Lagraine (who had been based with him at the Villa Medici in Rome) and by Clairin later the same month. The men rented a house with a studio where they lived together with Lagraine and in June 1870 bought a plot of land together on which to build a larger home and studio.¹³⁸ According to Regnault, this would be

¹³⁴ Exhibited in *Henri Regnault (1843-1871)*, ed. Odile Caule and Sophie de Juvigny, exh. cat. (Saint-Cloud : Musée de Saint Cloud, 1991) and *Velázquez et la France. La découverte de Velázquez par les peintres français*, ed. Jean-Louis Augé et al, exh. cat. (Castres: Musée Goya, 1999), 134-35. The painting was bequeathed to the musée de Louviers by R. [or René] Jourdain in 1919. René may have been a relative of Clairin's friend Roger Jourdain or this may be a misprint on the part of the musée Goya.

¹³⁵ Clairin referred to himself whilst in Rome as one of the 'indépendants'; 106.

¹³⁶ See note 129 for these friends.

¹³⁷ 'C'est trop beau et comme difficultés c'est incroyable; toutes nos couleurs paraissent de la boue à côté de ce que nous avons devant les yeux'. The main text was written by Clairin, the postscript by Regnault. The full text is unlocated; this unattributed excerpt appeared in a French sale catalogue in the 1970s; *Lettres autographes de peintres des XIX et XX siècles* (full details of the sale are illegible in the photocopy provided; MOSD, dossier Clairin).

¹³⁸ According to Cazalis the studio appeared in several of Regnault's paintings and was decorated by him and Clairin with 'peintures dans le genre mauresque, et cherchèrent à y réunir tout le luxe des curiosités orientales, les tapis, les tentures, les étoffes tramées d'argent ou d'or, les selles splendidement ornées des cavaliers africains, les coffrets du Maroc étoilés d'arabesques, et ceux plus fleuris encore, incrustés de nacre ou d'ivoire, de la Perse et de l'Inde, en un mot toute cette décoration nécessaire à la pensée d'artistes [my emphasis], épris de la couleur ; 72-73.

his base from which he would return to Paris for only 2-3 months a year.¹³⁹ This did not happen, but Regnault bequeathed the house to Clairin in his will asking him to 'work hard and live well there in memory of me'.¹⁴⁰ Their time back in France before Regnault's death was also spent living together at the Clairin family home in the rue de Rome, working in a studio in the rue Chaptal and, for the most part, on military duty together.

Although the early section of Clairin's memoirs bears constant reference to the relationship with Regnault and their joint activities, it is perhaps in the expression of his grief that his view of the character of their relationship becomes clearest. In July 1871 Clairin returned to Tangier writing of the reason for this journey: '[t]o begin my life again seemed to me an impossible effort. It seemed to me as if my life was ended, I couldn't think about the future; my grief led me to seek refuge in the past'.¹⁴¹ On his arrival he shut himself away in their shared bedroom in the house writing of this moment: 'I found myself more alone than ever before, so horribly alone, that I cried my heart out, I curled myself up in a little ball, I drown myself in sorrow.' During the course of his stay in Morocco the new studio was sold, Lagraine returned ahead of him to Paris and Clairin journeyed to Fez in the company of the French ambassador.¹⁴² But trying to paint again, what he lacked was Regnault's presence: 'but he was

¹³⁹ Henri Regnault to Victor Regnault, 3 June 1870, Regnault, 373.

¹⁴⁰ 'Tu feras finir l'atelier et la maison de Tanger, dont je te fais cadeau et où je te prie de travailler à force, et de vivre à ton bon plaisir, en souvenir de moi'. Regnault's instructions were written in a letter to Clairin dated 27 September 1870. Presumably, Regnault was bequeathing his share in the new house and studio as Clairin had already claimed that they bought the land together. On Clairin's return to Tangier this site was sold by or to the French legation; Clairin, 151, 270. It is not clear how advanced the building work was at any stage.

¹⁴¹ 'Recommencer à vivre me semblait un effort impossible. Il me paraissait que ma vie était achevée, et la pensée d l'avenir m'accablait; ma douleur m'avertit de chercher dans le passé mon refuge', Clairin, 234.

¹⁴² 'Je me suis enfermé dans notre chambre, où il n'y avait plus qu'un lit, le mien. Je m'y trouvai plus seul que jamais, plus atrocement seul, et je pleurai, tout mon saoul; je me roulai, je me vautrai dans mon chagrin', Clairin, 239. Clairin writes that he promised Regnault's father he would put his affairs in order. The trip to Fez was made in the company of the French diplomat Tissot, of whom Clairin wrote that this 'brand new friend was really important to him: he gave him the sense of starting a new life [cet ami tout neuf m'était précieux: il me donnait l'illusion de commencer une existence nouvelle]'; Clairin, 240. This is the likely source of the misinformation that Clairin travelled to Tangier with Regnault in December 1870 as a member of the French embassy. The length of his stay

no longer there, he who could bring me to life with his genius, his constant courage, his magnificent spirit and his shining ardour'.¹⁴³

Bréton also records a verbal account by Clairin of his relationship with Regnault in her diary on 19 July, two days before his journey to Tangier. Friendship is given precedence over the other kinds of love Clairin has experienced. She cites him thus:

Think of it this way, Geneviève, we are both widowed, because I promised my life to my friend just as you gave yours to him and for both of us his being and his life was all about happiness and the future. For me, who has seen love in all its forms and can judge its false pledges, its short periods of intoxication, I have only ever really respected and had commitment in this world for *friendship*. I simply don't trust or believe in any other way of relating. That's what I bow down to and *I have faith in that*; that is my blessing, my religion and God has smitten my heart with it completely. He has killed the *friend* but he has not killed friendship, that remains intact, heartbroken maybe, even bleeding, but not contaminated by disillusionment. It is to you that this legacy now passes, I offer it to you. Just as I belonged to Henri, body and soul, now I belong to you [emphasis in original].¹⁴⁴

Two days later Bréton wrote that Clairin offered to marry her on the basis of an agreement made with Regnault two years before, namely that the three of them would spend their

is not given in his memoirs. According to Goetschy, Clairin stayed in Morocco until early 1872, moving on to Spain before his return to Paris; Goetschy, 'Ateliers et vitrines: Georges Clairin (suite et fin)', *La Vie moderne*, 3e année, no. 42 (15 October 1881), 667-70 (667). Goetschy's biography of Clairin is not entirely accurate on other events, although this chronology does seem likely. Works of Tangier and the road to Fez are dated 1872 in the catalogue of his studio sale, but this too is not wholly reliable on the dating of many other works listed; *Catalogue des tableaux, aquarelles, pastels, dessin [sic] par Georges Clairin et provenant de son atelier*, I and II (February 1920) [hereafter *Catalogue Atelier Georges Clairin*]

¹⁴³ 'Mais il n'était plus la, lui, pour m'animer de son génie, de son perpétuel courage, de son entrain magnifique et de sa rayonnante ardeur'; Clairin, 240.

¹⁴⁴ 'Pensez, Geneviève, nous sommes tous deux veufs, car j'ai voué ma vie à mon ami comme vous lui donnez la vôtre et pour nous deux, il résumait en sa personne la vie, l'avenir et le bonheur. Pour moi, qui ai vu l'amour sous toutes ses formes et pu juger de ses faux serments et de ses courtes ivresses, je n'ai jamais eu de respect et de culte au monde que pour l'amitié; sur tout autre sentiment, je doute ou je nie; là, je me prosterne et je crois; c'est ma vertu, ma religion et Dieu m'a frappé, là, en plein cœur. Il a tué l'ami, mais il n'a pas tué l'amitié, elle subsiste intacte, bien douloureusement et sanglante, mais pure de désillusions. C'est à vous que revient cet héritage, je vous le remets. Comme j'étais à mon Henri de corps et d'âme, je vous appartiens de même'; Bréton, 259.

lives together, or, should Regnault die, Clairin would become Bréton's companion. This is a difficult episode and passage to make sense of: Clairin does not refer to it in his memoirs, nor is it clear that Regnault had intended to marry Bréton as early as 1869 when the agreement between the two men was supposedly made. Nonetheless, Clairin's possible wish for companionship with Bréton in July 1871 is based on his attachment to Regnault: he said, according to Bréton, that 'I promise you the life that I had vowed to him in my secret heart.'¹⁴⁵ Together with the statement that 'we are both widows', this puts his relationship with Regnault on an equal footing to that of Bréton as fiancée. This accords with a notion of a passionate but not necessarily erotic friendship between the two men. But, given that it is Regnault's fiancée he is addressing and that she recorded the encounter, the chances of it displaying passionate eroticism are slim. This would require both the availability of a discourse with which to articulate such an eroticism, Clairin's willingness to use it (if appropriate), and a modern reader's ability to decipher it. Beyond the physical loss of Regnault as his living companion, Clairin retained several of his works made during their life together in Spain.¹⁴⁶ He also kept until his own death a bronze memorial bust of Regnault by their friend Ernest-Louis Barrias (1871, musée d'Orsay).¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Bréton, 222.

¹⁴⁶ For those he owned until his death, see *Catalogue Atelier Georges Clarin*. As late as 1912 Clairin gave away or sold one of Regnault's watercolours, a scene of the Cour de Lions at the Alhambra, mentioned in a letter from him to unknown recipient, 31 May 1912 (private collection, Paris).

¹⁴⁷ The bust was donated to the musée d'Orsay in 1930 by Clairin's sister, Mme Petit de Villeneuve. It did not appear in his studio sale and I therefore conclude that Clairin left it to his sister in his will. She had also owned Barrias's terracotta bust of Clairin signed 'à mon ami Clairin/E. Barrias 1875' which was donated to the musée d'Orsay in 1931 by her son; *Catalogue sommaire illustré des sculptures du musée d'Orsay*, ed. Anne Pingeot, Antoinette Le Normand-Romain and Laure de Margerie (Paris: RMN, 1986), 38. Given the naturalism of Barrias's work, the bust of Regnault may have been based on a death mask taken by Barrias and Clairin the day after he died and before his burial at Père-Lachaise cemetery, which was then given to the musée Carnavalet, Paris. The mask was illustrated in Armand Dayot, *L'Invasion, Le Siège, La Commune 1870-1871* (Paris: Flammarion, 1901), 158. Several other versions of the Barrias bust are extant. One was ordered by the State in 1871, shown at the Exposition Universelle in 1878 and installed in the lycée Henri-IV, Paris. A commemorative bust of Regnault by Chapu (1878) was installed in the École des beaux-arts.

Again, there is insufficient space to fully investigate if Clairin had other same-sex relationships, whether of passionate friendship or the love in 'other forms' he mentioned briefly in his conversation with Bréton. Nonetheless, a letter dating from c. 1883-88 to a female friend does give a clear picture of where Clairin's 'vector of desire' was directed at the time of writing (the term is Clayson's with regard to Regnault's rendering of an 'alluring male torso' in the figure of Hassan, see note 127). The letter is a reply to his friend and is illustrated on the first page with a pen and ink drawing taking up most of the page (fig. 2: 37). A municipal guardsman on horseback delivers the friend's letter to Clairin who represents himself in caricature as a skinny figure constructed from five paintbrushes, arms and legs akimbo, his head thrown back. His low position relative to the height of the mounted guardsman, along with the way he holds his palette (penetrated at the thumbhole with his right arm to act as a shield) figure Clairin as transfixed and utterly prone to capture by this uniformed man's good looks. He described the man's appeal in an exclamation written next to his drawing: 'Quel beau municipal / et à cheval! / Qu'il est beau oh oh oh!'¹⁴⁸

Crucially, Clairin's artistic collaborations with Regnault early in his career provided him with experience of a way of working that he was to pursue in the future, albeit differently, with Bernhardt. Throughout Clairin and Bernhardt's life-long friendship he produced a number of portraits of her in theatre roles as well as 'à la ville' and at home. In 1878 they collaborated

¹⁴⁸ The first page of a three-page letter is reproduced in *French and Other European Drawings, Paintings and Sculpture of the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Robert J. F. Kashey and Martin L. H. Reymert, exh. and sale cat. (New York: Shepherd Gallery, 1981), cat. no. 37. I am very grateful to David Wojciechowski, Shepherd Gallery Associates, New York, for providing me with a transcript of the entire letter. In the postscript Clairin declares to his friend that perhaps the letter is 'a bit too private' and that he has no 'municipal guard' suggesting, by his play on words, that he has revealed a secret to her ['Cette lettre est peut-être un peu trop intime – que voulez-vous? Je n'ai pas de garde municipal']. Soldiers in the Garde municipale de Paris (still in existence as the Garde républicaine) were at the disposal of high-ranking political dignitaries. Given that Clairin is thanking his friend for her help in meeting the Minister responsible for a likely commission at the theatre in Tours, she was probably connected to a political figure in some way. Clairin was granted the commission for redecoration at the theatre in Tours which had burnt down in 1883. I am extremely grateful to Richard Jacques for his essential involvement in all these aspects of my readings of this letter.

on an illustrated book *Dans les nuages* in which Bernhardt provided the text and Clairin the drawings.¹⁴⁹ On the basis of these projects, it is far more fruitful to see Clairin and Bernhardt's working relationship as collaborative, rather than situating his work as the stand-alone products of an ex-boyfriend-turned-friend hanging around the famous actress's house. Clairin's portrait of Bernhardt exhibited at the Salon in 1876 (musée du Petit Palais, Paris) is a case in point (fig. 2: 38). This image is reproduced compulsively as visual evidence of a particular kind of feminine (hetero)sexuality that permeated Bernhardt's entire life and work. Reading or presenting this painting as such is based, partly, on the assumption of the artist's opposite-sex attraction for his sitter. If, however, as I argue, Clairin was erotically attracted to men, the heterosexual male artist/heterosexualized female model scenario is thrown into jeopardy. Instead of the ubiquitous emblem of a heterosexual male's figuring of the femme fatale, this painting can instead be read as the outcome of an artistic collaboration (by means of portraiture) between a female, stage-educated sitter and a male homosexual painter that would represent a feminized sexuality he admired but only she could be seen to act out.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Clairin's oeuvre reveals a strong interest beyond his friendship with Bernhardt in representing actresses and stage scenes, as well as in costume design for the theatre. Again, there is insufficient space here to investigate. A pastel entitled 'Sarah à Belle-Île', c. 1890 was exhibited in *Pierre Cardin présente Sarah Bernhardt* (Paris, 1976) and appeared for sale in 1977 (location unknown) and again in 1979 in New York. Sources differ as to whether this was a joint work by Ernest-Ange Duez (1843-96) and Clairin or if Duez dedicated it to Clairin. The names are written bottom left in Duez's handwriting but it is not clear if the dedicatory 'à' has been included without seeing the image first-hand. I have been unable to trace its location.

¹⁵⁰ Much greater attention is due this painting. There is divergence over whether or not Bernhardt was represented in a role and this determines more recent readings of the painting, particularly in terms of Bernhardt's perceived feminine sexuality. According to the Salon review in *The Times* Bernhardt was depicted in the third act of Alexandre Dumas fils's play *L'Étrangère* in which she debuted in February 1876 playing the role of the mixed race American, Mrs Clarkson; Anon., 'The Paris Salon, from a French correspondent (Paris, 30 April)', *The Times* (1 May 1876), 10. In more recent literature the possibility that this is a painting in role is not mentioned and it is treated primarily as emblematic of Bernhardt's persona because of the signature serpentine pose and possibly at home because of her location on a divan. For instance, a book to accompany a recent exhibition captioned the painting with a citation 'the enchantress in her den [l'enchantresse dans son antre]', *Portrait(s) de Sarah Bernhardt*, ed. Noëlle Guibert (Paris: BNF, 2000), 101. I think it likely that this is a painting in role and that the painting may not show Bernhardt at home. The divan in Clairin's painting is not covered in the same way as that in Abbéma's painting, *Le Déjeuner dans la serre* and photographs of the atelier-salon at avenue de Villiers do not show it close-up for the purposes of comparison. However, I am unable to establish whether or not the set for *L'Étrangère* included this divan or comment on the

A further, material outcome of Clairin and Bernhardt's artistic collaboration is suggestive specifically for the notion that Bernhardt's studio home in the avenue de Villiers can be read as queer-art-space. In 1876 Clairin was part of the team, along with Abbéma, who decorated this residence. According to Colombier's *Memoirs of Sarah Barnum*, Clairin [named Lerin] painted the ceiling of Bernhardt/Barnum's bedroom with a scene entitled *The Rising of Aurora* in which he made 'his personages modern and especially life-like'.¹⁵¹ Colombier associated the ceiling and the management of Bernhardt's new home in the same sentence as its occupant's manner which she described as 'a la Maecenas'.¹⁵² This phrase references the Roman statesman Maecenas (c. 67-8 BCE) who was Caesar Augustus's right-hand man [*Caesaris dextra*] in the period prior to and during his rule as Emperor. As well being as a poet and scholar, Maecenas's name was, according to the *Grand dictionnaire*, 'synonymous with a generous and enlightened patronage of the arts and literature'.¹⁵³ Both Virgil and Horace dedicated poetic works to him and, in the case of Horace, Maecenas returned the favour when he wrote the following epigram: 'If that I do not love you, my own Horace, / More than life itself, behold your / Comrade leaner than Ninnius.'¹⁵⁴ But Maecenas was also, according to the *Grand*

presence of a dog in the play, which in any case may have belonged to Bernhardt. Whichever of these scenarios is the most likely, the perceived difference of either 'Mrs Clarkson' or Bernhardt (as Jewish) make it imperative that discourses of race are understood to be at play in this image. A smaller oil on canvas copy of the painting dated 1878 came up for sale at Sotheby's in New York in 2000; *La Belle Époque: Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture*, Sotheby's, New York, 3 May 2000, lot no. 279, 168.

¹⁵¹ Colombier (1884), 78-79. According to Colombier Bernhardt had chosen this subject matter and Clairin painted her as the figure of Aurora. Gold and Fizdale read into this passage that the other figures were 'a host of her familiars disguised as mythological creatures', 140. This is certainly a possibility. Clairin contributed to several other collective ventures during his career as a mature artist. He provided several wall and ceiling paintings for the decorative scheme at Charles Garnier's Paris Opéra in the 1870-80s, most strikingly the high camp *Bacchanale* for the Salon du Glacier. Here Clairin painted himself into the Cabanelesque scene as a recumbent, vine-decked faun, one suitable, by supposition, for the bar he and Regnault were to have run in Madrid.

¹⁵² 'A la Maecenas' is the phrase used in the English translation of Colombier's biography.

¹⁵³ 'Le nom de Mécène resté le synonyme de protecteur généreux et éclairé des arts et des lettres', Alphonse Karr, 'Mécène (Caius Cilnius Maecenas)', *Grand dictionnaire*, X, 176.

¹⁵⁴ Cited in Suetonius, 'Life of Horace', *The Lives of the Caesars*, 2 vols [Loeb Classical Library] (London: Heinemann, 1913), II, n.p. For a recent analysis of this verse, see 'Maecenas' in *The Fragmentary Latin Poets*, ed. Edward Courtney (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 276-81. Courtney gives the following Latin transcription: 'ni te uisceribus meis, Horati, / plus iam diligo, tu tu<u>m

dictionnaire, an 'epicurean' and 'one of his treatises concerned the issue of adornment thereby indicating rather effeminate tastes'. Moreover, in the latter years of his life he had subjected himself to 'debaucheries of all sorts'. The *Grand dictionnaire* does not specify the type of debaucheries but it does cite Seneca on Maecenas's troubled relationship with his wife Tarentia and his recourse to wine and 'a thousand other voluptuous pleasures'.¹⁵⁵ What the *Grand dictionnaire* does not cite directly are Seneca's comments on Maecenas's masculinity, in which, according to Craig Williams in *Roman Homosexuality: Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity*, he 'sneered that Maecenas' eunuchs were more manly than himself.' As is the purpose of Williams's study, he goes on to argue that Maecenas's position *vis à vis* effeminacy or masculinity as connotative of twentieth-century homosexuality is complex.¹⁵⁶ Nonetheless, I would argue that in describing Bernhardt's manners as 'à la Maecenas', Colombier was, by association, situating Clairin's painting, at the very least, within a context of 'debauchery' and therefore, at least partially, in the camp of same-sex eroticism.¹⁵⁷ Given that 'Barnum' allegedly took measures to ensure that 'Lerin' never married, this is a substantial hint that Clairin was being figured by Colombier as what we now call homosexual.¹⁵⁸

sodalem / nimio uideas strigiosorem.' Courtney's commentary on the doubtful term 'nimio' is extensive, stating its likely reference to the 'offspring of a mule and a mare'; 277-78. I am grateful to Professor Levene, Department of Classics, University of Leeds for his kind assistance with locating this epigram and his confirmation that the Loeb version is a free translation in which the, literally, visceral aspect of Maecenas's love for Horace in the Latin is not conveyed.

¹⁵⁵ 'Un de ses traités avait pour objet la toilette, ce qui montre des goûts assez efféminés'; and 'a mille autres voluptés', Karr, 'Mécène', *Grand dictionnaire*, 176.

¹⁵⁶ Craig A. Williams, *Roman Homosexuality: Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 157. For a review of Williams's book, see Bruce W. Frier (University of Michigan). Frier suggests that readers should 'gird your loins for another romp through the theme park of social constructionism' and concludes that 'it remains to be seen whether Roman social history will soon or ever be able to dispense with the concept of homosexuality', 'Craig A. Williams, *Roman Homosexuality: Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity*', *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, 11:5 (1999), <<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/bmcr/1999/1999-11-05.html>> [13 June 2006].

¹⁵⁷ 'A la Maecenas' is not included in Alfred Delvau, *Dictionnaire érotique moderne par un professeur de langue verte* [1864], repr. (Geneva: Slatkine, 1968).

¹⁵⁸ The only posthumous writer on Bernhardt who suggests that Clairin may have been homosexual is Philippe Jullian. He writes as follows of the relationship: 'Clairin entra dans la Ménagerie vers 1874 et ne la quitta que mort quarante ans plus tard. On disait que Sarah avait brisé sa carrière (et un beau mariage), mais elle remplit merveilleusement la vie de son ami et lui servit d'alibi quand les femmes, qu'il aimait de loin, lui tournaient autour. Qu'on appelât Jojotte ce joli brun à l'élégante barbiche

Clairin's shift from a love/art collaboration with Regnault to a friendship/art collaboration with Bernhardt is one way that allows for the possibility of thinking Bernhardt's studios and domestic interiors as 'queer-art-space' in the terms laid out by *Zigzags*, namely in the materiality of collaborative art production and studio practice as effected through the making of artworks and their display. There are other ways in which the Clairin-Bernhardt axis of *Zigzags*'s mutual admiration society manifested itself that have not been considered elsewhere. Much has been made of the 'exoticism' of Bernhardt's atelier-salons in contemporary and subsequent literature. Although it has not been within the scope of this chapter to consider Bernhardt's decorative schemes in any depth, it is possible that she may have gained access to the Orientalist aesthetic researched and reproduced by Clairin in his studio environments during and after his relationship with Regnault. For instance, as early as November 1868 in Madrid his and Regnault's studio was furnished by them, according to Regnault, with 'an Oriental luxury' and this was also the case with the studio home they rented in Tangier in

permet de croire qu'il n'avait pas la vocation du mariage.' I have not been able to ascertain Jullian's sources regarding the possibility that Bernhardt 'ruined his career'. With regard to doing the same to 'a lovely marriage', Jullian may be referencing Colombier's *Sarah Barnum* and reading into it, as I have done, the connotation of homosexuality. Jullian is forthright in his implications. His suggestions that Bernhardt provided an 'alibi' for Clairin when women were around and that 'marriage was not his vocation' point to a same-sex interest that only falls short of calling him 'homosexual'. I have not been able to establish if Jullian had other sources apart from Colombier. There are two further possibilities. The first is his reading of Bernhardt's affectionate name for Clairin – 'Jojotte' (she also used 'Geogotte') because this is a feminized form. As I have demonstrated from a number of sources (Regnault's Madrid letter, Marcello's correspondence) this name was not given him by Bernhardt but was in use in the 1860s. I have not been able to establish who gave Clairin this name in the first instance. The second reason for Jullian's reasoning might be Clairin's appearance, epitomized by his 'brown hair and elegant little beard'. This would require further study of dress and comportment codes both in the nineteenth century and of the time when Jullian was writing (1970s) because of his interest in presenting material on Clairin in this way (his other work covers a markedly 'homosexual' subject area). I do not have the time or space to explore this here. See Philippe Jullian, *Sarah Bernhardt* (Paris: Balland, 1977), 87. I am very grateful to Dr Claudine Mitchell for her thoughtful response to my questions regarding Jullian's implications in this passage, namely her comments that the use of 'Jojotte' connotes 'effeminate which is not the same thing as homosexual' and that the 'reference to Sarah serving as alibi would corroborate the connotations towards 'homosexual'; email from Claudine Mitchell, 27 January 2007.

December 1870.¹⁵⁹ On his return to Paris, Clairin had two studios in the rue de Rome, one of which, in his home at number 62, was described by the art journalist Gustave Goetschy as ‘sumptuously and richly decorated’ with ‘Moroccan architectural features’ and ‘full of furnishings, carpets, weapons, lamps and fabric from the Orient’.¹⁶⁰ Another aspect of the Bernhardt-Clairin axis is the association between Clairin’s wider set of artistic friendships and the specific site of Bernhardt’s art production. For instance, Escalier, the architect of her hôtel in avenue de Villiers was a friend of Clairin’s in the late 1860s as were other contributors to the decorative scheme there (again, Escalier, along with Duez, Butin, and Jadin) and three of Clairin’s friends were Bernhardt’s immediate neighbours around the time she took up residence (again Duez, Barrias, and Jourdain). Both aspects of the Bernhardt-Clairin axis require further research which I am unable to pursue here.

Although the collaboration between Bernhardt and Clairin can readily be demonstrated as a two-way relationship, I want to maintain that it was only one axis of the three-way relationship that *Zigzags* in 1876 called a ‘trio’ and ‘mutual admiration society’. Before I re-consider another axis of this ‘society’ (Bernhardt-Abbéma, already discussed in Chapter 1), I want to return to the three-way relationship and therefore also consider the axis of Abbéma-Clairin. Both Abbéma and Clairin are usually presented in posthumous literature separately in relation to Bernhardt and, on the whole, by illustrating images of each of them alone. The relationship between Abbéma and Clairin is certainly less evident than either other axis of the trio: I have found no written documentary evidence of it and only one pen and ink portrait of Clairin by Abbéma.¹⁶¹ Nonetheless, all three were involved in the same projects: the decoration of Bernhardt’s hôtel in avenue de Villiers, the decoration of the Théâtre Sarah

¹⁵⁹ See note 131 for the Madrid studio. According to Cazalis, with regard to the studio home the men first rented in Tangier, they ‘sought to unite all the luxury of oriental curiosities therein [cherchèrent à y réunir tout le luxe des curiosités orientales]’ and this was the backdrop for many of Regnault’s paintings executed there; 72, 73.

¹⁶⁰ ‘[S]omptueux et richement aménagé’; ‘l’architecture mauresque’; and ‘rempli de meubles, de tapis, d’armes, de lampes et d’étoffes d’Orient’, Goetschy, *La Vie moderne* (15 October 1881), 670.

¹⁶¹ These were exhibited and illustrated in *Non-Dissenters: One Hundred and Seventy French Nineteenth-Century Drawings, Pastels and Watercolours*, ed. Robert J. F. Kashey and Martin L. H. Reymert (New York: Shepherd Gallery, 1976), n.p. They are undated.

Bernhardt in the late 1890s, the illustration of Bernhardt's memoirs serialized in English in *The Strand Magazine*, and others.¹⁶² Although only few are available, all three are shown in private photographs, including in two that I illustrated earlier of the conservatory at avenue de Villiers around 1877 (figs 2: 10-11).¹⁶³

Does this paucity of visual representation of Bernhardt, Abbéma, and Clairin mean that they were not, as *Zigzags* claimed, friends and collaborators within a 'trio', 'a mutual appreciation society'? Are the separate axes of Bernhardt-Abbéma and Bernhardt-Clairin in which both Abbéma and Clairin remain the admiring, lesser partner in the relationship a more accurate way of reading this set of relations? After all, the 'society's' certificate did represent Bernhardt with a nimbus and place Abbéma and Clairin in 'admiring poses' in relation to her. But even images of either separate axis that includes Bernhardt are also rare or tend to go unnoticed.¹⁶⁴ Carol Ockman has suggested within an art historical context the possibility of

¹⁶² Some secondary sources exclude Abbéma from the avenue de Villiers project, although Lysiane Bernhardt states that she did work on the house; 97.

¹⁶³ The other photographs are: one of a group on the balcony of Bernhardt's holiday home at Sainte-Adresse (before 1884) reproduced in Huret (1899; 93) and two of a group at Belle-Île-en-mer reproduced in Lysiane Bernhardt; opp. 193.

¹⁶⁴ Clairin appears in one further group photograph (without Abbéma) reproduced in Lysiane Bernhardt, opp. 209. I know of only one photograph of Bernhardt and Clairin alone, which is reproduced in Huret (1899), 137. Bernhardt and Clairin are represented in only one painting – although this remains unremarked – a work by Clairin, *La Gondole* (c. 1878-79, oil mounted on paper, musée du Petit Palais, Paris), gift of his friend Armand Renaud in 1896. This is dated by the museum as c. 1896. Clairin produced a series of gondola paintings including this one: the others are of Bernhardt and possibly Abbéma (for sale in Paris in 1988 and 1991) and another of two women, possibly Bernhardt and Abbéma, a watercolour, dated c. 1897 (coll. F. H. Duchêne, Paris), illus. Philippe Jullian, *The Symbolists*, trans. Mary-Anne Stevens (Oxford: Phaidon, 1973), fig. 21. He also exhibited a painting entitled *La Gondole* at the Salon in 1896. I am grateful to Lynne Thornton, expert on Orientalist paintings in Paris, for providing useful information on Clairin's gondola paintings; email from Lynne Thornton, 2 November 2005. Judging from the perceived age of Bernhardt and Clairin in the Petit Palais painting it is possible that this and both those known to represent two women are of an earlier date. It is possible that Clairin travelled to Venice with Abbéma and Bernhardt in the winter of 1878-79 and therefore the first three gondola paintings mentioned above resulted from this trip. Clairin produced a number of genre scenes of Venice, but all are undated. Clairin's paintings of the two women require further study as does his other Italian work: a recent sale included a painting of a woman and a 'pageboy' crouched down behind the seat in intimate engagement. This is quite possibly a portrait, precise or generic, of Bernhardt and Abbéma.

regarding the character of the relationship between all three as collaborative.¹⁶⁵ She also considers the implications of the Bernhardt-Abbéma axis in particular with regard to a setting productive for art making.¹⁶⁶ Certainly, the configuration of a ‘mutual admiration society’ by *Zigzags* was never meant as a serious assessment of the working and personal relationship between Bernhardt, Abbéma, and Clairin. But this does not mean that it had no grounds in material reality. Scrutiny of images or descriptions of Bernhardt’s studios and homes (as discussed above) and those of Abbéma at rue Lafitte and Clairin at the rue de Rome attests to the ownership and display by the trio of artworks of, or for, each other.¹⁶⁷

What I seek to do here is to claim that Bernhardt’s relationship with both Abbéma and Clairin can be configured as providing the conditions for her studio and home to be considered as queer-art-space because both painters were crucial to Bernhardt’s production as an artist. I have already claimed that the two photographs of the conservatory (figs 2: 10-11) represent scenes of a particularly intimate sociality and want to reiterate this claim now in view of my discussion of Clairin’s work and my previous discussion of Abbéma in Chapter 1. Both show familial scenarios that overlap with, but are different from, a heterosexual family group (they include along with the trio Bernhardt’s life-long friend, Mme Guérard, and Abbéma’s parents). Unlike countless images of Bernhardt as public ‘icon’ (in a stage role, as celebrity at home or about town, or even ‘as a sculptor’), Bernhardt is not the sole or main focus of the scenario pictured. Instead, and in both photographs, she is one member of an intimate group. Friendship and love outside the heterosexual family or opposite-sex relationships are factors included in the Bernhardt legend but only ever considered very briefly. Friendship and love that one can now designate queer or specifically lesbian queer are the unsaid known of the

Two photographs of Bernhardt and Abbéma appeared at *Sarah Bernhardt et son époque*, 23 April 1997. See above for a discussion of *Le Déjeuner dans la serre* in which Abbéma represents both herself and Bernhardt in a familial group.

¹⁶⁵ Ockman states concerning the trio, that ‘[Abbéma] and Clairin were the most faithful chroniclers of Bernhardt’s image and the central members of her self-appointed family’, Ockman (2005), 44.

¹⁶⁶ Ockman writes of Abbéma and Bernhardt’s ‘rich artistic dialogue’ and their equally compelling personal relationship, Ockman (2005), 47.

¹⁶⁷ An undated photograph of Clairin in his studio at 62 rue de Rome shows one of Bernhardt’s marine sculptures, illus. *Portrait de l'artiste*, cat. no. 66.

Bernhardt story. Crucially, these images were taken in one room (the conservatory) which was integral to Bernhardt's studio at avenue de Villiers more broadly conceived, as my discussion in the first part of this chapter has demonstrated. As such, these images signify the conjuncture and necessity of friendship for Bernhardt in an artistically collaborative relationship and therefore designate their location as queer-art-space. With regard to the discourse on Bernhardt or the history of later nineteenth-century art production in France, again, this is as yet, the 'unthought known' of art history.¹⁶⁸

Failure to represent this artistically collaborative trio in appropriate measure is symptomatic of a lack of attention to detail in documenting and reading material on Bernhardt's art practice in general and her sculpture practice in particular. This failure occurs because some material is repeatedly reproduced and other material languishes in archives (for example, in out of print publications), or the history and analysis of it remains sketchy. This has implications beyond Bernhardt studies: it perpetuates the story that women did not make much sculpture in nineteenth-century France, that what they did make was somehow insignificant, mediocre, or, at best, compromised by the constrained circumstances of gendered conditions of production.¹⁶⁹ For a history of Bernhardt's sculpture practice, it maintains the notion of her as

¹⁶⁸ The phrase is Christopher Bollas's. He writes '[i]n the beginning there may be the word, but there is also the wordless. The infant-mother dialogue is more an operational and less a representational form of knowledge.' *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known* (London: Free Association, 1987), 281.

¹⁶⁹ Anastasia Easterday argues that 'women [sculptors] were not simply subject to gender-biased institutional constraints, but that they experienced a more interactive relationship.' However, she does add that '[h]ow women sculptors strategically positioned themselves within the various systems they confronted throughout the 19th century may have been ultimately limiting. But their strategies were the only really viable options aside from the unacceptable solution of overthrowing the established order altogether.' Easterday situates Bernhardt as a 'decadent woman' with an 'eccentric character' who, although working 'predominantly in the less prestigious area of portraiture', received more attention than other women sculptors because of her celebrity. But contemporary viewers were ambivalent: 'audiences and critics', she writes, '[...] could not quite decide whether they were interested in her work because of what they saw as its quality, or whether they were more intrigued by the notoriety of its author', Easterday, 'Charting a Course in an Intractable Profession: Women Sculptors in 19th-Century France' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1997), viii-ix, 321, 322, 326. Despite these observations, Easterday herself does not pay

an amateur at the expense of a more accurate and fuller account of her practice. This will be the subject of the following chapter.

Lesbian Queer-Art-Space

Finally in this chapter, I want to take up the differentiation of queer-art-space as lesbian by returning to both Abbéma's painting, *Le Déjeuner dans la serre* and Melandri's photographs of Bernhardt with the *Bust of Louise Abbéma*. Bernhardt's relationship with Abbéma, both personal and artistic, is one of the enduring themes of this thesis. In Chapter 1 I considered Bernhardt's portrait bust of Abbéma, reading with scholarly lesbian desire, as signifying the inscription of a desiring transaction between artist and sitter. At the beginning of this chapter, images that included the bust enabled me to pursue an investigation of the site of Bernhardt's sculpture production, asking questions of the places in which it was represented. If the bust can be configured as an icon of lesbian erotic intimacy, then where it was made or displayed locates this intimacy in the time and place of a studio and home. Moreover, if the artist and sitter are also seen to occupy the same places, this too represents the historical grounding and location of a lesbian intimacy as it was lived out and translated into an enduring form, the portrait bust, by means of the work of art making.

With regard to my qualification of the place where this occurred as 'lesbian queer-art-space', there is a founding literature and ongoing debate on female same-sex relations and whether or not these might be best configured as lesbian and, if so, precisely what 'lesbian' signifies. This debate is grounded in work on 'romantic friendship' between women in the nineteenth century (mainly Britain and the United States) and currently hinges on notions of the appropriateness of 'lesbian' to qualify same-sex activity between women during a time when 'lesbian' may not have been in use.¹⁷⁰ Similar work in nineteenth-century French studies

more than passing attention to Bernhardt's actual works in sculpture, presenting a synopsis of contemporary treatment of it in art critical and popular publications.

¹⁷⁰ For this founding literature, see Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (New York: Morrow, 1981) and Carol Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Oxford University

Press, 1986). Recent scholarship contests the use of 'lesbian' (interchangeably as noun or adjective) as inattendant to the specificities of various forms of same-sex activity between women and the social and cultural positioning of women with regard to gender roles. For instance Judith Halberstam writes that 'within a Foucauldian history of sexuality, "lesbian" constitutes a term for same-sex desire produced in the mid to late twentieth century within the highly politicized context of the rise of feminism and the development of what Foucault calls a homosexual "reverse discourse"; if this is so, then "lesbian" cannot be the transhistorical label for all same-sex activity between women'; *Female Masculinity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), 51. This is also the position of Laura Doan who in a chapter on the currency of masculine clothing for women, albeit elsewhere and in a later period (1920s England), warns contemporary scholars against reading 'boyish or mannish garb for women' as signifying the same-sex interest of the wearer. She writes: 'if we impose our current assumptions about the requisite association of clothing and same-sex desire, we risk misreading female masculinities in the 1920s, for in the 1920s, as the tabloid response to Barker [Valerie Arkell-Smith, alias Colonel Victor Barker] indicates, such connections were not yet consolidated'; Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism: The Origins of a Modern English Lesbian Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 96. There are many issues raised by this polarization between historians who wish to use 'lesbian' as a transhistorical, umbrella term for same-sex activity between women and those who contest its validity in specific historical and social contexts. Here I want to make four points. Firstly, the question of 'a Foucauldian history of sexuality' as useful for women is questioned by some (especially classical) feminist scholars. Amy Richlin asks: 'Can a historical model [Foucault's three volumes of *The History of Sexuality*] that incorporates the absence of women and others be turned around and applied to the study of the very groups it omits?' Given that this would require changing the model Foucault produced for his history (note: not *histories*) because the material would be so different (for instance by including documents, of whatever kind, left by women from the ancient world), Richlin's answer is a resounding 'No'. Rather she suggests that '[t]he (historical) project of documenting continuity as well as discontinuity – the history of rape, for example – falls out of sight here in a variation of [...] the "wrong because depressing" argument'; Richlin, 'Foucault's *History of Sexuality: A Useful Theory for Women?*' in *Rethinking Sexuality: Foucault and Classical Antiquity*, ed. David H. J. Larmour, Paul Allen Miller and Charles Platter (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 138-70. Secondly, within queer scholarship it seems that despite the urgency to dispense with 'lesbian' it just slips back in: Doan's book is, after all, subtitled 'Modern English *Lesbian Culture*'. Thirdly, a far more thorough study would have to be done of the history of the French language but 'lesbienne' was included in Delvau's *Dictionnaire érotique* as early as 1864. The entry reads: 'femme qui préfère Sapho a Phaon, le clitoris à la pine; Parisienne qui semble née à Lesbos, "terre des nuits chaudes et langoureuses"', 237. For a fuller account of the various terms used to signify same-sex eroticism between women in France that overlaps with the period I am considering, see Claudine Brécourt-Villars, 'Argot Bizarre', in *Petit Glossaire raisonnée de l'Érotisme Saphique 1880-1930* (Paris: La Vuc, 1980), 29-31. To my knowledge 'lesbienne' (noun) was not used to refer to either Abbéma or Bernhardt. My method in this thesis is not, however, to claim (ahistorically, transnationally, or otherwise) that Bernhardt or Abbéma were 'lesbians'. However, I do assert that the *desire* and experience of *love* which I read as inscribed into the art works they made of one another is 'lesbian' (qualifier) because this best signifies an *erotic* artist-sitter interchange, not only one of friendship. Finally, it is clear that a far more nuanced analysis that distinguishes *and* attends to the links between the sociology of lesbian sociality and its cultural manifestations is required. The founding literature tends to flounder on this distinction while the more recent, critical, literature (Halberstam, Doan) tends towards a sociological exegesis of cultural representation. Abbéma was never *directly* named a

(prior to the later 'Paris-Lesbos' activities of Natalie Barney and René Vivien) has not been given such a large profile within this debate.¹⁷¹ Here I explore how it might be possible, within the remit of an art historical case study, to write about a historically and culturally situated event [événement] of lesbian sociality and art practice in the 1870s. Whereas the three-way relationship between Bernhardt, Clairin and Abbéma can be thought of as 'queer' because it did not reproduce dominant heterosexualized models of art production, the two-way liaison of Bernhardt and Abbéma requires further qualification as lesbian because their intimacy is specifically physical and erotic and this is represented as such in (some of) their works of each other.

'lesbienne' or any of its possible substantive synonyms. However, contemporary sources refer to her (if only obliquely) as a 'man' (see Chapter 1). Robert de Montesquiou made several references to her in terms of same-sex practice. In a poem which he titled with a pseudonym for Abbéma as 'Abîme' he wrote: 'Abîme, who for years has never been coy / About having a girl instead of wanting a boy' ['Abîme, qui depuis des ans a le renom / D'avoir une compagne au lieu d'un compagnon'], *Les quarante bergères: portraits satiriques en vers inédits de Robert de Montesquiou* (Paris: Librairie de France, 1925), 94-95; in *Papillotes Mondaines* he wrote of her as 'Mlle. Abbéma / whom no man loves [Mlle. Abbéma / qui pas un homme n'aima]'; and in *Notes et réflexions inédites de Robert de Montesquiou* he wrote of an 'Abbémania' de gougnotte!'; BNMS, NAF 150151, fols. 14, 12, 13 respectively. In the previous verse to 'Abîme' Montesquiou writes of the protagonist, 'Barine', that she 'had been touched by a lesbian hand [par la main Lesbienne fut touché]'; *Quarante bergères*, 92-93. According to Delvau, a 'gougnotte preferred Sapho to Phaon, the clitoris of her female companion to the penis of her male companion [une gougnotte préfère Sapho à Phaon, le clitoris de sa voisine à la pine de son voisin]', 211-12. Note the similarity to his definition of 'lesbienne' cited above in this note.

¹⁷¹ This literature is far more restricted but includes the excellent Leslie Choquette, 'Homosexuals in the City: Representations of Lesbian and Gay Space in Nineteenth-Century Paris', in *Homosexuality in French History and Culture*, ed. Jeffrey Merrick and Michael Sibal, *Journal of Homosexuality* [special issue], 41: 3-4 (2001), 149-67, which covers the period from the 1830s to the end of the nineteenth-century. See also van Casselaer's *Lot's Wife* which discusses lesbian sociality beyond the Barney-Vivien axis and briefly covers the 1870s with regard to Bernhardt. For the Barney-Vivien axis, see Martha Vicinus, 'Fin-de-Siècle Theatrics: Male Impersonation and Lesbian Desire' in *Borderlines: Genders and Identities in War and Peace 1870-1930*, ed. Billie Melman (New York: Routledge, 1998), 163-91. Shari Benstock covers a period of lesbian sociality in the early twentieth century in Paris in *Women of the Left Bank: Paris 1900-1940* (London: Virago, 1987). For a discussion of 'lesbianism' in nineteenth-century Paris (mainly in its representation in literature and art) see, Marie-Jo Bonnett, *Les Deux amies: essai sur le couple de femmes dans l'art* (Paris: Blanche, 2000), 117-58. For a discussion of sapphism as represented and censored in literature, see Nicole Albert, 'Books on Trial: Prosecutions for Representing Sapphism in fin-de-siècle France', in *Disorder in the Court: Trials and Sexual Conflict at the Turn of the Century*, ed. George Robb and Nancy Erber (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1999), 119-39.

Griselda Pollock reads Abbéma's painting *Le Déjeuner dans la serre* as 'a representation of a studio space in Sarah Bernhardt's specially fashioned and personalized home in which the actress-artist is the luminous and hospitable centre of an informal sociality'. Crucially, Abbéma's placement of herself in the image in an 'intimate proximity to her lover' (as is the case with the photographs of the conservatory) renders the two the 'de-centred couple in [the] painting'. Within such a setting, according to Pollock, and because of Abbéma's 'calculated structure, colouring and mobilization of skills in portraiture' what is enabled here is an image of Bernhardt no longer 'reduced to mere icon' but presented with the other women in the image (Abbéma and her mother) as 'sentient, thinking, feeling and desiring subjects'.¹⁷² Pollock combines this reading of Abbéma's painting with an analysis of Alfred Stevens's painting *In the Studio* (1888) which figures three women – artist, model and a visitor – gathered round an easel but engaged in an intense moment of social interchange, the work of painting having momentarily broken off. In this painting, Pollock reads all three figures, not as a portrayal, but as 'facets of Sarah Bernhardt' representing her professional and creative work 'across the spaces and modes of representation between theatrical imag(in)ing and visual representation in painting and as an artist'.¹⁷³

What I want to consider further is how Abbéma's painting, because it locates Bernhardt and herself in close proximity in one part of Bernhardt's studio, configures that studio as a site of production (and therefore the practice that occurred there), in part, determined by lesbian intimacy. A satirical cartoon of the painting picked up on the primary figures of Abbéma and Bernhardt, thereby focussing on the physical proximity of the women around a central point of shared bodily contact (fig. 2: 39). This cartoon follows how Abbéma, putting herself in the picture with Bernhardt, structures their pose in the painting to form a voluptuous V in the meeting and parting of their bodies and, most strikingly, turns her body towards Bernhardt's in a gesture of erotic closeness only accentuated by her right hand lost from sight in the shadow of this meeting point. Leaning her head on her left hand she shows herself, the artist,

¹⁷² Pollock, 109, 110.

¹⁷³ Pollock, 117.

at rest, her work evident in the scope and painterly mastery of this work – the close brushwork of her own costume contrasting with the loose application of stroke and colour in Bernhardt's sleeve as she rests her forearms on the table.

1877, when this painting was taken through the final preparation for its exhibition at the Salon (it had been underway since at least 1876), was also a year when Bernhardt was in the process of making her portrait bust of Abbéma. Although not exhibited until 1879, the journal *L'Art* had announced in 1877 that it was in progress and would be exhibited that year.¹⁷⁴ The reason for Bernhardt's delay is unknown but I want to suggest that the experience of Bernhardt and Abbéma's collaboration in producing the portrait bust is inscribed into this painting.

Bernhardt leans forward onto the table to address the standing child. Laid loosely curled on the table her left hand is in repose, displaying two rings, one of which, like Abbéma she wears on her little finger (fig. 2: 40).¹⁷⁵ Her right hand (by 1877 her sculpting hand for the last eight years or so) lightly clasps the cloth between thumb and forefinger in a gesture that echoes the holding of a sculptor's modelling tool. Given the location of the conservatory and its possible use as an extension of the adjacent sculpture studio, this detail of Abbéma's painting is itself a gesture towards how both women's art making is inextricably linked to their erotic intimacy. As such, *Le Déjeuner dans la serre* represents a reciprocity on the part of Abbéma to the ongoing making of her portrait bust. Her painting is thus another form of the process of signifying erotic intimacy in an art work that in Chapter 1 I called 'making love' and provides a location in which this could occur.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Eugène Véron, *L'Art* (1877), 264.

¹⁷⁵ Abbéma also wears a ring on her little finger and the possible significance of this because of its later use as a signifier of (female and male) homosexuality in mid-twentieth-century culture (at least in the UK) warrants further investigation.

¹⁷⁶ This is also the subject of Chapter 4 and the Epilogue in which I discuss a plein air painting by Abbéma of herself and Bernhardt together in a boat on the lake in the bois de Boulogne celebrating their amorous liaison. This may have been a studio painting based on sketches or a photograph – the circumstances of its making are not known. However, what Abbéma signifies by dating the painting so precisely (8 July 1883) is, if not a literal plein air painting, the semblance of one.

At the end of Chapter 1, I claimed that Melandri's photographs where Bernhardt is represented with the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* indicated that 'in admiring and showing affection for something she has made and in this something being the representation of an other woman [...] these images demonstrate [...] an intense moment of desire inscribed in a relationship between sculptor and sitter.' My consideration of the same photographs in this chapter had the purpose of identifying the location of Bernhardt's sculpture practice. Given the composition and framing of the images, it was not possible to determine if these were situated in the sculpture studio or atelier-salon in avenue de Villiers. Nonetheless, as images of Bernhardt as a sculptor, these were produced to, and did, represent the site of sculpture production in a studio. I now want to make some further observations with regard to the character of that studio because of how Bernhardt, as sculptor, is figured in these images.

All the photographs in the Melandri series where Bernhardt is shown with her sculpture and painting (and one with her son) show her in a white trouser suit. Recent sources on Bernhardt claim this was designed by Bernhardt with the couturier Charles Frederick Worth, although I have found no reference to this in any contemporary source.¹⁷⁷ Published responses to Bernhardt in this suit were generally twofold. Firstly, she was figured in terms of how she transgressed the boundaries of gender, had managed not to, or both. Secondly, she was qualified as a decorative object. In the satirical journal *Les Hydropathes* Georges Lorin described her as 'the prettiest boy I have ever seen' and continued with an inventory of items in the outfit at once regarded as masculine garb but feminized by Bernhardt: 'he wears little booties (because his feet are very small), Japanese boots [...] high-heeled with big bows; a pretty

¹⁷⁷ None of the journals that illustrated Bernhardt in the suit either in a photograph or in caricature mention either the design of it or the involvement of Worth. The earliest claim I have found for his involvement is in William Emboden, *Sarah Bernhardt* (London: Studio Vista, 1974), 32. The suit is not mentioned in Huret (1899) or Lysiane Bernhardt (1945). I have not made an assessment of all biographies on Bernhardt but am reluctant to affirm Worth's involvement without more reliable archival evidence. I plan to pursue this.

cravat all frilly with lace, shirt cuffs, the same in lace'.¹⁷⁸ On a visit to Bernhardt's home in October 1878 Félicien Champsaur added to his description of her as a 'sweet and pretty boy in a jacket and trousers' that, along with the costume, '[t]he whole effect with the cute head and sparkling eyes was very charming and attractive, like a special artistic object to be put on a pedestal.'¹⁷⁹ The article in the London journal *The Theatre* which illustrated one of the photographs by Melandri (with a self-portrait bust) claimed that she '[w]ears her trousers and pea-jacket without any loss of womanly grace'.¹⁸⁰ Caricatures of Bernhardt in the suit continued to be published until as late as 1886, demonstrating a fascination with Bernhardt's appearance and production of sculpture but rarely the work or act of work itself.¹⁸¹

Aside from the Melandri photographs, Bernhardt was shown wearing the suit in two of Clairin's illustrations for Bernhardt's novella *Dans les Nuages: Impressions d'une Chaise* published at the end of 1878 as a witty riposte to tales published in the press about her that year. In both drawings by Clairin Bernhardt is pictured at home and involved in physical activity (playing croquet and fixing the chair who is protagonist of the story). This accords with Bernhardt's claim in her autobiography she wore her 'sculptor's costume' because it facilitated movement when she climbed ladders during the construction work on the house at avenue de Villiers. The eyewitness account by the mother of Miss Moulton, one of Bernhardt's sitters, states that

¹⁷⁸ '[L]e plus joli garçon que j'aie jamais vu [...] il porte des bottines (car il a le pied très-petit), des bottines japonaises ... à talon, et à bouffettes; une jolie cravate toute moussue de dentelles, des manchettes *idem* en dentelles', Lorin, *Les Hydropathes* (1879), 2.

¹⁷⁹ Champsaur (1878), n.p.

¹⁸⁰ 'Portraits: Mdlle. Bernhardt', *The Theatre* (1 June 1879), 285.

¹⁸¹ These appeared in chronological order as follows: André Gill [pseud. André Gosset de Guines, 1840-85], 'Sarah Bernhardt', in *La Lune rousse* (6 October 1878); Cabriol [Georges Lorin], 'L'Hydropathe Sarah Bernhardt', in *Les Hydropathes* (5 April 1879); Albert Robida (1848-1926), 'Succès à la cour: la charmante Séraphiska', in *La Caricature*, (15 May 1880); Anonymous and untitled drawing in *Art Amateur* (November 1880); Adolphe Willette, 'Sarah Sculpteur', in *Le Chat noir* (1882); Henri Demare, 'Sarah Bernhardt: Quelques chapitres de sa vie' (1883); Coll-Toc, 'Sarah Bernhardt', in *Femmes du jour* (April 1886).

she wore 'white trousers and jacket and a foulard tied artistically about her head' at the studio in boulevard de Clichy and this would date as 1875.¹⁸²

What if we take Bernhardt at her word; that the suit, even if not her constant attire in the studio, stood in for the ease with which she could carry out her work? In the illustrations for *Dans les nuages* Bernhardt is involved in physical activity. In the photographs by Melandri where she is pictured with her sculpture (a self-portrait bust, a life-sized plaster of *Médée* and the *Bust of Louise Abbéma*) Bernhardt places her body in poses that also signify the physicality of making sculpture, more evident because her limbs are outlined by the tailored trouser suit. In the photographs with her self-portrait bust she rests her left leg on a box and her right elbow on the sculptor's modeling stool in order to support her head (figs. 2:16-17). In the photograph with *Médée* (fig. 2: 18) Bernhardt uses a similar shoulder and lumbar rotation (having climbed onto the base of her large work) with which to show both proximity to the work in question and her engagement with the viewer/photographer in a (staged) moment of breaking off from her activity. This was an attire and a physicality Bernhardt was accustomed to in her work in the theatre, having already played two travesti roles: in 1861 in *Les Enfants d'Édouard* and in 1869 as the Florentine troubadour and seducer, Zanetto, in François Coppée's *Le Passant* and in which she appeared in several photographs in the Melandri series, some with Robert de Montesquiou in the same costume.

In the photographs with the *Bust of Louise Abbéma* (figs 1: 35-36) Bernhardt's engagement is different. Her pose in the full-length photograph with the bust is more frontal than those with the self-portrait and *Médée*. Her body is also on the same vertical plane as the work shown (rather than in front of it). Here she does not engage with the viewer but with the bust, either facing it or embracing it. The physicality of sculpture making is thereby extended into a display of affectionate investment not seen with the self-portrait or *Médée*. Again, Bernhardt engages her limbs in demonstrating this affection – she has her arm around the bust in one,

¹⁸² Neither is this the only outfit she was represented in 'at work', as the paintings by Abbéma and Bourgoïn illustrate (figs 1: 22 and 2: 3).

rests it alongside the bust in another and in both cases leans in towards the work (in fig. 1: 34 the platform of the stool has been adjusted in order to tilt towards her). The conjuncture of Bernhardt's physical activity as a sculptor in her studio and her affection for the portrait of a woman she loved and who loved her demonstrate how each was a condition of production for the other. The place where this occurred can, therefore, be qualified, in part, as lesbian queer-art-space.

Bernhardt did not wear this suit 'in public', although she was shown 'in public' wearing it 'in private' (Melandri's photographs, several drawings). Georges Sand (1804-76) and Rosa Bonheur (1822-99) were both known for wearing trousers in public before 1878, but were they precursors to Bernhardt? Perhaps this was the case with Bonheur, except that her reasoning was in order to pass as a man to gain access to the Parisian abattoirs for work purposes. Bernhardt, on the other hand, wore this suit at home. Bernhardt presented herself in trousers in her studio because, she explained, it was easier to work. Using access equipment and requiring agility when working on large-scale objects (as she did in 1878-79 for *La Musique*, Monte Carlo) makes this a reasonable claim. Her precedent for this was a fellow sculptor, Harriet Hosmer, who when in the process of making her colossal *Zenobia* in 1858 wrote to her friend Cornelia Carr 'tomorrow I mount a Zouave costume, not intending to break my neck upon the scaffolding, by remaining in petticoats'.¹⁸³ The problem with 'petticoats', or female clothing, for Hosmer and also for Bernhardt (if what she wears in Abbéma and Bourgoïn's paintings of her sculpting is indicative), is that the voluminous skirt material might have made easy movement harder. Therefore trousers made sense when clambering up platforms or reaching around a tricky area of modeling on a large figure. Abbéma's option was tightly fitting, long skirts, but then painting did not require the same athleticism as large-scale sculpture. This is conveyed, albeit sarcastically, in the *Chat Noir* illustration.

¹⁸³ Harriet Hosmer to Mrs [Cornelia] Carr, 'Rome, Mar. 4 1858', *Harriet Hosmer: Letters and Memories*, ed. Cornelia Carr (London: Lane, 1913).

Bernhardt's appeal in this suit, and her jaunty pose, in each of Melandri's images does also speak of something else. Her uplifted leg in the photographs with the self-portrait bust is less 'gender' transgressive and more the jaunty eroticism of a woman in her own territory. But who was she being erotic for? In the absence of contemporary women's writing on the appeal of 'masculine' clothes, and this is a loss that continues or rarely gets discussed in the literature on early twentieth-century 'cross-dressing', it remains for the twenty-first century art historian to make this claim and situate Bernhardt's lesbian erotic appeal for the viewer now.