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**Redrawing Boundaries:**  
Suffrage Artists, Spatiality, Gender, and Power

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in History.

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## Abbreviations

AFL	Actresses Franchise League.
ANZWVC	Australian and New Zealand Women Voters Committee.
ASL	Artist Suffrage League.
BDWSU	British Dominion Woman Suffrage Union.
CDA	Contagious Diseases Act.
ELFS	East London Federation of Suffragettes.
HHWI	Haslemere Hand Weaving Industry.
IDAA	Irish Decorative Arts Association.
ILP	Independent Labour Party.
IWSA	International Women's Suffrage Association.
LSE	London School of Economics.
MoL	Museum of London.
NA	National Archives.
NUWSS	The National Union of Women Suffrage Societies.
RCA	Royal College of Art.
TIBG	The Institute of British Geographers.
US	United Suffragists.
WFL	Women's Freedom League.
WGA	Women's Guild of Arts.
WL	Women's Library, London School of Economics.
WSPU	Women's Social and Political Union.
WTRL	Women's Tax Resistance League.
WWSL	Women Writers Suffrage League.

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This thesis comes from a fascination with politics, a lifelong love of history, of art, of creativity, and an admiration of those who endeavour to see beyond what is, to what can, and sometimes should be. It also comes from a strong sense of injustice for women, from stories

of grandmothers I never knew or ever met, who struggled with violent husbands and poverty, yet raised children and young men who did better. My father, William Douglas Morton, thankfully, was one of them. He died many years ago, but posthumously, thank you Dad. Your love of history, art, reading, of writing poetry (although you often hid it away), your sense of humour and quiet pride in the stories, drawings, and paintings I made, and in the ideas I had as a child, remained with me. You never saw any of this. My first degree, Masters, or my Doctoral journey. But your hand was on mine for all of it.



## Abstract

During the early twentieth century British women's suffrage campaign, women artists, and some men, produced a wealth of visual materials for the cause from colourful banners and posters, to post cards and household ephemera, making a significant contribution to the visual spectacle of the movement. Yet, the only comprehensive text on suffrage artistry was published thirty-five years ago and while recent scholarship has begun to address the neglected identities and entrepreneurship of those behind suffrage visual culture, suffrage artists themselves are often lost in the boundaries between visual and political histories. This thesis makes a major contribution to the scholarship offering fresh voices and perspectives on suffrage artists' gendered struggle for creative alongside political power at this critical juncture of modernity. Differently, it uses a spatial framework to move between the disciplinary boundaries, and across the archival deficits that have frustrated the recovery and analyses of suffrage artists' lives, politics, and creative energetics. The chapters are wrapped around themes of place, space, embodiment, mobility, and utopias, organising, re-grounding and reframing suffrage artists' lives, work, bodies, identities, and legacies, across an assemblage of landscapes both concrete and symbolic, real and imaginative, local and global, past and present. The principal focus falls on artists aligned to suffrage art groups the ASL and the Suffrage Atelier. However, friends, supporters, and other discursive actors appear where their suffrage and feminist stories are enmeshed in the spatial drama of contesting the power politics of art and gender in this era. The thesis gives fresh insight into how suffrage artists collectively organised and challenged gender power structures through suffrage art's diverse economies, their colonisation and occupation of male architectures in the city, their intertextual disruption of prevailing discourses on gender traits and sexualities, as well as bringing fresh class and colonial links to the fore in ways that add to suffrage, socialist and imperial archives. In this transitional phase for women's art and women's politics, it locates suffrage artists within broader, transformative feminist cultures. At the same time, it explores ways spatiality might better illuminate the lives of more marginalised women in the suffrage movement, while contributing to wider studies on gender and power.

## Chapter One

# In the Margins: An Introduction

*Spaces can tell stories and unfold histories. Spaces can be interrupted, appropriated, and transformed through artistic and literary practice. bell hooks*

In her essay *Choosing the Margin* bell hooks emphasizes the importance of creative practice for interrupting, appropriating, and transforming spaces which themselves can tell stories and unfold histories.<sup>1</sup> This thesis identifies and examines those spaces that suffrage artists' interrupted, appropriated, and transformed during the women's suffrage campaign, the stories that might unfold from them, and how these narratives and journeys connected to, or opposed, prevailing discourses of gender and power.<sup>2</sup> In so doing it speaks from the margins of the movement, of stories and voices that remain unheard. Suffrage artists, mostly women and some men, left a rich body of surviving visual work, producing suffrage posters, postcards, banners, jewellery, and more, now held for the most part between the metropolitan archives of the Women's Library (WL) and the Museum of London (MoL). As a collective body, their artistry is acknowledged to have made a significant contribution to the spectacle of the women's suffrage campaign while challenging visual representations of Edwardian femininity. Organised suffrage art groups, the Artists Suffrage League (ASL) formed in 1907 and the Suffrage Atelier in 1909, whose artists are often the primary focus of this thesis, produced much of this work. The societies were London-based and operated during the early twentieth century campaign, when the popular press, photography, commodity culture,

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<sup>1</sup> Bell Hooks, 'Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness' in B. Hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (U.S, Boston: South End Press, 1999) p.209.

<sup>2</sup> M. Tamboukou, *In the Fold between Power and Desire: Women Artists Narratives* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010).

spectacle politics, and population record keeping was then, at its historical zenith. Yet despite this, and the richness of the visual collection, the written archives for the ASL and the Suffrage Atelier also held at the WL, are limited in scope. No formal membership lists for the societies survive, and there is no, centrally organized, or substantial body of archive material detailing suffrage artists' political, working, or personal lives, whether they belonged to a suffrage art group, or worked independently to produce suffrage art as many women did.

Autobiographical sources are scarce, lost, or problematic, and while recent work discussed in the literature review below has sought to identify and address the paucity of information on their lives, overall, the difficulties of researching suffrage artists and thus the true scope of their feminist praxis, means they remain relatively marginalised in the written histories of the campaign. This is compounded by their awkward positioning somewhere between the genres of women's visual art and women's politics, historical disciplines that are often viewed antithetically, analysed differently, with suffrage artists themselves lost in the slippage in between. The complex ways they may have engaged with and/or contested the eras gender power structures, their creative, feminist praxis, and politics, cannot be fully explored, or understood, utilising only political or visual sources and methodologies. Instead, it requires an interdisciplinary approach that enables the surviving fragments of their personal, working, and feminist lives to be examined and more meaningfully assembled. Therefore, and taking a fresh perspective, this thesis employs a spatial framework which allows each chapter to thematically draw from a range of disciplinary scholarship, where necessary circumventing the formal, historical archive, identifying, navigating, and analysing suffrage artists' lives and work through the everyday and entwined relations and sites of power.<sup>3</sup> This innovative approach leads the thesis on a journey through the concrete and material spaces of the urban metropolis, through the insides, outsides, and meanings of its

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<sup>3</sup> See, Nast, H.J., & Pile, S, (eds.), *Places through the Body* (London: Routledge, 1998) p. 12.

architectures, to travel across three continents in the age of empire, and into the ideological, imaginative, and performative practice of suffrage artists' creativity itself. This is an experimental endeavour but one that promises new insight into the ways suffrage artists fought for women's creative alongside political power against the backdrop of suffrage campaigning and a new modern era where the gendered boundaries of politics, class, sexuality, empire, and art were being tested. Situating suffrage artists across this broader lexicon of power, moves them from the margins to the centre of debate in this important transitional phase between women's art, women politics, and the politics of modernity.

While not all scholars will agree, the term suffrage artist is used throughout the thesis to describe those women and some men who ordinarily worked as artists, designers, and crafters, and who contributed their time, and, art and design skills, directly to the suffrage campaign, chiefly, though not exclusively, through the ASL and the Suffrage Atelier as collective art organisations. However, other suffrage artists and non-artists who supported, or had links to these groups, or whose suffrage stories are enmeshed in other ways in the spatial drama of contesting the power politics and geographies of art and gender during the campaign, feature along the way. Many of these women possessed full, rich, and often long artistic lives and careers in which the production of suffrage art was a relatively short-lived experience, and I do not argue it defined them. Yet, it was important enough to them to found new suffrage art societies, and to commit to participating in them, formalising their politicised collective art ventures, at times, to the detriment of their own health and commercial businesses. For example, the Suffrage Atelier's 'chief worker' Clemence Housman (1861-1955) 'wore herself out' doing needlework for suffrage banners.<sup>4</sup> While ASL founder Mary Lowndes' (1856-1929) business partner and fellow suffragist, artist

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<sup>4</sup> Letter from Laurence Housman to Sarah Clark, 6 December (undated but likely 1911/12), Housman Papers, Street Library, Sommerset.

Barbara Forbes (1872-1946) said of Lowndes ‘we have a *lot* of work, and as she spends all her time on suffrage, I must do what little I can for the despised customer’.<sup>5</sup>

The thesis focuses overwhelmingly on the early years of the twentieth century suffrage campaign, when suffrage art working was at its height. However, its spatial framework allows the fraying of time parameters so that each chapter might follow suffrage artists’ trajectory of actions and experiences and importantly, how these interplayed with their consciousness of the asymmetry of gender power mechanisms in life, art, and politics. Thus, it reaches back into their family lives often deeply rooted and routed through British colonialism; into their fledgling feminism in the nineteenth century; and at other times forward to the here and now via the material legacies left by their activism. Nevertheless, given the ASL and the Suffrage Atelier artists’ lives and suffrage work during the campaign, form the central strand of enquiry, the thesis seldom strays beyond 1914 when both societies effectively ceased to function. This cessation did not of course bring an end to its artists’ individual work for the suffrage or other gender conscious causes, and in a variety of ways. Suffrage histories current focus on women’s continuing work through the 1914- 18 period and beyond to their enfranchisement on equal terms with men in 1928, is revealing the richness and diversity of women and men who fought on for the franchise and for broader sex equality. Many suffrage artists were among them and although this phase of their lives generally falls beyond the scope of research here, this is an endeavour worthy of a future post addendum.

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<sup>5</sup> L. Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign 1907-1914* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1988) p. 20, quoted from an appended note by Forbes on a letter from Lowndes to Phillipa Strachey October 1909, WL, box 146, LSWS general correspondence.

## *Suffrage Literature Review*

ASL and Suffrage Atelier materials kept at the WL and MoL formed the basis of art historian Lisa Tickner's pioneering and comprehensive work on the imagery of the British women's suffrage campaign *The Spectacle of Women* published in the late 1980s to which this thesis is indebted.<sup>6</sup> Tickner's work featuring many images and a biographical appendices of identified artists, added to the existing archive and was painstakingly researched in the days before digitisation, from suffrage newspapers, art catalogues, articles, occasional autobiographies, and so on. Her book was rightly hailed 'the definitive work on its subject' and 'an important piece of cultural history' that raised the profile of women artists and women's artistry in the public politics of the campaign.<sup>7</sup> While impressive in scope, Tickner's chief purpose as an art historian was, as Griselda Pollock highlighted, to analyse suffrage artists' 'contribution to visual representations of femininity in the Edwardian era' an approach that has continued to define how art historians have generally engaged with suffrage art and gender since.<sup>8</sup>

Their emphasis has remained on visual representations of femininity in suffrage art, particularly on the female body as spectacle in the campaign. For example, scholars such as Barbara Green, Rosemary Betterton, Jane Marcus, Cheryl Jorgensen- Earp, Marina Warner, and more recently Chloe Ward, often revolve their visual critiques around suffrage artists' emotive, violent poster depictions of hunger striking suffragettes and their forced feeding in prison.<sup>9</sup> These are broadly linked to cultural modernism and the new advertising culture

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<sup>6</sup> Tickner, *Spectacle*.

<sup>7</sup> These press quotes from A.S Byatt (London Evening Standard) and Claire Tomlin (The Observer) appear on the back cover of Tickner's work. Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> G. Pollock, [untitled] Reviewed work(s): 'The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign 1907-1914 by Lisa Tickner' *Journal of Design History*, 3:1 (1990), pp. 69-72.

<sup>9</sup> B. Green, *Spectacular Confessions: Autobiography, Performative Activism, and the Sites of Suffrage 1905-1938* (London: Macmillan Press, 1997); R. Betterton, *An Intimate Distance: Women Artists and the Body* (London: Routledge, 1996); J. Marcus, 'The Asylums of Antaeus: Women, War, and Madness – Is There a Feminist Fetishism' in V. H. Aram, (ed.) *The New Historicism* (London: Routledge, 1989) pp. 132-151; C.R. Jorgensen-Earp, *The Transfiguring Sword: The Just War of the Women's Social and Political Union* (U.S, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1997); M. Warner, *Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form* (London: Vintage, 1996); C. Ward, 'Images of Empathy: Representations of Force Feeding in

through the commodification of the female body in suffrage designs. Alternatively, the suffragette image of the armour-clad warrior woman is scrutinized as a visual symbol of women's bodily rejection of men in an increasingly volatile battle of the sexes, and/or is linked to violent Avant Garde strategies of the suffragettes.<sup>10</sup> Either way, her androgynous image is framed and defined by the destructive tactics of the WSPU.

Other art scholars, such as Rosika Parker and Janice Helland, who have focused on the production of suffrage textiles by artists and crafters rather than on printed suffrage imagery, emphasize how suffrage banner working enabled women to subvert their traditionally feminine needleworking skills by turning them to politically feminist ends.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, art historians have not substantially revisited the artwork of the movement since Tickner's *Spectacle*, or broadly sought to further recover the identities, lives, and feminist praxis of the artists that produced it who have often been viewed, principally, as political rather than creative agents. Necessarily, neither have they sought to examine the ideological or material implications of suffrage artists' struggle for creative alongside political power as it played out across the sites and spaces of their art making during the campaign. The sites and spaces of suffrage artistry in Britain were vast in its broadest sense, if all those who stitched something, made something, at some point during the campaign are encompassed, whether they embroidered or painted banners for a local march, made suffragette rosettes for their clothing, or decorated floats and town halls with swags and flags in suffrage colours. Many women and men from across the nations contributed to the rich tapestry of the suffrage

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Votes for Women' in M. Garrett & Z. Thomas (eds.) *Suffrage and the Arts: Visual Culture, Politics and Enterprise* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019).

<sup>10</sup> See, S. Park, 'Political Activism and Women's Modernism' in M. T. Linett, *The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Women Writers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) pp. 172-186.

<sup>11</sup> R. Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (London: Women's Press, 1996); L. Tickner, 'Banners and Banner Making' in J.M Przyblyski & V.R. Schwartz (eds.), *The Nineteenth Century Visual Culture Reader* (London: Routledge, 2004); J. Helland, 'An Irish Harp and Sleeping Beauty: The Politics of Suffrage in the Textile Art of Una Taylor and Ann Macbeth' in Garrett & Thomas, *Suffrage and the Arts*, pp. 231-249.

spectacle, and much needed work, for example, on the artistic social and suffrage networks of women at the Glasgow School of Art, continue to give exciting new perspectives.<sup>12</sup> Yet most artists who were committed to regular suffrage art working, especially to organised groups the ASL and the Suffrage Atelier, centred themselves in London during the suffrage campaign, at the global ‘storm centre of the women’s movement’, the political epicentre of the British Empire, and for many the beating heart of the art world.<sup>13</sup> For that reason, the lived sites and spaces through which suffrage artists’ negotiated, occupied, and contested relations of power examined in this thesis, are principally metropolitan. However, it also illuminates the diverse geographies of suffrage artists’ lives, travels, and artistic praxis, and how these were globally spatialised and interlinked.

Meanwhile, scholars concerned with the politics of the women’s suffrage movement have been reluctant to engage with the campaign’s visual artists and are often uncomfortable with a visual analysis of their artwork though this is used illustratively.<sup>14</sup> For example, suffrage artists’ work appears most often in lively, but quite specific debates about women’s use of art as political propaganda to effectively shore up popular suffrage arguments for the public. Sometimes it features as a visual segway for discussing commercial or political strategies employed by major suffrage societies, the NUWSS, WFL and the WSPU particularly.<sup>15</sup> For instance, emotive posters depicting hunger striking suffragettes illustrate

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<sup>12</sup> L. Arthur, ‘The Artistic, Social and Suffrage Networks of Glasgow School of Art’s Women Artists and Designers’ in Garrett & Thomas, *Suffrage and the Arts*, pp. 43-65.

<sup>13</sup> This phrase, credited to one of the leaders of the American suffrage movement Carrie Chapman Catt, is taken from Margaret Corbett Ashby’s papers (WL) quoted in L. Walker (2006) ‘Locating the Global/Rethinking the Local: Suffrage Politics, Architecture, and Space’ *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 34:1/2, p.176.

<sup>14</sup> For some interesting exceptions, see K. Cowman (2007) ‘“Doing Something Silly”: The Uses of Humour by the Women’s Social and Political Union, 1903–1914’ *IRSH* 52, pp. 259–274; T Morton, ‘An Arts and Crafts Society Working for the Enfranchisement of Women’: Unpicking the Political Threads of the Suffrage Atelier’ in Garrett & Thomas (eds.) *Suffrage and the Arts*, pp. 65-89.

<sup>15</sup> C. H. Palczewski (2005) ‘The Male Icon and the Feminine Uncle Sam: Visual Argument, Icons and Ideographs in 1909 Anti-Women Suffrage Postcards’ *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 91:4, pp. 365-394; J. Mercer, (2005) ‘Media and Militancy: Propaganda in the Women’s Social and Political Union’s Campaign’ *Women’s History Review* 14:2/3, pp. 471-486; I. Watson I, *A Study of the Promotional Strategies Employed by the Suffragette Movement, 1866-1914* (University of Stirling, BSc Hons, 2000-2001) Unpublished thesis; E.



debates about the saliency of this act as a political strategy by the WSPU for auguring activists early release from prison. Meanwhile, those depicting suffragettes being forcibly fed, are used to illuminate discussions on the socio-political impact of the government's brutal tactics in response.<sup>16</sup> Such imagery helps scholars to visually encapsulate their commentary on suffrage campaigners sometimes contradictory strategies toward feminist self-empowerment as they performed a 'double shuffle' between suffragette violence and injured innocence.<sup>17</sup>

Suffrage banners on the other hand, often representing different women's suffrage societies, their diverse geographies, and occupations, as they were carried aloft on parades by women, at times, numbering in the hundreds of thousands, are used to demonstrate the breadth and depth of those taking part in the campaign. They are also employed as material evidence of a new, more visible, 'trooping of the feminine' *en masse* in British politics and of suffragism's global reach.<sup>18</sup> For example, the huge, international suffrage Women's Coronation Procession which marched through London's streets in 1911, was decorated by a plethora of colourful banners symbolizing and carried by representatives from 'all corners of the earth' photographs of which with participants from India to Australia, have been used to

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Crawford 'Our Readers are Careful Buyers: Creating Goods for the Suffrage Market' in Garrett & Thomas, *Suffrage and the Arts*, pp. 117-136.

<sup>16</sup> For example, see, C. R. Jorgensen-Earp (1999) "The Waning of the Light": The Forcible-Feeding of Jane Warton, Spinster' *Women's Studies in Communication* 22:2, pp. 125-151; C. Ward, 'Images of Empathy: Representations of Force Feeding in Votes for Women', Garrett & Thomas, *Suffrage and the Arts*, pp. 249-272.

<sup>17</sup> For the context to 'double shuffle' and her description of arrest and hunger striking as an 'unworthy political game', see the critical writings of WFL activist Teresa Billington-Greig, who had herself been imprisoned. T. Billington-Greig, 'The Militant Suffrage Movement: Emancipation in a Hurry' (1911), in *The Non-violent Militant: Selected Writings of Theresa Billington-Greig*, (ed.) by C. McPhee and A. FitzGerald (1987), pp. 185-93. See also, Tickner, *Spectacle*, p.38.

<sup>18</sup> M. Lowndes, *Banners and Banner Making* (London: Artists Suffrage League, 1909) WL archives 234163.3; J. Robinson, *Hearts and Minds: The Untold Story of the Great Pilgrimage and How Women Won the Vote* (London: Doubleday, 2018); Green *Spectacular Confessions*; Z. Thomas, 'Historical Pageants, Citizenship and the Performance of Women's History before Second-Wave Feminism' in A. Bartie, L. Fleming, M. Freeman, A. Hutton & P. Readman (eds.) *Restaging the Past: Historical Pageants, Culture, and Society in Britain* (London: UCL Press, 2020) pp. 108-131.

frame discussions about the complexity of suffragists relationships with the power mechanisms of imperialism and its race hierarchies.

Together, such scholarship gives fascinating insights into these varied but highly performative, corporeal acts by suffrage campaigners, that visibly, and publicly challenged the era's cultural definitions of femininity which located women's bodies firmly within the home, not marching on the streets, while also exposing women as the victims of men's violence and duplicitous claims of male chivalry in Britain and its empire. Yet, while suffrage artistry is given some space in suffrage scholarship, suffrage artists as makers are mostly silent. In a reversal of art histories approach, suffrage scholars generally regard them as creative not political agents, showing little interest in retrieving their identities, or hence considering whether their feminist, imperial, class, or sexual politics, might have entwined with their work in other ways to culturally contest, or complicate, male discourses of power and privilege at home and abroad. The thesis chapters recover and resituate suffrage artists' feminist praxis and politics within this broader lexicon of power.<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, their very involvement in the suffrage movements collective, mass feminization, means suffrage artists are for the most part absent from scholarship on early twentieth century feminist-modernist subcultures whose intertextual creativity and language is central to studies on gender, sexuality, and power at the fin de siècle.<sup>20</sup> The characterisation

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<sup>19</sup> *Memento of Women's Coronation Procession to demand Votes for Women*, Saturday June 17, 1911, Order of March and Descriptive Programme (London: Woman's Press, 1911), preface; Tickner, *Spectacle*; C. T. Mohanty, 'Feminist Encounters: Locating the Politics of Experience' in M. Barrett & A. Phillips (eds.) *Destabilizing Theory: Contemporary Feminist Debates* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992); G.H. Landsman (1992) 'The "Other" as Political Symbol: Images of Indians in the Woman Suffrage Movement' *Ethnohistory*, 39:3, pp. 247-284; S. Mukherjee, 'Diversity and the British female Suffrage Movement', Fawcett Society (30 November 2015) <https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/blog/diversity-british-female-suffrage-movement> (accessed 20 June 2022).

<sup>20</sup> B. Elliott & J. Wallace, *Women Artists, and Writers: Modernist Impositionings* (London: Routledge, 1994); L. Delap, *The Feminist Avant-Garde: Transatlantic Encounters of the Early Twentieth Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); K. Deepwell (ed.) *Women Artists and Modernism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998); L. Perry & D. Peters (eds.) *English Art 1860-1914: Modern Artists and Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); L. Doan & J. Garrity (eds.) *Sapphic Modernities: Sexuality, Women, and National Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); C. Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms: Modernism Subculture and Domesticity* (U.S, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); S. K. Tillyard, *The Impact of*

of the ‘masculinism’ of modernist aesthetics, if exaggerated, has positioned its proponents as antithetical to suffragism, while vanguard feminists frequently rejected the state mechanism of the vote emphasising women’s individuality rather than their collective unity (central to the suffrage movement) as most vital to their emancipation.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, while it is accepted that suffrage struggles provided the backdrop from which early twentieth century feminism emerged, and that suffrage and feminist politics were crucial in shaping modernism in both aesthetic form and content, suffrage artists seldom appear in accounts of the creative or experimental energetics surrounding vanguard feminism or modernism.<sup>22</sup>

Nonetheless, this thesis shows through an analyses of the Suffrage Atelier’s politicized arts and crafts scheme, how its versatile approach to vanguard feminism’s individualist, versus suffragists collectivist politics, produced a hybridized form of what might be termed individualist collectivism articulated through the shared language of the crafts. Lucy Delap has shown crafts were an important strand of international vanguard feminist thinking on women’s future role in the labouring economy and how its rhetoric borrowed heavily from the utopian craft language of the socialist movement, as did English modernist groups.<sup>23</sup> The thesis situates the Suffrage Atelier’s scheme at the nexus of these overlapping conversations challenging scholarly notions there was no real middle way between women’s individual artistic advancement and collective suffrage working in this era.<sup>24</sup> It also exposes the society’s range of personnel, ideological, and class intersections

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*Modernism 1900-1920: Early Modernism and the Arts and Crafts Movement in Edwardian England* (London: Routledge, 1988).

<sup>21</sup> While some modernists proselytised against the mass, feminized, women’s movement, notions that the modernist movement was wholly and aggressively masculine has been ‘exaggeratedly mythologised’. See, J. Beckett & D. Cherry ‘Modern Women, Modern Spaces: Women Metropolitan Culture and Vorticism’ in K. Deepwell, *Women Artists and Modernism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998) p. 42.

<sup>22</sup> Park, ‘Political Activism’; L. E Nym Mayhall (1995) ‘Creating the ‘Suffragette Spirit’: British feminism and the Historical Imagination’ *Women’s History Review*, 4:3, pp. 319-344.

<sup>23</sup> This included strong, anti-capitalist rhetoric, so much so, that feminist and socialist craft utopianism is often confused. Delap, *The Feminist Avant-Garde*, p. 228.

<sup>24</sup> See chapter 5. For some recent comments on irreconcilability see, M. Quirk, *Women, Art and Money in Late Victorian and Edwardian England: The Hustle and the Scramble* (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2019).

against a backdrop of largely middle-class professional women's craft societies reluctant to embrace the sex politics of the women's movement explicitly, alongside its gender strategies to empower women marginalised in craft sectors such as printing, and to put suffrage craft making on an international footing.

Consequently, suffrage artists are similarly absent from scholarship on the gender disruptive, experimental spaces of Avant Garde and 'elite' modernist groups associated with small London coteries such as the Rebel Art Centre, and the Bloomsbury group, defined by the metropolitan geographies its artists inhabited. These coteries examined by authors such as Bridget Elliot and Jo Ann Wallace, Laura Doan, Melanie Micir, and Katy Deepwell, featured women artists like Kate Lechmere, writers like Virginia Woolf, and informal fringe members such as Vita Sackville West, whose androgyny and open transgression of traditional gender boundaries examined across their artistic, public, domestic, and sexual lives, are interlinked with the visible emergence of early twentieth century queer subcultures.<sup>25</sup>

Yet, suffrage artists' operated across the same social milieus and intertextual artistic spaces, although this cross pollination is seldom acknowledged.<sup>26</sup> For instance, painter Duncan Grant (1885-1978) was an ASL poster artist who also belonged to the Bloomsbury group, and was much admired by Woolf.<sup>27</sup> Meanwhile, several other suffrage artists including the Suffrage Atelier's Laurence (1865-1959) and Clemence Housman, and friend and designer Pamela Colman Smith (1878-1951) were writers, playwrights, poets, and amateur actors, as well as visual artists, whose sites, spaces, and modes of everyday living,

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<sup>25</sup>Elliot & Wallace, *Women Artists and Writers*; Doan & Garrity, *Sapphic Modernities*; M. Micir, *The Passion Projects: Modernist Women, Intimate Lives, Unfinished Archives* (U.S: Princeton University Press, 2019); Deepwell, *Women Artists and Modernism*.

<sup>26</sup> Zoe Thomas has recently drawn attention to the intermingling spaces of feminist, modernist, and suffrage sociability among women arts and crafts workers across metropolitan studios. Z. Thomas, *Women Art Workers and the Art and Craft Movement* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020).

<sup>27</sup> B. Caine, *Bombay to Bloomsbury: A Biography of the Strachey Family* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Virginia Woolf to Vanessa Bell letter dated 22 May 1927 L Vol III, in T. Hargreaves, *Virginia Woolf and Twentieth Century Narratives of Androgyny* PhD thesis (London: Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London, 1994).

socializing, and working, were also used to reimagine gender roles and sexual boundaries in a wider articulation of their feminist politics. The thesis examines these real sites and imaginative spaces exploring visual linkages between suffrage artists, feminist, and modernist spaces of gender, whether through their private relationships, artistic practices, theatrical lives or intertextual performances. Works and edited collections cited above along with Katherine Cockin, Green, Tickner, Marcus, Deborah Cherry, Zoe Thomas, Miranda Garrett, and others, have opened and probed some of the visual connections between suffragism, feminism, and modernism's visual disruptions of traditional gender roles, identities, and the emergence of queer subcultures.<sup>28</sup> The thesis locates suffrage artists within such debates.

Suffrage artists' creative voices then are often lost within women's radical political histories, and their political agencies overlooked within the transformative histories of women's artistry, across suffrage, feminist, and modernist work on gender, space, and power. This thesis deliberately locates itself in those margins, in the disciplinary and theoretical lacunas that limit the recovery of suffrage artists' lives and importantly, continue to stifle the gender power contexts within which their creative and political subjectivities, working practices, voices and visualities, have been located, analysed, and understood. Some substantive work has recently emerged that acknowledges these shortfalls and has begun to counter them, focusing on the retrieval and analysis of suffrage artists' agencies and identities in the context of visual culture. Most prominently, Miranda Garrett and Zoe Thomas's edited collection of essays *Suffrage and the Arts: Visual Culture, Politics and Enterprise*, discuss suffragists merging of art and politics in Britain and Ireland through various institutions, marketing, painting genres, and visual representations of the suffrage campaign itself, chiefly

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<sup>28</sup> Elliot & Wallace, *Women Artists, and Writers*; Deepwell, *Women Artists and Modernism*; K. Cockin, *Edith Craig: Dramatic Lives* (London: Cassell, 1998); K. Cockin, *Women and Theatre in the Age of Suffrage: The Pioneer Players, 1911-1925* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001); Green, *Spectacular Confessions*; Tickner, *Spectacle*; Marcus, 'The Asylums'; D. Cherry, *Beyond the Frame: Feminism and Visual Culture in Britain* (London: Routledge, 2000); Garrett & Thomas, *Suffrage and the Arts*

discussed through the prism of gender and entrepreneurship.<sup>29</sup> Thomas has also woven the suffrage movement into her broader work on women in the arts and crafts movement, which builds as Maria Quirk's recent scholarship has, on understandings of women artists professionalism and studio cultures.<sup>30</sup> Meanwhile, suffrage scholar Elizabeth Crawford has produced a more traditional, biographical dictionary of suffrage artists, recovering, and lifting numerous women (and men) artists names and locations from historical obscurity while leaving a bread crumb trail for future researchers to follow.<sup>31</sup>

This thesis makes a major contribution to this relatively small but growing body of new scholarship featuring suffrage art and its artists. It adds fresh historical voices and stories of its own as its thematic, spatial framework and focus on structures of power, allows a new unfolding of the sites and spaces where they lived, worked, and travelled, those they occupied, imagined, created, and transformed, during the height of the suffrage campaign. To do so it grounds and interrogates their bodies, identities, and the local, and global sites, and spaces of suffrage artists' praxis, interweaving these through temporal, material, and archival spaces, interlinked as modern sites of feminist struggle over gender and power, knowledge, and identity. It upends scholarship on the Suffrage Atelier's origins, identifies new suffrage artists and supporters, reveals fresh ways suffrage artists' challenged gender power structures and expressed their feminism through women's collective ownership of artistic production, their colonisation and occupation of architectures in the city, their disruption of hegemonic discourses on gender roles and sexualities, as well as bringing fresh class and colonial links to

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<sup>29</sup> Garrett & Thomas, *Suffrage and the Arts*.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas, *Women Art Workers*. See also, Z. Thomas (2015) 'At Home with the Women's Guild of Arts: Gender and Professional Identity in London Studios, c.1880–1925' *Women's History Review*, 24:6, pp. 938-964 & Z. Thomas (2020) 'Between Art and Commerce: Women, Business Ownership, and the Arts and Crafts Movement', *Past and Present*, 247, pp. 151-195. M. Quirk (2016) 'Stitching Professionalism: Female-Run Embroidery Agencies and the Provision of Artistic Work for Women, 1870–1900' *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 21: 2, pp. 184–204; Quirk, *Women, Art and Money*.

<sup>31</sup> Suffrage historian Elizabeth Crawford has recently recovered several unidentified suffrage artists. This thesis also contributes to this ongoing endeavour. See, Elizabeth Crawford, *Art and Suffrage: A Biographical Dictionary of Suffrage Artists* (London: Francis Boutle, 2018).

the fore in ways that add to suffragist, socialist and imperial archives. It ultimately views suffrage artists as important interlocutors in a transitional phase for women's artistic and political cultures, assigning their creative sites, spaces, and energetics, a more dynamic role in women's broader socio-political redrawing of fin de siècle boundaries governing the power relationships between genders in the early twentieth century.<sup>32</sup> The thesis also makes a case for the broader application of spatiality in suffrage histories particularly in the retrieval and analysis of more marginalised groups.

### ***Intertwining: Suffrage, Gender, and Art.***

The intention of this and the following section is not to provide a history of the suffrage campaign, or of women's art, but to give context to how the politics and geographies of gender and art intersected in ways that led to the emergence of artists' formalised collective working for the suffrage campaign. This began in London in 1907 with the founding of the ASL and was followed two years later by the formation of the Suffrage Atelier in 1909. Generally, and whatever their genre of art, collective practice and professional belonging between artists increased in the early twentieth century. This helped women especially, to define, position, and promote their creative identities in more consolidated, publicly identifiable ways than was possible before, while some also fought publicly alongside, for women's political recognition. The sections below loosely tie together the trajectories of suffrage and feminist politics, and women's art, and how these explicitly intertwined just before the First World War. This foregrounds and frames the thesis chapters which shift across different times and events, various sites, and spaces, real and imaginative, over the course of the pre-war campaign, charting how suffrage artists negotiated and contested the gender power structures of art, sex, and politics.

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<sup>32</sup> J.H Kilde (1999) 'The Predominance of the Feminine' at Chautauqua: Rethinking the Gender-space Relationship in Victorian America' *Signs* 24:2, p. 454.

The organised women's suffrage campaign spanned the decades between 1866 when Liberal MP John Stuart Mill formally handed a petition for female suffrage to parliament, and 1928 when women were finally granted the vote on the same terms as men. However, its origins lay in the social, economic, and political upheaval witnessed in the late eighteenth century with Britain's industrial revolution, and England's war with revolutionary France. These events led to several campaigns for social and political reform at home as the rising middle class sought to cement their growing political power, and within which context modern notions of feminism emerged. Scholars have identified several strands to these early formulations around women's rights. The most relevant here are 'enlightenment feminism' connecting John Stuart Mill with Mary Wollstonecraft's seminal work *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* and the element of feminism found in socialist utopianism which echoes particularly through chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis. These strands commonly advocated a tyrannical link between oppressive class systems shaped by feudalism and the rights of Kings, and men's natural right to power over women. However, these radical ideologies were gradually infused and diffused by more conservative notions primarily espoused by religious groups, particularly the Evangelical movement. By the mid nineteenth century, its rejection of the aristocracy and patriotic fervour, twinned with its sexual conservatism, had taken root in Victorian society and especially within middle class culture. Its gendered concept of 'separate spheres' for women and men and its dismissal of any notion of equality between them became fundamental to the responses, arguments, and strategies employed by those in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century women's suffrage movement. The notion of separate spheres ideologically and to some extent culturally underpinned the gender constructs that not only denied women the vote, but also access to artistic knowledge and power, framing the sites, spaces, and identities, suffrage artists would dually navigate, resist, and contest during the suffrage campaign.



When the nationally organised campaign for female suffrage began it was made up of a hotch-potch of organisations most of which folded as quickly as they had begun, or else split and morphed into others as women differed over strategies. Suffragists possessed a wide range of religious, social, and political perspectives, and many, including suffrage artists, had already actively worked in diverse campaigns to reform women's social, legal, economic, and educative rights. For example, chapter 2 touches upon ASL artists Emily Ford (1850-1930) and Violet Garrard's (1865-1938) work alongside Josephine Butler on the repeal of the Criminal Diseases Act and with the National Vigilance Association in the late nineteenth century.<sup>33</sup> But the parliamentary vote represented a shared grievance around which most could coalesce particularly following on from the passing of the Reform Act of 1832. Women, and most men, were unable to vote before the Act, but its granting of the franchise to men, compounded by the 1867 and 1884 Acts, meant the male majority could vote by the late nineteenth century. This brought the question of women's suffrage into increasingly sharp focus with gender now *the* primary factor for disqualification.

In 1865, it was women geographically centred around Langham Place in London, a group close to Mill and his wife Harriet, and since described as the Langham Place circle, that conceived the suffrage petition for presentation by Mill to parliament the following year. The petition, eventually signed by 1,499 women householders nationwide, was drafted by Emily Davies (1830-1921), Jessie Boucherett (1825-1905), and Barbara Bodichon (1827-1891) and set in motion a series of parliamentary debates, the outcomes of which would reciprocally shape and reshape suffragists and later suffragettes' actions and reactions over the next five decades. Bodichon (later Leigh Smith Bodichon) was a successful, pioneering professional woman painter, locating female artists at the heart of the British women's suffrage campaign from the outset. She sits outside the remit of this thesis but some of the

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<sup>33</sup> See chapter 2.

literature surrounding her life and career in London and Algiers, notably in Deborah Cherry's work *Beyond the Frame*, is helpful in exposing the globality of women artists' lives, and the spatial interaction between their imperial privilege, professional lives, and feminist agencies in London. Chapter 4 explicitly engages with this topic when retracing suffrage artists' international routes to London, their exhibiting of global travel paintings in the city, together with their more explicit imperial suffrage art and crafting.<sup>34</sup>

Cherry and Lynne Walker's 'feminist remapping' of the West end of the city established the importance of the metropolis in its enabling of women artists, who were also suffragists, to share urban proximity to one another in the late nineteenth century encouraging their shared passions for art and feminist causes through regular sociability.<sup>35</sup> For example, artists Bodichon, Laura Herford, Margaret Gillies, Sophia Beale, and Emily Mary Osborn lived close by, took tea together, and were all active in the women's movement, signing petitions such as *The Letter from Ladies to Members of Parliament* in 1884, and the *Declaration in Favour of Women's Suffrage* in 1889.<sup>36</sup> Chapter 2 of the thesis similarly maps out and interrogates the crucial role that early twentieth century women artists' shared professional interests, and closely shared territories in London, would play in the mobilisation of suffrage art groups the ASL and the Suffrage Atelier which, for the first time, explicitly brought suffrage politics and women's art together. It also locates this development within a broader place-based analysis of suffragists urban tactics for large scale creative drives and other artistic events during the campaign. Proximate living would also emerge as a spatial tactic in the formation of modernist art and feminist subcultures in the city that creatively, if

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<sup>34</sup> Cherry, *Beyond the Frame*, esp. pp. 20-33.

<sup>35</sup> Cherry, *ibid*; L. Walker, 'Vistas of Pleasure: Women Consumers of Urban Space in the West End of London, 1895-1900' in C. Campbell Orr (ed.) *Women in the Victorian Art World* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995) pp. 70-85.

<sup>36</sup> Cherry *ibid*; L. Walker (2006) 'Locating the Global, pp. 174-196.

not politically, contested hegemonic constructs of gender power and sexuality, and with which suffrage artists' private and artistic lives overlapped, explored in chapter 6.

Women artists who were involved in the nineteenth century women's suffrage movement confined themselves to publicly supporting it as professional women artists. For example, Bodichon along with 67 other female painters, had signed the National Society for Women's Suffrage' demand for female enfranchisement published in 1897.<sup>37</sup> Overlaps with those artists at the centre of the early twentieth century suffrage campaign are few, but among the signatories were artists Bessie Wigan and Emily Ford who would later help form the ASL. So too was painter Louise Jopling-Rowe who went on to support and patronise both the ASL and the Suffrage Atelier, though the weight of her activities leaned towards the more radical latter.<sup>38</sup> It was not until the ASL's founding in 1907, that women artists began to apply their artistic skills directly to the suffrage cause. While subsequently they did so in different ways - some formally, in a structured fashion with the ASL and later the Suffrage Atelier, others independently - this represented a 'radical break in the history of relations between women artists and the women's movement'.<sup>39</sup> By identifying and mapping out ASL and Suffrage Atelier artists' locations in London, chapter 2 is able to examine some of the material and socio-spatial mechanisms that informed this shift, and the mobilisation of both suffrage art societies in the context of women's wider, creative colonisation of the city, their increasing politicization, and simmering tensions over gender in metropolitan art clubs and institutions. In so doing, it revises some of the where's, and the who's, and how's, underpinning these events.

There were several sometimes subtle but important differences between the ASL and the Suffrage Atelier which are discussed thematically throughout the thesis chapters.

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<sup>37</sup> Tickner, *Spectacle*, p. 15 & Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> D. Cherry *Painting Women: Victorian Women Artists* (London: Routledge, 1993) p. 94.

However, extraordinarily, both represented the only organised suffrage art groups to emerge in the context of a vibrant, global women's suffrage campaign. This uniqueness is rather taken for granted in the movement's histories. So too are other aspects of suffrage artists' globalism which, once retraced, chapter 4 views through the complex lens of migration and imperial diasporas, feminist travel, and colonial ties, all entangled in the tensions inherent between white western women's self-empowerment, and 'others' disempowerments, under British rule. It asks how these tensions might have played out in London as a globally spatialized city where most suffrage artists lived and worked during the campaign. There was a 'complex current' to global feminism as Barbara Caine, James Keating, Mrinalini Sinha and others have shown, in which London, the geographical and political epicentre of the British Empire, acted as a 'magnet' to suffragists from around the world, especially from former and existing British colonies.<sup>40</sup> This was also true for women artists who gravitated to it from other parts of the country and from other parts of the world in pursuit of their careers, among them Australasians such as Dora Meeson-Coates and Bessie Wigan who would help form the ASL. Chapter 4 discusses how the global migration of suffrage artists profoundly affected their socio-political praxis in London, which was fostered through shared diasporas of home and homeland, community, and empire, and spatially interlinked their art with gender politics at a local, national, and global scale. Scholarship on the spatial geographies of the campaign have necessarily raised a plurality of questions about how suffragists global identities were shaped and operated within the complex lexicon of empire, between the local

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<sup>40</sup> B. Caine (1993) 'Vida Goldstein and the English Militant Campaign' *Women's History Review*, 2:3, pp. 363-376 & B. Caine *Australian feminism and the British Militant Suffragettes* (Australia, Canberra: Dept. of the Senate, 2003) accessible pdf [www.aph.gov.au](http://www.aph.gov.au) (accessed 2000); J. Keating (2018) 'Piecing Together Suffrage Internationalism: Place, Space, and Connected Histories of Australasian Women's Activism' *History Compass*, 2018, 16:8, pp. 1-15 <https://doi.org/10.1111/hic3.12481> (accessed July 2021); S. Mukherjee, *Indian Suffragettes: Female Identities and Transnational Networks* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); M. Sinha (1999) 'Suffragism and Internationalism: The Enfranchisement of British and Indian under an Imperial State' *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 36:4, pp. 461-484; T. Cresswell (2005) 'Mobilising the Movement: The Role of Mobility in the Suffrage Politics of Florence Luscomb and Margaret Foley, 1911-1915', *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, 12:4, pp. 447-461.

and the global, between fixity and motion and their assemblages of power.<sup>41</sup> Chapter 4 locates suffrage artists within and across these debates.

The formation of the ASL, the Suffrage Atelier, and the radical shift this signified in women's politicisation of their art, was closely aligned to strategic developments over the long suffrage campaign and the controversial explosion onto the London scene in 1906, of the recently formed WSPU. When the largest suffrage organisation, the NUWSS formed in 1897 under the presidency of Millicent Fawcett, it committed to established constitutional methods of campaigning in which women had become expertly adept. Many suffragists belonged to the governing Liberal party and had been active for example, as unpaid party fundraisers and organisers. Many were quick to point out the hypocrisy of its position of investing women with the task of engaging with and persuading the electorate which way to vote, while deeming those same women incompetent to cast a vote themselves. Indeed, following the General Election of 1880, over forty percent of returning MP's pledged support in principle for female suffrage. Therefore, suffragists were hopeful of a favourable women's amendment to the 1884 Reform bill. However, Prime Minister William Gladstone worked against it, and it was defeated by a majority of 136. Notably, one party member was so outraged that she left the Liberal's immediately – Emmeline Pankhurst, later leader of the WSPU which she formed with like-minded women in Manchester in 1903.

After the defeat of the amendment to the 1884 bill, the energy of the campaign was depleted as parliament incessantly talked out and talked over women's efforts for political emancipation. Neither the Liberal or Conservative Party could agree on what the impact of granting even limited franchise to women would have on their own power and interests, and they had no appetite for adult suffrage. Stalemate ensued. Women did make some ground

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<sup>41</sup> Most recently, see, A. Hughes-Johnson & L. Jenkins, *The Politics of the Women's Suffrage Movement: Local, National, and International Dimensions* (London: University of London Press, 2021).

incrementally.<sup>42</sup> However, there was no prospect of obtaining the parliamentary vote as other, more pressing political concerns, for men at any rate, took precedence including the issue of Home Rule in Ireland, the Boer War (until 1902) and labour and trade union disputes.

Though the franchise was still weighted towards middle class men, there was now a substantial body of working-class voters. The rise of socialism had seen the emergence of the parliamentary Labour Party to represent their interests, giving refreshed impetus to calls for wider adult suffrage, and indeed for women's suffrage too. The Labour party was also strategically divided in its approach to female suffrage demands, but working-class women in the North of England aligned with it, and vigorously campaigned for the time being at least, for female enfranchisement on the same terms 'as it is or may be granted to men'.<sup>43</sup> This approach was also embraced by major suffrage societies the NUWSS, in 1903 by the WSPU, and later by its splinter group, the WFL. Nonetheless, while some labour members were in favour, others refused to countenance anything other than full adult suffrage and so the issue of supporting women's separate electoral demands remained contentious and unresolved across the labour and socialist movements. The tensions between gender and class politics played out across suffrage artists' aesthetic and ideological practices during the campaign in different ways, but seldom more explicitly I argue in chapter 5, than in the Suffrage Atelier's arts and crafts scheme which drew upon the utopian socialist ideology of the Arts and Crafts Movement yet reappropriated it for specifically feminist ends.

After leaving the Liberal party in 1884 Emmeline Pankhurst, her husband Richard, and daughters Sylvia, an artist, Christabel, and Adela, had campaigned for women's suffrage in the north, and in 1894 joined the Independent Labour Party. However, frustrated by the

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<sup>42</sup> For example, the Municipal Franchise Act was restored to single women ratepayers in 1869, and propertied women could vote in county council and parish and district councils by 1888 and 1894 respectively.

<sup>43</sup> They believed this would help cut across class and party divisions on the issue, appealing more broadly by ensuring that under this measure, women could not represent an electoral majority.

party's position on female versus adult suffrage, they formed the WSPU, and remained in Manchester until 1906 when they relocated their headquarters to London. This followed on from what is widely regarded as the society's first militant act in October 1905 – Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney were arrested and imprisoned for disrupting an election meeting at the Free Trade Hall with Pankhurst allegedly 'spitting' as she was manhandled out.<sup>44</sup> This series of events transformed the WSPU from a provincial to a national organisation and began the 'suffragette' tactics that would, if controversially, generate publicity in the popular press that kept the issue of female enfranchisement in the public eye and under the political spotlight. Where the nineteenth century campaign was hard fought on the battle ground of petitions, lobbying, meetings, parliamentary questions, the circulation of suffrage literature and pamphlets, the WSPU added a new, more public, confrontational, and later violent approach through heckling, vandalism, imprisonments, arson, and bombings, that changed the face of women's political campaigning, and the era's notions of femininity. This also included a guerrilla strategy of bodily insertion and occupation of patriarchal property symbolic of male political power and privilege in the city. It is in this context that chapter 3 explores suffrage artists' occupation of specific buildings and landscapes similarly symbolic of men's power and privilege but in the arts, which it examines as an articulation of their feminist politics.

While at times divisive, the fresh impetus the WSPU brought to campaigning encouraged suffragists across the social, political, and tactical spectrum, to take their campaign onto the streets, visibly crossing separate sphere boundaries that served, unrealistically, to inhibit especially middle-class women to a private domestic life, while men

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<sup>44</sup> For recent perspectives on Annie Kenney and working-class women's participation in the women's suffrage and labour movements, see, L. Jenkins (2019) 'Annie Kenney and the Politics of Class in the Women's Social and Political Union' *Twentieth Century British History*, 30:4, pp. 477-503 & L Jenkins, *Sisters and Sisterhood: The Kenney Sisters, Class, and Suffrage c.1890-1965* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

were free to access the public realms of commerce and politics. The flurry of meetings, street marches, and processions that characterised the refreshed twentieth century campaign, epitomized women's newfound public and political confidence. Importantly, it also stimulated demand for colourful suffrage banners and graphic poster art to enliven these events, to advertise them, to simply illustrate key arguments, activities, geographies, and histories of the women who had and were campaigning for women's rights, as well as to critique the government's responses to them, and to visually parody its ministers. The formation of the ASL and Suffrage Atelier and the work of other suffrage artists independently, ensured this visual, political spectacle. Behind it, the creative praxis involved, also opened fresh opportunities, sites, and spaces, real and imaginative, for women artists, and for some men, to experiment with and to push the boundaries of gender roles and identities which impacted their lives daily as women struggled to access creative knowledge and power, alongside political representation.



*Figure 1. WSPU banner making for a procession in 1910. Source: WL digital collection, LSE, 7JCC/O/02/015 <https://www.flickr.com/photos/lselibrary/22531423129/in/photolist-CT1wkn-Ak2r7z-AD4LhY-5KQvNG/> (accessed May 2022).*



Women's involvement in political marching with banners and flags flying was not new to the women's suffrage campaign. For example, it had recent antecedents in working-class trade union processions of the 1890s and early 1900s in which women were active participants.<sup>45</sup> But suffrage processions differed because they were woman centred, and redefined by the inclusion of middle-class women whose presence on the street visibly shattered the ideological notion of separate spheres which socially relegated them particularly, to the domestic sphere. Overall, the women's suffrage movement was predominately middle class. The seminal work *One Hand Tied Behind Us* by Jill Liddington and Jill Norris lifted the lid on working class women's participation in the campaign.<sup>46</sup> Since, numerous local and national studies have illuminated their role in the movement, and in considerable numbers. However, while the voices of these women are continually being recovered, their contribution to the movement is often less well documented, harder to identify, to define, and retrieve. The same is true of suffrage artists who generally reflected the middle-class composition of the movement, and while some working-class contributors have been identified, these are few.<sup>47</sup> Chapter 2 for example, recovers the previously hidden contribution of Rosie Silver (c.1878-?), wife to Harry Silver, an immigrant Polish tailor, to the WSPU's 1908 procession banner making drive. Likely, many more participated in suffrage art working than shall ever be proven, anonymously embroidering prominent suffrage banners, and producing other types of artisanal craft work for the campaign whose makers are often unidentifiable. Chapter 5 discusses the potentials and opportunities of working women's role in formalised suffrage art making through the principles and personnel of the Suffrage Atelier. Its suffrage arts and crafts scheme was open to amateurs as well as professional women, offered financial recompense, and training, and had numerous ties to the

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<sup>45</sup> Tickner, *Spectacle*, pp. 60-66. See also, Parker, *The Subversive Stitch*; Thomas, 'Historical Pageants'.

<sup>46</sup> J. Liddington & J. Norris, *One Hand Tied Behind Us: The Rise of the Women's Suffrage Movement* (London: Virago, 1978).

<sup>47</sup> Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*.

class politics of the labour and socialist movements. In addition, chapter 4 highlights some of the largely anonymous, local suffrage crafting that working women were typically involved in, while discussing the global and imperial tensions in the WFL's international suffrage craft fair held in Chelsea Town Hall, in 1912.<sup>48</sup>

Importantly, the social stratifications of class – of middle-class women particularly – was itself under challenge during the long suffrage campaign. Social shifts accompanied by a general economic downturn, had seen an unprecedented lack of marriage prospects for young middle-class women worsened by the loss of young men to imperial wars. This gave rise to the surplus 'woman question' and led to much debate about what professions were suitable for single middle-class ladies to enter, now that many were obliged to earn their own living. Occupations that were generally deemed permissible drew upon established, gendered notions about women's 'natural' instinct to nurture, such as teaching and nursing. Alternatively, they rested upon creative skills already associated with women's domestic accomplishments, duties, and hobbies. Among these were decorative painting and illustration (floral subjects and designs for children's books were particularly encouraged) interior design, as well as other forms of domestic handicraft or home industries, including pottery and textile work. Suffrage artists were among those middle-class women attracted to these new professions although their lifestyles were not homogenous, and their economic, family, and living circumstances, varied as much as their art. For example, some had families that were socially well placed but financially challenged, particularly after the deaths of husbands or fathers. Chapter 4 shows through suffrage artists' travel, how several artists' journeys towards creative careers in London, coincided with such a turn of events. Many were self-employed art workers, commission reliant painters, and entrepreneurs. Most were unmarried,

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<sup>48</sup> The notion of colonial crafting is explored in R. Dias & K. Smith (eds.) *British Women and Cultural Practices of Empire, 1770-1940* (US: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018).

and those that were, often to other artists occupying similarly precarious social and financial positions. Else they were themselves, like thrice widowed suffrage artist and mother Louise Jopling-Rowe, often the main breadwinner.

Many lived and worked in London during the suffrage campaign. This included those associated with the ASL and the Suffrage Atelier which were both headquartered there, although its artists were by no means restricted to it as I discuss in chapters 2 and 5.<sup>49</sup> Women artists began settling in the city in numbers from the latter part of the nineteenth century when art as a professional occupation for women gained greater momentum and scope. As outlined, they travelled there from other parts of the world, and from different parts of the country. For example, at the turn of the century, the ASL's Mary V. Wheelhouse had already moved to London from Hull in the northeast of England to pursue her career as an illustrator.<sup>50</sup> While Suffrage Atelier siblings Clemence and Laurence Housman had left their family home in the Midlands to train and seek their livings as artists in the city.<sup>51</sup> They came as those women artists arriving from imperial and former imperial colonies and dominions, like Meeson-Coates and Wigan, to attend its many arts schools and simply to be in those places and communities deemed to be at the centre of the British art world.<sup>52</sup> For example, Louise Jacobs, later described in the *Suffragette* in 1912 as the 'draughtsman of many of the Atelier's publications' moved to London from Hull after winning a prestigious studentship to study at the RCA.<sup>53</sup> The renowned Slade School of Art which had an enlightened approach to female artists was also popular, as were the more technical national schools which taught a mixture

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<sup>49</sup> The chapters only touch upon the issue of wider geographies given the length parameters here. However, this topic has significant possibilities for further spatial research.

<sup>50</sup> Crawford, *ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> For a general biography of the Housman siblings, see, E. Oakley, *Inseparable Siblings: A Portrait of Laurence and Clemence Housman* (Warwickshire: Brewin Books, 2009).

<sup>52</sup> Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*.

<sup>53</sup> *Suffragette*, 8 November 1912, p.59. The studentship was won through the South Kensington Board of Education free for three successive years. See, *Hull Daily Mail*, 13 August 1903, p. 2; *Hull Daily Mail*, 15 October 1903, p. 5.

of fine art and commercial art practices. Women artists were also attracted by the bohemian lifestyles and artistic reputations of metropolitan suburbs like Chelsea, Kensington, and their urban environs, looking to rent homes and studios there.<sup>54</sup> Necessarily, this meant many operated independently from family, often as newcomers to the city and the commercial art market. Their arrival ushered in new, alternative ways of living, bringing together a geographically diverse mix of artists from home and abroad, renting rooms, live-in studios, and sometimes cohabiting or working commercially together. Suffrage Atelier artists Agnes Eleanor Hope Joseph (1878-1953) and Ethel Blanche Willis (1870-1954) lived together for most of the society's life span and beyond. Meanwhile, ASL artist Wheelhouse and Suffrage Atelier artist Jacobs, both from Hull, started a toy making venture together in Chelsea. This was a period of exciting and dynamic growth for professional and entrepreneurial women artists as Thomas and Quirk have shown.<sup>55</sup>

Female artists move into the city in numbers, was part of a wider reconceptualization of women's living arrangements through alternatives to the nuclear family which, for Gayatri Spivak, represents one of the least recognised pillars of western feminisms 'imperialist project' which broadly entangled with colonial desire to occupy, possess, and settle on land that is lived on and owned by others.<sup>56</sup> While the thesis diverges from it to some degree, this is a critical strand of thinking for particularly chapters 2 and 3's engagement with the notion of suffrage artists' creative colonisation of metropolitan sites and spaces defined by the

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<sup>54</sup> H. Taylor (1986) 'If a Young Painter be not Fierce and Arrogant, God...Help Him: Some Women Art Students at the Slade c. 1895-1899' *Art History* 9:2, pp. 232-244; E. Zimmerman (1991) 'Art Education for Women in England from 1890-1910 as Reflected in the Victorian Periodical Press and Current Feminist Histories of Art Education' *Studies in Art Education*, 32:2, pp. 105-116; Y. Mengting, *London's Women Artists 1900-1914: A Talented and Decorative Group* (Singapore: Springer Press, 2020). The correlation between the attendance of art schools like the Slade and women artists feminist radicalisation is an area ripe for further research.

<sup>55</sup> Quirk 'Stitching Professionalism'; Quirk, *Women, Art, and Money*; Thomas, *Women Art Workers*; Thomas 'At Home with the Women's Guild'; Thomas, 'Between Art and Commerce'.

<sup>56</sup> G. C. Spivak (1985) 'Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism' *Critical Inquiry* 12, p. 244-5. See also, Cherry, *Beyond the Frame*, pp. 75-80.

gendered creativity and histories of arts men. A part of women artists wider settlement of the city this includes the thesis' exploration of women artists habitation of renowned creative towns and suburbs such as Chelsea, Kensington, and Hampstead, as well as their use and occupation of very specific locations, namely Cheyne Walk in Chelsea, a popular tourist site publicly symbolic of men's power and privilege in the arts. The thesis locates suffrage artists' praxis across these sites and spaces within the context of Henri Lefebvre and more recently Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson's argument that 'place-making and hegemonic configurations of power are inseparable' and so 'an integral part of resistance is the act of claiming a place as one's own' by territorially and symbolically appropriating it.<sup>57</sup>

Importantly, metropolitan living away from the traditional nuclear family, opened up new opportunities and spaces for women's artistic, social, and sexual, as well as feminist experimentation with gender, and in ways that were potentially transformative. For example, Clemence Housman's move with her brother Laurence to the city enabled her to escape the 'Victorian bonds of home' that traditionally tied her by virtue of her gender to family life and duty, leaving both siblings free to engage in creative, social, and political enterprises, and unconventional lifestyles, that were impossible at home.<sup>58</sup> When analysing suffrage artists' wider interlinkages to disruptive modernist aesthetics, chapter 6 of the thesis discusses how some of the sibling's intertextual public suffrage and non-suffrage work, and private lives, intertwined to subvert traditional gender roles and thus hegemonic notions of gender power, across real and imaginative spaces, including by engaging intertextually with disruptive avant-garde cultures of androgyny.

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<sup>57</sup> A. Gupta & J. Ferguson, 'Culture Power Place: Ethnography at the end of an era' in Gupta and Ferguson (eds.) *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997) pp.1-29.

<sup>58</sup> L. Housman, *The Unexpected Years* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1937) p.104.

Feminist scholars who have examined the spectrum of female employment in the artistic professions argue that despite the biological determinism that lay behind it, middle class women's entry into the artistic marketplace, particularly in metropolitan centres like London, not only facilitated their engagement with organised feminism, now that living and working in London was 'one of the strategies of suffrage politics', but also with cultural modernism.<sup>59</sup> At the fin de siècle, commercial and metropolitan cities like London had become modernist centres for experiments with aesthetic culture which flourished in the coming decade. The Slade School of Art, attended by several suffrage artists, became a 'training ground for a pre-war generation of modernists' and among modernist groups emerging during the suffrage campaign in the city were, as noted above, the Bloomsbury group; but also the Camden Town Group (1911); Roger Fry's Omega Workshop (1913); and the short lived Rebel Art Centre made up of the latter's defectors and instrumental in the formation of the Vorticist Group in Great Ormond Street (1914).<sup>60</sup> While these groups are often characterised in mainstream histories by their masculinity, feminist authors have exposed how women artists were vital to, and sometimes at the centre of them.<sup>61</sup> For instance, while Woolf was a central figure in Bloomsbury, artist Kate Lechmere was instrumental to Wyndham Lewis's founding of the Rebel Art Centre, and the Vorticist Group that emerged from it in 1914, which also included female artists Jessica Dismorr and Helen Saunders. These women and groups are themselves not integral to the thesis' examination of suffrage artists' disruption of hegemonic discourses on gender roles and sexuality in chapter 6. Yet, the utopian lifestyles and experimental art associated with them, from lesbianism and the wearing of male clothing, to block prints, bright symbolist colours, and radical decoration that redefined the domesticity of homes and studios, were all visual performances of gender,

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<sup>59</sup> Walker, 'Locating the Global' p. 182; Elliott & Wallace, *Women Artists and Writers*, p.13.

<sup>60</sup> Mengting, *London's Women Artists*, pp. 90-100.

<sup>61</sup> The Camden Town Group excluded women artists, later embracing them, and developed into the gender-blind and more diverse London Group.

sexual, and artistic identities that it demonstrates echoed through the intertextual works, lives, domestic sites, and spaces of suffrage artists. This is especially true of the Suffrage Atelier whose younger, arguably more dynamic artists, designers, friends, and supporters, form the basis of the chapter's exposition, as they were most explicitly interconnected to modernist-feminist theatrical, literary, and queer subcultures.

Cultural historians generally agree that art, and the London art scene, changed and flourished between 1901 and 1914 compared to what had gone before.<sup>62</sup> Yet these creative sites and spaces were saturated with gendered discourses and practices that sought to control and limit women's creativity. Despite the rapid growth of social and political reform movements, including demands for female suffrage, women artists in the early twentieth century were still confronted with social conventions and gender bias that hindered their professional recognition and advancement. Many art schools in the city didn't accept women at all or restricted the type and subjects available to them.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, women artists and artisans who completed art school training often found it was commercially inadequate; there was scant space for the exhibition of their art; or that employers designated and relegated their work by gender rather than skill. Women's social responses to the gendered politics of artistic exclusion, saw them create their own spaces of compensation through local, female centred networks, offering informal peer group advice and guidance, professional support, and patronage through sympathetic clients who commissioned women's work. Oftentimes they travelled abroad to create their own artistic experiences and identities underpinned by imperial authority as discussed in chapter 4. Historians Quirk, Thomas, and Yu Mengting have shown how women and some men also set up a host of formal clubs and exhibition

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<sup>62</sup> Mengting, *London's Women Artists* p. 31.

<sup>63</sup> P. Dalton, *The Gendering of Art Education: Modernism, Identity and Critical Feminism* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2001); E. Zimmerman (1991) 'Art Education for Women in England from 1890-1910, as Reflected in the Victorian Periodical Press and Current Feminist Histories of Art Education' *Studies in Art Education*, 32: 2, pp. 105-116; Cherry, *Painting Women*.

societies to counter female artists' educative, institutional, and professional marginalisation across artistic genres during this period.<sup>64</sup> Suffrage artist Louise Jopling Rowe for example, was among several metropolitan women artists who set up their own female schools, as well as writing instructive books and manuals such as 'Hints to Students and Amateurs'.<sup>65</sup> ASL artist and founder Mary Lowndes was amongst those that founded the WGA in 1907 to promote and encourage women working in arts and crafts industries, the same year she inaugurated the ASL.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, several prominent suffrage artists from both societies belonged to the WGA whose silence on the question of women's suffrage, like most other female art societies, inevitably played a role in the ASL and Suffrage Atelier's founding as explicit outlets for women artists' feminism as discussed in chapters 2 and 5.

Suffrage art societies the ASL and especially the Suffrage Atelier, which had an explicit, educative component, were enrolled within this backdrop of artistic innovation by women for women during the early twentieth suffrage campaign, contributing to a wider cultural, creative, as well as political shift in women's approach to gender politics, art, and professional self-empowerment. Only by spatially, visually, and at times cartographically, mapping out suffrage artists within and across this vast and complex assemblage of changing political, social, professional, material, local, and globalized landscapes, and utopian and creative imaginaries, all sites and spaces saturated by gendered discourses and practices, can the thesis begin to paint a fresh picture of how suffrage artists' praxis opened up restrictive

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<sup>64</sup> Quirk 'Stitching Professionalism'; Quirk, *Women, Art, and Money*; Thomas, *Women Art Workers*; Thomas 'At Home with the Women's Guild'; Thomas, 'Between Art and Commerce'. For example, the Allied Artists Association was established in 1908 by Frank Rutter and became the first British exhibiting society to introduce, in terms of gender, 'an absolutely, liberal constitution along the lines of the Salon des Indépendants in Paris'. See, Mengting, *London Women Artists*, esp. pp. 59-60.

<sup>65</sup> L. Jopling-Rowe, *Hints to Students and Amateurs* (London: Hunt, Barnard & Co. Ltd, 1911). See also, Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*.

<sup>66</sup> Other founders and early committee members included May Morris, her mother Jane, Mary Seaton Watts, and suffrage artists Annie Swynnerton and Mary Sargent Florence. Indeed, Thomas's work reveals the inner workings of the Women's Guild of Arts and the fascinating tensions between the sexual politics of suffrage, art, and gender, in their organisational attempts to promote and encourage women working in the arts and crafts. See, Thomas, 'The Women's Guild of Arts'; Thomas, *Women Art Workers*.



gender power structures, radicalising the politics of creative identity, and auguring conditions of possibility for new, active experiments in art and in life.<sup>67</sup>

### *Spatial Themes and Chapters.*

To bring some cohesion to the matrix of sites and spaces laid out and interrogated across the thesis, I adopt a methodological approach that Maria Tamboukou might call ‘a spatial plane of reference’.<sup>68</sup> This enables the thesis to collage together often diverse fragments gathered on suffrage artists’ lives and work, and crucially, to reassemble and analyse them through the sites and spaces of their creative, social, and political praxis, and their entwined relations of power. Despite Crawford’s recent invaluable biographical work, bringing together and evaluating the lives, and particularly the creative and feminist practices of suffrage artists, is a difficult task. As sketched out above, there is not a wealth of information on more than a handful of individual suffrage artists, while there are smaller pieces scattered here and there on many more. There is not much homogeneity either. Some suffrage artists as noted, were active with the ASL, others the Suffrage Atelier, some occasionally produced or contributed time and work to both societies. Many produced suffrage artworks independently, and ad hoc, and all had different ways of working and used different materials to work with. Suffrage artists as outlined above, are broadly defined here by their making and designing of artistic images and wares for use in and/or sale for the suffrage cause, principally for the ASL and the Suffrage Atelier as formal suffrage art societies.<sup>69</sup> Yet, a spatial focus allows the thesis to show how supporting women artists and friends nonetheless played an integral role, for example, in the ASL and the Suffrage Atelier’s mobilisation, or helping sustain their activities over the course of the campaign.

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<sup>67</sup> Tamboukou, *In the Fold*, p. 311.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, p. 9.

<sup>69</sup> Although the work produced may not always have been explicitly demarked as a ‘suffrage’ product. There is no way of knowing for example, if embroidered items sold for the campaign by the craft-oriented Suffrage Atelier, which included mantle shelf and book covers, had suffrage indicia.

Some lent studios and drawing rooms for ASL and Suffrage Atelier work, classes, and meetings, worked as secretaries or speakers without contributing artistically themselves, or sold their own paintings to raise funds. While not the focus, they too are deserving of consideration in any gender or spatial analysis of suffrage art praxis, or of the sites, spaces, and territories that suffrage artists sought to occupy or transform, and so feature throughout the thesis chapters.<sup>70</sup> Others, artists and none-artists, as referenced above, also appear because their suffrage stories are directly enmeshed in the spatial drama of contesting the power politics and geographies of art and gender during the campaign.

The chapters coalesce around spatial themes familiar to scholars of gender and power. These reflect key strands of scholarship that have emerged from the ‘spatial turn’ over recent decades and have significantly impacted studies of the relationship between gender and power across feminist histories. The spatial turn has encouraged a new emphasis on ‘environments, built and otherwise, architectural surroundings, landscapes, and conceptual places and spaces’ and these ‘have affected the nature and scope of power, cultural production, and social experience’ and our understandings of it.<sup>71</sup> Under this spatial umbrella new cultural geographies have given fresh perspectives on the connections between, place (located space), space, and people, and the shaping of identities across histories and disciplines, times and events, in ways that are useful to assessing suffrage artists’ socio-political lives and imaginaries. Differences in perspectives and approaches have emerged, but it is across places and spaces, built or otherwise, real and imagined, that scholars agree struggles over knowledge, power, and identities played out, whether their interest lies in class, race, gender, and queer studies, and/or the many and complex intersections between them. While this thesis centres on suffrage artists’ contribution to broad attempts by women

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<sup>70</sup> See also, Morton, ‘Changing Spaces’.

<sup>71</sup> K. Bebe, A. Davis & K. Gleadle (2012) ‘Introduction: Space, Place and Gendered Identities: Feminist History and the Spatial Turn’, *Women’s History Review* 21:4 pp. 525-27.

(and some men) to redraw the gender roles and boundaries of the era, it inevitably intersects to varying degrees with all these struggles for power over different sites, spaces, and bodies, using spatial themes to move across and between them.

The seminal works of Michel Foucault and Henri Lefebvre have remained hugely influential over how scholars discuss spatial terms and approaches. This thesis is no exception. Foucault's work on power and knowledge, and scholarly debates that have since connected his concepts of utopia and heterotopia - of 'imagined' and 'enacted' space - with Henri Lefebvre's notions of 'conceptual' and 'lived' space are central, implicitly underpinning much of the interrogative work across its chapters.<sup>72</sup> These spatial strands have also been helpful in streamlining much of the literature selected across theoretical and disciplinary boundaries, to examine the varied sites and spaces suffrage artists coveted, inhabited, moved through, and (re)designed during the suffrage campaign. For example, chapters on located space or place, draw on work by spatial scholars such as Tim Cresswell, Michel de Certeau and John Agnew whose bottom-up approach to place, politics, and the poetics of everyday life, align with feminist geographers Doreen Massey, Gillian Rose, and Sarah Deutsch, on how constructs of gender – of masculinity and femininity – were enacted through the regular sites and spaces of women's homes, neighbourhoods, and work.<sup>73</sup>

Meanwhile, collective, scholarship by theoretical authors such as Nicole Pohl, Lucy Sargisson, and Marsha Morse on women's utopianism, feminist imaginings, mobility, embodiment, and creativity, enable suffrage artists' more liminal spaces to be explored

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<sup>72</sup> H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991); M. Foucault (1986) 'Of other spaces' *Diacritics* 16, pp.22-27; P. Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader* (U.S, New York: Pantheon, 1984).

<sup>73</sup> Cresswell 'Mobilising the Movement', pp. 447-461; M. De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. S. Rendall (London: University of California Press, 1988); J. Agnew, 'Space and Place' in J. Agnew, & D. Livingstone, (eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Geographical Knowledge* (London: Sage, 2011) pp. 316-331; D. Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge Polity Press, 1994); G. Rose, *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993); S. Deutsch, *Women and the City: Gender, Space, and Power in Boston, 1870-1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). See bibliography for multiple entries from these authors.

through complex linkages between gender, space, modernity and the body.<sup>74</sup> As Heidi Nast and Steve Pile argue, there is a need ‘to look at the relationship between bodies and places, not because of academic requirement to sort out our paradoxes, but because the ways in which we live out body/place relationships are political’.<sup>75</sup>

Chapter 2, Place Settings and chapter 3, Bodies in the Museum, centre on place (or located space) to map out suffrage artists’ habitation of it in different ways that transform its use and meanings. Both enrol women artists’ occupation of creative territories in London as a source of men’s artistic power and authority, with their struggle for political and artistic equality. Chapter 2 analyses suffrage artists’ collective organisation into the ASL and the Suffrage Atelier, through the suburbs, streets, and architecture they colonized, the public and private spaces they inhabited, and where they campaigned, principally across Chelsea, Kensington, and Hampstead. These are examined as materially important sites – as radical standpoints - where the societies uniquely mobilised in the context of a globally vibrant women’s suffrage campaign. Given most suffrage artists lived and toiled in London, and the ASL and Suffrage Atelier were headquartered there, Lefebvre’s work on the city - seen as synonymous with modern life, where proximity, spontaneous encounters, shared aspiration, solidarity in action, and questions of autonomy, constantly arise - is central to the chapter’s account of that process, as is the body of feminist spatial scholarship that has grown around it.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>N. Pohl, *Women, Space, and Utopia, 1600-1800* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); L. Sargisson (2013) ‘A Democracy of All Nature: Taking a Utopian Approach’ *Politics*, 33:2, June, pp. 124-134 <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9256.12005> (accessed 8 September 2022); M. Morse (1992) ‘Feminist Aesthetics and the Spectrum of Gender’, *Philosophy East and West*, 42:2, pp. 287-295. See also, J. Robinson (2000) ‘Feminism and the Spaces of Transformation’ *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 25:3, pp. 285-301.

<sup>75</sup> H. Nast & S. Pile (eds.) *Places through the Body* (London: Routledge, 1998) p.1.

<sup>76</sup> These are the characteristics that give the city its ‘radical potential’. Lefebvre uses this concept to counter the denigration of the city in many Marxist and socialist histories, but it can also be said to be true for organised suffragism as a radical, social, and political movement. See, N. Maycroft, ‘Henri Lefebvre: Alienation and the Ethics of Bodily Appropriation’ in L. Wilde, *Marxism’s Ethical Thinkers* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan,

The chapter is also enriched by urban and architectural scholarship by Jane Rendall, Thomas Markus, and Nigel Thrift, who have illuminated the relationship between gender, power, and the materiality of place.<sup>77</sup> It also benefits from geographers spatial work on contentious politics which demonstrate how neighbourhoods where inhabitants share territories, as well as sharing interests that are culturally marginalised, can act as potential launch pads, especially for women's activism.<sup>78</sup> Bringing together the radical potential of dense urban spaces of the city, with geographers approaches to assessing the formation of social and political groups, allows the spatial interactivity between local artists, community practices, and suffrage events during the campaign to be re-examined. This enables the chapter to analyse the spatial mechanisms, processes, and gender dynamics at play as the ASL and the Suffrage Atelier came into being and organised across familiar, local sites and spaces. It unites suffrage studies, which view the campaigns' politics as 'better assessed at the local level', with feminist retellings of women artists' experiences of modernity through the spatial metaphors of settlements and habitations.<sup>79</sup> Ultimately, the chapter situates suffrage artists within a 'transformative politics of the local' valorising place as a site of new beginnings, as a radical standpoint for women's entwined creative and political agendas which were progressive and empowering.<sup>80</sup>

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2001) pp.129-130; Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* & H. Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life* (London: Verso, 1991); Cherry, *Beyond the Frame*; Walker 'Locating the Global'.

<sup>77</sup> J. Rendall, *Art and Architecture: A place between* (prepublication) p.157 <http://www.janerendell.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2009/03/Art-and-Architecture-prepublication.pdf> [Accessed Jan 2018]; T. Markus, 'Is There a Built Form for Non-patriarchal Utopias?' in A. Bingham, L. Sanders, & R. Zorach, (eds.), *Embodied Utopias: Gender, Social Change and the Modern Metropolis* (London: Routledge, 2002) pp. 15-32; A. Amin & N. Thrift, *Cities: Reimagining the Urban* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002); S. Pile & N. Thrift, *Mapping the Subject: Geographies of Cultural Transformation* (London: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>78</sup> For example, Helga Leitner, Eric Sheppard & Kristin Sziarto (2008) 'The Spatialities of Contentious Politics' *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 33, p. 161; D. Martin (2003) 'Place-Framing' as Place-Making: Constituting a Neighbourhood for Organizing and Activism', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, pp. 730-750; D. Martin & B. Miller (2003) 'Space and Contentious Politics', *Mobilization: An International Journal*, 8:2, pp. 143-156.

<sup>79</sup> J. Hannam, 'I had not been to London', *Women's Suffrage – a View from the Regions* in J. Purvis & S. Holton (eds.), *Votes for Women*, p. 233; S. Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900-1940* (U.S Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986); Elliott & Wallace, *Women Artists and Writers*.

<sup>80</sup> Leitner, Sheppard & Sziarto, 'The Spatialities of Contentious Politics', p. 161.

Chapter 3, Bodies in the Museum, centres on suffrage artists' embodiment during the campaign, in a very particular place, a street, Cheyne Walk in Chelsea, which it explores as feminist interruptions of the male power geographies of art and gender. Cheyne Walk was renowned as an 'open air museum' that publicly amplified narratives of men's superiority in the arts, through tourist guidebooks and pamphlets detailing stories of the houses, studios, paintings, and lives of elite male artists who once occupied it.<sup>81</sup> It was discussed in fin de siècle literary and artistic circles, including by Woolf, as a divisive symbol of men's power and privilege in the arts, and was well known to suffrage artists.<sup>82</sup> While spatial scholars define place as porous and 'shifting' they also acknowledge it may possess powerful and enduring meanings 'deeply structured in prevailing relations of power'.<sup>83</sup> In this sense, place is not always abstract in the way space is. It has meanings and histories, which differ from person to person, and at different times, making it a potential battle ground for gender power struggles in the wider context of the politics of identity and recognition.<sup>84</sup> In a series of case studies, the chapter (re)locates suffragette artist Sylvia Pankhurst, ASL artist Bertha Newcombe, and suffrage artist Louise Jopling Rowe there, interrogating them as creative occupants, users, and usurpers, of its elite men's historic houses, studios, and famed embankment running alongside the river Thames. These explorations are interlinked with their feminist identities through the spatial prisms of corporeality, embodiment, and phenomenological theories of gender and place, where women's very presence in male territories is seen as a disruption. It calls upon seminal spatial works including Foucault,

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<sup>81</sup> W. H Godfrey, (ed.), *Survey of London: volume 4 Chelsea part II* (London: London County Council, 1913) p. 42. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/>(accessed: September 2021); W. H. Godfrey, *Indication of Houses of Historic Interest in London* (London: LCC, 1909).

<sup>82</sup> V. Woolf, 'Great Men's Houses' in *The London Scene*, pp. 23-29; V. Woolf, *Night and Day* (U.S: San Diego, Harcourt, 1920); A. Zemgulys (2000) 'Night and Day is Dead': Virginia Woolf in London "Literary and Historic", *Twentieth Century Literature* 4:1, p. 69.

<sup>83</sup> J. Ryan (1994), 'Women Modernity and the City' *Theory, Culture, Society*, 11:35, p.40; B. Bender, *Landscape, Politics and Perspectives* (Oxford: Berg, 1993).

<sup>84</sup> L.J. Smith, 'Heritage, Gender and Identity' in B. Graham & P. Howard, (eds.) *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* (London: Routledge, 2008) p.167; C. Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone, Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*, (Oxford: Berg, 2004).

Patrick Berger, Walter Benjamin, De Certeau, Judith Walkowitz, and Griselda Pollock to frame, ground, and articulate the gender politics of suffrage artists site-specific practices of being, looking, painting, walking, and ways of seeing there, both as women artists, and as suffragists.<sup>85</sup> In so doing, it performs a type of ‘place informed’ subjectivity which recognises women’s responses to meanings embedded in particular places, as integrally enrolled with their creative and feminist identity making.<sup>86</sup>

While not strictly a suffrage artist, the chapter also ponders the curious recording of militant suffragette and friend to Pankhurst, Maud Joachim, as an ‘artist’ in the painter Joseph W.M Turner’s famous Cheyne Walk studio during the 1911 suffrage census boycott - though this was not her profession. This raises potentially interesting spatial questions around temporality and a historically ‘self-conscious politics of location’ in suffrage artists’ broader agencies there drawing on the work of Jacques Derrida on the archive as reaching beyond the narrative relationships between subject, time and space.<sup>87</sup> Architectural sites and landscapes imbued with masculine meaning have been targeted by suffrage scholars wishing to illuminate suffragist struggles over gender power and identity especially through suffragette

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<sup>85</sup> Rabinow, *Foucault Reader*; J. Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin Books, 1972); W. Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: a lyric poet in the era of high capitalism*, trans. H. Zohn (London: New Left Books, 1973); De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*; G. Pollock, *Generations and Geographies in the Visual Arts: Feminist Readings* (London: Routledge, 1996); G. Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism, and the histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 1988); J. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delights: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late Victorian London* (London: Virago, 1992); H. Hawkins (2012) ‘Geography and Art. An Expanding Field: Site, the Body and Practice’ *Progress in Human Geography*, 77:1, pp. 52-71; Rose, *Feminist Geographies*, p.9; J. Allen, *Lost Geographies of Power* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003).

<sup>86</sup> Subjectivity comes as female members of a particular society understand their status in it as subjects by acting through it and - in the broadest sense of the word - comprehending it. For an interesting discussion of place informed subjectivity and art, see, C. A Watts, *Painting Parisian Identity: Place and Subjectivity in Fin-de-Siècle Art* (U.S, Florida: University of Florida, 2011) Unpublished MA thesis, p. 15.

<sup>87</sup> Borden, I, Rendell, J, Kerr, J & Pivaro, A, (eds.) *The Unknown City: Contesting Architecture and Social Space*, (London: MIT Press, 2001), p. 9. Derrida’s work on the archive sees it as ‘much more than a thing of the past’, or even of present time. It is, ‘a question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow’ J. Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (U.S, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) pp. 34-36. See also, J. Sassoon (2003) ‘Phantoms of Remembrance: libraries and archives as ‘the collective memory’’, *Public History Review*, 10, p. 55.

strategies of bodily insertion to which the chapter is indebted.<sup>88</sup> Ultimately, both chapters 2 and 3 align suffrage artists' gendered agencies there, with Chandra Mohanty's work on the geographies of feminism, which claims that 'a place on the map... is... also a locatable place in history' thus gender power studies must involve deconstruction of, and resistance to, not only the 'map' and 'history' but also 'place' itself.<sup>89</sup>

A thesis drawing upon feminist spatiality must embrace both a politics of place - its localization - as well as a politics of ubiquity - its global manifestation.<sup>90</sup> Therefore chapter 4 *The Art of Travel*, centres on the spatial theme of mobility to explore the gender power implications of suffrage artists' travel and migrancy in the context of art and empire, both at home and away. The act of suffrage artists' movement from one place to another, whether locally or globally, was itself imbued with power because it fractured multi-scalar associations between women and home that structured late nineteenth and early twentieth century notions of femininity. This is well-illustrated by a rich body of feminist work on women's travel writing which helps underpin the chapter's understanding of female experiences of mobility.<sup>91</sup> Global female travel has drawn particular interest given its

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<sup>88</sup> Walker, 'Locating the Global; L. Walker (2006) 'Women Patron Builders in Britain: Identity, Difference and Memory in Spatial and Material Culture' in D. Cherry & J. Helland (eds.) *Local/Global: Women Artists in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2006) pp. 121-136; D. Massey (1995) 'Places and Their Pasts Author(s)' *History Workshop Journal*, 39, pp. 182-192; D. Cherry (2006) 'Statues in the Square: Hauntings at the Heart of Empire' *Art History*, 29:4, pp. 660-697; A. Oram, 'Sexuality in Heterotopia: Time, Space and Love Between Women in the Historic House' in *Women's History Review (Special Issue) Space, Place and Gendered Identities: Feminist History and the Spatial Turn* (London: Routledge, 2012) 21:4, p. 537; Smith, 'Heritage, Gender', pp. 159-180. In her work on the interplay between heritage, gender and power, Cara Aitchison argues that heritage sites represent a 'powerful cultural form and process, which both shapes and is shaped by gendered constructions of space and place'. C. Aitchison, 'Heritage and Nationalism: Gender and the performance of power' in D. Crouch (ed.) *Leisure/Tourism Geographies: Practices and Geographical Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1999) p. 61. Many disciplines now regard heritage landscape and museum sites as places (or located spaces) at which 'some of the most interesting and significant of their debates and questions can be explored in novel and often excitingly applicable ways.' S. McDonald, 'Expanding Museum Studies: an introduction' in S. McDonald, *A Companion to Museum Studies* (Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011) p. 1.

<sup>89</sup> C. T. Mohanty, 'Introduction: Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism' in C.T Mohanty, A. Russo & L. Torres (eds.) *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (U.S, Indiana, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991) p. 4.

<sup>90</sup> J.K Gibson-Graham, *A Postcapitalist Politics* (U.S, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, (2006).

<sup>91</sup> See chapter four. Massey argues women's mobility should be central to all feminist enquiries given 'mobility and control over mobility both reflect and reinforce power'. D. Massey, 'Power-geometry and a Progressive



entanglement with other formations of power, notably imperialism. Therefore, employing a loose framework of empowerments and disempowerments, and set within the context of imperial privilege, chapter 4 pieces together suffrage artists' global travels and migrations encompassing Europe, Egypt, India, Australia, America, and the West Indies from a variety of archival sources, letters, and landscape paintings. This builds a collage of imperial and often very personal life entanglements and diasporas for suffrage artists, which the chapter reveals played out in London as a globally spatialized city, in their professional lives, exhibitions, feminist sociability, and in their imperial suffrage banner making, and collective crafting during the campaign. Suffrage artists' experiences are largely absent from scholarship on the imperial threads of women's global mobility that run through the written histories of the British suffrage movement. Therefore, chapter 4 freshly situates them within it, illuminating some of the individual stories and collective tensions created between suffrage artists' feminist, and artistic self-empowerment, and the colonial disempowerments inherent in their global travel and migrancy. It also explores how these global tensions are evident in localised suffrage art and craft making, shared, and brokered across classes, through the hierarchal language of imperialism.<sup>92</sup> By revealing both disruptions and collaborations in suffrage artists' relationships to the imperial project, the chapter seeks to enrich the suffrage and imperial archive, while adding to spatial scholarship on the complex relationship between mobility, gender, and power.

Chapter 5, *Dreams Come True*, and chapter 6, *Seeing is Believing*, pivot around the spatial themes of utopia and enacted utopias (or heterotopias) as empowering real and imaginative spaces of suffrage artists' experimentation with gender, art, and identity. The

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Sense of Place' in J. Bird, J. B. Curtis, T. Putnam, G. Robertson & L. Tickner (eds.) *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change* (London: Routledge, 1993) p. 62.

<sup>92</sup> For a concise discussion on empowerment versus disempowerment in suffrage and wider feminist movements, and other emerging global themes, see, K. Gleadle & Z. Thomas (2018) 'Global Feminisms, c. 1870–1930: Vocabularies and Concepts—a Comparative Approach' *Women's History Review*, 27:7, pp. 1209–1224.

historical value of exploring utopias or imaginative spaces to better understand political or intellectual ideas, or groups, has at times been maligned precisely because of its imaginative or creative element which is often feminized, seen as ‘soft’, and placed in ‘direct tension with masculine knowledge’ based on scientific or ‘hard’ evidence.<sup>93</sup> However, in their critical essays on utopia, Patrick Hayden and Chamsy el-Ojeili argue that thinking through radical politics without acknowledging an element of utopianism, is or should be impossible, stating ‘utopianism by its very definition is a political endeavour, and its role in political and therefore in social and material change, is undeniable’.<sup>94</sup> Numerous feminist scholars across disciplines including Sargisson, Pohl, Jenny Robinson, and Marcia Morse have signalled varyingly how female utopianism can be read positively as the imagining, the future projection, and often the enactment of alternative female spaces that resist masculine power through a diverse range of feminist aesthetics and visualities, most often enacted in tumultuous times when substantial shifts in gender relations are more likely.<sup>95</sup>

It is in this context that the thesis broadly defines the spaces of utopia and enacted utopia as those where suffrage artists projected and strove for ideal social, artistic, economic, and political conditions that may or may not have existed, but required an element of creative work to reach, either in conceptualising or enacting them. Chapter 5 analyses the Suffrage Atelier’s arts and crafts scheme as a politically feminist heterotopia or creative counter site to the realities of gender inequality in the arts and craft industries. The chapter locates its scheme within a wider national and international resurgence of female craft practice and language in debates about women’s art and women’s labour, and against a backdrop of growing professional craft societies for women that sought to remain determinedly apolitical.

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<sup>93</sup> L. Sargisson (2013) ‘A Democracy of All Nature’, pp. 124-134 <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9256.12005> (accessed 8 September 2022).

<sup>94</sup> P. Hayden & C. el-Ojeili *Globalization and Utopia: Critical Essays* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009) p.7.

<sup>95</sup> Sargisson, ‘A Democracy’; Pohl, *Women, Space, and Utopia*; Robinson, ‘Feminism and the Spaces of Transformation’, pp. 285-301; Morse, ‘Feminist Aesthetics’, pp. 287-295.

Ideologically, craft practice in this era was embedded in atavistic notions of socialist utopianism, but was also at the forefront of vanguard feminist utopian debates about women artists role in the labouring economy, and was seen as potentially transformative.<sup>96</sup> The chapter examines the gender politics of the Suffrage Atelier's arts and crafts scheme, which drew upon the craft language and ideologies of socialist and feminist utopianism, and was vocal in reorienting the means of artistic production according to the determinants of gender. This encompassed for example, its female rather than male members ownership of the means of print production in response to increasing threats to women's work in the printing trades; the provision of artistic training classes addressing lacunas in female education; and a remuneration scheme that allowed women to learn, earn, and experience explicitly feminist society-based craft as diverse political economies, and as productive 'labour[s] of becoming'.<sup>97</sup> This enabled them to assume power in new ways, and connected the scheme's transformative politics of the local, to more global questions about arts and crafts as a powerful, revolutionary space for feminist politics, and for the modern aestheticization of women's labour.<sup>98</sup> There was also a class inclusive element to it which the chapter explores through its personnel's direct links to the socialist and labour movements.

Sitting somewhere between utopia and heterotopia, chapter 6 focuses on those liminal spaces between the real and the imaginative to explore suffrage artists' contestation of power through the aesthetic transformation of gender in their everyday social and sexual spaces and art. It examines how suffrage artists' decorative and performative alteration of intimate domestic-studio and female-male body space challenged traditional gender roles, traits, and sexualities, which were being actively reinforced by the new science of eugenics and

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<sup>96</sup> Delap, *The Feminist Avant-Garde*.

<sup>97</sup> H. Hawkins (2012) 'Geography and Art. An Expanding Field: Site, the Body and Practice' *Progress in Human Geography* 37:1 p. 60; J.K Gibson-Graham (2006) *A Post Capitalist Politics* (U.S, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

sexology at the height of the campaign and which were often underpinned by powerful cultural notions of biological essentialism. It embeds these visual alterations and future projections of what could be, within emerging feminist-modernist discourses, acknowledged to have challenged the era's hegemonic narratives of gender and sexualities. The chapter calls upon suffrage, feminist, and queer scholarship on the interpretation of artists' homes, studios, and the decorative interior, as well as the meaning of theatrical performativity within the 'enclosed room' to explore suffrage artists' experimentation, projection, and performance of gender and sexual politics through the visual display of objects and art, to the staging of performative 'at homes' for invited audiences.

Meanwhile, their visual alterations of female-male body space are principally explored through discourses of androgyny linked to subversive feminist-modernist exchanges on gender, art, and homosexuality. The androgynous figure, which often appeared historically at times of social and political turmoil, is evident across suffrage artists' intertextual suffrage and non-suffrage work, and personal relationships, as it was across the lives and works of vanguard feminists and female modernists including Woolf who used it as a morphotactic tool to experiment with and challenge social constructs of gender, and to articulate a new language of lesbianism. Notably several suffrage artists were also playwrights, amateur actors, and novelists, with social and professional links to vanguard feminist theatre and to metropolitan lesbian subcultures.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> J. Neiswander, *The Cosmopolitan Interior: Liberalism and the British Home, 1870-1914* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2008); D. Miller, 'Behind Closed Doors' in D. Miller (ed.) *Home Possessions: Material Culture Behind Closed Doors* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2021); H. Heynen, 'Modernity and Domesticity: Tensions and Contradictions' in H. Heynen & G. Baydar (eds.) *Negotiating Domesticity: Spatial Productions of Gender in Modern Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2005); J. Potvin, *Bachelors of a Different Sort: Queer Aesthetics, Material Culture, and the Modern Interior in Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015); Cockin, *Women and Theatre*; K. Cockin, 'Formations, Institutions and the Free Theatre', *A Journal of Cultural Materialism*, 15, (2017) pp. 55-71; E. Crawford (2002), *Enterprising Women: The Garretts and their Circle* (London: Francis Boule); Walker, 'Locating the Global', pp. 174-196; L. Walker, 'Women Patron-Builders'.

Probing the role of visibility and performativity in the conceptualisation or utopian ‘imagining’ and projection of new gender and sex critical space, is crucial to understanding the translation of such space into transformative cultural discourse and practice. These were sites and spaces where gendered political, sexual, and artistic boundaries, were reconceived, experimented with, transfigured, and visually projected as future possibilities in personally powerful ways that nonetheless interacted with wider public cultural debates about gender sex and power. These were liminal spaces existing somewhere between utopia and heterotopia, between real and imagined space, which Foucault saw as a useful window into the struggle for power and knowledge, and from which Kevin Hetherington suggests modernity itself emerged.<sup>100</sup>

### **Sources.**

The thesis draws upon existing suffrage literature, archives of the ASL and Suffrage Atelier, kept, as outlined above, at the WL, but most often upon suffrage and regional newspapers, census records, artists’ letters, periodicals and catalogues, locally produced biographies and repositories, autobiographical works by suffrage artists such as Louise Jopling Rowe, Laurence Housman, Dora Meeson-Coates, and accounts written by contemporaries and friends who give rare glimpses into the social, political, and creative spaces of suffrage artists’ lives such as author Arthur Ransome, suffragette Zoe Proctor, and social reformer Beatrice Webb. Unfolding the spaces and places of their artistic and political praxis, puts new women in the frame as suffrage artists and supporters across chapters, including self-employed embroider and crafter Mildred Ellinor Statham (c.1884-1964) with the Suffrage Atelier. Statham was born in Brazil and was daughter to a shipping merchant. She spent most of her childhood in Cheshire and studied at the South Kensington Art School.

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<sup>100</sup> P. Rabinow (ed.) *The Foucault Reader*, p. 252; K. Hetherington, *The Badlands of Modernity: Heterotopia and Social Ordering* (London: Routledge, 1997) p. 53; Bebe, Davis & Gleadle, ‘Introduction: Space, Place and Gendered Identities’ pp. 525-27.

She appeared in 1910 at a fund-raising event for the Suffrage Atelier at the Royal Court Theatre (see chapter 6) and made an applique reproduction of Leighton's 'Flaming June' for the society which was displayed at an exhibition of its banner work in 1913.<sup>101</sup> Among others featuring throughout its chapters, are crafter and entrepreneur Eliza Turck (1832-1910), artist Charlotte Lilian Sheppard (1854-1925), needleworker Rosie (Mrs Harry) Silver (c.1878-?) and 1908 WSPU banner work leader Miss Agathonike Craies (1885-1947).<sup>102</sup>

Photographs, suffrage images, but also other visual work suffrage artists produced such as illustrations, portrait and landscape paintings, are used selectively across chapters where they reveal more about the creative, political, and sexual spaces suffrage artists encountered, moved through, created, and resisted, revealing global life travels, and on-site performances, locations captured, negotiated, and documented, spaces re imagined and visually transformed as powerful gender boundaries were contested and reconfigured. The thesis also draws upon suffrage artists' intertextual work, such as novels, plays, articles, interviews, and theatrical performances, by Clemence and Laurence Housman, Edith Craig (1869-1947), suffrage banner worker Jennie Salaman Cohen (Mrs Herbert Cohen), Pamela Colman-Smith, and on the lifestyles and works of other creatives, feminists, and modernists such as Vita Sackville West, Virginia Woolf and Kate Lechmere among others, where their social, sexual, and/or artistic lives help contextualise and/or overlapped with suffrage artists' circles and discourses.<sup>103</sup>

Necessarily, the secondary sources consulted are wide ranging. Aside from suffrage scholarship, the thesis chapters' draw upon feminist, visual, literary, colonial, performance,

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<sup>101</sup> Statham has not been recognised as a suffrage artist prior to work by this author here and in Morton, 'Changing Spaces', pp. 623-629. See, 'Some Beautiful Banners' *Votes for Women*, 12 September 1913, p. 719. See also her brief entry in, S. Gray, *British Women Artists: A Biographical Dictionary of 1,000 Women Artists in the British Decorative Arts* (U.K Oakamoor: Dark River, 2019).

<sup>102</sup> Details are given in the chapters where these women feature.

<sup>103</sup> Jennie Cohen embroidered a suffrage banner with the Suffrage Atelier for the Jewish League designed by daughter Ethel Cohen. *Votes for Women*, 12 September 1913, p. 719.

and authorship theory, alongside the work of cultural and social geographers on museum, heritage, and architectural sites, on archival, imperial, and queer spaces, crossing multiple disciplinary, temporal, and sex boundaries to unfold new sites and spaces of suffrage artists' lives and praxis. The decision to include suffrage artists' intertextual creative work within the frame of analysis, raises its own challenges over how images, texts, and materials are juxtaposed and interpreted in the representation of women artists' agencies. The thesis engages with the scholarship this topic has generated, but ostensibly, images are not the principal focus, and overall, it positions suffrage artists' creative works only in ways that articulate how space was appropriated, documented, occupied, and transfigured by their various gender and sexual subjectivities in women's wider struggle for access to creative, alongside political power.

Although as indicated above, some new identities are discovered through the thesis' spatial unfolding of the places and spaces of suffrage artists' creative praxis, the aim is not to actively pursue their recovery, or to provide substantive biographical accounts of numerous suffrage artists' lives: a task rigorously performed in Crawford's recent work. Instead, it seeks to revisit, revise, and expand upon the sites, spaces, and approaches to analysing suffrage artists, broadening their role as creative interlocutors in suffrage, feminist, imperial, socialist and modernist histories of female empowerment, while contributing to conceptual studies on gender, space, and power. A spatial approach allows the chapters to shift across a complex array of sites and spaces, yet to understand the relationship between suffrage artists' political and creative subjectivities in essence, as negotiated 'through the traffic between symbolic and concrete spaces' resisting and challenging constructs of gender through the reterritorialization of real and imaginative space in various ways, to transform its meanings, and so destabilize its relationships of power.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> S. Hanson & G. Pratt *Gender, Work and Space* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.19.

## Chapter Two

### Place Settings

The London suburbs of Chelsea and Kensington proved popular with artists wishing to settle in the city to pursue their careers from the early nineteenth century onwards. The leafy suburbs were relatively affordable compared to the smog laden and more expensive parts of central London previously favoured. They offered a variety of accommodation from the palatial houses along the Thames waterfront, to modest, newly constructed studio flats or rented rooms in old tenement buildings for those artists and artisans on more meagre incomes. The towns were also situated close to the picture buying public in the affluent West End, and as the century progressed, were well served by good under and over ground transport links, giving easy access to the city's amenities. The provisions associated with artists' daily professional and social lives – art schools, art suppliers, picture dealerships, galleries, tea rooms and coffee houses – began to proliferate locally, as a steady flow of new painters, sculptors and artisans arrived. This growing infrastructure in turn attracted more artists, and very quickly Chelsea, its neighbour Kensington, and surrounding towns such as Hampstead became centres for artistic life in London. Women artists' colonization of these locations as they sought to make careers for themselves in a profession that marginalised them by gender, was integral to the formation of the ASL and Suffrage Atelier as the only suffrage art groups to mobilise during the global campaign. This chapter looks thematically through place to examine how that happened via a series of separate, yet interconnected sites, spaces, and events. These were embedded in the everyday local, material, and cultural lives of women artists, rather than distant from them, changing the shape and scope of their working practices. In so doing, the chapter (re)grounds and revises who, where, and how



gender struggles transformed neighbourhoods into radical standpoints for women's new progressive agendas for art and politics, through the transformative power of the local.<sup>105</sup>

### *The Creative City.*

Traditional, phalli-centric histories of the creative city locate its 'heyday' in the early to mid-nineteenth century when leading male lights of the art world, such as Joseph M.W Turner (1775-1851) and George Frederic Watts (1817-1904) lived and worked respectively in Chelsea and Kensington.<sup>106</sup> Once such men died, moved away, or simply faded in reputation, the artistic relevance of these places is often seen to have declined. However, viewed from a more egalitarian and woman-centred perspective, far from declining, these towns sat at the centre of a new and thriving artistic community which flourished in the early twentieth century as women artists of varied means and ambitions settled there in numbers to pursue their artistic careers. As early as the 1860s, pioneering women artists arrived, many bringing with them a strong commitment to feminist ideals. Affluent artists such as Alice Westlake (1842-1923) in Chelsea, helped found the Kensington Society, so called because its meetings were held at 44 Philimore Gardens just off Kensington High Street. The Society debated all manner of things related to the position of women including the issue of women's suffrage. It officially broke up in 1868 but 'proved a catalyst for the birth of the women's suffrage movement'.<sup>107</sup> Its intellectual successor, the NUWSS, had two branches in North and South Kensington by the 1900s.<sup>108</sup> Many women artists that continued to arrive in the towns

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<sup>105</sup> Gibson-Graham, *A Post Capitalist Politics*; A. Escobar & W. Harcourt, *Women, and the Politics of Place*, (U.S, CT: Kumarian Press, 2005); Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*.

<sup>106</sup> For example, J. F. Lamb, 'Symbols of Success in Suburbia: The Establishment of Artists Communities in Late Victorian London' in, D. Mancoff & D. J. Trela (eds.), *Victorian Urban Settings: Essays on the Nineteenth Century City and its Contexts* (1996).

<sup>107</sup> E. Crawford, *The Women's Suffrage Movement: A Reference Guide, 1866-1928* (London: Routledge, 1999) p. 321.

<sup>108</sup> Crawford, *The Women's Suffrage Movement*, pp. 321-322. Artist Alice Westlake was among the signatories on the women's suffrage petition to parliament in 1866 and helped bridge conversations between women at the centre of earlier feminist campaigns and the new tide of female suffrage campaigners that settled in London in the early twentieth century.

throughout the 1880s and 1890s supported female suffrage and the NUWSS, with several forming the nucleus of the ASL in Chelsea.

In the decades that followed, these female pioneers were joined by a generation of younger, often less affluent women artists, similarly attracted by the district's artistic history and flourishing national schools which now offered more practical, commercially viable classes in design, engraving, textile, jewellery and metal work in addition to traditional instruction in the fine arts.<sup>109</sup> The influx of young and often unmarried female artists and artisans meant that by 1901, the number of women living and pursuing artistic occupations in Chelsea and Kensington and peripheral towns and suburbs such as Finchley and Hampstead to the north, and Shepherds Bush and Hammersmith to the west, also saw a steady rise in creative residents. This included a mix of female painters, sculptors, decorative metal workers, and embroiderers. In the case of specialised work associated with traditional crafts industries like bookbinding, female practitioners began to outnumber their male counterparts illustrating the vibrancy of metropolitan sites and spaces for the development of women artists and artisans' careers.<sup>110</sup> Women's arrival is seldom written about in mainstream (masculinist) creative histories of London. Yet, it represents their creative colonization of it, especially once the traditional yoke of the superiority of fine arts over more utilitarian forms of art working is upended.

Art scholars Deborah Cherry and Lynne Walker's 'feminist remapping' of parts of the London's West End, where leading women painters and feminists chiefly settled in the nineteenth century, challenged the orthodoxy of the city as a masculine centre of commerce

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<sup>109</sup> For example, among those local national schools that included craft instruction were South Kensington School of Art, Lambeth School of Art, and Finsbury Technical College (instruction in silversmithing and enamelling). Laurence and Clemence Housman of the Suffrage Atelier attended South Kensington and Lambeth while WSPU artist Ernestine Mills took enamelling and silver work classes at Finsbury.

<sup>110</sup> Census of England and Wales (1901), County of London. BPP 1902 CXX [Cd.875] 106. Chelsea. Occupations. Table 35, p.107. Available at: [www.histpop.org](http://www.histpop.org) (Accessed June 2020).

and political power from which women were assumed to be absent. This work has since been built upon most recently by scholars Maria Quirk, Yu Mengting, and Zoe Thomas who have demonstrated the vibrancy of women artists' commercial enterprise and entrepreneurship across central London in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>111</sup> This chapter focuses on Chelsea, Kensington, and nearby Hampstead between 1901 and 1914 because these creative conurbations were the places where art and feminism first became explicitly enrolled, where radical new spaces for women's politicised and collective art practices were enacted and organized, and whose material settings were deeply implicated in the socio-spatial processes which facilitated the ASL and the Suffrage Atelier's coming into being.

Like pioneering women artists of the previous decades, twentieth century arrivals to the city also brought with them a keen interest in feminist politics, or, as the chapter shows, were radicalized there in the increasingly fervent atmosphere of suffrage politicking. As their influx gathered pace, so did the momentum of the women's suffrage movement. The lengthy campaign was reinvigorated by the formation of the WSPU in 1903, and its supporters had a strong presence in Chelsea and Kensington. It established local branches and thriving shops in Kensington's Church Street and on the Kings Road in Chelsea – the town's main thoroughfare - as well as branches and offices in surrounding towns and neighbourhoods. So too did its splinter group the WFL formed in 1907, to which the Suffrage Atelier was closely allied. The Suffrage Atelier operated on a non-partisan basis, but many of its artists supported the campaign's more militant organisations including the WSPU and the WFL (and its affiliate the WTRL). This contrasted with ASL artists most of whom kept with the constitutional side of the movement.

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<sup>111</sup> M. Quirk 'Stitching Professionalism'; M. Quirk, *Women, Art, and Money*; Thomas, *Women Art Workers*; Mengting, *London Women Artists*; Thomas, 'Between Art and Commerce'.

Therefore, these towns became host to a heady mix of women artists and artisans whose social and economic lives, and whose feminist and suffrage politics, ranged from one end of the spectrum to the other. As outlined in chapter 1, the ways women participated in the campaign were equally diverse. For example, in Kensington, sisters and artists Marie (1866-1946) and Georgiana Brackenbury (1865-1949) chose to work as speakers and organisers for the WSPU rather than to directly utilise their artistic skills for the campaign.<sup>112</sup> While others, such as artist and enameller Ernestine Mills (1871-1959) published suffrage postcards independently, at other times working for the WSPU, making jewellery and medals in its colours for imprisoned suffragettes. Yet others organised into collectives with the explicit purpose of creating artwork for the campaign forming the ASL in 1907 followed by the Suffrage Atelier in 1909. The ASL was founded in Chelsea by artists Mary Lowndes and Barbara Forbes and was composed from a relatively tight knit community of pioneering and professional women artists who had arrived there chiefly in the 1880s and 1890s. The Suffrage Atelier's origins as an 'Arts and Crafts society composed of suffragists' are less definitive.<sup>113</sup> Art historian Lisa Tickner located its likely beginnings in Kensington, and with artists and siblings Laurence and Clemence Housman's banner work for the WSPU rally in 1908. While this assertion has some veracity and is discussed below, the chapter revises the geographies and personalities behind its founding, attributing this to less well-known artists Agnes Joseph and her amateur companion Ethel Willis, and other local artists, in nearby Hampstead.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Their home - known as 'mouse castle' – acted as a refuge for suffragettes temporarily released from imprisonment under the infamous Cat and Mouse Act. Both women spent time in prison. Crawford, *Women's Suffrage*, pp. 75-76; Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*; J. Liddington & T. Morton (2007) 'Walking with Women's Suffrage in Kensington and Chelsea' *Herstoria* 8, pp. 30-39.

<sup>113</sup> This was how the Suffrage Atelier described itself in the advertisement section in *The Vote*, 10 January 1913. It was also described as 'An Arts and Crafts Society Working for the Enfranchisement of Women' in A.J.R., *Suffrage Annual and Women's Who's Who* (London: Stanley Paul, 1913) p. 6.

<sup>114</sup> Tickner, *Spectacle*. The assertion that the Housman siblings founded the Suffrage Atelier is made widely and was first tentatively challenged in Morton 'Changing Spaces' and later in Morton, 'An Arts and Crafts Society'. This assertion has since been acknowledged over grateful discussions with Jill Liddington and Elizabeth

Principally, the chapter explores *how* both societies mobilised during the campaign. Particularly, what spatial, structural, and urban mechanisms were at play in their ‘becoming’ as radical, politically feminist, and globally unique suffrage art groups in the city? In her spatial work on contentious politics, geographer Deborah Martin has urged more scholars to address the question of *how* specific groups mobilise in particular places at given times, and why certain collective identities motivate activism, all of which is too often assumed, or simply taken for granted across multiple disciplines.<sup>115</sup> Where an organisation seeking political change is located, often determines how and by whom that change is contested, suggesting a dynamic co-production between subject and place.<sup>116</sup> Given the built environment of place is the spatial fabric through which those social relations, and the routines that underpin them, are facilitated, regulated, and mediated, there is an inevitable entanglement with prisms of power, including gender.<sup>117</sup> Over three thematic and loosely chronologic sections the chapter focuses on the interactions between place, people, and events, to freshly interrogate the ASL and Suffrage Atelier’s mobilisation as collective, suffrage art groups. It argues they emerged from women artists’ capitalization on new metropolitan geographies of opportunity to organize and politicize their own struggles for the vote, underpinned by their equal interest in building creative power through professional knowledge and identity.<sup>118</sup>

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Crawford in J. Liddington, *Vanishing for the Vote: Suffrage, Citizenship, and the Battle for the Census* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014) p.45 & p. 367 f/n 1 & in Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*.

<sup>115</sup> Martin, ‘Place-Framing’, pp. 730-2. Whatever the discipline, Martin argues that ‘all studies of political groups should ask, not just whether the local context structures common interests and goals, but how’. Nicholls similarly argues that place possesses qualities that influence the type and shape of the social and political groups that emerge within it and place should therefore more often be used as a tool to study the formation of political organisations. W. Nicholls (2009) ‘Place, Networks, Space: Theorising the Geographies of Social Movements’ *TIBG*, 34, p. 91.

<sup>116</sup> Martin & Miller, ‘Space and Contentious Politics’, pp. 143-156; Leitner, Sheppard & Sziarto, ‘The Spatialities of Contentious Politics’, p.165; Escobar & Harcourt, *Women and the Politics of Place*, p. 2.

<sup>117</sup> Leitner et al, ‘Spatialities’ p. 161. Similarly, Nina Laurie et al stress the importance of materiality as ‘a spatial context for social networks of different kinds’ between women in which the built environment is integrally enrolled. See, N. Laurie, C. Dwyer, S Holloway & F. Smith, *Geographies of New Femininities* (London: Routledge, 1999) p. 169.

<sup>118</sup> Hooks, *Yearning*, p. 145.

### *Made in Chelsea: the ASL, 1901-1907*

Several years before the ASL formed in 1907, its founders and companions Lowndes and Forbes were already living at ‘Brittany Studios’ at 259 King’s Road, Chelsea where they operated a stained-glass business together. Lowndes had trained with Arts and Crafts designer Henry Holiday, later founding the stained-glass company Lowndes and Drury with Alfred Drury, a beacon for stained glass making in Britain before the War.<sup>119</sup> Brittany Studios would serve as the ASL’s headquarters until its cessation in 1914 and several other women who would later make up the ASL’s core committee were already near neighbours by the turn of the century. *Map 1* (Appendix A:1) demonstrates, Emily Ford (1850-1930) who helped the two organise the ASL, lived just around the corner at 44 Glebe Place; as did another founding artist and committee member Bessie Wigan (1860-1949) who rented a studio there.<sup>120</sup> So too did artist Violet Florence Garrard (1865-1938) who produced several designs for the ASL and whose home nestled between Ford’s house and Wigan’s studio.<sup>121</sup> Garrard spent several years living and studying art in France before returning to England in the 1880s, and was by all accounts an unconventional woman. She smoked heavily and cared little for her appearance, being described nevertheless, as possessing a ‘beautiful ivory face’. She was the inspiration for the aloof character Maisie in Rudyard Kipling’s first semi-autobiographical novel, *The Light that Failed*, and was close friends with preeminent Victorian artist and Chelsea resident John Singer Sargent who was unusually supportive of female suffrage.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Mary Lowndes, Barbara Forbes 1901 census record: RG13/78 94 2 (NA). Lowndes & Drury subsequently became the centre for the best stained-glass artists in Britain before 1914. For more on this industry including Lowndes and other women’s role in it. See, P. Cormack (2017) ‘The Glass House: A Great Feminist Enterprise’ *Journal of Stained Glass*, 41, pp. 6-14; P. Cormack, *Arts and Crafts Stained Glass* (U.S, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015); A. Crawford, *By Hammer and Hand: The Arts and Crafts Movement in Birmingham* (Birmingham: Birmingham Museum & Arts Gallery, 1984).

<sup>120</sup> Emily Ford, 1901 census record RG1378681283 (NA); Bessie Wigan rented 1 Hans Studio, Glebe Place, circa 1897-1901 and lived at 16 Glebe Place, in 1904. See, Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*, p.224.

<sup>121</sup> 1901 & 1904-1938 Garrard occupied 43 Glebe Place. See Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*, p. 100-1.

<sup>122</sup> The two having met in childhood, maintained a friendship for many years during which time Kipling fell in love with Garrard considering them engaged. Nevertheless, his feelings remained firmly unrequited. See, M. C Rintoul, *Dictionary of Real People and Places in Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1993) p. 437; M. Spilka, *Hemingway’s Quarrel with Androgyny* (U.S, Nebraska: Bison Books, University of Nebraska Press, 1990)

Founding ASL committee member and artist Bertha Newcombe (1857-1947) lived nearby in Cheyne Walk, while illustrator and toymaker Mary V. Wheelhouse (1867-1947) likely a committee member from the ASL's inception, was based around the corner from Lowndes and Forbes on the New King's Road. Another founding committee member May (Mary) Heatherington Barker (1858-1912) proved something of an outlier based 3 miles north on Marylebone Road.<sup>123</sup>

These artists locations at the turn of the century illustrate their formation in what might be termed 'creative clusters'.<sup>124</sup> This was characteristic of the broader living and working habits of women artists in the city and can be viewed as a spatial response to their creative marginalisation. These were challenging times for women artists who, despite their increasing entry into the creative marketplace, saw their ambitions hampered by prejudiced institutional, professional, and commercial art practices, as well as by pervasive middle class 'separate spheres' ideologies that were prohibitive to women's progress. Many art institutions employed exclusionary practices based on gender. For instance, female artists were prohibited from taking anatomy classes - a practice vital to artistic development - to prevent their immoral exposure to the male nude.<sup>125</sup> Discriminatory attitudes against women in the artistic world were acutely felt by female artists in Chelsea. Its famous Chelsea Arts Club founded by James McNeil Whistler in 1891, aimed to advance the cause of art and artists 'by means of exhibitions, life classes and other kindred means' but it did not allow women

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especially chapter 4, pp. 104-5; G. Annis, 'The Light that failed: An Introduction' published by the Kipling Society. Available at: [http://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/rg\\_light\\_intro.htm#maisie](http://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/rg_light_intro.htm#maisie) (accessed May 2015). See, Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*, p. 100.

<sup>123</sup> 1901 census records for Bertha Newcombe, RG137718534293 (NA); Mary Wheelhouse, RG13696426 (NA); May Barker RG1311015546304 (NA). See also, Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*.

<sup>124</sup> The term 'creative clusters' has been used recently by David Harvey *et al* in their exploration of networks and place in twenty first century creative industries. See, D.C. Harvey, H. Hawkins & N.J. Thomas (2012), 'Thinking Creative Clusters Beyond the City: People, Places, and Networks' *Geoforum* 43, pp.529-539.

<sup>125</sup> As Deborah Cherry argues, artistic professionalism in the nineteenth century and beyond, was a space produced [and reproduced] as masculine, because women were marginalised by 'asymmetrical and unequal relations to art education, art administration and professional status.' See D. Cherry *Painting Women*, p. 53.

members. For some female artists like Australian sculptor Margaret Baskerville, who lived in Chelsea on a sojourn between 1904 and 1906, Chelsea was a place that came to explicitly represent ‘the subordination of women in the English Art World, by the exclusion of women from its famous art clubs’.<sup>126</sup> Such exclusionary art practices went hand in glove with the gendered partisanship shown by many of Chelsea’s artistic men toward women’s enfranchisement. Chelsea’s bohemian society enjoyed a politically and socially radical reputation which alongside its creative heritage, attracted many women artists there. But its male artists, who might well have been progressive in other matters, were on the whole conservative about the value of women’s art and the value of women’s suffrage. This was keenly felt by another Australian artist, Dora Meeson-Coates, arriving in Chelsea around the same time as Baskerville. She tersely recalled ‘it was the women-artists not the men who welcomed us as newcomers to Chelsea’ and that most men there ‘were not partisans of the women’s suffrage movement’.<sup>127</sup> Meeson-Coates became an influential figure in the ASL and positioned herself at the core of Chelsea’s global feminist community which I discuss in detail in chapter 4.

Women artists’ exclusionary experience as newcomers to Chelsea, highlights why the practice of creative clustering was a feature of the geographies of women artists settling in the city. Importantly, it helped to create a dense local web of professional females by the turn of century that acted as a local and material counter to women’s artistic marginalisation by men.<sup>128</sup> Women like Lowndes, Forbes, Ford, and Newcombe, sat at the centre of a subaltern

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<sup>126</sup> On Chelsea Arts Club see, <https://chelseaartsclub.com/home-public/history/>. The club did not allow women members until 1966. For more on Baskerville (1861-1930), who eagerly secured a studio in Chelsea on a sojourn between 1904-1906, hoping to experience ‘the life’, see, A. Woollacott, *To Try her Fortune in London: Australian Women, Colonialism and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) p. 79.

<sup>127</sup> D.M Coates, *George Coates: His Art and His Life* (London: Dent, 1937) pp. 32-43 & Tickner, *Spectacle*, p.20.

<sup>128</sup> The notion of clustering, more often called propinquity politics, features strongly in spatial works dealing with geographical and cartographical aspects of socio-political networks. For instance, see, D. Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005); A. Amin (2004) ‘Regions Unbound: Towards a New Politics of Place’,



creative culture there, which gave newly arriving female artists like Meeson-Coates access to much needed, alternative sources of patronage, information, and support.<sup>129</sup> This was vital in allowing women to negotiate the masculinism that dominated their daily working lives as artists in the city, and inevitably more female artists were in turn attracted to settle nearby. Their proximate living arrangements also drew on a mixture of pre-established family, friendship, or feminist campaign connections. This is evident among the early cluster of women artists in Chelsea who later forged the nucleus of the ASL. For example, Violet Garrard and Emily Ford may well have known one another before becoming near neighbours in Glebe Place thanks to mutual acquaintanceships made around earlier campaign work for Josephine Butler's repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts (CDA's). Ford, born in 1851 to a radical Quaker family in Leeds, had been active in her hometown in various social reform campaigns before moving to London where she aided Butler (a family friend) in her campaign.<sup>130</sup> Garrard was also friendly with Butler, working alongside her on the CDA's and the National Vigilance Association committee formed in 1885 for the 'improvement of the laws for the repression of criminal vice and public immorality'.<sup>131</sup> Emily Ford and Bessie Wigan had also been among 76 painters that publicly endorsed the claim for women's suffrage published by the Central Committee of the National Society for Women's Suffrage and the Central National Society for Women's Suffrage in 1897.<sup>132</sup>

Many also shared prior art school training in London before clustering together in Chelsea. Lowndes, Newcombe, Wigan, and Ford, along with Garrard and another ASL artist

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*Geografiska Annaler* 86:1, pp. 33–44 where Amin proposes a double notion of a politics of propinquity and connectivity.

<sup>129</sup> Tickner, *Spectacle*; Liddington & Morton, 'Walking', pp. 30-39; Crawford, *The Women's Suffrage Movement & Art and Suffrage*; Cherry, *Painting Women*.

<sup>130</sup> Ford's painting of Butler is at the Leeds City Art Gallery. See, Tickner, *Spectacle*, p. 245; Crawford, *The Women's Suffrage Movement*, p. 225-6; J. Jordan, *Josephine Butler* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007).

<sup>131</sup> Records of the National Vigilance Society, GB 106 4NVA/7, Administration, and miscellaneous records (WL). The NVS was formed in response to the trafficking of women and children highlighted by the CDA campaigns.

<sup>132</sup> Tickner, *Spectacle* p. 15.

Caroline Watts (1868-1919) had all studied at the Slade School of Art for varying and multiple periods between 1875 and 1885 that often overlapped.<sup>133</sup> Another ASL member, Edith Letitia Shute (1854-1952) also studied with Watts and later rented a studio on the outskirts of Chelsea just over a mile from Lowndes and Forbes.<sup>134</sup> Venerable art institutions like the Slade and the RCA are acknowledged to have trained a disproportionate percentage of women artists who became friends, and later, suffrage and feminist activists. Scholarship on how women's attendance of metropolitan arts schools in this period correlate with their feminist radicalisation, remains an underdeveloped but growing field.<sup>135</sup>

Physical clustering then, was a means of collective empowerment for women artists. Yet the role the material or built environment played in this 'tactic of the habitat' in places where formal political art organisations like the ASL and Suffrage Atelier emerged has received little attention. Lefebvre and numerous feminist spatial scholars, have discussed the importance of urban density to the radical potential of the city and of place.<sup>136</sup> Cherry drew directly upon Lefebvre's 'The Eye of Power' in her description of nineteenth century feminist artists' localised, friendship groupings in the West End, as part of a wider 'feminist tactics of the habitat' that jibed with the neighbourliness or 'social glue' that also underpinned the

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<sup>133</sup> Crawford, *The Women's Suffrage Movement* & 'Suffrage Stories/Women Artists: Caroline Watts and the 'Bugler Girl'' available at <http://womanandhersphere.com/2014/12/03/suffrage-storieswomen-artists-caroline-watts-and-the-bugler-girl/>; Tickner, *Spectacle*, p. 248. See also, Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*.

<sup>134</sup> Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*. Shute rented a studio somewhere in Chelsea in this period though the exact location has yet to be traced. However, by 1911, she was living in an apartment listed at 12 and 13 St Georges' Court, (apt block 10-29), Gloucester Road, South Kensington. See, 1911 census record for Edith Letitia Shute, RG14PN104 RG78PN4 RD2 SD1 ED17 SN43 (NA).

<sup>135</sup> Some general discussions on the radical nature particularly of The Slade School can be found in, D. Peters Corbett & L. Perry, *English Art, 1860-1914: Modern Artists and Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000) especially chapter 10; H Taylor (1986), 'If a Young Painter Be Not Fierce and Arrogant, God...Help Him: Some Women Art Students at the Slade c. 1895-1899', *Art History* 9:2, pp. 232-244; C. Yeldham, *Women Artists in Nineteenth Century France and England: Their Art Education, Exhibiting Opportunities and Membership of Exhibiting Societies and Academies, with an Assessment of the Subject Matter of their Work and Summary Biographies* Vol II (London: Garland Publishing, 1984); Mengting, *London's Women Artists*.

<sup>136</sup> Especially useful on this regards Lefebvre, is, Maycroft, 'Henri Lefebvre', p. 129.

women's suffrage movement.<sup>137</sup> Cultural geographers working on gender and social change in the metropolis, have emphasised the need to examine the way buildings are made and situated - their proximity, design, and volume - and what type of inhabitants they attract, to fully understand how place is imbued with the power to 'create, make possible, or limit, entirely different social relations' impacting on whether and how local political groupings might form.<sup>138</sup> For example, does the local landscape, the expense, type, and density of its buildings, facilitate social and structural opportunities for women to meet, and importantly to form cohesive groups around shared interests, as well as shared territories?<sup>139</sup> Moreover, are there regular opportunities for spontaneous encounters which underpin the 'radical potential' of place and allow even loosely radicalized groups to engage fresh participants and grow.

In Chelsea, the increasing number of women artists (as well as men) looking to settle there at the turn of the century had had a dramatic effect on its landscape. There was a rapid rise in the commercial development of modest properties and compact studio flats, making Chelsea a relatively affordable location for the new working woman artist. Author Arthur Ransome wrote in 1907, the year the ASL mobilized, that Chelsea had been 'engulfed in a lava stream of cheap new buildings' designed especially for artists with accompanying studios 'dotted all about'.<sup>140</sup> These sat alongside a myriad of 'ugly loveable little houses' that kept 'apartment to let' signs permanently in the windows' reflecting artists often transient lifestyles.<sup>141</sup> These new developments rubbed architectural shoulders with established, middle

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<sup>137</sup> Cherry, *Beyond the Frame*, p.24 where she eruditely quotes from Foucault's 'The Eye of Power' in M. Foucault, *Michel Foucault: Power/Knowledge. Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-77*, C. Gordon (ed.) (Brighton: Harvester, 1980) pp. 146-65; Walker, 'Locating the Global', p.182.

<sup>138</sup> Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*; Markus, 'Is There a Built Form', p. 20; Leitner, Sheppard & Sziarto 'The Spatialities of Contentious Politics', pp.157-172.

<sup>139</sup> Geographers such as Nigel Thrift and Ash Amin among many others remind us, that simply inhabiting the same place does not necessarily produce solidarities between people. See, Amin & Thrift, *Cities*; Nicholls 'Place, Networks, Space', pp. 78-93; Amin, 'Regions Unbound'; Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*; Massey, *World City* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007). For some wonderfully notable exceptions, see, Cherry, *Beyond the Frame*, pp. 22-23; Elliott & Wallace, *Women Artists and Writers*, pp.152-166.

<sup>140</sup> A. Ransome, *Bohemia in London* (London: Chapman & Hall Ltd, 1907) p. 44.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

class Georgian town houses, many with built-in studios like those in Glebe Place, fueling the towns' socio-economic mix, architectural diversity, and urban density, with artists often living cheek by jowl.<sup>142</sup> This new, tightly packed, purpose built, and more affordable 'studio' landscape, attracted and housed often unmarried women artists, rapidly accelerating their shared occupation of buildings there. This increased opportunities for new friendships, fresh faces, and spontaneous encounters, along with their exposure to suffrage and feminist politics in the increasingly fervent atmosphere of metropolitan suffrage campaigning.

Spontaneous encounters between women are rarely documented because they are by their very nature 'haphazard'. But Australian artist Dora Meeson-Coates entry into suffrage activism and the circle of women artists in Chelsea with whom she later formed the ASL, illuminates how the dense material habitat was directly entangled with her politicization. Meeson-Coates, and her husband fellow artist George Coates, had turned their backs on a comfortable middle-class family home for the bohemian, artistic life in Chelsea, leaving their 'backwater in Ealing' to 'be nearer the centre of the art world'.<sup>143</sup> In 1903, the couple rented a flat in Trafalgar Studios, Manresa Road, a purpose built, three-tier, 15-unit block, and the first of several, similar, affordable bijou property developments made swiftly to house the influx of artists to Chelsea. These included the Wentworth and Bolton Studios illustrating the boom in Chelsea's multiple studio complexes. Nevertheless, Trafalgar is acknowledged by

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<sup>142</sup> Census records together with local street directories for the period 1901-1911 reveal that in the 50 years prior to the First World War, over 1,300 new domestic artists' studios were erected in London to meet the growing demand with a significant proportion located in Kensington and Chelsea and occupied by women. See, British History online, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/middx/vol12/pp79-90> & <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/middx/vol12/pp102-106>; Census of England and Wales (1901) *ibid*; POLD London various. Available at: <http://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/cdm/landingpage/collection/p16445coll4/hd/PAGEVIEWER.ASP?fn=00007tpk.tif&dn=BCL12011Btif&zoom=in>. See also, Ransome, *Bohemia*, p.38 & 44. The 'rubbing shoulders' of rich and poor added to the bohemian frisson though it was not appreciated by everyone. Oscar Wilde remarked how he was 'forced' to use a Persian screen to hide the unpalatable view of the inaptly named Paradise Walk, one of the poorest streets in London which he could view from the rear window of his substantial home on Chelsea's Tite Street. See, Lamb, 'Symbols of Success in Suburbia', p. 65.

<sup>143</sup> Coates, *George Coates*, p. 32; M. Scott, *How Australia Led the Way: Dora Meeson-Coates and the British Suffrage Movement*. Commissioned by the Commonwealth Office (2003). Pdf available at: [https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05\\_2012/meeson\\_suffrage04.pdf](https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05_2012/meeson_suffrage04.pdf) (accessed June 2015).

urban historians to have been ‘among the most crowded residence for artists’ at the turn of the century with Meeson-Coates herself describing it as a ‘busy nest of workers.’<sup>144</sup>



*Figure 2. This photograph taken inside Trafalgar Studio's in 1950 before demolition shows its large windows flooding the studio with light. Its original stove is still visible among the general debris and artistic detritus. Source: London Picture Archive, London Metropolitan Archives, Record No. 57559 <https://www.londonpicturearchive.co.uk> (accessed March 2023).*

She and husband George were holding an open exhibition of their artwork in its maze of window laden, studio flats, when another local artist Mary Sargent-Florence wandered in by mistake. She was already active on the local women's suffrage scene and had been trying

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<sup>144</sup> J.P Lorente & C. Targett, 'Comparative growth and urban distribution of the population of artists in Victorian London', in P. Borsay, R.E Mohrmann & G. Hirschfielder (eds.) *New Directions in Urban History: Aspects of European Art, Health, Tourism and Leisure Since the Enlightenment* (Germany: Waxman, 2000) p.84.

to locate a suffrage meeting taking place in the block that day. From this chance meeting the two women struck up an immediate friendship, and Sargent-Florence introduced Meeson-Coates and her husband to her Chelsea friends, including fellow artists and suffragists, Mary Lowndes, and Emily Ford. Thence, the couple became active suffragists in Chelsea, and four years later Dora played a significant role in founding the ASL with Lowndes, Ford, and others. She also produced several designs for the society as did her friend Sargent-Florence who introduced her to Cicely Hamilton (1872-1952) at another Trafalgar flat meeting. Meeson-Coates and Hamilton subsequently worked on two ASL publications together.<sup>145</sup>

It is reasonable to speculate given Chelsea's dense studio landscape, that other, spontaneous encounters between women artists took place across its labyrinth of studio architecture, leading some, like Meeson-Coates, into suffrage activism and in time to suffrage artistry. Interestingly, artists and siblings Ellen (1859-1943) and Alice Woodward (1863-1951), also Chelsea residents and ASL members from its inception in 1907, were both members of the 91 Art Club which, by 1904, also met in Trafalgar Studios for art exhibitions. The club had formed in 1891 to promote women's work in fine and applied arts which was marginalised by gender and excluded from many male local art and craft clubs.<sup>146</sup> The 91 Art Club's toing's and froing's from the building likely elicited similar encounters between established and incoming Chelsea women artists that remain hidden but nonetheless contributed to local women artists' political radicalisation, and to the ASL's later collective work. Other 91 Art Club members included the ASL's Mary Sargent-Florence, Emily Ford, and Mary Lowndes.<sup>147</sup> In this sense, Trafalgar Studios is a representative microcosm of the importance of the architectural materiality of place in helping women establish their own

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<sup>145</sup> Coates, *George Coates*, pp. 32-43; Tickner, *Spectacle*, p.19; Crawford, *Women's Suffrage Movement*, p. 257; Scott, *How Australia Led the Way*. Cicely Hamilton lived in Glebe Place at the time. See, Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*. Florence Haigh a Scottish artist who became a local organizer for the WSPU also rented in Trafalgar Studios and was neighbours with Meeson-Coates before she and George also relocated to Glebe Place.

<sup>146</sup> On the 91 Art Club and some of its pertinent members, see, Thomas, *Women Art Workers*, passim.

<sup>147</sup> See Thomas, *Women Art Workers*, pp. 34, 45, 86 & 138-9.

creative territories in Chelsea, shaping their capacity to meet and to engage in contentious gender politics as part of women artists' wider colonization of the city, tied to their professional identities. These women would also help form or play a significant role in the WGA founded the same year as the ASL, but the latter enabled them to express their political activism as artists, collectively, in a way that other female centred art organisations did not.<sup>148</sup> This opportunity inevitably encouraged pro-suffrage artists to join the ASL, but its initial mobilization was reliant on more complex mechanisms, discussed below.

Doreen Massey and Gillian Rose have argued that friendships hewn from 'haphazard social and physical propinquity' in the urban sprawl of the city, form place-making 'bundles' that are integral to its radical potential. This is especially so where inhabitant groups in particular locations share common interests that are more broadly culturally marginalised.<sup>149</sup> In their spatial works on the geographies of feminism and contentious politics Laurie et al, and Martin and Miller insist collective radicalism can only be understood by (re) 'situating activism in place and defining a collective identity in terms of the common place that people – mostly neighbourhood residents – share'.<sup>150</sup> This 'place framing' is particularly relevant when considering women's politicisation, where local friendships, interactions, shared encounters and interests, represented everyday spaces of compensation because they generally lacked men's access to formal political and many professional institutions, clubs, and mechanisms, around which women's shared concerns might otherwise have coalesced or ignited.

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<sup>148</sup> I discuss this further in chapter 5. On the WGA see Thomas, 'At Home with the Women's Guild of Arts'.

<sup>149</sup> For example, Massey, *For Space*, p. 119 & 140; Massey (2004), 'Geographies of Responsibility' *Geografiska Annaler* 86, B, pp. 5–18; G. Rose, 'Performing Inoperative Community – the Space and the Resistance of Some Community Arts Projects in S. Pile S & M. Keith (eds.) *Geographies of Resistance* (London: Routledge, 1997) pp. 184–202; G. Rose (1995) 'Distance, Surface, Elsewhere: a Feminist Critique of the Space of Phallogocentric Self/knowledge' *Society and Space*, 13, pp. 761-78.

<sup>150</sup> Martin, 'Place-Framing', p. 733; Martin & Miller, 'Space and Contentious Politics', pp. 143-156. The 'physical, mappable resources of an area, may constitute a potential set of resources, connections or restraints...' in Laurie, Dwyer, Holloway & Smith, *Geographies*, p.170.

Chelsea's reputation as 'centre of the art world' attracted female artists, and its dense, studio landscape helped structure their social and professional 'thrown togetherness' in neighbourhoods where they also shared an acute 'consciousness of exclusion' as women artists, and disenfranchised subjects.<sup>151</sup> The strong presence of the NUWSS in Chelsea saw established artists such Lowndes and Newcombe active in the suffrage movement by 1901, with new comers like Meeson-Coates quickly becoming politicised. Therefore, Chelsea's 'place frame' was ripe for the foundation of the first formal, politically radical suffrage art group to emerge in the campaign. Yet, the suffrage interests and creative skills local women plainly and knowingly shared, continued to run oddly parallel to one another for several years before the ASL finally mobilised in 1907, despite their gender conscious formation of female centred art clubs during that time. This was not untypical in Martin and Miller's findings for place-based neighbourhood activism, where a specific external force or 'catalyst' was often required to turn a 'latent place frame' into one of 'collective action'. Such an event moves inhabitants from radical potential to radical action, helping shape both their likelihood and capacity to engage in contentious politics, and in what way.<sup>152</sup> Most often this impetus comes from a specific event at a particular moment in time that closely elides with shared community interests and identities. For women artists in Chelsea, this was the NUWSS decision to hold its first, public demonstration, the so called 'mud march' in February 1907. The march took place from Hyde Park to Exeter Hall and was timed to coincide with the opening of the next parliamentary session. The NUWSS needed the march to be eye-catching and newsworthy, to draw popular public and political attention to the suffrage cause. In

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<sup>151</sup> Massey, *For Space*, p. 140.

<sup>152</sup> Martin, 'Place-Framing', p. 730 & 165. As Martin and Miller put it, an 'external force for stimulation' is needed. Martin & Miller, 'Space and Contentious Politics', pp. 143-156. They argue that external forces or stimulation to mobilise are fundamental in shaping both the context and the likelihood of 'people's capacity to engage in contentious politics' p. 150. See also, E. Grosz, *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution, and the Untimely* (London: Duke University Press, 2004) p. 183; McAdam, S. Tarrow & C. Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); J. Pierce, D. Martin & J.T Murphy (2011) 'Relational Place-making: the Networked Politics of Place' *TIBG*, 36, pp. 54-70.



response, Lowndes, and Forbes, together with their artistic friends and neighbours, set their minds to producing a variety of colourful, chiefly textile banners to enliven the lines of the march with much of the work carried out at Lowndes' studio. Importantly, their clustering as well as shared friendships, politics, and artistic networks, allowed them to mobilise quickly into the ASL which created a vibrant new space for women artists' political expression.

The banners they produced lent artistry, colour, and pageantry to the mud march drawing praise from a usually hostile general press: the NUWSS noting the march 'was widely and sympathetically reported'.<sup>153</sup> The public value of continuing ASL work moving forward, was now self-evident. Further suffrage marches were already being mooted, and demand for other artistic wares including suffrage posters and postcards was growing. ASL work now needed to be maintained and cultivated overtime, and among a group of busy, professional women artists, throwing up new challenges. Collective art making cultures were still a relatively new if growing phenomenon for professional women especially those trained in fine, rather than the applied arts. Painting was still viewed as a typically isolationist pursuit in execution and practice, if happily supplemented by studio exhibitions and artistic social gatherings often held on Sundays.<sup>154</sup> By 1909 however, the *English Woman's Review* noted the 'intense interest in the suffrage movement among women artists' who 'individuals by temperament and activity...now found collectivity and the cause more absorbing'.<sup>155</sup>

New suffrage art working by the ASL in Chelsea began shaping artists approach to collective creativity, reinforcing how the unique social settings of place are entwined with the

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<sup>153</sup> NUWSS Annual Report 1907 Box 145, cutting (WL).

<sup>154</sup> Louise Jopling-Rowe who had spent her time in England flitting between homes and studios in Kensington and Chelsea, recalled how 'spending days in a studio...gave few opportunities for meeting fellow workers' so local get-togethers were deliberately arranged on 'Sundays, which both for artists and actors, can be made a real holiday'. L. Jopling-Rowe, *Twenty Year of My Life*, (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1925) p. 221.

<sup>155</sup> I discuss this further in chapter 3, but for a general discussion, see, Thomas, *Women Art Workers*. The *English Woman's Review* is quoted in, Cherry, *Painting Women*, p. 94.

development of fresh ideas and practices where the cultural-becomes-political.<sup>156</sup> In 1907, as *Map 2* (Appendix A:2) illustrates, the circle of ASL women grew to encompass Clara Billing (1881-1963) a Blackpool born sculptor based at 2 Albert Studios, Albert Bridge Road, across the river Thames from Chelsea in Battersea. Billing joined the ASL's committee although later, refocused her energy on aiding the WSPU showing the fluidity of suffrage politics. Others included local artist Emily Harding Andrews (1851-1940) originally from Bristol, who produced several postcard and poster designs from her studio at Chelsea's the Bolton's in the coming years; Bethea Shore (c.1860-1928) based at 40 Rossetti's Garden Mansions, Flood Street in Chelsea, and later 6 Munro Terrace; and the Woodward sisters, Ellen, Alice, and Katherine, who lived at 129 Beaufort Street, but also rented various studios across Chelsea reinforcing their professional status. Other early ASL members included Christiana Herringham (1852-1929) located at 40 Wimpole Street, London. Herringham, who was friends with Bertha Newcombe, embroidered some ASL banners as well as judging its design competition in October 1907, but also switched her allegiance to the WSPU rather than remaining with the constitutional side of the movement.<sup>157</sup>

Records are sketchy, but amalgamated newspaper reports together with subscriptions suggest that the ASL likely had at least 60-80 regular members at its height although this would have fluctuated with suffrage events.<sup>158</sup> These artists are not all identifiable but likely the majority lived in London. Those that have been identified living outside the city were chiefly spread across the southeast of England, and often maintained regular connections

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<sup>156</sup> Gibson- Graham, *A Post Capitalist Politics*, p. xxxiii; A. Escobar (2001) 'Culture Sits in Places: Reflections on Globalism and Subaltern Strategies of Localization' *Political Geography* 20, p. 156.

<sup>157</sup> See, Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*, pp.113-114; *The Women's Franchise*, 17 October 1907, p. 176. Herringham belonged to the WSPU. For more on Herringham see chapter 4.

<sup>158</sup> Two ASL reports containing two accounts give subscriptions and donations in 1909 and 1910 respectively as £8 9s 7d & £4 10s 1d plus £6 donation. Presuming the subscription fee was approximately 1s 6d (the same as the Suffrage Atelier) this would suggest just over 60 members. Other miscellaneous references to banner work, cites about '80 ladies' at work. See, *The Daily News*, 12 June 1908 (cutting) NUWSS circular, 'Press Reports on Banners', cited in Tickner, *Spectacle*, p.71; Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*, p. 18-22.

through friendships and studios located in London.<sup>159</sup> *Map 3* (Appendix A:3) nonetheless suggests for the most part, the ASL continued to rely heavily (though not exclusively) on women living in Chelsea and its close environs for regular work, where its headquarters were rooted throughout the campaign. Much activity necessarily centred there in Lowndes and Forbes studio with Lowndes herself producing many of the ASL's suffrage banner designs. However, there were gatherings at committee members Bertha Newcombe and Bessie Wigan's homes and studios, and Emily Ford's in Glebe Place. Dora Meeson-Coates described Ford's studio in liberal terms as 'a meeting ground for artists, suffragists, people who *did* things.'<sup>160</sup> Some ASL artists moved closer to its headquarters once they were regularly embroiled in its work, reinforcing the ongoing importance of clustering in suffrage artists' socio-political lives. For example, Mary Sargent Florence rented a studio at 53 Glebe Place; ASL artist Charlotte Charlton (1866-1945) relocated from Hampstead Way to 28 Glebe Place in 1913; and Dora Meeson-Coates moved just around the corner to 55 Glebe Place in 1911, where she remained for the rest of her life.<sup>161</sup>

Just as it had enabled the ASL's speedy mobilisation, artists local embeddedness was also vital to sustaining it, actively discouraging their leaving when, as inevitably happens, group relationships become strained.<sup>162</sup> Suffrage artists were not a hegemonic group, and even within the parameters of a relatively small society like the ASL, there were disagreements over tactics, methods, and designs. A year after its foundation in 1908, Lowndes complained to Philipa Strachey, secretary of the London Society for Women's

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<sup>159</sup> This assertion is established from compiling addresses given for ASL artists listed in Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*.

<sup>160</sup> Coates, *George Coates*, pp. 32-43; ASL *Reports* Box 153 (WL). Wigan's studio in Cheyne Walk was a popular venue and several meetings were reported there. For example, see, *The Vote*, 5 November 1910, p. 14 & *The Common Cause*, 17 November 1910, p. 526.

<sup>161</sup> Meeson-Coates later moved to number 52 Glebe Place where she remained for the rest of her life.

<sup>162</sup> M. Diani, 'Networks and Participation' in D.A. Snow, S.A. Soule & H. Kriesi, *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004) p. 342; Nicholls, 'Place, Networks, Space', pp. 78-93; Pierce, Martin & Murphy, 'Relational Place-making', pp. 54-70.

Suffrage: ‘Oh my odious committee!’ they are always, ‘cross, quarrelsome, undecided and prolix’ ... ‘a team of artists is an awful team to drive’.<sup>163</sup> Nevertheless, how the ASL was made in Chelsea illustrates the importance of urban clusters and the materialities, specificities, and possibilities of place, for a new ‘opening for politics of a particular kind’.<sup>164</sup> This was a new visual politics, hewn from women’s community response to their artistic, but also political marginalisation, fulfilling the radical potential of the city. Mary Lowndes remarked in 1909, that suffrage banners had now become ‘associated with the appearance of women’ in the street, bringing to ‘masculine public life’ a new ‘trooping of the feminine’.<sup>165</sup> Through the display and mastery of their art, the ASL were not only protesting men’s political privilege, but had mounted a vibrant and very public challenge to men’s claims to artistic power and identity in the city. The ASL had set the bar, but it was soon to be raised.

#### ***A Flurry in Kensington: the WSPU Rally, 1908.***

By the later standards of much larger suffrage processions, the NUWSS mud march of 1907 was modest with just 3,000 participants, but at the time was hailed as ‘the largest and most significant ever held’.<sup>166</sup> The relatively cordial press coverage of the march commented on the ASL banners positive ‘effect on the public’ providing impetus for further processions across the suffrage society spectrum.<sup>167</sup> Though credit given to the ASL is often muted, it was a watershed moment in the visual spectacularism that has come to define the women’s suffrage movement in Britain. However, neither the mud march, the banners, or the positive press it received, had any effect upon the Liberal government. The newly appointed Prime Minister Herbert Asquith, continued to air his scepticism about the level of public support for

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<sup>163</sup> Mary Lowndes to Phillipa Strachey, 25 July 1908, Autograph Collection (WL) LSE. See also, Tickner, *Spectacle*, p.20.

<sup>164</sup> J.K Gibson- Graham, *A Post Capitalist Politics*, p. xxxiii.

<sup>165</sup> WL archives 234163.3 M. Lowndes, *Banners and Banner-making* (1909) pp. 1-2.

<sup>166</sup> Tickner, *Spectacle*, pp.74-80.

<sup>167</sup> NUWSS Annual Report 1907, pp. 7-8. WL (<https://digital.library.lse.ac.uk> (accessed September 2021)).

female suffrage. When protracted debates over the women's suffrage bill failed in parliament later that year, the WSPU leadership decided to organise its own, much larger march, to take place alongside another planned NUWSS procession, both scheduled just over a week apart in June 1908.<sup>168</sup> The WSPU hoped to attract a quarter of a million supporters to the rally, assembling in Hyde Park, making plain the popular demand for women's suffrage so it could no longer be disputed – even by Asquith.<sup>169</sup>

Impressed by the press attention the artistry of the mud march had received, the WSPU urged its supporters to organise. It called particularly upon artists sympathetic to the society to design, paint, and embroider, colourful banners and posters to be carried aloft on procession and displayed at the Hyde Park rally point. The NUWSS mud march had appealed to a relatively small group of already sympathetic, constitutionalist women artists in Chelsea, who were able to mobilise quickly. This creative call to arms represented a fresh catalyst for more radical artists, those supportive of militant tactics, to get involved in suffrage art making collectively. It was also a much larger rally, meaning the WSPU had to capture and mobilise considerably more artists and helpers and from further afield. In the end, an array of suffrage banners was designed and donated by often nameless women and men across the country, bringing many into suffrage activism, and suffrage artistry, for the first time. Nonetheless, the geographical epicentre for the creative and organisational side of the rally was the WSPU branch in Kensington, a role it retained for subsequent WSPU events in the years that followed. The local flurry surrounding the rally stimulated artists' fresh participation in suffrage art working in the town and affords glimpses into the dynamic urban strategies at play. This included the reconfiguring of local buildings and the 'building up' of trans local

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<sup>168</sup> Sixty Liberal MPs had agreed to further parliamentary debate on the issue of woman suffrage, but a second reading of a women's suffrage bill was talked out in the autumn of that year like those before it. The NUWSS and WSPU processions took place on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> of June respectively.

<sup>169</sup> Various accounts suggest that it more than surpassed this number. See, Tickner, *Spectacle*, pp. 91-100.

relationships between women artists through creative collaboration. This section examines how these activities broadened the spatial and political boundaries of women's creativity, growing the geographies of organised suffrage art practice in the city, encouraging new more radical women and men, and fresh forms of art and space making.<sup>170</sup> In addition, the 1908 rally drive represents a creative and chronological interlude between the formation of the ASL in 1907, and the Suffrage Atelier in 1909, and so also provides a backdrop to the chapter's reassessment of the Suffrage Atelier's origins with Laurence and Clemence Housman's banner making for the event, which it ultimately revises.

The local drive in Kensington began in early spring 1908. Newspapers reported on the whirlwind of activity in both Kensington and Chelsea on the run up to the WSPU and NUWSS rallies that year, including campaigns of house visiting, pavement chalking, the distribution of cartoons and pamphlets, and decorated bicycle rides through the principal streets of West London, as well as 'the side streets of working-class houses'.<sup>171</sup> Meetings were organized at sites inhabited by young women such as Kensington College and local factories such as the Standard Laundry in Bollo Road, South Acton, to promote widespread interest.<sup>172</sup> As the official site for rally preparations, the WSPU Kensington branch which had numerous artistic members, was responsible for ensuring creative activity was plentiful and coordinated. This meant providing, even requisitioning places where work could be directed and organised, and/or collectively carried out on the run up to the day *See Map 4* (Appendix B:1). Accordingly, its members employed dynamic, innovative urban strategies, acting upon

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<sup>170</sup> Several recent studies seeking to map the geographies of resistance and contentious politics focus on localities to assess how shared work, often on creative and/or political projects, help forge new trans-local connections between people in one place and another. See, D. Featherstone (2005) 'Towards the Relational Construction of Militant Particularisms: or Why the Geographies of Past Struggle Matter' *Antipode*, 37, pp. 250–71; P. Routledge (2003) 'Convergence Space: Process Geographies of Grassroots Globalisation Networks' *TIBG*, 28, pp. 333–49; Leitner, Sheppard & Sziarto, 'The Spatialities of Contentious Politics', pp. 161–162.

<sup>171</sup> For example, see *West London Press*, 24 January 1908, p.5; 29 May 1908, p.5 & 12 June 1908, p.5. For bicycles, see, *Votes for Women*, 4 June 1908, p. 211.

<sup>172</sup> *Votes for Women*, 11 June 1908, p. 239.

the social and material opportunities of place by (re)configuring available sites such as WSPU shops and offices for creative purposes, as well as high street buildings in bustling artistic areas, brimming with local artists' homes and studios.

Rooms and basements in local WSPU shops and offices were transformed into sites for collective art working where banners, pendants, and posters were produced for the rally. Zoe Proctor, a WSPU activist and writer, described how 'a great many banners and symbolic devices were designed and carried out' in this way as artists rearranged and fully utilized those urban spaces already accessible to WSPU workers.<sup>173</sup>



*Figure 3. May Sinclair outside the WSPU Shop in Kensington, 1910. Source: WL digital collection, LSE <https://www.flickr.com/photos/lselibrary/38206694842/> (accessed February 2023).*

<sup>173</sup> Not herself a visual artist, Proctor nevertheless helped local Chelsea resident and WSPU activist Maud Joachim among others, in 'preparing and colouring the [smaller] bannerettes' often a feature of suffrage processions. Z. Proctor, *Life and Yesterday* (London: Faval Press, 1960) p. 97.

Other High Street buildings were also temporarily (re)appropriated for the rally drive, some in Kensington, but also in neighbouring Chelsea, and Hammersmith. These were taken over and converted into temporary committee and work rooms (what we might now term ‘pop ups’) during rally preparations colonizing local architecture in innovative ways.<sup>174</sup> For example, new rooms were set up at 400 King’s Road on Chelsea high street for the rally, a locality densely populated with artists, and just a few doors down from the ASL’s headquarters. Work for the upcoming NUWSS rally a few days before that of the WSPU was already underway there. The *Votes for Women* newspaper emphasized that the position of the building was ‘a commanding one’ and Chelsea artist Florence Haigh (1856-1952) encouraged women to visit to discover more about banner making and other activities ‘where you will find work waiting for you’.<sup>175</sup> Its windows were enticingly displayed with ‘bills and photographs of speakers’ to lure women in.<sup>176</sup>

Similarly, new committee rooms were also set up a half mile away at the imposing Broadway Hall in Hammersmith, close to the tube station.<sup>177</sup> The Hammersmith WSPU branch was to form part of the Kensington section of the procession which was organized by Kensington WSPU artists (see below). So, Kensington branch headquarters were temporarily relocated there to help coordinate and encourage participation among local women including advertising tactics such as pavement chalking.<sup>178</sup> Hammersmith was renowned for its community of arts and crafts practitioners attracted there not least by leading figures of the movement and residents such as Emery Walker, and WGA founding member, designer, and suffrage artist, May Morris, daughter to William Morris, both of whom lived there during the

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<sup>174</sup> See for instance, *Votes for Women*, 4 June 1908, pp. 212-3.

<sup>175</sup> *Votes for Women*, 4 June 1908, p. 212.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>177</sup> *Votes for Women*, 4 June 1908, pp.212-13.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*



campaign years.<sup>179</sup> Later, as an ‘Arts and Crafts Society of Suffragists’ the Suffrage Atelier would also locate one of its shifting headquarters there, in the suburb of Shepherd’s Bush.<sup>180</sup>

Together, the selection and temporary reconfiguring of such imposing buildings on the bustling high streets and thoroughfares of these renowned artistic territories, speaks to the creative focus of the rally drive from the local Kensington branch organizers. Moreover, given buildings and the daily routines of toing and froing from them, are what imbue the materiality of place with power, suffragists temporary colonisation of local high street architecture and territories for the rally preparations, represented a very visible feminist disruption that challenged the normative routines of place.<sup>181</sup> These public sites and buildings were spatially interlinked by rally work with more informal spaces of local artists’ homes and studios where direction and instruction for artists wishing to take part was similarly provided, as well as collaborative work space. For example, Kensington artist Louise Jopling-Rowe (1843-1933) a pioneering and commercially successful female painter held several ‘at homes’ at her studio and drawing room at 7 Pembroke Gardens to drum up support, funds, and to give out artistic advice on rally preparations.<sup>182</sup> She was also appointed chief artistic organizer for the WSPU’s Kensington branch and sought to aid and connect the WSPU Chelsea branch, to which many fellow artists also belonged, with Kensington’s work. Jopling-Rowe even donated money to Chelsea branch efforts for the rally.<sup>183</sup>

Other local women artists were also given formal roles to help bring fellow artists into the fray. For instance, Kensington artists Mary Postlethwaite (1856-1933) and Charlotte

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<sup>179</sup> For a concise, and colourful delve into these houses and addresses, see, [www.emerywalker.org.uk](http://www.emerywalker.org.uk) (accessed 2019)

<sup>180</sup> *The Vote*, 10 January 1913, p. 188

<sup>181</sup> Leitner, Sheppard & Sziarto, ‘The Spatialities of Contentious Politics’, p. 161.

<sup>182</sup> *Votes for Women*, 14 May 1908, p. 175. This was Jopling-Rowe’s fifth ‘At home’ centred on the rally preparations. Jopling-Rowe was a committed suffragist and was among the first professional women artists to sign the *Declaration in Favour of Women’s Suffrage* in 1889, publicly allying herself with feminist politics. See also, Liddington & Morton, ‘Walking’, p. 33; Crawford, *Women’s Suffrage*, p. 610; Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*, pp.197-199.

<sup>183</sup> *Votes for Women*, 2 July 1908 p. 282.

Lilian Sheppard (1854-1925) were drafted in to help Jopling-Rowe organize artists and other professions walking in the Kensington section of the rally, helping coordinate the spectacle of it.<sup>184</sup> Sheppard, who had a studio at 3a Seymour Place, South Kensington, donated regularly to the WSPU throughout the campaign sometimes using the sale of her art work to raise funds. She also took part in the suffragette illegal boycott of the government's 1911 census writing 'no votes, no information' across her census schedule while giving her profession 'artist'.<sup>185</sup> She was formally assigned to the WSPU's Chelsea branch to co-ordinate with Jopling-Rowe in Kensington, and became a member and treasurer of its branch that year.<sup>186</sup> Meanwhile, artist Florence Haigh was also charged with 'arranging an artist's group' for the Kensington section, operating from her address in that 'busy nest' Trafalgar Studios.<sup>187</sup> Therefore, the rally created a fresh meshwork of interacting domestic, studio, and public sites and spaces, where women artists could openly discuss their creative skills and how and where these were best applied to suffrage politicking, emboldening women artists and organizers to reterritorialize local space in dynamic ways that were 'place-based but not place bound'.<sup>188</sup>

The WSPU's need to appeal to and organize a larger body of artists on a wider scale, given the size of the rally, evidently stretched women's trans-local networks and practices engaging new sites, spaces, and participants. Among the artists that responded to the WSPU's call in 1908, were siblings Laurence and Clemence Housman whose cottage studio would serve as a nexus with other sites and spaces coopted for rally work, to bring these together. It would later for a time, also become the Suffrage Atelier's headquarters. Originally from

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<sup>184</sup> See, *Votes for Women* 18 June 1908, p. 256. Sheppard may also have been tasked with organising a nurse's section. *Votes for Women*, 4 June 1908, p.212. She more commonly appears as C.L Sheppard or Lillian Sheppard than Charlotte.

<sup>185</sup> For example, see, *Women's Franchise*, 5 September 1907, p. 109; *Votes for Women*, 8 October 1908, p. 19. She held this sale of pictures at the studio with friend, fellow artist, and suffragist, Rose Aspinall Syers. For Sheppard's 1911 census return for 3a Seymour Place. See 1911 census record RG14PN125 RD2 SD1 ED38 SN290 125 38 (NA). For more on Sheppard see chapter 4.

<sup>186</sup> *Votes for Women*, 5 November 1908, p. 102.

<sup>187</sup> *Votes for Women*, 4 June 1908, p. 212.

<sup>188</sup> Escobar & Harcourt, *Women, and the Politics of Place*, p 5.

Bromsgrove, a market town in the West Midlands, the siblings had moved to the creative quarter of London in the 1880s to pursue their artistic careers, living for the most part in a series of rented rooms in either Chelsea or Kensington.<sup>189</sup> Clemence initially supported them both, via the proceeds of her exemplary engraving and woodcutting work. However, the siblings had several strings to their creative bows, also being keen writers. An unexpected windfall by way of the commercial success of Laurence's novel, *An Englishwoman's Love-letters* - in his own opinion 'the worst book' he ever wrote - allowed the siblings to move into more spacious accommodation at number one Pembroke Cottages in Kensington in 1901, where they happily remained until the 1920s.<sup>190</sup> The cottage was a relatively small property with a garden studio, but was excellently located just off Edwardes Square, a leafy enclave of French design adjunct to Kensington's bustling commercial High Street, which had several art dealerships and publishers. Thus, it was ideally placed for commercial art working and the siblings continued to produce black and white illustrations for a variety of magazines, newspapers, and novels.

The proceeds from Laurence's book also afforded the siblings financial scope to follow their creative passions and crucially to combine this with Votes for Women activism which they began in earnest during the rally preparations. Clemence was openly supportive of the suffrage movement beforehand, but neither she nor Laurence had taken an active role. In later years, Laurence, who had been largely ambivalent about female suffrage, claimed he was galvanised by a speech given in neighbouring Chelsea that year by WSPU leader Emmeline Pankhurst, discovering he had 'that most uncomfortable thing, a social conscience'.<sup>191</sup> Importantly, he also recalled the flurry surrounding the WSPU rally in

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<sup>189</sup> For a general biography the Housman siblings, see, Oakley, *Inseparable*.

<sup>190</sup> L. Housman, *Unexpected*, pp. 119 & 184-5. The move to Pembroke cottages followed a brief spell in York Mansions, Battersea, on the south side of the Thames.

<sup>191</sup> Housman, *Unexpected*, p. 264; Linda Hart (2005) 'Laurence Housman: A Subject in Search of a Biographer' *Housman Society Journal*, 31, p. 24, Crawford, *Women's Suffrage Movement*; S. Stanley Holton, *Suffrage Days: Stories from the Women's Suffrage Movement* (London, 1996), pp. 139-158.

Kensington, and the ‘infectious nature of the movement’ in his hometown was a catalyst for his activism.<sup>192</sup> His chief contribution to the rally was the design for the WSPU Kensington branch banner, the largest and leading banner of the entire procession entitled ‘From Prison to Citizenship’. It depicted a female figure draped in white robes and broken shackles with trailing green leaves against a purple background, thus incorporating the WSPU’s colours of purple, white and green.<sup>193</sup> Politicizing his artwork proved an inspiring experience for Laurence, opening fresh opportunities to experiment in bold new designs, created, using for him, unfamiliar materials. ‘Perhaps I am destined to end as a poster artist!’ he wrote enthusiastically to his friend Janet Ashbee, ‘Anyway, this was good training!’ a view likely shared by many fledgling artists and designers drawn into suffrage art working for the first time.<sup>194</sup> Housman remains among the relatively few but growing number of men identified as suffrage artists and designers, who were made up of both professionals and amateurs.<sup>195</sup>

Laurence’s involvement was likely encouraged by sister Clemence, who oversaw the execution of his banner design at their Kensington cottage studio. Inspired by the rally, Clemence had collected funds in March that year for the WSPU’s self-denial week, standing outside the rail station on Kensington High Street with local WSPU activists, writers and novelists, Violet Hunt, May Sinclair, and Evelyn Sharp, who were her near neighbours.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Housman, *Unexpected*, p.273.

<sup>193</sup> The banner was so large and heavy that it had to be mounted on a wagon rather than be carried by hand to Hyde Park from Kensington and was one of the few banners to remain unfurled throughout the proceedings. See, Tickner, *Spectacle*, p. 94.

<sup>194</sup> Letter Laurence Housman to Janet Ashbee, 24 June 1908, King's/PP/CRA/1/19, CR Ashbee Journals (KCC).

<sup>195</sup> These included, Duncan Grant, illustrator Edmund Hort New (1871-1931), Alfred Pearse (A. Patriot) and amateur artist Thomas Poyntz Wright. For more, see, Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*.

<sup>196</sup> Crawford, *Women’s Suffrage*, p. 638; Housman, *Unexpected*, p.264; Oakley, *Inseparable*, p.71-74. Sinclair lived just a few doors away from the Housman siblings in a small flat in Edwardes Square Studios, and would become lifelong friends with Laurence, later speaking at a Suffrage Atelier meeting in 1909. *The Common Cause*, 21 Oct 1909, p. 363 (Forthcoming Meetings). Kensington followed Chelsea in rapidly constructing artist’s studio flats to meet growing demand, and in parts, was tightly clustered. Edward’s Square Studios, where Sharp had briefly been neighbour to WSPU artist and committed suffragette Olive Hockin, and similar studio blocks in Mary Abbott’s Place and Pembroke Square, were all located within just five hundred feet of one another and erected relatively quickly between 1892 and 1910. Various development plans for this area during this period can be found at, British history online, [www.british-history.ac.uk](http://www.british-history.ac.uk). For instance, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vol42/pp249-263> (accessed February 2015).

The siblings mobilisation that year aligns with ASL findings in Chelsea, and with wider work by feminist geographers, that women's political activism most often begins at a 'community politics' level through 'networks of local action' though these are usually linked to larger national organizations and events, in this instance, the WSPU rally.<sup>197</sup> Specifically writing on the campaign, Miriam Boussahba-Bravard and June Hannam have long argued that 'local suffragism had a life of its own' and local place and community offers a better perspective to examine individual activists informal and formal recruitment to the cause.<sup>198</sup>

Their newfound commitment led the Housman siblings to open their cottage garden studio for collective work on the 1908 Kensington banner, designed by Laurence, joining the amalgam of other public buildings, shops, and basements, informal sites and 'at home' spaces opened up chiefly for the creative work and organisation of the rally. The identities of the banner making team at the cottage, initially headed by Clemence, have remained elusive but alongside the Housman's are assumed to have been workers later central to the Suffrage Atelier's founding the following year. Suffrage press reports unsurprisingly indicate that most were WSPU or 'Union members' (though this was not a requirement) and the relationships forged between artists attached to the Kensington and Chelsea branches, as well the Kensington branch work in Hammersmith, likely encouraged trans local participants.<sup>199</sup> Nevertheless, its core workers likely lived in Kensington, or close by. For example, Elizabeth Crawford has speculated that local branch artist and rally organiser Mary Postlethwaite was highly likely to have been part of the banner making team, living just a short walk from the Housman's cottage in Pater Street.<sup>200</sup> I would tentatively suggest artists Louise Jopling Rowe and Charlotte Lillian Sheppard, both also situated in Kensington, and integral to rally

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<sup>197</sup> N. Laurie, et al, *Geographies*, p. 171.

<sup>198</sup> Boussahba-Bravard, *Suffrage Outside Suffragism: Women's Vote in Britain, 1880-1914* (Manchester: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p.17; J. Hannam, "'I had not been to London', Women's Suffrage – a View from the Regions', in Purvis and Holton (eds.), *Votes for Women*. pp. 226-45.

<sup>199</sup> *Votes for Women*, 25 June 1908, p. 270.

<sup>200</sup> Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*, p. 188-9.

planning, may also have been involved. Jopling Rowe would later go on in 1911 to design the banner for the Musicians' section of the AFL in the Women's Coronation Procession.<sup>201</sup>

Through a place-based focus on Kensington newspapers, and local archives, this chapter can identify a new member of the Kensington banner making team - Miss Agathonike Sabina Craies (1885-1947). Craies of 33 Holland Villas Road, Kensington, was the daughter of William Fielden Craies, a London barrister, and Euterpe Ionides, daughter of a wealthy Manchester cloth merchant and supporter of the arts.<sup>202</sup> A family commissioned portrait of Craies as a child (aged 6 or 7) was painted by artist and suffragist Annie Swynnerton in 1892, suggesting the family's longstanding support for female artists work and connections with the suffrage movement.<sup>203</sup> It is not clear whether Craies (sometimes known as 'Sissie') was formally trained in the arts, although she obviously had an 'eye' for design and composition. She had won a half guinea prize in a Tatler photography competition for her entry 'Chalets' in 1905.<sup>204</sup> In late May 1908, she took over Clemence's role, heading the Kensington banner making team at the cottage, a formidable task given Clemence's considerable artistic talent and experience.<sup>205</sup> Also a Kensington resident, Craies formal heading of the banner team following Clemence, demonstrates a formal if loose structure to the work, also reinforcing the importance of locality in collective banner working.

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<sup>201</sup> See her entry in Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*.

<sup>202</sup> Miss Craies 1911 census record RG14PN89 RG78PN4 RD2 SD1 ED3 SN306 (NA). See also <https://annielouisaswynnerton.com/> (accessed 1/9/2021).

<sup>203</sup> See <https://annielouisaswynnerton.com/> (accessed 1/9/2021). 1892 portrait by Annie Swynnerton exhibited New Gallery 'Miss Agathonike Craies' of 'The Pink Frock' *The Tablet*, 30 April 1892, p. 684; *Illustrated London News*, 21 May 1892, p. 624 (full portrait illustration featured). Craies had acted as an artist's model on numerous occasions throughout her life. See, 1908 portrait by Harold Spencer (Society of Portrait Painters) 'Miss Agathonike Craies' *The Westminster Gazette*, 27 November 1908, p. 4; 1918 'Miss Craies' portrait by Spencer Watson (Royal Society of Portrait Painters) *The Globe*, 11 June 1918, p. 3.

<sup>204</sup> *The Tatler* 18 October 1905, 225, p. 106.

<sup>205</sup> *Votes for Women*, 28 May 1908, p. 197.



*Figure 4. The Housman sibling's studio was located at their home 1 Pembroke Cottage, Kensington. Banner making for the 1908 WSPU Procession took place there. It later served for a period as the Suffrage Atelier's headquarters. Banner and design work continued there throughout the campaign. Source: Author's photograph.*



*Figure 5. The Kensington branch banner for the 1908 WSPU procession designed by Laurence Housman. It was made at the cottage by a team first headed by Clemence Housman and later supervised by Agathonike Craies. The banner is pictured here being re used in June 1911 for the Women's Coronation Procession. Source: Suffragette collection, I.D 50.82/1660, Museum of London.*

Otherwise, it was an evidently informal and fluid affair, with other banner work also undertaken at the studio alongside. For instance, suffrage artist Rosie Silver (c.1878-?) newly identified here, used the Housman's studio to work up a banner designed by her husband Harry, an immigrant polish tailor.<sup>206</sup> Having recently moved from Hull, she became an active member of the Kensington WSPU branch, speaking at many local suffrage meetings, as well as to the public, courageously 'mounting the chair on street corners.'<sup>207</sup> Meanwhile, Bertha Sharp (writer Evelyn Sharp's sister) then a Kensington branch secretary, was also stationed at the cottage for a time, acting as a procession organizer.<sup>208</sup> The Housman's purposefully

<sup>206</sup> *Votes for Women*, 28 May 1908, p. 197; Mrs Harry (Rosie) Silver 1911 census record RG14PN686 RG78PN24 RD9 SD2 ED3 SN19 (NA).

<sup>207</sup> *Votes for Women*, 23 April 1909, p. 26; *Votes for Women*, 25 June 1909, p.13. It is likely she lived in Kensington in 1908, later residing at 94 Charlotte Street, St Pancras.

<sup>208</sup> *Votes for Women*, 14 May 1908, p. 175.



stretched the studio open hours until seven in the evening to accommodate women's various lifestyles, and Bertha Sharp was present from three until close every day.<sup>209</sup>

Writing to friend Janet Ashbee, Laurence Housman made clear the banner had 'taken a lot of time' and it is reasonable to surmise there was much 'toing and froing' as well as fraternizing between enthusiastic amateurs, artisans, artists, needlewomen, crafters, and embroiderers at the cottage studio.<sup>210</sup> The suffrage press reported ahead of the rally 'that all our friends who can spare time will call at the studio and give whatever help they can in the work to be done' on the banner: later reporting it created 'many new friends.'<sup>211</sup> Creative interactions at the cottage are best described as 'light institutionalism' defined as a coming together in place for a collective purpose, with or without formal belonging, and without a rigid set of commitments, seen in urban spatial analysis as vital for strengthening local and trans local socio-political movements.<sup>212</sup> Temporarily at least, Kensington itself became a 'contingent site of feminist artistic and cultural activity' where domestic and studio spaces, public sites and buildings, created intersecting spaces where artists and crafters found new opportunities to participate in the radical politics of suffrage art making.<sup>213</sup>

Once mobilised, the Housman siblings fully immersed themselves in suffrage politics. Laurence Housman became an indefatigable worker for the campaign, writing numerous suffrage plays, articles, and touring nationally and internationally as a renowned speaker. Clemence continued supporting the WSPU and later became a founding member of the WTRL. She was briefly imprisoned for tax evasion and illegally boycotted the government's 1911 census survey to protest being denied the vote. The boycott was the brainchild of her

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<sup>209</sup> *Votes for Women*, 14 May 1908, p. 175.

<sup>210</sup> Letter Laurence Housman to Janet Ashbee, 24 June 1908, King's/PP/CRA/1/19, CR Ashbee Journals (KCC); *Votes for Women*, 11 June 1908, pp. 229-30.

<sup>211</sup> *Votes for Women*, 14 May 1908, p. 175 & *Votes for Women*, 11 June 1908, pp. 229-30.

<sup>212</sup> Amin & Thrift, *Cities*, pp. 72-3. See also, Nicholls, 'Place, Networks, Space', pp. 78-93.

<sup>213</sup> D. Cherry & J. Helland, 'Local Places/Global Spaces: New Narratives of Women's Art in the Nineteenth Century' in Cherry & Helland, *Local/Global*, p. 2.

brother Laurence.<sup>214</sup> Moreover, their cottage studio acted circa early 1910-1911 as headquarters to the Suffrage Atelier, in which the two became central figures, and various society work continued there throughout the campaign.<sup>215</sup> Clemence was one of its ‘chief workers’ producing several of its suffrage banners. Laurence took a more public role, becoming a spokesperson for the society, as his artistic input dwindled, he later claimed, because of his increasingly poor eyesight.<sup>216</sup> He was not destined to be a poster artist after all, but was contemporarily at least, a high-profile agitator for the cause.

Consequently, Lisa Tickner speculated the banner making there in 1908, likely sowed the seeds of the Suffrage Atelier’s formation in spring the following year. Since, the Housman siblings have been cited as founders of society in numerous accounts elsewhere. There are indeed some evident Kensington entanglements. While connections between known and suspected members of the 1908 banner making team - such as Mary Postlethwaite, Agathonike Craies, and Rosie Silver - and the Suffrage Atelier are not in evidence, Louise Jopling-Rowe went on to support the society, opening her Kensington home and studio for its exhibitions, meetings, and fundraising events.<sup>217</sup> Beyond the known banner making team, possibly Rosa Frances Palotta (c.1866-1932) a jewellery, enameller and metal worker who contributed to the Suffrage Atelier’s ‘Athene Gallery’ at the WFL 1909 Yuletide

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<sup>214</sup> Immediately following the rally in July 1908, Clemence Housman joined a deputation of women seeking an interview with Asquith which resulted in several arrests. Artist Mary Postlethwaite was also present. For a full account see, *Votes for Women*, 2 July 1908, p. 282. In August, Clemence also wrote an article ‘Conditions of Release’ for *Votes for Women* discussing the arrest of law-abiding women. For Clemence’s article, see, *Votes for Women*, 27 August 1908, p. 414. For more on Clemence and Laurence’s role in the 1911 census boycott, see, Liddington, *Vanishing*, pp. 36-47.

<sup>215</sup> The Suffrage Atelier seem to have resident there from the Autumn of 1909. See, *The Common Cause*, 21 October 1909, p. 363 (Forthcoming Meetings).

<sup>216</sup> Housman, *Unexpected*, p. 274; Oakley, *Inseparable*, p. 77; *The Common Cause*, 6 October 1910, p. 418.

<sup>217</sup> Rosie Silver did remain in touch with Laurence Housman, liaising with him over storage as honorary secretary of the general stall for the WSPU Women’s Exhibition that took place the following year. See, *Votes for Women*, 26 March 1909, p. 20; *Votes for Women*, 30 April 1909, p. 20. Jopling-Rowe was seated on stage with the Housman’s at the official Kensington banner unfurling, officially presenting it to the Kensington branch to whom it was credited. See, *Votes for Women*, 18 June 1908, p. 256. These events were numerous, but for example see, *The Vote*, 10 August 1912, p. 281. She had already patronised the ASL’s artistic efforts since its formation in 1907 but was certainly more explicit in promoting Suffrage Atelier work.

festival, and who lived in Kensington, might provide another local link, although this is not clear.<sup>218</sup> The 1908 rally work in Kensington undoubtedly played a significant role in encouraging and widening opportunities for women artists sympathetic to militantism to engage in suffrage activism, not least the Housman siblings. However, the most credible evidence for the Suffrage Atelier's founding points to neighbourhood dynamics in Hampstead, and to more obscure artists Ethel Willis and Agnes Joseph.<sup>219</sup>

### ***The Hampstead Hive: Relocating the Suffrage Atelier, 1909.***

An unprecedented 250,000 people are estimated to have taken part in the WSPU rally in June 1908, which, combined with the large-scale rally held just a few days before by the NUWSS, demonstrated significant demand for the vote among women - though the rallies did nothing to sway the government. However, they did make an impact from a propaganda perspective, cementing the vital role of visual artists in the movements' propaganda war, and provoked an uptick in demand for artistic suffrage products. The demand for suffrage banners, and other suffrage goods, such as posters, postcards, and other decorative objects grew as did a surge in support for the WSPU. Somewhat surprisingly, the society failed to spawn an artistic wing following the rally work, unable to rely like the NUWSS on the ASL for most of its subsequent artistic work. Instead, the WSPU continued to rely on a regular, if relatively small number of committed individuals such as artist Hilda Dallas (1878-1958) and Alfred Pearse (1856-1933 pseudonym A. Patriot) for most of its cartoon, postcard, and poster designs. These were augmented by *ad hoc* contributions from varied artistic supporters over

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<sup>218</sup> *The Vote*, 16 December 1909, p. 86 (Yuletide Festival); 1911 census Record, RG14001310851 (NA); 1908 address, *The Queen*, 25 April 1908, p. 737. Her address throughout the period was 48 Hogarth Road, Earls Court, Kensington.

<sup>219</sup> I tentatively made this assertion in Morton 'Changing Spaces', pp. 623-629; and later in Morton, 'An Arts and Crafts Society', pp. 65-89. This view has since been given some assent by suffrage scholar Elizabeth Crawford. Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*, pp. 22-29. See also, Suffrage Atelier papers, Box No 2/LSW/154/7, Correspondence, Constitution and Addresses, circa 1909 (WL); Early postcards 'The Opportunist' by Ethel Willis was published in April 1909, swiftly followed by Joseph's 'The Intolerable Burden of the Vote' and officially from the Broadhurst address, 'Politicians Beware' (WL).

time, and the range of its utilitarian and decorative goods, from tea sets to board games and jewellery, was innovative and extensive.<sup>220</sup> The general demand for artistic suffrage goods mushroomed to the point that, by 1910, three years on from its formation, the ASL was beginning to feel the strain. Mary Lowndes was forced to respond publicly to criticisms over the ASL's lack of new poster designs, citing production costs as the chief culprit.<sup>221</sup> The Suffrage Atelier emerged into this new, rapidly expanding marketplace for decorative suffrage items in 1909, as an independent, non-partisan suffrage art society, with a distinctly commercial edge. The remainder of the chapter revises where and how the Suffrage Atelier began, using place-based research, and the spatial interactions between people, time, and events. This relocates its founding to Hampstead, and illuminates how its differing artistic ideologies and tactics, compared with the ASL, interplayed with the scope of its more dynamic geographies and practice.

Suffrage press reports from June 1909, suggest it took some 'four months or so' for the Suffrage Atelier to properly organize itself, locating its tentative beginnings in January or February that year.<sup>222</sup> Its first official AGM took place at 8 Adelphi Terrace, London, in May 1909, and was hosted by Suffrage Atelier member Edith Craig (1869-1947).<sup>223</sup> Craig was daughter to famed actress Ellen Terry, and a theatrical stage manager, actress, and costume designer. She was also founding member of the AFL, all talents she would put to good use working with the Suffrage Atelier on various schemes.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Mercer, 'Media and Militancy', pp. 471-486.

<sup>221</sup> In an editorial in the NUWSS newspaper the *Common Cause*, Lowndes writes how she 'can quite believe people are pretty tired of many of them as indeed, we are ourselves' but defends the ASL and its artists citing production costs as the culprit for limited designs. *The Common Cause*, 22 December 1910, p. 617.

<sup>222</sup> *The Common Cause*, 24 June 1909, p.144.

<sup>223</sup> There has been doubt as to whether Craig was formally a member of the Suffrage Atelier, or just a friend/supporter of the group, but an interview with her in an article about her, conducted in early 1910, suggests that she was indeed a member. See, *The Vote*, 12 March 1910, p. 232.

<sup>224</sup> For example, she worked with Suffrage Atelier members Isobel Pocock and Laurence Housman on 18 June and 23 July 1910 processions. Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*, p. 65-67. For more on this theme, see chapter 6.



*Figure 6. An early Suffrage Atelier postcard designed by Ethel Willis in circulation in April 1909 when the society was based in Broadhurst Gardens, Hampstead. Source: WL postcard collection, IMGPO873, author's photograph, LSE.*

The society's first official headquarters was located at 53 Broadhurst Gardens, off Finchley Road, Hampstead, where Agnes Joseph and Ethel Willis (acting as honorary secretary) produced its first postcard designs and held its first exhibition. A large building, housing a kindergarten and girls day school, it was also home to Willis, and had a studio available for Suffrage Atelier use.<sup>225</sup> All the earliest letters, correspondence, designs, and activities related to the Suffrage Atelier are attributable to both Willis and Joseph at this Hampstead address, indicating the two women founded the society there. It was also something of a family affair, with Joseph's sister Eva acting as its new honorary secretary in the summer of 1909, operating from her address at 192 Marylebone Road. These were the

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<sup>225</sup> Ethel Willis was also known sometimes as Edith.

first of several metropolitan addresses across which collective Suffrage Atelier activities were shifted and organized, whether formally or informally. Each of these sites, some newly recovered, reveals an intersecting web of fresh biographies and collective work that spanned several miles across towns in London, in contrast to the ASL's more centralized practice in Chelsea.

Willis was born in Islington, London. She produced several Suffrage Atelier postcard designs but was likely an amateur artist given there is no record of her undertaking any formal art school training.<sup>226</sup> She had previously given her occupation as governess, so may have taught art among other subjects in this role, or perhaps at the girl's school in Hampstead where she was living, and where the Suffrage Atelier was first headquartered. Willis's whereabouts in the years immediately preceding the society's formation are elusive, though a passport application for a Miss E B Willis in 1903, raises the possibility that she may have spent some time abroad, perhaps in Paris.<sup>227</sup> Despite her probable lack of formal training early on, Willis felt empowered enough following her suffrage campaign work, to give her official occupation as 'artist'. By 1922, she was working independently, producing a Christmas card design for the WFL as it, and clearly Willis herself, battled on to achieve the vote for women on the same terms as men in 1928.<sup>228</sup>

Joseph on the other hand was an accomplished mixed media artist, who had first trained at the Kensington School of Art in Berkley Square, before moving to Cornwall to study at the Newlyn school. She had cut her commercial teeth in poster design, having been commissioned to produce a Brighton Railway poster in 1903 advertising holidays on the

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<sup>226</sup> She clearly had some design talent which Elizabeth Crawford surmises she may have inherited from her father's side of the family which manufactured jewellery Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*, p. 226.

<sup>227</sup> Index To Register of Passport Applications 1851-1903, Miss E B Willis, FO 611/19 (NA).

<sup>228</sup> 1939 Register, E B Willis 'Artist' Irvington, Aston, Ivinghoe, Wing R.D, Buckinghamshire, RG101/2155C/007/24, Letter code: DWN1 (NA); 'This card has been specially designed by our old friend Miss Willis of the Suffrage Atelier', *The Vote*, 3 November 1922, p. 348.

Sussex Downs.<sup>229</sup> By 1904, after the death of her mother in Cornwall (her father had died in 1897) Joseph moved to London with her sisters, but spent frequent periods studying in Paris between 1905 and 1907.<sup>230</sup> It remains unclear how Joseph and Willis met before venturing on their Suffrage Atelier journey together in 1909. Purely speculatively, perhaps the two met in Paris on the informal, artistic ‘circuit’ of sketching and painting classes, restaurants, and cafes, or perhaps on a steam journey across the channel. Either way, they shared a close bond and were to become long-term companions.

Immediately, the Suffrage Atelier set itself apart from the ASL in explicitly committing to using only traditional arts and crafts methods to produce its suffrage materials. The ASL also used arts and crafts techniques, but it did not tie itself to them, using whatever methods were available and cost effective. The Suffrage Atelier’s commitment to handicraft practice was ideological and is discussed at length in chapter 5. The society also differed in offering its artists financial remuneration for their work, contrasting with the voluntary expectations of the ASL. It also diverged in its publication of a written constitution, one of the few formal society documents to survive.<sup>231</sup> The constitution contains important information about its payment of artists which was largely commission based, and other of the society’s aims and ambitions. But suffice to say here, that its boldly commercial, artisan suffrage enterprise was dynamic, and was reflected geographically in its use of multiple,

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<sup>229</sup> Joseph was a truly mixed media artist. She also produced pottery as well as woodcuts and poster designs. See, Tickner, *Spectacle* (appendix 2); Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*, p. 133-137; M. Hardie (eds.), *Artists in Newlyn and West Cornwall, 1880-1940: A Dictionary and Source Book* (Bristol: Redcliffe, 2008) pp. 86-88. In 1901 she was boarding with the Blewett family in Hill Side Terrace, Newlyn. 1901 census record, Agnes Joseph, RG13 2252 953 19 (NA).

<sup>230</sup> 1901 census records show Joseph’s mother and brother Arthur were staying a short way away in Cornwall at the Polarcane Hotel, Helston: RG132235891482 (NA). Her father, a former railway engineer for the Bombay Staff Corps in India, died in 1897 when the family were living in Bristol. See, India Office Records and Private Papers, Frederick William Joseph, IOR/L/MIL/9/298/A. 62: 1858-1876 (BL). Papers show Joseph’s father did well, rising to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the Executive Engineers section for public works and state railway construction in Calcutta. He was also fluent in native languages.

<sup>231</sup> Suffrage Atelier papers, Box No 2/LSW/154/7, Correspondence, Constitution and Addresses, circa 1909 (WL). The ASL did pay winners of its design competitions. The Suffrage Atelier did offer classes in the latest commercial methods of design and reproduction but did not use them for suffrage work. For the ideological and material implications of this commitment, see chapter 5.

shifting, and overlapping sites and spaces for its collective work, starting with its fledgling months in Hampstead. *See Map 5* (Appendix C:1).

Hampstead had a vibrant suffrage and artistic scene by 1909 when the Suffrage Atelier formed. It had WSPU, NUWSS, and WFL branches, and the town hall, a few doors down from the Suffrage Atelier's studio, was as a regular venue for suffrage gatherings where women met to 'demand votes.'<sup>232</sup> Situated to the north of Kensington and Chelsea, the studio's surrounding streets contained a generous sprinkling of aspiring and established women artists including Catherine Courtauld (1878-1972), Kathleen Trousdell Shaw (1870-1958), Helen Dorothy Copsey (1888-1975) and newly identified artist here, Eliza Turck (1832-1910) who were all important artists, supporters, and patrons of the Suffrage Atelier in its early days.<sup>233</sup> Catherine Courtauld belonged to the wealthy Unitarian Courtauld family which made its fortune in textile manufacturing but took a benevolent interest in workers welfare and broader socio-political reform measures, including female suffrage.<sup>234</sup> Despite being one of the wealthiest heiresses in the country, Courtauld sought to earn her living as a commercial artist. She operated out of number 1 Marlborough studios, 12a Finchley Road, advertising her artistic services in London's Post Office Directory.<sup>235</sup> Between 1910 and 1912, she produced several poster and postcard designs for the Suffrage Atelier for which she

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<sup>232</sup> See Crawford, *Women's Suffrage*, p.267; *Votes for Women*, 13 January 1911 & 3 February 1911, p. 295. *Willesden Chronicle*, 15 May 1908, WFL advertisement, p. 4.

<sup>233</sup> Courtauld and Copsey were identified as Suffrage Atelier artists by Tickner, *Spectacle* (appendix 2). However, additional information including business practices and addresses in Hampstead were identified in T. Morton, 'Changing Spaces' from Courtauld, POLD 1910 1:3 (C&P), POLD 1915 3 (C&P); *The Common Cause*, 9<sup>th</sup> September 1909, p.283; Census record 1901, Copsey, RG14PN609 (NA); 1911 census record, Copsey, RG78PN22 RD8 SD1 ED19 SN129 (absent likely evading) (NA). Shaw was identified through listings for Suffrage Atelier meetings in a variety of suffrage newspapers. For instance, *The Common Cause*, 22 July 1909, p. 199 & 10 March, 1910, p. 680. Details of these artists have since been published in Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*, except for Turck (see below).

<sup>234</sup> See, Crawford, *Women's Suffrage*, pp. 142-3; S.L Courtauld, *The Huguenot family of Courtauld*, (Privately printed, 1957).

<sup>235</sup> Courtauld, POLD 1910 1:3 (commercial & professional), POLD 1915 3 (C&P).



is credited in numerous visual reference and digital sources that feature the campaigns imagery.

However, Courtauld also played an unrecognised role in facilitating the Suffrage Atelier as it sought to gather artists and establish a foothold as a fledgling, suffrage organisation. For example, within weeks of its inaugural AGM hosted by Edith Craig in May 1909, she took charge of a Suffrage Atelier stall to promote its efforts at a WFL fete in Woking, Surrey. This may well have led directly to artist Isobel Pocock (1883-1963) and her friend Gladys Letcher (1882-1952) joining the society given the fete took place at Pocock's family home 'Lyndhurst'. Her first recorded suffrage illustration 'The People's House' was published on the front cover of the *Women's Franchise* some short weeks later, as was Letcher's satirical cartoon of Asquith in the 'Dim and Speculative Future'.<sup>236</sup>

By July that year, Courtauld had opened her Hampstead studio to Suffrage Atelier training classes which were advertised in the suffrage press.<sup>237</sup> These focused on a Cartoon Club, with instruction in hand block making and printing, taking place once a week, every Wednesday afternoon. This likely attracted new members to the society, particularly young or amateur artists and crafters looking to enhance their skills. Whether Courtauld was present, or tutored the classes, is unclear, but it is likely she would have relished such a role in the Cartoon Club. A keen cartoonist herself, she produced several comical postcard designs for the Suffrage Atelier poking fun at, among others, the Anti-Suffrage Society as an 'ASS'. The classes continued at her studio into the Spring of 1910 when she began to produce her own

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<sup>236</sup> The Woking WFL branch ceased to exist in 1910. Many early branches of the WFL did not survive often due to its uncompromising stance that all members should support non-violent militancy. See, C Eustance, 'Meanings of Militancy' p. 53. See also, SFC, reel 13, WFL Annual Reports, 1908 – 1911, accession nos. 50.82/1522- 1526. Thank you to Jackie Theobald who generously shared research from her MA dissertation, *Why Should Anyone be Interested in the First Wave Feminists of Woking?* (Oxford: Ruskin College, 30 June 2009) ref: 05T03487. This led me to Pocock and to Letcher's pre-existing friendship, location, and suffrage alliances. See also, *The Woking News and Mail*, 30 October 1908, p. 5 & 25 June 1909, p. 5.

<sup>237</sup> *The Woking News and Mail*, 25 June 1909, p. 5.

poster and postcard designs for the society.<sup>238</sup> Her early facilitative activities for the Suffrage Atelier redefine her role as more than simply an artist for the society and reinforce the artistic community in Hampstead as vital to the society's initial impetus, and to local women's political empowerment through artistic training.<sup>239</sup>

Kathleen Trousdell Shaw's association with the Suffrage Atelier has only recently been recovered via local press reports from 1909. These advertise Suffrage Atelier decorator and banner working classes in her Hampstead workspace, at 3a Wychcombe Studios on England's Lane, on Fridays from July that year.<sup>240</sup> Shaw, a pioneer of her sex in the field of sculpture, was made a Member of the Royal Hibernian Academy in 1907. She was also the first woman sculptor to be made a member of any Royal Academy in the British Isles. Born in Edmonton, London, she attended art school in Dublin, Rome, France, and Athens, before settling back in London in the 1890s. She regularly advertised her services as an art tutor (particularly for children) in water-colour and oil work in the local press. Her adverts invariably featured her resume which included her achievements as an exhibitor with the Royal Academy; as a medallist trained at the Atelier Ludovici; and as a holder of an ACT certificate from the South Kensington School.<sup>241</sup> Shaw's teaching activities were the more remarkable because she was deaf as the result of a progressive condition that onset in her

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<sup>238</sup> Advertisements appeared regularly throughout this time, but see for example, *Women's Franchise*, 8 July 1909, p. 630; *Women's Franchise*, 24 February 1910, p. 866.

<sup>239</sup> Later, Coutauld's contribution to the campaign dwindled following a long sailing trip to Sydney, Australia, with her sister in 1912, when she met on board her future husband Captain Wilfred Dowman. For more information on Captain Wilfred Dowman, his relationship with Catherine, and their involvement with the Cutty Sark, see, A. Platt & R. T. Sexton (2009) 'Philanthropy and the Cutty Sark: Captain W.H. Dowman and Mrs Catherine Dowman, nee Courtauld' *Mariners Mirror*, 95:4, pp. 459-474.

<sup>240</sup> *Women's Franchise*, 8 July 1909, p. 630 (Suffrage Atelier Fixtures). Elizabeth Crawford has recently included Shaw in her book, Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*.

<sup>241</sup> See, *Hampstead and Highgate Express*, 14 July 1908, p. 8. She was then based at the Studio, Stanfield House, Prince Arthur Road, Hampstead.

formative years. By the time of her involvement with the Suffrage Atelier in 1909, at almost forty years of age, she had lost her hearing completely.<sup>242</sup>

Once settled in London, Shaw became close friends with neighbour Rosamond Venning, who was already active in the suffrage movement and may have been Shaw's initial conduit into the campaign.<sup>243</sup> By January 1909, Shaw was supporting the WSPU, donating her 'pence box' to a fundraising drive ahead of its forthcoming Women's Exhibition at the Princes Skating Rink to be held in May - I argue shortly, a significant and timely event in the Suffrage Atelier's mobilization.<sup>244</sup> In April, a month before its first AGM, the Suffrage Atelier held a business meeting at Shaw's Hampstead studio locating her at the society's very beginnings.<sup>245</sup> Its decorator and banner making classes continued at her studio into 1910, and an AGM was also held there at her invitation in March that year.<sup>246</sup> It is tempting to imagine that Shaw, as with Courtauld, participated in or perhaps tutored the Suffrage Atelier classes at her studio given the prominent role teaching played in her everyday living. As membership lists do not survive, it is not clear whether she was a formal member of the Suffrage Atelier or had a more informal relationship with it. Whether she contributed artwork to it is also a moot question, though none can be attributed to her. Any connections between Shaw and the Suffrage Atelier vanish beyond 1910, possibly because she had relocated to Hastings in Sussex.<sup>247</sup> If so, this again reinforces the importance of proximity for many women artists in maintaining their organizational relationships in the longer term.

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<sup>242</sup> H. D. W Stiles (2019) Kathleen Trousdell Shaw, sculptor (1865-1958) 26 April blog <https://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/library-rmid/2019/04/26/kathleen-trousdell-shaw-sculptor-1865-1958/> (accessed 8 May 2020).

<sup>243</sup> 1911 census record, Kathleen Shaw, gives her relationship to Venning as 'Adopted daughter' RG14006090355 (NA).

<sup>244</sup> *Votes for Women*, 14 January 1909, p. 260 (Pence Box).

<sup>245</sup> *The Women's Franchise*, 8 April 1909, p. 2-3. Rosamond Venning was also present at the meeting.

<sup>246</sup> *The Common Cause*, 10 March 1910, p. 680. The AGM took place by kind invitation of Miss Kathleen Shaw on 12<sup>th</sup> March at 3p.m.

<sup>247</sup> She advertised her services in 1912, giving her address as 'Silverhow' Westham, Hastings. See, *Bexhill-On-Sea Observer*, 19 October 1912, p.11.

The early role of Hampstead artists Shaw and Courtauld in 1909, strengthens the notion the Suffrage Atelier was rooted there, and like the ASL, the importance of local community in women artists' collective mobilization. It also flags the Suffrage Atelier's regular educative work as a potential strategy for engaging new participants, an element formally absent from the ASL's operation. Another local studio in Hampstead's environs was also used for fledgling Suffrage Atelier classes in 1909 and belonged to a hitherto lost female artist here recovered as among its earliest supporters. The studio, located at 7 St. George's Square, Primrose Hill, bordering Hampstead and Camden, belonged to painter, illustrator, and Arts and Crafts artist, Eliza Turck.<sup>248</sup> Turck, not formerly associated with the Suffrage Atelier, or with the suffrage movement at large, was the daughter of Merchant Herman Turck, born in Guernsey, and his wife Anna Louise.<sup>249</sup> Eliza was a pioneer in practically all aspects of art and craft work including leatherworking and bookbinding, colouring, and lace making, to name but a few. She also manufactured and sold art supplies, gave art classes and advice, as well as listing journalism among her many talents which regularly featured in columns of *The Queen* magazine.<sup>250</sup>

From summer 1909 she lent her studio to the Suffrage Atelier for training classes which continued until her death in April 1910, sadly cutting short the relationship she might have forged as its Arts and Crafts matriarch and patron.<sup>251</sup> Whether her relationship with the Suffrage Atelier was formal or informal, is, as is often the case, unclear. However, she did produce tapestry items for sale via the society's 'Athene Gallery' at the WFL's yuletide

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<sup>248</sup> While now in the borough of Camden, Turck's studio located north of Primrose Hill, was then in borough of Hampstead. For Suffrage Atelier's use of her studio see for example, *The Women's Franchise*, 8 July 1909, p. 670.

<sup>249</sup> Census records 1851, RG 4303527 00091; 1901, RG 0133 0135 0187.

<sup>250</sup> Various press reports especially in *The Queen*. For instance, *The Queen*, 23 February 1901, p. 306; *The Queen*, 11 February 1905, p. 231; *The Queen*, 28 May 1910, p. 954.

<sup>251</sup> For instance, see, *Women's Franchise*, 8 July 1909, p. 630. Probate records show that she died on the 20 April 1910 still resident at 7 St George's Square. She left her estate of £857 10s 2d to Emily Tietkens.

festival in December 1909, and so was likely a member.<sup>252</sup> The inaugural months that she lent her studio for its classes, and her popularity within the women's art and crafting community in London, likely drew in potential new artists vital to securing the society's survival.

In contrast to these relatively well-established artists Helen Dorothy Copsey was still in training when she produced her first design for the Suffrage Atelier in 1909 making her with Pocock, Willis, and Joseph, one of its fledgling artists.<sup>253</sup> Copsey was still in her early twenties when the society mobilised when she and her family were living in Hampstead. She was studying at the Royal Polytechnic (Regent Street) between 1906 and 1910 as well as the RCA in South Kensington. Crawford has recently suggested that Copsey likely met one or more other Suffrage Atelier artists via her art school training. This may be, but she was a decade or so younger than many of them, and thus at a different stage in her training. At the time, she was living at 18 Glenloch Road, where her family owned and ran a carver-gilder and picture framing business.<sup>254</sup> It also served as a local water-colour dealership, perhaps an opening through which Copsey sold some of her own paintings. It also seems reasonable to speculate that she might have met and interacted with other Suffrage Atelier members through her family's business.<sup>255</sup> The Suffrage Atelier headquarters, its above artists' homes, and studios, were located within walking distance, and businesses like the Copsey's were well used by artists living and working locally, especially as it sold a range of materials and art supplies alongside its framing and dealership service. Likely, as with most small, family firms, Helen probably helped there from time to time. Other Suffrage Atelier artists with embedded ties in Hampstead included embroider and lace maker Elizabeth Mary Gosling (1862-1920) also a member of the WFL, the Hampstead Highgate branch of the LSWS

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<sup>252</sup> *The Vote*, 16 December 1909, p. 86.

<sup>253</sup> She produced a postcard and probably other pictorial work including a poster displayed at the WFL Yuletide Festival, *The Vote*, 16 December 1909, p.86.

<sup>254</sup> 1911 census record, Charles Edward Copsey, RG14PN609 RG78PN22 RD8 SD1 ED19 SN129 (NA).

<sup>255</sup> Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*, p. 62-63.

(1909), and the Hampstead Art Society.<sup>256</sup> Possibly Eleanor Emmanuel (c.1886-?) an elusive artist, probably a sculptress, who may also have had some connection given she contributed to the Suffrage Atelier's 'Athene Gallery' at the 1909 WFL Yuletide festival.<sup>257</sup>

Therefore, place-focused research on Hampstead, and the Suffrage Atelier's early reliance on the contribution and aid of local women artists there, strongly suggests the society formed in the town, with Willis and Joseph at its head. It also shifts artists previously marginalised or hidden within its histories, to a more central position in its organisational beginnings. Moreover, evidence that there were several, different studios at play at once for collective work and training, albeit at this stage localized in Hampstead, is also indicative of the Suffrage Atelier's decentralized approach compared with the ASL. As I discuss shortly below, this later saw it utilize multiple, overlapping studios of workers and friends for its activities across different areas of London and aligned with its wider ideal, alluded to in press reports and its constitution, of establishing regional branches, claiming to have artists 'in all parts of the United Kingdom'.<sup>258</sup>

Also evident in its constitution, printed and published in February-March 1909, is the importance of local militant 'bazaars' as catalyzing events for the Suffrage Atelier's mobilization. The start of 1909 marked the announcement of several new 'militant' society events (thus in which the ASL had no interests) which gave further momentum to artistic suffrage demands. This included the WFL Green, White, and Gold Fair in April where the Suffrage Atelier had a stall, and the January announcement of the much larger, WSPU Women's Exhibition to be held at the Princes Skating Rink in London's Knightsbridge, from

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<sup>256</sup> *Women's Franchise*, 4 March 1909, p. 436; *Hampstead and Highgate Express*, 21 May 1904, p. 5. Most often referred to as Mrs Ambrose Gosling, she appeared at numerous Suffrage Atelier events renowned for her needle and lace work. For example, *The Vote*, 28 September 1912, p. 395 where she is the star attraction for an 'At home' & *The Common Cause*, 29 August 1913, p. 363, where she appears with other Suffrage Atelier members at an exhibition at a Westminster Teashop.

<sup>257</sup> *The Vote*, 16 December 1909, p. 86 (Yuletide Festival); 1911 census record, Eleanor Emmanuel, RG14006590577 (NA).

<sup>258</sup> I refer to the successes, and failures of this strategy in chapter 5. See, *The Vote*, 15 June 1912, p. 145.

the 13<sup>th</sup> through to 26<sup>th</sup> May.<sup>259</sup> The Suffrage Atelier's constitution was published just a few weeks following its announcement in January and included a direct appeal for a range of artistic work that was 'suitable for selling at the Art stall on the occasion of the Exhibition'.<sup>260</sup> The Exhibition was to run along the lines of a traditional (albeit grandiose) fete or bazaar. The Prince's Skating Rink was a large, cavernous space measuring 250ft long by 150ft wide allowing a substantial number and variety of stalls and display areas to be housed within. This included an art stall for selling paintings and sketches, but also smaller, personal, or household goods and items, such as figurines, leather work, book covers, curtains, pottery, and jewelry. This type of craft work fell outside the usual scope of suffrage banner, poster, and postcard production which generally defined the parameters of the ASL's suffrage art working, and was generated for suffrage processions and rallies, for circulation and shop window displays. The broader range of goods required opened new commercial opportunities for women artists to make and sell suffrage craft objects including household items known to have been produced by the Suffrage Atelier to the consuming public including mantel shelf and book covers.<sup>261</sup> The WSPU Exhibition had an entry fee of 2/6d on opening day and 1/5d thereafter, attracting large crowds throughout its duration.<sup>262</sup>

Socio-spatial interactions surrounding the Exhibition also reveal more about the Suffrage Atelier's early dynamics including the likely timing of the Housman siblings' involvement. Donations and goods submitted for the Exhibition Art stall (and general stall) were gathered in by Laurence Housman who was, by 1909, helping the WSPU's Kensington and Chelsea branches prepare for the May event. These were stored at his and sister Clemence's cottage studio until they could be transported to the Exhibition venue in

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<sup>259</sup> The Fair took place over the 15, 16 & 17 of April at Caxton Hall. See, *The Vote*, 20 May 1909, p. 591.

<sup>260</sup> Suffrage Atelier Papers, Box No 2/LSW/154/7, Constitution and Addresses, circa 1909 (WL).

<sup>261</sup> This included mantelshelf, book covers, and curtains. See, *The Vote*, 10 August 1912, p. 281.

<sup>262</sup>A. Sebba, 'The Women's Exhibition of 1909' available at: <http://annesebba.com/journalism/the-womens-exhibition-of-1909/> (accessed May 2012).

Knightsbridge. Some of the donated work is listed in a suffrage press report including contributions from the Housman siblings, as well as from the ‘newly formed’ Suffrage Atelier.<sup>263</sup> These are listed quite separately reinforcing the notion that the Housmans were not yet part of, or central figures in, the society at that time. Interactions with the Suffrage Atelier over the stall (probably with Ethel Willis) likely encouraged that involvement. By the end of June, Laurence Housman appeared as a guest speaker for the society at an event at Caxton Hall. There Agnes Joseph promised the assembled audience that his speech would be ‘of special interest to artists’.<sup>264</sup>



*Figure 7. A photograph of stalls at the packed WSPU Women’s Exhibition, Prince’s Skating Rink, Knightsbridge, May 1909. Source: Suffragette collection, IN1288, The Museum of London <https://collections.museumoflondon.org.uk/online/object/436969.html> (accessed October 2022).*

<sup>263</sup> *Votes for Women*, 30 April 1909, p. 612; 7 May 1909, p. 642.

<sup>264</sup> *The Common Cause*, 24 June 1909, p. 144.



Nonetheless, the Housman siblings seem to have remained relatively peripheral figures until the Suffrage Atelier placed an advertisement in *Votes for Women* a month later in July (and once again in August) requesting suitable rooms for its expanding enterprises, at no or low rent, from someone sympathetic to its aims.<sup>265</sup> The siblings eventually answered the advertisement (they had been away in Hereford when it was placed) and offered their cottage studio in Kensington for society work. This lends further weight to the notion that Joseph, Willis, and others in Hampstead were the society's principal founders. Had the Housman siblings already been intimately involved with the society's work at this early stage, ongoing conversations would surely have obviated the need for the society to advertise in the press for new rooms at all.

From autumn 1909, the Housman studio was put at the Suffrage Atelier's disposal for classes, alongside for a time, those listed above in Hampstead. Most likely in spring 1910, it replaced Broadhurst Gardens as the society's official headquarters shifting its official location from Hampstead to Kensington. By summer that year, the society was flourishing and had grown to include an estimated 100 regular members.<sup>266</sup> Its non-partisanship and therefore willingness to collaborate in and contribute to militant WSPU and WFL bazaar events as well as those organised by constitutionalists, and the broad range of goods it produced and sold, arguably made it ideologically and artistically a more accessible, flexible, and diverse society. Among artists it attracted were poster and postcard designers like Jessica Walters, who supported the WSPU, and despised Asquith particularly given the arrest and forcible feeding of her sister Alice, a teacher, who was released from prison in an 'alarming state' and Mildred Statham whose craft versatility encompassed leatherwork as well as

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<sup>265</sup> Space particularly needed for collective banner work. see, *Votes for Women*, 23 July 1909, p. 902.

<sup>266</sup> This is based on accumulative data on various Suffrage Atelier subscriptions and a piece in the *Sheffield Evening Telegraph*, 26 May 1910, p. 2. Tickner, *Spectacle*.

embroidered goods.<sup>267</sup> The Suffrage Atelier enabled a much broader scope of women artists and crafters, amateur and professional, than the ASL, to express their feminist politics creatively which I discuss in more depth in chapter 5.

This flexibility also characterised its approach to its metropolitan geographies as it shifted its London headquarters throughout its lifespan to suit its needs from Hampstead, to Kensington, to Hammersmith (Shepherd's Bush), and later sites in central London. *See Map 6* (Appendix D:1). This contrasted with the ASL whose headquarters remained rooted in Chelsea, as did the Suffrage Atelier's fluid use of multiple, overlapping studios in the city as supplementary sites for its collective praxis whether art working, training classes, talks, or exhibitions. This type of organic, relatively diffuse spatial practice is identified by Arturo Escobar and Wendy Harcourt in their work on women and the politics of place, as a tactic of 'localisation and interweaving' fundamental to women's resistance politicking and networking at a community level.<sup>268</sup> For example, when headquartered in Hampstead as discussed, the Suffrage Atelier utilized, on a sort of rotational weekly basis, Catherine Courtauld, Eliza Turck, and Kathleen Shaw's studios, but also Joseph's sister Eva's address in Marylebone Road, and the Housman studio in Kensington prior to relocating its headquarters there.<sup>269</sup> Once relocated, it continued for a time to use some Hampstead studios, but also turned to near neighbour Louise Jopling-Rowe for various supplementary events. Jopling-Rowe was a popular figure in London's artistic circles. As one columnist wrote she knew 'many people who are always somebody in literature and art' counting renowned pre-Raphaelite artist John Everett Millais and playwright Oscar Wilde among her closest

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<sup>267</sup> On Walters, see her entry in Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*. On Statham's leatherwork as well as embroidery see for example, *Leamington Spa Courier*, 4 May 1906, p. 5; *The Bed's Advertiser & Luton Times*, 17 October 1913, p. (no. missing); *Surrey Mirror*, 8 May 1931, p. 2.

<sup>268</sup> Arturo Escobar and Wendy Harcourt see this parallel process as fundamental to women's resistant politicking at a local level. Escobar & Harcourt, *Women, and the Politics of Place*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>269</sup> See for instance, *The Common Cause*, 9 September 1909, p. 283.

friends.<sup>270</sup> Securing her patronage and her home and studio for Suffrage Atelier meetings and exhibitions increased the Suffrage Atelier's social and financial standing along with its profile- and fund-raising drives for the society were always 'generously answered' there.<sup>271</sup>

Meanwhile, Suffrage Atelier work also got underway at 4 Stanlake Villas, in Shepherds Bush, Hammersmith, where Joseph and Willis had moved home together probably late in 1910. Once settled they officially relocated the Suffrage Atelier's headquarters to the villa briefly at some point in 1911, before securing the larger property number 6, next door, where its official headquarters was sited in 1912.<sup>272</sup> There local artist Mary Esther Greenhill, a 66-year-old commercial portrait artist and animal painter, lent her support and her studio a few doors away holding supplementary exhibitions of its artists' work.<sup>273</sup> There is nothing to suggest Greenhill was involved with the Suffrage Atelier before it moved a few streets away from her. This suggests the spatial strategy of localisation and interweaving succeeded in capturing new artists and supporters, expanding the Suffrage Atelier's material resources, while society work continued not only at headquarters, but at Joseph and Willis's home, and in earnest at the Housman, and Jopling-Rowe studios in Kensington.<sup>274</sup> In 1914, the Housman siblings continued on with society work at the cottage, designing, and Clemence working, a 'Unity' and a 'Viking' banner for exhibition.<sup>275</sup> In August, on the eve of War in Europe, the Suffrage Atelier's official address remained 6 Stanlake Villas but it was also by then utilizing

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<sup>270</sup> Ladies Column, *The Illustrated London News*, 12 April 1890, p. 474 & Cherry, *Painting Women*, p. 89; *The Vote*, 10 August 1912.

<sup>271</sup> *The Vote*, 29 June 1912, p. 177.

<sup>272</sup> Willis moved to 4 Stanlake Villas likely at some point in 1910. By April 1911, she is recorded on the census record as 'Head' with Joseph as 'Boarder'. However, the two women took part in the census boycott with the enumerator supplying some details (probably from a neighbour) writing 'Other particulars unknown (suffragettes)'. 1911 census record, 4 Stanlake Villas, RG14002141025 (NA); *The Vote*, 23 December 1911, p. 108; Tickner, *Spectacle*, p. 242. *The Vote*, 20 April 1912, p. 17 (stating the society had recently 'overflowed' into 6 Stanlake Villas); *The Vote*, 23 December 1911, p. 108; Tickner, *Spectacle*, p. 242.

<sup>273</sup> Her studio was at 262A Uxbridge Road. *The Vote*, 7 December 1912, p. 107; Greenhill Census returns, 1901, RG13/42 p.23 (NA) & 1911, RG14/213 183 (NA). The 1911 census gives her address as 1 Abdale Road. The entrance to her studio 282A Uxbridge Road was in Abdale Road.

<sup>274</sup> *The Vote*, 20 April 1913, p. 17; *The Vote*, 10 August 1912, p. 281.

<sup>275</sup> See, *The Vote*, 30 January 1914, p. 230 & *The Vote*, 9 January 1914, p. 184.

The Betterment Books Room in Rosslyn-hill Hampstead to exhibit and sell posters, and Room 28, at 2 Robert Street, Adelphi Terrace, a central London address where the society had an official office for a period in 1913 (Room 12).<sup>276</sup> Overtime, the Suffrage Atelier's shifting studios and the overlapping use of multiple satellite locations across areas of London, added to an interlinking meshwork of resources used by women, for women, to formally and collectively advance and express both their creative and political identities interests that remained both culturally and structurally marginalised by gender.

In conclusion, focusing spatially on three places in London, Chelsea, Kensington, and Hampstead, the chapter has (re)examined the mechanisms – or the where's, how's, and why's - behind the mobilisation of suffrage art societies the ASL and the Suffrage Atelier. It has shown how these groups emerged from an increasing cascade of women's artists and crafters greater colonisation of key areas of the city where many, including later ASL members, had begun clustering in response to their artistic marginalisation at the turn of the twentieth century. ASL friendships were forged on shared territories and shared interests: on neighbourliness, on prior feminist work, shared art school training, and newly founded women's art clubs, but also by dense living arrangements in Chelsea's studio landscape which elicited new friendships and encounters evidenced in Meeson-Coates and Sargent Florence's meeting, leading to Coates subsequent entry into suffrage activism.

However, it was a series of nationally orchestrated suffrage processions that catalysed first the ASL, which was able to respond quickly based on community ties and neighbourly proximity in Chelsea, to produce a range of colourful, expertly executed banners for the NUWSS mud march. The popular, visual watershed this created in the campaign, broadened the radical geographies of women artists organised political artistry which quickly enveloped

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<sup>276</sup> *The Common Cause*, 19 June 1914, p. 238; *The Vote*, 1 August 1913, p. 232. Robert Street was an address associated with the WFL.

Kensington as the creative epicentre for the WSPU's 1908 rally drive. A much larger procession, it demanded the fresh mobilisation of artists sympathetic with the militant cause locally, and trans locally, to create leading artwork and to organize and coordinate artists' bodily procession in the rally itself. The Housman siblings were among those caught up in the procession fervour, to which their artistry proved instrumental.

Research around Kensington during the rally drive, has shown how spatially, the formal and informal interaction between women artists was facilitated across a range of equally formal and informal sites and spaces, appropriated and occupied for rally work, from prominent high street buildings to domestic drawing rooms. Work on the focal point of the rally, the Kensington branch banner at the Housman's cottage studio, augured new friendships, bringing together team members, banner makers, and organizers, some newly identified, such as Agathonike Craies, Rosie Silver and her husband Harry, and some including the Housman siblings and Lousie Jopling-Rowe, who later played a proven role in the Suffrage Atelier's activities.

However, the chapter's analysis of local newspaper and ephemeral material related to Hampstead, strongly suggests that rather than being rooted in the 1908 Kensington rally work with the Housman siblings as supposed, the Suffrage Atelier formed instead in Hampstead where known and newly identified fledgling artists and supporters, such as Eliza Turck, lived and worked in 1909. Headed by Ethel Willis and Agnes Joseph, its mobilisation centred on a series of bazaars and fetes rather than large, organised processions, though these played their part in a cascade effect of events that encouraged artists' application of their skills directly to campaigning. Bazaars and fetes appealed to Suffrage Atelier artists' ambition to produce a diverse range of arts and crafts goods and to sell them, raising money for its artists, and for

the cause.<sup>277</sup> Its non-partisanship, early training classes, and broader range of art and crafts work likely encouraged women's participation, as potentially did the more diffuse geographies of its artistic practice across London. In the city, its shifting metropolitan headquarters and continual, overlapping use of its artists and supporters' homes and studios for suffrage work, classes, and exhibitions, made for a more dynamic society that was regularly active right up to the outbreak of war in 1914.

Therefore, viewing suffrage art societies mobilisation through a spatial lens, shows how women artists' new, collective, politically radical creative practices, were reciprocally shaped and reshaped through the concrete, dense, urban spaces, and materialities of place and time, and its unique social settings. Chelsea, Kensington, and Hampstead, became contingent sites for women artists (and sometimes men's) politicisation, and thus for the collective politicisation of their art. This new radical relationship between women's art, and politics, was entwined with women's powerful material reconfiguration of everyday buildings, and disruption of the uses, routines, and regularities of place, creating a dynamic tactics of the habitat where familiar urban landscapes of home were acted upon in varying but empowering ways. More broadly, the chapter reinforces the value of place-based studies for uncovering yet hidden, politicised women artists, and in understanding the transformative power of the local in women's wider contestation of the asymmetric politics of gender.

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<sup>277</sup> See chapter 5.

## Chapter Three

### **Bodies in the Museum**

This chapter shifts the spatial focus on place from a series of interlinking locations, sites, and spaces, to the meaning of suffrage artists' occupation of a very particular place: Cheyne Walk in Chelsea.<sup>278</sup> Cheyne Walk was a popular tourist and heritage site during the years of suffrage campaigning that commemorated, celebrated, and amplified historic narratives of elite male artists who had lived, worked, and died there. In effect it operated as an 'open air museum' symbolizing men's superiority, power, and privilege in the arts.<sup>279</sup> While active as suffragists, several women artists occupied significant historic houses and studios there, made political paintings, walked, and observed life on its famous promenade which ran alongside the river Thames. Their being there was recorded in various ways that the chapter explores through a series of case studies interrogating their diverse agencies as embodied occupants, users, and usurpers of its elite male histories and territories which are interlinked with broader articulations of their radical suffrage and feminist politics. It views their presence in Cheyne Walk as a disruption of the established male power geographies of art, gender, and identity, redrawing the gendered and temporal boundaries of it, both past and present, as a dwelling place defined by arts 'great men'.

#### ***Old Bohemia: Cheyne Walk and the Embankment.***

When Chelsea became London's artistic capital in the early nineteenth century, Cheyne Walk became the creative heart of the town. In the 1840s, it had been home to the male elite of the artistic world with renowned pre-Raphaelite painters such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882) and the father of impressionism Joseph W.M Turner taking waterfront

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<sup>278</sup> Agnew, 'Space and Space', p. 320.

<sup>279</sup> Zemgulys, 'Night and Day', p. 69.

houses with studios there. They were soon joined by a host of other celebrated artists and writers all of whom drew inspiration from Cheyne Walk's vistas of the Thames and took regular victuals together in the many cafes and coffee houses that became synonymous with Chelsea's bohemian lifestyle.<sup>280</sup> Cultural geographies of the city proclaimed Cheyne Walk the centre of elite male creativity and although by the 1880s, most of its famous male artists and writers had died, or faded in reputation, it had become one of London's foremost tourist destinations. It featured heavily in contemporary accounts of the city's 'places to see' and its artistic heritage was documented in London County Council's (LCC) landmark, *Survey of London*, edited by Walter Godfrey and published in two parts in 1909 and 1913 at the height of the women's suffrage campaign.<sup>281</sup>

Cheyne Walk's houses were also among the earliest recipients of the LCC's new commemorative plaques (now known as blue plaques) that delineated properties of historic interest from more mundane buildings in the city.<sup>282</sup> Guidebooks, maps, and plaques burgeoned with details about the homes, studios, art works, talents, and lives of 'old bohemia's' famous men and tourists flocked there to see the houses of their heroes: encouraged to imagine the exact spot where this or that masterpiece was once created.<sup>283</sup> The circulation of such popular tourist discourses ensured that Cheyne Walk's sites and spaces were viewed by the public not only as architectural objects, but as cultural objects which embodied hegemonic notions of worthy creativity as male creativity.

Yet Cheyne Walk is largely absent from feminist scholars spatial work on the gendered city. Andrea Zengulys is one of few to tackle it in her feminist reading of historical

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<sup>280</sup> Godfrey, *Survey*, vol 4, p. 42; Lamb, 'Symbols of Success in Suburbia', pp. 57-75.

<sup>281</sup> Godfrey, *Survey*, vol 4, p. 42.

<sup>282</sup> Godfrey, *Indication*.

<sup>283</sup> See, A. Beaver, *Memorials of Old Chelsea* (London: Stock, 1892); R. Blunt, *In Cheyne Walk and Thereabout* (London: Mills, 1914); E.V Lucas, *A Wanderer in London* (London: Methuen, 1906); Walter H. Godfrey (ed.), *Survey of London: The Parish of Chelsea, Part I* (London: LCC, 1909); Walter H. Godfrey (ed.), *Survey of London: The Parish of Chelsea, Part II* (London: LCC, 1913).



representations of early twentieth century London, describing it as an ‘open air museum space’ whose houses served as ‘a cluster of shrines, memorials, and monuments’ to the artistic genius of the male gender.<sup>284</sup> As such, Cheyne Walk represents fertile ground for exploring suffrage artists’ being and making art there as disruptive of men’s claims to order, knowledge, and power in the arts, particularly against the backdrop of their political struggle for female suffrage. Therefore, the chapter focuses on four protagonists who spent time living, walking, and working there: Sylvia Pankhurst, daughter of Emmeline Pankhurst, the charismatic leader of the WSPU, who rented rooms there while studying at the RCA; her friend, WSPU activist Maud Joachim, who dabbled in suffrage bannerette making, yet was identified as an ‘artist’ on the government’s 1911 census survey while living in Cheyne Walk; ASL artist Bertha Newcombe, who lived and produced political art work in her home studio at number one at the height of her suffrage campaigning; and pioneering suffragist and later suffrage artist Louise Jopling-Rowe, who regularly strolled, observed, and enjoyed its bustling embankment at dusk, an experience recorded in her later autobiography, *Twenty Years of my Life*.<sup>285</sup>

Importantly, suffrage artists understood Cheyne Walk as a powerful and divisive cultural symbol of men’s artistic superiority. Beyond the tourist maps and pamphlets, it was drawn, painted, and discussed as a location in fictional novels, autobiographies, and essays of the era, written and circulated by other creative artists seeking to carve out and to (re)define their own place in the emerging, modern creative milieu. For example, in 1907, author Arthur Ransome wrote that ‘All of the best memories of old Chelsea rest in the narrow, stately fronted houses along Cheyne Walk’ and recounts well-worn tales of Turner painting his famous sunsets of the Thames from the roof terrace of his home and studio there, and of

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<sup>284</sup> Zemgulys ‘Night and Day’, p. 69.

<sup>285</sup> Jopling-Rowe, *Twenty Years*.

Rossetti's house with its exotic back garden 'zoo' and illustrious visitors such as William Morris, among tales of other 'great men who had lived there'.<sup>286</sup> Meanwhile, feminist writer Virginia Woolf, who admitted falling prey to the allure of Cheyne Walk, of being unable to pass a 'great' writer's house there 'without pausing to give an extra look into it', was critical of its public pre-eminence as a place which encompassed a proscribed and gendered artistic ideal.<sup>287</sup> She argued that Cheyne Walk and its houses symbolized the 'myth' of Chelsea and of the city of London more broadly, as a place of 'great men's houses' leaving no room for women as creative agents in metropolitan life.<sup>288</sup>

These highly gendered, often conflicting responses to Cheyne Walk's iconic status as a popular public landmark, as an open-air museum to arts great men, illuminate its symbolic importance as place in early twentieth century debates about art, identity, gender, and power. Cheyne Walk was 'a nexus of contested meaning' in which this chapter will argue, suffrage artists' bodies and practices intervened.<sup>289</sup> Their awareness of Cheyne Walk's cultural and architectural significance as a symbol of arts 'great men' meant they understood it, like other creative artists of their time, as a powerful resource in the politics of identity and recognition - 'in how certain groups are recognized or misrecognized' – which interlinked with their wider struggle for both political and creative power.<sup>290</sup> Kay Anderson and Faye Gale have shown how heritage sites are 'valuable documents on the power plays from which social life is constructed both materially and rhetorically' having the 'potential to reflect struggles'

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<sup>286</sup> Ransome *Bohemia*, pp. 16 & 40-45. Rossetti's illustrious visitors also included Edward Burne-Jones.

<sup>287</sup> V. Woolf, *The Essays of Virginia Woolf* (edited by A. McNellie. U.S, San Diego: Harcourt Press, 1987) 2:161.

<sup>288</sup> V. Woolf, 'Great Men's Houses' in *The London Scene: Five Essays by Virginia Woolf* (U.S, New York: Hallman, 1975) pp. 23-29; Zemgulys, 'Night and Day'.

<sup>289</sup> Bender, *Landscape*, p.276.

<sup>290</sup> L.J. Smith, 'Heritage Gender Identity' in B. Graham & P. Howard (eds.) *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and History* (London: Ashgate, 2008) p. 163.

within society at large.<sup>291</sup> This has seen gendered meanings attributed to specific historical sites and heritage landscapes come under increasing scrutiny by feminist scholars for what they offer as places for ‘reflections on [women’s] temporality and subjectivity, identity and alterity’.<sup>292</sup> These are themes that this chapter also reflects upon because landscape is a complex scene. It is a narrative of understanding, written from a certain point of view, and often involves a bringing of past times and experiences into present contexts, producing multiple meanings.<sup>293</sup> This is a process in which the historian is fully implicated as one of many successive inhabitants, users, and story tellers, who choose to make symbolic use of a place at varying points in the space-time nexus.<sup>294</sup>

Importantly, suffrage campaigners saw *themselves* as historians and heritage makers of the women’s suffrage movement, even as the campaign unfolded. Work on the historical consciousness of suffragists political actions has revealed how ‘suffrage feminists can be ‘remembered’ both because of the nature of their campaigns, but also through the histories they helped to construct themselves’.<sup>295</sup> Therefore, this chapter’s (re)embodiment and analysis of suffrage artists in Cheyne Walk, also considers the interplay between their past and present voices there through the temporalities of their painting, writing, the blue plaque, and the census archive. These materials possess potentially hidden meanings that become more visible with time, but that also cast light back on a feminist self-consciousness of place among suffrage artists during the campaign. In this, I call upon Jacques Derrida’s work on the

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<sup>291</sup> K. Anderson & F. Gale, *Inventing Places: Studies in Cultural Geographies* (Australia, Melbourne: Longman, 1992) p. 8. See also, S. McDowell, ‘Heritage, Memory, Identity’ in Graham & Howard, *The Ashgate Research Companion*, pp. 37-55.

<sup>292</sup> A. Huyssen, *Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (London: Routledge, 1995) quoted in R. Hoberman *Museum Trouble: Edwardian Fiction and the Emergence of Modernism* (U.S, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2011) p. 4.

<sup>293</sup> See, Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone*, pp.31-32.

<sup>294</sup> Meskimmon, *Women Making Art: History, Subjectivity, Aesthetics* (London: Routledge, 2003), p.4; Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p.38.

<sup>295</sup> H. Keane (2005) ‘Public History and Popular Memory: Issues in the Commemoration of the British Militant Suffrage Campaign’, *Women’s History Review*, 14:3/4, p.581.

archive as ‘much more than a thing of the past’, or even of present time, but as ‘a question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow’ which reaches across the narrative relationships between subjects, time and space.<sup>296</sup> Overall, the chapter seeks to reaffirm the symbolic importance of some places to understandings of what it means for suffrage feminist subjects and cultures to be located within men’s territories of power, in order to contest them.

*Sylvia Pankhurst: Property, Power, Protest (i).*



*Figure 8. Sylvia Pankhurst in her studio (undated). Source: WL digital collection, 7vjh 5 2 59, LSE <https://www.flickr.com/photos/lselibrary/> (accessed January 2023).*

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<sup>296</sup> Derrida, *Archive fever*, pp. 34-36; Sassoon, ‘Phantoms of Remembrance’, p. 55.

It had always been Sylvia Pankhurst's intention to be an artist. It was, as she would later reflect, the 'lasting and fervent hope' of her youth'.<sup>297</sup> She began renting rooms at number 120 Cheyne Walk while completing her training at the RCA in 1906.<sup>298</sup> Situated just across the river from the RCA, it had inspiring views of the Thames. Her move there also coincided with her family's decision to relocate the WSPU from its roots in Manchester to new headquarters in London – a move crucial to gaining a national and international identity for the WSPU.

Pankhurst was a committed suffragette and a committed socialist, twin passions she enrolled in her early artwork. She produced several paintings recording the working lives of industrial women, chiefly in the north of England and the Midlands, and advised the WSPU on decorative elements of its campaign.<sup>299</sup> However, she became torn about the purpose of her artistry, caught between pursuing the 'socialist realism of her paintings of working-class women' and producing 'that dilute pre-Raphaelite allegory' which became her chief contribution to suffrage iconography reproduced in murals, tea sets, and other commercial items.<sup>300</sup> This conflict, together with her realization that success as an artist chiefly depended upon the patronage of the rich, may have influenced Pankhurst's eventual decision to give up on her art career and to focus instead on political campaigning. This took her across the country and encompassed several terms of imprisonment for militant activities. Together with her work for the socialist cause, and later intervention in Ethiopia's affairs under Mussolini's

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<sup>297</sup> S. Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement* (London: Virago, 1977) p. 104-5; Crawford, *Women's Suffrage*.

<sup>298</sup> Pankhurst maintained her rooms in Cheyne Walk for many years though later occupied them only sporadically.

<sup>299</sup> The social and political value of these paintings is increasingly being realized through new exhibitions, film, and experimental graphic arts projects. See, British Universities Film & Video Council: Moving Image and Sound, Knowledge, and Access, 'Sylvia Pankhurst: Everything is Possible', <http://www.worldwrite.org.uk/sylviapankhurst/> (accessed 2 October 2021); J. Ashworth, 'Locating Sylvia Pankhurst', <http://locatingsylviapankhurst.com/index.html> (accessed 10 April 2021); J. Mulhallen (2009) 'Sylvia Pankhurst's Paintings: A Missing Link' *Women's History Magazine* 60, pp. 35-38.

<sup>300</sup> Tickner, *Spectacle* p. 28; Crawford, *Women's Suffrage*, p. 517. She created designs for the organization including exhibition murals, membership cards, and emblems that appeared on commercial items, such as WSPU tea sets and fabrics.

fascist occupation in the 1930s, Pankhurst's politics have since overshadowed her relatively short career as an artist. This has to some degree obscured other ways that her passion for art might have played out within the context of her political campaigning beyond the production of suffrage items and imagery. Here I seek to reconnect these aspects of Pankhurst's life through her occupation of rooms in Cheyne Walk as a female artist, twinned with the strategy of bodily 'insertion' well used by suffragettes, as her symbolic, feminist intervention, in its elite male discourses of creativity.

The strategy of 'insertion' is widely referred to by scholars of the women's suffrage movement as a self-consciously disruptive tactic, focused upon the physical insertion of the female body into spaces that were culturally preconceived as masculine.<sup>301</sup> The strategy took various guises and became more explicit over the course of the campaign. For example, in the late nineteenth century, suffragists focused on lobbying for entry into various male institutions from which women were excluded by virtue of their gender. This saw artists, for example Louise Jopling-Rowe, forcing seats on the male dominated boards of key art institutions.<sup>302</sup> Later in the campaign, marches, parades, and open-air meetings broadened these strategies to include suffragists bodily occupation of the very public spaces of city streets, and iconic, architectural sites which commemorated famous men or celebrated their historical achievements. It was not a coincidence that key speeches made by leading figures of the suffrage movement, as well as rally points selected for mass suffrage processions and

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<sup>301</sup>There was a strong materialist element to the suffrage movement: it was as Janet Lyon argues, a 'political dramaturgy'. See, J. Lyon, *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern* (U.S, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999) pp. 92-124; E. Comentale (2001) 'Thesmophoria: Suffragettes, Sympathetic Magic, and H.D.'s Ritual Poetics, *Modernism/modernity*, 8:3, pp. 471-492.

<sup>302</sup> Jopling-Rowe took part in a successful lobbying campaign to gain women's entry into the Royal Society of British Artists and was the first woman to 'sit' on its board in 1902. She was a pioneering female artist and suffragist who, among other activities for the campaign, later became a key supporter of the Suffrage Atelier and aided the ASL. She was also a suffrage artist, directly turning her hand to banner design. She designed a banner in 1911 depicting a woman in classical dress playing the harp which was carried by the musician's section of the Actresses Franchise League in the Women's Coronation Procession in June that year. See Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*, p. 198-199.

smaller demonstrations, occurred in places such as Trafalgar Square at the site of Lord Nelson's statue, or in the public lobby of the Houses of Parliament. As Smith and Katz point out 'all space is political' but for women suffragists living in a patriarchal Edwardian Britain, some spaces and some places were inevitably more political than others.<sup>303</sup>

Scholars agree that property understood publicly and popularly as symbolic of male superiority and power was of particular interest to suffragettes. The WSPU unleashed an unprecedented series of orchestrated assaults on property that for them represented patriarchy, capitalism, and order. Its activists deliberately, physically, and often illegally occupied buildings that symbolized male political power and patriarchal privilege from which women were legislatively and often materially excluded. Repeated attempts by the WSPU to either 'rush' the House of Commons or to enter its inner chambers by stealthier means, demonstrates their belief that women's actions (or more precisely women's bodies) 'could counter and transform the gendered ideologies inscribed in built spaces through physical occupation.'<sup>304</sup> It was with a great sense of achievement that Emmeline Pankhurst recalled the moment that she and others crossed the architectural threshold that signified their transgression into male political space when rushing the House of Commons. 'My small deputation' she later wrote 'succeeded in reaching the door of the Strangers' Entrance. We mounted the steps to the enthusiastic cheers of the multitude that filled the streets.'<sup>305</sup>

Occupying the interior of these 'power' buildings proved a popular tactic within the ranks of the WSPU's more militant activists. Although it has not been considered before in the context of the property power plays of the WSPU, I argue that for the artists among their

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<sup>303</sup> N. Smith & C. Katz, 'Grounding Metaphor: Towards a Spatialized Politics' in, M. Keith & S. Pile (eds.) *Place and the Politics of Identity* (London: Routledge, 2004) pp. 67-83.

<sup>304</sup> Kilde, 'Predominance of the Feminine', p. 10. I am referring here to the 'pantechinon raid' where similarly to the Trojan horse plot, WSPU activists sought to smuggle themselves into Westminster in a furniture van.

<sup>305</sup> E. Pankhurst, *My Own Story* (U.S, Michigan: University of Michigan, 1914) p. 180. Her sense of achievement was curtailed by the appalling violence suffragettes suffered at the hands of the police that day which became known as 'Black Friday'.

activists, Cheyne Walk as a cultural symbol of male superiority and power in the arts, easily sits within this category. As part of the WSPU leadership, Sylvia Pankhurst shared an astute understanding of the symbolic importance of occupying specific buildings in particular places to counter masculine claims to knowledge, power, and identity. In her study of the interplay between suffrage politics and architecture, Lynne Walker reveals the importance that the Pankhursts', but especially Sylvia, personally placed upon occupying buildings in the city that represented male elitism. Walker explains that when the WSPU moved the organization's headquarters in 1912, they deliberately selected Lincoln's Inn, an imposing, neo-classical building which had been designed by a renowned, male, establishment architect. It was a metropolitan building that represented the 'symbolic power' of the male and of the masculine state, and so occupying it was important to those in the WSPU who viewed it as 'material proof of the greatness of the Union which it shelters'. This represented Walker argues, a subtler, often overlooked part of the Pankhursts' broader guerrilla war on 'all forms of patriarchal property' which included the occupation of buildings, as well as the more infamous damage and destruction of them.<sup>306</sup>

The decision to move the WSPU's headquarters into Lincoln's Inn was influenced by Sylvia Pankhurst who Walker credits with a 'keen eye for architecture' and its symbolism. She also acknowledges her ongoing proclivity for tying the architectural spaces she occupied to her social and political beliefs.<sup>307</sup> For instance, in 1912, Pankhurst was expelled from the WSPU by her mother Emmeline and sister Christabel over the issue of working-class women's role in the organization. Pankhurst had wanted more autonomy and prominence for working class women within the WSPU. In contrast, her mother and sister believed that the

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<sup>306</sup> Walker, 'Locating the Global', pp. 174-196; WSPU Annual Report, 1913 in Walker, *ibid*. The WSPU also engaged in 'door-stepping' which involved confronting politicians opposed to women's suffrage at the front door of their own homes.

<sup>307</sup> Walker, *Ibid*, p. 186. When Prime Minister Herbert Asquith refused to receive a deputation of working women Pankhurst had organized, she used her own body to force the issue by laying down outside the House of Commons building until he agreed to see them – which he subsequently did.



vote would be better secured (certainly more rapidly at any rate) by procuring more middle and upper-class women members, particularly those that were socially and politically well connected. When Sylvia subsequently formed the predominantly working-class breakaway suffrage society, the East London Federation of Suffragettes (ELFS) she located its headquarters in the heart of London's poverty-stricken East End. Among the properties Pankhurst selected and occupied with ELFS was a former bakery and a former brewery in Bowe, though she refurbished a series of similarly 'humble properties' there 'into architecture with a radical, social purpose'.<sup>308</sup>

Walker's notion of 'patriarchal property' is easily applied to Cheyne Walk whose houses collectively represented a popular 'cluster of shrines and memorials' to the creative genius of the male gender, that Woolf had sought to critique, and which Pankhurst as an artist would have been acutely aware. Most young, upcoming women artists like Pankhurst chose to settle away from the historic waterfront inhabiting cheaper accommodation in other parts of Chelsea where the recent rash of studio developments and the growing influx of 'modern' artists saw it named colloquially as 'new bohemia'.<sup>309</sup> Despite struggling with the expense however, Pankhurst remained in Cheyne Walk conducting not only suffrage affairs there, but also heading up and tackling creative inequalities for women alongside.<sup>310</sup> For instance, when living in Cheyne Walk and completing her studies at the RCA, Pankhurst challenged the institutes ruling that the number of women allowed to take scholarships should be severely restricted irrespective of merit. She made her challenge public by persuading her close friend and Labour MP Keir Hardie to raise the issue in the House of Commons at Parliamentary Question Time. The ruling remained in place, but undeterred, Pankhurst later marched a

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<sup>308</sup> Walker, *Ibid*, p. 190.

<sup>309</sup> See Ransome, *Bohemia* p. 44.

<sup>310</sup> Pankhurst's rent was 11 shillings and she arrived with only 25 shillings to her name. To live there was a financial sacrifice and she was helped initially at least by her close friend and Labour MP, Keir Hardie. See, B. Winslow, *Sylvia Pankhurst: Sexual Politics and Political Activism* (London: Routledge, 2013).

deputation of past students from the RCA to the 1911 Board of Education's Enquiry into the institute's educational practices. This applied pressure to its proceedings by making women artists visible, and thus publicly exposing the institutes gendered hierarchies that restricted women's access to training and professional practice in the arts.<sup>311</sup>

Pankhurst had interjected herself in numerous other public debates, sites, and institutions, to challenge restrictions imposed upon women's access to artistic spaces only open to, or monopolized by, men during the suffrage campaign. This included her bodily intervention in other creative spaces which like Cheyne Walk, were culturally reified, or defined as male spaces of art and knowledge. In 1902, just a few years prior to moving into Cheyne Walk, Pankhurst for example had won the Proctor Travelling Studentship which enabled her to study art in Venice. She asked to be admitted to the Academia delle Belle Arti's life-drawing class where (as she well knew) women students were not permitted. Denied her request and directed to work alone in the nearby antiquities' storeroom, Pankhurst knew she would 'never get into the life class' if she waited to be admitted. Therefore, the next day, she 'simply walked in' and in so doing, physically and symbolically transgressed the gender boundaries that had sort to define the class as exclusively masculine territory.<sup>312</sup>

Pankhurst's occupation of rooms in Cheyne Walk, as a material and cultural symbol of male superiority in the arts, therefore interlinked with her broader contestation of women's exclusion from sites and spaces of artistic knowledge, identity, and power on the grounds of gender and class, enrolled with her acute awareness of the symbolism of architecture. When located within the context of suffrage campaigning; the suffragette strategy of bodily

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<sup>311</sup> Pankhurst also threw a stone in protest at a painting of a seventeenth century speaker inside the House of Commons. See Crawford, *Women's Suffrage*, p. 516-24. Targeting artwork was a tactic of suffrage militancy and a topic which will be discussed in more depth later in this chapter. Pankhurst was not charged thanks to Keir Hardie's intervention.

<sup>312</sup> From that point on she took the class alongside the male students. Sylvia Pankhurst quoted in K. Connelly, *Sylvia Pankhurst: Suffragette, Socialist and Scourge of Empire* (London: Pluto Press, 2013) pp. 13-16.

insertion and her own into male spaces of creativity; Pankhurst's choice of occupying powerful male architectures with the WSPU at Lincoln's Inn, or properties in the East End that aligned with the causes of the socialist ELFS, her rooms at Cheyne Walk fit with her proclivity for living in, invading, and operating from, buildings symbolic of male power and privilege, and the spaces within them, that were emblematic of her personal battles as an artist, a socialist, and as a suffragette across the gender and class spectrum.

***Maud Joachim: Property, Power, Protest (ii).***

Pankhurst was joined shortly after her arrival in Cheyne Walk, by fellow WSPU member and friend Maud Joachim. Joachim moved next door into 118 Cheyne Walk where she resided for varying periods chiefly between 1909 and 1911.<sup>313</sup> She like Pankhurst was committed to militancy and was arrested and imprisoned on multiple occasions between 1908 and 1912. A well-educated Girton College graduate from a wealthy family (she was niece to the famous Austrian, Jewish violinist, Joseph Joachim) Joachim was described as an 'artist' under occupation on the government's census survey in 1911 although it is unclear what range of creative practices this encompassed, or whether she received any formal training in the visual arts. It seems likely that she was, at best, a dabbling amateur who participated in largely anonymous 'ad hoc' artistic work for the suffrage cause carried out in her local community. Fellow WSPU supporter Zoe Proctor recalled Joachim 'preparing and colouring' bannerettes for WSPU rallies in the basement of its Chelsea shop just a few streets from her Cheyne Walk residence.<sup>314</sup> Therefore, while Joachim cannot be classified as a suffrage artist, she is nevertheless included here because I argue her identification as an 'artist' at 118

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<sup>313</sup> Joachim's decision to rent there was undoubtedly encouraged by her friendship with Pankhurst and with the regular communication of WSPU affairs between the two as their roles in the organisation grew.

<sup>314</sup> Crawford, *Women's Suffrage*; Proctor, *Life and Yesterday*, p. 97.

Cheyne Walk, had everything to do with her feminism and was enmeshed in contesting the gendered politics of place, art, and power.

Joachim's occupation of 118 Cheyne Walk initially came to light through two separate projects which briefly conjoined: this authors use of then newly released 1911 census to recover and map suffrage artists' whereabouts during the campaign, and historian Jill Liddington's compilation of suffrage campaigners who participated in the illegal census protest that year, organised by the WFL, the WSPU and others.<sup>315</sup> Suffrage supporters were encouraged by societies willing to break the law to disrupt the decennial government survey of 1911 by employing one of two key strategies: evasion or non-compliance. Those women who chose to evade the census altogether, absconded from their usual addresses and hid elsewhere when census officials called to gather information on census night. The rationale was to effectively exclude themselves from the census and thus spoil the state's compilation of population statistics. 'Non-compliance' protesters on the other hand, remained at their homes but steadfastly refused to supply the required information when census enumerators called. Described by Liddington as 'resisters' these women were often explicit in articulating the reasons for their protest by recording it by hand on the census schedule itself. One resister wrote on her census form for example, that as disenfranchised citizens 'women don't count' therefore they 'will not be counted' summarizing the protest's *raison d'être*.<sup>316</sup>

The release of the 1911 census as Liddington explains had been 'eagerly anticipated' by historians of the women's suffrage movement for what it might reveal about the locations of suffrage activists at the height of the campaign, as well as about the level of their participation in the census boycott.<sup>317</sup> Since its inception in 1841 the census has been used as

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<sup>315</sup> Liddington & Morton, 'Walking', pp. 30-39; Liddington, *Vanishing*.

<sup>316</sup> J. Liddington & E. Crawford (2011) "'Women do not count: neither shall they be counted': Suffrage, Citizenship and the Battle for the 1911 Census' *History Workshop Journal* 71, pp. 98-127.

<sup>317</sup> Liddington, *Vanishing* p. 3 & 234.

an archival source for various social and political ends, including by early feminist campaigners demanding social reform to alleviate for example, the high rates of infant mortality made visible by the census survey. By the Edwardian era, the census had already become part of a broader, national fervour for recording, collecting, cataloguing, and analysing all manner of statistics and measurements relating to the human condition, and can be situated within the context of a broader fin de siècle obsession with all forms of urban, economic, medical, race, and sexual body mapping.<sup>318</sup>

Whichever form of protest women chose on census night (if any at all) it was apparent even then that the protest was destined to be of future significance to feminist and suffrage historians, as it has since proved to be.<sup>319</sup> The census gives a glimpse into the private spaces of people's homes, but the census itself is also a dwelling place, one that marks an 'institutional passage from the private to the public sphere, upon which future generations call'.<sup>320</sup> Therefore, it made an excellent platform for suffrage campaigners not only to rally against their contemporary exclusion from the franchise, but to also act as a repository of protest for those seeking to project the social and political ideologies of the suffrage movement, and in some cases, the identities of individual protesters, into future histories of the suffrage campaign.

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<sup>318</sup> See, P. K Gilbert, *Mapping the Victorian Social Body* (U.S, New York: State University of New York Press, 2004) & P. K Gilbert *Imagined Londons* (U.S, New York: New York University Press, 2002); G. Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency: A Study in British Politics and Political Thought, 1899-1914* (London: Prometheus, 1989); A. Blunt & G. Rose, *Writing Women and Space: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies* (London: Longman, 1994). The 1911 census broke new ground technologically being compiled by machinery. It also included new 'impertinent' questions surrounding women's fertility and was completed by householders in their own hand.

<sup>319</sup> Liddington, *Vanishing*, pp. 1-12 & 209-219; Liddington & Crawford, 'Women do not Count'; [www.mappingwomenssuffrage.org.uk](http://www.mappingwomenssuffrage.org.uk) (accessed October 2021).

<sup>320</sup>R. Vosloo (2005) 'Archiving Otherwise: Some Remarks on Memory and Historical Responsibility' *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, 31:2, p. 382. In her work *Vanishing for the Vote* Liddington acknowledges that the census turned the home 'into a contested space, politicized acutely and dramatically one night, transforming the domestic and private into the public and political' Liddington, *Vanishing*, p. 232.

In Joachim's case, the release of the census led both to the discovery of her whereabouts in Cheyne Walk and to her participation in the census boycott as a 'resister'.<sup>321</sup> Joachim's participation in the illegal protest is not especially surprising given her broad commitment to engaging in militant activities for the WSPU. However, her decision to 'resist' rather than to 'evade' the census, coupled with the location of her boycott in Cheyne Walk, raises the prospect that there was a self-consciously creative and historical motivation to her method of protest. As discussed, Cheyne Walk was a place broadly symbolic of patriarchal privilege in the arts, but Joachim's home had particular significance. It was the former residence and studio of the 'father' of impressionist painting Joseph W M Turner who had lived and worked there and was among the houses singled out in Ransome's *Bohemia in London*.<sup>322</sup> Described by him in 1907, as a modest 'tiny red tiled house, a little below the level of the street, set back between an inn and a larger house' the building had become an architectural memorial to the painter. Tourists travelled there to gaze at the building, especially at its roof terrace, where Turner had sat 'to watch the sunsets' and to execute some of his most famous works of the Thames a pilgrimage which still takes place today.<sup>323</sup>

Therefore, Joachim's occupation of the building was doubly encoded with meaning. Not only was there symbolic value in her contemporary habitation of a building that served to inspire public remembrance of an elite male artist of the past, but her census protest there ensured that the female artist, and the feminist body, would forever intercede in its elite male

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<sup>321</sup> Joachim's census protest is available to view at (NA) 1911 Census Return: RG140040700407121703.

<sup>322</sup> Turner appears to have resided in both 118 and 119 Cheyne Walk although he died in 119 where a remembrance plaque is located. However, and importantly, in 1911 when Joachim rented it, 118 was the same house as 119 the two having been knocked through and redeveloped as one house by architect Charles Ashbee between 1897-1898. Hence (and as C Lewis Hind noted in his book 'Turner's Golden Visions' in 1910) 119 Cheyne Walk did not then exist and neither did it appear on the census run in 1911. Therefore 118 was *de facto* Turner's home. See Godfrey, *Survey of London: vol 4 Chelsea*; C. Wood, *Dictionary of British Artists* (London: ACC Books, 1978); R. Stephen Sennott (ed.) *Encyclopaedia of Twentieth Century Architecture* (London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2004) Vol 1(A-F), p. 81; C. Lewis Hind *Turner's Golden Visions* (London: T.C & E.C Jack, 1910) p. 151.

<sup>323</sup> Ransome, *Bohemia* p. 43. Lewis-Hind among them. See, *Turner's Golden Visions* p.151. For current pilgrimages see, for example, *Diary of a Londonness* – 'J. W. M Turner: Walk in Turner's Footsteps' Blog, 22 April 2021 <https://www.diaryofalondoness.com/turner-in-london/> (accessed March 2022).

spaces through the census as archive. Choosing to resist rather than evade the census, meant Joachim was there to supply some details that were recorded on the census for the Cheyne Walk house – namely her surname, marital status, and occupation. The census enumerator wrote ‘suffragette information refused’ but she likely divulged the specific information he was able to record - ‘Joachim’, ‘single’, ‘artist’ as well as her status as a suffragette, serving to insert the ‘unmarried’, ‘creative’ and ‘militant feminist’ body into future historical narratives of ‘Turner’s’ home in perpetuity. This act raises questions about temporality and historical self-awareness in Joachim’s, and indeed in Pankhurst’s occupation of houses in Cheyne Walk, and about how different forms of women’s resistance might speak to us from the archive through the study of place. An acute awareness of history, heritage, and time *must* be ‘part of the revolutionary or utopian nature of any political project’ according to Iain Borden *et al.*, and so too is the seeking by its protagonists of a ‘forward projection of the periodization into the future’.<sup>324</sup>

Historian Hilda Keane has ably demonstrated that suffragists possessed an acute awareness of the historical potential of their unprecedented actions to secure the vote for women.<sup>325</sup> The public invocation of historical heroines such as Mary Wollstonecraft and Elizabeth I as part of the campaign had helped to create a raised consciousness amongst suffragists of their own historic legacy.<sup>326</sup> Moreover, general memory making through campaigners’ compilation of scrapbooks, the keeping of pamphlets, postcards, and press clippings, indicates that the heritage and history making process was widely engaged in by suffrage supporters across the political spectrum. However, it was militant suffragettes

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<sup>324</sup> Borden et al. *The Unknown City*, p. 9. Derrida’s locates the archive as ‘much more than a thing of the past’, or even of present time. It is, ‘a question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow’ which reaches across the narrative relationships between subjects, time and space. Derrida, *Archive Fever*, pp. 34-36; Sassoon, ‘Phantoms of Remembrance’, p. 55.

<sup>325</sup> Keane, ‘Public History’, pp. 581-602; H. Keane (1994) ‘Searching for the Past in Present Defeat: The Construction of Historical and Political Identity in Mid-war British Feminism’ *Women’s History Review* 3:1, pp. 57-80.

<sup>326</sup> Both featured for example, on suffrage banners.

connected to the WSPU who possessed a particularly ‘strong sense of their role in history’ even as the campaign unfolded. Sylvia Pankhurst for example, was one among many WSPU activists that embarked upon the memorialization of the campaign during the continuing struggle for the vote. She wrote a series of articles entitled ‘The History of the Suffrage Movement’ for the WSPU’s paper *Votes for Women* which ran from autumn 1907 to the autumn of 1909 when she was resident in Cheyne Walk.<sup>327</sup>

Joachim’s census resistance at the site of Turner’s revered former home, may be seen both as a feminist and a creative protest in her present that, at the same time, reached self-consciously forward into future narratives of Cheyne Walk as a historical location for elite male creativity. Since the release of the 1911 census, divergent strands of enquiry and opinion have opened up over the historical consciousness of other suffragettes and their locations of protest on census night. For example, Emily Wilding Davison, a schoolteacher and committed WSPU activist best known as a suffragette ‘martyr’ following her death under the King’s horse on Derby Day in Epsom in 1913, hid overnight on census night in the chapel of the Houses of Parliament where she remained until discovered the next morning and arrested.<sup>328</sup> The archive has revealed that census takers retrospectively recorded ‘Westminster’ as Davison’s place of residence on census night and this has caused division amongst suffrage scholars over her intentions – whether Davison’s plan was to ‘evade’ the census by hiding out overnight in the Houses of Parliament (chiefly as a publicity stunt) and that the retrospective recording of her on the census survey the next morning was ‘unintentional’, or whether it was exactly what she intended so that Westminster, the

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<sup>327</sup> Perhaps the pinnacle of WSPU memory making was the formation of Suffrage Fellowship chiefly by former WSPU members. It acted as an official repository or archive for campaign related material ensuring that individual and collective words and deeds would be remembered. Keane, ‘Public History’; Keane, ‘Searching for the Past’.

<sup>328</sup> She hid in the Palace of Westminster in the Chapel of St Mary Undercroft in the crypt of St Stephen’s Hall. There she narrowly escaped the notice of an MP who was showing two visitors around the chapel by hiding in what was referred to as Guy Fawkes’ cupboard – used as a broom cupboard. She was released from arrest after two hours detention without charge.



epicentre of male political power, would be legitimately, ironically, and indelibly recorded in the census archive as her place of residence.<sup>329</sup> Such debates will always be speculative. The level of historical self-consciousness that informed Davison's or Maud Joachim's decision to occupy those particular locations on census night can never be 'known'. At best Joachim's intention like Davison's, can be interpreted as it is here by situating her authorial consciousness in its social, political, and historical context (including her awareness of the census as archive) but also in its imagined, symbolic, and psychological dimensions. Feminists' working in visual, socio-spatial and cultural fields have drawn extensively on psychoanalytic theory to further understandings of women's subjectivity in relation to positionality, making connections between the spatial politics of internal psychic figures and their external cultural geographies.<sup>330</sup>

It is worth noting that Joachim had other viable options open to her on census night. She could for example, have anonymously evaded the census, joining other WSPU members in locally organized 'mass' evasions that took place in towns across London that night, one just 3 miles away.<sup>331</sup> Moreover, as a fully committed suffragette who was involved in a range of militant activities throughout the country, Joachim was very often absent from home. She endured frequent spells of imprisonment from London to Dundee in Scotland, as well as periods of convalescence in Bath after forcible feeding in prison under the aptly named Cat and Mouse Act.<sup>332</sup> Therefore, being in any one place at any one time during the suffrage

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<sup>329</sup> For example, see, Liddington, *Vanishing*, p.129, who argues that Davison was 'caught by an enumerator against the best of intentions', and Dr. Mari Takayanagi, parliamentary historian, and Senior Archivist at the Parliamentary Archives, who believes Davison spent the night there in order to give her residence on the form as 'the Houses of Parliament'. A plaque placed by Labour MP Tony Benn now memorializes Davison's occupation of the premises on census night. For plaque, see, <http://parliamentandwomen.wordpress.com/2011/03/24/emily-wilding-davison/> (accessed July 2013).

<sup>330</sup> S. Smith, *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography: marginality and the Fictions of Self-representation* (U.S, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1987) p. 5; Rendall, *Art and Architecture*.

<sup>331</sup> For example, a typical mass evasion took place at Aldwych skating rink about 3 miles from Chelsea where approximately 570 evaders mostly WSPU supporters spent the night. See, Liddington, *Vanishing*, pp.138-142.

<sup>332</sup> Under the Cat and Mouse Act, imprisoned suffragettes on hunger strike were temporarily released to recover from the horrific cycle of starvation and forcible feeding on pain of being rearrested when sufficiently recovered. To avoid this injurious process, recovering suffragettes were often moved from place to place

campaign was at best an intermittent experience for Joachim. This makes her timely presence as a ‘resistor’ in Turner’s Cheyne Walk studio on census night, 1911, more rather than less likely to have been a deliberate and conscious act, and one that was of symbolic significance given her recording there as an ‘artist’ as well as a suffragette.

In her work on the interplay between gender and heritage sites, Alison Oram discusses the significance of the physical habitation of the female body in male heritage space as having ‘double potential’ because places understood as heritage sites have ‘multiple meanings attached to the layers within them’ which (unlike other spaces) visitors, tourists, and inhabitants, are made acutely aware through guidebooks, plaques, and other cultural discourses.<sup>333</sup> Heritage buildings are consequently never merely architectural or cultural objects, but instead represent specific places of continuing epistemological, social, imaginary, and historical enquiry, negotiated through the figures of their inhabitants overtime by researchers and historians alike. Thus, sites like Cheyne Walk, are places where gender identities can be negotiated but also *renegotiated* through bodies in the present, and by bodies in the past looked at in the ‘here and now’. This potentially reconfigures the gender meanings attached to place and its commemoration in the future.

The houses that Joachim and Pankhurst occupied in Cheyne Walk are still standing. The promenade’s waterfront houses have survived (for the most part) the redevelopment that changed London’s urban landscape so dramatically after the Second World War: perhaps in part because of the history and heritage of the elite male artists that have continued to define its cultural meaning as place. While it may not be the celebrated tourist attraction that it once was, Cheyne Walk continues to be visited and revered as a site where great male artists and

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harboured by fellow suffragettes and sympathisers. Maud spent time recovering from one episode at the Blathwyt family home in Batheaston near Bath. See Crawford, *Women’s Suffrage* p. 310.

<sup>333</sup> Oram, ‘Sexuality in Heterotopia’, pp.533-551; A. Oram (2011) ‘Going on an Outing: The Historic House and Queer Public History’ *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice* 15:2, pp. 189-207; Borden et al. *The Unknown City*, p.20.

writers of bygone generations created great works of art. A plaque to the memory of Turner still marks out *his* house from others on the promenade, and tourists still gaze up at its frontage to ponder on the artistic genius of the great man that lived worked and died there. Cheyne Walk continues to feature in twenty first century guidebooks and tourist maps of London's 'places to see'.<sup>334</sup> Yet there is now another layer to the story. Due to the work of pioneering feminist scholars in the early 1980s, a blue plaque was mounted on the front of number 120 Cheyne Walk commemorating Sylvia Pankhurst's life there as a 'campaigner for women's rights.' The plaque says nothing of her creative identity and the significance of her habitation as an artist there, but for those visitors and tourists who 'know' or have come to understand her as an artist as well as a feminist campaigner, the symbolism of her material memorialization; her continued embodiment at the very heart of 'old bohemia' is not lost. Public historian Graeme Davison has suggested that historic plaques often work to suppress the identity of less powerful groups within the spaces of the city but conversely, the commemorative plaque can also serve as a quiet, interventionist protest, against more dominant discourses of collective remembering.<sup>335</sup> It is in this context that Pankhurst's plaque now jostles with Turner's next door, whose former home and studio is now also the subject of feminist scrutiny thanks to Maud Joachim and the release of the 1911 census. Joachim's creative and feminist body is beginning to be *reinserted* into Cheyne Walk and into Turner's territory and gradually made public through suffrage walks, talks, and publications.<sup>336</sup> Such work alongside Pankhurst's plaque, continues the (re)insertion of both Joachim and

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<sup>334</sup> For example, <http://www.kingsroadrocks.com/2013/12/turner-and-the-thames-in-chelsea/>; <http://general-southerner.blogspot.com/2012/05/cheyne-walk-chelsea-very-very-special.html>; <http://www.londonshoes.blog/2018/06/23/cheyne-walk-draft/> (accessed January 2022).

<sup>335</sup> G. Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History* (Australia, St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 2000) p. 55.

<sup>336</sup> Liddington & Morton, 'Walking' published to run alongside guided walks with the authors. Also see, Liddington, *Vanishing*.

Pankhurst's feminist and creative bodies among the 'great men' of art in Cheyne Walk, illustrating how the gendered landscape of place 'is always in process of *reappropriation*'.<sup>337</sup>



*Figure 9. Sylvia Pankhurst's house with blue plaque mounted in Cheyne Walk. The building where Turner's studio was located and where Joachim spent census night is set back from the road behind the tree. Source: Derek Harper <https://www.geograph.org.uk> (accessed November 2022).*

### ***Bertha Newcombe: Sex, Politics, and the Painter's studio.***

By the time Pankhurst and Joachim took rooms in Cheyne Walk, artist and suffragist Bertha Newcombe was in her fifties and had already been a resident there for well over twenty years. She moved into number 1 Cheyne Walk sometime in the 1880s with her family – her father Samuel Prout Newcombe, her mother Hannah, and her sisters Mabel and Jess -

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<sup>337</sup> Bender, *Landscape*, p. 270.

remaining there until her father's death late in 1913. The Newcombe family were comfortably middle class and had a strong, artistic tradition. The renowned topographical artist Samuel Prout (1783-1852) had been a close relative, and Bertha's father continued the family 'trade' becoming an artist, author, and co-founder of the successful and pioneering London School of Photography established in 1853 and based in London's Newgate Street. The London School flourished and had several satellite premises in other parts of London, Manchester, and Liverpool by the 1870s. Having made his fortune, Samuel Prout Newcombe sold the business, retiring to pursue his love of art, painting, and collecting antiquities. A new home in Cheyne Walk perfectly articulated this amalgam of interests and moving there put the Newcombe family on London's social and artistic map.<sup>338</sup>

Consequently, Bertha Newcombe did not *choose* as an artist or as a suffragist to live in Cheyne Walk, nor did she live there independently as Pankhurst and Joachim did. Rather, her being and remaining there was wholly dependent upon her family, removing the element of autonomy from past or present understandings of her physical interpolation there. However, the longevity of her time in Cheyne Walk coupled with her ongoing status as a professional woman artist, allows an ontological shift in the chapter's emphasis from suffrage artists' symbolic occupation of an address to her experience of living in and moving through that address, as a women artist and suffragist actively engaged in political art making there. Such a 'politics of emplacement is not linked to identity per se, but it provides a material and cultural context within and against which suffrage artists' feminist and creative identities were shaped and can be understood as a process of co-production between subjects and places.<sup>339</sup> Cheyne Walk was defined by the turn of the century as a 'beacon of social and

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<sup>338</sup>Samuel Prout Newcombe has been listed as an artist, a local school master, and as a published author of *Fireside Facts from the Great Exhibition*. See, Crawford, *Women's Suffrage*, p.448; H. Mallieliu, *The Dictionary of British Watercolour Artists up to 1920* (London: Antique Collectors Club, 1976); Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*, p. 167.

<sup>339</sup> Escobar & Harcourt, *Women and the Politics of Place*, p. 2

artistic tradition' and its residents as creative conservatives who had 'nothing to do with the bohemians and political radicals' that occupied 'Chelsea's meaner streets'.<sup>340</sup> This was something Newcombe's habitation and activities there challenged just as Pankhurst and Joachim's overlapping occupation there did.

Newcombe's studio, like many unmarried women artists of her generation, was located within her family home and represented the heart of her professional, political, and social life. During the years she lived and worked in Cheyne Walk, Newcombe studied fine art at the renowned Slade School; achieved substantial critical acclaim as a painter; joined several professional art societies including the then 'avant-garde' New English Art Club which accepted both men and women members; produced a steady stream of landscape paintings and commercial book illustrations, and exhibited on numerous occasions including with the prestigious if conservative Royal Academy - truly pioneering achievements for a woman of her time. Newcombe also joined and exhibited with the Society of Women Artists and the Society of Lady Artists (an early articulation of her feminist identity) before producing suffrage artwork for the ASL and sitting on its committee from 1907, alongside her Chelsea friends discussed in chapter 2.<sup>341</sup> Joining the ASL merged Newcombe's creative and feminist passions and reflected her commitment to law-abiding methods of suffrage campaigning: a fervent commitment which at times brought her into conflict with other campaigners and Chelsea residents. Among them was writer Thomas Hardy's estranged wife who Newcombe chastised 'in a most ill-bred manner' for previously belonging 'to the Militant Set'.<sup>342</sup>

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<sup>340</sup> S. Dark, *London* (U.S., New York: Macmillan, 1923) p. 59.

<sup>341</sup> See, Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*, p. 448; Tickner, *Spectacle*, p. 247. Though Newcombe likely had other latent connections to the women's suffrage movement, she appears not to have formalized these links independently until the campaign was reinvigorated following the new 'militant' actions of the WSPU in 1906, despite being opposed to their methods.

<sup>342</sup> Newcombe strongly believed that votes for women should be obtained by peaceful methods and was not a supporter of militancy. Her attitude to the WSPU's policy was made clear in a letter to NUWSS secretary Philippa Strachey in which she argued it simply 'cannot be endorsed'. See, ALCWS TWL 6.1 Box 1 9/01/1030

Newcombe's other politics tended toward 'the radical end of the spectrum' extending to the socialist as well as the women's suffrage movement. In 1895, she was a founding member of the 'Ninety-Five Club' a group of Chelsea women who supported radical Liberal candidates in county council elections. She was also an affiliate of the socialist, oftentimes elitist intellectual group, the Fabian Society, which had grown out of the sexual egalitarianism of the ILP and with whom several Edwardian suffragists and avant-garde feminists in Britain and the U.S shared close links. Dora Marsden, a one-time WSPU militant, who later became disillusioned with the suffrage campaign, was a feminist, socialist, and editor of the avant-garde journal, *The Freewoman*. She regarded Fabian women as the only other group than feminists 'who profess to be intelligent and advanced'.<sup>343</sup>

Consequently, numerous protagonists from the suffrage and socialist movements visited Newcombe's studio in Cheyne Walk making it a hub of political as well as creative activity. Feminist scholars have demonstrated how the domestic studios of women artists in this period were often used as a socio-political hub for feminist and other political meetings, as well as functioning as a place of creativity and commerce, thus complicating the gender boundaries that supposedly separated public enterprises from the private spaces of home.<sup>344</sup> However, Daniel Buren's work has emphasised other ways in which the studio is pertinent to understanding women's political and artistic practices. Buren views the studio as among the

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(WL). Probably because Mrs. Hardy was a well-known supporter of women in the arts, and sympathetic to the suffrage cause, Newcombe called upon her looking for aid for the LSWS (the London affiliate of the NUWSS). Her visit did not go well. Hardy subsequently complained that not only was Newcombe's visit 'unexpected - and uninvited' but that she was chastised by her 'in a most ill-bred manner' for previously belonging 'to the Militant Set'. See, Mrs Thomas Hardy to Miss Strachey, 21st June 1910, Autograph Letter Collection: Women's Suffrage, 6.1 Box 1 9/01/0801 (WL).

<sup>343</sup> See, Delap, *The Feminist Avant-Garde*, p. 35. American feminists attached to the Fabian Society included Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Harriet Stanton Blatch. See also, B. Webb, *Diaries of Beatrice Webb*, 9<sup>th</sup> April 1895 (LSE typescript) p. 390. Available at <http://digital.library.lse.ac.uk/objects/lse:wip502kaf/read#page/390/mode/2up> (accessed November 2022). She describes Newcombe as a 'Fabian artist'; General correspondence, Passfield Papers (1941-42), LSE Archives Catalogue PASSFIELD/2/4/M.

<sup>344</sup> For instance, Cherry & Helland, *Local/Global*; Cherry, *Beyond the Frame*; Walker, 'Locating the Global', pp. 174-196; Walker, 'Women Patron Builders', pp. 121-136; Morton, 'Changing Spaces', pp. 623-627; Thomas, *Women Art Workers*; Quirk, *Art and Money*.

first of a series of physical and cultural frames through which the identity of the artist and the significance of their artwork should be examined, and this includes the place or location of the studio as well as its internal spaces.<sup>345</sup> Deborah Cherry and Marsha Meskimmon argue that locating the practices of women artists *as* women artists within specific places, times, and contexts, ‘is crucial in allowing the significance of their mediation in and through particular discourses [including masculine heritage discourses like Cheyne Walk’s] to be explored’.<sup>346</sup> This is done most effectively alongside an exploration of women’s artwork itself where both the artist, and the artwork, are viewed as material ‘bodies’ within the studio, which is itself embedded within a particular place that may have specific cultural meanings. This approach represents a ‘double play’ between materiality and agency in which the body of the artist and their art, in conjunction with their historical and material place in the world, are neither dismissed as irrelevant, nor reified as the essential origin of their meaning. Instead, they are ‘implicated in relations, processes, and practices, through which matter comes to matter, or becomes meaningful’.<sup>347</sup> I adopt this approach to perform a feminist-place analysis of select paintings made and exhibited by Newcombe within the spaces of her Cheyne Walk studio.

The positioning of Newcombe’s studio within the heritage landscape of Cheyne Walk, provides a very specific and explicitly gendered cultural frame through which to consider the politics of her embodiment *as* a woman artist, suffragist, and feminist, enrolled with the meaningfulness of her art and art making there. Like all heritage sites, Cheyne Walk was dedicated to the cultural reproduction of its past. Thus, the idealised spatial form of the artist’s studio *there* was explicitly defined according to early nineteenth century descriptions

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<sup>345</sup> D. Buren (1979) ‘The Function of the Studio’ (translated by Thomas Repensek) *October* 10, p. 51-53.

<sup>346</sup> M. Meskimmon, ‘Feminisms and Art Theory’ in P. Smith & C. Wilde (eds.) *A Companion to Art Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002) p. 389.

<sup>347</sup> Betterton, *Intimate Distance*, p. 3-4; E. Grosz, *Space, Time, and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies* (London: Routledge, 1995) pp. 9-24.



of the studio as a reverential place, reserved for the solitary work of the creative male genius. This persisted, despite more contemporary understandings of the studio having shifted towards a more open and collaborative emphasis on creativity.

This ‘myth’ which formed the basis of the disparity between Woolf and Ransome’s writings on Cheyne Walk outlined at the outset of the chapter, fulfilled its cultural function as a heritage site to construct and validate artistic identity as male identity, and thus ‘the patriarchal social and cultural values that underpinned it’.<sup>348</sup> This point is neatly made by Zemgulys in her brief critique of a photograph featured in Godfrey’s popular, *Survey of London*, of pre-Raphaelite painter William Holman-Hunt’s house. Godfrey literally uses an ‘X’ to ‘mark the spot’ on a window of a house in Cheyne Walk, where the ‘genius’ Holman-Hunt’s studio was believed to have been located, and thus the place where his artistic masterpieces were made. Zemgulys describes Godfrey’s painstaking attempt to indicate the studios *exact* position in the building as ‘comical’, but at the same time acknowledges the seriousness of the cultural message his efforts sought to convey. Godfrey’s determination to identify the precise location of Holman-Hunt’s studio she argues, ensured that the place [the studio in Cheyne Walk], the artwork that was made there, and the body of the artistic genius ‘were linked in their worth’ and defined as ubiquitously male.<sup>349</sup> Godfrey’s *Survey* like other widely circulated guidebooks, tourist pamphlets, and photographs of Cheyne Walk, can thus be read as an important part of the broader cultural geographies of art which mapped the place or positionality of gender identities vis-à-vis creative power and belonging as male.

Therefore, Newcombe, a professional woman artist living and working in Cheyne Walk, occupied a contradictory subject positioning. Her identity as a talented and successful professional female painter of the period, was likely bolstered to some degree by the location

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<sup>348</sup> Smith, ‘Heritage’, p.160.

<sup>349</sup> Zemgulys, ‘Night and Day’, p. 62.

of her studio within such a revered artistic site as Cheyne Walk. Alison Bain's work on the artist's studio has demonstrated how women 'tenaciously grasp the idealized spatial form of the studio as proof of status, commitment, and belonging to the profession' and this includes its location in a place renowned for cultural creativity or bohemianism.<sup>350</sup> On the other hand, Newcombe's intimate knowledge of it - her likely first-hand encounters with the daily tourists on the promenade, and familiarity with the popular literature detailing its elite male histories - all ensured an acute awareness that living and working in Cheyne Walk *as a* woman artist, meant inhabiting a place peculiar in space and time: a place that existed in the public mind, and in the collective memory, as a site symbolic of male superiority in the arts.

Situating Newcombe, her artwork, and her studio in Cheyne Walk, helps to bring out their meanings as locally situated and interconnected sites that shaped and shape contemporary and historical understandings, of what it meant and means for women artists' bodies, creative and political practices, to be enrolled and located. This can best be illustrated through an analysis of two of Newcombe's explicitly political oil paintings, made in her studio, as embodied art practices: the first, a portrait of playwright, socialist, and Fabian, George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) (painted 1892) and the second, a feminist, historical portrait of Emily Davies and Elizabeth Garrett Anderson (1836-1917) presenting the first women's suffrage petition to John Stuart Mill in 1866 (painted 1910). Such an analysis, as Jane Rendall explains, does not necessarily try to explain 'the intention of an artist or attempt to unravel the 'unconscious' aspects of a work' but provides a material context within which to explore the interactions between art, its meaning, and the architectural space and place in which it is made and displayed, as well as the feminist progression of Newcombe's art itself.<sup>351</sup>

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<sup>350</sup> A. Bain (2004) 'Female Artistic Identity in Place: The Studio' *Social and Cultural Geography* 5:2, pp. 171-2.

<sup>351</sup> J. Rendell, *Art, and Architecture: A Place Between* (Prepublication document) p. 152. Available at: <http://www.janerendell.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2009/03/Art-and-Architecture-prepublication.pdf>



*Figure 10. Bertha Newcombe's portrait of George Bernard Shaw, 1892, held at Ruskin College. Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/68089753@N07/9375084613> (accessed January 2023).*

Simply by producing artwork there as a professional female artist, Newcombe intervened in the creative power geographies that defined Cheyne Walk as the de facto territory of the elite male artist. However, by painting Shaw in her studio, Newcombe not only subverted gendered expectations about the identity of the artist in the studio as male, but about who more broadly held the power of the artistic 'gaze' fundamental to contemporary debates about sex, art, and power. Shaw was among many guests from the socialist

movement that Newcombe received in her ‘small, wainscoted studio’ which also included fellow Fabians Beatrice and Sydney Webb.<sup>352</sup> Her portrait of Shaw embodied these dissident political voices and, as the portrait was signed ‘Bertha Newcombe’, publicly articulated her socialist identity. In this sense, the portrait can be located within Newcombe’s broader project ‘to provide visual records of the circle of progressive middle-class intellectuals to which she belonged, and in which [her] feminist politics were inflected through radical and class politics.’<sup>353</sup>

Yet Newcombe’s feminism may also be read through the Shaw portrait in more discursive ways, by enrolling the identity of the portrait sitter, and the performativity of the artist herself, within the studio and the place where it was made. Griselda Pollock succinctly explains that it was only the male artist who had ‘the right to enjoy being the body of the painter in the studio’ and this was especially true in heritage narratives of Cheyne Walk where women were publicly memorialised as the subjects, the objects of sexual desire and inspiration, under the gaze of the genius male artist in *his* studio there.<sup>354</sup> By painting a man – not least a renowned creative and politically radical figure like Shaw – Newcombe upended this cultural notion. Through her signed portrait of Shaw, *she* was made visible as the female body of the painter in the studio there. In this painting, it was Newcombe’s gaze as female artist that was fixed upon the male subject as object, inspiring sexual desire, and creative genius. Newcombe developed a passion for Shaw during his many portrait sittings resulting

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<sup>352</sup>B. Webb, *The Diaries of Beatrice Webb* 9<sup>th</sup> March (1897) p. 486 (typescript: LSE) available at: <http://digital.library.lse.ac.uk/objects/lse:wip502kaf/read#page/486/mode/2up> (accessed March 2014); Webb, *Diaries*, passim; General correspondence Passfield Papers (LSE).

<sup>353</sup> This point is made by D. Cherry, *Painting Women*, p. 208. The Shaw painting was originally donated to the Labour Party by Newcombe and was thought to have been lost in the Second World War. It was only recently recovered at Ruskin College in 2011. See, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-18512351> (accessed September 2020). Newcombe also produced portrait sketches in 1895 of Sydney and Beatrice Webb. These later appeared in Edward Pease’s book, ‘The History of the Fabian Movement’, E. R Pease, *The History of the Fabian Society* (U. S: New York, New York, E.P. Dutton & co., 1916) *frontpiece*.

<sup>354</sup> G. Pollock, *Avant-Garde Gambits, 1888 -1893: Gender and the Colour of Art History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1992) p. 140, quoted in, Betterton, *Intimate Distance*, p. 4.

in an affair between the two. According to Beatrice Webb who viewed the Shaw painting on site in Newcombe's Cheyne Walk studio, this produced 'a powerful picture' in which love 'had given genius to the artist.'<sup>355</sup> Daniel Buren argues that the studio's physical geography should not be dismissed as simply 'the place where artists lived and worked' when exploring the bonds of meaning that exist between artists, art works, and the studio, but instead seen 'in terms of the narrative plot lines current in the times and places in which artists lived' and made their work.<sup>356</sup> Through her painting of Shaw - and her *act* of gazing - Newcombe intercedes in Cheyne Walk's well worn, patriarchal narrative plot lines, by reconfiguring the studio there as a site of female creativity and genius, subversively inspired not only by radical politics, but by sexual desire.

The sense of not belonging or of 'otherness' for women artists in narratives of Cheyne Walk was amplified for Newcombe as a suffragist and suffrage artist by the masculine meanings attached to her own home. Like most houses that made up Cheyne Walk's architectural landscape, the Newcombe household had distinctly male histories ascribed to it which in turn formed part of Cheyne Walk's public narratives. The Newcombe home itself was a relatively recent build, but a significant amount of architectural salvage reclaimed from the various homes of famous male residents (whose houses in Cheyne Walk had long since been demolished) had been built into its interior features, including Newcombe's own studio. These displaced relics and their cultural heritage were described in detail in Godfrey's *Survey*, and thus the Newcombe household was fully inculcated in the reproduction of Cheyne Walk's elite male past. Godfrey's description of the Newcombe family's incumbency

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<sup>355</sup> Webb, *The Diaries of Beatrice Webb*, 9<sup>th</sup> March (1897) p. 486. Beatrice Webb confirms the affair, and it seems Newcombe may have had hopes of marrying Shaw who married an American socialite instead. Crawford, *Women's Suffrage* p. 448-449; Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*, p. 168.

<sup>356</sup> Daniels, 'Art Studio' p. 147.

there, not as one of tenancy but as one of ‘custodianship’, reinforces the tangible sense of Newcombe’s home and studio as enclosed within Cheyne Walk’s masculinist museum.<sup>357</sup>

Woolf vehemently argued that Cheyne Walk’s explicit function as a museum dedicated to the memory of arts ‘great men’ negated women’s prospects of being either creative or radical there. Chelsea more broadly, and Cheyne Walk in particular, provoked her to such a degree that she illustrated this point by deliberately locating the family home of her fictional heroine Katherine Hilbery in Cheyne Walk in her essay *Night and Day*. In a similarly relic ridden house to Newcombe’s, Hilbery is prevented from pursuing her own imaginative work because of the limits imposed upon her by acting through space overtly defined by tradition, and by an ideology of ‘great men.’<sup>358</sup> In many ways Woolf’s writing pre-empted postmodern, feminist discussions about the spatial relationship between subjectivity and positionality - or as Rendell succinctly puts it, discussions of how ‘*where I am makes a difference to what I can know and who I can be.*’<sup>359</sup> These limits were of personal significance to Woolf, who likened her own life in the wealthy Stephen’s family home at the historic Hyde Park Gate, as akin to being encased in a ‘museum.’<sup>360</sup>

Women’s self-awareness and feminist identity is very often linked to a gendered sense of inhabited space or ‘place’ as not their own. If a woman *as a woman* feels the limits imposed upon her by acting through space overtly defined as masculine, then her located practices there ‘become a social and cultural performance in which the meanings and values associated with the specificities of place are first felt, then either accepted, rejected and/or contested.’<sup>361</sup> These gendered performances manifest in a variety of ways (as well as

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<sup>357</sup> See, Godfrey, *Survey of London, Part I*, p. 31. S.P Newcombe Esquire is named as ‘custodian’.

<sup>358</sup> Woolf, ‘Great men’s Houses’ in *The London Scene*, pp. 23-29; Woolf, *Night and Day* (U.S: San Diego, Harcourt, 1920); Zemgulys, ‘Night and Day’, p. 57-67.

<sup>359</sup> Rendell, *Art and Architecture* p.156.

<sup>360</sup> J. E. Fisher (1990) ‘The Seduction of the Father: Virginia Woolf and Leslie Stephen’ *Women’s Studies* 18 p. 33.

<sup>361</sup>G. Rose (Women and Geography Study Group) *Feminist Geographies: Explorations in Diversity and Difference* (London: Pearson Education, 1997); Smith, ‘Heritage, Gender’, p. 167.

consciously and/or unconsciously) but nevertheless are always responses to the subject's place positioning. For Woolf's fictional heroine Katherine Hilbery, the response to her embodiment within Cheyne Walk was 'misery' and the material price was the death of her productive self, trapped within its environment of 'memorialization'.<sup>362</sup>

Yet in Newcombe's case, such situated knowledge - or the location of the 'knower' within the 'known' - enables her art making there, particularly her explicitly feminist art making, to be seen as a form of resistance to her positioning within a place which symbolised male superiority in the arts and thus women's inferiority. As the suffrage campaign gathered momentum and Newcombe joined the ASL, she began to articulate her radical political identity much more explicitly through her work than she had in her painting of Shaw. By then in her fifties, and a fine artist by trade, she nevertheless began to experiment with the new medium of poster or graphic design, producing posters and postcards for the ASL, with varying measures of success. In 1910, Newcombe produced a **posterette** for the ASL advertising the 'Election Fund' organized by the NUWSS to raise money to support MPs in favour of women's suffrage during the General election. It featured a female figure which was well executed, but there is a naivety to the application of the lettering which is not well planned or adequately spaced and looks consequently 'amateurish'. The posterette illustrates the difficulties faced by many professional, fine artists, looking to transfer their skills to the newly emerging but very different discipline of poster or 'graphic' design. However, it does illustrate Newcombe's willingness to embrace and to experiment with new forms of art and art making. Far from being subsumed by where she was, this experimentation signalled a growth in Newcombe's creative confidence.

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<sup>362</sup> Zemgulys, 'Night and Day' p.67.



*Figure 11. The Apple Seller, 1910, officially titled, 'An Incident in Connection with the Presentation of the First Women's Suffrage Petition to Parliament in 1866' is probably Newcombe's best known work. Source: WL digital collection, LSE <https://www.flickr.com/photos/lselibrary/26510794911/> (accessed March 2022).*

She also produced an oil painting in 1910 (a general election year) entitled, 'An Incident in Connection with the Presentation of the First Women's Suffrage Petition to Parliament in 1866' known colloquially as 'The Apple Seller'. Probably Newcombe's best known work, it depicts the moment when Emily Davies and Elizabeth Garrett Anderson presented the first women's suffrage petition (initially hidden under an apple-seller's cart) to John Stuart Mill in Westminster Hall. Like Sylvia Pankhurst's essays on the history of the



women's suffrage campaign published between 1907 and 1909, Newcombe's *Apple Seller* produced in 1910, can be located within the context of a broader body of work that sought to commemorate the history of the women's suffrage movement while the campaign was still underway. Yet if, as art theorist Meskimmon claims, 'the work of art *is* the work of embodiment' then the *Apple Seller* not only articulates Newcombe's feminist beliefs through its subject matter, but also in how it relates to the historical, political, and geographical locus in which she and the *Apple Seller* were situated as feminist 'bodies.'<sup>363</sup> Newcombe's status as a known, professional woman artist, meant that *all* her paintings intervened in the normative masculine power structures of the art world which served to marginalize female achievement within the profession. But the *Apple Seller* specifically intervened in the genre of history painting which was considered *the* most elite form of oil painting and thus the preserve of male artists. *Their* historic scenes invariably depicted the battlefield and the triumph of its heroic male figures. Thus, men's ownership of the artistic skills and knowledge required to produce such paintings of the past, were used to reproduce their broader claims to history, power, and territory in the present.

Newcombe's *Apple Seller* subverted this genre by commemorating a significant moment in the history of the women's suffrage movement - depicting *its* heroic female figures on the gendered battlefield of the public street, and at the steps of the political battleground that was Westminster.<sup>364</sup> In painting this feminist historical scene, Newcombe also usurped the creative tools, skills, and knowledge claims, as well as the visual language of 'men's' history painting, to speak about women's feminist past, reinforcing their present claims not only to political citizenship, but to creative equity.<sup>365</sup> That Newcombe produced

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<sup>363</sup> Meskimmon, *Women Making Art*, p. 5.

<sup>364</sup> Crawford makes the point that this harking back in 1910, to the more genteel days of the suffrage movement by Newcombe, was in stark contrast to events that unfolded that year, notably the violence perpetrated upon demonstrating suffragettes by the police on 'Black Friday'. See, Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*, pp. 168-169.

<sup>365</sup> Calling on heroic female figures from history to legitimise women's current claims to political citizenship was a strategy broadly employed within the suffrage movement. It is visually evident in the frequent use of

and initially displayed her painting of the historic deeds of heroic feminist figures within her studio, itself situated within a site dedicated to promoting the histories of arts great men, adds symbolic value to its meaning. If the notion of embodiment is taken seriously, then *The Apple Seller* itself becomes a feminist ‘body’ occupying space in Cheyne Walk just as Newcombe, Pankhurst, or Joachim did. Consequently, those who viewed it there as part of the external world, interacted with it as they would interact with other feminist bodies in the world. Thus, the viewer becomes an actor and spectator in the ongoing processes through which art is made meaningful, as each takes up their own position in relation to their knowledge and experience of the subject depicted in the artwork, together with their knowledge and experience of the place *where* the work is made and displayed.<sup>366</sup>

Discussing feminist artist Susan Isabel Dacre’s portrait painting of suffrage campaigner Lydia Becker, Deborah Cherry emphasizes the importance of these layers of embodiment in fully understanding feminist portraiture as a site of women’s resistance. Dacre’s painting of Becker was displayed during the campaign in fellow artist and suffragist Helen Blackburn’s rooms in London. Cherry argues that the portrait itself not only ‘produced woman as a sign of feminist resistance’ but for those women who saw it *there* in Blackburn’s London rooms, at the geographic heart of men’s political privilege and power, it also incited ‘women’s desires for representation and equality, not only in politics but also in the domain of culture’ and art.<sup>367</sup> Newcombe’s *The Apple Seller* and its suffrage heroines, were painted at the cultural and historic heart of men’s *creative* power and privilege in London, and visitors who saw it displayed there, first journeyed through the milieu of tourists, historic houses, and plaques, experiencing first-hand the ‘visceral’ sense of Cheyne Walk as place:

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images of historical heroines such as Florence Nightingale and Elizabeth I in suffrage processions and on suffrage banners, in texts, and in speeches.

<sup>366</sup> Meskimmon, *Women Making Art*, p. 78.

<sup>367</sup> Cherry, *Painting Women*, pp. 208- 210.

positioning themselves within or against its masculinist narratives as Ransome, Woolf, Beatrice Webb, and countless others including Newcombe herself had done.<sup>368</sup> This is Buren's 'external frame' through which they viewed *The Apple Seller* in her studio, not only as a sign of feminist resistance, but as a corporeal intervention in the sexual politics of place: a temporal lens through which this author and readers also experience *The Apple Seller*, once its original positioning is determined.<sup>369</sup>

It is through such 'skeins of relations' between the internal and external world, between art and other bodies, between past and present viewings of *The Apple Seller*, that 'the actual site of [its] production, the...territories it portrayed and the location of its viewing' are interconnected and become integral to its meaning as a material act of feminist resistance.<sup>370</sup> Rowena Fowler and Suzanne MacLeod have incisively used this interconnected approach to art, site, and the body, to interpret suffragette (and notably former art student) Mary Richardson's attack on the iconoclastic male painting of a female nude 'The Rokeby Venus' in London's National Gallery in 1914. Various museums, art galleries, and historical monuments, had become targets of usurpation and destruction by suffragettes who were ready 'to challenge the notion of artistic heritage as part of the primacy of property (public or private)'.<sup>371</sup> Fowler and MacLeod argue that the embodiment of *The Venus* along with

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<sup>368</sup> Ellen Landau and Christine Lofaro speak of the place of the studio as integral to our understanding of art and of art making because of 'the visceral role geography can play in stimulating creativity' and understanding. In her diary, Beatrice Webb makes direct reference to her knowledge of Cheyne Walk's history and landscape of 'grand public buildings with their national historical associations'. See entry, 15<sup>th</sup> sept 1885, p. 434 (LSE digital library) available at: <http://digital.library.lse.ac.uk> (accessed October 2014). See also, Cherry & Helland, *Local/Global* p. 4; E. G. Landau (2005) 'The Pollock-Krasner house and Study Center' in W. Corn, 'Artists' Homes and Studios: A Special Kind of Archive' *American Art* 19:1, pp. 28 – 31; C.P Lofaro (2012) 'Studio Art Practice: A Multi-layered Resource' paper published for the APS Bank Centre Art Exhibition, Malta. Available as pdf at: <https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/handle/123456789/27085> pp. 10-13.

<sup>369</sup> The work of art is made 'in a specific place which it cannot take into account. All the same it is there that it was ordered, forged, and only there may it be truly said to be in place'. See N. Kaye, *Site Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation* (London: Routledge, 2000) pp. 1-11; M. J. Jacobs, *The Studio Reader: On the Space of Artists* (U.S, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010) p. 2; S. Daniels (2011) 'Art Studio' in Agnew & Livingstone, *The Sage Handbook*, pp. 137-149.

<sup>370</sup> Cherry & Helland, *Local/Global* p. 4. See also, A. Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) p. 62.

<sup>371</sup> See, D. Gamboni, *The Destruction of Art: Iconoclasm and Vandalism since the French Revolution* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007) p. 95.

Richardson herself, both female ‘bodies’ enclosed within the walls of the National Gallery (at that time an elitist, patriarchal art museum) is integral to fully understanding Richardson’s attempt to *destroy* the painting as an act of feminist resistance.<sup>372</sup> Simply reversing the militant element of *destruction* in this hypothesis, enables Newcombe’s *creation* of the explicitly feminist Apple Seller within ‘the museum’ of Cheyne Walk also to be seen as an act of feminist *and* of artistic resistance – albeit one situated at the opposite end of the same continuum of protest. In this way, museums and heritage sites can help illuminate the ‘troubling of oppositions’ that often exists between the artist as sexed subject, and the site within which the artist and their artwork itself is made and/or displayed. It is this type of interconnectivity – one that enrolls ‘location, power, vision and corporeality’ - that gives art the potential to ‘materialise female embodiment as a process’ and in so doing, make place, the artist, and the artwork itself, interlinking locations of feminist struggle that interplayed with the politics of the suffrage campaign.<sup>373</sup>

### ***Louise Jopling-Rowe: Footsteps of a Feminist Flaneuse?***

Continuing with the notion of place as ‘integral to meaning’ I now turn to the final case study of suffrage artist Louise Jopling-Rowe’s temporary, peripatetic use of Cheyne Walk’s embankment as an articulation of her feminist politics.<sup>374</sup> The embankment (and gardens) running alongside Cheyne Walk was renowned by day and by night for its vibrant mix of people attracted by the public houses, food, and coffee stalls there. It was well used by returning dock workers, as well as tourists and artists, many of whom enjoyed the added frisson of experiencing the promenade at dusk. Author Arthur Ransome acknowledged that

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<sup>372</sup> R. Fowler (1991) ‘Why Did Suffragettes Attack Works of Art?’ *Women’s History*, 2:3 pp. 109-125; S. MacLeod (2006) ‘Civil Disobedience and Political Agitation: The Art Museum as a Site of Protest’ *Museum and Society*, 5:1, pp. 44-57.

<sup>373</sup> Cherry & Helland, *Local/Global* p.4; Meskimmon, *Women Making Art* p. 77.

<sup>374</sup> Meskimmon, *Women Making Art*, p. 72. Chelsea Embankment and gardens runs alongside Cheyne Walk creating an open promenade along the river Thames.

there was something peculiar about its ‘atmosphere’ that with its history and riverside location old bohemia was ‘a place different, special to every other suburb of the town’.<sup>375</sup> The view that certain places have a different feel to others has been articulated by cultural geographer John Allen as ‘ambient power’ where there is ‘something about the character of an urban setting ... that affects how we experience it and which, in turn, seeks to induce certain stances’ that can act ‘both to encourage and to inhibit how we move around, use, and act within them’.<sup>376</sup> The significance of ambient power on movement has been used to explore the reconfiguration of gender relations and identities, chiefly by focusing on the female body as a moving spatial field that makes new space by either reproducing the established sexual politics of localities or disrupting them.<sup>377</sup> Here, I follow in the footsteps of Jopling-Rowe’s strolls along the embankment during the early years of her fight for women’s political and creative equity, opening fresh opportunities to engage in spatial debates around the relationship between gender, place, and power by calling upon notions of the impossible *flâneuse* and the importance of Michel de Certeau’s ‘rhetoric of walking’ to feminist interpretations of place and bodily movement.<sup>378</sup>

The *flâneur*, or as Walter Benjamin would have it the ‘botanist of the asphalt’, moved alone in the city, and via the ‘gaze’ observed and experienced its sites and sights ‘sliding between various classes’ and ‘watching life on the streets’.<sup>379</sup> The *flâneur* has been defined as a male role because it was not, it is argued, a role open to middle class women: the ‘other’ most likely to have had time and resources to paint or write of their urban experiences, and

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<sup>375</sup> Ransome, *Bohemia* p. 39.

<sup>376</sup> J. Allen (2006) ‘Ambient power: Berlins Potsdamer Platz and the Seductive Logic of Public Spaces’, *Urban Studies*, 43(2), p. 445.

<sup>377</sup> Cresswell, ‘Mobilising the Movement’, pp. 447-461; N. Munn (1996) ‘Excluded Spaces: The Figure in the Australian Aboriginal Landscape’ *Critical Inquiry*, 22, pp. 446-465; S.M. Low (2003) ‘Embodied Spaces: Anthropological Theories of Body, Space, and Culture’ *Space and Culture* 6:9, p. 14.

<sup>378</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

<sup>379</sup> W. Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: a Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism* trans. H. Zohn (London: New Left Books, 1973) p.36.

the class of women from which many suffrage artists were drawn. Janet Wolff and Griselda Pollock have argued that the sexual divisions operating during this period made it effectively impossible for the female equivalent of the artistic *flâneur* - the *flâneuse* - to exist.<sup>380</sup>

Women's public movement in the nineteenth and early twentieth century was not 'an act of free will' but heavily structured by cultural expectations surrounding gender and class encapsulated by the notion of separate spheres.<sup>381</sup> Wolff and Pollock's view has dominated historical and feminist deconstructions of women artists' public movement and experience as creative 'others' in the modern metropolis. It has to some degree been countered by Elizabeth Wilson, Judith Walkowitz, and Linda Nead who have demonstrated the dangers of imposing such an ideological 'straitjacket' on women's historical access to the ocular pleasures of the city.<sup>382</sup> Certainly, by the latter years of the nineteenth century, many women artists in Britain had begun to actively enjoy the visual pleasures of the city alone, without chaperones, which many saw as an articulation of their feminist politics.

Adopting the role of *flâneur* Ransome described how it was often in the early evening that the artistic 'irregulars' of new bohemia wound their way to Cheyne Walk to 'usurp the bohemia of the past' walking its historic promenade and embankment.<sup>383</sup> Female artists are conspicuously absent from his account of these creative 'usurpers' and women's presence there is mentioned only in passing as the 'wife or friendly model' to a male companion.<sup>384</sup> However, accounts of Jopling-Rowe's strolls there in the late 1880s appearing sporadically in

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<sup>380</sup> J. Wolff (1985) 'The Invisible *Flâneuse*: Women and the Literature of Modernity' *Theory, Culture and Society* 2:3, pp. 37-46; G. Pollock, 'Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity' in Pollock, *Vision and Difference*.

<sup>381</sup> Cresswell, 'Mobilising the Movement', p. 448.

<sup>382</sup> Wilson for example, sites new alternative spaces that were socially available to women of all classes (such as department stores) as places where the *flâneuse* might emerge. E. Wilson (1992) 'The Invisible Flâneur' *New Left Review* 191:1 pp.90-110; L. Nead, *Victorian Babylon: People, Streets, and Images in Nineteenth Century London* (London: Yale University Press, 2005); see also, A. D'Souza & T. McDonough (Eds.), *The Invisible Flâneuse? Gender, Public Space and Visual Culture in Nineteenth Century Paris* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006); J. Walkowitz, *Nights Out: Life in Cosmopolitan London* (London: Yale University Press, 2012) & Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*.

<sup>383</sup> Ransome, *Bohemia* p.44.

<sup>384</sup> Ransome, *Bohemia* p.44.

her autobiography, and in the subject matter of her Royal Academy painting *Saturday Night* (or *The Search for the Breadwinner*, 1882) testify to her presence among old bohemia's 'artistic usurpers' challenging contemporary, masculinist accounts.<sup>385</sup> This coincided with her public declaration of support for female suffrage signing for example, the *Letter from Ladies to Members of Parliament* in 1885 among other petitions culminating in her later support of both the ASL and Suffrage Atelier, having already founded her own female art school in the mid-1880s.<sup>386</sup>

Jopling-Rowe recounts her walks on the long embankment, often alone and at dusk, as 'grey mysterious twilights on the river's bank'.<sup>387</sup> She drifted past the same public houses and coffee stalls, the newspaper and food sellers described by Ransome, where she adopted a strange mixed 'gaze' that was both voyeuristic and philanthropic. She recalled how she would 'stand opposite the public house of an evening and watch the effect of the light on the faces of the people who entered...Passers-by would stand and stare too, until I had to move away, the crowd obstructing my view of the scene I wanted to impress upon my mental vision'.<sup>388</sup> It was the act of walking, standing, and mingling as Jopling-Rowe describes herself doing 'within the crowds on the street' that essentially defined the peripatetic artist of modern life according to Baudelaire.<sup>389</sup> At times Jopling-Rowe broke her anonymity, deliberately seeking out in her words 'so-called fallen women' approaching those that looked the most destitute outside the promenade's public houses about modelling work, for which she paid them well 'so each of us did the other a good turn'.<sup>390</sup>

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<sup>385</sup> Jopling-Rowe, *Twenty Years*. The painting (1882) was purchased by a private collector and is not available for public viewing.

<sup>386</sup> Advertisements for her school began to appear around 1887. See, P. de Montfort (2017) 'Louise Jopling Rowe: Artist, Teacher, Campaigner' [www.fineartconnoisseur.com](http://www.fineartconnoisseur.com) (accessed March 2023).

<sup>387</sup> Jopling-Rowe, *Twenty Years*, pp. 230-231.

<sup>388</sup> Jopling-Rowe, *Twenty Years*, pp. 230-231.

<sup>389</sup> C. Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil* translated by J. McGowan (Oxford: Oxford University Press); C. Baudelaire, *Parisian Prowler* quoted in, D. Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) *passim* & p. 22.

<sup>390</sup> Jopling-Rowe, *Twenty Years*, pp. 230-1.

There is undeniably much of the *flâneuse* in Jopling-Rowe's account of her strolls in Cheyne Walk where she experiences life on the street, standing and mingling among the crowds and its differing classes. Nevertheless, in approaching models she becomes visible and clearly positions herself as a middle-class artist and 'other' to the destitute women she observes and ultimately 'aids' by choosing them as artistic subjects and paying them. Middle- and upper-class women often sought to forge alliances with working women and 'women of the street' by employing two methods of looking associated with the nineteenth century, and often employed in the rhetoric and imagery of the suffrage campaign. These were the gaze of the *flâneur* and the gaze of the social reformer.<sup>391</sup> Both are evident in Jopling-Rowe's account which is at best sympathetic, at worst snobbish and judgmental.<sup>392</sup> Nevertheless, unlike Benjamin and Baudelaire who acknowledge the street presence of destitute women and prostitutes yet deny them the power of observation which they ascribe only to men, Jopling-Rowe gives the 'other' woman a voice. She details how some of the women she observed on the promenade 'would be truculent, and in a drunken voice say "What yer looking at?" evidently resenting any glance bestowed upon them'.<sup>393</sup> Her account of this dialogue grants the power of the gaze to the middle-class woman artist, but also cedes the right of reply to the destitute woman gazing back, with all of its unbridled resentment.

Aruna D'Souza and Tom McDonough suggest that 'the middle class woman's spatial purview (or lack thereof) was one of the mechanisms by which a definition of a class specific femininity was secured' inevitably leading to the 'exclusion of urban sites and sights from women's vision as well as from the domain of their picture making'.<sup>394</sup> Consequently,

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<sup>391</sup> B. Green, *Spectacular Confessions*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>392</sup> She refers to destitute, drunken women accosting her in 'their shameless condition'. Jopling-Rowe, *Twenty Years*, pp. 230-231.

<sup>393</sup> Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire*; Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken, 1968), pp. 155 & 188; Jopling-Rowe *Twenty Years* p. 231.

<sup>394</sup> D'Souza & McDonough, *The Invisible Flâneuse*, p.8; Pollock, *Vision and Difference*; Cherry, *Beyond the Frame*, p. 29.



women's art was dominated by representations of suitably feminine subjects and spaces: by scenes of the domestic interior and still life. These are subjects that have excluded them from mainstream accounts of modern artists, chiefly concerned with the representation of public, in other words, masculine spaces notably the urban street, the bar, and the café. This narrow view of what constitutes 'modern' subjects is continually being challenged by feminist scholars along with associated, rigid notions of the way women artists used and represented public space. Those scholars that have focused on the reality rather than the theory of middle-class women artists' experience of urban spaces, contest the assumption that they did not (or very seldom did) transgress their cultural exclusion from public places such as streets, bars, cafes, and riversides. They have opened up new avenues of enquiry around the gender boundaries assumed to have defined women artists' urban work and experiences, and thus how these might sit in relation to their suffrage and feminist politics.<sup>395</sup>

Jopling-Rowe's account of street-life on Cheyne Walk's long embankment challenges the view that gendered social restrictions on middle-class women in public, denied female artists' visual experiences of the urban street. Her excursions there, especially at dusk, support the view that the reality of women artists' metropolitan experience was more nuanced, and the scope of their artistic vision was greater than the domestic domain of their picture making might suggest. Indeed, Jopling-Rowe recorded urban street life along the embankment in her painting *Saturday Night* which depicted a scene outside a public house in 'old bohemia'. There, Jopling-Rowe had witnessed a woman 'with a baby in her arms and another child clinging to her skirt, just open the door, look in, and move dispiritedly

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<sup>395</sup> E. Wilson (1992) 'The Invisible Flaneur' *New Left Review* 191:1 pp.90–110; Elliot & Wallace, *Women Artists and Writers*; Watts, *Painting Parisian Identity*; Thomas, *Women Art Workers*; Quirk, *Art and Money As* Wilson points out, if the private spaces of home and other 'feminine' spaces and places are included in 'the modern' which is defined in masculine terms, portraiture, domestic still life and other 'female' subjects can be seen as equally valid sites for the constitution of the bourgeois world.

away...She was in search of a husband and the Saturday nights wages, which he was no doubt dissipating as fast as he could'.<sup>396</sup>



*Figure 12. Louise Jopling Rowe, 1890. Source: L Jopling, NPG Ax8712, The National Portrait Gallery <https://www.npg.org.uk> (accessed May 2020).*

Saturday Night proved the exception rather than the rule among a vast number of traditional ‘domestic’ paintings she produced throughout her lifetime, and for which she has

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<sup>396</sup> Jopling-Rowe, *Twenty Years*, p. 230.

been critiqued by feminist authors.<sup>397</sup> Yet the recovery of her excursions on the riverbank suggest that this was not necessarily because ‘urban sites and sights’ were excluded from her ‘vision and experience’ as a female artist, but more she felt confined *as* a female artist to paint primarily domestic scenes for commercial saleability. Thrice married, twice widowed, and having given birth to four children (though ultimately only one survived into adulthood), Jopling-Rowe was frequently the sole or main breadwinner. Therefore, her social and commercial viability was vital to her family’s survival. That she thus painted popular domestic pieces more often than depicting street scenes like *Saturday Night*, considered a controversial subject for women artists and potentially damaging to their ‘feminine’ reputations and careers, is eminently understandable.<sup>398</sup>

A constant feature of Jopling-Rowe’s autobiographical writing is her frustration at compromising her artistic freedom and thus, as she saw it, her feminist principles to maintain her social and economic status. Her provocative account of solitary strolls along the embankment in search of a ‘subject’ in many ways pre-echoes Virginia Woolf’s writings on ‘street-haunting’ which describe a woman’s observations of street life as she makes her way to a shop to purchase a pencil - a journey that is frequently cited by feminist scholars as *the* counter proof that the artistic *flâneuse* existed in early twentieth century London.<sup>399</sup> Rowe’s observations and encounters during her strolls in Cheyne Walk and along its embankment at dusk, signify her experimentation as a middle-class woman with the role of *flâneuse* and her wanderings there can be seen as an articulation of her feminist and creative identities. The

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<sup>397</sup> See, P. Gerrish Nunn, *Canvassing: Recollections by Six Victorian Women Artists* (London: Camden Press, 1986); W. Slatkin, *The Voices of Women Artists* (London: Pearson, 1992).

<sup>398</sup> Not all suffrage artists succumbed to such pressure and articulated their feminism in the work they produced. Most notably, Australian suffragist and ASL artist Dora Meeson-Coates created a series of paintings depicting the smog laden industrial dock scenes that were then a feature of life on the Thames. Perhaps her younger age, lack of children, and antipodean origin, emboldened her painting of marine scenes, a genre of painting considered the site and sight of elite male artists.

<sup>399</sup> V. Woolf, *Street Haunting: A London Adventure* (London: Read Books Design, 2013); R. Bowlby, *Feminist Destinations and Further Essays on Virginia Woolf* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1996). Jopling-Rowe’s autobiography (1925) predates Woolf’s original *Street Haunting* essay by two years (1927).

WSPU to which Rowe later belonged, evoked, and encouraged representations of 'the wandering spirit' of militancy during the suffrage campaign, as a symbol of women's negotiation and reclamation of public space, and its inherent cultural, social, and political freedoms.<sup>400</sup> Wandering the embankment, and at dusk, was to experiment with 'risky, feminine metropolitan and artistic identities' that were increasingly synonymous with suffrage politics and the modern woman artist.<sup>401</sup>

Explicit in Jopling-Rowe's observations and painting on old bohemia's embankment is the act of walking along it, which for most artists and writers as Ransome attests, was a rite of passage, a historically self-conscious act, and a respectful 'usurpation' of its great artistic past by the 'new bohemians' of the present. Yet for pioneering feminist artists like Jopling-Rowe, actively struggling for women's creative alongside their political equity, it was also surely a political act that represented a physical and symbolic reclamation of arts elite male territory. In his work on gender, social, and cultural change, Thomas Markus writes that such reclamations by women of men's territory is a 'key strategy for resisting patriarchal environments' particularly where (as with heritage and museum sites) that territory is explicit in reinforcing gendered hierarchies.<sup>402</sup> Meanwhile, Michel de Certeau's 'rhetoric of walking' proposes that the act of walking itself can counter the languages and stories of the urban street, making it a site of conflict where 'the poetic space of the pedestrian' may also become 'a space of resistance'.<sup>403</sup> Through this double lens, Jopling-Rowe's walking might be seen as a usurpation of the footsteps of those genius men whose stories had made the promenade famous and whose creative works and reputations (most notably Turner) ironically drew her there, just as Woolf had been drawn despite her feminist misgivings. Moreover, its

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<sup>400</sup> When Elizabeth Robins spoke to suffrage supporters gathered in the Albert Hall in March 1912, she rallied support with her image of 'the wandering spirit of militancy'. E. Robins, 'At the Albert Hall' in *Way Stations* (U.S, New York: New York, Dodd, Mead & Company, 1913) p. 308.

<sup>401</sup> Nead, *Victorian Babylon*, p. 78.

<sup>402</sup> Markus, 'Is There a Built Form', p. 30.

<sup>403</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*; Nead, *Victorian Babylon* p. 7.

significance as an act is captured by her later writing about it, about her experiences and observations there in that place, as opposed to another (again as Woolf had done in a fictional context). This can be seen as a deliberate writing, a ‘treading over’ of men’s bygone footsteps, creating a new space or a ‘second poetic geography on top of the literal...or permitted meaning’ of old bohemia as a place defined by the presence and activities of arts elite men.<sup>404</sup> Glimpsed in Jopling- Rowe’s observations, painting, writings and footsteps, we see, as Jane Rendall has argued of walking, that is a way of discovering and transforming the gender politics of place. It is a feminist activity that takes place through the hand, heart, and mind as much as through the feet.<sup>405</sup> Walking was (and remains) an everyday tactic that creates links between place, time, and memory, at the same time shattering panoptic male narratives of power by rendering streets familiar, liveable, and accessible.

In conclusion, the chapter has drawn upon numerous spatial writings on heritage, time, politics, art and gender, to examine Cheyne Walk’s landscape as a medium through which male power in the arts was popularly transmitted, and so its significance as a fresh site for exploring suffrage artists’ hidden gender struggles for creative identity at a critical time in women’s political history.<sup>406</sup> The gendered body, which is itself a contested site, allows ‘culturally disenfranchised actors to push against tradition, hegemony, and dominant standpoints’ by physically intervening in and disrupting the social meanings or privileges attached to particular places.<sup>407</sup> In this vein the chapter has reclaimed and positioned suffrage artists’ embodied practices in and on Cheyne Walk. Jopling-Rowe’s observations, paintings, writing, and her ‘rhetoric of walking’ along and among the sights and sounds of its embankment, trod over both the urban sights and sites of arts ‘great men’ and their privileged

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<sup>404</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, pp. 104-105.

<sup>405</sup> Rendell, *Art*, p. 190.

<sup>406</sup> Bender, *Landscape*, p.276 & *Making Space*, p. 436.

<sup>407</sup> S. Finley, ‘Arts-based Inquiry: Performing Revolutionary Pedagogy’ in N.K Denzin & Y.S Lincoln (eds.) *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials* 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (London: Sage, 2008) p. 103.

ways of looking, representing her own feminist reclamation of men's creative territories.<sup>408</sup> Bertha Newcombe's paintings, and painting practices, embodied within her 'wainscoted' studio; her portrait of Shaw inspired by desire; her explicitly feminist history painting in *The Apple Seller*; and her experimentation with suffrage poster design, all respectively and subversively sexualized, politicized, and (re)identified the sexed body of the artist in the studio there as female, and feminist, contesting its masculinist narratives. This fresh insight adds to scholarship interrogating how women's creative practices, particularly when embodied within culturally revered male spaces, can help (re)shape artistic identities, encourage innovation, and enable political rebellion, where art, the artist, and the place making of art itself, are enrolled as interlinking, counter sites of feminist resistance.

Integral to the struggle for gender identity and power 'is the act of claiming a place as a place of one's own and thereby symbolically appropriating it'.<sup>409</sup> The chapter examined this more explicitly through artist and WSPU activists' Sylvia Pankhurst and friend Maud Joachim's occupation of houses and studios in Cheyne Walk which are acknowledged to have represented a collective cluster of shrines and memorials to the creative genius of the male gender. The occupation and insertion of their creative and feminist bodies within its landscape, and specifically in the architectural spaces of renowned artist J.W.M Turner, raises particularly interesting questions about temporality and historical self-consciousness in suffrage artists' 'being' in a place emblematic of men's claims to knowledge, power, and privilege in the arts. Feminist geographers recognise in their work on gender and place, that when the female body is freely and autonomously embodied in spaces preconceived as

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<sup>408</sup> See, Kaye, *Site Specific Art*.

<sup>409</sup> J. T Harrington, *'Being here': Heritage, Belonging and Place Making: a Study of Community and Identity Formation at Avebury (England), Magnetic Island (Australia) and Ayutthaya (Thailand)*. (Australia: PhD thesis, James Cook University, 2004). Available at: <http://researchonline.jcu.edu.au/71/> (accessed February 2015) pp. 17-18.

masculine (including located spaces or place), it may lead to a re-gendering of that space: to a symbolic and, in some cases, a material mapping over of its existing meanings.<sup>410</sup>

Whether suffrage artists' embodiment in Cheyne Walk was autonomous or not, each made room for themselves there in multiple ways as creative and political agents by virtue of their own deeds, words, and paintings. Moreover, the (re)insertion of their feminist identities and female bodies there (which includes their work) as suffragists and as artists (even if deliberately or mistakenly so defined like Joachim) continues to materially intercede in Cheyne Walk's past and present landscape as ubiquitously male. In Pankhurst's blue plaque; the 1911 census record for Joachim; in Jopling-Rowe's writings, and in the experimental suffrage posters, and portrait paintings of Newcombe produced in her studio that survive, suffrage artists' feminist bodies and agencies are (re)inserted into Cheyne Walk's historic, elite male landscape. This brings 'what 'has been' into the here and now' immortalised on ceramic, on paper, and on canvas.<sup>411</sup> Thus, present day artists, tourists, and historians can begin to reread, retrace, and re interpret Cheyne Walk not as a place synonymous with male superiority in the arts which still prevails in narratives today, but as an important site for women's disruptive and resistant creative and feminist politics. After all, as Bell argues, whether in the past, or in the here and now, the meaning of a particular place, 'it's *genius loci*' - depends upon the geniuses we locate there'.<sup>412</sup>

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<sup>410</sup> Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*; L. McDowell, (1993) 'Space, Place and Gender Relations Parts 1 and 2' *Progress in Human Geography* 17; G. Rose, *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993); I. Borden, J. Rendell, J. Kerr & A. Pivaro, 'Things, Flows, Filters, Tactics' in Borden et al, *The Unknown City*.

<sup>411</sup> Rendell, *Art and Architecture*, p. 99; Liddington & Morton, 'Walking'.

<sup>412</sup> M.M. Bell (1997) 'The Ghosts of Place' *Theory and Society* 26:6, p. 813.

## Chapter Four

### The Art of Travel

The previous chapter's account of Louise Jopling-Rowe's walking along Cheyne's embankment during her struggle for the vote, considered the feminist meaning of her bodily mobility in a very particular place that was deeply and publicly implicated in the masculinist power geographies of art and gender. Yet, the very act of women's movement from any place to another, whether on foot or by other means, whether locally or globally, was itself imbued with power because it fractured the multi-scalar association between women and home that structured late nineteenth and early twentieth century notions of femininity.<sup>413</sup> Women's mobility was heavily governed by male cultural expectations around class and gender meaning women's bodies 'on the move' in this era, and in a variety of contexts, are viewed by scholars as an indicator and diagnostic of their sense of feminist empowerment.<sup>414</sup> Global female travel has drawn particular attention given its entanglement with other formations of power, notably imperialism, leading to a genre of feminist work on western women's travel writing, some featuring visual artists.<sup>415</sup> This body of work acknowledges that these largely

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<sup>413</sup> For example, N. Duncan (ed.) *BodySpace: Destabilizing Geographies of Gender and Sexuality* (London: Routledge, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed, 2005); Beckett & Cherry, 'Modern Women'; S. Smith, *Moving Lives: Twentieth-Century Women's Travel Writing*, (U.S: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

<sup>414</sup> For instance, see, Cresswell, 'Mobilising the Movement', pp. 447-461; S. Bieri & N. Gerodetti (2007) 'Falling Women, Saving Angels': Spaces of Contested Mobility and the Production of Gender and Sexualities within Early Twentieth Century Train Stations', *Social & Cultural Geography*, 8:2, pp. 217-234; Laurie, Dwyer, Holloway & Smith, *Geographies*, p. 161; K. Retsikas (2007) 'Being and Place: Movement, Ancestors, and Personhood in East Java, Indonesia' *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 13, pp. 971-2; A. Blunt (2007) 'Cultural Geographies of Migration: Mobility, Transnationality and Diaspora' *Progress in Human Geography* 31:5, pp. 684-694; R. Silvey (2004) 'Power, Difference, and Mobility: Feminist Advances in Migration Studies' *Progress in Human Geography*, 28:4, p.12. The distinction is made between women's unforced and enforced movements associated with slavery and trafficking. Suffrage artists movement was unforced but not free from gender constraints. For a succinct contemporary discussion, see, R. Law (1999) 'Beyond Women and Transport: Towards New Geographies of Gender and Daily Mobility' *Progress in Human Geography*, 23:4, pp. 567-588.

<sup>415</sup> For example, J. Pomeroy, (ed.), *Intrepid Women: Women Artists Travel* (London: Routledge, 2017); S. Morgan, *Place Matters: Gendered Geography in Victorian Women's Travel Books about Southeast Asia* (US, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1996); S. Mills, *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 1991); S. Foster, *Across New Worlds: Nineteenth Century Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990); C. Mariaconchetta (2020) 'Women Travellers to Albania in the Long Nineteenth Century: Two Case Studies' *Victorian Popular Fictions*,



empowering world journeys for western women, and the material cultures they produced, were built upon disempowerments of ‘others’ inherent in the imperial project.<sup>416</sup> Therefore, and across disciplines, their historical travels are now routinely critiqued in the context of sex, class, race, and imperial privilege. Nevertheless, western women’s journeys are seen in the round as positively challenging gendered notions about who moved where and when, unsettling male cultural ideals of female sessility that served to bind women to home and domestic life especially in Britain.<sup>417</sup>

The imperial threads of women’s global travel run through the histories of the British women’s suffrage movement: in biographical accounts of its high-profile campaigners attracted from diverse colonial and post-colonial homelands; in the roots of its international suffrage organisations such as the IWSA, and the internationalist interests of local societies; or in the global conferences and processions held in London that opened new, spatial possibilities and opportunities for travel, transforming the practice and the global optics of women’s politics.<sup>418</sup> Necessarily, scholarship on the spatial geographies of the campaign have raised a plurality of questions about how suffragists global identities were shaped and

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2:1, pp. 1-23; M. L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, 2008); J. K. Dabbs (2016) ‘Empowering American Women Artists: The Travel Writings of May Alcott Nieriker’ *Nineteenth-century Art Worldwide*, 15 (3); P. McKenzie-Stearns, Precious, ‘Venturesome Women: Nineteenth-century British Women Travel Writers and Sport’ (2007). *Graduate Theses and Dissertations. Unpublished* <http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/etd/2284> (accessed 2 September 2022); I. Grewel, *Home and Harem: Nation Gender Empire and the Cultures of Travel* (London: Duke University Press, 1996).

<sup>416</sup> For broader discussions, see, C. Hall (ed.) *Cultures of Empire: A Reader: Colonizers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); C. Midgley, ‘Introduction: Gender and Imperialism: Mapping Connections’ in P. Levine (ed.) *Gender and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) pp. 1-18. Though not incorporating a gendered perspective, Edward Said’s seminal work is otherwise invaluable. For example, see, E. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage Books, 1994).

<sup>417</sup> In addition to those above, see, Smith, *Moving Lives*. Also, the unforced movement of non-western women. For example, see, S. Ahmed, C. Castañeda, A.M Fortier & M Sheller (eds) *Questions of Home and Migration Uprootings/ Regroundings* (London: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>418</sup> For example, see, Mukherjee, *Indian Suffragettes*; Keating ‘Piecing Together’, pp. 1-15 <https://doi.org/10.1111/hic3.12481> (accessed July 2021); Caine, ‘Vida Goldstein’, pp. 363-376; A. K. Madsen (2014) ‘Columbia and Her Foot Soldiers: Civic Art and the Demand for Change at the 1913 Suffrage Pageant-Procession’ *Winterthur Portfolio*, 48:4, pp. 283–310 <https://doi.org/10.1086/679369> (accessed 23 June 2022); Tickner, *Spectacle*; C. Midgley, A. Twells & J. Carlier (eds.) *Transnational History: Connecting the Local and the Global - Women's and Gender History* (London: Routledge, 2016); J. Purvis & J. Hannam (eds.) *The British Women’s Suffrage Campaign: National and International Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2021).

operated within the complex lexicon of empire, between the local and the global, between fixity and motion.<sup>419</sup> Yet suffrage artists are largely absent from this scholarship. Therefore, the chapter freshly situates them within it by identifying, tracing, and entwining their neglected global journeys, their feminist and professional self-cultivation, and suffrage activism in London, through the spatialized gender power discourses of mobility, art, and empire.

Suffrage artists' global travel is pieced together in its physical and visual manifestations from a variety of sources including newspapers, landscape paintings, and craft practices, building a collage of imperial life entanglements and diasporas during the long suffrage campaign, mitigating the general absence of traditional archival sources.<sup>420</sup> Their global journeys shift the first section of the chapter across three continents, examining how their artistic travel and life migrations intimately intertwined colonialism with their emerging sense of professional and feminist empowerment. The remainder of the chapter explores suffrage artists' art and activism through the spatialized lens of imperial travel and migrant diaspora in London, including more diffusely, women's art working for the WFL's international fair in Chelsea. There, the Suffrage Atelier alongside many anonymous workers, shared in imperial space making through global suffrage crafting. Global travel was not of course accessible to many 'ordinary' women of limited means who engaged in suffrage arts and crafts making at home in Britain. Yet most felt comfortable with the concept of empire even though it connected them to 'global circuits of production, distribution and exchange' that oppressed 'millions of other imperial subjects', imagining empire from home through other women's travel experiences, or through comparisons with 'other' women framed

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<sup>419</sup> Most recently, see, Hughes-Johnson & Jenkins, *The Politics of the Women's Suffrage Movement*.

<sup>420</sup> Visual images, such as the landscape paintings discussed, are not available to view whether because they are in private collections or are lost. Therefore, the chapter uses descriptions of them from exhibition catalogues and newspaper reports of the time.

through imperialism's hierarchical notions of race and nation.<sup>421</sup> Through an imperial lens at local and global scales, the chapter's strands together illuminate some of the spatial stories and tensions created between suffrage artists' professional and feminist self-empowerment, and the colonial disempowerments inherent in the global aspects of their lives and work, including spaces between fixity and motion present in imperial suffrage art work in London.<sup>422</sup> By revealing both the disruptions and collaborations in suffrage art and suffrage artists' relationships to the imperial project, the chapter enriches the suffrage and imperial archive, while adding to existing spatial scholarship on women's mobility, gender and power.

### ***Unpacking Mobility: Forms and Contexts.***

Spatial scholars Gillian Rose and Doreen Massey have long argued that mobility should be central to all feminist studies because 'mobility and control over mobility both reflect and reinforce power'.<sup>423</sup> Hence, feminist inquiries seeking to examine discursive constructions of gender often centre upon women's geographical mobility in the form of travel and migration, using these as a set of socio-spatial tools with which to dissect women's understandings of self, identity, and empowerment.<sup>424</sup> For example, Kristina Huneault broadly connects the formation of feminist identities with travel through its role as a 'trajectory of self-actualization and discovery'<sup>425</sup>; Rachel Silvey sees women's migration as a

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<sup>421</sup> R. Lewis, *Gendering Orientalism Race, Femininity and Representation* (London: Routledge, 1996); C. Hall & S.O Rose, 'Introduction: Being at Home with the Empire' in C. Hall & S.O Rose (eds.), *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) pp. 21-22. The working classes in Britain themselves have been regarded by various scholars as among the colonised in anti-capitalist writings, and socialist women were often highly critical of Britain's imperial culture.

<sup>422</sup> For a concise discussion on empowerment versus disempowerment in suffrage and wider feminist movements, and other emerging global themes, see, K. Gleadle & Z. Thomas (2018) 'Global feminisms, c. 1870-1930: vocabularies and concepts—a comparative approach' *Women's History Review*, 27:7, pp. 1209-1224.

<sup>423</sup> D. Massey, 'Power-geometry and a progressive sense of place' in Bird, J., Curtis, B. Putnam, T., Robertson, G. & Tickner, L., (eds.) *Mapping the futures: local cultures, global change* (London: Routledge, 1993) p. 62; G. Rose, *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (London: Polity Press, 1993).

<sup>424</sup> For an interdisciplinary overview, see, Cathryn Koo-Lattimore & Erica Wilson (Eds.) *Women and Travel: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Canada: Apple Academic Press, 2017).

<sup>425</sup> K. Huneault, 'Placing Frances Ann Hopkins: A British Born Artist in Colonial Canada' in Cherry & Helland, *Local/Global*, p. 179.

way of enriching ‘feminist theorizations of power’ through global diasporas;<sup>426</sup> and Maria Tamboukou as ‘an effective conceptual tool for theorising female subjectivities on the move’.<sup>427</sup> Authors exploring specific links between nineteenth and early twentieth century white, western women artists’ global mobility and their feminist empowerment, often intertwine their corporeal travels and migrations, sometimes driven by artistic professionalism, with their metaphorical journeys to feminist self-hood. These enquiries have opened-up gendered, mobile discourses, around resistance, independence, and individual agency, as well as those of dislocation and alienation where more permanent migrations have taken place.<sup>428</sup> The latter plays a central role in numerous cultural works concerned with the re-visioning of identities where longer ruptures from home and homelands can be read as potentially empowering as they are here, particularly for women artists settling in London from colonial and post-colonial lands who became embroiled in the suffrage campaign.<sup>429</sup>

Historical accounts of western women artists who travelled, often focus upon the long nineteenth century, and avoid direct, or certainly deep, entanglements with how their global mobilities manifest in the spatial *practice* of feminist or suffrage politics at home. Illuminating exceptions include works by Lynne Walker, Janice Helland, and particularly Deborah Cherry who critique through an imperial lens, the spatialized geographies and political practices of Victorian women artists occupying nineteenth century feminist networks

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<sup>426</sup> Silvey, ‘Power, Difference, and Mobility’, p.10.

<sup>427</sup> M. Tamboukou (2009) ‘Leaving the Self: Nomadic Passages in the Memoir of a Woman Artist’ *Australian Feminist Studies*, 24:61 (Sept) p. 308.

<sup>428</sup> For instance, see, J. Pomeroy, (ed.), *Intrepid Women: Women Artists Travel* (London: Routledge, 2017); Tamboukou, ‘Leaving the Self’; S. P. Casteras, ‘With Palettes, Pencils, and Parasols: Victorian Women Artists Traverse the Empire’ in Pomeroy, *Intrepid Women*; Tamboukou, *In the Fold*; Cherry, *Beyond the Frame*; Dias & Smith, *British Women*. It is important to stress that women artists were not a homogenous group and exploratory travel, as in the case of artist Gertrude Bell’s extensive wanderings in the Middle East, did not always engender political enlightenment. Bell never wavered in her belief that parliament was no place for ladies despite becoming political advisor in Iraq to King Faisal. See, G. Duplisa (2016) ‘Writing in the Masculine: Gertrude Lowthian Bell, Gender, and Empire’ *Terrae Incognitae* 48:1, pp. 55-75.

<sup>429</sup> The atmosphere or ‘feeling’ associated with movement is often a concern in the poetry and literature of exile and displacement and is central to practices of re-imagining. For an overview, see, K. Hannam, M. Sheller & J. Urry (2006) ‘Editorial: Mobilities, Immobilities and Moorings’ *Mobilities*, 1:1, pp. 1-22.

in London.<sup>430</sup> Cherry's interlinking of pioneering artist and feminist Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon's extensive world travels and pictorializing of Algeria (where she had a home) with her suffrage and abolitionist activities at her home powerbase in London, is especially useful. It reveals how, through a metropolitan focus, it is possible to explore more global tensions between women artists' professionalism, feminism, travel, and empire - albeit from a white western perspective.<sup>431</sup> This chapter too examines the enrolling of suffrage artists' global and imperial worlds with their feminist politics in London including a diasporic analysis of the suffrage work and social life of Australian ASL artist, Dora Meeson-Coates, who settled there. Suffrage artists and suffrage art activities are centred on in the metropolis as a spatialized point of contact between the local and global during the campaign.

During those years, London, as a globally spatialized city, represents an important site for feminist and imperial analyses of women's world travel, transnational migration, and shared spaces of diasporic identification in ways that for were for many potentially empowering whether personally, and/or politically.<sup>432</sup> Yet beyond a general analysis of the

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<sup>430</sup> Cherry & Helland, *Local/Global*; Cherry, *Beyond the Frame*; Walker, 'Locating the Global', pp.174-196; L. Walker, 'Home and Away: The Feminist Remapping of Public and Private Space in Victorian London' in Bordain et al *The Unknown City*, pp. 296-311.

<sup>431</sup> Cherry, *Beyond the Frame*, chapter 2, pp. 59-100. A London centred focus necessarily prioritises white British and colonial women and potentially obscures regional, national, as well as and colonial perspectives, with travel to and from the metropolis as elsewhere, intersected by gender, race, and class impediments. It also limits the appraisal of suffrage artists' agencies by excluding those that took place outside the city. Nevertheless, exploring London through a global and spatially interconnective lens nevertheless broadens the suffrage and imperial archive by identifying and recovering suffrage artists' cultural and material modes of imperial construction. For more on Barbara Bodichon's travels see M. Simon-Martin (2016) 'Barbara Bodichon's Travel Writing: Her Epistolary Articulation of Bildung', *History of Education*, 45:3, pp. 285-303; K. Siegal 'Intersections: Women's Travel and Theory', in K. Siegel (ed.) *Gender, Genre, and Identity in Women's Travel Writing* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), chap 2.

<sup>432</sup> See, B. Caine (2001) 'Feminism in London, Circa, 1850-1914' *Journal of Urban History* 27:6, pp.765-778; Walker, 'Home and Away'; L. Walker, 'Vistas of Pleasure: Women Consumers of Urban Space in the West End of London, 1850-1900' in C Campbell Orr (ed.) *Women in the Victorian Art World* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995) pp. 70-85; Laurie, Dywer, Holloway, & Smith, *Geographies*; S. Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (U.S, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991) pp. 217-218; D. Cherry (2006) 'Statues in the Square: Hauntings at the Heart of Empire' *Art History* 29: 4 (September) pp. 660-697; D. Massey 'A Global Sense of Place' in T. Oakes & P. L. Price (Eds.) *The Cultural Geography Reader* (London: Routledge, 2008) pp. 257-264; Massey, 'Geographies of Responsibility', pp. 5-18; Massey *Space, Place and Gender*; M. P. Smith (2005) 'Transnational urbanism revisited' *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 31, 235-44. p.237; J. May (1996) 'Globalization and the Politics of Place: Place and Identity in an Inner London Neighbourhood', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 21:1, pp. 194-215.

imperial narratives on display in the popular imagery, designed, produced, and choreographed for London's spectacular mass suffrage processions and events at the height of the campaign, few scholars consider the global agencies of suffrage artists living, working, and making there.<sup>433</sup> The imperial threads weaving through the imagery of such spectacular events helps our understandings of how the campaign's material culture participated in the interactive spaces of empire, and features in the analysis below of migrant suffrage artists Dora Meeson-Coates and Marjorie Hamilton's role in the imperial pageantry of the vast 1911 Women's Coronation Procession in London. However, the absence of scholarship on suffrage artists' wider global agencies as imperial subjects, travellers, migrants, and creative agents, means the significance of their global mobility and imperial knowledge making is missed in the trajectories of their professional self-cultivation, though this was predicated on colonial disempowerments. This must be recognised to ensure, as Kathryn Gleadle and Zoe Thomas suggest, 'we do not disguise the plurality of ways women have historically attempted to empower themselves'.<sup>434</sup> Hence, the chapter begins by retracing suffrage artists' various imperial entanglements revealing pathways of artistic travel and familial migrations encompassing Europe, Egypt, India, Australia, America, and the West Indies. These were pathways that shaped suffrage artists' professional lives and feminist identities in ways that reflected the asymmetric power relations of empire and foreground the chapter's following examination of global suffrage art activism in London.

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<sup>433</sup> For instance, see, Ticker, *Spectacle*; Tickner, 'Banners and Banner Making' pp.341-347; B. Green, *Spectacular Confessions: Autobiography, Performative Activism, and the Sites of Suffrage, 1905-1938* (London: Macmillan, 1997); A. Stevenson, & K. Allukian (2021) 'The Suffrage Postcard Project: Feminist Digital Archiving and Transatlantic Suffrage History' *Journal of Contemporary Archival Studies*, 8:8 available at: <https://elischolar.library.yale.edu/jcas/vol8/iss1/8> (accessed 5 March 2022); Z. Thomas, 'Historical Pageants, Citizenship and the Performance of Women's History before Second-Wave Feminism' in A. Bartie, L. Flemming, M. Freeman, A. Hutton, & P. Readman (Eds.) *Restaging the Past: Historical Pageants, Culture and Society in Modern Britain* (London: UCL Press, 2020) pp. 108-131; D. Atkinson, *The Purple, White and Green, 1906-1914* (London: Museum of London, 1992).

<sup>434</sup> K. Gleadle & Z. Thomas (2018) 'Global feminisms, c. 1870–1930: vocabularies and concepts - a comparative approach', *Women's History Review*, 27:7, p. 1219.

There are also many differences between suffrage artist's global travels. These encompassed casual, or purposeful journeys back and forth, as well as semi-permanent, and permanent resettlements and migrations, meaning these mobile experiences cannot be fully conflated. However, there are useful spatial connections between them that allow suffrage artists' seldom chartered globalism, to be collaged and explored in the context of gender, power, and empire. Their journeys' arouse spatial questions about the relationship between mobility, knowledge, and power, raised across Foucault's expansive work and, in more gender specific ways, by feminist authors such as Rose, Massey, Daphne Spain, and Gleadle.<sup>435</sup> Such spatial works indicate how women's diverse travel is central to feminist studies where mobility is enrolled, as here, with the exploration of political and cultural change, and where the power of women's unforced travel is seen as a form of resistance to dominant male social and sexual (and sometimes class and racial) controls.<sup>436</sup>

In charting and entwining suffrage art and suffrage artists' globalism, the chapter necessarily draws out ways they undermined (however subtly) the long association of mobility with masculinity, fundamental to gendered discourses of colonial adventures and of artistic professionalism through narratives of the 'grand tour'.<sup>437</sup> The act of travelling itself as an articulation of their feminism and professionalism was reinforced by suffrage artists exhibiting the fruits of their travel to mainstream and selected suffrage audiences, through

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<sup>435</sup> See, Foucault 'Space, Knowledge, and Power' in P. Rabinow (ed.) *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought, with Major New Unpublished Material by Michel Foucault* (London: Penguin Books, 1986); S. Eldon & J. Crampton, *Space, Knowledge, and Power: Foucault and Geography* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); G. Rose, *Feminism and Geography* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1993); Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*; D. Spain (1993) 'Gendered Spaces and Women's Status' *Sociological Theory*, 11:2, pp. 137-151; K. Gleadle *Borderline Citizens: Women Gender and Political Culture in Britain, 1815-1867* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2009).

<sup>436</sup> And so, men's claims to the physical, cultural, and political powers, knowledge, and freedoms, associated with it. Inderpal Grewel's discussion of two Indian widows' trips to England and America demonstrates the limits of scholars Eurocentric race assumptions about desire and women's notion of travel, mobility, and freedom. Grewel, *Home and Harem*. See also, Sumita Mukherjee (2022) 'Mobility, Race, and the Politicisation of Indian students in Britain before the Second World War' *History of Education* pp. 1-18 accessible at <https://doi.org/10.1080/0046760X.2021.2010815> (accessed April 2022).

<sup>437</sup> See, S. J. Lippart (ed.) *Artistic Responses to Travel in the Western Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2018).

landscape paintings, shared in galleries and studios at home. The chapter for example, considers ASL artist Bessie Wigan and artist and suffragist Charlotte Sheppard's sharing of their global travel paintings with various audiences in the city, in the context of their professional and imperial space making.

Against the backdrop of empire, the chapter threads through a critique of how suffrage artists' work and travels benefitted from and added to imperial knowledge building across classes. It was their privileged positioning as white, middle-class western women of means, that enabled their travel to and from Europe, to freely migrate between homes and homelands in Britain, and British or former British colonies, despite normative social restrictions on women's movement. This was aided by growing transport infrastructure and modern modes of travel, meaning global mobility flourished. Meanwhile, dichotomies of home and away, of home and homeland, were complicated by colonial migrations, settlements, and resettlements, and by unifying narratives of empire that often omitted the ideological and material power differences between women, classes, and races, between colonizer and colonised. This is especially evident in the chapter's exploration of the Suffrage Atelier's language posters and local suffrage crafters imperial costume work for the international WFL fair in Chelsea whose theme of unification drew on racial stereotypes and hierarchies of empire.

In his transnational studies, Avtar Brah underscores how global travel and particularly concepts of diaspora synonymous with colonial migration 'centre on configurations of power' and relationality. This requires a positioning of oneself against the 'other' constructing layers of empowerment and disempowerment that are historically specific.<sup>438</sup> As

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<sup>438</sup> A. Brah 'Diaspora, Border and Transnational Identities' in R. Lewis & S. Mills (eds.) *Feminist Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010) pp. 616-618. Historical and conceptual scholars including Georgina Gowans, Avtar Brah, along with Silvey and Tamboukou, broadly distinguish diasporic journeys from other forms of casual or more temporary travel, as about putting down roots elsewhere to recreate homes everywhere, while maintaining an ideology of return. See, G. Gowans (2003) 'Imperial



women who travelled in the age of empire, suffrage artists' global mobilities and migrations were entangled in tensions that existed between freedom and dislocation, diasporas of home and homelands, and between colonial empowerments and disempowerments. The chapter reveals how these tensions weaved through their professional and feminist self-cultivation: their exploitation of colonial travel, knowledge, and communities, to produce and perform globally spatialized art, just as they began to campaign globally for women's political empowerment which included (rhetorically at least) those women living under British rule abroad as well as at home.<sup>439</sup> This juxtaposition was at times uncomfortable, yet professionally and politically edifying: an imperial tension the chapter captures in part through Pamela Colman Smith's retelling of Jamaican folklore tales in London, and letter extracts from ASL artist Christiana Herringham's travels and artistic work in India.

The beginnings of the organized women's suffrage movement in Britain had coincided with the apogee of British imperialism and so suffrage campaigners were 'accustomed to thinking globally from their perspective as members of the British empire'.<sup>440</sup> Moreover, in the 'complex current' of global feminism, London, the political epicentre of the British Empire, acted as a 'magnet' attracting suffrage campaigners from around the world, especially from former and existing colonies of the British empire as Barbara Caine, James Keating, Sumita Mukherjee, Mrinalini Sinha, and Tim Cresswell's spatial work on the mobility and internationalism of the women's suffrage movement have shown.<sup>441</sup> Most coalesced around the campaigns of the major British suffrage societies, or the International

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Geographies of Home: Memsahibs and Miss-Sahibs in India and Britain, 1915- 1947' *Cultural Geographies*, 10:4, pp. 424-441; A. Brah 'Diaspora, Border and Transnational Identities' in R. Lewis & S. Mills (eds.) *Feminist Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010) pp. 613-634; Silvey, 'Power, Difference, and Mobility'; Tamboukou 'Leaving the Self'.

<sup>439</sup>A. Jensen (2011) 'Mobility, Space and Power: On the Multiplicities of Seeing Mobility' *Mobilities*, 6:2, pp. 256-7; Hannam, Sheller & Urry, 'Mobilities', pp. 1-22.

<sup>440</sup> Walker, 'Locating the Global' p. 176.

<sup>441</sup> Caine 'Vida Goldstein' & Caine *Australian Feminism*; Keating, 'Piecing together'; S. Mukherjee, *Indian Suffragettes*; Sinha, 'Suffragism and Internationalism', pp. 461-484; Cresswell 'Mobilizing the Movement'. See also, Hughes-Johnson & Jenkins, *The Politics of the Women's Suffrage Movement*.

Women's Suffrage Alliance (IWSA) all headquartered in the city. As demonstrated below, women from Australia, India, and New Zealand, often participated in the visible politicking of large metropolitan suffrage processions, and appeared in the suffrage press, reinforcing the campaign's popular notion of 'global sisterhood'. This underpinned the challenges made, in the movement's oratory at least, to the gendered colonial power structures that operated to deny women full rights of citizenship under British rule.

It was argued the struggle for the vote in England was 'not just for English women alone, but for all the women, degraded, miserable, unheard of, for whose life and happiness England has daily to answer to God'.<sup>442</sup> Yet, the British movement arguably did little to forward the rights of women in colonized countries, and largely operated as an echo chamber for western women's imperial privileges and narratives, with imperial hierarchies of power on race and nation going largely unchallenged.<sup>443</sup> Thus numerous scholars have problematized the relationship between western feminists and imperial culture because, as Gayatri Spivak argues, 'the forces that shaped the western activist and her sense of self as an autonomous subject, simultaneously subjected the 'native female' to the relays of colonial and imperial power' and 'othering': a central tenet in Brah's exposition of transnational travel and diasporas.<sup>444</sup> The chapter reveals how the benefits of colonial power were ever present in the travels, work, and mobile lives of suffrage artists, including legacies of slavery through suffrage artists Pamela Colman-Smith and Suffrage Atelier embroiderer Elizabeth Gosling.

One of the axioms of the British suffrage movement was its rejection through 'global sisterhood' of the gendering of citizenship under the British empire, while framing that

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<sup>442</sup> Quoted in A. M Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (US, Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1994) p.4.

<sup>443</sup> For example, several suffrage artists such as Dora Meeson-Coates and Bessie Wigan living and working for the campaign in London, travelled from post-colonial Australia which had broken from British rule and was celebrated by the British suffrage movement for granting women the franchise in 1902 – although it only enfranchised white women.

<sup>444</sup> Spivak, 'Three Women's Texts', p. 244-5; Brah, 'Diaspora'.

rejection through the power brokerage and hierarchical ‘othering’ of those living under British colonial rule. Grewel and Burton have shown how imperial, racist, and gendered narratives of empire shaped the lives and identities of all women including those who participated in the women's movement, making it a constituent of modern British feminist identities across social classes.<sup>445</sup> The chapter explores how the notion of empire and race was navigated and experienced through craft practice by suffragists who may not have had the means to travel globally, by drawing on the complex relationships between craft, suffrage, and colonial identities, common to women in England, Ireland, America, and India, and in imperial art working for the WFL’s international fair in Chelsea. Tensions once more emerge in these politicised spaces of global identification that empowered local women as feminist actors on a world stage yet were predicated on unrealistic communities of empire.

Suffrage artists’ global travels, migrations, professional and feminist identities, art, and imperial suffrage crafting in London, are critiqued in the context of empire, not along the lines of colonial conquest (although it illuminates how they benefitted from it) but as a set of globally spatialized practices that took place against the backdrop and privileges of a nonetheless masculinized empire. As such it was an empire in which suffrage artists themselves were subjugated by gender, not least as British subjects rather than enfranchised British citizens, and as professional women. This approach, together with a loose framework of empowerments and disempowerments, allows the chapter to reveal the diversity of ways suffrage artists’ global mobility forged new, positive spaces of feminist and artistic self-

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<sup>445</sup> Burton, *Burdens of History*; Grewel, *Home and Harem*. However, reactions to empire were by no means homogenous with working class and socialist women being more likely to display anti-imperialist tendencies, as well as those close to communities in India and Ireland, such as suffragists Margaret Cousins and Annie Besant. See, Sinha ‘Suffragism and Internationalism’. Importantly, the use of the term ‘travel’ itself has also come under Grewal’s scrutiny. For her, the term travel symbolises ‘a universal form of mobility [that] erases or conflates those ... that are not part of this Eurocentric, imperialist formation’ such as immigrants, deportees, and slaves (ibid, p. 9-11). I accept Grewal’s critique of the term travel; indeed, the chapter deliberately embraces it to survey suffrage artists’ global entanglements precisely because they were embedded in the privileges of empire including personal legacies of slavery.

cultivation, diasporic socio-political networking, which alongside imperial suffrage crafting at home, created new spaces of global identification for women across classes. However, it demonstrates in tandem, how that professional self-cultivation and suffrage art working was built on the embrace and exploitation of colonial disempowerments and ‘othering’ inherent in their global lives, and in suffrage art and crafts made, shared, and brokered, through the hierarchal and racial language of imperialism.

### ***Global Routes, Roots, and Identities.***

The diverse global roots and routes of suffrage artists living and working in London during the campaign, encompasses pathways of artistic travel and familial migration to and from Europe, Egypt, India, Australia, America, and the West Indies. These travels constituted multiple journeys often taken from home in Britain, or between home and homelands in British or former British colonies, that themselves came to represent artists’ home from home. This produced diasporic experiences, stories, paintings, and identities that participated in the global, interactive spaces of empire. Importantly, they also interconnected with modes of feminist empowerment and creative self-cultivation at home, where women were negotiating space for themselves as professional artists.

The explosive growth in travel technologies during the nineteenth century, including omnibus, cross-country rail, and steamship journeys, expanded notions of the local at the same time shrinking concepts of the global.<sup>446</sup> Despite male sexual and socio-cultural restraints on their mobility in this era, women found new opportunities to journey to fresh places, giving rise to the phenomenon of the lady traveler. Renowned explorers like Mary Kingsley recounted her travels on the ‘dark continent’ of Africa through publications and talks on the professional lecture circuit, carving new spaces for women in the emerging

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<sup>446</sup> Walker, ‘Locating the Global’, p. 182.

profession of female travel writing.<sup>447</sup> Meanwhile visual artists like Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon travelled across three continents to practice art, obviating the gendered social and institutional practices that restricted her purview as a professional artist at home in England.<sup>448</sup> Women like Bodichon and Kingsley understood they were acting in socially unbecoming ways by challenging gendered notions around women's mobility. Their travel exploits, writings, paintings, and exhibitions, began to publicly erode expectations at home 'about who moves, how they move, and where they move'.<sup>449</sup> Many creative women felt 'a measure of freedom was somewhat easier to achieve' by travelling abroad where 'more relaxed social conventions allowed them greater leeway in charting their own identities'.<sup>450</sup> Paradoxically it was operating as privileged subjects (though not citizens) within the framework of Britain's colonial oppression of other people's freedoms, that both Bodichon and Kingsley, and the generation of women that followed, practiced their craft on the African continent and elsewhere, including suffrage artists.

The desire for knowledge and for professional recognition was 'one of the most persuasive motives for inducing women artists to leave 'the security of home' in Britain.<sup>451</sup> Thanks to pioneers like Bodichon, travel abroad was now explicitly bound to women artists' sense of professional and feminist self-cultivation. Most sought artistic knowledge by travelling to enlightened institutions in Europe which taught in ways not yet available to women in England, and through painting excursions in the great cities of Rome, Munich, Florence, Venice, Paris, and their rural surrounds. Several suffrage artists benefitted from

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<sup>447</sup> L. E. Ciolkowski (1998) 'Travelers' Tales: Empire, Victorian Travel, and the Spectacle of English Womanhood in Mary Kingsley's 'Travels in West Africa'' *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 26:2, pp. 337-366; A. Blunt, *Travel, Gender, and Imperialism: Mary Kingsley and West Africa* (US, New York: Guilford Press, 1994); K. Wilson "'Tropics are Tropics Wherever Found': Performing Empire in the Travel Writings of Mary Kingsley and Mary Gaunt' History Honors Theses. 9. 2021. Available at [https://creativematter.skidmore.edu/hist\\_stu\\_schol/9](https://creativematter.skidmore.edu/hist_stu_schol/9) (accessed June 2022).

<sup>448</sup> See, Simon-Martin 'Barbara Bodichon's Travel Writing'; Cherry, *Beyond the Frame*, chaps. 2 & 3.

<sup>449</sup> T. Cresswell & T.P. Uteng, *Gendered Mobilities* (London: Routledge, 2008) p.5.

<sup>450</sup> Pomeroy, *Intrepid*, p.3.

<sup>451</sup> *Ibid* p. 2.

instruction at Parisian schools including Louise Jopling-Rowe. For example, she attended the all-female Atelier Chaplin, a private school formed in the winter 1853-4 by artist Charles Chaplin, which operated outside the gendered norms in both subject matter (allowing nude drawing) and professional practice.<sup>452</sup> ASL artists Violet Garrard, Dora Meeson-Coates, and suffrage artists the Woodward sisters attended the Académie Julian, the first to admit women on the same terms as men<sup>453</sup>; while Mary Sargent Florence with links to the ASL and the Suffrage Atelier attended Colarossi's studio, and Kathleen Shaw an early supporter of the Suffrage Atelier, studied at the Ecoles des Beaux Arts.<sup>454</sup>

Jopling-Rowe spent several years living in Paris in the late 1860s and makes clear in her autobiography that it was not simply the training, but the travelling, the being away from home, outside the British art scene and the confines of restrictive social ties in London, that gave women artists a sense of self and professional empowerment. 'Only abroad' she wrote, 'can a working and a domestic life be carried on simultaneously with little efforts. ...How my relations in England would have stared, and thought me little less than mad, to entertain the idea of becoming a "professional" – ...What a happy life it was! How different from that I should have led in London!'.<sup>455</sup> Kristi Siegal has shown how comparisons of life at home and abroad offered women a way of critiquing their own culture and was thus a factor in many artists' path to professional empowerment and political enlightenment.<sup>456</sup> Travelling

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<sup>452</sup> The school taught women exclusively, drawing an international mix of artists including American Mary Cassatt, French painter Henriette Browne, and Spanish artist Alejandrina Gessler y Lacroix. Chaplin's Atelier was known as the 'oldest women's studio', so-few artists were then capitalizing on the under-represented and potentially lucrative market of women painters. Rowe later recalled her fellow art 'companions were charming'. Ironically, women's attendance at Chaplin's all-female school was encouraged by contemporary art critics gendered attacks – or 'pseudo castration' – of his own work which they diminished as 'too feminine'. See, Michelle Pauken Cromer (2019) 'Migrating *Mujeres* and Gender Bending: Charles Chaplin's *Atelier* and the Education of Spanish Women Painters in Nineteenth-Century Paris' *Metacritic Journal for Comparative Studies and Theory* 5.1, pp. 55-68. Available at <https://doi.org/10.24193/mjcst.2019.7.03> (accessed July 2022).

<sup>453</sup> Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*. Dora passed happy days circa 1899 with husband George in Paris prior to their marriage 'when art was at its zenith' comparing 'notes and observations on the art and life around us'. Coates, *George Coates*, p. 15.

<sup>454</sup> Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*.

<sup>455</sup> Jopling-Rowe, *Twenty Years*, p. 6.

<sup>456</sup> K. Siegel, 'Intersections' pp. 2-3.

awakened their feminist consciousness and radicalism while distance from home allowed them ‘to reconceptualise (themselves as) militants’.<sup>457</sup> Pioneer Barbara Bodichon on writing about travel had stated, ‘I did not know before, how intense, how completely a part of my soul were all feelings about freedom and justice in politics and government’.<sup>458</sup> On her return to London, Jopling-Rowe started her own female art school and began her long suffrage journey, first formalised when she signed the ‘Letter from Ladies to Members of Parliament’ in 1885. The distance from (or to) home (homeland) had been integral to Rowe’s deconstruction and reconstruction of her professional and feminist identity, transformed by her travels both in and over space.<sup>459</sup>

However, women in Paris still had nowhere near the freedoms of men, and like Bodichon in her pictorializing of Algeria, some artists felt true creative freedom and professional empowerment could only be found by travelling away from the social and artistic conventions of Britain and Europe to paint in more distant lands, experiencing different cultures.<sup>460</sup> London born artist Charlotte Lillian Sheppard who worked closely with Rowe and the Housman siblings organizing the Kensington and Chelsea sections of the WSPU procession in 1908 (see chapter 2) spent eight years painting in Egypt in the 1890s and would later use her art directly for the cause (below).<sup>461</sup> She had initially journeyed there with her brother, an engineer, the two living many months on a river boat, though she later

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<sup>457</sup> Cherry, *Beyond the Frame*, p.60.

<sup>458</sup> Simon-Martin ‘Barbara Bodichon’s Travel Writing’ pp. 285–303.

<sup>459</sup> For an interesting discussion on this see, K. Kirby, *Indifferent Boundaries: Spatial Concepts of Human Subjectivity* (U.S.A, New York: Guilford Press, 1996).

<sup>460</sup> Global travel as modernity, as Caren Kaplan points out, was part of Eurocentrism, in S. Smith, *Moving Lives: Twentieth-Century Women’s Travel Writing* (US, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2001) p. 52. Authors detailing Bodichon’s life have consistently tied her global art travels to the development of her professional practice and to her feminism. See M. Simon-Martin, ‘Barbara Bodichon’s Travel Writing’; Cherry, *Beyond the Frame*, passim.

<sup>461</sup> There are various newspaper reports including, *The Western Daily Press*, 8 October 1900, p. 6; *The Norfolk News*, 24 November 1900, p. 8; ‘Egypt in London’, *Norwood News and Crystal Palace Chronicle*, 1 April 1899, p.5 She also spent significant time in Holland.

returned without him, taking a studio there in winter months with fellow artist and miniaturist Nora Jones.<sup>462</sup>

On the African continent the ‘female colonial gaze’ granted British women artists the privilege of ‘spectatorial power’ a positioning within the colonial structure which could act to their professional advantage when returning home.<sup>463</sup> Sheppard’s journeys to Egypt took place in a period of British rule known as the ‘veiled protectorate’ (1882-1914) when the country was not officially part of the British Empire (1914-22) but was financially reliant upon it after defaulting on multiple loans. A program of long-term investment in Egypt’s agricultural revenue began, including work to improve the Nile’s irrigation system, requiring engineers like Sheppard’s brother.<sup>464</sup> While this was not colonization by force it nevertheless involved Britain’s seizure, settlement, and environmental alteration of land crucial to the imperial project.<sup>465</sup> Sheppard’s spectatorial power enabled her to capture Egyptian scenes participating in imperial project building in Britain via a series of exhibitions that followed. One, in 1899 in the city, entitled by the press ‘Egypt in London’ stimulated several newspaper reports describing how Sheppard had resided in the valley of the Nile, bringing home a series of watercolours which transported the viewer to the ‘land of the Pharaohs’.<sup>466</sup> This was perfect for those unable to ‘get original impressions of its vivid scenery’ as ‘an hour spent in a careful examination of these drawings may almost serve the purpose of 24 hours on

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<sup>462</sup> ‘A Clever Miniature Painter’ *The Tatler*, 19 March 1902, No. 38, p. 494.

<sup>463</sup> S. Mills ‘Gender and Colonial Space’ in R. Lewis & S. Mills (eds.) *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003) p. 704. Or what Rose Dias & Kate Smith also call the ‘feminist colonial gaze’. See Dias & Smith, *British Women*, p. 11. See also, C. Jordan, ‘Emma Macpherson in the “Blacks’ Camp” and Other Australian Interludes: A Scottish Lady Artist’s Tour in New South Wales in 1856–57’, in Pomeroy, *Intrepid*, p. 90.

<sup>464</sup> D. Green, *Three Empires on the Nile: The Victorian Jihad, 1869-1899* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2007); M. W. Daly (ed.) *The Cambridge History of Egypt, Vol. 2: Modern Egypt from 1517 to the End of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) [https://ia601307.us.archive.org/10/items/iB\\_CE/02.pdf](https://ia601307.us.archive.org/10/items/iB_CE/02.pdf) (accessed 1 July 2022).

<sup>465</sup> Indeed, for Edward Said, imperialism means ‘at some very basic level... thinking about settling on, controlling land that you do not possess, that is distant, that is lived on and owned by others.’ E. W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1995) p.5.

<sup>466</sup> ‘Egypt in London’, *Norwood News and Crystal Palace Chronicle*, 1 April 1899, p.5.



a Nile steamer'.<sup>467</sup> For a fascinated London public, as the press editorial indicates, Sheppard's exhibition restructured colonized land 'for leisure and tourism, as well as visual and spiritual refreshment, sensory pleasure, and a pictorializing vision'.<sup>468</sup>

Through her sketches and paintings which included titles such as 'Dawn on the Nile' 'Sphinx by Moonlight' 'Flood time near Luxor' and 'Seashore-side Gabor' Sheppard took possession of these territories, depicting and displaying them at the centre of imperial power in London, pictorializing 'the land of the pharaohs' thus adding to imperial knowledge.<sup>469</sup>

Cherry, along with Sarah Mills and Mary Pratt have shown in their work on gender and colonial space, that while imperial knowledge building is generally thought of as masculine (as is mobility) women travellers and artists played an important role 'in constructing a form of knowledge which...[was] a way of taking possession without subjugation': removing the physical violence associated with masculine colonialism, while benefitting from and contributing to the wider western imperial project.<sup>470</sup>

The imperial project itself produced a complex model of spatiality, power, and knowledge, within which western women artists like Sheppard were themselves subjugated by gender. Not least, they remained unenfranchised and thus subjects not citizens of the colonizing British Empire and were subject to marginalisation by gender in their artistic careers. Yet, they were able to negotiate and occupy spaces for themselves within communities of imperial knowledge and authority where they could acquire some professional and commercial power.<sup>471</sup> For example, through her Egyptian work, Sheppard inhabited imperial space, which was itself closely intertwined with other power mechanisms,

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<sup>467</sup> Ibid.

<sup>468</sup> Cherry, *Beyond the Frame*, p.77. See also, J. Urry, *Consuming Places* (London: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>469</sup> 'Egypt in London', p.5.

<sup>470</sup> Cherry, *Beyond the Frame*, p. 80; Mills, 'Gender and Colonial Space', p.704; Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*.

<sup>471</sup> Rose, 'Distance, Surface, Elsewhere', pp. 761-781; Mills, 'Gender and Colonial Space'.

notably class, the latter often determining political commitments to empire.<sup>472</sup> This enhanced her professional visibility and status, and in 1902, the high society pages of *The Tatler* positively reported to its readers that Sheppard's 'well known Egyptian work always attracts so many admirers' while detailing her travels there as a professional artist.<sup>473</sup> Sheppard's pictorializing of Egypt on the one hand, showed the 'liberating potential of female travel' across the globe and she publicly challenged through her exhibitions, and the press, gendered notions about women's mobility and capability as professional artists.<sup>474</sup> On the other, her being there was implicitly bound to her privileged gaze as a white, middle class, western woman artist, whose landscapes sat among other 'interconnected assemblages' of empire 'through which colonial systems were produced, maintained and understood'.<sup>475</sup> This axiom necessarily casts a collective shadow over feminist interpretations of any suffrage artists' global travels and creativity as simply empowering, and so the chapter asks throughout, at whose cost comes that self-empowerment, not only away from home, but upon their return.<sup>476</sup>

For some British suffrage artists, global travels were a complex mix of familial and marital migrations, settlements, and resettlements, alongside career driven journeys taken by others. This complicated the notion of home and homeland, their relationship to imperial power, and sometimes cut short their participation in the suffrage campaign. For example, May Gibbs, who produced several cartoons for the NUWSS newspaper the *Common Cause*, was born in 1877 in Sydenham, south London, but emigrated with her family to Australia shortly afterwards in 1881. Having spent much of her youth in Australia, Gibbs later returned to England of her own accord, to London, to establish herself as an artist between 1900-1,

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<sup>472</sup> See, Z. un. N. Aziz (2021) 'Songs of Sisterhood: Feminist Political Practice between Empire and Internationalism 1910-20' *Gender & History*, July, p. 6.

<sup>473</sup> 'A Clever Miniature Painter' *The Tatler*, 19 March 1902, No. 38, p. 494.

<sup>474</sup> K. Huneault, 'Placing Frances Ann Hopkins: A British Born Artist in Colonial Canada' in Cherry & Helland, *Local/Global*, p. 179.

<sup>475</sup> Dias & Smith, *British Women*, p.11.

<sup>476</sup> Huneault, 'Placing Frances Ann Hopkins', p. 179.

1904-5, and again in 1909 when she began producing work for the suffrage cause. However, her activism ended when she returned ‘home’ as she saw it to Australia in 1913 where women had already been granted the franchise (1902), and where she enjoyed a successful career as a children’s author and illustrator.<sup>477</sup>

Journeys between homes and homelands were often multiple, and deeply rooted and routed in imperial structures of colonial knowledge and exploitation. Nowhere is this more manifest than in the pluralistic geographies and professional identity making of suffrage artist Pamela Colman-Smith. Like Gibbs, Colman-Smith was also born in London in 1878, but to American parents who lived in Manchester for the formative years of her life. The family moved to the colonies of the British West Indies when Colman-Smith was aged about ten years old, and she remained there until her mother died. She then left for her parents’ homeland America (a former British colony) periodically returning to her father in the West Indies until his death when she voyaged back to her roots in England in 1901. A self-confessed anglophile, she remained in the country until her death, though she never relinquished her U.S citizenship by parentage and spent frequent spells in the States and in Ireland.<sup>478</sup> In many ways Colman-Smith fits Tamboukou’s ‘nomadic subject’ – a subject in transition - not defined by homelessness, but by the ability to recreate homes everywhere.<sup>479</sup>

In Ireland, she became heavily involved in Irish home craft industries founding the Dun Emer Industries and Press with Evelyn Gleeson and Lilly Yeats, and worked on craft

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<sup>477</sup> She returned to study art at schools in south Kensington and Chelsea. See, Crawford, *Art & Suffrage*; and for her career as a children’s author & illustrator, see, <https://maygibbs.org/about-may-gibbs/> (accessed August 2022). Female suffrage in Australia, granted in 1902, excluded non-white women. I discuss this in more detail later in the chapter.

<sup>478</sup> She returned to America to study art, training at the Pratt Institute in New York where she earned an income selling hand-coloured books, illustrations, and prints via a Fifth Avenue gallery, before coming ‘home’ once again to England. Her career later took off following an exhibition in 1907 in the well-known New York photographer Alfred Steiglitz’s *Photo Session Gallery* leading to two further exhibitions. Many thanks to Melinda Boyd Parsons of Neuman University, Delaware, the leading authority on Smith, for information from her unpublished biography of Pamela Colman- Smith: ‘Primitivism’, Visionary Synaesthesia, and Social Reform (forthcoming). See, also Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*.

<sup>479</sup> Tamboukou, *Leaving the Self*, p. 38.

periodicals like ‘The Broadsheet’ with W.B Yeats, making a significant contribution to Irish Revivalism.<sup>480</sup> Visitors to her Chelsea flat during the suffrage campaign, included WB Yeats, other Irish revivalists, and Home Rule proponents such as Shane Leslie, an Irish dissident cousin of Winston Churchill, who became an Irish nationalist and Sinn Fein sympathiser. This suggests, perhaps together with her own conversion to Catholicism circa 1912, that Colman-Smith may have harboured nationalist or certainly anti-imperialist sentiments.<sup>481</sup>

Nonetheless, she used her experience of colonial life in the British West Indies to her professional advantage, publishing in 1899, and retelling, and animating, local Jamaican folklore ‘Annancy Tales’ in London, and at numerous theatres across the south of England, and in the United States throughout the campaign years.<sup>482</sup> Various reports in *Tatler* and the *Bystander* magazine, one entitled ‘Jamaica in London’, describe her seated on the floor with lit candles and hand carved figures to help tell the ‘absolutely fresh and delightful tales’ which ‘she speaks as a Jamaican negro to the manner born’ and have a flavour ‘of the Indian folklore Mr Kipling has made us so well acquainted with’.<sup>483</sup> Rudyard Kipling was among the most influential cultural commentators on the tensions and dualities of the British empire, and the comparison leaves little doubt that Colman-Smith’s appropriation of the Tales, and her telling of them in a Jamaican accent, was a complex yet highly imperialist act.<sup>484</sup> Britain’s

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<sup>480</sup> See N. G. Bowe & E. Cumming, *The Arts and Crafts Movements in Dublin and Edinburgh, 1885-1925* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1998). On Irish Revivalism, see, G. Castle (2011) ‘Irish Revivalism: Critical Trends and New Directions’ *Literature Compass* 8:5, pp. 291–303. For more on Colman-Smith’s crafts see chapter 4.

<sup>481</sup> Home rule was regarded in Ireland, as it was in India, as hand in glove by some with anti-colonialist sentiment, as was Irish Revivalism. See Castle, *ibid.* These names are taken from Pamela Colman-Smith’s visitors’ book courtesy once more of correspondence with Melinda Boyd-Parsons, Neuman University.

<sup>482</sup> See, *Kildare Observer and Eastern Counties Advertiser*, 2 September 1905, p.6; *Tenbury Wells Advertiser*, 21 July 1908, p. 4; *Eastborne Gazette*, 15 January 1913, p. 3; *The Referee* 15 July 1906, p. 4.

<sup>483</sup> *Tatler* ‘Musical Mems’ 145, 6 April 1904 p. 30; *The Bystander* ‘Jamaica in London’ 17 February 1904, p. 807-8.

<sup>484</sup> Literary reviews of Kipling’s work have taken many turns over the years, but he is now generally seen as occupying space somewhere between a critic and apologist rather than an out and out defender of the British Empire. For instance, see, P. Battles (1996) ‘‘The Mark of the Beast’’: Rudyard Kipling’s Apocalyptic Vision of Empire’ *Studies in Short Fiction*, 33:3, pp. 333-344; N. Scott, (2014) ‘The Representation of the Orient in Rudyard Kipling’s ‘Kim.’’ *Arbeiten Aus Anglistik Und Amerikanistik*, 39:2, pp. 175–84 available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24329449> (accessed 15 October 2022).

colonisation of the West Indies was built on a legacy of violence and slavery, but, like Sheppard's exhibition 'Egypt in London', Colman-Smith's 'Jamaica in London' carved a unique space for her within imperial knowledge making systems while obfuscating the violence and exploitation associated with it.<sup>485</sup>

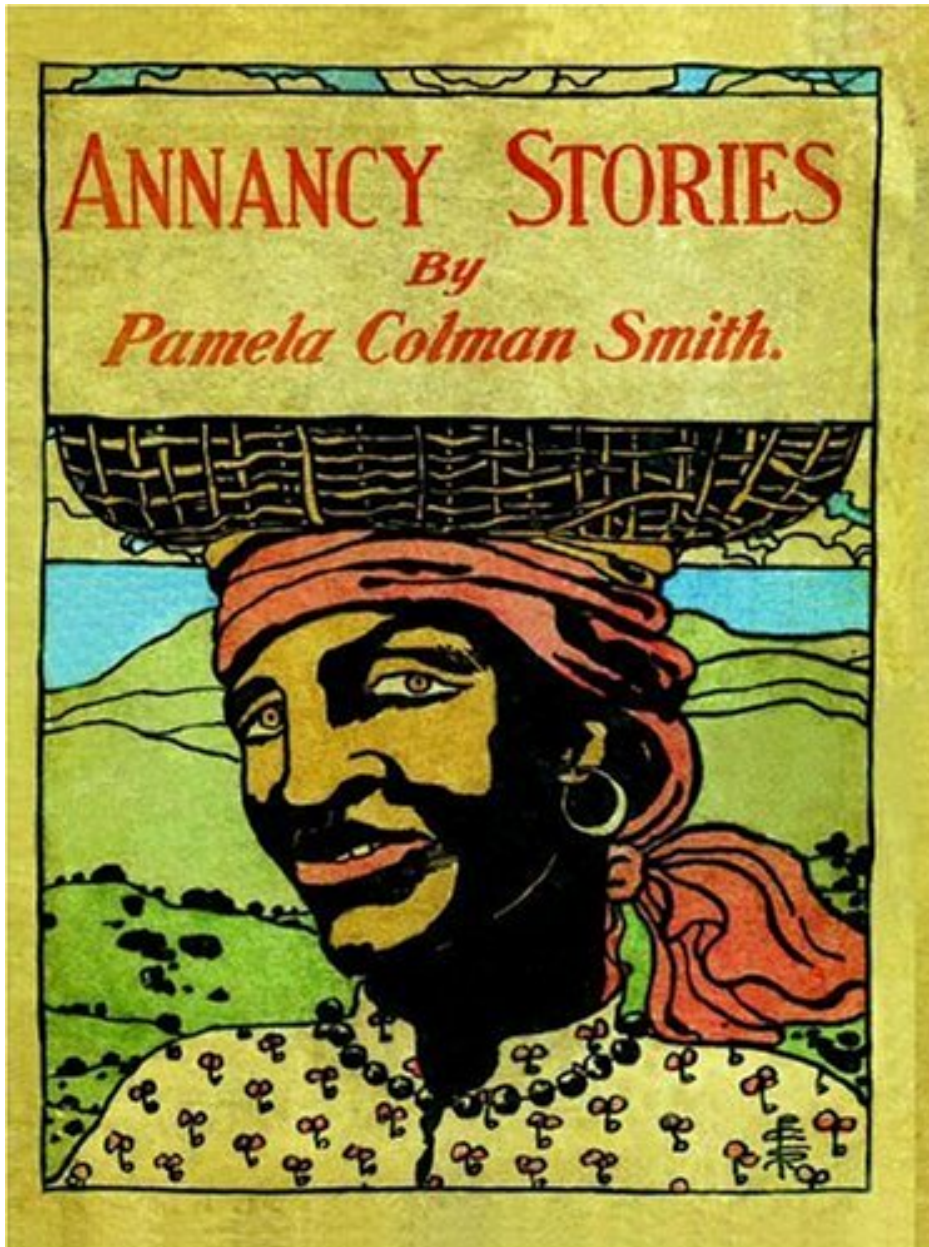


Figure 13. Replicated front cover of *Annancy Stories* authored by Pamela Colman-Smith (New York: R. H. Russell, 1899). Source: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Annancy-Stories-Pamela-Colman-Smith/dp/0976961229> (accessed February 2023).

<sup>485</sup> Mills, 'Gender and Colonial Space', p.704; Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*.

The feminist and suffragist movements in Britain were built on the rhetoric of philanthropy and anti-slavery, but tangible links to colonial slavery were present in the diasporic life of Suffrage Atelier embroiderer and Women's Freedom League activist Elizabeth Gosling. During the suffrage campaign, she regularly travelled back and forth between her home in Hampstead, London, and home in the British colony of Bermuda where her husband's business, Gosling Brothers, was situated, and where he sat on the colony's Legislative Council. The couple had their son there in 1897.<sup>486</sup> Gosling Brother's, a rum maker still operating in Bermuda (still part of the British commonwealth) benefitted directly from the exploitation of African slaves whom they employed and received substantial compensation for in 1836 following the passing of the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833.<sup>487</sup> Therefore, in the shifting homes and foundations of Elizabeth Gosling's diasporic family life between London and Bermuda; in Colman-Smith's retelling of her childhood Jamaican folklore tales; and in Sheppard's travels 'pictorializing' Egypt, we see the tensions between suffrage artists' empowerment as white western women and the commensurate disempowerments enacted under the imperial project. Accordingly, while as women their global mobility, artistic advancement, and later suffrage activism should rightly be viewed in the broader context of progressive feminism, from the perspective of the power geometries of empire the 'locations from which they speak, and the contradictions that marked these locations' must also be acknowledged in their journey toward political and artistic self-empowerment.<sup>488</sup>

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<sup>486</sup> *Hampstead and Highgate Express*, 18 July 1908, p. 4; Morton, 'Changing Spaces'; Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*.

<sup>487</sup> In 1836 Ambrose Gosling claimed £50 16s 6d for 4 'enslaved'. See Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery, UCL, Bermuda claims no. 732 (15 Feb 1836) claimant Ambrose Gosling, <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/claim/view/2120000732> (accessed 20 September 2022). Parliament passed the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833 affecting the British West Indies and other parts of the empire.

<sup>488</sup> Grewel, *Home and Harem*, p. 17.

Several suffrage artists were not born in Britain but in existing British, or former British colonies. They nevertheless settled on ‘home’ in England to pursue their artistic careers, disrupting notions of home and homeland that underpinned the imperial project. In the latter, the notion of home was organized around a principle of inclusions and exclusions, of colonisers and colonised, as a way of establishing hierarchies of difference.<sup>489</sup> For instance, ASL artists Bessie Wigan and Dora Meeson-Coates were both born in the former (by 1901) British colony of Australia migrating to England with their families in the late nineteenth century - although Meeson-Coates spent much of her childhood in New Zealand.<sup>490</sup> In 1895, she began her training at London’s Slade School of art, but when her studies were ‘interrupted’ by a short health hiatus, she returned to Australia attending Australia’s Melbourne National Gallery School.<sup>491</sup> There she met fellow Australian artist, future husband and suffragist, George Coates – the two spending the rest of their lives together in England. Interestingly, on their first encounter, rather than a fellow Australian, George believed Dora was ‘an English girl straight from the Slade school’ who *must* ‘imagine herself superior to colonial students’ revealing how tensions over discourses of coloniser and colonised were keenly felt even in the intimate spaces of suffrage artists’ private as well as public lives.<sup>492</sup> Later the chapter discusses how Meeson-Coates diasporic identity, her being between home in England, and antipodean homelands, explicitly shaped her suffrage art, feminist sociability, and campaign work in London, creating empowering spaces of global identification.

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<sup>489</sup> Gowan, *Imperial Geographies*, p. 428.

<sup>490</sup> Wigan had moved to England by 1871, attending boarding school in Bristol, although there is no information on her artistic training. She was an ASL supporter from its inception in 1907. Bessie Wigan: census return 1871 pn2540 fn95 pg39 (NA); census return 1911 RG14-00-4-02-00402-0191-03 (NA). Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*.

<sup>491</sup> Meeson-Coates came to England when her father was studying law in 1895, returning in 1896 to resume her training at the Slade which ran through to 1898. Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*.

<sup>492</sup> Meeson-Coates, *George Coates*, p. 9. She italicises the word ‘must’ in her text.

There were also strong ties to the British colony of India among suffrage artists where some were born and spent their younger years before travelling to England and spending the campaign years in London. Here, family lives were enmeshed from the outset in the operating structures of the British Raj through paternal occupations. For example, WSPU supporter and artist Margaret Forbes was born in Bombay, where her father served as a chaplain;<sup>493</sup> ASL artist Bethea Shore in lower Bengal, where her father was employed as a civil servant;<sup>494</sup> and Suffrage Atelier co-founder Agnes Joseph in Ajmere, where her father Captain Frederick Joseph was with the Bombay Staffs Corps.<sup>495</sup> There are no surviving accounts of these women's experiences in India, but Gowans work drawing on the early twentieth century life writings and reminiscences of British women living there as children and adults, reveals how England, invariably referred to as 'home', often compared unfavourably to the freedoms and privileges experienced in India. This problematized imperial notions of home, and senses of belonging for women, in ways that opened space for dislocation and tension over the successes and sustainability of British colonial rule.<sup>496</sup> English ASL artist Christiana Herringham was not born in India, but her travel experiences there opened-up an 'experiential rift' between the location of homeland in England, and her sense of belonging at home in India.<sup>497</sup> This augured her questioning the legitimacy of colonial politics in India, which importantly she framed at home through the global politics of craft practice, and coincided with an uptick in her feminist and suffrage activism.

Herringham went to India for the first time in 1906 with her husband Wilmott, to see the living conditions of their son Geoffrey posted to Egypt and India with the British army.

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<sup>493</sup> Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*.

<sup>494</sup> Her family arrived in London in the 1870s and she occupied several addresses there. Bethea Shore: census return 1901 RG13 37 202 57 (NA); census return 1911 RG14-00-1-33-00133-0363-03 (NA) & Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*.

<sup>495</sup> Agnes Eleanor Hope Joseph: birth/baptism record 1878 Ajmere, India, N/1/164 f. 6 (APAC/BL); census return 1901 RG13 2252 95 3 19 (NA). See also, Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*.

<sup>496</sup> Gowans, *Imperial Geographies*, p. 428.

<sup>497</sup> P. Gilroy, *Between Camps: Nations, Cultures, and the Allure of Race* (London: Penguin, 2000) p. 124.



She was experiencing a flourishing professional career at home as a tempura artist, copyist, and art critic at that time. On the trip, she saw, and set her heart upon copying the deteriorating Buddhist wall paintings in caves at Ajanta, leading to her later return to India in 1911. As it had for other women artists traveling away from home in Britain, and from the familiarity of European cultures, Herringham's sense of freedom and creative empowerment was whetted in Ajanta, not least by it having 'no intrusive social code to say that a woman artist may do this, but a woman artist may not do that'.<sup>498</sup>



*Figure 14. Christiana Herringham, circa 1885 (copyright Jean Vernon Jackson Collection). Source: <https://www.exploringsurreypast.org.uk> (accessed November 2022).*

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<sup>498</sup> M. Lago, *Christiana Herringham and the Edwardian Art Scene* (London: Lund Humphries Publishers, 1996) p. 210.

Her journey began with typically romanticised, imagined notions of mystic India, permeated with familiar imperial narratives of native ‘backwardness’.<sup>499</sup> Writing to her friend, artist William Rothenstein, she described how Indian peoples compared to white Europeans, should be considered ‘many or fewer stages less removed from childhood’.<sup>500</sup> This historically specific form of racism was a critical component of imperial and feminist discourse on Indian women in particular, who suffragists argued needed to be ‘saved’.<sup>501</sup> Yet, time spent in India, ‘a colonial contact zone’, forced Herringham to confront the complications of her own position and beliefs as a subject, not citizen, of the British empire within which she herself was subjugated by gender.<sup>502</sup> She (and Wilmott) became increasingly embarrassed by the behaviour they witnessed from English middle and aristocratic classes toward the native population. And both began to question the veracity of political propaganda and ‘how dependent the average English at home were upon the government’s point of view’.<sup>503</sup> Herringham’s biographer Mary Lago writes she had little interest in Indian politics, but Herringham’s experience led her to write revealingly to Rothenstein:

‘I feel as if we are like the old Romans in our position here – and people in England think as little of it as probably people in Rome thought about Gaul & Britain and Spain. You have no idea how queer it feels to walk about feeling that you have written on you ‘Ruling Nation’, especially when it is also ‘Woman of Ruling Nation’.<sup>504</sup>

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<sup>499</sup> Grewal, *Home and Harem*; Gowans, *Imperial Geographies*; Mohanty, ‘Feminist Encounters’ Barrett & Phillips *Destabilizing Theory*.

<sup>500</sup> Lago, *Christiana Herringham* p. 150.

<sup>501</sup> Mukherjee, *Indian Suffragettes*, p. 29; Burton, *Burdens of History*; Aziz ‘Songs of Sisterhood’; Sinha ‘Suffragism and Internationalism’; Purvis & Hannam, *The British Women’s Suffrage Campaign*.

<sup>502</sup> Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, pp. 3-7. Pratt defines these as social spaces where disparate cultures meet and grapple with each other, usually under highly asymmetrical relationships of power.

<sup>503</sup> Lago, *Christiana Herringham*, p. 151

<sup>504</sup> *Ibid*, p.152.

She does not elaborate, but Herringham's reference to Roman colonization, and her distinction between being a visible symbol of a 'Ruling Nation' and a 'Woman of a Ruling Nation', points to her heightened awareness in India of her own gendered subjugation as a voteless subject in Britain, while nevertheless being 'seen' by the 'other' in India as subjugator. Introducing their collected essays on British women and the material cultures of empire, Rose Dias and Katie Smith outline how it was not uncommon for such tensions to arise 'from the native subject's concern at being observed and delineated not only by a foreigner, but by a woman'.<sup>505</sup> That it seems to have unsettled Herringham speaks to Frédéric Regard's assertion, drawing on Gayatri Spivak, that 'empire messes with identity' and so the 'colonizing subject's identity too, is distorted in the process of encounter'.<sup>506</sup> Herringham's trips to India set in motion an irrevocable shift in her sense of home and belonging, affecting her life in England. She wrote to Wilmot: 'You mustn't miss me too much because I shall have to go away from London [again] pretty soon it is so suffocating'.<sup>507</sup> And Lago writes, even being very busy in London 'did not abate the restlessness that Christiana had felt ever since her return from India'.<sup>508</sup> Almost immediately following her second trip there in 1911, at the height of the suffrage campaign, she became subject to delusions, was committed to an asylum, and remained institutionalised for the rest of her life. The reasons for Herringham's emotional fragility at this stage of her life were complex, but as Siegal argues, whether it is put into written words or not, travel in all its forms elicits 'identity upheaval' something Herringham perhaps herself recognised, writing: 'That is the great fascination of travelling, I think. You lose your own identity'.<sup>509</sup>

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<sup>505</sup> Dias & Smith, *British Women*, p.12.

<sup>506</sup> F. Regard (ed.) *British Narratives of Exploration: Case Studies of the Self and Other* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2009) preface, p. 4.

<sup>507</sup> Lago, *Christiana Herringham*, p. 171.

<sup>508</sup> *Ibid*, p. 174.

<sup>509</sup> Siegal 'Intersections', p. 44 & Lago, *Ibid*, p. 148.

Herringham's 'unsettling' in India, and her artistic work and freedom at Ajanta, likely furthered her politicization of art as a tool for creative, professional, and feminist advancement that reveal paradoxes and interlinkages between her own colonial self-empowerment, and the promotion of native Indian crafts under threat from British imperialism. Between her return to England in 1906, and institutionalisation in 1911, she switched allegiance to the militant side of the suffrage movement, joining the WSPU; supported and produced suffrage designs for the ASL; and became a founding member in 1907 of the WGA formed to promote and maintain professional standards and opportunities for women, marginalised by gender in arts and crafts work.<sup>510</sup> Alongside, Herringham fought the decline of native arts and crafts work in colonial India. Herringham had seen how conservative attitudes toward the superiority of 'high' art which deemed her own tempera and craft work at home in Britain as 'primitive' (and therefore not progressive) was also infecting the British Raj; the government 'simply transplanted British views to India' leading to the irrevocable loss of Indian art as she experienced through her copyist work in Ajanta.<sup>511</sup> Indeed, her support for women's marginalized craft in England, and her work on behalf of Indian craftsmanship, can be seen as spatially intertwined through empire and a narrative of artistic disempowerment.

Herringham's Indian experiences relayed to her friend and artist Rothenstein, formed the basis for his founding of the India Society in April 1910 to 'promote the study and appreciation of Indian culture in its aesthetic aspects'.<sup>512</sup> The Society claimed politics 'were absolutely excluded from its scope' yet it used the comparative collecting and copyist activities of the Dutch, Prussian, and French empires, and the benefits of it to the aesthetic

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<sup>510</sup> Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*; Lago, *Christiana Herringham*.

<sup>511</sup> Lago, *Christiana Herringham* p. 147.

<sup>512</sup> 'The India Society' *The Academy*, 11 June 1910, p. 570. Herringham's travels also encouraged Rothenstein to travel to India including Ajanta in 1910. See, R. R. Arrowsmith (2010) 'An Indian Renaissance' and the Rise of Global Modernism: William Rothenstein in India, 1910–11' *The Burlington Magazine* CLII (April) pp. 228–235.

enrichment of these nations, to press forward its agenda in imperial Britain.<sup>513</sup> Herringham's work and the subsequent founding of the India Society undoubtedly lay the foundations for a 1913 petition to 'save' Indian craftsmanship signed at the height of the suffrage campaign by numerous 'artists of distinction' including Suffrage Atelier artists Laurence Housman and Louise Jopling-Rowe. The petition urged then Secretary of State for India Lord Crewe, to employ Indian master builders and craftsman rather than their English counterparts in the construction of the city of New Delhi.<sup>514</sup> Although it used explicitly imperial language to achieve it - the petition claimed saving Indian craftsmanship was 'for the general good, artistically and morally' and politically served to 'tie the natives of India more closely to the Mother Country' – it nonetheless recognized and sought to redress the colonial disempowerment of native craftsmen.<sup>515</sup> Like Herringham's broader work, the 1913 petition can be viewed doubly as a rejection of the consequences of artistic colonialism, yet made through the power brokerage and language of the colonial ruler. Moreover, there are other linkages in signatories Housman and Jopling-Rowe's work with the Suffrage Atelier to redress women's disempowerment in the crafts industries at home across classes which I develop below and discuss further in chapter 5.

This same double strategy evident in the petition, echoed through the British suffrage movement's rhetoric for women's enfranchisement which rejected the gendered politics of empire through notions of global sisterhood, yet couched its appeals in imperialist terms and rights as 'women of the ruling nation'. I now follow these imperial tensions through into the global spaces forged by various suffrage creativities in London.

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<sup>513</sup> *The Academy*, *ibid.*

<sup>514</sup> *The Times*, 'The New Delhi: Indian Craftsman or Western Architect' 7 February 1913, p. 5.

<sup>515</sup> *Ibid.*

### *The Global City: Art, Suffrage and Empire*

Suffrage artists' global web of travel and migration gave them an outward looking perspective on the world that inevitably gelled well with the women's suffrage movement's internationalist approach to female enfranchisement.<sup>516</sup> The international fight for the vote was widely popularized in Britain through suffrage press reports of various, often high-profile campaigner's world tours; international society conferences, processions, and fairs; and press columns detailing stories that connected and compared suffrage activities at home with those going on abroad. All were invariably framed, organized, and discussed in the everyday power language of empire that ran through all women's lives in Britain, whether they wanted it to or not. This part of the chapter explores how that process of 'local globalization' played out through the spatial geographies of travel and empire in suffrage artists' varied art and campaign work, and in suffrage art crafting in London, the political epicentre of British imperialism. It reveals how new spaces of global identification were created that were politically and artistically empowering for women. Yet, it also illuminates how these spaces often recreated the asymmetric power relations of colonialism that not only happened in the 'peripheries' of empire, but in the street, homes, town halls, and studios of the metropolis itself.

London's importance on the suffrage and feminist world stage was arguably symbolized by the location there of the headquarters of the IWSA. Situated in the impressive Adelphi Terrace, it was 'a short walk from the Houses of Parliament, the locus of British political power and imperial might'.<sup>517</sup> Just a few days following the sixth IWSA convention, London held the most spectacular suffrage demonstration of all, the Women's Coronation Procession, which displayed the breadth of women's support for the vote across the nations

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<sup>516</sup> Walker, 'Locating the Global' p. 176.

<sup>517</sup> Walker, *ibid*, p. 178.

of the British empire and beyond.<sup>518</sup> The procession was meant to rival the official Coronation procession for the king as a spectacle ‘of the manhood of the Empire’ and so to challenge the values that excluded women from it. The king’s impending coronation, along with an imperial conference being held in the city, meant London was swamped with visitors from home and overseas, presenting the perfect opportunity to bring ‘before the eyes’ ‘women as one half of the people who are the King’s Loyal Subjects’.<sup>519</sup> Women from all walks of life, regions of the country, professions, and nations, were invited to take part including representatives in traditional costume from India, Ireland, Wales, and Australia. The procession program claimed to bring together women from ‘all corners of the earth’.<sup>520</sup> There was an Empire Car in which children sheltered under the Emperor kings tree and ‘at their feet symbolic presentments of the various dependents and colonies’ bound to the Crown.<sup>521</sup> Historians have since reflected upon and critiqued the procession’s representation of a global ‘sisterhood of unity’ in the context of class differences, and of its celebration of a colonialist British Empire which reinforced a white western, imperialist point of view. In so doing, it effectively erased ‘material and ideological power differences within and among groups of women’.<sup>522</sup> An observer from *The Times* noted while ‘women of every class of society seemed to be united in the demonstration ... the wives and daughters of the working class were comparatively few’ and Indian women were not there to represent the campaign for votes in India, an issue which was not raised until after 1917, when democratic assemblies were slowly introduced by the imperial parliament.<sup>523</sup> The class and race realities of global sisterhood were complex something the chapter will view shortly, through the lens of the less

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<sup>518</sup> The convention took place on the 13<sup>th</sup> of June 1911 in Sweden. The Women’s Coronation Procession followed four days later, the 17<sup>th</sup> of June 1911.

<sup>519</sup> *Memento of Women’s Coronation Procession to demand Votes for Women, Saturday June 17, 1911, Order of March and Descriptive Programme* (London: Woman’s Press, 1911), preface, passim.

<sup>520</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>521</sup> *The Bystander*, 21 June 1911, p. 593.

<sup>522</sup> Especially as author Chandra Mohanty points out, between First and Third World women. See, C. Mohanty, ‘Feminist Encounters’ p. 83.

<sup>523</sup> *The Times*, 19 June 1911, p. 33, quoted in Mukherjee, ‘Diversity’.

well known but revealing artistic work for the WFL's local International Suffrage Fair in 1912, in Chelsea.

Suffrage artists were integrally involved in the Women's Coronation Procession choreography and imagery (though some reluctantly) which saw a fragile truce called between the increasingly polarized suffrage societies the NUWSS and the WSPU.<sup>524</sup> It was perhaps fitting that English born suffrage artist Marjorie Hamilton, who emigrated young to the then dominion of Canada, was 'given the rather important commission' of designing the purple, white and green flyer advertising the procession during a spell when she was residing in London. She made several journeys, multiple homes, and career switches between the two countries over the course of her lifetime.<sup>525</sup> Hamilton's strong ties to both home and homeland in many ways embodied the processions ideals of global sisterhood, as did Australian and ASL artist Dora Meeson-Coates' work for the parade. She was commissioned to make the banner to head the Australia and New Zealand contingent of the procession. The banner she created depicted Australia as a young woman, imploring a mature Britannia to 'Trust the Women Mother as I Have Done' referring to the granting of female suffrage in New Zealand in 1893, and Australia in 1902.<sup>526</sup> By imploring its maternal figure to cede to the daughter's greater wisdom on the vote, the banner symbolically reversed the powers of

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<sup>524</sup> Head of the ASL, Mary Lowndes, wrote to the NUWSS that she and Barbara Forbes were 'absolutely unable to give up the time required for organising such a thing at this moment' and ventured the same was true for many of the League's other artists. However, one of them, artist Emily Ford, independently offered to create several shield shaped banners representing the names of town councils supportive of a proposal to extend the franchise to women householders in a Conciliation Bill that was pending in parliament. These visually illustrated the benefits of quiet, constitutional work, and as Ford put it, bearing 'no possible relation to the WSPU'. See, NUWSS Executive Committee Minutes & Emily Ford letters to Philippa Strachey (WL) LSE & Tickner, *Spectacle*, pp. 122-131.

<sup>525</sup> Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*. The London Conference of 1866, led to the formation of the Dominion of Canada in July 1867. The term dominion was chosen to indicate Canada's status as a self-governing polity of the British Empire. The British North America Act, 1867 (enacted by the British Parliament), saw Canada become a federated country in its own right. It achieved full sovereignty in 1982. Women's suffrage was granted gradually across the Canadian provinces from 1916 and was granted in full in 1918 in all dominion provinces. This excluded New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, and Quebec, which granted female suffrage between 1919 and 1940.

<sup>526</sup> M. Scott, *How Australia Led the Way*; Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune*; Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*.



the ‘mother’ country (Britain) over the colonies (Australasia), unsettling hegemonic power structures of empire and citizenship through the comparative lens of feminist advancement – though it did not unsettle the imperial hierarchies of race as the celebrated female franchise in Australia in 1902, only extended to white women.



*Figure 15. Dora Meeson-Coates hessian painted banner for the Australia and New Zealand contingent of the 1911 Women's Coronation Procession. Source: Gifts Collection, Parliament House Art Collection, Canberra, ACT.*

In an editorial for *Votes for Women*, Christabel Pankhurst argued that the best start to the new reign of King George V and Queen Mary would be ‘the admission of women to the rights and dignities of citizenship’ pointing out that women in the colonies were able to take

part in shaping their own destiny and nationhood through the vote, unlike women in the ‘Mother Country’ who were denied the rights and privileges of British citizenship.<sup>527</sup> In this sense, the banner mirrored the imperial rhetoric of the campaign at large, that later used in artists’ 1913 India petition above. Meeson-Coates was herself one of the ‘four bearers who staggered under its weight’ during the procession, while husband George walked ‘devotedly alongside all the way, begging in vain to be allowed to help’.<sup>528</sup> In many ways, the banner’s visual intertwining of Australia and New Zealand, of maternal connections between home and homeland, ‘metropole and dominion’, with the empowering politics of female suffrage, mirrored Meeson-Coates own diasporic life, politics, and sociability in London. She became actively involved with the Australian and New Zealand Women Voters Committee (ANZWVC) which addressed antipodean women’s concern over their potential loss of voting rights at home while they were resident in Britain. She frequently lent her Chelsea studio for its meetings.<sup>529</sup> This work continued during, and post war, when she became Australia’s representative in London for the British Dominion Woman Suffrage Union (BDWSU). The BDWSU received little publicity in the press though Meeson-Coates was present at meetings held on topics such as the White Australia policy, women’s disadvantage in India, and similar imperial issues.<sup>530</sup>

Meeson-Coates became a lynch pin in bringing migrant artists together with suffrage communities creating spaces of diasporic identification through art and politics in the city. Her home with George in Chelsea, in the ‘cosy...little village street’ of Glebe Place, was a renowned first port of call for many migrant artists seeking to settle and work in London, the couple holding large parties and social gatherings there.<sup>531</sup> The local influx of artists from

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<sup>527</sup> ‘A Constitutional King’, *Votes for Women*, 13 May 1910, p. 536.

<sup>528</sup> Meeson-Coates, *George Coates*, p. 63.

<sup>529</sup> Meeson-Coates, *George Coates*; Scott, *How Australia Led the Way*; Woollacott, *To Try her Fortune*, pp. 79-81; Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*.

<sup>530</sup> Scott, *How Australia Led the Way*, p. 52.

<sup>531</sup> Meeson-Coates remained in Chelsea until her death. Meeson-Coates, *George Coates*, p. 192.

abroad, many from former British colonies, was acute, leading author Arthur Ransome to write in 1907, 'Chelsea does not breed artists she adopts them' giving it a different kind of local patriotism, 'the patriotism of members of a foreign legion'.<sup>532</sup> The home gatherings held by Meeson-Coates worked in part to counter the sense of alienation and dislocation many migrant artists felt when dwelling at length in the city. Meeson-Coates had herself experienced loneliness when settling in London. She recalled how her art tutor had discovered her 'bitterly crying' 'in the lonely empty school' and hearing her 'home was in New Zealand' encouraged her 'to get out and enjoy myself'.<sup>533</sup>

The necessity of spaces to counteract what was known as the London shock was cited by Constance Smedley as among her reasons for founding the Lyceum Club in 1904, offering artists opportunities to 'come into free and helpful contact with other men and women from all over the world'.<sup>534</sup> Underpinned by her own diasporic identity Meeson-Coates local response was to welcome and to connect particularly antipodean migrant artists and suffragists at her home. These social spaces fostered artists' shared diasporas of home and homeland, of community and empire, while interlinking art with gender politics at a local (London), national (Britain), and global (Australia and empire) scale. This enabled 'triadic geographies of belonging' in the city that were potentially empowering both politically and creatively.<sup>535</sup> Among Australian visitors to Meeson-Coates home was Australian sculptor Ola Cohn who arranged a meeting with her within two weeks of her arrival, noting in her diary

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<sup>532</sup> Ransome, *Bohemia*, pp. 39-40.

<sup>533</sup> Meeson-Coates, *George Coates*, p.62. There are further intimate, domestic accounts of the tensions the couple felt between belonging at 'home' in London, and yearnings for 'homeland' in Australia, scattered throughout her biography of husband George.

<sup>534</sup> See, G. Bockington (2005) 'A World Fellowship: The Founding of the International Lyceum Club for Women Artists and Writers' *Transnational Associations: The Review of the Union of International Associations* 1, pp. 15-22. Chiefly for women artists, writers, and actors, it did permit some men.

<sup>535</sup> This adaptable concept, and phrase, is used in several works related to empire and transnationalism. For example, see, Gowans, *Imperial Geographies*, p. 427; S. Vertovec (1999) 'Conceiving and Researching Transnationalism', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 22, pp. 447 -62. See also, S. Alomes, *When London Calls: The Expatriatism of Australian Creative Artists to Britain* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1999).

that she and her husband George were most welcoming and understanding. Regular guests also included fellow ASL artist Bessie Wigan, Anglo-Australian May Gibbs who produced cartoons for the NUWSS newspaper the *Common Cause*, and pro-suffrage *Daily Herald* cartoonist Will Dyson and his wife Ruby Lindsay, who subsequently illustrated some front covers of the *Suffragette* newspaper.<sup>536</sup> The couple later moved to Glebe Place to live opposite the Meeson-Coates, consolidating their friendships and political collaborations. Therefore, and together with her work for the ANZWVC and BDWSU, Meeson-Coates facilitated extensive, politicized, Anglo-antipodean networks in the city. That these often revolved around her home and studio in Chelsea illustrates place as a ‘tool of sociality’ and how imperial diasporic identities intertwined with women’s collective struggle for artistic and political power.<sup>537</sup>

Suffrage artists who had travelled and explored what it meant to be women artists in other parts of the world, used the intimate spaces of their homes and studios in other ways to share their global paintings and travels with other suffragists in the city. For example, in 1908, Sheppard, who had by then spent several years living and painting landscapes in Egypt and Holland, held an exhibition of work for sale with artist, friend, and fellow suffragist, Rose Aspinall Syers who specialised in landscape and marine paintings. The exhibition at Syers and Sheppard’s studio in Seymour Place, off the Fulham Road, was advertised in the suffrage press and was open from 2p.m until 7p.m for several days in October. Tea was served ‘for 3d’ to make the exhibition a sociable space to visit, and viewers were offered the chance to peruse and buy the pictures displayed at ‘moderate prices.’ The artists hoped ‘to be able to hand over a good donation to the WSPU’ from the sales.<sup>538</sup> This tactic was used by nineteenth century artists like Bodichon, who utilized their art in diverse ways to raise funds

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<sup>536</sup> Meeson-Coates, *George Coates*, pp. 32-43 & Tickner, *Spectacle*, p.20.

<sup>537</sup> Retsikas, ‘Being and Place’, p. 971-2; Blunt, ‘Cultural Geographies’, pp. 684–694.

<sup>538</sup> *Votes for Women*, 8 October 1908, p. 19.

for feminist projects, while also promoting their professional identities and bolstering earnings.<sup>539</sup> Meanwhile, Australian ASL artist Bessie Wigan, exhibited her travel paintings in 1910 at one of several suffrage society ‘at homes’ at her studio.<sup>540</sup> There, suffrage audience’s ‘eyes fell always on some delightful picture representing Miss Wigan’s travels far and wide’ which formed the subject of the ‘charmingly informal meetings’.<sup>541</sup> This included time spent in Australia, at the Italian lakes and mountains, in Belgium, Ireland, the Norwegian fjords, and France: travels on the European continent made possible by Wigan’s migration to the British ‘Motherland’ to practice her art.<sup>542</sup> While small in scale, these exhibitions opened opportunities for female artists to share the freedoms and exploits of their travels with other suffragists who remained at home, connecting them with those spaces they imagined beyond the local.<sup>543</sup> Where they pictorialized ‘topography in the colonial context’ these displays were spatially entangled with imperial privilege and knowledge building, joining other public exhibitions, not least Sheppard’s own ‘Egypt in London’, as interconnected assemblages through which nationhood and empire was reinforced and understood. Yet, when displayed within a feminist setting and viewed by suffrage audiences, such female authored paintings, themselves co-agents in artists’ travels ‘far and wide’, served as powerful visual counters to hegemonic discourses of global travel, freedom, and adventures as masculine. Together they interacted with books, lectures, and other intertextual woman centred material cultures on travel, to undermine the gendering of mobility. Just a few years later, at the outbreak of war in 1914, Wigan’s studio once more served as a globally connected site when she lent it as

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<sup>539</sup> See Cherry, *Beyond the Frame*, p. 70.

<sup>540</sup> Born in Maitland, New South Wales, Wigan had settled in Portishead with her family, attending a girl’s boarding school in Bristol, before moving to pursue her career in London. Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*. As an artist of means, Wigan regularly travelled. In 1905, the socialist newspaper the *Clarion* carried a small but favourable piece on one of her exhibitions calling it ‘a one-man show by Miss Bessie Wigan who ... has travelled to many parts for inspiration and found it’. *The Clarion*, 24 March 1905, p. 3.

<sup>541</sup> *The Common Cause*, 17 November 1910, p. 526.

<sup>542</sup> For example, see, *The Clarion*, ‘Women Artists’ 24 March 1905, p. 3; *The Standard*, ‘Miss Bessie Wigan’s Annual Exhibition’ 11 May 1912, p.4; *The Standard* ‘Miss Wigan’s Watercolours’ 28 April 1910, p. 7; *The Gentlewoman* ‘Miss Wigan’s Sketches in Norway & Scotland’ 18 December 1897, p.866

<sup>543</sup> Cherry, *Beyond the Frame*, p. 100.

Chelsea headquarters for the global Overseas Dominion Association and oversaw its use as a work room for local women made destitute by the world war.<sup>544</sup>



*Figure 16. The decorations for the WFL International Suffrage Fair, Chelsea Town Hall, 1912. Suffragists gather under the motto 'Women of the Nations Unite!'. Source: Suffragette collection, IN1353, Museum of London <https://collections.museumoflondon.org.uk/online/object/437269.html> (accessed December 2022).*

Creating a shared space where women could compare nations and citizenship across the empire and beyond, was the central device at play at the Women's Freedom League's International Suffrage Fair, held on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November 1912, at Chelsea town hall.<sup>545</sup> It receives much less attention in the spectacle politics of the suffrage campaign than the Women's Coronation and other large international suffrage processions. Nonetheless, the fair

<sup>544</sup> *Conservative and Unionist Women's Review*, 1 October 1914, p. 406.

<sup>545</sup> *The Vote*, 23 November 1912, pp. 59-61.

provides an interesting perspective on more ordinary, local women's interactions, with the global spaces and power hierarchies of empire. The fair featured a poster parade designed by the Suffrage Atelier who worked closely with the WFL since artistic cooperation between the two societies was agreed in April that year.<sup>546</sup> The parade was orchestrated by its co-founder Ethel Willis and featured a series of global language posters carried through the hall on both the opening and closing days.<sup>547</sup> Ever thrifty, the Suffrage Atelier later reused the posters placing bold advertisements in the suffrage press for the whole month following, to attract visitors to its headquarters, then based at Stanlake Villas, Shepherd's Bush, to view them.<sup>548</sup>

The suffrage press described how 'a procession of the women of the nations' carried the posters 'each bearing the words 'votes for women' in her own language whether in the Latin characters, or those of eastern Europe and Asia, marched through the hall and massed on the platform.'<sup>549</sup> The press report notes that 'special interest [was] attached to the chronological order of the enfranchised American states beginning with Wyoming in 1869 and ending with Michigan, Arizona, Kansas, and Oregon'.<sup>550</sup> The vote had only been secured in Oregon that very month and represented a typically quick response by the Suffrage Atelier whose possession of its own printing press enabled it to visually capitalize on current, global suffrage affairs.<sup>551</sup> This section of the poster parade assembled on stage beneath a large United States flag.<sup>552</sup> The language posters were hailed as 'an instructive and unique spectacle to which much thought and trouble had been given' and they certainly captured the

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<sup>546</sup> *The Vote*, 27 April 1912, p. 30.

<sup>547</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>548</sup> For example, see, *The Vote*, 7 December 1912, p. 107.

<sup>549</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>550</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>551</sup> Just a few months prior in summer 1912, the Boston USA issue of the women's journal noted on 'the front-page cartoon is a reproduction of 'The Appeal of Womanhood' the striking design published by the Suffrage Atelier...rejoice that the cartoon is now doing service in another part of the world. It is significant as proving the unity of purpose among suffragists all the world over.' *The Vote*, 27 July 1912, p. 238. Here the poster image itself becomes an active transatlantic agent.

<sup>552</sup> *The Vote*, 23 November 1912, pp. 59-61.

clarion call of the fair ‘Women of the Nations Unite!’.<sup>553</sup> The hall itself was decked with suffrage garlands, union jacks, and the flags of the nations which were assembled into groups depending upon whether women were enfranchised there or not. Meanwhile, WFL volunteers at the fair dressed in colourful, national costumes, most designed, executed, and embroidered by Miss Ellen Watson, who may have worked with the Suffrage Atelier from time to time.<sup>554</sup>



*Figure 17. Women with skin darkened at the WFL's International Suffrage Fair, Chelsea, 1912. Source: Suffragette collection, IN1342, The Museum of London <https://collections.museumoflondon.org.uk/online/object/437245.html> (accessed December 2022).*

Press coverage of the costumes was enmeshed in imperial stereotypes and racial hierarchies. These ranged from the ‘picturesque’ (a word often used in imperial tropes) costumes of Switzerland and Spain, to the ‘rough riders of New Zealand’; the ‘Canadian skaters’; the ‘half veiled women of Turkey, Egypt and Persia’; and the ‘South African darkies’ with white

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<sup>553</sup> Ibid.

<sup>554</sup> There are several references to a Mrs Watson and Miss Watson across Suffrage Atelier related materials as well as G Watson a designer of suffrage postcards. Ellen Watson was most probably a WFL member, and as the two societies worked closely together, was she also a Suffrage Atelier contributor? On G Watson see, Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*.



suffragists seeming to colour their skins to perform as Indian dancers in traditional dress.<sup>555</sup>

The language and costumes women stitched and embroidered for the fair, reproduced powerful imperial tropes of nationhood, and women's performance of the highly imperialist act of cultural cross-dressing, illustrates the racialized gender positioning of suffragists in the cultural context of crafting 'differences' between women across suffrage and empire.<sup>556</sup>

Alex Hughes-Johnson and Lyndsey Jenkins stress in their recent exposition of suffrage internationalism, that imperial ties connected women across Britain, Ireland, and former colonies like America and Australia, as well as existing colonies like India, whether they wanted them to or not. Therefore, women framed their aspirations by referencing their nation's position on the hierarchical imperial scale, whatever their individual social differences might have been.<sup>557</sup> At the fair this was intersected by the hierarchical organisation of women, along with national flags, into groups based on which nations had enfranchised women and which had not. Moreover, women similarly framed suffrage craft practice itself through imperial ties and hierarchies between nations, with craft used to perform 'women's identity, status and allegiance, within the complex cross-cultural realities of colonial society' as women struggled globally for emancipation.<sup>558</sup>

Craft practice offers multiple perspectives on suffrage art and suffrage artists' potential relationships to imperialism. For example, Anglo-American suffrage artist Pamela Colman-Smith exemplifies how women's global mobility and identities could combine with

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<sup>555</sup> Ibid. An examination of photographs from the fair held at the Museum of London, appear to show suffragist Ruby Ginner & others dressed in Indian clothing with darkened faces. See, <https://collections.museumoflondon.org.uk/online/object/437245.html> (accessed 20 September 2022). <https://collections.museumoflondon.org.uk/online/object/437261.html> (accessed 20 September 2022).

<sup>556</sup> R. Lewis, *Gendering Orientalism Race, Femininity and Representation* (London: Routledge, 1996) p. 146. In this suffrage editorial which stresses the performative and artistic aspects of suffrage work, the political remarks made by Indian, WFL attending member, Ramdulan Dube, give way to a few simplistic, if not patronising, sentences about her good education and attractive dress. *The Vote*, 23 November 1912, pp. 59-61.

<sup>557</sup> Hughes-Johnson & Jenkins, *The Politics of the Women's Suffrage Movement*, p. 329.

<sup>558</sup> E. C. Paterson (2013) 'Crafting Empire: Intersections of Irish and Canadian Women's History' *Journal of Canadian Art History*, 34:2, p. 250 and see pp. 243-267.

craft practice to create international suffrage dialogue between the Irish, English, and the American Arts and Crafts Movements in spite, and because of, the imperial ties between them. This came chiefly through her role in the formation and running of Dun Emer Industries in Ireland which included the Dun Emer Press.<sup>559</sup> In 1902, Evelyn Gleeson together with Elizabeth Yeats, were encouraged by friends in London to set up an Arts and Crafts workshop in Dublin. However, the two had little experience of the craft process and so at the behest of their friend Dr Augustine Henry and through her own friendship with both W.B Yeats and his brother Jack, Colman-Smith was requested to travel to Dublin to advise them. She had already worked with Yeats on editing, designing, and publishing the Arts and Crafts periodical *The Broad Sheet* leading her to branch out and publish her own short-lived periodical *The Green Sheaf* in 1903. She had also contributed several designs to the weekly *Irish Homestead Magazine* including the ‘Celtic Christmas’ edition. When Gleeson and the Yeats sisters split acrimoniously in 1908, the latter formed the Cuala Industries near their hometown of Churchtown, Co. Dublin, and Colman-Smith produced designs for it too.

Gleeson’s feminism was evident in Dun Emer’s fostering of its female crafters’ health, creativity, and entrepreneurship, as it sought to attract women from the labouring classes. Gleeson, like Yeats and Colman-Smith, though to varying degrees, also harboured Irish nationalist, or anti colonial sympathies, linked with Irish craft revivalism and practice.<sup>560</sup>

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<sup>559</sup> At her studio in Chelsea, she cultivated multifarious and international friendships including with many arts and crafts artists and literary figures from England and Ireland and as we have seen Irish nationalists. Aside from Shane Leslie, Lilly Yeats, and most of the Yeats family this included Edith Elkin Mathews, an arts and crafts publisher for Jack Yeats; arts and crafts guru Emery Walker; Irish artist Elinor Monsell; and E Harcourt Williams (who performed with the Irish Literary theatre). It was her close connections to the English and Irish Arts and Crafts and literary community, that saw her play a role in Dun Emer Industries. These names are taken from Pamela Colman-Smith’s visitors’ book courtesy once more of correspondence with Melinda Boyd-Parsons, Neuman University.

<sup>560</sup> In 1881, Gleeson was Vice-President of the Athlone branch of the Irish Ladies Land League. It was a nationalist organization that supported impoverished tenant farmers. In the 1890s, after a move to London, Gleeson joined the suffragist Pioneer Club of London, establishing a ‘women’s information bureau’ in 1897 to help ‘raise the position of women...and to provide them with wages as good as men’s in the same kind of work.’ See, K. Brown, *The Yeats Circle: Verbal and Visual Relations in Ireland, 1880–1939* (London: Ashgate, 2011); Paterson, ‘Crafting’, pp. 106–18.

Through her work in Ireland, Colman-Smith connected with Irish artist, sculptor, and later fellow Suffrage Atelier member Sophia Rosamund Praeger who was also involved with Irish suffrage and nationalist (anti-colonial) societies.<sup>561</sup> Praeger was enrolled with the Arts and Crafts Society of Ireland, the Belfast Industrial Development Association, as well as the Irish Decorative Arts Association (IDAA). The latter was a female dominated organization and it was through the IDAA that Praeger began to attend women's suffrage meetings with the Irish Women's Suffrage Federation in Belfast. The ISF itself was supported by many leading Arts and Crafts advocates including Horace Plunkett, George Russell, and Suffrage Atelier designer Laurence Housman was invited as a speaker on several occasions. Importantly, the handicraft revival in Ireland was strongly linked to the progressive and idealist politics of Home Rule and Republican nationalism. The motto of Dublin's Irish National Exhibition of crafts in 1880 was 'Ourselves Alone' adopted and translated in its Irish form by the nationalist Sinn Fein Party in 1904. This made the involvement of any English Arts and Crafts practitioners in Irish craft affairs a sensitive proposition. Accusations of English imperialism or at the very least elitism, were always a possibility – and so it was for the relationship between those in the English and the Irish female suffrage movements. The women's suffrage movement has been accused historically of all kinds of imperialist tendencies from its relegation of the contribution of working-class women, to its patronising (if arguably well-meaning) treatment of women in the British colonies. In Ireland, tensions were particularly high after the WSPU abandoned their support of Home Rule.<sup>562</sup> Consequently, Bowe and Cummings point out that only a small number of English Arts and Crafts protagonists were involved in any significant way in the Irish Crafts: Charles Ashbee,

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<sup>561</sup> Colman-Smith and Praeger worked together on numerous occasions both publishing with the Irish Homestead magazine.

<sup>562</sup> J. McBrinn, *Sophia Rosamond Praeger, 1867-1954: Art, Literature, Science* (Belfast: Queens University, Naughton Gallery, 2007); M. Ward (1995) 'Conflicting Interests: The British and Irish Suffrage Movements' *Feminist Review* (The Irish Issue: The British Question) 50, pp. 127 -147.

Cobden-Sanderson, and the Yeats sisters among them, with otherwise limited overlaps and cooperation between the two.<sup>563</sup>

Colman-Smith is seldom mentioned, but her role in Dun Emer and broader craft industries helped bridge the gap particularly between Irish and English female craft practitioners, while the crafts themselves acted as an empowering bridge between English and Irish suffragists and feminists across colonial divides. This is epitomised by Praeger's commitment possibly through her friendship with Colman-Smith, to the London based Suffrage Atelier.<sup>564</sup> During this time, Colman-Smith also shared international dialogue with the American Arts and Crafts Movements, writing several articles among other correspondences, for Gustav Stickley's influential U.S periodical 'The Craftsman'.<sup>565</sup> What Colman-Smith's interlinking craft relationships highlight, is the potential of handicraft practice especially fabric crafting, lace, and costume making, to open new spaces of shared global dialogue between women across potentially hostile borders of various kinds. Craft practice had the potential to intersect imperial and geographical boundaries, enable feminist conversations to take place, and social relationships to be established among women across political and social divides, on an international scale. For many women working on decorative suffrage schemes, designing world language posters, embroidering imperial costumes, sewing flags, and decorations for the WFL international suffrage fair and other

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<sup>563</sup> Bowe & Cumming, *The Arts and Crafts Movements in Dublin*; N. Bowe (1988) 'Wilhelmina Geddes, Harry Clarke, and Their Part in the Arts and Crafts Movement in Ireland, *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*, 8, pp. 58-79.

<sup>564</sup> Socio-political links with Ireland may have been strengthened further through Suffrage Atelier artist Louise Jacobs whose cousin (with whom she kept in regular contact) was Irish artist Estella Solomons. Solomons was a nationalist sympathizer eventually joining the Ranelagh branch of Cumann na mBan in about 1918, during which time her studio became a safe house for republican volunteers. Jacobs and Solomons travelled to Holland and exhibited together in 1911. See also, R. Kennedy, 'Estella Solomons: A Portrait of the Artists as a Republican' *The Independent (Irish)* 21<sup>st</sup> January 2016. Available at: <http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/1916/thinkers-talkers-doers/estella-solomons-a-portrait-of-the-artist-as-a-republican-34379332.html> (accessed February 2016).

<sup>565</sup> P. Colman-Smith, 'A Protest Against Fear', *The Craftsman* March 1907 & 'Should the Art Student Think?' *The Craftsman* July 1908, pp. 417-419.

such events, enacted new space where feminist identities could be creatively expressed in ways that spanned not only national and international, but class boundaries.

Global travel (beyond economic migration) was largely inaccessible to art and craft workers drawn from the lower-middle and working-classes who lacked the resources. As a socio-spatial practice travel is inextricably linked with power formations of class, as well as of race and gender, acting to limit the geographies of working class women's movement.<sup>566</sup> Elaine Paterson argues that despite the vast social, cultural, and geographic divides and international borders that separated them, craft women were all participants in a colonialism, and its effects continued to be felt as women's struggle for political citizenship was waged across nations.<sup>567</sup> Various scholars have suggested social distinctions were erased, temporarily at least, as 'nimble fingered ladies of all classes' discussed, organized, and/or worked together on politicized arts and crafts for the cause, painting or stitching for example, suffrage banners.<sup>568</sup> Designing, crafting, and embroidering global objects for the fair that represented those nations tied together by empire, not only served to perform colonialism, but to articulate it as a tangible, social network that intersected local community, social status, material object, and global politics.<sup>569</sup> Thus, empowering spaces of compensation were created that enabled local metropolitan women irrespective of class, to understand themselves as global actors and producers connected with other women in a cross-border struggle for political representation. Embroidery, costume, or dress, and lace making, were the kind of crafts more often engaged in by working women, and the WFL claimed 'a great number of workers amongst their members'.<sup>570</sup>

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<sup>566</sup> Blunt, 'Cultural Geographies', p. 688; P. Ehrkamp & H. Leitner (2006) 'Rethinking Immigration and Citizenship: New Spaces of Migrant Transnationalism and Belonging' *Environment and Planning* 38, p.1591.

<sup>567</sup> Paterson, 'Crafting Empire' p. 256.

<sup>568</sup> Parker, *The Subversive Stitch*; Morton, 'Changing Spaces', pp. 623-637.

<sup>569</sup> Paterson, 'Crafting Empire'.

<sup>570</sup> *The Vote*, 29 October 1910, p. 10.

This globalism was augmented by the use of craft materials often sourced from British colonies around the world.<sup>571</sup> Deborah Cherry and Janice Helland have shown how whether paint or textiles, such materials travelled extraordinary distances before being applied, pieced, or stitched together for the campaign at home.<sup>572</sup> Christiana Herringham herself brought back silks from her travels in India which were sewn into several suffrage banners including, by her own hand, the ASL's 'Alliance not Defiance' banner in 1908.<sup>573</sup> Used for international suffrage events these materials raised artists and artisans awareness of their place in world, and in the context of empire, encouraged a dialogue between craft practices and material work enacted by both colonized and colonizing women.<sup>574</sup> For example, colonial India was especially prevalent in wider debates within the arts and crafts movement in Britain, which sought to disrupt the hierarchies of art across empire: an issue raised by Herringham, and the 1913 New Delhi petition, and was key to gendered discussions around women's craft working, experiencing a revival during the suffrage campaign. These debates were intersected by ideologies of empowerment and disempowerment whether by class under the destructive forces of industrialisation, or by gender by suffragists involved in arts and crafts industries. The Suffrage Atelier was particularly explicit in challenging women's marginalisation in masculinist craft industries.<sup>575</sup> Interestingly the society's welcoming and training of amateur as well as professional arts and craft workers, rare in women's guilds in England and not practiced by the ASL, resonated with the blurring in colonial spaces of divides between professional and amateur crafters, where the status granted to both or either, was constantly negotiated and renegotiated.<sup>576</sup> Women's amateur

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<sup>571</sup> *Global*, p. 4-5.

<sup>572</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4 & 8.

<sup>573</sup> Lago, *Christiana Herringham*, p. 173; Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*.

<sup>574</sup> For broader discussions, see, Dias & Smith, *British Women* (introduction); Walker, 'Locating the Global'.

<sup>575</sup> I discuss this at length in the following chapter which centres on the Suffrage Atelier. See also, Morton, 'An Arts and Crafts Society'.

<sup>576</sup> Dias & Smith, *British Women* (introduction).

status in Britain was increasingly defined by class due to a lack of formal art school training, with class inclusivity also present in the Suffrage Atelier's agenda, discussed in chapter 5.

Speaking at the Royal Society of Arts, socialist artist Walter Crane drew parallels between what some artists were trying to do in India, with what some were trying to do in England: 'to raise the banner of the handicrafts' with the difference that at least 'in India the handicrafts were a living condition' while in England industrialism had made many crafts extinct'.<sup>577</sup> The thread of imperil craft concern, which intimately entwined craft workers in England with those in India, captured by Crane, mirrors those expressed by Herringham and the 1913 New Delhi petition which, aside from Suffrage Atelier signatories Laurence Housman and Louise Jopling Rowe, was also signed by Crane, who was supportive of the Suffrage Atelier's work.<sup>578</sup> The following chapter, centred on the society and its feminist craft practice, reveals the same rhetoric infused Laurence Housman's writings on craft practice in Britain, as with other society members, and ran simultaneously through international feminist texts on the degraded position of women in the modern labouring economy.<sup>579</sup> Indeed, Mahatma Gandhi himself drew on craft dialogue in his Morris-Ruskin-inflected Marxism which reified khaddar (or home-spun cloth), and swadeshi, through which he rejected British manufactures in India, and used craft language to destabilize western orientalism.<sup>580</sup>

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<sup>577</sup> W. Crane (1909-1910) 'Proceedings' *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 58, pp. 188-189. *The Times*, The New Delhi: Indian Craftsman or Western Architect' 7 February 1913, p. 5. See also, Lago, *Christiana Herringham*, p. 199

<sup>578</sup> *The Times*, 'The New Delhi: Indian Craftsman or Western Architect' 7 February 1913, p. 5. Crane often lent his work for Suffrage Atelier events. For example, see, *The Vote*, 16 December 1909, p. 86 & *The Vote*, 29 October 1910, p. 10.

<sup>579</sup> See, L. Housman, *National Art Training* (Manchester: Municipal School of Art, 1911); L. Delap, *The Feminist Avant-Garde*.

<sup>580</sup> P. Brantlinger (1996) 'A Post-industrial Prelude to Postcolonialism: John Ruskin, William Morris, and Gandhism' *Critical Inquiry*, 22: 3, pp. 466-485; Sria Chatterjee (2020) 'Post industrialism and the Long Arts and Crafts Movement: between Britain, India, and the United States of America' *British Art Studies*, Issue 15 <https://dx.doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-15/schatterjee> (accessed 5 November 2022).

The suffrage movement's notion of global sisterhood was captured in the WFL international fair's clarion call 'Women of the Nation's Unite!' and in the promotion of commonalities between women who occupied diverse geographical and social spaces around the world, yet shared, whether they wanted to or not, colonial and craft connections without ever leaving home. Held in London, like the larger more spectacular Women's Coronation Procession, the international fair represented a process of 'local globalization', a creative space between fixity and motion, which encouraged 'horizontal comradeship' through the notion that women's cross border political, as well as social struggles, could be remedied at home and in the colonies, through British women's enfranchisement.<sup>581</sup> Yet these suffrage spaces of global identification were largely imagined, not because they were not real or felt so by women who utilized their creative skills to make art and craft materials for them, but because they imagined a community of empire forging empowering alliances among women across social and imperial boundaries. But this omitted the real power differences of class, race, and nation that existed between them despite shared gender concerns and campaigns.<sup>582</sup>

To conclude, the chapter has shown how global mobility and the power structures of empire, ran through suffrage artists' personal, professional, and feminist lives: whether in their place of birth, family, and childhoods, spent in Australia, New Zealand, India, America, and the West Indies, or in their professional and feminist identities forged by painting on the European, Asian, and African continents. These global life roots and routes to London, where most campaigned, gave them an international perspective on global affairs central to suffrage politics, though these were embedded in the imperial privilege of their positioning as white, western, middle-class women. So too, their professional self- cultivation through travel, which was built implicitly, sometimes explicitly, on the disempowerments inherent in

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<sup>581</sup> Mohanty, 'Cartographies of Struggle', pp. 4-6.

<sup>582</sup> For discussions, see, L. McDowell 'Spatializing Feminism: Geographic Perspectives' in Duncan *BodySpace*: pp. 27-43; Mohanty, 'Cartographies of struggle'.



Britain's colonial power structures. Whether by virtue of their migration from homelands in colonial or post-colonial countries, their fathers, or brothers' imperial occupations there, links to the slave trade, or their ability to move across continents using their spectatorial power to pictorialize, add to, appropriate, and exploit imperial knowledge back home.<sup>583</sup>

Yet they were themselves disempowered by gender, unenfranchised subjects not citizens, under British rule. This ambiguity together with their migrant identities, lived diasporas, unsettled senses of belonging, and of home and away, disrupted some suffrage artists' notion of home, of citizen and subject, colonizer and colonised, fundamental to imperialism's difference and 'othering' but in potentially empowering ways. Their global travels and migrant experiences brought back to the political epicentre of empire in London, echoed through suffrage processional banners which symbolically reversed the powers of the 'mother' country over the colonies, and the international suffrage networks and societies they fostered locally through shared diasporas and a global sense of empire. Social gatherings in response to migrant artists' dislocations from home, expanded suffrage artists' politicized networks, while painting exhibitions showing global travels far and wide connected homebound suffragists beyond the local to the global, and challenged gendered notions of mobility and artistic professionalism as masculine.

Global suffrage designing and crafting for the local WFL international fair in Chelsea, London, whether on the Suffrage Atelier's multiple language posters, imperial costumes, flags, or other global decorations, helped create empowering spaces of feminist identification between women who could not travel, drawing on common global art materials, shared craft practices, a sense of empire, and the vote, to promote comradeship between them across social, political, and geographical boundaries. While historically racist language and

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<sup>583</sup> Cherry & Helland, *Local/Global*, p. 4.

imperialist acts of cultural cross-dressing were stitched into the national costumes designed and performed for the fair, at the same time suffrage artists found common ground in the crafts for surmounting imperial sensitivities particularly through travel and interaction between women in England and Ireland, despite anti-colonial sentiments there, embodied in Praeger's relationship with the Suffrage Atelier.

Still, implicit in these creative spaces were the tensions that existed in the rhetoric of global sisterhood that largely denied the asymmetric power geographies and material differences between women, and classes of women, in the first and third worlds, between the colonizer and colonized of the British empire. It was colonial disempowerments that enabled suffrage artists to experience the freedoms of global travel and of self-empowerment that underpinned their professional cultivation and feminist agencies. However, while the privileged, imperial positions and spaces suffrage artists occupied, and from which they benefited, should be acknowledged, so too must the diverse ways suffrage artists and crafters carved out empowering feminist spaces in the context of a home and empire created and limited for them by male power structures that, however flawed their efforts, they actively sought to disrupt.

## Chapter 5

### Dreams Come True?

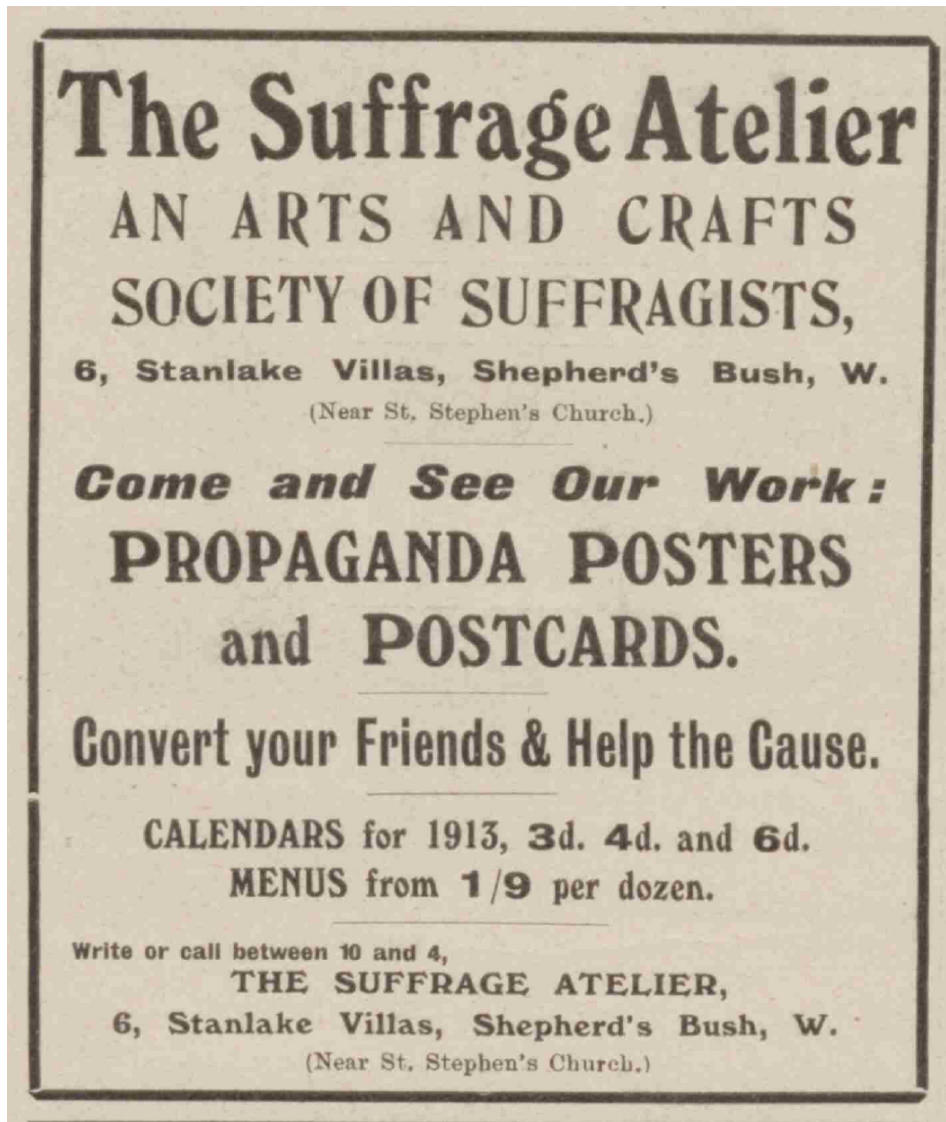


Figure 18. 'An Arts and Crafts Society of Suffragists'. A Suffrage Atelier advertisement, *The Vote*, 10 January 1913.

Suffrage Atelier artists Laurence Housman, Louise Jopling Rowe and other artists' signing of the 1913 petition to support Indian craftsmen in the building of the city of New Delhi, reflected a refreshed interest in the ideologies of arts and crafts practice at that time, both nationally and internationally. By then in operation for four years, the Suffrage Atelier

described as ‘an arts and crafts society working for the enfranchisement of women’ had produced a variety of suffrage products – posters, postcards, banners, curtains, calendars, and book covers among them - using only traditional handicraft methods.<sup>584</sup> Its commitment to producing suffrage art work in this way was outlined in the society’s published constitution along with plans for an artistic training scheme and remunerative package for its artists, giving the society an entrepreneurial edge. As a women’s suffrage, and an arts and crafts society that paid its workers, the Suffrage Atelier differed from the ASL, and straddled the political ideals of gender equality, seemingly with the class principles of socialism (synonymous with the arts and crafts movement in this era) while aiding women financially. Thus, it occupied an unusual position as a society at a critical juncture in modern women’s collective negotiation of space and power as commercial art practitioners, explicitly combining their business enterprise with their fight for political citizenship. This against a backdrop of otherwise vibrant arts and crafts societies for women by the 1910s that were overall reluctant to be outwardly political.

Yet the gender implications of the Suffrage Atelier’s politicized craft scheme, not least for the women who interacted with it, seldom appear across women’s suffrage, arts and crafts, or business histories, though it marked a significant and experimental shift in the way some artistic women were collaboratively working by the early twentieth century.<sup>585</sup> Therefore, the chapter traces and analyses the development of the Suffrage Atelier’s arts and crafts scheme interlinking it with the utopian ideals, socialist politics, and language, synonymous with the mainstream Arts and Crafts Movement at the fin de siècle, and how it appropriated these for explicitly feminist ends. The chapter illuminates fresh feminist sites and spaces the society created to counter men’s dominance over arts and crafts industries like

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<sup>584</sup> The Suffrage Atelier’, *The Common Cause*, 1 July 1909, pp. 158–159; A. J. R., *Suffrage Annual and Women’s Who’s Who* (London: Stanley Paul, 1913), p. 6.

<sup>585</sup> Zoe Thomas is an exception. See, Thomas., *Women Art Workers*.

printing, while enabling women artisans across classes to assume social and economic power in new ways positioning itself at the nexus of the suffrage and women's art and craft market. In this sense, it frames the Suffrage Atelier's scheme as a uniquely feminist craft heterotopia where various esoteric strands of socialist and feminist utopianism combined explicitly with suffrage politics to enact politicized craft initiatives that challenged gender power structures of art in multiple ways.

### ***Crafting Context: The Arts and Crafts Movement.***

The Arts and Crafts Movement emerged in the 1880s intent on reforming English design which its figurehead, socialist William Morris, and other leaders of the Movement such as Walter Crane and Charles Ashbee, found lacking in comparison to their Continental counterparts. The inferiority of English design was blamed on inadequate methods of teaching in English schools contrasting with French and Italian 'atelier' style art schools which encouraged artistic experimentation and emphasized quality and the aesthetics of design in the production of everyday objects such as furniture and textiles, as well as those created for purely decorative rather than functional purposes. Thus, the Arts and Crafts Movement vaunted the production of hand-made utilitarian goods such as book covers, wallpapers, fabrics, and other everyday household items, embracing many traditionally female domestic craft occupations such as weaving and lace making and professionalising them.

Unsurprisingly, women designers and craft workers played a significant role in the Arts and Crafts Movement, though they were largely absent from its histories prior to feminist work by pioneering authors such as Anthea Callen, Lynne Walker, Janice Helland, and since notably Zoe Thomas, and Maria Quirk.<sup>586</sup> Women art workers were attracted in

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<sup>586</sup> For example, A. Callen, *Angel in the Studio: Women in the Arts and Crafts Movement, 1870 1914* (London: Astragal Books, 1979); L. Walker, 'The Arts and Crafts Alternative' in J. Attfield & P. Kirkham (eds.) *A View*

large numbers and their participation in craft industries was widespread in Britain, Ireland, and in the United States. Several women who would turn their hand to making art for the women's suffrage campaign earned their living from craft practice: the ASL's Mary Lowndes and Barbara Forbes for example, who ran their stained-glass business together in Chelsea, and Ernestine Mills in Kensington who produced a range of enamel, metal ware, and jewellery, skills utilized in the campaign chiefly by the WSPU. These and many other women, known and unknown, would use their craft skills to produce various forms of suffrage ephemera during the campaign. Nevertheless, only those artists belonging to the Suffrage Atelier made a collective ideological commitment to using only traditional handicraft methods to produce all its suffrage materials within the context of the campaign. Hence in 1913, it was unequivocally described in the *Suffrage Annual and Women's Who's Who's Who*, and in the suffrage press as 'an Arts and Crafts society working for the enfranchisement of women'.<sup>587</sup> While the ASL too used arts and crafts methods, it did not tie itself to them.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, an ideological commitment to arts and crafts practice was often understood as indicative of a broader lifestyle choice associated with the utopian ideologies of the socialist movement. Alongside its artistic concerns, the Arts and Crafts Movement was as much about socio-political and moral reconstruction as it was about improving art and design.<sup>588</sup> It sought to raise the creative status of the crafts which were seen as inferior to the fine arts: a bias that socialist leaders of the Movement like Morris, saw as intrinsically class based. The movement's mantra was to 'reform art by first reforming society' and much of what was wrong with society (and so with art) was blamed on the modern, capitalist factory system. The method of industrial specialization used in the

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*from the Interior: Feminism, Women and Design* (London: The Women's Press Ltd, 1989) pp. 163-175; E. Bridget & J. Helland, *Women Artists and the Decorative Arts, 1880-1935: The Gender of Ornament* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2002); Thomas, *Woman Art Workers*; Quirk, 'Stitching Professionalism'.

<sup>587</sup> *The Common Cause*, 1 July 1909, pp. 158-9; *Suffrage Annual and Women's Who's Who's Who* (1913).

<sup>588</sup> Tillyard, *Impact*, p.15.

production of household commodities (which broke the process of production down into its constituent parts), saw workers perform the same monotonous task repeatedly, often in intolerable conditions. The price was the production of inferior quality goods. But over and above this, Arts and Crafts advocates believed that the ‘evils’ of the factory system led to a wider social and moral breakdown by demoralizing and alienating the worker from the ‘joy’ of creation and from the fruits of his own labour. Morris’s solution was the reorganization of the means of production so that the worker might be reunited with the joy of labour. Thus, the movement espoused an atavistic approach to the process of design and production which reflected the values of a bygone age. It called upon the return of small craft workshops and guilds with skilled craftsman working together and seeing the process of production through from beginning to end - the antithesis of industrial specialization. It was hoped that through such guilds small groups of artists working together would emerge in every part of the country disseminating the Arts and Crafts ‘way of life’ which also included a reverence for rural lifestyles and the revival of folk traditions along with craft practice.<sup>589</sup> This rhetoric as we shall see, was present among Suffrage Atelier artists and within the society’s operations at large.

In essence the Arts and Crafts Movement presented a utopian vision for the function of art in a more socialist society and many of its most prominent members were socialists including Morris, Crane, and Ashbee (though not exclusively).<sup>590</sup> Socialism was a powerful and rising political force in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Throughout the

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<sup>589</sup> Tillyard, *Impact*, p. 13-15. Morris and other crafts advocates venerated rural craft guilds as ideal. Although some were relatively successful such as Ashbee’s Guild of Handicraft, most craft guilds operated for practical reasons from an urban base. See also, P. Stansky, *Redesigning the World: William Morris, the 1880s and the Arts and Crafts* (U.S, California: Princeton University Press, 1985); S. Rowbotham (2008), ‘Arts, Crafts and Socialism’ *History Today* February, pp. 41-50.

<sup>590</sup> Morris was for a time a member of the SDF and formed the break-away Hammersmith Socialist League. According to Stansky, he was the pivotal link between principles of socialism and their habitation in the world of art and design. Stansky, *Redesigning the World*. However, not all advocates of the Arts and Crafts Movement were socialist with some such as Ruskin, having right wing sentiments. See, A. Crawford (1997), ‘Ideas and Objects: The Arts and Crafts Movement in Britain’ *Design Issues*, 13:1, pp. 15-26.

1880s social and political tensions (the Docker and match girl strikes, suffrage riots, and Irish revolts) had combined with a greater awareness over the plight of the poor among the middle and upper classes where the Arts and Crafts Movement had its origins. Its concerns with social and moral, as well as aesthetic, regeneration focused on the working classes, and appealed to those who felt morally compelled ‘to do something’. Its aim, ‘...to improve the condition of man and the quality of life’ in order ‘to make culture and art available to everyone’ gave the Movement a social, moral, and importantly a political dimension. It was (in theory at least) anti-capitalist and closely allied to the revolutionary ideals of early socialism (Morris’s socialist vision was certainly Marxist).<sup>591</sup>

Historian Dennis Hardy argues that the real and peculiar achievement of the Arts and Crafts Movement’s utopian ideals was that they engaged with political ideology in a way that utopian schemes had not done before. Earlier utopian visions proffered by the romantics such as Coleridge and Shelley and the pre-Raphaelite brotherhood, though similarly promoting a role for art in everyday life to improve the individual and society at large, had failed chiefly because they lacked ‘significant political engagement’. However, the Arts and Crafts Movement’s fusion of socialist ideologies with artistic endeavour enabled it to be political and significantly for craft practice and craft utopianism itself to become ‘politicized’.<sup>592</sup> The Suffrage Atelier would take this politicization in a new, gendered, and distinctly feminist direction in the early twentieth century. As an ‘Arts and Crafts society working for the enfranchisement of women’, the Suffrage Atelier inevitably aligned itself both with the reformist class principles of the Arts and Crafts Movement (and as we shall see sought to be class inclusive) and with the progressive feminist ideals of gender equality that underpinned

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<sup>591</sup> Callen, *Angel*, p. 214; Stansky, *Redesigning the World*; G. Naylor, *The Arts and Crafts Movement: A Study of its Sources, Ideals, and Influence on Design theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

<sup>592</sup> Its politicization has seen Hardy describe the Movement as a ‘peculiarly English contribution to utopianism’. The extent to which utopianism can be truly political is a matter of continuing scholarly debate. See D. Hardy, *Utopian England: Community Experiments, 1900-1945* (London: E & FN Spon, 2000) p. 110; K. Taylor, *The Political Ideas of the Utopian Socialists* (London: Routledge, 1982).



women's demands for political citizenship and broader emancipation. In this I argue it differed from other commercial arts and crafts ventures for women most of which remained determinedly apolitical.

However, the differing sexual politics of socialism and feminism as ideologies, meant that their reformist aims though sometimes complementary, were frequently at odds. Primarily concerned with issues of class rather than gender, socialism as a political movement was often ambivalent on the issue of women's suffrage and at worst, openly hostile as outlined in chapter 1. The mainstream Arts and Crafts Movement mirrored socialism's broader uncertainty about women's emancipation and could be intrinsically sexist. Even in its utopian visions of arts and crafts communities in a more socialist society, women assumed a traditional domestic, albeit venerated, role, and the gender power status quo was never really challenged including women's relationship to the labouring economy.<sup>593</sup> Despite attracting women craft workers in large numbers, its nineteenth century guilds were dominated by men (and were sometimes exclusively male) employing most women in secondary roles or as outworkers unless related to its leading men, something experienced by Clemence Housman (below). William Morris's daughter, designer May Morris, was among those women along with her mother Jane, who helped set up alternative spaces for professional arts and crafts women which flourished in the early twentieth century, not least the WGA.<sup>594</sup> Arts and crafts scholars, most recently Zoe Thomas, have shown how several women's arts and crafts guilds and clubs formed particularly in the early twentieth century to offset the movements marginalisation of chiefly middle-class professional women in its societies and industries, only occasionally encouraging amateur, or working-class women's

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<sup>593</sup> Callen, *Angel*; J. Hannam & K. Hunt, *Socialist Women, Britain, 1880s to 1920s* (London: Routledge, 2002); C. Collette, 'Socialism and Scandal: The Sexual Politics of the Early Labour Movement' *History Workshop*, 23, (1987), pp. 102-111; S. Rowbotham, L. Segal, & H. Wainwright, *Beyond the Fragments: Feminism and the Making of Socialism* (London: Merlin Press, 1980).

<sup>594</sup> Thomas, 'At Home with the Women's Guild of Arts'.

participation.<sup>595</sup> However, these groups were largely apolitical and certainly did not view the crafts as a vehicle for women's political radicalism, and I discuss this in more detail in the following section. This was something that set the Suffrage Atelier apart as a woman centred arts and crafts society actively seeking political reformation.<sup>596</sup>

The Suffrage Atelier's politicised ideals and approach to the crafts can be glimpsed in an early speech made for the society in 1909 by designer Laurence Housman entitled 'Art and National Movements'.<sup>597</sup> The speech emphasised (as Morris himself frequently lamented) how 'art had long suffered from a want of connection with life' in England, and – pre-empting historian Hardy's observation almost a century later - that previous attempts to unite art and life made by the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood had failed because 'the growth of internationalism in [artistic] technique had not been followed by any international idea or inspiration' to carry it. Importantly, the speech urged that a new opportunity existed for the unification of art and life because art, and craft practice in particular, could be supported and followed by a national and international 'idea and inspiration, such as the women's movement now supplied'.<sup>598</sup> Though tantalizingly brief, the report of the speech hints at artists' interest in re-appropriating utopian arts and crafts ideals on the unification of art and life, but for feminist ends, alluding to the possibility of a politically feminist craft economy underpinned by the realignment of arts and crafts with an internationally resurgent women's suffrage and wider women's movement.

In their extensive work on establishing alternative economies, Gibson-Graham argue that such schemes require 'an expansive vision of what is possible' combined with an ability

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<sup>595</sup> Thomas, *Women Art Workers*.

<sup>596</sup> This was a Suffrage Atelier self-description in the press. See, *The Vote*, 10 January 1913, p. 188.

<sup>597</sup> The speech given in June 1909 was reported in, *The Common Cause*, 1 July 1909, p. 158.

<sup>598</sup> Ibid. Housman himself is considered to have been a belated Pre-Raphaelite who firmly believed in the realization of its utopian ideals for the role of art. See, L. Spargo (1999), 'Laurence Housman: A Belated Pre Raphaelite' *Housman Society Journal*, 16, pp. 35-46.

to interact with and share languages of power without having to ‘overthrow’ them. There must also be a realistic strategy to enact new possibilities ‘pressing forward to establish a politics of the otherwise’ a form of utopianism which nonetheless allows subjects to assume power in new ways.<sup>599</sup> The remainder of the chapter follows this trajectory to consider in detail how the Suffrage Atelier’s feminist arts and crafts scheme hoped to challenge some of the gender power and class structures in arts and crafts industries through its enactment of an inclusive, commercial suffrage craft scheme, that helped train and empower women as local economic, creative, and feminist subjects.<sup>600</sup> Based on a ‘politics of collective action’ and built on a vision of profitable as well as non-profitable feminist economies, the chapter traces the Suffrage Atelier’s successes and failures, but begins by exploring some of its artists and workers originating utopian intellectual and socialist ideals, and gendered craft experiences, before moving through its sharing of powerful utopian craft language that appealed to women as craft producers and consumers across the political, artistic, and class divides of the era.<sup>601</sup>

### ***Threads of Socialism and Feminism.***

Prior to the society’s formation, several Suffrage Atelier artists had considerable experience of life and work within early mainstream arts and crafts industries in the nineteenth century and were familiar with their political philosophies. Engaging with some of these gendered interactions and experiences is important for developing a deeper understanding of the ontological thinking that informed its artists’ political, ideological, and commercial concerns, and thus those intellectual processes that helped shape the Suffrage Atelier’s collective suffrage craft scheme. Thinking practices and processes are always

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<sup>599</sup> Gibson-Graham, *A Postcapitalist Politics* (U.S, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006) p. xxxiv-xxxvi & Gibson-Graham (2003) ‘An Ethics of the Local’ *Rethinking Marxism*, 15, pp 51 & 54.

<sup>600</sup> For a more in-depth account of the Suffrage Atelier’s class politics, see, Morton, ‘An Arts and Crafts Society’, pp. 65-89.

<sup>601</sup> The society’s successes and failures also reveal the paradox between ideal and lived space. See, Pohl, *Women, Space and Utopia*, p.2.

‘negatively grounded’ emerging from a space of ‘non-being’ and in this sense are utopian but they are for that very reason intrinsically important to our understanding of economic and/or political alternatives, including feminist ones, because they represent a starting place - ‘a wellspring for becoming’ - for the imagining new possibilities beyond dominant hierarchical power structures and in ways that might be enacted.<sup>602</sup>

Influential Suffrage Atelier figures Laurence and Clemence Housman for example, had both trained with leading Art and Crafts notables such as Charles Ricketts and Charles Shannon at an art school near their lodgings in Kensington in the mid-1880s. Clemence who became an exemplary engraver, worked as a copier for the private print presses including Pear Tree and Essex House founded by prominent members of the Movement to preserve the art of hand printing and illustration in the light of new photomechanical processes.<sup>603</sup> Throughout their lives the Housman’s maintained tangible connections with prominent Arts and Crafts practitioners. Laurence shared a life-long friendship with Janet Ashbee the wife of leading socialist Arts and Crafts practitioner Charles Ashbee whose Guild of Handicraft was in Chipping Campden a semi-rural village in the English Cotswolds.<sup>604</sup> Ashbee, who was not a feminist sympathiser, noted that Laurence and Clemence, who regularly visited the picturesque village, always came ‘in pursuit of that Will o’ the Wisp, the simple life’ a term associated with socialist utopian ideals of craft work and the rural idyll.<sup>605</sup> In 1938, at the Ashbee’s daughter Helen’s wedding, Housman openly declared, ‘I am still myself a Socialist’ and he shared many life-long friendships with socialist and ‘left wing’ activists some of whom had worked with him through the trials and tribulations of suffrage campaigning.<sup>606</sup>

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<sup>602</sup> Gibson-Graham, *Postcapitalist Society*, p. xxxiii.

<sup>603</sup> Tickner, *Spectacle; Oakley, Inseparable; Callen, Angel*.

<sup>604</sup> Ibid & F. Ashbee, *Janet Ashbee: Love, Marriage and the Arts and Crafts Movement* (U.S, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2002).

<sup>605</sup> C. Jones (2008) ‘Bete Grise, Buttercups and Bicycles: Laurence Housman and Chipping Camden’ in *Housman Society Journal*, 34, p. 41.

<sup>606</sup> Jones, ‘Bete Grise’, p. 47.

This included ILP candidate and owner of the *Daily Herald* newspaper, George Lansbury who was also involved in a number of utopian pastoral schemes in England that provided rural work and living opportunities for unemployed working class men and their families.<sup>607</sup>

Housman's relationship with the political as well as the philosophical left during the suffrage campaign, would ultimately change the course of his working relationship with the WSPU leadership: a fate similarly suffered by his friend Lansbury.<sup>608</sup> Housman was all but expelled from the WSPU's ranks after writing several letters in 1911 to persuade them that supporting the NUWSS Election Fighting Fund which sought to back ILP candidates who had declared a commitment to women's suffrage 'was the best means for defeating the government'.<sup>609</sup> However, despite having its roots in Manchester's ILP, the WSPU leadership increasingly moved away from the labour movement under Christabel Pankhurst's tutelage and as Laurence himself put it, because the Labour Party was not prepared to 'throw out the [Liberal] government bodily' the WSPU remained firmly against this course of action and his involvement with the EFF was seen by the WSPU leadership as a betrayal. Subsequently his letters 'ceased to be answered' and he was 'no longer allowed to speak at WSPU meetings'.<sup>610</sup> Housman, though never publicly critical of the WSPU during the campaign, thus drifted from it, later citing its increasingly violent militancy and Mary Richardson's slashing of Velasquez's painting the Rokeby Venus, as at least in part responsible for his

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<sup>607</sup> Lansbury established two labour colonies, one in Essex, the other in Suffolk providing market gardening and fruit growing employment opportunities for working men and their families with some measure of success. See, Hardy, *Utopian England*, p. 25.

<sup>608</sup> George Lansbury a radical Labour MP, proposed that all Labour MPs should vote against the government until women were granted the vote. He resigned from the Party when he failed to procure official support and stood as an independent candidate largely on the issue of women's suffrage in his former constituency of Bromley and Bowe. Although the WSPU supported Lansbury's action in principle, they failed to offer sufficient practical support to his campaign. Lansbury supporters were even denied the use of the WSPU's cars to take pro-voters to the polling station. Lansbury was defeated. In the closing years of the campaign, the WSPU leadership alienated socialists and labourists further by proposing property qualifications for the franchise and opposing universal adult male suffrage.

<sup>609</sup> Housman, *Unexpected*, p. 281.

<sup>610</sup> Housman, *Unexpected*, p.282.

desertion.<sup>611</sup> Nevertheless, and at the time, the WSPU's stance toward the labour party was clearly of great concern to him and he noted in a letter to his close friend Alice Clark in 1912, that on donating to his sister Clemence's self-denial fund for the WSPU 'I hope my contribution will go to militancy and *not* to the anti-labour propaganda' being peddled.<sup>612</sup> Clemence's unwavering support of the WSPU perhaps 'hints at a differing emphasis between the siblings over the relationship between class and gender politics within the suffrage campaign' though the two would work closely together for the Suffrage Atelier, not least opening their home studio in Kensington as headquarters and offices to it.<sup>613</sup>

Ascertaining the political proclivities of other Suffrage Atelier artists, founders, and associates with any such clarity is problematic. Few were as vocal or certainly prominent in the press as Housman who was a renowned suffrage speaker and playwright as well as a designer. Formal records are few and fragmentary, and women often shared multiple political allegiances expressed through informal as well as formal channels both inside and outside the suffrage movement. The Suffrage Atelier's self-conscious, collective commitment to practicing arts and crafts given its socialist connotations, suggests that most of its artists and crafters likely leaned to the left politically - though they were not necessarily socialists. Morton's analysis of leading suffrage society subscription rolls, inter organisational collaborations, and other forms of more anecdotal evidence, reinforce this assertion, including the Suffrage Atelier and its artists' growing collective and individual relationships to the WFL.<sup>614</sup> This was significant because the WFL - initially formed in 1907 as a break

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<sup>611</sup> Housman viewed the WSPU's later non-strategic, sporadic, and more violent militancy as 'organizational suicide not worthy of further support'. Housman, *Unexpected*, p. 266.

<sup>612</sup> See, Housman, *Unexpected*, and Housman letter to Alice Clark dated 5th March 1912, miscellaneous letters, Housman Papers, Street Library, Somerset.

<sup>613</sup> See chapter 2 & Morton, 'An Arts and Crafts Society', p. 71. Gregarious by nature compared to his diligent but more reserved sister, Laurence took a more visible role in the Votes for Women campaign, occasionally acting as a spokesperson for the Suffrage Atelier. Consequently, while women like Clemence and other female artists dominated the society and its work, Laurence's dialogue is comparatively well documented.

<sup>614</sup> Morton, 'An Arts and Crafts Society'. For instance, several Suffrage Atelier artists subscribed individually to the WFL prior as well as after the society's official coalition with the organization in 1911. The Suffrage Atelier as a society also made an unusual, collective donation to the WFL in 1910. Some of its artists sat on the

away society from the more autocratic WSPU - adopted an increasingly pro-Labour stance as the suffrage campaign progressed. Its leadership, in contrast to the WSPU, maintained a stalwart focus on women's trades, professions, and the question of women's labour. Thus, it attracted many artisan craft women from across the social classes like Lambeth leathercraft worker Minnie Mills, and Kensington enamel and jewellery worker Rosa Palotta the latter among those loose body of unrecognised women crafters and suffragists that likely worked for the Suffrage Atelier from time to time.<sup>615</sup>

Suffrage Atelier artists did share numerous ties to the WSPU, some of which were outlined in chapter 2. Generally however, these bonds were informal and sporadic, and monetary donations were often made *ad hoc* especially closer to the outbreak of War.<sup>616</sup> There was a sharp decline in WSPU membership nationally in those years, suggesting that, like Laurence Housman, a number of former WSPU members turned away from its more violent militancy, but may also have taken exception to its leaderships growing anti-labour stance.<sup>617</sup> Fellow Suffrage Atelier supporter and suffrage artist Louise Jopling-Rowe for example, had also been an early WSPU member; an organiser for the 1908 rally; and had

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WTRL's committee - a sister organization of the WFL. The Suffrage Atelier's collective donation is recorded in the WFL Annual Report 1910, subscriptions, reel 13, accession no. 50.82/1525, SFC, WL. The Housman siblings are mentioned *passim* in the WFL Minute Books as are Louise Jacobs and Katherine Gatty Gillett [Suffrage Atelier secretary from 1912, sometimes referred to as Mrs Gatty sometimes as Mrs Gillett] usually in respect of their presence at meetings or their undertaking speeches on behalf of the WFL. See records of the WFL, 2WFL/1, WFL Minute Books, Box no. FL054 Fawcett Society, WL & WFL Annual Report 1910, accession no. 50.82/1525, reel 13, SFC, WL p. 14. Laurence Housman speaks for the WFL on 8<sup>th</sup> of October in Trafalgar Square, London. Clemence Housman was one of the WTRL's founding members and sat on its committee until her resignation in August 1914. Both her brother Laurence and Louise Jopling-Rowe were ongoing contributors to the WTRL, going on tour, making speeches, and attending meetings as were Ethel Willis and Katherine Gatty. The WTRL also employed the Suffrage Atelier for many of its artistic needs. For instance, the society made the WTRL's official banner which depicted John Hampden and was carried on several suffrage processions. Records of the WTRL, 2WTR/2, Committee Minutes, Fawcett Society (WL).

<sup>615</sup> Rosa Palotta belonged to the WFL and exhibited on the Suffrage Atelier stall at the WFL Yuletide Festival in December 1909. Several craft stalls selling a wide variety of artisan goods and a Suffrage Atelier stall were also present at the WFL Green, White and Gold fair in April 1909. WFL Green, White and Gold Fair, Official Catalogue, April 1909, pp. 11-18, reel 13, SFC, WL. See also Ellen Watson chapter 4.

<sup>616</sup> For example, Louise Jacobs, Agnes Hope Joseph, and Jessica Lloyd Walters, seem to have subscribed to the WSPU until the year ending 1910, only then reappearing in 1914. SFC, reel 13, WSPU Annual Reports, 1908-1914, subscription lists, accession nos. 50.82/1515 – 1521.

<sup>617</sup> See, A. Rosen, *Rise Up, Women! The Militant Campaign of the Women's Social and Political Union, 1903-1914* (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1974).

advocated militant tactics that focused on damage to property. Nevertheless, as the campaign progressed, she too drifted toward the WFL and by 1914 together with Housman, she was a founding member of the United Suffragists (US). The latter was hailed that year as an organization that tried to align ‘the suffrage movement with the rebel socialist politics of the *Daily Herald*’ reinforcing the notion that the WSPU’s anti-labour sentiment may have played a significant role in both and perhaps other artists’ later disaffection. Significantly, the US also marched with Sylvia Pankhurst’s labour-oriented ELFS reinforcing its members interest in working class representation.<sup>618</sup>

The Suffrage Atelier also attracted members and friends who can be firmly located within the working class, labour, and socialist movements. For instance, Miss Eilian Hughes, a member of the Women’s Industrial Council, held classes every Thursday evening at the Suffrage Atelier offices on the art of public speaking. This was a main stay of her activity as a women’s labour representative as well as of suffrage political agitation and propagandizing in this period.<sup>619</sup> In 1912, Katherine Gatty (sometimes known as Gillet or Gatty-Gillett) who had previously performed several militant acts chiefly window smashing for the WSPU and had been imprisoned on several occasions, took on the role of Suffrage Atelier secretary. Importantly, Gatty was a self-confessed and outspoken socialist and trade unionist with the National Amalgamated Union of Shop Assistants, Warehousemen and Clerks, and would later commit to communism. She became secretary to the Suffrage Atelier the same year that

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<sup>618</sup> Morton, ‘Arts and Crafts Society’ p. 71; Crawford, *Women’s Suffrage: A Reference Guide*, S.S. Holton, *Feminism and Democracy: Women’s Suffrage and Reform Politics in Britain, 1900-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 128, K. Cowman, ‘A Party between Revolution and Peaceful Persuasion: A Fresh Look at the United Suffragists’, in Joannou, & Purvis, *The Women’s Suffrage Movement*, pp. 77-89. For general reading on the East London Federation, see Rosemary Taylor, *In Letters of Gold: The Story of Sylvia Pankhurst and the East London Federation of the Suffragettes in Bow* (London: Stepney Books, 1993).

<sup>619</sup>Details of Hughes public speaking classes at the Suffrage Atelier can be found in, *The Vote*, 9 November 1912, p.31. Art and other forms of feminist education were central to the Suffrage Atelier’s ideology though the impact of this type of political education has received less scholarly attention in women’s histories than it deserves. See, J. Purvis (1994) ‘A Lost Dimension? The political education of women in the suffragette movement in Edwardian Britain’, *Gender and Education*, 6:3, pp. 319-327.



it relocated its official headquarters to Shepherds Bush in Hammersmith a ‘place’ synonymous with Morris’s Hammersmith Socialist League; and with a commensurately thriving socialist Arts and Crafts community; and was a short journey from Gatty’s home in Acton.<sup>620</sup> In this, and as we shall see other extra-curricular art-focused activities, the Suffrage Atelier created new, powerful spaces, where labour women (themselves subject to the labour movements mixed response to women and gender issues) could explicitly vocalise their class and their feminist agencies.

What is certain is that time spent working for early mainstream Arts and Crafts guilds as Laurence and Clemence Housman had done, represented a political and ideological education as well as an artistic one. For example, in their early careers both were encouraged by Ricketts and Shannon to read Morris and Ruskin’s political philosophies as well as contribute drawings to Arts and Crafts periodicals, *The Yellow Book*, *Pageant* and *Dome*. Laurence clearly came to share Morris’ vision of the social evils of the capitalist system. In a speech delivered at the Manchester Municipal School of Art at the height of the women’s suffrage campaign in 1911, he lambasted the ‘present age, which prides itself on the inhuman system of specialization’, decrying its wearing monotony on the health and spiritual wellbeing of Britain’s labour force. Housman argued that the true test of whether the State was in ‘industrial health or disease’ was whether ‘it tends more in the direction of setting labour free for other higher purposes...and so evolving an aristocracy of labour; or

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<sup>620</sup> The NAUSAWC worked for limiting working hours to forty-eight a week; for the improvement of working conditions; to help local members find work, and to demand local minimum wage rates. Representatives like Gatty were paid 50/- with increments. NAUSAWC records, Warwick MRC, GB 0152 MSS.259/NAUSAWC (University of Warwick). In later life, Gatty became a member of the communist party and regularly corresponded with Anna Louise Strong, a renegade American journalist and communist. See, Anna Louise Strong Archive, 1/34b Gillett-Gatty, Katherine (1944) (University of Washington Libraries). See also, Biographical Press Cuttings (G): single, obituary, 1952 – Gillett Gatty, Katherine (WL); several prison letters between Gatty and Mrs F G Arney (Alice Mary Arney) 1912, Autograph letter collection, 9/20/168 (ALC/3577-83), (WL); various of Gatty’s correspondence with Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington in Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington papers, collection list no. 47 (MSS 33,603-33,635) & Additional Papers, collection list no. 82 (MSS 40, 460-40,563; 41, 176-41, 245) manuscript collection, National Library of Ireland. See also, Crawford, *Women’s Suffrage* & R. Wallace, *The Women’s Suffrage Movement in Wales, 1866-1928* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009) pp. 80-93.

whether...it is constantly being driven to accept work of a lower kind, and to invent jobs of a relief character which are not really wanted'.<sup>621</sup> His frequent references to the inhumanity of specialization; to setting labour free and to the aristocracy of labour, as part of what is clearly a capitalist critique, leaves little doubt as to Housman's adoption of Morris' Marxist vision of industrial relations, though sadly Clemence Housman's position is not documented. The expression of anti-capitalist sentiment was common to many utopian visions in Edwardian Britain, irrespective of political persuasion, and importantly, it became central to feminist and suffrage debates about women's role in the labouring economy. These were debates in which the Suffrage Atelier would actively participate through the shared language of craft utopianism.

The Housman siblings were not alone in their friendships with leading protagonists of the Arts and Crafts Movement as the twentieth century dawned. Suffrage artist and most likely Suffrage Atelier member Pamela Colman-Smith's friendships discussed in chapter 4, had led to her setting up and jointly running the all-female Arts and Crafts guild Dun Emer Industries in Ireland prior to the formation of the Suffrage Atelier.<sup>622</sup> This created a significant thread of feminist craft conversation between women in England and Ireland, in America and Canada, despite suffrage and imperial tensions, epitomised by Irish artists Praeger and Shaw both working with the London-based Suffrage Atelier to enrol their love of crafts with feminism. The potential of craft rhetoric and practice to open up shared dialogue between women across borders of various kinds (geographical, ideological, political, real or imagined) may have fuelled the wider conviction aired in Laurence Housman's speech for the society in 1909, that establishing an alternative market nationally and internationally for feminist craft goods, through the 'idea and inspiration...the women's movement now

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<sup>621</sup> L. Housman, *National Art Training*, pamphlet of speech delivered at the Manchester Municipal School of Art, 18 September 1911. Housman Papers, (SL), pp 10-12.

<sup>622</sup> See chapter 4.

supplied' was a viable proposition. This was particularly so as craft conversations at that time were infusing global debates about the relationship between art and life in feminist and modernist circles providing a coalescent language between women: a subject I shall return to shortly.<sup>623</sup>

During her time at the Dun Emer, and later Cuala Press in Ireland, Colman-Smith produced illustration and textile designs and took a leading role in organising and teaching craft skills to its employees.<sup>624</sup> It's hard to imagine her experiences weren't brought to bear in some way on the Suffrage Atelier's scheme which provided similar, practical training to women in design and print work, and with whom her close friend Edith Craig was closely involved. Reading Elaine Paterson's detailed exposition of Dun Emer's practices, the parallels with the Suffrage Atelier's later scheme are such that it is difficult not to suppose Colman-Smith was more embroiled with the society than the absence of surviving documents might suggest.<sup>625</sup> In gendered terms, Dun Emer is often singled out by Arts and Crafts scholars as a welcome exception to the pattern of the male dominated private print presses that prevailed in England.<sup>626</sup> Anthea Callen argued that the English Arts and Crafts Presses offered very little in the way of printing or design opportunities for women leading her to describe them as a predominantly male sphere of the crafts. Though the revival of craft practices saw women become more involved in craftwork professionally and in larger numbers, the Arts and Crafts Movement which otherwise sought to elevate the status of the crafts and its workers, nevertheless retained 'an inherent blindness to the oppression of

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<sup>623</sup> G. Castle, *Modernism and the Celtic Revival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); *The Common Cause*, 1 July 1909, p. 158.

<sup>624</sup> Bowe & Cumming, *The Arts and Crafts Movements*; N. Bowe (1989) 'Two Early Twentieth Century Irish Arts and Crafts Workshops in Context: An Túr Gloine and the Dun Emer Guild and Industries' *Journal of Design History* 2:2/3, pp. 193-206; R. Schuchard (Nov 1978) 'W.B Yeats and the London Theatre Societies, 1901-1904' *The Review of English Studies*, New Series, 29:116, pp. 415-446.

<sup>625</sup> Paterson, 'Crafting', pp. 243-267.

<sup>626</sup> N. G. Bowe & E. Cumming, *The Arts and Crafts Movements in Dublin*; Bowe, 'Túr Gloine and the Dun Emer Guild'; Callen, *Angel*.

women' as its male leaders never questioned the power relationships inherent in the sexual status quo.<sup>627</sup> Legislation later aimed at restricting women's commercial access to the print trades, was something the Suffrage Atelier would seek to challenge head on.

At the turn of the century mainstream craft guilds by and large, employed women as outworkers. They were organized and dominated by men and in some instances, were exclusively male. Women were rarely at the core of the guilds unless they were the elite women of the movement, usually related to or favoured by its male leaders, and this meant women seldom had opportunities to produce designs or take part in the printing process being relegated instead to secondary tasks such as copying or embellishing designs produced by men.<sup>628</sup> Despite being acknowledged as one of the country's finest engravers, Clemence Housman herself had experienced these gendered practices when she was relegated to copier rather than designer during her time at Pear Tree and Essex House Presses. The quality of Clemence's work as an engraver has since been recognized as superior to that of many of her male contemporaries, an opinion which Laurence himself, ever supportive, voiced consistently throughout their careers.<sup>629</sup>

In this way the Arts and Crafts Movement continued to reflect male hierarchies which characterised the sexual division of labour in other industries more widely, and as in other industries, women sought to circumvent their marginalisation by setting up their own societies. In England, female art and craft workers responded by setting up alternative female guilds such as the Guild of Women Binders, the Haslemere Hand Weaving Industry, and the WGA.<sup>630</sup> The Guild of Women Binders, which stands out in terms of size and commercial

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<sup>627</sup> Callen, *Angel*, pp. 184-218.

<sup>628</sup> For example, May Morris, William Morris's daughter who became director of embroidery at her father's firm Morris and Co. and Janet Ashbee who was involved with her husband Charles Ashbee's Guild of Handicraft.

<sup>629</sup> Callen, *Angel*; R. Engen, *Laurence Housman* (The Artist and the Critic Series, 1. Stroud: Catalpa Press Ltd, 1983); Oakley, *Inseparable*; Housman, *Unexpected*.

<sup>630</sup> Bridget & Helland, *Women Artists and the Decorative Arts*'; Callen, *Angel*; Tillyard, *Impact*; A. Myzelev (2009) 'Craft Revival in Haslemere: she, who weaves ...', *Women's History Review*, 18:4, pp. 597- 618; Z.

success, was founded in 1898 and is the more typical of women's alternative experiences in the crafts movement. It was the largest and the most well-known 'umbrella' organization to which professional craft women flocked. It described itself as a 'business institution, extending women's work into a new and attractive field' encouraging women to see participation in the crafts as a legitimate field of employment. The year following its formation it had established a depot in Charing Cross and had sixty-seven members.<sup>631</sup>

The Binders Guild, however, did not encourage an association between the crafts and political radicalism of any kind. In keeping with most female craft organizations and much of the literature aimed at women in the crafts market, employment for women in the crafts was not seen as 'political' and the crafts themselves were certainly not viewed as a vehicle for women's radicalism. The Haslemere Hand Weaving Industry (HHWI) formed in 1902 differed to some degree, because it promoted women's participation in the crafts within the context of the mainstream Arts and Crafts Movement. Like other arts and craft societies the HHWI used small (preferably rural) workshops but focused on raising the social status of craft women, especially amateur working-class women, as opposed to middle class professionals to whom most female crafts guilds offered the greatest opportunities. It was run by women for women and attempted to further their managerial opportunities and to help them become economically independent. The HHWI has thus been described by Tillyard as both 'professional and visionary' although it is viewed by other scholars as a laudable but essentially utopian scheme and is therefore overlooked as a practical, valuable source of additional income for women craft workers. This echoes through the general omission of the Suffrage Atelier's remunerative scheme across arts and crafts, and suffrage histories.<sup>632</sup>

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Thomas (2015) 'At Home with the Women's Guild of Arts: gender and professional identity in London studios, c.1880–1925', *Women's History Review*, 24:6, pp. 938-964; Thomas, *Women Art Workers*.

<sup>631</sup> Tillyard *Impact*, p.8.

<sup>632</sup> Tillyard *Impact*, p.38-9. The negation of the HHWI's practical implications has ironically been aided by its founders Mary Blount Maud King who themselves emphasized the pastoral 'quasi-religious philosophy of country life' rather than its economic benefits. See, Walker, 'The Arts and Crafts Alternative', p.70.

Despite its emancipatory aims the HHWI did not publicly engage with women's politics reserving comment on the issue of women's suffrage despite its founders' private support for the campaign. Commercially driven, most female guilds avoided political entanglements although the sexual politics surrounding craft practice was a frequent source of tension. For instance, when the WGA formed in 1907 (the same year as the ASL and just prior to Suffrage Atelier) by Lowndes, May Morris and others, it was for those professional mostly middle-class craft women who were excluded from the mainstream (male) Art Workers Guild simply by virtue of their gender. When it was proposed in 1912 that 'men be eligible for election as Honorary Associates to the Women's Guild of Arts' several women objected and when the proposal was reaffirmed in 1913, they resigned in disagreement with 'the way the guild was managed'. These included members who were also suffrage artists and campaigners, such as the ASL's Mary Sargent Florence, Emily Ford, Mary Wheelhouse, Pamel Colman-Smith and Suffrage Atelier artist Louise Jacobs.<sup>633</sup>

Historically, the Suffrage Atelier has not been contextualised against these female arts and crafts organisations because it has been viewed separately as a suffrage, not an arts and crafts society, and not as a business enterprise. Morton's work focusing on the Suffrage Atelier's politics and its 'commercial edge' has gone some way towards addressing this oversight, while Zoe Thomas's recent publication on women art workers has acknowledged the Suffrage Atelier's craft credentials.<sup>634</sup> Viewing the Suffrage Atelier against this backdrop of vibrant, largely professional women's craft guilds operating during the campaign, that nonetheless remained apolitical on suffrage, is vital to understanding its positioning as a society. Not only did it break from them by allowing artists' feminist freedom of expression

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<sup>633</sup> Thomas, 'At Home with the Women's Guild' & *Women Art Workers*. Other WGA members included artist and suffragists Annie Swynnerton and ASL contributor, Christina Herringham.

<sup>634</sup> Morton, 'An Arts and Crafts Society'; Thomas, *Women Art Workers*, p. 81-82. See also, Morton, 'Changing Spaces'.

(as the ASL did) but recognised that enacting a politically feminist economy around its suffrage craft scheme to help support women artists commercially, was not only desirable but possible. In the light of tensions over the gender power relationships between men and women's role in the arts and crafts industries, even within the gender politics of female craft organisations themselves, the Suffrage Atelier's scheme was unique in forging a new space for women where, as we shall see, they could train and engage in arts and crafts practice whether professional or amateur; be paid for their suffrage work through its remuneration scheme (something not offered by the ASL); within a community where they could explicitly express their feminism, and potentially socialism across social classes, encouraged by the overt presence of labour women like Hughes and Gatty.

It is important to point out at this juncture, that numerous scholars previously claimed the Arts and Crafts Movement (thus the potential market for craft products) had all but ended by the time the Suffrage Atelier formed in 1909. The Movement's demise is generally located circa 1907 although it is argued it had been on a downward spiral in terms of aesthetic influence and market sales, since the turn of the twentieth century. A variety of reasons have been suggested for its decline, chief among them a steady economic downturn coupled with the Movement's gradual disconnection from the revolutionary socialist politics which had become increasingly unfashionable with those on the new political left. A more 'pragmatic' approach embodied by the ILP was now favoured and even socialist radicals began to believe that working within the existing structure through parliamentary representation rather than attempting to overturn it, was the only way to change society. Therefore, alternative attempts at social and moral regeneration represented in the earlier utopian visions of the Arts and Crafts Movement, were increasingly viewed as futile. This it is argued effectively signalled

the end of the Movement as ‘fewer connected handcraft with a wider attempt to change society’.<sup>635</sup>

However, the perception of decline is based chiefly on the level of male participation in the mainstream Arts and Crafts guilds: a decline not reflected amongst women workers or amongst women as potential consumers of female centred craft products, although it did serve to illuminate women’s participation in the crafts ‘in the light of harsh economic realities’ which the Suffrage Atelier’s remuneration scheme in part sought to address.<sup>636</sup> Conversely, Lynne Walker, Alan Crawford, and most recently Zoe Thomas, have shown that women’s craft practice was on the up during this time. Significant numbers of women continued to enter the craft marketplace and the number of female craft workers taking positions usually held by men - roles as designers particularly - increased fivefold between 1888 and 1910. Thus, by the time, as Walker puts it, the ‘arts and crafts men were running out of steam, the women in the movement were just getting started’ evidenced in their flourishing guilds.<sup>637</sup>

There were numerous reasons for a revival in the popularity of arts and crafts between about 1910-1912 that are significant in understanding the Suffrage Atelier’s interest in a commercial feminist arts and crafts scheme supported by the women’s movement. Among them was the crafts’ linguistic alignment with the anti-capitalist sentiment and ‘back to the land’ rhetoric common to many utopian schemes emerging in Edwardian England. This included new feminist thinking which sought to reconnect women’s craft practice either with a change to their economic and social role in society, or more simply, with aesthetic practice

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<sup>635</sup> Tillyard, *Impact*, p. 38. See also, Stansky, *Redesigning the World*; S. Adams, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (Herts: The Apple Press, 1987); T. Harrod, *The Crafts in Britain in the Twentieth Century* (London: Yale University Press, 1999).

<sup>636</sup> Walker, ‘The Arts and Crafts Alternative’, p. 166.

<sup>637</sup> *Ibid*, p. 172; Crawford, ‘Ideas and Objects’; Thomas, *Women Art Workers*.



as a useful tool through which to alter themselves.<sup>638</sup> The craft resurgence emerged during a transitional phase in western art and culture between the utilitarian and reformist social philosophies of the Arts and Crafts Movement, and the contrasting ideologies of individualism and ‘art for art’s sake’ associated with pre and post war modernism.

In England, arts and craft rhetoric was surprisingly resilient in modernist circles. Michael Saler argues in his fascinating work on the inter war avant-garde, that English modernists did not divorce art from life in the same way as ‘formalist’ modernists on the continent. Debates about modern visual art in England between 1910 and 1945 dealt with issues of aesthetics, style, and content – on art for art’s sake - but revolved primarily around the social function of art, or whether art ought to be defined in formalist or more socially engaged terms.<sup>639</sup> This phase was marked by heated intellectual and ideological exchanges including ‘intense feminist discussions of the nature of life, work and art’ as many feminist and modernist thinkers began to consider wider social change in terms of the ‘modern’ future, but also with reference to societies of the past. These creative conversations between the ideologies of socialism, feminism, and modernism, shared a common rhetoric which centred on the anti-capitalist sentiment inherent in pastoral utopianism and within which arts and crafts practice sat as a potentially cohesive language.<sup>640</sup> The Suffrage Atelier and its artists actively participated in the shared power language of the crafts, which was widely re-appropriated from socialism but for new political, aesthetic, and commercial ends. Important for the commercial success of a potentially international suffrage craft scheme, utopian craft

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<sup>638</sup> The surge in feminist interest in the crafts is encapsulated in the renewed manifesto of the Peasant Arts Society which re-committed its largely female membership to be ‘active propagandists, to encourage everywhere the love of country life and the handicrafts’ holding a series of lectures to rally support at Caxton Hall in 1912. J. Marsh, *Back to the Land: The Pastoral Impulse in Victorian England from 1880-1914* (London: Quartet Books, 1982), pp. 167-68.

<sup>639</sup> M. Saler, *The Avant-Garde in Inter-war England: Medieval Modernism and the London Underground* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) pp. 7-9.

<sup>640</sup> L. Delap, *The Feminist Avant-Garde*, p. 217.

language infused global debates in the 1910s about the relationship between women's art, labour, and life, in feminist, modernist, and suffragist circles.

### ***Unifying Utopias: The Language of Craft.***

Socialist utopias that underpinned the Arts and Crafts Movement were based on the notion of communities within which women's role was presumed to be centred on family, domesticity, and the service of men. Seen as politically radical in other ways, Morris's concept of gender relations and 'girlish virtue' like Ruskin's fitted with traditional notions of women's place which sat uncomfortably with increasingly vocal demands for women's liberty, equality, and freedom.<sup>641</sup> Like many in the broader socialist and labour movements, Arts and Crafts exponents many of whom were socialists themselves, occupied varying ideological positions on women's role in social, political, and economic life, which ranged from support for full equality, through to ambiguity, and at worst open hostility including specific objections to women's suffrage. Hence Sheila Rowbotham's description of socialism and feminism in this period as 'uneasy bedfellows.'<sup>642</sup>

It was unclear in Arts and Crafts, or other socialist utopian doctrines how the 'joy of labour' central to the movement's political and social philosophies, sat with the question of women's role in the labouring economy which it treated as a marginal issue. The ensuing debates over women's role gave discussions of the 'simple life' and the rural aspects of socialist and crafts utopianism in particular great prominence within the women's movement

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<sup>641</sup> Laurence Housman later wrote of Ruskin that, 'I came to value chiefly not his writings on art but his political economy'. Housman, *Unexpected*, pp. 124-5. G. G. Cockram, *Ruskin and Social Reform: Ethics and Economics in the Victorian Age* (London: Taurus Academic Studies, 2007); Naylor, Gillian, *The Arts and Crafts Movement: A Study of its Sources, Ideals and Influence on Design Theory* (London: Studio Vista, 1971); Stansky, *Redesigning the World*; F. Diamanti, 'The Treatment of the Woman Question in Radical Utopian Thought' in B. Goodwin, *The Philosophy of Utopia* (London: Frank Cass, 2001), pp. 117-139; J. Petts (2008), 'Good Work and Aesthetic Education: William Morris, the Arts and Crafts Movement, and Beyond', *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 42:1, pp. 30-45.

<sup>642</sup> S. Rowbotham & J. Weeks, *Socialism and the New Life: The Personal and Sexual Politics of Edward Carpenter and Havelock Ellis* (London, 1977), p. 20. See also, Hannam, & Hunt, *Socialist Women*; S. Rowbotham, L. Segal, & H. Wainwright, *Beyond the Fragments: Feminism and the Making of Socialism* (London: Merlin Press, 1980).

as a whole. This included within feminist ‘avant-garde’ circles where women’s labour, the aestheticization of women’s labour, and specifically of women’s craft work, would form a central tenet in the emerging ideology of what Lucy Delap refers to as feminist utopianism – an important strand in competing models for women’s empowerment at this critical moment in the history of gender and modernity.<sup>643</sup>

Morris and Ruskin were avidly read in feminist circles despite a marginalization or domestication of women’s role in their pastoral utopian visions. Morris’s account of work as an aesthetic experience and as a pleasure, struck a particular chord as most feminist thinkers had by then ‘framed the question of women’s labour as a central problem of the [women’s] movement’.<sup>644</sup> Feminist writers such as Dora Marsden and Rebecca West emphasised women’s particular suffering and exploitation under the capitalist system focusing on their relation to industry. They questioned how any feminist could condone the existing capitalist system, which combined ‘physical drudgery’ with ‘mental inertia’ for women. ‘Many felt that women’s pre industrial position gave her honour and authority and a key role as a ‘civilising force’, while modern women seemed parasitic or exploited in an alienating labour market’.<sup>645</sup> This type of anti-capitalist rhetoric was so prevalent and frequently used within early twentieth century feminist circles, that it has often been confused with socialism.<sup>646</sup> Such views were captured by Laurence Housman, when he argued at the height of the suffrage campaign in 1911, that the most acute result of industrialization was its effect on ‘women, whose industries used to be home industries before machinery drew them out of their homes’ and who were now ‘constantly being thrown out of one useless employment into another, and

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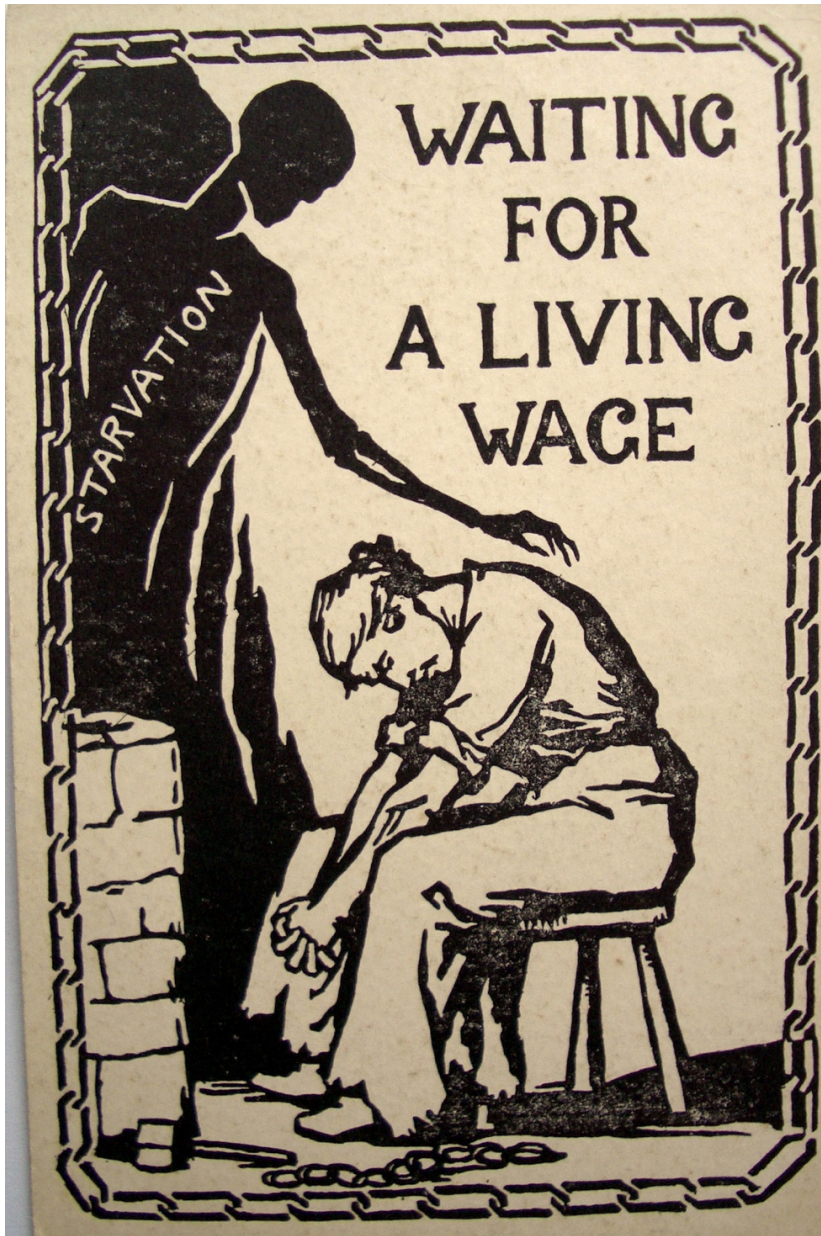
<sup>643</sup> Delap, *The Feminist Avant-Garde*, p.218.

<sup>644</sup> Ibid.

<sup>645</sup> Delap argues that debates amongst feminists strongly reflected themes of simplicity and self-sufficiency. Through their social critique of Edwardian Society and the capitalist economy, many feminists sought redemption from the capitalist machine economy. Their concerns echoed Kropotkin but showed greater sensitivity to the situation of women workers. See, Delap, *The Feminist Avant-Garde*, pp. 227-230; D. Marsden, *Free Woman*, 20 June 1912, p. 83.

<sup>646</sup> Delap, *The Feminist Avant-Garde*, p. 228.

very often have to pass through a fresh apprenticeship at a starvation wage”.<sup>647</sup> Similar rhetoric was used by Suffrage Atelier artist and Nottingham lace manufacturer Thomas Poyntz Wright in a letter to the suffrage press castigating ‘the starvation wage paid to women’.<sup>648</sup> It was also a frequent theme in Suffrage Atelier designs (for example, see below).



*Figure 19. 'Waiting for a Living Wage'. Suffrage Atelier postcard showing the hovering figure of starvation designed by Catherine Courtauld. Source: WL, Suffrage postcard collection, IMG0840, author's photograph, LSE.*

<sup>647</sup> Housman, *National Art Training*, p. 10.

<sup>648</sup> *Votes for Women*, 2 June 1911, p. 582.

Feminists, irrespective of their political proclivities, were thus faced with the dilemma of arguing either, for ‘a return to pre-industrial conditions, or at the very least to push for a transformation of women’s engagement with work’.<sup>649</sup> Arts and crafts inspired utopias represented a potential vehicle for this type of change in women’s industrial relations and so support for ‘back to the land’ and ‘neo-medievalist’ utopias grew as a counter space to the evils of industrialization for women. This included a recognition of the virtues of re-employing women’s traditional handicraft practices as a way of bringing about economic and social change by altering women’s relationship to the labouring economy. The role of art and craft in women’s lives and its ability to bring about social change, emerged as a strong theme in feminist utopian visions particularly in Britain and in the United States. Leather worker and designer Mary Ware Dennet, a prominent member of the U.S, Boston arts and crafts movement and a feminist, saw the arts and crafts as a vehicle for social reform, although she was also aware of its limitations.<sup>650</sup> Meanwhile, feminist Muriel Ciolkowska, *The Freewoman*’s Paris correspondent and a contributor to the modernist *New Age* and *Little Review* magazines, wrote two articles for *The Freewoman* in 1912, titled, ‘On the Utility of Art’, describing a theory of artistic culture intimately bound up with manual crafts. Ciolkowska expected women to play a large part as ‘social reformers through the artistic principle’.<sup>651</sup>

In England, Laurence Housman also made a direct link between art and social reform arguing that ‘the man or woman who embarks whole-heartedly on Art training must in the end find himself involved in the struggle for the recovery of those true social values which have been lost’. Like Ciolkowska he describes art and the artist’s role in utilitarian terms

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<sup>649</sup> Delap, *The Feminist Avant-Garde*, p. 218.

<sup>650</sup> Ibid, p. 225; R. Winter (1975) ‘The Arts and Crafts as a Social Movement’ *Record of the Art Museum, Princeton University: Aspects of the Arts and Crafts Movement in America*, 34:2, pp. 38-39.

<sup>651</sup> M. Ciolkowska, *Freewoman*, 25 July 1912, pp. 192-3; 8 August 1912, pp. 225-7.

suggesting that, if the artist ‘has a gift for the designing of stage-scenery, he should necessarily be involved in a struggle to secure a good drainage system... who designs for textile fabrics should be very much concerned indeed in getting cleanly conditions and pure air in the towns and dwelling-houses where his designs have to live and look beautiful, or grow ugly and rot’.<sup>652</sup> This exemplifies what Nicole Pohl broadly terms ‘architectural utopianism’ where artists’ direct intervention in the utilitarian design of dwellings and infrastructures, is seen as integral to improving citizens lives.<sup>653</sup> The interconnections between social reform, art and life, were clearly emphasized in Housman’s ‘Art and National Movements’ speech for the Suffrage Atelier in 1909 and likely representative, loosely at least, of its leading artists, friends, and supporters unrecorded views. Pamela Colman-Smith for example, whose political proclivities according to her biographer Melinda Boyd-Parsons were ‘on the left’ wrote several short articles and poems urging artists to engage with and improve the beauty of everyday life, and Louise Jacobs applied her artistic skills directly to that end during the campaign in 1912, when she designed and executed a mural at a Jewish school in an underprivileged area in the East of London, to brighten and inspire children’s experience there.<sup>654</sup> Suffrage Atelier artist Helen Copsy later taught art at the Dover School and ‘The Institute’ in East Finchley, part of the Hampstead Garden Suburb project’s utopian scheme to provide residents with green space, housing, and artistic education across classes – its artists combining esoteric and practical utilitarian ideals of art applied to everyday life.<sup>655</sup>

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<sup>652</sup> Housman, *National Art Training*, p. 6.

<sup>653</sup> Pohl, *Women, Space and Utopia*, p. 5.

<sup>654</sup> All Colman-Smith’s articles are rather cryptic and mystical. She speaks of ‘living, growing, art’; of seeing beauty and power in ugliness, dirt, and grime, and how artists must ‘throw aside your petty drawing room point of view’ to improve life. See, Colman-Smith, ‘A Protest’ & Colman-Smith ‘Should the Art Student Think?’ Louise Jacobs won a design competition run by the committee of the Exhibition of Designs for Mural Painting and for the Decoration of Schools. She won the commission for the Commercial Street LCC School. See, ‘Designs for School Decoration’ *The Times*, 19 June 1912, p. 15.

<sup>655</sup> *The Dover Express & East Kent News*, 6 August 1915, p. 4; *The Times & Guardian*, 1 June 1934, p. 8. The Dover School was founded by Sir Henry Cole (1808-1882) in connection with South Kensington School of Art. The students came from poor households with many holding down full-time jobs but determined to better themselves. By 1903, five students from the Art and Science school were successful in obtaining scholarships to

Not all feminist thinkers were interested in art as a vehicle for bringing about women's collective social or economic change, or for improving general working and living conditions for others. Emerging modernist conversations were characterised by an ethos of individualism and of art for art's sake, leading many feminist thinkers to shun notions of art as socially unifying or 'useful'. Equally, they expunged utopian craft ideals of female collaboration and 'sisterhood' terms used prevalently in the suffrage and wider women's movement. They looked instead toward art in the fulfilment and development of the *individual* woman: to art as a route to true personal freedom and emancipation, rejecting overarching schemes of communitarianism and 'co-operation as a guiding principle in society, and fellowship as an end'.<sup>656</sup> Individualist rhetoric was so prevalent in feminist avant-garde circles it has since contributed to the frequent separation of feminism and feminist thinking from that of the wider women's movement, to some degree obscuring the role of utopian craft rhetoric in the ideological interplay between the two.<sup>657</sup>

The notion of communitarianism in craft and pastoral utopias was gradually being superseded by the notion of collectivism in this period – and collectivism implied that while working together, contributors could nevertheless maintain their individuality, working 'collectively' but not necessarily as a faceless, organic entity, devoid of the individualism that often-characterised communitarian ideals. Simple life utopias were in fact 'understood by most Edwardians, in contrast to their Victorian predecessors, as specifically aiming *at* a harmonious authentic self' rather than at creating idealised forms of community.<sup>658</sup> This shift in emphasis to the individual, meant that simple life culture which included craft practice,

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the Royal College of Art. Thanks to local historian Lorraine Sencicle for this information. See, <https://doverhistorian.com>.

<sup>656</sup> Delap, *The Feminist Avant-Garde*, p. 228; Marsh, *Back to the Land*. Morris's vision of interdependency and community was rejected in favour of a more individualist approach, not only of autonomy in work, but also a political and personal autonomy in life.

<sup>657</sup> Delap, *The Feminist Avant-Garde*; Boussahba-Bravard, *Suffrage Outside Suffragism*.

<sup>658</sup> *Ibid*, p. 222.

could enthuse both modernist and radical feminist thinkers who saw its back to basics principles as an opportunity for self-reflection and self-improvement, while still appealing to those with more moralistic ideas about the benefits of women's communal craftwork schemes as a path toward social change. Craft therefore became an important sphere where the individual aesthetic impulse might be authentically expressed, just as for others it represented a route to reconfiguring women's broader social and economic position. Thus, Lucy Delap argues in her writings on feminist utopianism, that pastoral and particularly craft themes can be seen as one of the rare points at which 'individualist' and 'collectivist' concerns coalesced representing a key phase in the intellectual development of the early twentieth century women's movement.<sup>659</sup> Even in English modernist circles as Saler has shown, the use of craft language was not unusual where practical, economic concerns, interplayed with ideological or philosophical notions.<sup>660</sup> Roger Fry for example, used Arts and Crafts language when running his Omega Workshop, to 'steal' the commercial arts and crafts market and remained deliberately ambiguous at that time about the social function of art.<sup>661</sup>

The Suffrage Atelier culturally participated in this development using coalescent language to promote women's handicraft practice, and its own arts and crafts scheme, as broadly as possible. For example, it emphasised first and foremost its role as 'an arts and crafts society working for the enfranchisement of women' but in addition encouraged its members to 'forward the women's movement' more broadly by artistic means, offering at the same time to help them 'learn or improve *themselves*' through training and practice in the handicrafts. This re-politicised the crafts by locating them firmly within the context of the

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<sup>659</sup> Ibid, p. 228.

<sup>660</sup> J. Heilbrun & C. Gray, *The Economics of Art and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>661</sup> See, Tillyard, *Impact*, pp.128-9; Saler, *The Avant-Garde*, p. 8. Vorticist Wyndham Lewis was at Roger Fry's Omega Workshop for a time but quit and launched a scathing attack on its modernist credentials partly because of his 'disgust at the workshop's decorative aesthetic and its doctrines of anonymity and collectivism which Lewis associated with an 'effeminately pleasant tea party''. See, L. Tickner (1992) 'Men's work? Masculinity and modernism' *Differences* 4:3, p. 104.



suffrage and wider women's movement, whilst acquiescing to women's more 'modern' individualist interests in the emancipatory value of art and craft practice for its own sake.<sup>662</sup> Interestingly, many Suffrage Atelier designs were anonymous, stamped only with the society's symbol, while others were signed, hinting that both collectivist and individualist principles were at play.

## TO OUR READERS



*Suffrage Atelier.*

*Figure 20. Suffrage Atelier illustration by Louise Jacobs. The image draws on 'back to the land' utopianism. Source: The Vote, 28 December 1912 (front cover).*

<sup>662</sup> The Suffrage Atelier Papers, Constitution and Addresses, circa 1909. Records of the Fawcett Society and its Predecessors, Box No 2/LSW/154/7 (WL).

A Suffrage Atelier illustration published in 1912 and designed by its artist Louise Jacobs (below), epitomises the Suffrage Atelier's visual re appropriation of pastoral utopian language for feminist ends. It depicts a peasant man and woman in a rural setting; the man holding a spade in one hand ready to toil, and in his other, the hand of the woman who holds their unclothed baby. With their backs to the observer, both look out over a pastoral landscape as the sun rises beyond a path which leads to the horizon and to a life of new possibilities. Strongly evocative of socialist utopian imagery that depicted the rural idyll and 'back to the land' utopias, the Suffrage Atelier's design nevertheless realigns the pastoral scene with women's imagined political and emancipatory demands. Meanwhile, designers like Laurence Housman encouraged 'pageants, folk songs and dance' which he lauded as a 'visible sign' of a greater 'renewal of the blending of art and life': interchangeable terms familiar to both socialist Arts and Crafts, and feminist utopias.<sup>663</sup> His sister Clemence and Suffrage Atelier member, theatre director, and designer Edith Craig were never seen without black cotton smocks, swirling orange scarves, and leather sandals.<sup>664</sup> These clothes, which were obviously utilitarian rather than 'fashionable' were associated with the pursuit of unconventional 'utopian' value systems and rural lifestyles. While at the same time, the Suffrage Atelier's collective adoption of 'a bright blue workman like coat' gelled with the rise of the new artistic uniform worn within modernist Avant Garde groups. Thus, in image, word, action and body, the Suffrage Atelier and its artists straddled utopian signifiers of both old and new, collective, and individualist languages, and creative identities.<sup>665</sup>

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<sup>663</sup> Laurence Housman also frequently referred to the rural idyll and to the 'joy of the harvest' glorifying back to the land and rural labours. Suffrage Atelier, *The Common Cause*, 1 July 1909, p. 158; Housman, *National Art Training & Housman, Unexpected*; Oakley, *Inseparable*; Engen, *Laurence Housman*.

<sup>664</sup> As I shall discuss in the following chapter, smock, scarves, and sandals also became a cultural signifier of latent lesbianism. See, K. Cockin, *Edith Craig*, p.59; Hardy, *Utopian England*, p. 123; P. Cunningham, *Reforming Women's Fashion, 1850-1920: Politics, Health, and Art* (U.S: Ohio, Kent, Kent State University Press, 2003).

<sup>665</sup> *The Vote*, 5 October 1912, p.401 describes it as 'a bright blue workman like coat, a black skirt and a big black bow'. *The Sheffield Evening Telegraph*, 26 May 1910 p. 2, as 'a long coat in a most artistic shade of blue linen'. Female modernist artists like Kate Lechmere, one of few prominent women members of such groups,

Importantly for the viability of the Suffrage Atelier's politicised arts and crafts scheme, rural, pastoral, and craft themes had also taken root and were flourishing among women within the suffrage and wider women's movement as well as within feminist avant-garde and modernist circles. For example, Mary Neal a member of the WSPU, was also founder of the English folk song and dance revival society with much of her work taking place within working class communities in London. Neal promoted the idea of national renewal through the introduction of 'rural influences upon city dwellers' and was praised by Laurence Housman for her work in reviving traditional folk songs and dances 'in many of our towns and villages'. Neal worked alongside other prominent suffrage campaigners such as Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, Constance Lytton, Evelyn Sharp, and Lilah McCarthy of the AFL.<sup>666</sup> They too were folk revivalists and combined this with their work for and support of the women's suffrage movement.<sup>667</sup>

Therefore, when the Suffrage Atelier formed in 1909, establishing a politicized, commercial craft scheme, widely supported by women's assurgent drive for political and social emancipation, seemed prudent. Women's continuing entry into arts and crafts industries in large numbers; a resurgent feminist interest in women's crafts whether as a route

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wore white blouses with softly tied, dark coloured bows and plain skirts – hallmarks of the modern woman artist. See, Tickner 'Men's work?' pp. 12-13; L. Perry & D. Peters (eds.) *English Art 1860-1914: Modern Artists and Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); Beckett & Cherry, 'Modern Women', p. 43 & Thomas, *Women Art Workers*. Clothing's 'non-verbal symbols are least stable, and therefore manipulation of these symbols is likely to precede manipulation of verbal symbols.' D. Crane (1999) 'Clothing Behaviour as Non-Verbal Resistance: Marginal Women and Alternative Dress in the Nineteenth Century', *Fashion Theory*, 3:2, p.261. As discussed in the following chapter this also applied to expressions of homosexuality and androgyny.

<sup>666</sup> Mary Neal first introduced folk songs to working class communities at the Esperance Working Girls Club where it became to her own surprise, very popular. She later founded a new society named the Esperance Morris Guild welcoming both sexes. See, Marsh, *Back to the Land*, pp. 82-85. Also, Delap, *The Feminist Avant-Garde*, p. 225; Housman, *National Art Training*, p. 21.

<sup>667</sup> Lefebvre argues in *Rights to the city* that festivities when carried out in the modern city - particularly those that evoke ruralism and simple life practices - are threatening to the reproduction of capitalism and are a key means of liberation from it in everyday life. These strong revivalist elements within the women's movement - traditional festivals, pageants, and handicraft - can themselves be set against the backdrop of women's political re-appropriation of the female body from capitalist alienation. H. Lefebvre, 'The Right to the City' in E. Kofman & E. Lebas (eds.) *Henri Lefebvre: Writings on Cities* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996); Maycroft, 'Henri Lefebvre', pp. 136-139.

to self-improvement, or as a vehicle for broader social change; and the cultural redefinition of craft language from narrow associations with socialist utopias, to broader permeation within suffrage, avant-garde, and modernist circles, opened a new revitalised market for women as craft producers, but also as consumers of female centred arts and crafts goods. To enact its commercial suffrage scheme successfully, the Suffrage Atelier had to create a ‘realistic strategy’ in order to establish ‘a politics of the otherwise’, moving from utopian craft dreams to heterotopic sites and spaces where women artists and artisans wishing to work in gendered arts and crafts industries could assume power in new ways.<sup>668</sup>

### ***Gender and the Politics of Production.***

Outside the mainstream Arts and Crafts Movement few schemes that overtly connected politics with production and consumption, whether of artistic or of other goods and commodities, succeeded. Even the Arts and Crafts Movement had quickly become divorced from its early socialist origins. In her work on socialist women’s enterprises and the politics of consumption, Karen Hunt outlines several proposed ventures where socialist women envisioned how particular goods would be produced, distributed, and sold in aid of the movement, or to support fellow socialists often victimised for their politics by providing them with alternative forms of employment. In these politically motivated economic schemes, ‘there was little attempt to argue the gendered aspects of the strategy’ in other words to emphasise ‘not only that most of the consumers, but also many of the producers would be women’.<sup>669</sup> The Suffrage Atelier differed because it explicitly promoted women’s role as producers, and conspicuously encouraged their role as consumers of crafts, overtly

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<sup>668</sup> Gibson-Graham, *A Post Capitalist Politics & ‘An Ethics of the local’*.

<sup>669</sup> K. Hunt (2000) ‘Negotiating the Boundaries of the Domestic: British Socialist Women and the Politics of Consumption’, *Women’s History Review*, 9:2, p. 396.

connecting both roles with women's growing interest in suffrage and women's wider emancipation.

Commenting at the time on socialist women's alternative economic enterprises, Lily Bell, a writer for the women's column of the ILP's *Labour Leader*, noted 'that these fair schemes never seem to get beyond the region of speculation. I know one store...and it has great difficulty in making ends meet'.<sup>670</sup> Such observations underscore the difficulties of transforming an imagined craft scheme into a practical, and sustainable venture – a problem the Suffrage Atelier had to overcome. To that end, the society developed a strategy for both the short and longer term, much of which is loosely outlined in its constitution.<sup>671</sup> It envisaged multiple branches that would not only produce artwork for the suffrage campaign but would alongside, provide rigorous artistic training to improve women's commercial prospects, encouraging amateurs as well as professionals, while offering financial remuneration for their suffrage work. How those strategies translated from hopes into practice reveals a series of triumphs and failures, but importantly reveals the society's production of 'diverse economies' which created empowering new spaces for women across classes through non-profit as well as profit making activities, opening opportunities for them to transform themselves as economic and feminist subjects.<sup>672</sup>

Just as Morris had conceived of small Arts and Crafts guilds scattered throughout the country's towns and villages, where a cultural renewal of handicraft practice and employment (and in Morris's case, a move away from the city toward a more rural way of life) would be encouraged, so the Suffrage Atelier encouraged members to form 'local branches'.<sup>673</sup> In

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<sup>670</sup> L. Bell, 'Matrons and Maidens Column', *Labour Leader*, 21 April 1894 cited in, Hunt, 'Negotiating', p. 396.

<sup>671</sup> The Suffrage Atelier Papers, Constitution and Addresses, circa 1909. Records of the Fawcett Society and its Predecessors, Box No 2/LSW/154/7 (WL). Also partly published in Tickner, *Spectacle*, appendix 1.

<sup>672</sup> J.K Gibson-Graham (2008) 'Diverse economies: performative practices for 'other worlds'' *Progress in Human Geography*, pp. 1–20.

<sup>673</sup> Suffrage Atelier Papers.

1912, it planned to pay a ‘traveller...a woman with charming manners and of determined effort’ to visit suffrage branches up and down the country, promoting the society’s work and practices.<sup>674</sup> It claimed by 1912 ‘its designers live in all parts of the United Kingdom’ and its claim has some veracity.<sup>675</sup> Suffrage Atelier designer and lace manufacturer, Thomas Poyntz-Wright (1863-1947) lived in Nottinghamshire; sculptor and painter Sophia Rosamond Praeger (1867-1954) in Ireland, and designer Jessica Walters in Bristol, suggesting it enjoyed more expansive geographies than the ASL whose artists outside London were generally confined to the southeast.<sup>676</sup>

However, there is no evidence to suggest this translated into regional groups or branches, and in this sense, the Suffrage Atelier remained a principally London society.<sup>677</sup> Nevertheless, the society’s apparent failure to establish branches beyond the capital, should not obscure the intrinsic political and ideological message captured in this aim. Importantly, this strategy tells us that the society did not see the metropolis as *the* centre for creativity but rather the opposite – that it hoped to decentralise and distribute its creativity through regional activities. This constituted a direct challenge to the power given to the city within dominant western (and thus masculinist) creative cultures, which in turn reinforce hierarchical orderings of art: with high or fine art at the apex, and craft at the bottom. This ordering was seen as inherently class based by those in the mainstream Arts and Crafts Movement and has

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<sup>674</sup> *The Vote* 26 October 1912 (corner page number missing).

<sup>675</sup> *The Vote*, 15 June 1912, p. 145.

<sup>676</sup> As referenced in chapter 2, outside London, ASL members were generally confined to the southeast of England. See also, Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*.

<sup>677</sup> Nevertheless, the Suffrage Atelier’s collective work and economies were circulated and distributed outside metropolitan centres as far away as the United States. The Boston USA issue of the women’s journal in 1912 noted on ‘the front-page cartoon is a reproduction of ‘The Appeal of Womanhood’ the striking design published by the Suffrage Atelier...rejoice that the cartoon is now doing service in another part of the world. It is significant as proving the unity of purpose among suffragists all the world over.’ *The Vote*, 27 July 1912, p. 238. Here poster image itself had become an active transatlantic agent.

long been seen as gender based by feminists, not least because most craft practitioners were and are women.<sup>678</sup>

Crucial to building an alternative feminist craft scheme to empower female practitioners was improving women's access to suitable artistic training. The Suffrage Atelier stated that its primary purpose was to produce pictorial propaganda for the 'enfranchisement of women' but that this ran alongside its 'special object' of training and educating women in the arts and crafts.<sup>679</sup> If the society was to capitalise and build upon feminist interest, it had to offer instruction in traditional handicraft methods to those who were newcomers to the profession and/or to the creative marketplace. Thus, open to professionals and amateurs, the Suffrage Atelier provided instruction in a range of handicrafts, though the emphasis here is upon its tutelage of women in the skills required for the design and printing trades. Female artists and artisans were acutely marginalised in these industries, and this aspect of the society's educational programme created significant new spaces of artistic and commercial empowerment and experimentation for women of differing classes and artistic status.

Improving women's access to education and employment in both the design and printing trades had been an ongoing struggle.<sup>680</sup> As early as 1842 Fanny McIan founded the Female School of Design to encourage largely middle-class women's entry into the ornamental and illustrative design industry. The school - a victim of its own success - was discredited, downsized, and ultimately merged with the Central School of Arts and Crafts in

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<sup>678</sup> The urban and transnational tendencies of modernist and postmodernist studies have seen metropolitan centres dominant understandings of creative culture and activity until recent years. See, T. Edensor, D. Leslie, S. Millington & N. M. Rantisi, *Spaces of Vernacular Creativity: Rethinking the Cultural Economy* (London: Routledge, 2010) esp. pp 1-6.

<sup>679</sup> *The Common Cause*, 24 June 1909, p. 144.

<sup>680</sup> For general information on women in the design and printing trades see, Callen, *Angel*, p. 180; Naylor, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*; F. Hunt (1983), 'The London Trade in the Printing and Binding of Books: An Experience in Exclusion, Dilution and De-Skilling for Women Workers', *Women's Studies International Forum* 6:5, pp. 517-524; M. Tusan (2004), 'Reforming Work: Gender, Class, and the Printing Trade in Victorian Britain', *Journal of Women's History*, 16:1, pp. 103-126; P. Francis (1987) 'Socialists and the Art of Printing' *History Workshop*, 23, pp. 154-158.

1908 because its reputation and the quality of its female designer's work, had superseded that of the Central school which was then its male counterpart. Several new design schools linked to the manufacturing industry followed and offered in theory at least, increased opportunities for women designers. In practice however, many of the classes, including those offered by the large, now amalgamated Central and Female Schools of design, only admitted students who were already engaged in design and handicraft industries - in other words those on apprenticeships. Given that many women were boycotted by employers and male employees from apprenticeships in the design and printing trades, this meant that in real terms the design classes were not available to them and though several printing schools for women were founded in the nineteenth century their impact on women's employment was limited.

Neither did art schools like the Slade, which were innovative and radical in many other ways, prepare its female students for the realities of commercial undertakings in either the design or the printing trades. A Suffrage Atelier editorial in *The Vote* highlights the poor state of education and employment for women in design and print processes, stating that 'the artist on leaving the schools, frequently has...little real knowledge of the style and subject lending itself most effectively to printing work' and therefore of those designs 'most likely to succeed commercially'.<sup>681</sup> Thus the only way women could find training and employment in the printing industry in particular, was often by working alongside a male partner (not infrequently their husbands or male family members) or by setting up their own printing presses as the Yeats sisters and Evelyn Gleeson had done (with Colman-Smith's help) at Dun Emer and Cuala in Ireland.<sup>682</sup> The poor situation was compounded in the early twentieth century when tacit practices that excluded women from the printing trades were increasingly underpinned by state legislation. Suffragists became particularly concerned about 'a number

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<sup>681</sup> *The Vote*, 12 April 1912, p. 294.

<sup>682</sup> For a discussion on the role of male partners in women's art and craft careers, see, Thomas, *Women Art Workers*.



of attempts...to limit women's work opportunities notably legislation aimed at ending women's employment...as printers.'<sup>683</sup>

The Suffrage Atelier directly challenged this marginalisation and exclusion: aiming to improve women's prospects as designers and tackle as it stated in the suffrage press, the 'definite campaign on foot to drive women out of the printing trades'.<sup>684</sup> To this end the society held numerous educational classes at its various offices and members studios in both printing and design techniques. It held a 'designer's day' all day on Wednesdays, and Thursdays were 'printing days', when demonstrations of hand printing processes were carried out most likely by more experienced members of the society such as the Housman siblings, or possibly Pamela Colman-Smith who had worked in and/or previously helped found hand printing schemes. These specialised classes were supplemented on Tuesday evenings when a brief amalgam of key technical skills was offered chiefly through poster design competitions.<sup>685</sup> In the context of the lack of mainstream apprenticeships for women, the Suffrage Atelier's advertisement for 'an apprentice for the printing room with or without knowledge of design' in 1912, is significant.<sup>686</sup>

The range of weekly workshops meant, as the press reported, that Suffrage Atelier 'workers are fully trained in all the branches of design and printing'.<sup>687</sup> The society's printing scheme was facilitated in part by its purchase of a hand printing press in 1910 which is important for several reasons.<sup>688</sup> Bound up in its purchase and use, was an anti-capitalist ethic. A fundamental class principle of Morris's socialist Arts and Crafts vision (and of some modernist ventures) demanded workers ownership of the means of their own production, to re

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<sup>683</sup> S. Stanley Holton, *Feminism and Democracy*, p. 23.

<sup>684</sup> *The Vote*, 12 April 1912, p. 294.

<sup>685</sup> Advertisements of the Suffrage Atelier's various classes appear periodically throughout the suffrage press. For instance, *Votes for Women*, 18 February 1910, p. 329; *The Suffragette*, 8 November 1912, p. 59; *The Common Cause*, 17 February 1910, p. 634; *Votes for Women*, 1 April 1910, p. 430.

<sup>686</sup> *The Vote*, 27 January 1912, p. 169.

<sup>687</sup> *The Leicester Chronicle and Leicestershire Mercury*, Saturday 16 November 1912, p. 2.

<sup>688</sup> The purchase of the printing press is reported in, *The Common Cause*, 27 October 1910, p. 467.

position their relationship to the labouring economy.<sup>689</sup> The Suffrage Atelier emphasised as Morris had done, the importance of artists seeing the process of craft production through ‘from beginning to end’ - from design through to printing and publishing - thus restoring the joy of labour. However, the Suffrage Atelier’s purchase of a printing press meant that women artists’ ownership of the means of their own print production, and the reorganization of labour, was not performed on the basis of class, but on the basis of gender. For Gibson-Graham the ownership of the means of production is a fundamental requirement of any ethical and political project seeking to empower and transform local economies, and local subjects, and for feminist economies, it is essential in resisting dominant forms of capitalocentrism which feminists have long seen as gendered.<sup>690</sup>

That the purchase and use of the printing press was acutely informed by feminist politics (and not simply by practicality) is apparent in the Suffrage Atelier’s press announcements where, despite its otherwise egalitarian composition in welcoming male members, it specified that it could now run ‘workshops where every stage of the process of poster preparation is being done by women’ including design and printing processes. Crucially, it added that all ‘the work of printing and publishing is carried out by women only’ and not by male members.<sup>691</sup> That these processes were done by women, for women, and about women (via the creation of politically feminist material) meant their creative and political empowerment was fully enrolled. In this sense, Suffrage Atelier workshops

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<sup>689</sup> Fry’s modernist Omega workshop also stressed artists’ complete oversight of the production process from beginning to end.

<sup>690</sup> Gibson-Graham, ‘An ethics of the local’ & ‘Diverse Economies’. See also, J. Cameron & J.K. Gibson-Graham (2003), ‘Feminizing the Economy: Metaphors, strategies, politics’, *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, 10:2, pp. 145-157. Capitalocentrism is a dominant economic discourse that distributes positive power value to those activities associated with capitalist economic activity assigning lesser value to all other processes of producing and distributing goods and services by identifying them in relation to capitalism. Feminist scholars particularly, aim at fostering conditions under which images and enactments of economic diversity (including non-capitalism) might stop circulating around capitalism, stop being seen as deviant, eccentric, or irrelevant departures from the norm, and therefore as potential spaces of diverse forms of empowerment.

<sup>691</sup> *The Vote*, 15 June 1912, p. 145.

represented the transformation of imagined or utopian spaces of feminist creativity and labour, into real or heterotopic sites – empowering spaces of ‘micro revolt’ where the political and creative status quo was actively defied and challenged.<sup>692</sup>

The Suffrage Atelier’s concern with improving women’s knowledge and execution of design and printing for the purposes of attaining ‘a working career’, saw the society paradoxically offer instruction in modern design and printing techniques (new photomechanical print and design processes) alongside training in traditional hand methods. The advance of new mechanical processes and photography was gradually eliminating the need for traditional design and print methods (the reason Morris originally set up Arts and Crafts printing presses) and the latest print techniques required new and compatible practices in design to ensure suitability for reproduction. The society was clear to point out that *all* its suffrage material was made using strictly traditional methods, honouring its Arts and Crafts commitment. But it was highly pragmatic, and in offering instruction in atavistic methods of hand printing and giving advice on the latest more modern photomechanical and design techniques, the Suffrage Atelier maximised women’s potential to enter the creative marketplace. Just as it had straddled and blended old and new artistic languages, codes, and identities, so the Suffrage Atelier now straddled commercial creative practices, old and new. By 1912 the suffrage press claimed that improving women’s prospects in all aspects of design and printing ‘is what the Suffrage Atelier has attempted with a very large measure of success.’<sup>693</sup>

The Suffrage Atelier’s spectrum of artistic training was not limited to the design and print of suffrage posters, postcards, calendars, and cartoons. It’s product range included various forms of statuary, and other utilitarian pieces for the home, such as needle and

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<sup>692</sup> This phrase is taken from Fiona Hackney’s take on Lefebvre’s self-transformation as a ‘micro politics.’ See, F. Hackney (2013) ‘Quiet Activism and the New Amateur’, *Design and Culture*, 5:2, p. 175.

<sup>693</sup> *The Vote*, 12 April 1912, p. 294. Though this claim is difficult to quantify.

lacework much made by Elizabeth Gosling, as well as ‘mantel-borders, curtains, and book-covers’ made by a variety of artists.<sup>694</sup> None of the utilitarian and textile craft items made for the home appear to have survived (or certainly none that are attributable to the Suffrage Atelier) thus it is impossible to know whether these items were embellished with suffrage symbolism or were simply craft products, albeit made by a suffrage organization.

Nevertheless, the production of utilitarian items is consistent with the Suffrage Atelier’s adoption of the Arts and Crafts Movement’s ideology of unifying art with everyday life: making everyday art objects as those in the mainstream Arts and Crafts Movement had done, but re politicising them with feminist rather than class symbolism.<sup>695</sup>

‘Sketching from life’ was also a regular feature at Suffrage Atelier classes and well-known suffrage campaigners were promised as life models where possible.<sup>696</sup> Sketching from life formed part of a broad curriculum of activities held in addition to print and design classes such as cartoon clubs, tuition in hand colour printing (a technique commonly undertaken by illustrators), as well as textile and banner making demonstrations.<sup>697</sup> Members were also encouraged to instruct others in the techniques of wood carving from their local homes and studios.<sup>698</sup> Tutelage in woodcarving was offered at some schools such as South Kensington from the 1870s and Clemence Housman who was an exemplary wood engraver, undertook some of her training there. Nonetheless wood carving generally was seen as a male preserve and thus, in this directive too, the Suffrage Atelier’s desire to challenge all forms of gendered

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<sup>694</sup> *The Vote*, 10 August 1912, p. 281.

<sup>695</sup> Speaking at a Suffrage Atelier meeting socialist and feminist Anne Cobden-Sanderson insisted, ‘that art should touch life at all points, including politics’ and to this end the society’s work was commended. *The Vote*, 27 April 1912, p. 30.

<sup>696</sup> *Votes for Women*, 1 April 1910, p. 430.

<sup>697</sup> *Votes for Women*, 18 February 1910, p. 329; *The Common Cause*, 9 September 1909, p. 283.

<sup>698</sup> The Suffrage Atelier Papers (SAP), Constitution and Addresses, circa 1909. Records of the Fawcett Society and its Predecessors, Box No 2/LSW/154/7 (WL). See also, Tickner, *Spectacle*, appendix 1.

discrimination in arts and crafts practice, and to erode men's power in its industries, is evident.<sup>699</sup>

Women's economic as well as artistic empowerment was central to the Suffrage Atelier's feminist craft scheme and so it devised a remuneration package, offering relatively substantial earnings on a variety of art and craft items sold including statuary. Its constitution stated that its artists would receive commission for poster and postcard designs based on the number of reproductions sold. The commission paid: 'On post cards and other cheap publications shall be 50% on the first 2000 sold, and 25% on subsequent editions. The percentage due to the artist on Pictures, Statuary and Cartoons not published by the Society shall be 75%. The designs for posters published by the society and not intended for sale shall be paid by the society at a rate agreed upon between the artist and the society'.<sup>700</sup>

The proposed package was comprehensive, flexible, and relatively generous, and at the very least, offered the prospect of a supplemental income for women artists who might have other primary occupations. Suffrage Atelier poster artist Gladys Letcher for example, worked as a teacher in Woking, Surrey. In paying its artists for their work, the Suffrage Atelier acknowledged their status as 'working women' who needed to earn a wage, joining other female craft organisations in divorcing a long association of women in the crafts as wealthy amateurs. As the advertisement for a print room apprentice 'with or without design experience' illustrates, the society encouraged amateurs as well as professionals in need of

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<sup>699</sup> Oakley, *Inseparable*; Myzelev, 'Craft Revival', p. 607. The society's burgeoning curriculum of artistic training was likely encouraged by artists and patrons like Louise Jopling-Rowe. Following her time in Paris (see chapter 4) she became impassioned about improving women's commercial prospects. Thrice married and widowed, and so at various periods in her life, a single mother and breadwinner to a young family, her experience of balancing family life, work, and marriage, led her to urge 'every girl should have a vocation, either artistic or otherwise, by which if the necessity arose, she could earn her own bread, and be independent'. Jopling-Rowe, *Twenty Years*, pp. 146-147.

<sup>700</sup> The Suffrage Atelier Papers (SAP), Constitution and Addresses, circa 1909. Records of the Fawcett Society and its Predecessors, Box No 2/LSW/154/7 (WL). See also, Tickner, *Spectacle*, appendix 1.

income, importantly remaining open to working class women whose amateur rather professional status was defined by a lack of formal school training.<sup>701</sup>

The society's financial incentives also encouraged women who could not otherwise afford the time to participate in the suffrage campaign, producing suffrage designs for free as they were expected to do for the ASL and the WSPU who relied on voluntary contributions, making it accessible to women of different classes and needs. For instance, unlike many societies offering artistic education which only held classes during the day, the Suffrage Atelier's 'potted' design and printing classes ran on Tuesday evenings from seven until nine thirty, enabling working women to attend. The society did charge a minimum annual subscription fee for membership, but at just 1/6 (one shilling and sixpence) per annum, this was within the means of women on a relatively low incomes, and members were encouraged to run local satellite classes, reducing travelling time and costs for prospective artists, as well as encouraging them to send designs by post.<sup>702</sup>

Money was a constant concern even for more established artists like Pamela Colman-Smith who belonged to that stratum of impoverished middle-class women that chiefly benefitted from other female-centred crafts guilds.<sup>703</sup> As a letter written to her mentor Alfred Stieglitz in the U.S just a few months after the Suffrage Atelier formed in 1909 indicates, she had 'just finished a very big job for very little cash' and asks whether he had received payment for the sale of one her works yet and if so, 'can you send it to me?' ... 'I want some

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<sup>701</sup> Society banners show signs of amateur and professional needlework, as do the 'unsophisticated' design of several of its posters and postcards. The suffrage press reported that 'nimble fingered ladies of all classes' – and abilities – regularly participated in banner making for the cause, and Morton argues there is no reason to assume that interclass contributions did not extend to poster and postcard work especially in the light of the Suffrage Atelier's evening classes. Morton, 'Changing Spaces'; Tickner, *Spectacle*, p. 71. Moreover, working women were more likely to make ad hoc contributions and to work on embroidered, lace, and needlework items making author identification problematic. Morton, 'An Arts and Crafts Society', p.76.

<sup>702</sup> *Women's Franchise*, 8 July 1909, p. 670; Suffrage Atelier papers. The yearly subscription represented about 8-10% of the average weekly wage for working class women. It is not clear whether incremental payments were allowed or whether evening classes required an additional fee.

<sup>703</sup> Walker, 'The Arts and Crafts Alternative'.

money for Christmas!’<sup>704</sup> And the Suffrage Atelier sought to help women obviate limited financial means in additional ways to its remuneration scheme. It held open days for example, in which its members offered demonstrations in ‘designing and constructing plant which shall in a most inexpensive fashion, best serve the purpose of the working artist’ and that ‘the various processes form a most interesting object lesson as to what can be done on small means’.<sup>705</sup> At a Suffrage Atelier Christmas party in 1911, it was also suggested how a mangle could be ‘of great value’ and put to good use. How the society defined a ‘working artist’ is not entirely clear. Professional artists with dedicated studios, for example, seem unlikely recipients for such elementary instruction and so perhaps the demonstrations meant to benefit amateur ‘working’ artists, in other words, were those whose primary income was not derived from artistic work. Either way, such practical demonstrations using common household items, coupled with the society’s attention to those on ‘small means’ suggest that its scheme attempted to empower women’s small-scale artisanal practice at home, inclusive of all classes and economic circumstances.<sup>706</sup> It might have also represented a practical expression of more esoteric feminist principles, to alleviate women’s industrial exploitation through their return to home craft industries. These mundane, everyday details of the Suffrage Atelier’s material working practices, demonstrate how its artists were able to reclaim some autonomy and control over their gendered and social dislocation from creative and economic power in the arts and crafts market. Among others, Lefebvre and de Certeau warn us not to overlook the banal or the everyday as a means of producing new spaces, where alternative and resistant practices challenging hegemonic power structures may take place.<sup>707</sup>

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<sup>704</sup> Letter from Pamela Colman-Smith to Alfred Stieglitz, 19 November 1909. Available at: <https://marygreer.wordpress.com/2008/04/17/the-art-of-pamela-colman-smith/> (accessed January 2016).

<sup>705</sup> *The Vote*, 15 June 1912, p. 145.

<sup>706</sup> Morton, ‘An Arts and Crafts Society’.

<sup>707</sup> De Certeau, *Practice*; Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*; Edensor et al., *Spaces of Vernacular Creativity*, p.11.

The Suffrage Atelier's empowerment scheme relied not only upon the production of female craft items but on generating their consumption under the auspices of the women's movement. Hence the society held regular exhibitions of its artwork at its studios and at supporting women's homes, as well as holding fetes and monthly 'at homes' at its headquarters where craft demonstrations were given, and its products were displayed and offered for sale. Poster and postcard designs were also available to buy through various local suffrage society shops and offices (a benefit of the society's non-partisanship) and products were also advertised in the suffrage press to order by post.<sup>708</sup> It was chiefly within the feminist spaces of the women's movement that the Suffrage Atelier promoted itself and its products, but its artists also reached beyond them, visiting places up to 60 miles from London. This included the experimental social community of Letchworth Garden City where there was keen interest in the utopian aspects of rural craft production; and exhibitions in Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, and Eastbourne, Sussex, each held under the auspice of fighting women's sweated labour, reinforcing the society's concern with gendered industrial class issues.<sup>709</sup>

Where production within the commodity chain, has long been seen as a key space for exploring political as well as gender power and agency, the spaces of consumption - of sales,

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<sup>708</sup> There are numerous advertisements for Suffrage Atelier 'at homes' and exhibitions in the suffrage press. See for instance, *The Common Cause*, 6 October 1910, p. 418 (suffrage fair); *The Vote*, 23 December 1911, p. 108; *The Vote*, 9 November 1912, p. 31.

<sup>709</sup> 'At the Letchworth exhibition, the walls of the Pixmore Institute were arrayed with suffrage banners ...members of the Suffrage Atelier at Shepherds Bush had a fine exhibition...including lithographic work, designs for posters, post-cards, advertisements etc...'. See, *South Bucks Free Press*, 21 February 1913, p 2. Artists in attendance included founders Ethel Willis & Agnes Hope Joseph, embroiderer Mildred Statham, and as yet unidentified B Putnam. Inspired by Ebenezer Howard, Letchworth Garden City was designed to encourage social reform and happier communities chiefly by keeping rural areas separate from industrial ones; having numerous open and green spaces; and ensuring everyone in the city had a garden. The Letchworth concept was popular with many in the Arts and Crafts Movement some of whom visited and/or made their homes there. M. Miller, *Letchworth: The First Garden City* (U.S, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2007). For Eastbourne & Wycombe sweated exhibitions, see for example, *The Daily Herald*, 5 February 1913, p. 2; *The South Bucks Standard*, 20 February 1913, p. 8. Women's industrial exploitation was the subject of several Suffrage Atelier postcards and posters too, such as 'In the Shadow' Postcard Box 2, 857, item C1SA/007/2002.232 (WL); 'Waiting for a Living Wage' Postcard Box 2, 840, item C1/SA/027/2002.250 (WL); and 'Comfortable Women' Poster Collection, 1912 (WL) (also reproduced in Tickner, *Spectacle*, p. 181).



marketing, and advertising including exhibitions - less so. However, the spaces of consumption, and especially the spaces where production and consumption connect, are increasingly acknowledged as equally dynamic spaces for exploring gendered political action and women's production of diverse economies.<sup>710</sup> Exhibitions for example, are acknowledged to have played an integral role in the interactivity of creative cultures, with commercial schemes, and to act as potentially significant political spaces. The main purpose and consequence of the formation of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society for instance, had been the bringing of the consumer face to face with the craftsman in larger numbers than ever before. But the downside was that the Exhibition Society increasingly submerged the socialist ideals of the Arts and Crafts Movement beneath its commercialism. Its consumers were interested in the crafts as fashionable objects and were not concerned with the socio-political ideals behind them or the modes of production that made them (inspired by socialism these were antipathetic to their bourgeoisism). The Society's exhibitions therefore represented cultural spaces in which the Arts and Crafts Movements economic bloom was harvested, yet at the same time sowed the seeds of its long-term disconnection from socialist politics.<sup>711</sup> Meanwhile, female centred exhibitions put on by the WGA and others, while empowering spaces for middle-class professional women, excluded amateurs and were largely apolitical - although the English Woman Exhibition of Arts and Handicraft founded by ASL leader Mary Lowndes in 1911, featured a suffrage stall, and in bringing together women artisans from

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<sup>710</sup> L. Crewe (2000) 'Geographies of Retailing and Consumption' *Progress in Human Geography*, 24:2, pp. 275-290; N. Ettliger (2004), 'Toward a Critical Theory of Untidy Geographies: The Spatiality of Emotions in Consumption and Production', *Feminist Economics* 10:3, pp. 21-54; Hunt, 'Negotiating the Boundaries'.

<sup>711</sup> Tillyard, *Impact*; Callen, *Angel*; M. Greensted (eds.), *An Anthology of the Arts and Crafts Movement: Writings by Ashbee, Lethaby, Gimson and their Contemporaries* (Hampshire: Lund Humphries, 2005); W. Walton (1986) 'To Triumph before Feminine Taste': Bourgeois Women's Consumption and Hand Methods of Production in Nineteenth century France', *The Business History Review*, 60:4, pp. 541-563; M. Kimmel (1987), 'The Arts and Crats Movement: Handmade Socialism or elite Consumerism?' *Contemporary Sociology*, 16:3, pp. 388-390; Heilbrun & Gray, *The Economics of Art*.

around Britain, in part mirrored the Suffrage Atelier's hopes of establishing a national female arts and crafts market.<sup>712</sup>

The use of arts and crafts language across modernist, feminist, and suffrage milieus potentially enabled the Suffrage Atelier to overcome the ideological-commercial paradox more effectively. Many female consumers (including the wealthy bourgeoisie) interested in craft items but who were not switched on to the socialist (revolutionary) ideology synonymous with the Arts and Crafts Movement, were switched on to the women's movement, and the new left's progressive pursuit of parliamentary methods to secure social and political change in their own, and in other women's lives. By re-aligning the arts and crafts with more progressive politics, women's emancipation, or simply with women's aesthetic engagement as a form of self-improvement, the Suffrage Atelier presented politically, socially, and/or individually reconstructive ideals that middle class and fashionable female consumers could patronize.

Many of the products the Suffrage Atelier made – its curtains, mantle shelf covers, and calendars for instance - were designed and marketed as decorative items that would make 'a pleasing decoration to any room' and its exhibitions and at homes provided a platform for its artists' non-suffrage as well as suffrage art works. For example, at a monthly 'at home' exhibition, the press reported that a 'one woman show of clever watercolours and fine lithographs by Miss Louise Jacobs' filled the upstairs rooms, contrasting with downstairs where '*suffrage* posters and postcards of the Suffrage Atelier's *own* publication were on sale' [my italics] suggesting its artists generated sales and income at exhibitions from their private as well as their suffrage work.<sup>713</sup> Such exhibitions were important for the Suffrage Atelier in reconnecting the processes of feminist production and consumption by bringing producers

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<sup>712</sup> See, *The Common Cause*, 14 November 1912, pp. 553-4; Thomas, *Women Art Workers*.

<sup>713</sup> See, *The Vote*, 10 August 1912, p. 281 and *The Vote*, 9 November 1912, p. 31; Morton, 'Changing Spaces', pp. 623-637.

and consumers of women's craft products 'face to face' to sell their goods. In its feminist craft scheme, supply and demand could not be left to what Elaine Freedgood terms 'the invisible hand': contrarily, it was vital that the broader feminist elements of its suffrage work - particularly its endeavours to challenge women's restricted access to the design and printing trades, and to supplement their income - was made as explicit as possible to a new generation of gender conscious female craft consumers through exhibitions, meetings, and the suffrage press.<sup>714</sup> Making visible the hand of the producer to the consumer is central to transforming the power levers of economic space in Lefebvre's Marxist critique of capitalism, and importantly in feminist readings of women's production of new, diverse economies in their own gender interests.<sup>715</sup>

In contrast to the mainstream Arts and Crafts movement and other women's craft schemes, the Suffrage Atelier sought to attract consumers by making its suffrage products affordable to everyone - even those on restricted incomes. That its items 'come within the means of everyone' was stressed regularly in suffrage editorials as were costings - with small black and white posters being charged for example at one penny each.<sup>716</sup> Ownership of its own printing press meant it could produce new images more cheaply, more quickly, and prolifically, offering a broader range of designs to encourage sales.<sup>717</sup> In its commercial craft enterprise the Suffrage Atelier was successful enough to remain afloat until the outbreak of

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<sup>714</sup> E. Freedgood (2003) 'Fine Fingers: Handmade Lace and Utopian Consumption' *Victorian Studies*, 45:4, p. 637.

<sup>715</sup> Maycroft 'Henri Lefebvre'; Cameron & Gibson-Graham 'Feminizing the Economy'; Gibson-Graham 'Diverse Economies.'

<sup>716</sup> *The Vote*, 29 June 29, 1912, p. 177.

<sup>717</sup> The WSPU and the ASL were tied to the costly and lengthy process of outsourcing their artwork to external printers for reproduction in the latest and expensive, lithographic techniques. The Suffrage Atelier was not. The efficiency of the Suffrage Atelier's production of material led Mary Lowndes, whose ASL struggled to keep up with demand, to recommend that local NUWSS branches use the Suffrage Atelier's services for posters, as well as small banners and bannerettes. These she persuaded, 'can be made at a very small cost' ...in both cheap and costly materials, to suit all purses...nor are the most expensive necessarily always the most beautiful, design and colouring being the chief aim of the [Suffrage] Atelier'. Letter Lowndes to *The Common Cause*, 22 December 1910, pp. 617-618; *The Common Cause*, 1 June 1911, p.136; *The Vote*, 29 June 1912, p. 177; *The Vote*, 15 June 1912, p. 145.

war in 1914 when its venture came to an end - but it was a constant struggle.<sup>718</sup> No record of the society's finances survive but the ASL's records for 1909 and 1910 for example, show (after deductions for materials and its largest outgoing for printing) only a very modest profit of £145 and £205 respectively which for the ASL, did not include the payment of artists.<sup>719</sup> The rub was selling in large quantities and Mary Lowndes bemoaned on the ASL's behalf that if only suffrage supporters and societies 'would purchase posters in the hundreds' rather than sporadically and in smaller numbers, the group's financial pressures would be eased. Though the Suffrage Atelier produced far more designs more cheaply, it did not achieve, or regularly achieve at any rate, the level of sales required to flourish and do more than subsidise, rather than fully support its artists through commission – though the additional income sales raised was nonetheless welcome.

In 1914, a member of the society wrote a letter indicating that 'the finances of the Atelier are a tragedy, people get used to me managing to get through somehow, but it is an awful strain... a good many do not understand what an unfinanced business is like to work... we can manage if we get £120 – for the year on top of what we earn'.<sup>720</sup> Its hardship was borne out by supporter Mrs Louis Fagan who remarked upon its artists in 1912, that theirs was 'the worst sweated labour she knew'.<sup>721</sup> This was an ironic statement given the Suffrage Atelier's drive for an alternative economy, based on the production and consumption of feminist arts and crafts goods, took place against a backdrop of vibrant debates about female exploitation under the industrial capitalist system across the women's movement. Feminist ambitions to combat women's industrial exploitation through arts and crafts revivalism remained largely esoteric in Britain, and the Suffrage Atelier's finances, and lack of regional

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<sup>718</sup> Morton, 'An Arts and Crafts Society'.

<sup>719</sup> ASL papers, Box 153 (WL) gives details of the ASL's finances, some of which are re published in Tickner, *Spectacle*, p. 43.

<sup>720</sup> Unsigned Suffrage Atelier letter to Maud Arncliffe-Sennett, 26<sup>th</sup> January 1914. Bound into the Maud Arncliffe-Sennett Album in the British Library and reprinted in part in Tickner, *Spectacle*, p. 45.

<sup>721</sup> *The Common Cause*, 26<sup>th</sup> October 1912, p. 450.

branches suggest that it never truly enlisted the breadth or depth of support it had hoped for its 'utopian' scheme. There was constant frustration that 'far too little is known both inside and outside the [suffrage] movement of the real work and scope of the Suffrage Atelier' whose attempts to empower women in the design and printing trades it was argued 'should enlist the active sympathy and support of the whole suffrage movement'.<sup>722</sup>

Nevertheless, and in conclusion, Gibson-Graham's concept of diverse economies through a politics of collective action, allows us to look at the scheme's non-profit benefits which empowered women artists creatively, politically, and commercially. While in the end its scheme was principally metropolitan, its multiple endeavours saw the Suffrage Atelier enact powerful and complex spaces of compensation for women artists and artisans, where they could entwine their artistic and political subjectivities (feminist and socialist) in a way that was unique to the suffrage movement, and to other female centred arts and crafts schemes in England. Through women only design and print processes, a female, and feminist run counterculture was established where women resisted their gendered marginalisation in those trades by taking ownership of the means of print production, enacting a new relationship to the labouring economy that struck at the heart of the gender-power nexus of mainstream Arts and Crafts industries. Its training workshops and classes broadened women's commercial opportunities enabling them to share and develop new artistic skills along with feminist identities. In 1911, a member of the National Executive Committee of the WFL sagely remarked that the value of the Suffrage Atelier should not only be judged '...on its value to suffrage societies' in producing propaganda material, but also on its benefits 'to women artists, [in] affording them the opportunities to experiment'.<sup>723</sup>

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<sup>722</sup> *The Vote*, 13th April 1912, p. 294.

<sup>723</sup> *The Vote*, 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1911, p. 108.

The Suffrage Atelier's commodity chain also created powerful new spaces for political action and interaction. Working collectively and exhibiting their suffrage and other arts and crafts products at a diverse range of venues, including those connected with sweated trades, enabled face to face relationships to develop between women as craft producers and consumers. And based on their common interests in art, and women's political and economic emancipation, reaching across ideological, national, and class boundaries. The crafts were seen (and still are) as a means of bridging class divides, and the Suffrage Atelier's low fees; remuneration scheme; evening classes; speakers and workers from the socialist and labour women's movements, likely attracted working women to the society and to suffrage artistry in ways that have since been forgotten.<sup>724</sup>

Different women likely got different things from working for the Suffrage Atelier. Some may have seen its activities as a pathway to new artistic skills and careers, as supplemental income, or others as a convivial pursuit through which to express their creative and feminist identities. Either way its scheme represented an 'empowering business'<sup>725</sup> — an alternative craft enterprise which may not have fully realised the utopian ideals from which it emerged, but nevertheless enabled women to engage in 'productive 'labour[s] of becoming' in which being, doing, and making suffrage crafts collectively at a local level, created 'politics as, and economies of, the 'otherwise'' allowing women opportunities to transform themselves creatively, politically, and economically as a micro process, while resisting larger

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<sup>724</sup> Myzelev, 'Craft Revival', p. 598; Hackney, 'Quiet Activism'. Society banners show signs of amateur and professional needlework, and the 'unsophisticated' design of several of its black and white posters and postcards also suggest the work of amateur as well as professional hands. The suffrage press reported that 'nimble fingered ladies of all classes' — and abilities — regularly participated in banner making for the cause, and Morton argues there is no reason to assume that interclass contributions did not extend to poster and postcard work especially in the light of the Suffrage Atelier's evening classes. See, Morton, 'Changing Spaces'; Tickner, *Spectacle*, p. 71.

<sup>725</sup> Hackney, 'Quiet Activism', p.175; B. Brandt, *Whole Life Economics: Revaluing Daily Life* (U.S, Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publishers, 1995), pp. 113-114.

gender power structures.<sup>726</sup> In this sense, the Suffrage Atelier, a complex and experimental society was significant in navigating a new pathway in the power relationships between gender, art and politics in the early twentieth century, one that straddled and re-politicised the art of the past to empower women artists of the future at a critical juncture of modernity.

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<sup>726</sup> Gibson-Graham, 'An Ethics of the Local', p. 10 & pp. 49-74; F Mackenzie ('2006) "'S Leinn Fhein am Fearann' (The Land is Ours): Re-claiming Land, Re-creating Community, North Harris, Outer Hebrides, Scotland', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 24, pp. 577-598.

## Chapter 6

# Seeing is Believing

This chapter focuses on real and imaginative spaces, somewhere between utopia-heterotopia, to explore suffrage artists' aesthetic transformation of everyday social and sexual space, interlinked through performativity to subversive modernist-feminist debates on gender and sexuality. Feminist scholars Jenny Robinson, Luce Irigaray, Judith Butler, and Julia Kristeva, while differing in other ways, see transformations in gender power relationships as dependent upon individual and collective utopian imaginings of what could, or should be, of future possibilities conceptualised, experimented with, and projected, which they locate in a diverse range of feminist aesthetics.<sup>727</sup> The thesis has tugged at utopian strands and future projections running through suffrage artists' feminist agencies and temporalities from blue plaques, and the archive in chapter three, to the utopian visions underpinning the Suffrage Atelier's feminist arts and crafts scheme in chapter five. Yet these can also be found in suffrage artists' aesthetic attempts to negotiate and shape their artistic, social, and sexual identities inside and outside the suffrage campaign through the imaginative and decorative spaces of feminist art, and art making, which were performative. Nicole Pohl in her exploratory essays of the personal utopian spaces of women in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries - from the convent and the country house, to intimate letter and story writing - sees it as inevitable that when women imagine an ideal community or identity, they attempt to 'design a physical setting to establish and strengthen its existence'.<sup>728</sup> It is through this conceptual and visual

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<sup>727</sup> Robinson, 'Feminism and the Spaces of Transformation', pp. 285-301; L. Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman* (U.S, New York: Cornell University Press, 1974); J. Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990); J. Butler, *Bodies that Matter: on the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (London: Routledge, 1993); J. Kristeva, *Desire in Language: a Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (U.S, New York: Cornell University Press, 1980); J. Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language* (U.S, New York: Cornell University Press, 1984).

<sup>728</sup> Pohl, *Women, Space, and Utopia* p. 2.



window, that the chapter examines suffrage artists' decoration and (re)configuration of domestic studio space as semi-public theatre, and their intertextual (re)design and transfiguration of female-male body space through androgyny. These are viewed as culturally performative thus spatially interlinking sites, that straddled suffrage artists' inner private, and outer public worlds, through which they projected the instability of gender and sexual boundaries in ways that subverted established discourses of gender and power.

### ***Changing the Everyday.***

Probing the role of visibility, performance, and performativity in the conceptualisation or imagining of new gender and sex critical space, is crucial to understanding the translation of such space into transformative cultural practice in the transitional phase between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was a time of social and political upheaval in Britain with imperial setbacks abroad, Home Rule debates, the rise of socialism, workers strikes, as well as suffrage campaigns, coupled with increasingly anxious public debates about sex and homosexuality – epitomised by the cause célèbre Oscar Wilde trials in 1895.<sup>729</sup> The new sciences of eugenics and sexology emerging at the fin de siècle, often underpinned by biological essentialism, debated gender traits, the existence of Urania or a 'third sex', homosexuality, and 'deviant' same sex relationships, in ways that frequently served to reinforce traditional gender roles, traits, and heterosexual relationships, while also inadvertently opening up those spaces to question.<sup>730</sup>

The women's suffrage campaign directly engaged with these public debates in a plethora of aesthetic ways that are relatively well documented, though suffrage aesthetics

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<sup>729</sup> S. I. Salamensky (2002) 'Re-Presenting Oscar Wilde: Wilde's Trials, "Gross Indecency," and Documentary Spectacle' *Theatre Journal*, 54:4, pp. 575-588.

<sup>730</sup> For general debates including on gender, see, A. Giami & S. Levison (eds.) *Histories of Sexology: Between Science and Politics* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2021); C. Brickell (2006) 'The Sociological Construction of Gender and Sexuality' *The Sociological Review*, 54:1, pp. 87-113; L. Bland, *Banishing the Beast: English Feminism and Sexual Morality, 1885-1914* (London: Penguin, 1995).

were much broader than the issue of suffrage and should not be restricted to the campaign.<sup>731</sup> Barbara Green, Lisa Tickner, and Katherine Cockin among others have shown how suffrage marches, street parades, poster images, and suffrage theatre performances, interacted with one another in a visual spectacle which challenged cultural notions of ‘femininity’, exploring gender and sexuality (if more obliquely) through the imaginative and enacted relationship between suffragists activism, and visual performance.<sup>732</sup> Meanwhile, other feminist and queer scholars have interrogated how cultural notions of male and female sex traits, and homosexuality, were openly and enthusiastically discussed and performed in metropolitan literary and theatrical avant-garde circles, spaces which suffrage artists often shared, whose women and men artists often resented traditional gender tropes for constraining their abilities to fully experience, experiment with, to live and to be, their ‘true’ aesthetic and sexual selves. This chapter builds upon work that focuses on imaginative continuity, rather than distinction, between the creative dialogue of pre-war suffragists and modernist-feminists on gender even if they differed over suffrage and collectivist politics.<sup>733</sup>

Conceptual notions of performance and performativity cut across the tensions over gender and sexual politics between suffrage and modernist aesthetic spaces. Indeed, performativity is a fundamental element of visuality, which is understood broadly as the ‘interface between the visual, the verbal, and power, conveyed in the insistent theatrical’.<sup>734</sup> The quest for gender and sexual identity is itself an aesthetic performance thus as Gillian Rose and Nicky Gregson argue, performativity provides opportunities for ‘radically redoing

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<sup>731</sup> Park, ‘Political Activism’.

<sup>732</sup> Green, *Spectacular Confessions*; Tickner, *Spectacle*; Cockin, *Women and Theatre*.

<sup>733</sup> Many feminist and elitist modernists often denied, or became disillusioned with the women’s suffrage cause, despite being initially sympathetic, coming to see feminist politics as Woolf recalled on seeing Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence ‘throwing her arms’ about while speaking, ‘as just bad art’. See, Park, ‘Political Activism’, p. 183; Elliot, & Wallace, *Women Artists, and Writers*; A. O. Bell, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, vol 1, 1915–1919 (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977) p. 125 (diary entry, Saturday March 9, 1918).

<sup>734</sup> N. Mirzoeff (2006) ‘Disorientation: Minority and Visuality in Imperial London’ *The Drama Review*, 50:2, p. 54.

gender' and sexual boundaries in ways that are taken-for-granted across social practices that make up the creativity of everyday life. Since performances and performativity are themselves articulations of power (projecting particular subject positions) the everyday spaces in which these are enacted are also performative of power relations. As this thesis has discussed, the home, the artist's studio, and the suffragist body itself, were all highly gendered sites and spaces subject to male discourses of power and difference and so integral to suffrage artists and wider feminist campaigners' daily contestation of gender power relationships. Through visibility and performativity the chapter enrolls and explores the design aesthetics and decorative theatricalities of these sites and spaces, in and through which, suffrage artists reconfigured gender and sexual boundaries, creating liminal spaces of experimentation that destabilized the gender status quo.

The first section shifts across the different, decorative interiors of suffrage artists' domestic studio spaces, which complicated the separation and gendering of home, work, and politics, recontextualising them as domestic theatres that projected a feminist image of what was possible, into something real. It surveys the display and staging of suffrage artists' decorative objects and experimental artwork across these spaces; the socio-spatial dynamics this sometimes-politicised décor generated between the interior and exterior worlds; including the emotional responses of 'audiences' who interacted with it, and the performances enacted within from fairy tale recitals to miniature theatres. These are spatially interlinked with suffrage artists' aesthetic engagement with modernism and with public theatre performances that reconfigured the gendered meanings ascribed to domesticity and to the 'enclosed room' a central strand in modernist-feminist Free Theatre to which several suffrage artists were explicitly tied.<sup>735</sup> In part, the power of suffrage spectacle and

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<sup>735</sup> Katherine Cockin argues that any depiction of space within a domestic dwelling or 'enclosed room' in this period was inevitably implicated in separate spheres ideology. Hence it became central in plays, short stories,

theatricality lay in the degree to which events were performed in spaces that could be deemed ‘public’ but the kinds of performances explored here took place in semi-public spaces where the distinction between performer and audience was blurred, along with the gendering of space and artistic identity itself.

Section two focuses on female-male body space and suffrage artists’ intertextual use of androgyny as a visual morphotactic tool to transgress, reconfigure, and project new gender and sexual boundaries that connected aesthetically with modernist feminist and queer subcultures. The androgynous figure which embodied both male and female traits was a utopian image with a long aesthetic history most often appearing across western Europe at times of social and political turmoil which promised substantial rather than normal shifts in gender power relations.<sup>736</sup> It was also a central figure, often articulated through cross dressing, in modern, fin de siècle aesthetics of gender and sexual identity, and cultures of power.<sup>737</sup> The chapter examines how suffrage artists performed androgyny intertextually as a visual and cultural symbol in their suffrage, non-suffrage work, and private lives, to subvert male-female gender codes, and sexual boundaries, through the slippage in between. It explores suffrage artist Clemence Housman’s early subversion of gender traits in her imaginative ‘shapeshifting’ novella *The Werewolf* illustrated by brother Laurence, whose androgynous figures interacted with the siblings own unravelling of male-female traits and sexualities, in the private spaces of their relationships, and in their public suffrage politicking.<sup>738</sup> In addition, individual suffrage artists’ experimentations with cross-dressing to

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novels, and in the visual art of political campaigners for women’s suffrage who sought through it to reconceptualize gender roles and bring about legislative change. See, Cockin, ‘Formations, Institutions’ p.55.

<sup>736</sup> See for example, K. Weil, *Androgyny and the Denial of Difference* (U.S, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press 1992); N. Andrews, *Socialism’s Muse: Gender in the Intellectual Landscape of French Romantic Socialism* (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2006); J. Cocks, *The Oppositional Imagination* (U.S, New York: Cornell University Press, 1988).

<sup>737</sup> See, Potvin, *Bachelors*, p.22.

<sup>738</sup> C. Housman, *The Were-wolf* (London: Bodley Head, 1896) The Gutenberg Project <https://www.gutenberg.org/> (accessed December 2021).

alter their own female-male body space, is interrogated and intertwined with suffrage imagery and allegory of the armour-clad suffragette warrior woman for how both interplayed with modernist-feminist discourses of homosexuality, particularly new articulations of lesbianism. Together, these are considered as utopian counter-spaces to the sex volatility and vilification of homosexuality in mainstream culture during the height of the campaign, performed through a politics of ambiguity.

Therefore, through visibility the chapter illustrates how gender and sexual boundaries and identities were reconceptualised, experimented with, redrawn, transfigured, and projected as future possibilities and identities, creating liminal spaces somewhere between utopia and heterotopia, between real and imagined space, which Foucault saw as a useful window into the struggle for power and knowledge, and from which Kevin Hetherington suggests, modernity itself emerged.<sup>739</sup> Both chapter sections are spatially interlinked by an aesthetic performativity that was political because it disrupted traditional forms of gender and sexuality. Thus, the gendering of power across these sites and spaces is not seen as abstract. Rather, the power of suffrage artists' visibility in (re)gendering space and praxis is understood through performativity, performative because its effects were seen, touched, read, and spoken through the interaction of suffrage artists' décor, imagery, text, and bodies, transformative in utopian terms for what it tells us about suffrage arts creative praxis for 'inaugurating the foreseeable'.<sup>740</sup>

### ***The Power of Projection: The Housmans' Decor (i)***

The three domestic-studio interiors I examine are those belonging to Suffrage Atelier artists Laurence and Clemence Housman in Kensington; designer and friend Pamela Colman-

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<sup>739</sup> P. Rabinow (ed.) *The Foucault Reader*, p. 252; Hetherington, *The Badlands*, p. 53; Bebe, Davis & Gleadle, 'Introduction: Space, Place and Gendered Identities', pp. 525-27.

<sup>740</sup> E. Ziarek, *Feminist Aesthetics and the Politics of Modernism* (U.S, Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2012) p.26.

Smith in Chelsea; and the society's collective studio through 1912 in Shepherd's Bush. The latter two especially, represent snapshots fixed in time and space through specific written accounts and so appear in their idealised forms.<sup>741</sup> They are defined as domestic studios because they were set within the boundaries of a domestic dwelling – annexed or adjoined to it - which meant that the spaces of home, artistic work, and feminist and suffrage politics, inevitably intertwined and they were by their locational setting, fully implicated in the ideologies of separate spheres. Their study brings together various theoretical and feminist work on the artist's studio, with scholarship on suffragists domestic interiors, as well as Judith Neiswander, Hilde Heynen, Daniel Miller, and John Potvin's cultural work on reading the interior as a semi-public container expressing the identity of its inhabitants, while conveying their wider assumptions and beliefs about the world.<sup>742</sup> It also draws upon the explicitly utopian spaces of suffrage and modernist-feminist theatre to which suffrage artists' creative agencies and visualities were often explicitly tied. Suffrage Atelier artists and designers as a collective, were especially, though not exclusively, close to the literary and theatrical worlds in London. And their individual and collective practices show a utopian blending of gender, sex, and intertextual design, across these imaginative and performative spaces, transfiguring them in aesthetic ways that intersected with gender and modernity, and with the politics of feminism, whose defining ambition is to transform gender power relations.<sup>743</sup>

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<sup>741</sup> P. Sparke, 'The Crafts Interior: Elsie de Wolfe and the Construction of Gendered Identity' in S. Alfoldy & J. Helland (eds.) *Craft, Space, and Interior Design, 1855-2005* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005) p. 123.

<sup>742</sup> On the artistic studio for example, see above. Also, K. Cockin, *Women and Theatre*; Cockin, 'Formations, Institutions'; E. Crawford, *Enterprising Women: The Garretts and their Circle* (London: Francis Boutle, 2002); Walker, 'Locating the Global', pp. 174-196; Walker, 'Women Patron-Builders'; D. Miller 'Behind Closed Doors' in D. Miller (ed.) *Home Possessions: Material Culture Behind Closed Doors* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2001); H. Heynen, 'Modernity and Domesticity: Tensions and Contradictions' in H. Heynen & G. Baydar (Eds.) *Negotiating Domesticity: Spatial Productions of Gender in Modern Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2005); Potvin, *Bachelors*.

<sup>743</sup> Potvin *Bachelors*, p. 4.



Figure 21. Clemence Housman (date unknown). Source: Roger Clarke, Private Collection.

Suffrage Atelier artists and designers Clemence and Laurence Housman's life together as unmarried, cohabiting siblings during the campaign, gives a complex picture of the transgressions between domestic and studio space, private and public life, detailed in Laurence's autobiography.<sup>744</sup> While glimpses from different friends and relatives into the interior also give rare insight into how suffrage artists' campaign activities, and daily artistic work, intermingled to visually alter the spaces they inhabited and project artistic and feminist

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<sup>744</sup> Housman, *Unexpected*.

identities. Laurence recalled that he and sister Clemence ‘For the first time ... had a home in London really to our liking, with which we could feel intimate’ describing it from the outside as looking ‘not much bigger than a doll’s house’.<sup>745</sup> Given his own role as writer and playwright as well as designer for the suffrage campaign, this was surely a play on words, an allusion to Henrik Ibsen’s influential feminist play ‘A Doll’s House’ first staged in 1879 and well known and used by suffrage theatricals.<sup>746</sup> The play questioned traditional gender roles in the context of nineteenth century domesticity, boundaries Laurence and sister Clemence would push against in the personal-political spaces of their domestic-studio, and through female-body space, in private and in public works inside and outside suffrage campaigning.

Although the cottage was relatively small, the internal space was flexible with ‘the main room on the ground floor extending through double doors from front to back, giving it a large open aspect despite its external proportions’.<sup>747</sup> Its kitchen and dining room were in the basement. And it had a smaller cottage converted to a studio workshop at the bottom of the garden which ‘gave good extra accommodation’.<sup>748</sup> This became the official ‘home’ of the Suffrage Atelier through 1910 and was where most of the society’s banner making activities and early design and printing ventures took place.<sup>749</sup> Fundraising fetes were also held with garden stalls erected selling various suffrage wares with access through a side gate. In this sense, there was some separation between home and suffrage working at the cottage, but this distinction was inevitably blurred, and suffrage craft work was produced for the campaign inside the cottage too. Clemence, an exemplary embroiderer, stitched suffrage banners there, with Laurence noting how she ‘wore herself out’ sitting ‘because of her leg trouble’ ‘on a

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<sup>745</sup> Housman, *Unexpected*, p.195 & 194.

<sup>746</sup> M. Joannou (2010) ‘“Hilda, Harnessed to a Purpose”: Elizabeth Robins, Ibsen, and the Vote’ *Comparative Drama*, 44:2, pp. 179-200.

<sup>747</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 194-5.

<sup>748</sup> *Ibid*, p. 194.

<sup>749</sup> *Ibid*, p. 274. Suffrage Atelier work continued there throughout the campaign. See, chapter 2.



floor cushion [in the cottage] most of the day doing needlework' for the cause.<sup>750</sup> Clemence, also a highly regarded illustrator, kept her wood engraving materials and other tools connected with her profession at hand and on display in the house. Her nephew Jerry Symonds recalled in interviews that when he visited the cottage, these tools and materials were always out and on display at home, where he also remembers her sitting, embroidering a large gold and cream banner, most likely a suffrage one.<sup>751</sup> Therefore, there was little division between the Housman's studio and their home interior, between the outside world of work and suffrage politics and the interior spaces and concerns of domestic life. Contrarily, artistic equipment, tools, materials, drawings, and resources, visibly gathered in the living spaces of the cottage, reflected what was happening in the 'near sphere' of the siblings imaginative and exterior world, merging home, studio, garden, commercial, and suffrage political art working, into a creative 'round-about-us' of place and praxis reinforcing the futility of separate spheres ideologies.<sup>752</sup>

Laurence as previously noted (chapter 2) was a prolific speaker, writer, playwright, and poet for the campaign as well as a designer. His literary works for the cause which challenged gender inequities, were also penned in the intermingling interior spaces of the cottage and studio: spaces which represented a vital force in the creative processes of writers and artists' utopian imaginings of what could be. Diane Fuss and John Potvin's work on the interior spaces of notable literary figures conclude that artistic minds require and are co-produced by embodied praxis in which the 'projects and projections of interior space, become inseparable from cultural production itself.'<sup>753</sup> The siblings' interior décor increasingly

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<sup>750</sup> Clemence sat on the floor because she often had 'leg trouble'. Letter from Laurence Housman to Sara Clark, 6<sup>th</sup> Dec (no year) likely 1911/1912, Housman Papers.

<sup>751</sup> Oakley, *Inseparable*, pp. 92-3.

<sup>752</sup> D. Pigrum (2007) 'The 'Ontology' of the Artist's Studio as Workplace: Researching the Artist's Studio and the Art/design Classroom' *Research in Post-Compulsory Education* 12:3, p. 296.

<sup>753</sup> D. Fuss, *A Sense of an Interior: Four Writers and the Rooms that Shaped Them* (London: Routledge, 2004) p. 1; Potvin, *Bachelors*, p.5.

mirrored their suffrage work and articulated to guests from the world ‘outside’ their commitment to feminist politics. Where the siblings had avoided their neighbours and been quite unsociable in previous homes – ‘being morbidly anxious to keep our freedom and our privacy unimpaired’ - here they had found ‘a house that exactly suited us and made us a good deal more sociable than we had ever been before’.<sup>754</sup> That sociability began to revolve around suffrage campaigning with visitors and overnight guests including unknown women evading the 1911 census there as part of the suffrage boycott of it, a scheme masterminded by Laurence, and suffragettes from other parts of the country who used the cottage as a London base from which to perform acts of vandalism in the capital. However, visitors came informally and unexpectedly too, and included those unsympathetic to the fight for female suffrage who complained that not only was ‘the Cause’ the only topic of conversation at the cottage, but this was reinforced by the walls of every room which were hung ‘distastefully’ with suffrage objects and slogans everywhere ‘like Christmas decorations’.<sup>755</sup> Not only did this indicate the extent to which the siblings domestic and studio space, private and public lives, were visually interconnected by suffrage art, and politics, but their domestic space was reconfigured into a semi-public setting where their commitment to suffrage politics was visually displayed, manifest in décor that was explicitly politicized, and hard to ignore; where suffrage slogans and objects confronted viewers, eliciting responses, provoking comment and debate. One anti-suffrage visitor ‘Mary’ shouted ‘a shaft of abuse’ from the doorstep about suffragettes to Clemence who ‘jumped down her throat’ as she left the siblings cottage and crossed the threshold from the inside, back to the outside world.<sup>756</sup> In this sense, the siblings décor altered the way the interior spaces of the cottage interacted with the spaces of the exterior world, visually and subversively challenging anti-suffrage guests by animating

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<sup>754</sup> Housman, *Unexpected*, pp. 195, 197 & 200.

<sup>755</sup> Arnold Bax, *Farewell my Youth and Other Writings* (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1992) p. 35. For unexpected guests see, Oakley, *Inseparable*, pp. 92-93.

<sup>756</sup> Housman Papers letter 22c (undated), also quoted in Oakley, *Inseparable*, p. 96.

women's suffrage as a utopian political 'possibility in the process of becoming reality'.<sup>757</sup>

The Housman cottage was thus house *and* home; public and private; political and domestic; imaginative and productive space; open to invited and uninvited guests who became participating audiences in, and readers of, its interior spaces as utopian feminist imaginaries of what could be.<sup>758</sup> The siblings political suffrage décor, displayed within a conventionally 'feminine' domestic setting, enacted paradoxical aesthetic space seen by feminist scholar Marcia Morse as among the most productive and politically efficacious way of contesting engrained cultures of power in the everyday.<sup>759</sup>



Figure 22. Laurence Housman, 1915. Source: Laurence Housman, NPGx183672, The National Portrait Gallery <https://www.npg.org.uk> (accessed May 2021).

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<sup>757</sup> H. Lefebvre, *Introduction to Modernity* (London: Verso, 1995), p. 91.

<sup>758</sup> Morton, 'Changing Spaces'; Housman *Unexpected*, pp. 195 & 200; Walker, 'Women Patron Builders', p. 122.

<sup>759</sup> Morse, 'Feminist Aesthetics', p. 290.

*The Power of Projection: Parlour Performance with Pamela Colman Smith (ii).*

The spatial and visual interaction between suffrage artists' domestic and studio space, performed in other ways that interplayed with and complicated the gendering of space and identity. One of the most interesting belonged to suffrage artist Pamela Colman-Smith, also an amateur actress and studio set designer. Thanks largely to contemporaneous author Arthur Ransome, we can glimpse into her studio flat interior in Chelsea's 'The Bolton's' in 1907 - annexed to her lodgings next door.<sup>760</sup> Like the Housman's, Colman-Smith opened the flat's interior spaces by removing partition walls, extending its room and her sociability, by hosting weekly parties there for artists, musicians, writers, theatricals, and other 'irregulars' including fellow suffragists and suffrage artists. It was to one of these gatherings that Ransome was led by Japanese suffrage artist Yoshio Markino (1869-1956) who was friendly with Colman-Smith and other suffrage artists including Laurence Housman and Louise Jopling-Rowe.<sup>761</sup> Ransome's first impression of Colman-Smith's flat is worth quoting at length for what its decorative interior tells us, not least, about her radical positioning between aesthetic modes of identity but also the centrality of performativity in her transformation and the boundaries of self.

'We left our hats and followed her into a mad room out of a fairy tale...it had ... the effect of a well-designed curiosity shop, a place that Gautier would have loved to describe. The walls were dark green and covered with brilliant-coloured drawings, etchings, and pastel sketches. A large round table stood near the window, spread with bottles of painting inks with differently coloured stoppers, china toys, paperweights of odd designs, ashtrays, cigarette boxes and books; it was lit up

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<sup>760</sup> Ransome, *Bohemia*. Ransome on his first meeting wrote: 'Her name is Gypsy...no-one ever calls her anything else'. In his later autobiography, he recognised his youthful mistake – that the nickname he had misheard was 'Pixie' rather than Gypsy. However, his earlier testimony is more reliable in every other way, unfettered by subsequent fancies or changes of perspective bought about by age and experience. Ibid p. 54.

<sup>761</sup> Ransome, *Bohemia*, p.52. Yoshio Markino wrote several articles for women's suffrage newspapers and was among the very few artists who made sketches of the WSPU at work inside Clements Inn. See, Crawford, *Art, and Suffrage*.

by a silver lamp, and there was an urn in the middle of it, in which incense was burning. A woolly monkey perched ridiculously on a pile of portfolios, and grinned at the cast of a woman's head, that stood smiling austere on the top of a black cupboard, in a medley of Eastern pottery and Indian goods. The mantel shelves three stories high were laden with gimcracks.<sup>762</sup> A low bookcase crammed and piled with books, was half hidden under a drift of loose pieces of music. An old grand piano, on which two brass bedroom candlesticks were burning, ran back into the inner room, where in the darkness was a tall mirror, a heap of crimson silks, and a low table with another candle flickering amongst the bottles and glasses on a tray. Chairs and stools were crowded everywhere, and on a big blue sofa against the wall, a broadly whiskered picture dealer was sitting, looking at a book of Japanese prints.<sup>763</sup>

Like the Housman interior, there is little delineation between the visual signifiers of home and studio or the use and display of domestic and artistic objects. Chairs, sofas, and piano sit side by side with paints and sketches in the studio flat, and while suffrage decorations are absent from Ransome's account of her room, it nonetheless offers up a visual picture of Colman-Smith's feminist and creative identity through her collection of objects, and the experimental art on display. Neiswander and Lynne Walker have both argued that decorative objects made up of 'mixes of old styles' from around the globe were selected and tastefully displayed by women to reflect for example, a liberal, political outlook among the middle classes.<sup>764</sup> Walker saliently observes this practice in her analysis of WSPU leader Emmeline Pankhurst's home which she suggests would have been decorated along the lines of her Crafts shop in New Oxford Street, with 'old Persian plates, Chinese teapots [and] oriental brasses'.<sup>765</sup> The mixing of styles and objects from foreign lands demonstrated

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<sup>762</sup> 'Gimcracks' were cheap and showy objects of little or no use or intrinsic value.

<sup>763</sup> Ransome, *Bohemia*, pp. 55-56.

<sup>764</sup> Walker, 'Women Patron-builders', p. 123; Neiswander, *The Cosmopolitan Interior*, p. 91.

<sup>765</sup> Walker, 'Women Patron Builders', p. 123; J. Purvis (2003) *Emmeline Pankhurst: A Biography* (London: Routledge), p. 27.

women's progressive thinking in this fin de siècle period, and a post-colonial perspective locates these displays within the context of female empowerment through imperial authority and national identity.<sup>766</sup> Imperialism and colonization were tools of settlement, exploitation, and rule, but also Walker observes, 'carriers of cultural forces and social connections' that were not restricted to the colonies but could be seen at play in all social and cultural practices including architectural design and home decoration.<sup>767</sup> Colman-Smith's eclectic mix of styles and objects on show from many foreign lands including 'a medley of Eastern pottery and Indian goods' and Japanese prints, certainly reflected her nomadic lifestyle and artistic empowerment through imperial authority discussed in chapter 4.

Whether these things were selected and displayed tastefully, according to Walker's middle class liberal model, is another matter given Ransome's description of the 'ridiculous woolly monkey' the multitude of 'gimcracks' and cheap toys that packed the shelves. That it nonetheless effected a 'well designed curiosity shop' suggests a deliberate staging by Colman-Smith whose display of cheap gimcracks that she was 'unable to deny herself', sits with the Housman's 'distasteful' array of suffrage objects and slogans in the cottage, to be read as a visual revolt against the select, middle class display of tasteful objects which often embraced 'prettiness' reinforcing culturally ascribed notions of femininity, and which some suffrage artists strategically embraced.<sup>768</sup> This positions the Housman and Colman-Smith interiors within wider feminist critiques of the oppressiveness of feminized interior space within 'which many middle-class women were consigned' and constrained. And in Colman-Smith's case to a more radical disruption of that space evident across the experimental interiors of modernist-feminist artists who are acknowledged to have inculcated the domestic-studio in redefined women's feminist and artistic identity through decorative means.<sup>769</sup>

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<sup>766</sup> Walker, *ibid.* For a discussion on this see chapter 4.

<sup>767</sup> Walker, 'Locating the Global', p. 175.

<sup>768</sup> Ransome, *Bohemia*, p.56.

<sup>769</sup> Cockin, 'Formations, Institutions', p. 62.



Figure 23. Pamela Colman Smith pictured with her miniature theatre retelling Jamaican folklore tales. Source: *The Tatler*, No. 145, 6 April 1904, p. 30

Nestled alongside Colman-Smith's paints, and paintings, lay scattered sheet music, and a piano lit by candles, materials that together illuminated Colman-Smith's modern, unorthodox practice of synaesthesia – creating art to music. While her 'dark green' walls were 'covered with brilliant-coloured drawings', etchings, and pastel sketches. Importantly, this was not the type of interior synonymous with traditional arts and crafts practitioners and designers – the genre with which Colman-Smith is most identified - where bright colours

were generally eschewed for natural palettes. Instead, it is more akin as Ransome writes, to ‘a place that Gautier would have loved to describe’ reflecting its romantic, eclectic, decadent feel, and modernist influences.<sup>770</sup> Commenting on Colman-Smith’s later flat near Victoria Station in 1913, her friend Lilly Yeats wrote to her father that she, Colman-Smith, had ‘black walls and orange curtains’ and Yeats was unimpressed with her new friends who were ‘the sort of people who want to see both eyes in a profile drawing’ a clear reference to the advent of Picasso’s modernism.<sup>771</sup> Indeed, her Bolton and Victoria Station interiors are strikingly similar to those pioneering women associated with modernist art movements, such as vorticist Kate Lechmere whose flat in 1914 was described as ‘radical’ with ‘black doors in cream walls with black curtains in addition to the usual orgies of colour.’<sup>772</sup> Colman-Smith’s room reflected her shifting experimentation with the era’s emerging aesthetic forms associated with modernism, which she produced alongside her arts and craft work, including her black and white Suffrage Atelier designs. This matrix of styles echoed through the work of female Vorticists Jessica Dismorr and Helen Saunders whose colourful paintings as well as simple bold drawings and block prints were sent to modernist magazine *Rhythm* in 1911 and 1912 (to which Colman-Smith also contributed) stylistically overlapped with suffrage artists’ block print poster designs for the Suffrage Atelier, most notably those by Jessica Walters. Suffrage artists’ experimentation with new styles is significant in the tumultuous years of gender power struggles epitomized by the suffrage campaign, because, as Ewa Ziarek argues

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<sup>770</sup> Théophile Gautier (1811–1872) was a French poet, novelist, dramatist, journalist, art, and literary critic. Gautier's work is notoriously difficult to classify but was a key point of reference for many prominent modernists including poet and critic Ezra Pound, poet Thomas Eliot, and Anglo-American author Henry James. See, A. Gide, ‘Théophile Gautier’ in Gide, *Pretexts: Reflections on Literature and Morality* (U.S, New York: Meridan Books, 1959) pp. 251–254. See also <https://www.britannica.com/> (accessed 15th December 2022).

<sup>771</sup> Letter from Lily Yeats to J. B Yeats, 18 June 1913, in J. Hone (ed.) *J.B Yeats: Letters to his Son W.B Yeats and others, 1869-1922* (U.S, New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1946) p.106.

<sup>772</sup> Beckett & Cherry, ‘Modern Women’, p. 51 footnote 19. A correspondent from *Vanity Fair* argued that Lechmere’s flat was even more radical than the Rebel Art Centre downstairs, saying: ‘Miss Lechmere...has gone further and has decorated a whole flat—her own—in Futurism (the only one in London), in order to show the possibilities of the new decoration. It ... contains black doors in cream walls, and black curtains in addition to the usual orgies of colour. I am told she is engaged in planning a Cubist rock garden, with strange, stunted trees from Japan’. Quoted in Mengting, *London’s Women Artists*, p. 115.



in her persuasive interrogation of suffrage and feminist aesthetics, and the politics of modernism, women's feminism in this era cannot simply be read 'through the negation of existing power relations; on the contrary, its constituting force and utopian promise manifest themselves in the cryptic and enigmatic character of experimental art' and its search for the radical new.<sup>773</sup> During the campaign suffragists were compared to post-Impressionist's 'in their desire to scrap old decaying forms and find for themselves a new working ideal'.<sup>774</sup> In this sense, Colman-Smith's 'mad fairy-tale' décor from its eclectic objects to its dark green walls, and brilliantly coloured artwork, crafted a visual space between the real and the unreal, where creative and feminist self-discoveries took place in a transitional phase for both women's art and women's politics. Demonstrating how 'rooms can represent utopian spaces in which women could express themselves'<sup>775</sup>

It was in the 'incense-laden atmosphere of that fantastic room' at Colman-Smith's weekly parties, that Ransome also describes how women and men artists were encouraged to turn actors for the night, delivering speeches, and reading poetry and prose to fellow guests. Meanwhile, actors and performers turned artists and writers, expressing emotions and movement through colour and music, with 'stories told that were yet unwritten' and sharing work 'upon some new thing, a painting or a book...with fresh ardour after cheers or criticism'.<sup>776</sup> Regular guests included leading visual and literary artists of the day the Yeats family, Bernard and Charlotte Shaw, arts and crafts artist Emery Walker, and actor E Harcourt Williams, who intermingled there with suffrage artists and ASL members Emily Ford, Mary Lowndes, Barbara Forbes, and Mary Wheelhouse; writer and poet Ethel Rolt Wheeler of the Women Writers Suffrage League (WWSL); and renowned actress Florence Farr, active in the Actresses Franchise League (AFL), known socially as 'the bohemian's

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<sup>773</sup> Ziarek, *Feminist Aesthetics*, p. 46.

<sup>774</sup> Mengting, p.90.

<sup>775</sup> Sparke, 'The Crafts Interior', p. 124.

<sup>776</sup> Ransome, *Bohemia*, p. 59 & 62.

bohemian' who along with host Colman-Smith, connected this loose socio-political grouping to Oscar Wilde's circle and to Avant Garde societies exploring notions of occultism, theosophism, and Urania, or the 'third sex'.<sup>777</sup> Together with Colman-Smith's long-time friend and Suffrage Atelier member amateur actress, theatrical designer, and stage manager Edith Craig who was also a regular guest, as was her long-term lover and playwright Christabel Marshall (Christopher St John) the two sharing a lesbian menage a trois with artist Clare Attwood, it also intimately connected them not only through the utopian spaces of suffrage and feminist art and theatre, but with an emerging lesbian, gay and queer subculture. Several Suffrage Atelier artists, friends, and supporters, including Laurence Housman are known to have been homosexual while Colman-Smith's own sexuality remains ambiguous (see below).

Ransome is unequivocal in making a direct connection between the 'magical surroundings' of Colman-Smith's room, and creative artists' willingness to self-experiment as they connected through performativity if only for the night, across artistic, gender, social, and political borders, leaving Ransome to walk home 'rejoicing' in his 'new life'.<sup>778</sup> Enlisting her audience - who were as guests themselves performers there each week - in singing songs Colman-Smith also performed her Jamaican folklore 'Annancy Tales' on these occasions as she did in numerous public theatres during her suffrage activism (chapter 4). She acted these tales for her guests 'with the help of toys that she had made herself' which she operated on 'a diminutive stage before her'.<sup>779</sup> Colman-Smith's insistence that guests perform, blurred the boundaries between actor and audience, between artistic identities, which together with her own miniature stage performances, enacted a literal domestic theatre seen by spatial scholars

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<sup>777</sup> C. Ferguson & A. Radford (eds.) *The Occult Imagination in Britain, 1875–1947* (London: Routledge, 2018).

<sup>778</sup> Ransome, *Bohemia*, p. 63.

<sup>779</sup> See, *Kildare Observer and Eastern Counties Advertiser*, 2 September 1905, p.6; *Tenbury Wells Advertiser*, 21 July 1908, p. 4; *Eastbourne Gazette*, 15 January 1913, p. 3; *The Referee* 15 July 1906, p. 4; *The Times* (London) 4 February 1908, p. 9.

as a ‘direct threat to the particularised conventional notion’ of gender.<sup>780</sup> This was a politics of transfiguration which expresses and encourages ‘an openness of outlook based on freedom to move across border and boundaries in pursuit of new senses of self and other’.<sup>781</sup>

### ***The Power of Projection: Staging and the Suffrage Atelier (iii).***

Embracing and encouraging performativity, whether in a domestic studio, on a traditional stage, or on the streets, was an empowering move for women suffragists and artists. And importantly this type of visuality which embodied theatrical performativity carried over into collective spaces of suffrage art making in ways that were tied to experimental modernist-feminist theatre. At some point in 1911, the Suffrage Atelier officially relocated its headquarters to 4 Stanlake Villas, Shepherd’s Bush, a domestic dwelling that was also home to Suffrage Atelier co-founders and unmarried companions, Agnes Joseph, and Ethel Willis. Suffrage studio and domestic space intermingled but in 1912, so the Suffrage Atelier could have ‘greater scope for [its] energies’ the couple rented the property next door, 6 Stanlake Villas, in addition, into which the society’s activities ‘overflowed’.<sup>782</sup> Its large interior space, set over four floors, was used and altered for ‘at home’ events and on one such occasion in October 1912, the press reported how its interior was ‘transformed’.<sup>783</sup> For the at home, suffrage art and craft work was displayed and divided by content between rooms that were distinctly decorated, helping to separate and define its interior spaces. The decoration of the rooms elicited different responses as women moved through these spaces, enabling feminist and creative identities to be shared or experimented

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<sup>780</sup> A. L. Ackerman, ‘Theatre and the Private Sphere in the Fiction of Louisa May Alcott’ in I. Bryden & J. Floyd (Eds.) *Domestic Space: Reading the Nineteenth Century Interior* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 164; G. Pollock, ‘Louise Abbema’s Lunch and Alfred Steven’s Studio: Theatricality, Feminine Subjectivity and Space around Sarah Bernhardt, Paris, 1877-1888’ in Cherry & Helland, *Local/Global*, pp. 99-121; D. Keates, & J. W. Scott (eds.) *Going Public: Feminism and the Shifting Boundaries of the Private Sphere* (U.S, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

<sup>781</sup> Pile & Thrift, *Mapping*, p. 20.

<sup>782</sup> *The Vote*, 20 April 1913, p. 17.

<sup>783</sup> *The Vote*, 5 October 1912, p. 401.

with in different ways. For example, an upstairs room at the Villa ‘displayed the needlework of Mrs Gosling’ and was decorated with ‘flowers from the garden’ of suffragette, Miss Bennett, who had recently been imprisoned for acts of militancy.<sup>784</sup> Observing her flowers at the Villa evoked visitors imaginings of ‘what a solace this garden must have been to her during her terms of imprisonment’.<sup>785</sup> The decorative flowers forging empathic connections between suffragists, encouraging them to imagine and so to identify with Bennett’s private sufferings in prison, and her ‘solace’ in remembrances of her garden.<sup>786</sup> Hilde Heynen’s view that ‘things’ invested with memories, or personal significance, can articulate identities and elicit emotional bonds from others is evident here.<sup>787</sup> But so too is how the villa’s décor deliberately encouraged the imaginative transgression of boundaries between people, time, places, and events through the sentiment of private objects, displayed as public ‘props’, and staged to provoke responses from a visiting audience.

In addition, two further upstairs rooms, probably attic rooms, were used to display other Suffrage Atelier craft items and were decorated on a Hans Anderson fairy tale theme. ‘A quaint little upstairs room was turned into a marketplace...its sloping roof and alcoves presented an old-world air which lent itself to the telling of fairy stories from Hans Anderson’ ‘cleverly rendered by Miss Raleigh’.<sup>788</sup> In many ways the otherworldliness of the villa’s visual transformation, and the recital of fairytales, echoes Ransome’s earlier description of Colman-Smith’s interior as something ‘out of a mad fairytale’ combined with the performative element of guests telling of tales. Indeed, Colman-Smith had been involved in prior events where Hans Anderson’s tales were the central theme, including in 1903 the

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<sup>784</sup> This was probably Sarah Bennett an active member of the WSPU and the WFL. She had recently been released from prison when the Suffrage Atelier event took place. See, Crawford, *The Women’s Suffrage Movement* & Morton, ‘Changing Spaces’.

<sup>785</sup> *The Vote*, 5 October 1912, p. 401.

<sup>786</sup> Morton, ‘Changing Spaces’ p. 632.

<sup>787</sup> Heynen, ‘Modernity and Domesticity’, pp. 20-23; Morton, *ibid.*

<sup>788</sup> *The Vote*, 5 October 1912, p. 401.

‘Girl’s Realm Hans Anderson Bazaar’ raising funds for the Girl’s Realm and Guild of Service held at the Portman Rooms, London. There stallholders dressed in costumes, and rooms were decorated accordingly, with Colman-Smith among those who ‘told fairy tales.’<sup>789</sup> The decorative theme and narration of ‘Hans Anderson’ stories at the villa, may well have been a symbolic choice, representing suffrage artists’ marginalisation as women artists and political citizens by gender, and as a potential device to articulate its members broad interconnections with queer subcultures. Anderson’s fairy tales, openly admired by, and inspiring writers including Oscar Wilde, who’s public dandyish-ness and homosexuality saw him occupy the bohemian fringes of metropolitan society, were widely seen as literary and symbolic art, that consistently told the story of the marginalised, of the undefined ‘outsider’.<sup>790</sup> Foucault and Jay Miskowiec argue that true heterotopias are ‘capable of juxtaposing in a single real place, several spaces’ and it is thus ‘that the theatre brings onto the rectangle of the stage’ a whole series of times, subjects, and places ‘that are foreign to one another’.<sup>791</sup> The Suffrage Atelier’s at home event was itself a stage, where visual art, décor, and performativity in a domestic dwelling, spatially interacted with the suffragette prison cell, the garden, and fairy tales of the outsider.

The domestic studios of suffrage artists were semi-public spaces, but the Suffrage Atelier and its artists were no strangers to the public stage and theatre. Earlier in 1910, the society had hosted a performance at the Royal Court Theatre, London - acknowledged as the seeding ground for the feminist free theatre under Harley Granville Barker - to raise

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<sup>789</sup> For instance, see, ‘Girls Realm Hans Anderson Bazaar’ *Croydon Guardian & Surrey County Gazette*, 19 December 1903, p. 5; *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 9 December 1903, p. 6. Interestingly, Colman-Smith also ‘related the history’ of Brer Rabbit at the bazaar. The story of Brer Rabbit had its antecedents in the oral histories of African slaves and their descendants in the West Indies, where Colman-Smith spent much of her childhood, and were later written down and appropriated in her homeland (by parentage) in America, in the Southern States. Again, Colman-Smith’s creativity was intimately interwoven with her own global, imperial, and colonial identity, discussed in chapter 4.

<sup>790</sup> J. Wullschlager, *Hans Christian Anderson: The Life of a Storyteller* (London: Penguin, 2005).

<sup>791</sup> M. Foucault & J. Miskowiec (1986) ‘Of Other Spaces’ *Diacritics*, 16:1, p. 25.

awareness and funds for its artists and activities.<sup>792</sup> There it ‘put on’ two, new, one-act plays written by Laurence Housman: ‘Lord of the Harvest’ and ‘A likely Story’. The first was a social reformist play, and the second was described in *The Queen (The Ladies Newspaper)* as the ‘most delicious fantasy imaginable’ that ‘must be seen to be realised’.<sup>793</sup> Both plays drew in politically sympathetic stage actors of some repute including Robert Farquharson, and Decima Moore, who was also a founding member of the AFL, and Bessie Hatton, an actress, playwright, and a founding member of the WWSL. Acting opportunities were also given to eccentric and socially controversial figures, such as homosexual painter Trelawney Dayrell-Reed.<sup>794</sup> While Suffrage Atelier embroideress Mildred Statham choreographed interval entertainments including Morris dances and ‘movement’ to music itself a signifier of modernist culture.<sup>795</sup>

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<sup>792</sup> Cockin, ‘Formations, Institutions’ p. 59. Granville Barker was among Colman-Smith’s weekly party circle at her studio-flat in the Bolton’s.

<sup>793</sup> *The Queen (The Ladies Newspaper)* 4 June 1910, p. 1005.

<sup>794</sup> Farquharson (1877-1966) whose real name was Robert de la Condamine, was an English actor of Spanish descent known for his dandyishness. He starred in Oscar Wilde’s *Salome* and was praised by renowned critic Max Beerbohm. He also starred in plays by Colman-Smith’s friend W.B. Yeats, Anton Chekhov, and Percy Shelley. He later narrated radio adaptations of J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* for the BBC. See, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robin\\_de\\_la\\_Condamine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robin_de_la_Condamine) (accessed 3 September 2022). Decima Moore (1871-1964) was an English singer and actress. In 1908, Moore was one of the founding members of the Actresses’ Franchise League, which supported the women’s suffrage movement through pro-suffrage propaganda plays, readings, and lectures. See, Anne P. Baker ‘Moore, (Lilian) Decima (1871–1964)’, [www.oxforddnb.com](http://www.oxforddnb.com) Oxford University Press, September 2004 (accessed 12 December 2011). Bessie Hatton (1867–1964) was an English actress, playwright, journalist, and feminist who helped found the WWSL with Cicely Hamilton. She authored several fictional novels and her play ‘before sunrise’ was put on by the WFL. Alexandra Hughes-Johnson, ‘Hatton, Bessie Lyle (1867–1964)’ [www.oxforddnb.com](http://www.oxforddnb.com) Oxford University Press 12 September 2019 (accessed 20 January 2021). Trelawney Dayrell-Reed was a controversial figure, a painter, historian, farmer, and ousted curator of the Pitt Rivers Museum at Farnham for making homosexual remarks. Ian Collins describes him as a ‘darkly bearded and often becloaked giant’ who ‘looked like a pantomime villain and relished the risks of playing such a part to the full’. He had a close relationship with Augustus John living with him for a time in 1913. His own self-portrait befits Collins description. See, Ian Collins (2022) ‘John Craxton - A Rebellious 20th Century Artist’ <https://pallant.org.uk/perspectives-john-craxton/> (accessed 5 October 2022) & <https://damleyfineart.com/artwork/self-portrait-12/> (accesses 12 January 2023) to see the portrait.

<sup>795</sup> These were performed by suffragist and Swedish gymnastics teacher, Miss Mary Olive Lett, *The Times* 28 May 1910, p.12. The matinee was also supplemented by a short comedy ‘Smack’ by Rose Mathews of ‘The Play Actors’ group also known for their experimental productions. For more on this group see, I. Cockcroft & S. Croft, *Art, Theatre and Women’s Suffrage* (Aurora Metro Press, 2010) p. 56.; 1901 & 1911 census NA; Kelly’s London Directory 1910.

The Suffrage Atelier shared close connections with the suffrage and feminist ‘Free Theatre’ pioneered by Edith Craig which often staged productions at the Court Theatre.<sup>796</sup> Craig belonged to several suffrage societies alongside the Suffrage Atelier, including the AFL for whom she directed and produced multiple suffrage plays, as well as designing sets and costumes for spectacular suffrage processions and parades. But she also belonged to significant theatre societies producing experimental feminist drama, notably the Pioneer Players which she founded at the height of the suffrage campaign in 1911 and to which artists Pamela Colman-Smith, Laurence Housman, and suffrage banner designer Jennie Salaman Cohen were affiliated along with Craig’s lover Christabel Marshall (Christopher St John) actor Harcourt Williams, and others from Colman-Smith’s social circle from which, together with Craig’s Bedford circle, the Players emerged.<sup>797</sup> The AFL and the Pioneer Players ‘typified the politicization of women in the theatre by the suffrage movement’.<sup>798</sup> Housman’s play ‘Pains and Penalties’ was staged by the Players, as was Cohen’s *Level Crossing*, and she was also a member of its Advisory Committee.<sup>799</sup> The Players staged feminist and other social reformist plays chiefly in London, but established a global reputation, performing plays in the U.S and in Russia.<sup>800</sup> Several of the players leading male and female figures were lesbian or gay, and the name itself serves as a spatial metaphor for the material crossing of boundaries into new spaces and territories to be reclaimed reconfigured and occupied; and the

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<sup>796</sup> Cockin, ‘Formations, Institutions’; Cockin, *Dramatic Lives*; Cockin, *Women and Theatre*. Free Theatre was defined as breakaway independent theatres.

<sup>797</sup> Cohen also belonged to the Stage Society and was active in the WWSL, the Jewish League for Women's Suffrage, and cofounded the AFL in 1907. Tickner, *Spectacle*, p. 24; Cockin, *Dramatic Lives*; Cockin, *Women and Theatre*. Marshall contributed to the Pioneer Players as a dramatist, translator, actor, and member of the advisory and casting committee. I thank Melinda Parsons of Neuman University, the leading authority on Colman-Smith, for information about her social circle from her work and forthcoming biography Pamela Colman-Smith: ‘Primitivism’, Visionary Synaesthesia, and Social Reform & initial email correspondences from 2009.

<sup>798</sup> Julie Holledge, *Innocent Flowers: Women in the Edwardian Theatre* (London: Virago, 1981); Cockin, ‘Formations, Institutions’ p. 60.

<sup>799</sup> Ibid & J. P. Wearing, *The London Stage 1910-1919: A Calendar of Productions, Performers, and Personnel* (London: Scarecrow Press, 2013) section 14.187 ‘The Level Crossing’ performed by Pioneer Players (21 & 22 June 1914).

<sup>800</sup> Cockin, *Women and Theatre*.

need to understand the movement across all spaces and boundaries as politicised.<sup>801</sup> The AFL and the Players suffrage and feminist plays, visual sets, and performances, often emphasised the stage ‘as an enclosed room’ and through it ‘sought to open up ... claustrophobic domestic spaces’ as a way of interlinking and projecting potential future ‘pathways to social change’ by reconceptualizing everyday interiors in complex ways that challenged the gender constructs they symbolized.<sup>802</sup> This visual and performative reconfiguration echoes through the transformation of the villa, the decorative intermingling of suffrage politics across studio and domestic space at the Housmans; and in Colman’s Smith’s visual crafting of her ‘mad fairy tale’ studio-flat as a space of experimentation. In the spatial and visual interaction between the semi-public and public spaces of the home-studio and the stage, is alternative, liminal space to the existing order of things, which offered the utopian ‘promise of a new beginning’ in the politics of gender.<sup>803</sup>

### ***The Power of Projection: Experimenting with Androgyny (iii).***

If the semi-public space of the domestic studio and its rooms represented utopian space where women could experiment with and express their feminist and potentially sexual orientation in ways that undermined hegemonic notions of gender, then so did the visibility of female body space itself. The remainder of the chapter focuses on suffrage artists and suffrage art’s performance and transfiguration of gender through discourses of androgyny closely tied to an aesthetic history of social, political, and gender struggles, and to fin de siècle modernist and feminist discourses of homosexuality and gender ambiguity.

Generally defined as a union of the masculine and the feminine within one sex, the androgynous figure had a long literary and visual history, consistently appearing in artistic

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<sup>801</sup> Cockin, ‘Formations, Institutions’, p. 59; Cockin, ‘The Pioneer Players: Plays of/With Identity’ in Griffen, *Difference in View*, p. 128.

<sup>802</sup> Cockin, ‘Formations, Institutions’, p. 55

<sup>803</sup> Pigrum, ‘The ‘Ontopology’ of the Artist’s Studio’, p.8.



work at times of social and political turmoil in the western world. For example, artists in post-revolutionary France had turned to the figure of the androgyne to make sense of the uncertain and changing world around them, using its image to reconcile the sharpened class and gender divisions that emerged.<sup>804</sup> As an amorphous figure, the androgyne served not only as a visible sign of unification and cooperation, but at the same time as a potentially radical symbol through which to challenge sex differences and gender power roles. In mid-nineteenth century France, romantic socialists particularly the Saint-Simonian movement ‘sought the reworking of society on the grounds of love and cooperation’.<sup>805</sup> They adopted the androgynous figure as a physical symbol of their unifying ideals, but also used it to negotiate proto feminist calls for sexual equality. The Saint-Simeon’s attempted to reconfigure female sexuality in ways that destigmatized women from the powerful religious rhetoric of Eve’s original sin. They posited the androgynous figure as an embodiment of the Christian sentiment of chaste or true love because it at once denied and transcended sexual difference, thus offering an amelioration of Eve’s sin and of woman as sexual object.<sup>806</sup> This strand of religiosity ran through suffrage artists’ intertextual experimentation with the androgynous figure and through modernist-feminist discourse of lesbianism.

During the tumultuous social and political conditions of early twentieth century Britain, the androgynous figure was central in London’s artistic communities, encouraged by the cultural perception at the fin de siècle, that the ideal artist him or herself was androgynous. The artist had to be it was argued both ‘womanly in his/her dreams and aesthetic tastes’ and yet ‘forced to act like a man in the materialistic, masculine world’ of the literary and the artistic marketplace locating the androgynous figure at the heart of cultural modernism.<sup>807</sup> Thus, artists needed to possess ‘the unique combination of masculine and

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<sup>804</sup> Weil, *Androgyny*, p. 141.

<sup>805</sup> *Ibid*, p. 441.

<sup>806</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>807</sup> Weil, *Androgyny*, p.71.

feminine elements found in all hermaphrodites and homosexuals'.<sup>808</sup> This enabled them to think and to work 'without consciousness of their sex – the result of which would ideally result in uninhibited creativity'.<sup>809</sup> Thus the androgynous figure is acknowledged as central to the creative culture of modernism and its early experimentations with traditional gender roles, sexual identities, and discourses of homosexuality, shown here to have been similarly embedded in suffrage artists' suffrage, non-suffrage work, and lifestyles. Early modernist fringe groups like Bloomsbury in particular, which included artists and writers Virginia Woolf, Lytton Strachey, and Duncan Grant, strove for a self-confessed androgyny, and through it, experimented with discourses of homosexuality. Grant who was bisexual, was discussed admiringly and unwaveringly by Woolf, as a 'hermaphrodite, androgynous - like all great artists.'<sup>810</sup> Both Strachey and Grant were supporters of the women's suffrage movement. Grant designed posters for the ASL and most obviously supported the campaign through this artistic work, whilst others in the group supported it, or at least reconciled with it intellectually, through the utopian figure of the androgyne which denied sexual difference.<sup>811</sup> Suffragist Strachey developed his own sense of sexual modernity by learning 'the style and performance of gender ambiguity.'<sup>812</sup> Tracy Hargreaves has convincingly argued that Woolf's use of androgynous figures in her work, was a causal effect of (and remedy to) the tumultuous sexual politics of the era and the polarisation of the sexes heightened by the more violent, militant feminism in the latter stages of the women's suffrage campaign.<sup>813</sup> Thus the androgynous figure represents a potential source of creative continuity between suffrage artists' sexual politics and early feminist-modernist experimentations with gender and sex

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<sup>808</sup> Fassler, 'Theories of Homosexuality', p.250.

<sup>809</sup> E. Wright (2006) 'Re-evaluating Woolf's Androgynous Mind' *Postgraduate English Journal* 14, p.2.

<sup>810</sup> Virginia Woolf to Vanessa Bell letter dated 22 May 1927, L Vol III, quoted in Hargreaves 'Virginia Woolf', p.18.

<sup>811</sup> Ibid, pp. 237-251. See also, C. Heilbrun, *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny* (U.S: New York, 1974).

<sup>812</sup> Caine, *Bombay to Bloomsbury*, p. 280.

<sup>813</sup> Hargreaves, 'Virginia Woolf' pp. 25-30.

power roles, troubling historiographical divisions between the ‘feminised culture of women’s suffrage movement, and emerging discourses of modernism’.<sup>814</sup>

Andrews notes that ambiguous gender and sexual identity served as a utopian metaphor in societies where social and political boundaries were believed to be open to contestation.<sup>815</sup> The rhetoric of androgyny certainly permeated the wider women’s movement, taking numerous forms. Influential feminists directly involved in campaigning for women’s suffrage considered that the incorporation of each sexes qualities into the other to achieve a balanced whole, was the way forward both socially and politically.<sup>816</sup> For example, on writing ‘Women’s Labour’ in 1911, South African author, radical feminist, suffragist, and socialist Olive Schreiner, declared that: ‘Neither is the woman without the man, nor the man without the woman, the completed human intelligence’.<sup>817</sup> This was a line of thought that had its antecedents in John Stuart Mill’s political philosophy which while never using the term androgyny, viewed the removal of the distinction between masculine and feminine characters as the foundation for civil and political equality between them.<sup>818</sup> The removal of sex distinctions as a political philosophy, relied on a shift in cultural gender codes which remained rigidly underpinned by powerful religious rhetoric. Eve’s original sin, as identified by the romantic socialists and Saint Simeon’s, when coupled with influential notions of ‘muscular Christianity’ in pre-war imperialist Britain, strongly reinforced conservative gender roles. These attributed great physical power and emotional strength to men, thus bodily and emotional frailty to women.<sup>819</sup> Therefore, for those artists that wished to intervene

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<sup>814</sup> L. Bland (1995) ‘Heterosexuality, Feminism, and the Freewoman Journal in early twentieth-century England’ *Women’s History Review*, 4:1, p. 11.

<sup>815</sup> N. J Andrews (2003) ‘Utopian Androgyny: Romantic Socialists Confront Individualism in July Monarchy France’ *French Historical Studies* 26:3, p. 441.

<sup>816</sup> Tosh, ‘Middle Class Masculinities’, p. 57.

<sup>817</sup> O. Schreiner, *Woman and Labour* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1911) pp. 195-6.  
<https://dl.tufts.edu/pdfviewer/hh63t706t/rj430g76x> (accessed 10 September 2022).

<sup>818</sup> For a succinct and illuminating discussion of Mill’s views on this issue see, N. Urbinati (1991) ‘John Stuart Mill on Androgyny and the Ideal Marriage’ *Political Theory* 19:4, pp.626-648.

<sup>819</sup> Charles Kingsley and Thomas Hughes were significant figures in associating Christianity and godliness with physical endurance and muscularity. Their notions called upon neo-spartan virility, hardness, and endurance,

in, and to critique powerful socio- religious proscriptions of sex traits, the androgynous figure was a useful tool enabling gender itself to be exposed as a symbolic construct.

Such interventions can be observed in the intertextual creative works and lived experience of Suffrage Atelier artists and siblings Clemence and Laurence Housman. Through carefully crafted writings, speeches, and images, they sought to challenge religious conservatism and ‘undo’ gender codes both outside and inside the formal spaces of the women’s suffrage campaign in ways that intertwined with their feminism and Laurence’s homosexuality. In 1896, Clemence, a long-time supporter of though not yet an activist for female suffrage, published a novella, *The Werewolf* which was illustrated by brother Laurence.<sup>820</sup> *The Werewolf* drew upon the rich gothic tradition of shapeshifting; a device that had enabled the transgression of otherwise stigmatised boundaries between human and animal - usually men transforming into wolf like creatures. However, Clemence’s story more unusually, centres upon a female werewolf who possessed traditional ‘masculine’ qualities. The she wolf is described in the novella as independent, physically powerful, and in Clemence’s own words ‘tall and very fair. The fashion of her dress was strange, half masculine, yet not unwomanly’ and she carried weapons synonymous with male power such as an axe.<sup>821</sup> Correspondingly, the male protagonist and ‘hero’ of the story, Christian, (whose name less than subtly signifies his role as a symbol of religious orthodoxy in the novella) is described as small in stature, meek and self-sacrificing. These were qualities traditionally associated with the female sex and with feminine virtue both in religious and broader cultural

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that can be contextualised against the needs of the British empire in the late 1880s and leading up to First World War. See, S. M. Whitehead, *Men and Masculinities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002); J. A Mangan & J. Walvin (eds.) *Manliness and Morality: Middle class masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987); J. Springhall, ‘Building Character in the British boy: the attempt to extend Christian manliness to working class adolescents, 1860-1914’ in Mangan and Alvin, *Manliness*, pp. 52-74.

<sup>820</sup> Clemence is less known for her writing than brother Laurence, and poet brother Arthur (A.E) Housman. However, Clemence wrote a series of stories originally to entertain her fellow art students at the South Lambeth School of Art in London. *The Werewolf* was originally published with Bodley Heads’ John Lane and Elkin Mathews (both regulars at Colman-Smith’s Chelsea parties) though it reappeared in several later reprints.

<sup>821</sup> Housman, *The Were-Wolf*.

discourses. This illustrates Clemence's deliberate 'play' with gender roles and her reappropriation of shapeshifting to cross not only stigmatised boundaries between human and animal but between male and female sex traits.



*Figure 24. Laurence Housman's illustrations of Christian chasing the powerfully muscular, shape shifting she-wolf, White Fell, in his sister Clemence Housman's novella *The Werewolf* (London: Bodley Head, 1896). Source: The Gutenberg Project, <<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/13131/13131-h/13131-h.htm>> (accessed June 2019).*

Clemence's subversion of sex traits in *The Werewolf*, is reinforced by Laurence's character illustrations which the siblings worked on very closely together. His drawings often depict the she-wolf as a powerful figure, surpassing the male hero Christian in both physical size, speed, and strength, visually challenging the orthodoxy of women's physical frailty versus male muscularity.<sup>822</sup> The interplay between male and female sex traits within word and image in *The Werewolf*, consistently intercede in conceptions of 'womanhood' and 'manhood' inviting the reader to critique them. Centrally, the story shows how the she-wolf gains the trust of those living within a small rural village. And importantly, how it is only Christian within that village who perceives her as a threat. He immediately blames the she-wolf when some villagers go missing without explanation. However, the only evidence of the she-wolf's wrongdoing is Christian's fervent and unwavering belief in her guilt and evil.<sup>823</sup> This ultimately leads him to kill her - sacrificing himself in the process. In death, his body lies as 'the figure of one crucified, the bloodstained hands also conforming' reinforcing his religious symbolism.<sup>824</sup> Rechelle Christie argues that this leaves the *Werewolf* open to the interpretation that Christian 'is not chasing evil, but rather pursuing something which does not align with his conservative idea of femininity'.<sup>825</sup> This and the novellas deaths constitute a warning from Clemence, against the dangers of blindly following rigid gender constructs with destructive consequences, portentous perhaps, of coming police and suffragette violence.

Undoing gender roles, underpinned by religiosity, featured similarly in her brother Laurence's public politicking for the women's suffrage campaign that shortly followed. For example, in a speech written and performed for suffragists at the New Reform Club in 1911,

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<sup>822</sup> R. Christie (2007) 'The Politics of Representation and Illustration in Clemence Housman's *The Were-Wolf*' *Housman Society Journal*, 33, p. 64.

<sup>823</sup> *Ibid*, p.63.

<sup>824</sup> Housman, *Were-Wolf* (no page numbers).

<sup>825</sup> Christie, 'The Politics of Representation' p.64.

he asked, 'What is womanly?'<sup>826</sup> To be a woman he argued was to be 'in a state of development' meaning every woman had 'the right to experiment' implying, as his sister had done in *The Werewolf*, that gender traits were not fixed but transitory. Mirroring the proto-feminist discourse of the Saint Simeon movement, he also attacked Eve's legitimacy in defining female roles. Housman argued that Eve had to cease 'to be the model for women in this era'. She stood he argued 'for that ideal creature for whom men fight duels, whom they wish to protect quite out of herself; she is the woman who dares nothing, who is all meekness and resignation'. Eve, he continues, underpinned a 'false code of 'womanliness' that in turn made 'a false code of manliness'.<sup>827</sup> Thus, he underscored the shared interests of both women and men in challenging rigid gender distinctions and the asymmetric power relationship between them. This was particularly pertinent for Housman as a homosexual man given dominant hegemonic forms of masculinity, asserted superiority not only over constructs of woman as 'other', but also over minority groups including gay men. Housman's speech illustrates how the spaces of suffrage politicking gave homosexual men as well as women, a new space of visibility; a space within which they could fight for women's equality, but also position themselves as equal resisters of an oppressive, restrictive, and obscuring gender system.<sup>828</sup> It is significant that both the ASL and the Suffrage Atelier welcomed male artists some of whom like Housman and Grant were gay or bisexual. Housman also belonged to the Order of Chaeronea a secret society of homosexuals that was founded sometime in the 1890s. And helped found the British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology in 1914 which attracted some women and men from the suffrage movement, and 'considered questions connected with sexual psychology' from medical, sociological, and legal perspectives.<sup>829</sup>

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<sup>826</sup> L. Housman, 'What is Womanliness?' *The Common Cause* 19 January 1911, p. 673.

<sup>827</sup> Ibid.

<sup>828</sup> J. Roof (1992) 'Hypothalamic Criticism: Gay Male Studies and Feminist Criticism' *American Literary History*, 4:2, p. 356.

<sup>829</sup> L.A. Hall (1995) "'Disinterested Enthusiasm for Sexual Misconduct': The British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology, 1913-1947' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 30, pp. 665-686.

Housman's broad contribution to modern discourses of sex and sexuality are currently undervalued across disciplinary scholarship.

Clemence Housman's subversion of sex traits in the *Werewolf* particularly, supported by her brothers illustrations, pre-empts later feminists and modernists use of androgynous or 'mixed sex' figures as literary devices through which to critique gender roles and to imaginatively engage in 'a utopian transcendence of sex, self and language': an experimentation which often enrolled personal and professional lives.<sup>830</sup> The Housman siblings staged their own private resistance for example, to the culturally identified 'woman and man' whilst also intervening in those gender constructs through their public works. During the suffrage campaign, Laurence wrote to his good friend Sarah Clark: 'it struck me whilst writing this that Clem is the right man for me in much the same way as Roger is for you: for I think she is as masculine as you and I am as feminine as Roger'.<sup>831</sup> The Housmans own nieces and nephews referred to them affectionately as 'Aunt Laurence' and 'Uncle Clem' a playful acknowledgment of Laurence's high pitch and Clemence's alto voices.<sup>832</sup> Laurence Housman also told novelist Elizabeth Robins, 'I only wish that – just for the time - I could be a woman too'.<sup>833</sup> In this sense, the Housman siblings inhabited a liminal space between androgyny as an imagined, artistic ideal, and as a lived experience, as a creative utopia and heterotopia. 'The utopian image is something lived. It is the image of what is possible, and more than that image: the image of what is possible transferred into reality'.<sup>834</sup>

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<sup>830</sup> Weil, *Androgyny*, p. 147; See also, E. Ricketts (2015) 'The Fractured Pageant: Queering Lesbian Lives in the Early Twentieth Century' *Peer English*, 10, p. 85; Cockin, *Edith Craig*, p.21.

<sup>831</sup> Laurence Housman to Sarah Clark, 21 December 1912, miscellaneous letters, Housman Papers, Street Library, Somerset.

<sup>832</sup> Engen, *Laurence Housman*, p. 28. The two Housman siblings shared a very close relationship living together throughout their lives. This has led some to suggest their relationship may have been incestuous. However, I think this is to misrepresent a companionship borne of sibling love as well as of cultural and economic necessity. As struggling artists seeking to make their way in London, living together made financial and emotional sense for the siblings - aside from fulfilling Clemence's promise to her dying mother to take care of little Laurence.

<sup>833</sup> See, John, 'Men, Manners and Militancy' (source not cited), p.100.

<sup>834</sup> Lefebvre, *Introduction to Modernity*, p. 91.



Early modernists such as Hall, Barnes, and Sackville-West similarly used mixed sex trait characteristics of the androgynous figure in their public work, and in their private relationships, to challenge traditional gender roles but also to make early articulations of homosexuality.<sup>835</sup> In the 1920s, Sackville-West and her husband Harold Nicholson publicly implored in a radio broadcast for ‘man to develop his womanly qualities, and the woman her manly qualities’.<sup>836</sup> This to attain true harmony within oneself and within marital and other close relationships, echoing Laurence Housman’s earlier identification of his sister Clemence as ‘the right man for me’. Meanwhile, the figure of the androgyne was also articulated in Sackville-West, Hall, Barnes, and Virginia Woolf’s adoption of male clothing, whether as a metaphor for their own, or their fictional characters’ sexual ambiguity or same sex desire which interlinked with Clemence Housman’s earlier invocation in *The Werewolf* that the ‘fashion of her dress was strange, half masculine, yet not unwomanly’.<sup>837</sup> Joel Kaplan and Sheila Stowell among others have shown how clothing choice became an important site of gendered political and sexual conflict in the early twentieth century including in the visual cultural battle for women’s enfranchisement.<sup>838</sup> Cross dressing - or one sex adopting the clothing of the other - represented a culturally and visually important subversion of traditional gender roles but also sexual desires, interlinked with the androgynous figure’s prominent position in public debates about homosexuality through the emerging science of sexology.<sup>839</sup>

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<sup>835</sup> Elliott & J. Wallace, *Women Artists, and Writers*; Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism*.

<sup>836</sup> Vita Sackville-West & Harold Nicholson, ‘Marriage’ Radio Interview *Listener* 1, 26 June 1929.

<sup>837</sup> Such was its cultural embeddedness in modernist artistic circles, that clothing remained central to Woolf’s androgynous writings culminating in, *Orlando* (U.S: New York, Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1956). Therein she states, ‘there is much to support the view that it is the clothes that wear us and not we them...they mould our hearts, our brains, our tongues to their liking’. See, Weil, *Androgyny*, p.157.

<sup>838</sup> J.H Kaplan & S. Stowell, *Theatre and Fashion: Oscar Wilde to the Suffragettes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

<sup>839</sup> For a useful overview of the emergence of the science of sexology see, C. Brickell (2006) ‘The Sociological Construction of Gender and Sexuality’ *The Sociological Review*, 54:1, pp. 87–113.

The science of sexology enabled issues of gender and sexuality to be aired more openly than before. Its voices were dominated by men, although the science owed much to the late nineteenth century women's movement which had allowed debates about gender and sex to come under the public and political spotlight paving the way for later sexology debates.<sup>840</sup> Some sexologists like Edward Carpenter himself homosexual, a utopian socialist, and supporter of the women's suffrage movement redefined the androgynous figure from the more colloquial 'mannish woman and the womanish man' to the more scientific notion of the 'Uranian' or 'the intermediate sex' bringing it closer to the utopian artistic ideal a notion pushed by Havelock Ellis.<sup>841</sup> And more closely entangled dialogues of sex role transgression with debates about homosexuality and homosexual tendencies. However, many sexologists located the desire for social and political emancipation in the suffrage and wider women's movement within the category of gender and sexual deviancy with which it associated androgyny through mixed sex physical as well as character traits.<sup>842</sup> Homosexual men for example, were visually identified through visible feminine attributes – a slight, physical build, or an adoption of female affectations or effeminacy traits in anti-suffrage imagery. Though dealt with less often, homosexuality among women was indicated by their 'manly' appearance, and/or by their possession of a masculine complex. The latter was categorized as an interest in pursuing 'male' endeavours such as sport, commercial employment, and of course feminist politics. In 1914, sexologists W. Stekel and A. Tannenbaum wrote that 'in a very large percentage of active suffragettes the driving force is unsatisfied desire...in

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<sup>840</sup> For specific debates around Butler, the Criminal Disease Acts, sex, and sexology, see, Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delights*; L. Hall (2004) 'Hauling Down the Double Standard: Feminism, Social Purity, and Sexual Science in Late Nineteenth Century Britain' *Gender & History*, 16:1, April, pp.36-56; Bland, *Banishing the Beast*.

<sup>841</sup> S. Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter: A Life of Liberty and Love* (London: Verso, 2009); E. Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex: A Study of Some Transitional Types of Men and Women* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1908). Carpenter publicly acknowledged the debt sexology owed to feminists past and ongoing including the contribution of feminist Olive Schreiner to the development of its sex dialogue. Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism*, p. 150. He was with Housman, in the Order of Chaeronea, and a fellow founder of the BSSP.

<sup>842</sup> K. A. Martin (1993) 'Gender and Sexuality: Medical Opinion on Homosexuality, 1900-1950' *Gender and Society*, 7:2, pp. 246-260.

others...repressed homosexuality' meaning 'normal' women did not participate in suffrage politics and neither did normal men.<sup>843</sup> Cross dressing was enrolled by many sexologists as a visible sex trait and the most common mark of homosexuality especially of lesbianism. This had much to do with the 'trapped soul theory' which proposed 'the body as clothing for the soul; actual clothing as a disguise, as a symbol of one's true sex, or as a prop to one's role' lifting cross dressing out of mere transvestitism and tying it to inner desire.<sup>844</sup> Thus, by intertwining visible sex traits with sexuality, sexologists attempted to create a new language and with it a renewed power mechanism for controlling and keeping in place traditional gender and sexual hierarchies. And clothing became integral to contemporary debates and to modern feminist conversations about gender identity and sexuality.<sup>845</sup>

These 'scientific' social, cultural, and symbolic constructs around gender and sexuality, and the language that informed it, was not so easily controlled in the slippage between private and public lives especially during the heightened sex politics of the women's suffrage campaign. Ironically, sexology's public diatribes tying 'inverted' gender traits with homosexuality, and feminist and suffrage politics with sexual deviancy, opened new spaces, new questions, language, and new freedoms to challenge the exercise of power and control by dominant masculinities over sexuality and gender constructs using clothing, particularly cross dressing, as a visual code. The theatrical circles with which several suffrage artists' social and

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<sup>843</sup> W. Stekel & A Tannenbaum (1914) 'Masked Homosexuality' *American Medicine*, 9, pp. 530-537, in J. Katz (ed.), *The Gay/Lesbian Almanac* (U.S, New York: Harper and Rowe, 1983); L. Cartens (2011) 'Unbecoming Women: Sex Reversal in the Scientific Discourse on Female Deviance in Britain, 1880–1920' *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, January 20:1, pp. 62-94. Deviant sexuality among women included homosexuality but also nymphomania in heterosexual women and both were conflated with their desire for political equality.

<sup>844</sup> Fassler, 'Theories of Homosexuality' p. 243.

<sup>845</sup> Some scholars point to the limited spread of sexology's rhetoric, and thus argue for its limited cultural influence, by drawing attention to the restricted availability of its texts to those within the medical profession. Yet sexologists work was accessible within artistic and suffrage circles. Indeed, Laura Doan argues that among the first women to have access to sexology were those in the immediate pre-war period who drew on resources of the Cavendish Bentinck Library which was 'at that time supplying all the young women of the suffrage movement with the books they could not procure in the ordinary way'. Thus, sexology's ideas on androgyny, homosexuality, and Carpenter's work on the Uranian or intermediate sex, disseminated in suffrage and artistic circles 'second hand, third hand, and so on'. See, Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism*, p. 133 & 137.

professional lives overlapped as discussed, had a long tradition of cross sex dressing.<sup>846</sup> Indeed, Nina Auerbach writes of Craig's mother, actress Ellen Terry, that she spent the final phase of her life 'at the centre of a community of women who played men's parts'.<sup>847</sup> And clothing as an expression of social rebellion and homosexuality, both in life and in art, was nothing new in artistic circles. In the previous chapter I touched upon suffrage artists' wearing of smocks and sandals as a signifier of utopian socialist or alternative social politics, and oriental dress too had long been a signifier (if a more subtle one) of homosexual or same sex desire in visual, literary, and dramatic art circles. In her biography of Edith Craig, Katherine Cockin explains how she often went beyond conventions of even the new woman in her dress, and outside official theatre photographs, often wore a white kimono.<sup>848</sup> The kimono was a visually encoded garment likely expressing Craig's lesbianism, and her close friend and fellow suffrage artist Pamela Colman-Smith also dressed in oriental fashion and was described in 1913 as 'exactly like a Japanese'.<sup>849</sup> Colman-Smith's sexuality is ambiguous, but she shared her later life with Nora Lake until her death and though far from definitive her orientalism aligns with the lesbian undercurrent in Craig and Colman-Smith's social circle.<sup>850</sup>

But sexology's tying of cross-dressing through trapped soul theories, with sex deviancy and same sex desire, represented fresh liminal space and language through which to newly articulate lesbianism. Although mainstream sexology vilified women who loved other women defining them as 'unnatural' as outsiders, Lucy Bland points out that 'many were

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<sup>846</sup> L. Farris (ed.) *Crossing the Stage: Controversies on Cross Dressing* (London: Routledge, 1993); D. Crane (1999) 'Clothing Behaviour as Non-Verbal Resistance: Marginal Women and Alternative Dress in the Nineteenth century', *Fashion Theory*, 3:2, pp. 241–268; J. Davis (2014) 'Slap on! Slap ever!': Victorian pantomime, gender variance, and cross-dressing' *New Theatre Quarterly*, 30:3, pp. 218-230.

<sup>847</sup> N. Auerbach, *Ellen Terry: A Player in her Time* (London: J.M. Dent, 1987) p. 389.

<sup>848</sup> Cockin, *Edith Craig*; Edward Ziter, *The Orient on the Victorian Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>849</sup> WB Yeats, 1899, in *JB Yeats: Letters to his son, WB Yeats and Others, 1869-1922*, edited, (E.P. Dutton & co. London & New York, 1946) p.18.

<sup>850</sup> A. Sinfield, *Out on Stage: Lesbian and Gay Theatre* (U.S: New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 1999); Cockin, 'Formations, Institutions'.

simultaneously empowered through their ability to name themselves, and their feelings, and through the help that ‘naming’ gave them, in identifying other lesbians’.<sup>851</sup>



Figure 25. Edith Craig, c. 1910. Source: WL, digital collection, TWL.2009.02.61, LSE <https://www.flickr.com/photos/lselibrary/> (accessed March 2022).

Thus, despite its negative connotations, through debates about cross dressing, sexology gave a visual and linguistic framework for an early lesbian language that was used by literary modernist-feminist women above, to express or experiment with same sex desire

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<sup>851</sup> Bland, ‘Heterosexuality, feminism’, p. 16. Kari Martin points out that the scientific profession was slow to ‘name’ lesbianism, and the term did not appear in medical journals until 1914. She argues it was not culturally circulated noticeably, until the late 1930s. See Martin, ‘Gender and Sexuality’.

or sexual ambiguity in their life, and in their art. It was also visually present in suffrage artists' performances of gender and sexuality in the campaign. On several occasions Suffrage Atelier member Edith Craig chose to publicly play French painter Rosa Bonheur, a lesbian renowned for wearing male clothes, including in the suffrage *Pageant of Great Women* lending a political and sexual undercurrent to it.<sup>852</sup> In the context of the campaign, mixed gender metaphors tied to cross dressing were not confined to women but were also used by men. Laurence Housman and his friend, playwright, and suffragist, Israel Zangwill, referred to themselves as 'suffragettes in trousers' reinforcing the visual and performative intermingling seen in the Housman siblings' creative, suffrage works, and lived experiences.<sup>853</sup> The question of Clemence's sexuality or her relationships outside of her brother Laurence, has seldom been raised.<sup>854</sup> In this context, could we read Clemence's description of the cross-dressing fashion of the she-wolf in her novella, reinforced by Laurence's images, not only as a challenge to traditional gender roles but as an articulation, not only of Laurence's homosexuality, but of Clemence's lesbianism?

Among suffrage artists who toyed semi-publicly with sex ambiguity or lesbianism by wearing opposite sex clothing was Louise Jopling Rowe who took great delight in pretending at a party to be the musician Pablo de Sarasate whom she had recently met. Her hair was cut short, and she wrapped a towel around her 'to obtain that smooth appearance'. And as she entered the room, she recalled with pride the feeling of so many 'female eyes fixed admiringly upon me' believing the ruse, and seemingly enjoying the lesbian frisson.<sup>855</sup> But

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<sup>852</sup> Tickner, *Spectacle*; Cockin, *Women and Theatre*; Cockin, *Dramatic Lives*.

<sup>853</sup> SFC, un-accessioned, quoted in John, *Men, Manners and Militancy*, p.88. Similar mixed gender metaphors can be found in Israel Zangwill's 'One and One is Two: A Tribute of Literature to the Cause of Women' in B. Villiers, *The Case for Women's Suffrage* (London, 1907), pp. 204-216. This view of sex relations espoused during the campaign, became more difficult to sustain as the WSPU became increasingly hostile to men's participation and indeed to the MPU itself, but it was a belief nonetheless that these men never relinquished. See, See, Holton, 'Manliness and Militancy' *Men's Share?* pp. 122-128, and Housman, *Unexpected*, p. 279 & 282.

<sup>854</sup> Oddly, much has been made instead of the couple's living arrangements, affectionate letters to one another, and speculations of an 'incestuous' relationship. Hart, 'Laurence Housman', pp. 15-36; Oakley, *Inseparable*.

<sup>855</sup> Jopling-Rowe, 'Twenty Years', pp.236-237.

perhaps the most discussed cross dressing in the context of suffrage artistry and the campaign is the image of the male armour-clad suffragette warrior woman, among the most iconic of the movement. The most ‘masculinised’ versions of her emerged in the later imagery of the campaign which depicted the female body fully clad in armour based, initially at least, upon the religious figure of Joan of Arc adopted by the WSPU as their patron saint.<sup>856</sup> These depictions of the warrior woman are read by most scholars through the prism of the WSPU’s spiritual and violent militancy, and anti-male rhetoric, although campaign images and performances of her were not limited to the society.<sup>857</sup> Her armour as male clothing is generally interpreted as a visual sign and symbol, within the narrowest confines of its leadership’s rhetoric, which in the latter stages of the campaign is understood as ‘anti-male’. For example, Jane Marcus argues as a visual sign, armour on her female body represents the ‘suffragette’s images of themselves as virgin warriors’.<sup>858</sup> The armour rendering the female body a ‘sealed vessel’ disassociating it from its own biological nature, thus establishing the warrior woman’s virginity and purity of purpose as well as signifying the ‘real’ battle of good and evil - ‘the battle of the sexes’.<sup>859</sup> Similarly for Rosemary Betterton, the bodily purity that the warrior woman’s armour signified meant ‘rejecting men and embracing death for the

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<sup>856</sup> Milder forms of her were generally based on mythical and historical female antecedents, such as Britannia or Athena, produced by the Suffrage Atelier, the ASL, and the WSPU. She appeared on suffrage banners and in illustrations, draped in feminine apparel (save for helmet and trident) and was used most often in relation to constitutional concerns such as taxation without representation, or to women’s right to political citizenship as mothers of the nation. The representation of constitutional concerns had been Britannia’s historical and pictorial function since she first appeared on British coinage under Charles II in 1672. Suffrage artists use of her generally adhered to this tradition. See for example, WL, Suffrage Postcard Collection, Box no. 2, item: TM/2002.703, ‘Women Suffrage Reform - No Taxation without Representation’ (colour) and *Votes for Women*, 13 August 1915, front cover, ‘A Vote! For the Childs Sake’, reproduced in Tickner, *Spectacle*, p. 208. For a brief history of Britannia see, Warner, *Monuments and Maidens*: esp. p 46.

<sup>857</sup> The WSPU initially evoked the image of Joan of Arc in parades and suffrage processions, but in the later more militant stages of the campaign, when the colourful suffrage processions had all but disappeared, she was confined to illustrative form where she became a more allegorical figure. See Tickner, *Spectacle*, pp. 209-210. This warrior woman was more ‘militant’ in the visual sense, because she wore more accoutrements of battle, which usually included partial body or full body armour, together with the possession of a weapon such as a sword or shield.

<sup>858</sup> Marcus, ‘The Asylums of Antaeus,’ p.137.

<sup>859</sup> *Ibid.*

vote'.<sup>860</sup> However, even within the strict confines of the WSPU leaderships own rhetoric, a broader more amorphous sex interpretation of the suffragette warrior image is not without precedent and her image can be relocated within the broader cultural lexicon of utopian androgyny and fin de siècle feminist art and modernist debates about gender and homosexuality, that also characterized suffrage artists' queer lifestyles and intertextual experimentations with androgyny.<sup>861</sup>

The notion that armour on the female body renders it a 'sealed vessel', disassociating it from its biological nature, may signify a rejection of men, but it may also represent a denial or transcendence of sexual difference (gender ambiguity) as liberation. This was espoused in the discourses of androgyny favoured in romantic socialism, millenarianism, and in the fin de siècle feminism of Hall and Woolf, who used the androgynous figure to address, moderate, and interplay with 'both militant feminism and the structural and linguistic experimentations' of male modernists.<sup>862</sup> Utopian notions of sex transcendence was also central to the theosophist movement which celebrated the balance between male and female principles, and the potential to transcend sexual difference through evolutionary process, and spiritual

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<sup>860</sup> Betterton, *Intimate Distance*, p.48. Both Marcus and Betterton differ in their understanding of the militant warrior woman from Tickner's assertion in *Spectacle*, that her image was primarily meant to counteract anti-suffragists representation of militants as deluded incompetents. Tickner, *Spectacle*, p.208.

<sup>861</sup> Commenting on the significance of militancy and the warrior woman, Christabel Pankhurst acknowledged in a 1912 article for the *Suffragette*, that these represented 'women who fight *side by side* with their fathers, their brothers and husbands in every war'. The article entitled 'An invincible repugnance to disorder' implies the warrior woman's meaning as a unifying symbol drawing upon the historic use of the androgynous figure at times of social and political turmoil allowing radical change to be explored 'while providing reactionary coherence against the threat of disorder'. See, C. Pankhurst, 'An Invincible Repugnance to Disorder', *The Suffragette* 22 November 1912, p.82. J. De Vries, 'Gendering Patriotism: Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst and World War One' in S. Oldfield, (ed.), *This Working Day World: Women's Lives and Culture(s) in Britain 1914-1945* (London, 1994), pp. 75-88; Weil, *Androgyny*, p.170. It is also significant that it was the warrior woman's image that the WSPU turned to as the visual symbol with which to rally women to their 'new cause' in 1914 – supporting the Great War. Had her visual symbolic meaning as scholars often suggest, been so exclusively designed, and widely understood, as a vehement rejection of men and of a patriarchal system synonymous with violence, it seems likely that the WSPU's this immediate transition of her symbolic meaning to unite the sexes in struggle would have been rendered immutable. Jorgensen-Earp, 'The Transfiguring Sword' argues the 'just war' discourse used by the WSPU (of which the image of the militant warrior woman was a key part) was subsequently used by them 'to blend seamlessly with arguments justifying the Great War', p.150. See also, J. De Vries, 'Gendering Patriotism', pp. 75-88.

<sup>862</sup> Hargreaves 'Virginia Woolf', p. 48; R. Hall, *The Well of Loneliness* (London: Wordsworth Classics, 2015) originally published in 1928.



practice, and to which leading figures of the suffrage movement such as Charlotte Despard belonged.<sup>863</sup> The warrior woman's connection with spirituality is often made by scholars through her representation of Joan of Arc as a Christian symbol representing the loftier, emotional, and sacrificial 'ideals' of the WSPU's militant cause, who adopted Joan as their patron saint, and justifying it.<sup>864</sup> Certainly, Joan's personal qualities of courage, passionate commitment to Catholicism and self-sacrifice saw her beatified in 1909 and canonised in 1920 a process which raised her public profile 'leading to her increased significance for women as both a political figure, and a personal role model' as well as a religious icon.<sup>865</sup>

But while Joan was identified with women's militant and spiritual love for one another and the cause, she was also for some symbolic of their erotic love. Most feminists tended to discuss women's passionate commitment to the cause and to each other in terms of ideal feelings and experiences which were above the purely physical hence her spiritual dimension.<sup>866</sup> But, the multiple meanings of the word passion, then as now, meant that not only were there different understandings of what passion implied, but there was a liminal space for slippage *between* meanings – and so room for Joan's lesbian symbolism.<sup>867</sup> Joan's passion for Catholicism, her self-sacrifice, and struggle to be understood, struck a personal chord with homosexual women who had begun to understand and articulate their same sex desire and sexual ambiguity through Catholic discourses of martyrdom (in terms of pain and

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<sup>863</sup> Notably WFL leader and former WSPU founding member, Charlotte Despard was a theosophist. Tolerant of other and all faiths and associated with progressive politics Despard, who had converted to Catholicism, wrote a book *Theosophy and the Women's Movement* (1913) in which she argued that theosophy and feminism were inseparably linked. See, J. Dixon, *Divine Feminine: Theosophy and Feminism in England* (London: John Hopkins, 2001); C. Despard, *Theosophy and the Women's Movement* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1913).

<sup>864</sup> She gave suffragettes 'unfeminine' actions a sense of religious, moral, and historical legitimacy, hence her adoption as patron saint by the WSPU as a symbol of 'spiritualised militancy'. Tickner, *Spectacle*, p. 211; Betterton, *Intimate Distance*, p. 52. On militant Christian symbolism see, J. R. Watson, 'Soldiers and Saints: The Fighting Man and the Christian Life' in A. Bradstock, S. Gill, A. Hogan, S. Morgan (eds.) *Masculinity and Spirituality in Victorian Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000) pp. 10-26.

<sup>865</sup> Ricketts, 'The Fractured Pageant', p. 90.

<sup>866</sup> S. Jeffreys, 'Does it Matter if they did it?' in Lesbian History Group *Not a Passing Phase: Reclaiming Lesbian's in History, 1840-1985* (London: Women's Press, 1985).

<sup>867</sup> Bland, 'Heterosexuality, Feminism' p. 11.

suffering) and sometimes by conversion to Catholicism itself.<sup>868</sup> In this sense, Catholicism and the warrior figure of Joan of Arc offered lesbian women refuge from virulent homophobia and misogyny, including that espoused in some anti-feminist modernist circles, as well as in the diatribes of mainstream sexology. This was something Sackville-West recognised, emphasising in her later published biography of Joan in 1936, both her female masculinity, and religious awakening, as a means of understanding her own sexuality.<sup>869</sup> And other modernists like Hall and her lover Una Troubridge also converted to Catholicism during the volatile social period that spanned the suffrage campaign years: in 1912 and 1907 respectively.<sup>870</sup> The catholic faith was a common thread that ran through the social circles shared as seen above, by suffrage artists through Craig and Pamela Colman Smith.<sup>871</sup> Among these adult converts during the suffrage campaign were lesbian Edith Craig and her lover Christabel Marshall (subsequently known as Christopher St John) their lover artist Clare ‘Tony’ Attwood, as well as Pamela Colman-Smith herself, who converted to Catholicism circa 1912-1913, and later opened her home in Bude, Cornwall, as a retreat for Catholic Priests.<sup>872</sup>

In conclusion, the image of the suffragette warrior woman was therefore allegorically ambiguous. It occupied the same liminal space as the utopian figure of the androgyne, an open means of expressing gender ambiguity, transcendence, and homosexuality (especially lesbianism) during the tumultuous years of the women’s suffrage campaign by suffragists,

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<sup>868</sup> According to the catholic faith, lesbianism did not exist because it defined sinful sexual relationships by the presence of the phallus penis, and hence it made asexual beings of lesbians. Ibid.

<sup>869</sup> S. Raitt, *Vita and Virginia: The Work and Friendship of V. Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) pp.127-130.

<sup>870</sup> J. Glasgow ‘What’s a Nice Lesbian like you doing in the Church of Torquemada? Radcliffe Hall and Other Catholic Converts’, in K. Jay & J. Glasgow (eds.) *Lesbian Texts and Contexts: Radical Revisions* (London: New York University Press, 1990) pp. 241-242.

<sup>871</sup> Cockin, *Dramatic Lives*. Nina Auerbach lists multiple women who were adult catholic converts and lesbian. See, N. Auerbach, *Ellen Terry*, pp. 406-407.

<sup>872</sup> See, Cockin, *Dramatic Lives*. Lily Yeats visited Pamela Colman-Smith in 1913, remarking ‘she is now an ardent and pious Roman Catholic, which has added to her happiness but taken from her friends’. Letter from Lily to J.B Yeats, 18 June 1913, in *JB Yeats: Letters to his Son*. Information on Bude from Melinda Boyd Parsons & Crawford, *Art and Suffrage*.

feminists, and modernists alike. Whether articulated in the image of the warrior woman; the performance of lesbian painter Rosa Bonheur in suffrage pageants; in Clemence Housman's gender ambiguous *Werewolf* accompanied by brother Laurence's illustrations; in cross dressing references, or swapping gender roles at parties; or in personal and religious relationships, the androgynous figure was a utopian revisualizing of gender roles through the experimentation, transfiguring, and unifying of female-male body space.<sup>873</sup>

Visual alterations and theatrical performativity also sat at the centre of the utopian spaces of suffrage artists' experimentation with gender and artistic identity projected through and within the semi-public spaces of the 'at home' studio. This was a complex space, at once steeped in the gender ideologies of separate spheres by its domestic context yet intermingling with studio and commercial workspace across which women artists had long challenged the supposed distinction between private and public space and lives. The domestic studio settings and spaces of the Housman siblings, Colman-Smith, and the Suffrage Atelier, their politicised décor, vanguard art, theatrical staging, and performances, layered these spaces with new forms of feminist aesthetics where traditional gender roles for women and men were challenged, and notions of women's creative identities were experimented with. Together, these were intimate and real, yet open and imaginative spaces, where future possibilities were projected and shared, and where suffrage art and its artists connected with wider struggles to reshape and redraw artistic, gender, and sexual boundaries.<sup>874</sup>

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<sup>873</sup> Or 'I know the difference and how to transcend it'. Weil, *Androgyny*, pp.140-141.

<sup>874</sup> Robinson, 'Feminism and the Spaces of Transformation'; Butler, *Gender Trouble*; Butler, *Bodies that Matter*; Kristeva, *Desire in Language*; Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*.

## Chapter 7

### **Redrawing: A Conclusion.**

This thesis has added fresh historical identities and voices to the stories of artists' collective and individual challenges to gender power structures across classes during the early twentieth century suffrage campaign and has lent fresh perspectives to their interactions with the suffrage, socialist, and imperial archive. Importantly, its innovative and thematic use of a spatial framework for its chapters, and its focus on structures of power, have enabled new sites and spaces of enquiry to be unfolded: those where suffrage artists lived, worked, and travelled, those they occupied, imagined, created, and transformed, during the suffrage campaign. The thesis has recovered, (re)examined, and revised, the diverse sites and spaces of suffrage artists' daily lives and social imaginaries, viewing them as unique spaces of feminist resistance, as global and local exchanges, that experimented with, contested, and critiqued prevailing notions of gender power. Its spatial themes have enabled a fresh analysis firstly in chapter 2, of suffrage artists' collective mobilization into the ASL and the Suffrage Atelier in London through a place-based and chronological analysis of Chelsea, Kensington, and Hampstead. It demonstrated women artists' creative colonization of these key artistic areas of the city as the urban landscape rapidly and materially changed, flooded by a deluge of new studio blocks to accommodate arts growing popularity as a profession for young women as well as young men across a variety of genres. The prejudicial exclusion of women based on gender across a matrix of metropolitan artistic schools, exhibition channels, commercial opportunities, and professional clubs and societies, saw them densely cluster together, sharing neighbourhoods and seeking out one another in response to their creative marginalisation. At the fin de siècle, these loose, informal, groupings were already becoming integral to women artists' shared, open expression and articulation of feminist and suffrage

politics, many being radicalised by their artistic as well as political discrimination, encouraged by the increasingly fervent atmosphere of metropolitan suffrage campaigning. At that time as the chapter outlined, several suffrage artists were principal founders of woman centred metropolitan art clubs and guilds such as the local 91 Art Club and the WGA with ASL founder Lowndes and other suffrage artists playing an integral and active role in both societies. Their shared consciousness of exclusion, activities, and shared studio territories created vibrant social and material settings ripe for the mobilisation of organised suffrage art societies, but for several years, the connections between women's artistic skills, and the suffrage politics they endorsed, remained quite separate. It required a national or macro suffrage event in the shape of the NUWSS mud march, to finally catalyse local women artists and friends in Chelsea to inaugurate the ASL in 1907 headed by Lowndes and Forbes. The ASL was also a fresh space for women to explicitly articulate their feminism through their art, something they were unable to do via most female guilds that were reluctant to be seen to be political.

Chapter 2 mapped out the sites and spaces of suffrage artists' metropolitan locations across the period when suffrage art campaigning took place, showing how artists already established friendships and proximity to one another in Chelsea, helped mobilise the ASL quickly. The publicly lauded colourful banners they skilfully made for marchers to carry aloft created a new spectacle and a watershed moment for women artists' role in the campaign's propaganda war. This in turn created a cascade of suffrage creativity which the chapter further explored through the dynamic 'tactics of the habitat' employed via the WSPU Kensington branch for a much larger 1908 procession to Hyde Park. The WSPU's march enlisted a more numerous and diverse range of artists who were also sympathetic to the militant cause. The flurry surrounding its organisation centred principally on artists in Kensington tasked with overseeing recruitment and choreography, including Louise Jopling

Rowe and Charlotte Sheppard who also developed collaborative ties with Chelsea branch artists. Collaboration over creative arrangements saw everyday sites and spaces, and prominent public buildings in the towns, and others in nearby Hammersmith, reappropriated and used radically by local artists whether organising artistic aspects of the procession itself, advertising work, or by producing banners and bannerettes in local WSPU shops and basements, as well as in homes and studios. The chapter showed how spatial interactivity between these public and domestic sites opened new spaces of opportunity for women artists' radicalism and facilitated growing local and trans local relationships between them across classes. This was evidenced for example, in newly identified tailor's wife Rosie Silver's banner working, alongside the more privileged Miss Agathonike Craeis at the Housman cottage in Kensington for the 1908 WSPU rally.

The dynamics of the WSPU's creative work in Kensington, encouraged the mobilisation of new artists for the cause, including the Housman siblings, who headed its banner design and making at their cottage studio, and are widely regarded as subsequent founders of the Suffrage Atelier, in spring 1909. Yet, while ties are evident in the creative momentum between the two events, the chapter's analysis of the interactivity between people, places, timelines, and events, has revised the Suffrage Atelier's founding to Hampstead, and to less well-known artists Ethel Willis and Agnes Joseph instead. It demonstrated how a host of other supporting local artists in the town, including newly identified Eliza Turck, along with Kathleen Shaw and Catherine Courtauld facilitated classes, banner working, and cartoon training in the society's fledgling months. This active, educative component was one of several key differences between the ASL and the Suffrage Atelier throughout their life spans. This encouraged the Suffrage Atelier's multiple, overlapping use of several members and supporting artists' studios in Hampstead, but also in Kensington,

Hammersmith, and later rooms and book seller's venues in West London, continually shifting, and expanding the formal geographies of its metropolitan practices.

The chapter also illustrated the differences in the Suffrage Atelier's mobilisation which was precipitated by newer local friendships and contacts, and a series of suffrage fetes and bazaars rather than large scale rallies and processions. Their early efforts in travelling to a fete in Woking revealed a pre-established friendship between its poster artists Gladys Letcher and Isobel Pocock, and their likely route into the society. Aided by its non-partisanship, fetes and bazaars enabled its amateur and professional artists to produce and sell a broader range of suffrage craft goods, and more regularly. The Suffrage Atelier's WFL Yuletide Festival stall in 1909 revealed potential new artisan members, and its constitution the importance of the WSPU's Exhibition earlier that year in the Suffrage Atelier's early dynamics. Overall, the chapter demonstrated the importance women artists' creative colonization of the city, and of place itself as a material setting for suffrage artists' transformative politics of the local. This valorised place as a site of new beginnings, and as a radical standpoint for women artists' collective social, creative, and political agendas which were both progressive and empowering.

Chapter 3 continued to focus on the power geographies of place but this time through the spatial lens of suffrage artists' embodiment in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, as a feminist disruption of a place whose landscape was (and is) popularly renowned as symbolic of men's power and privilege in the arts, along with their claims to creative knowledge and identity. In a series of case studies, it relocated suffragette artist Sylvia Pankhurst, ASL artist Bertha Newcombe, and suffrage artist Louise Jopling Rowe there, interrogating them as creative occupants, users, and usurpers, of its elite men's historic houses, studios, and famed embankment running alongside the river Thames. It examined Sylvia Pankhurst's habitation there in the context of wider suffrage strategies of bodily insertion in sites and spaces

symbolic of men's political power and privilege, and her own acknowledged proclivity for occupying sites and spaces symbolic of her personal, political struggles. It located her being in Cheyne Walk as a woman artist, during which time she contested women's creative as well as political marginalization, within her wider strategy of usurping buildings symbolic of male power in the city. This was evident whether in her selection of powerful architectural locations like Lincoln's Inn for the WSPU headquarters or in situating herself as a socialist in a former brewery in the East End when collaborating with working class women in the struggle for the vote. Strategies of insertion also framed the chapter's consideration of her friend and neighbour Maud Joachim's occupation of painter J W M Turner's famous studio in Cheyne Walk during the suffragette boycott on census night, 1911. The recording of her there as an 'artist' (though this was not her occupation), and suffragette, a result of her choice to resist rather than evade the census, raised spatial and temporal questions about suffragists wider historical self-awareness of museum, heritage sites and tourist landscapes like Cheyne Walk, as potential archives for memorialising feminist protest in future historical projections. The chapter situated the census archive, Pankhurst's blue plaque, Newcombe's paintings and Jopling Rowe's writings as intertextual, material legacies, through which their feminist voices are reinserted into the heart of elite male artists' territories.

Bertha Newcombe's paintings made in her 'wainscoted' studio in Cheyne Walk also revealed the complex power linkages between the gendered body, place, art, and identity. The chapter's examination of her on site painting and display of portraits of Shaw, as an object of desire, of *The Apple Seller* as a feminist history painting, alongside her experimentation in the new genre of suffrage poster design, contested hegemonic narratives of the embodied artist in the studio there as male, subversively sexualizing, politicizing, and (re)defining it as female, and feminist. The spatial linkages made add fresh insight to scholarship interrogating how women's creative practices, particularly when embodied within culturally revered male



spaces, can help (re)shape artistic identities, encourage innovation, and enable political rebellion, where art, the artist, and the place making of art itself, are enrolled as interlinking, counter sites of feminist resistance. Meanwhile, Louise Jopling-Rowe's walking and practices of looking on Cheyne's embankment were viewed in the chapter through the lens of the impossible flaneuse and as an early articulation of her feminist politics enacted by a rhetoric of walking as she consciously trod over the historic sites and sights of arts great men: usurping the 'old' bohemia of the past. Overall, the chapter reaffirms the broader symbolic importance of some places to understandings of what it means for suffrage artists' and feminist bodies and cultures to be located within men's territories of power and to contest them. Connecting with women artists' wider creative colonization of key areas of the city, both chapters 2 and 3 demonstrate how 'place-making and hegemonic configurations of power are inseparable' and that 'an integral part of [feminist] resistance is the act of claiming a place as one's own' by territorially and symbolically appropriating it.<sup>875</sup>

Chapter 4 The Art of Travel recovered and spatially analysed suffrage artists' global life mobilities which spanned three continents and shaped their professional identities, feminist agencies, suffrage, and artistic practices in London. Their journeys independent of family broke women's normative restrictions of movement which was culturally regulated by masculine social and sexual controls and is an important spatial factor in considering articulations of their feminism given 'mobility and control over mobility both reflect and reinforce power'.<sup>876</sup> Situating suffrage artists within an imperial context the chapter illuminated some of the personal stories and collective tensions created between suffrage artists' feminist, and artistic self-empowerment, and the colonial disempowerments inherent in their global travel and migrancy. It revealed empowerments based on suffrage artists' life

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<sup>875</sup> Gupta & Ferguson, 'Culture Power Place' pp.1-29.

<sup>876</sup> Massey, 'Power-geometry' p. 62.

experiences of global journeys, landscape painting, and professional and feminist self-cultivation, as well colonial diasporas which often played out in their feminist and suffrage sociability in the city. For example, the chapter illustrated how ASL artist Dora Meeson Coates suffrage banner work for the Women's Coronation Procession as well as her complex set of social and political friendships and suffrage networks centred around her own diasporic identity as an Australian artist who lived and settled in London for the rest of her life. Others Marjorie Hamilton and May Gibbs travelled back and forth between home and homelands in their quest for artistic careers, privileges afforded to them by their status as middle-class, white western women. Charlotte Sheppard's pictorializing of Egypt and Pamela Colman-Smith's appropriation and retelling of Jamaican folklore plantation tales in London, contributed to imperial knowledge making systems at home that enabled them both to elevate their professional status while obfuscating the colonial occupation and violence upon which their knowledge was built. Direct family ties to slave trade profiteering were also revealed through Elizabeth Gosling's diasporic life between England and Bermuda.

Some suffrage artists' global lives as demonstrated including Suffrage Atelier founder Agnes Joseph, artist Margaret Forbes, and the ASL's Bethea Shore were embedded in colonial power structures through their father's occupations under the British Raj having been born and spent their childhoods in India. Others like Christiana Herringham travelled there for family reasons but were captivated by its art, and culture, which disrupted her view of art and politics at home together with her sense of belonging. She became increasingly involved in socio-political work revolving around arts and craft practice in India which jibed with her work to lift the status and practice of craft at home in England among women, not least helping found the WGA. The chapter illuminates how the thread of global crafting ran through localised suffrage work for the WFL's international fair in Chelsea, 1912, as did the racialised and hierarchical language of imperialism evident in different national costume

making, and performances. The suffrage movement's notion of global sisterhood was captured in the WFL international fair's clarion call 'Women of the Nation's Unite!' encouraging the notion of 'horizontal comradeship' between women crafters across nations and classes while omitting the real asymmetric power differences that existed between them despite shared gender concerns and campaigns. In recovering and analysing suffrage artists' globality and relationship to imperialism within the context of the campaign, the chapter added to the suffrage and imperial archive, and to scholarship on the relationship between mobility, gender, and power.

Both chapters 5 and 6 pivoted around the spatial themes of utopia and enacted utopias as empowering real and imaginative spaces for suffrage artists' experimentation with gender, art, and identity in ways that contested male discourses of power. Chapter 5 examined the Suffrage Atelier's arts and crafts scheme as an enacted utopia or heterotopia that actively sought to counter women's gendered marginalisation in the craft industries broadening its remit as a suffrage art society. It revealed how the Suffrage Atelier called upon utopian craft language to straddle global feminist and socialist debates about the future of women's role in the labouring economy and implemented practical measures to counter women artists' gendered exclusion particularly from the printing trades. It ensured female rather than male members took ownership of its own means of print production and provided artistic training in print and commercial design as well as addressing lacunas in other aspects of female artists' practical art education.

The chapter also demonstrated how the society's remuneration scheme worked, allowing women to learn, earn, and experience explicitly feminist society-based craft as productive 'labour[s] of becoming'.<sup>877</sup> The Suffrage Atelier's remuneration scheme

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<sup>877</sup> Hawkins, 'Geography and Art' p. 60.

contrasted with the voluntary ASL as did its welcoming of amateur as well as professional women artists. Women's amateur status in Britain once reserved for dabbling 'ladies' was now encompassing artisan women's practice as it was increasingly being defined by a lack of formal art school training as more middle-class women entered the schools and professions. The chapter revealed the strong class inclusive element to the society evidenced through its personnel's political ideologies and friendships beyond suffrage and its overt links to the socialist and labour movements through its trade unionist secretaries and speakers Katherine Gatty and Eilian Hughes.

Against a backdrop of professional craft societies for women that sought to remain determinedly apolitical, the chapter showed how the Suffrage Atelier sought to build a commercial craft enterprise based on the vibrant national, and international marketplace for suffrage and feminist goods. The Suffrage Atelier was like the ASL a principally London society but did to some degree achieve its aim of decentralising its suffrage scheme having a handful of designers based in diverse parts of the country and in Ireland, making it more geographically diverse. However, there is no evidence it ever succeeded in establishing regional branches as it had hoped although the chapter identified ASL and Suffrage Atelier geographies as a potential strand for future local enquiries. The chapter concluded the Suffrage Atelier's scheme enabled women to assume power in new ways through diverse political economies, and connected the scheme's transformative politics of the local, to more global questions about arts and crafts as a powerful, revolutionary space for feminist politics, and for the modern aestheticization of women's labour.

In two parts, chapter 6 explored the role of visibility, objects, and performativity in suffrage artists' conceptualisation or utopian 'imagining' and projection of new gender and sex critical space in the context of its translation into transformative cultural practice. It specifically looked at its intertextual linkages with feminist-modernist discourses that

disrupted traditional, hegemonic notions of gender and sexuality being reinforced by the era's new sciences of sexology and eugenics, often underpinned by biological essentialism. It did so through an analysis of suffrage artists' visual alteration of interior domestic studio space and of the female-male body through intertextual discourses of androgyny. The chapter demonstrated how suffrage artists' decor and theatrical alteration of domestic-studio space was used to contest traditional gender roles, and experiment with and project new political and artistic identities and possibilities. It revealed how the Housman siblings, Pamela Colman-Smith, and the Suffrage Atelier's studios - all set within domestic boundaries and contexts - were thus implicated in gendered cultural notions and ideologies of separate spheres. Hence, their diverse decor and performative experiments within it, which were shared by their openness as semi-public spaces, contested proscribed gendered and artistic ideals. The Housman siblings visual display of suffrage ephemera and artistic work tools and devices at the cottage complicated gendered boundaries between domestic, commercial, and political space, eliciting emotional responses from invited guests whether pro or anti suffrage. Colman-Smith's shambolic, 'mad fairytale' décor straddled her identity as a craft artist with emerging modernist styles and aided her theatrical storytelling, in which she enrolled her invited audiences to experiment with a range of artistic identities and boundaries in the gendered context of the 'enclosed room'. The Suffrage Atelier, similarly, enrolled friends, supporters, and audiences in the visual and theatrical performance and redecoration of its 'at home' events, retelling magical tales and suffrage stories of struggle through objects and reminiscences. The chapter demonstrated how by their visual reconceptualizing of everyday interiors in complex ways that challenged the wider gender constructs they symbolized, suffrage artists reinforced their suffrage, feminist, and creative selves while projecting to others potential future 'pathways to social change'.

The chapter also examined suffrage artists' visual alteration of female-male body space through the intertextual use of androgyny as a visual morphotactic tool to transgress, reconfigure, and project new gender and sexual boundaries. The androgynous figure often appeared historically and artistically at times of social and political turmoil when the possibility of real change in gender power relationships seemed more likely. The chapter demonstrated the presence of the androgynous figure across suffrage artists' intertextual suffrage and non-suffrage work, and personal relationships, as it was similarly evident across the lives and works of vanguard feminists and female modernists of the era. This included Woolf and Sackville West who used it as a vehicle to challenge social constructs of gender and articulate a new language of lesbianism.

It analysed several suffrage artists' work as playwrights, amateur actors, and novelists, with social and professional links to vanguard feminist theatre and to metropolitan lesbian subcultures. This included Clemence Housman's early subversion of gender traits in her imaginative 'shapeshifting' novella *The Werewolf*, whose androgynous illustrations by her brother Laurence interacted with the siblings own unravelling of male-female traits and sexualities in the private spaces of their relationship, and in their well-known suffrage politicking.<sup>878</sup> The chapter also intertwined suffrage artists' alterations of their own female-male body space through cross-dressing with suffrage imagery and allegory in the shape of the armour-clad suffragette warrior woman for how both interplayed with modernist-feminist discourses of homosexuality, particularly new expressions of lesbianism. This potentially reframed narrow militant interpretations of the warrior woman through the sex divisive lens of the WSPU's campaigning by locating her instead within the era's broader artistic spaces of androgyny which served as utopian counter-spaces to the sex volatility and vilification of homosexuality in mainstream culture, performed through a politics of ambiguity at the height

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<sup>878</sup> Housman, *Were-wolf*.

of the suffrage campaign. Together these were sites and spaces where gender, sexual, and artistic boundaries were reconceptualised, experimented with, transfigured, and projected as future possibilities in powerful ways that participated in wider cultural debates about gender and power and identity in the new modern era.

The thesis has analysed and critiqued suffrage artists' relationships to prevailing discourses of gender and power within and across a complex assemblage of changing material, political, social, professional, local, and globalized imperial landscapes, whose sites, and spaces were saturated by gendered discourses and practices. Together with their art, utopian and creative imaginaries, this has presented new perspectives on how suffrage artists' spatial entanglements and mobilities broadly contested and opened up traditional gender structures and radicalised the politics of identity formation, creating conditions of possibility for women's active experiments and self-cultivation in art, politics, and in life.<sup>879</sup> It has also recovered and acknowledged the disempowerments of 'others' in that process evidenced through feminist and professional self-cultivation in the context of suffrage and imperialism. Its' spatial themes have acted as a methodological framework giving fresh insight into the urban settings of the city in terms of the narrative relationships it has revealed, locally and globally, between suffrage artists, place, space, and time, politics, and visualities at a transitional phase for women's art and women's political culture. It has shown how the sites and spaces suffrage artists occupied, travelled, contested, created, and transformed, not only critiqued the ubiquitous masculinisation of creativity, but revolutionised the possibilities of social, political, and economic exchange by the enactment and visualisation of what 'could be'. In so doing, the thesis makes a major contribution to a small but growing body of

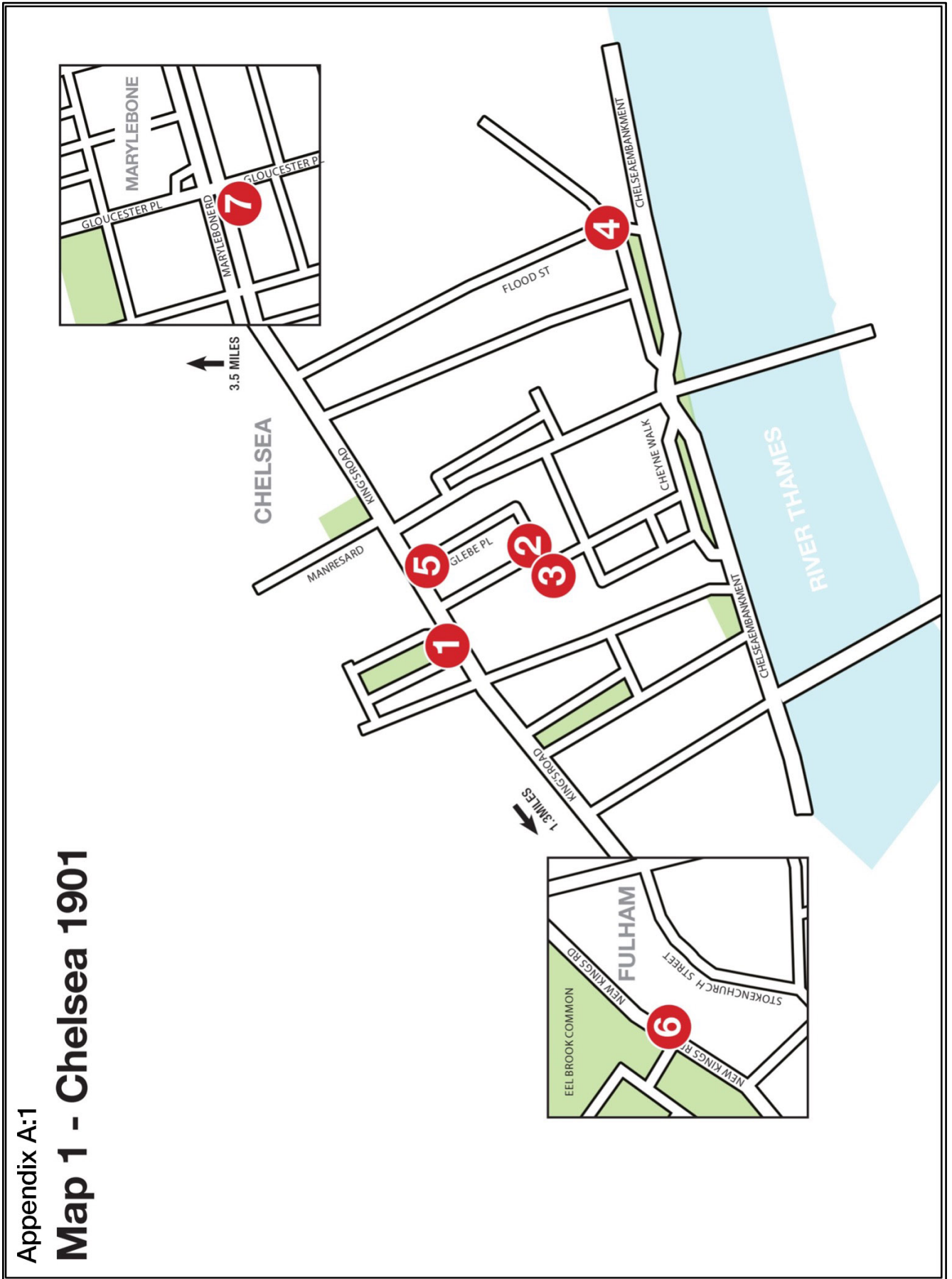
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<sup>879</sup> Tamboukou, *In the Fold*, p. 311.

literature surrounding suffrage visual cultures while adding to wider conceptual approaches and spatial scholarship on understanding relationships between women, gender, and power.

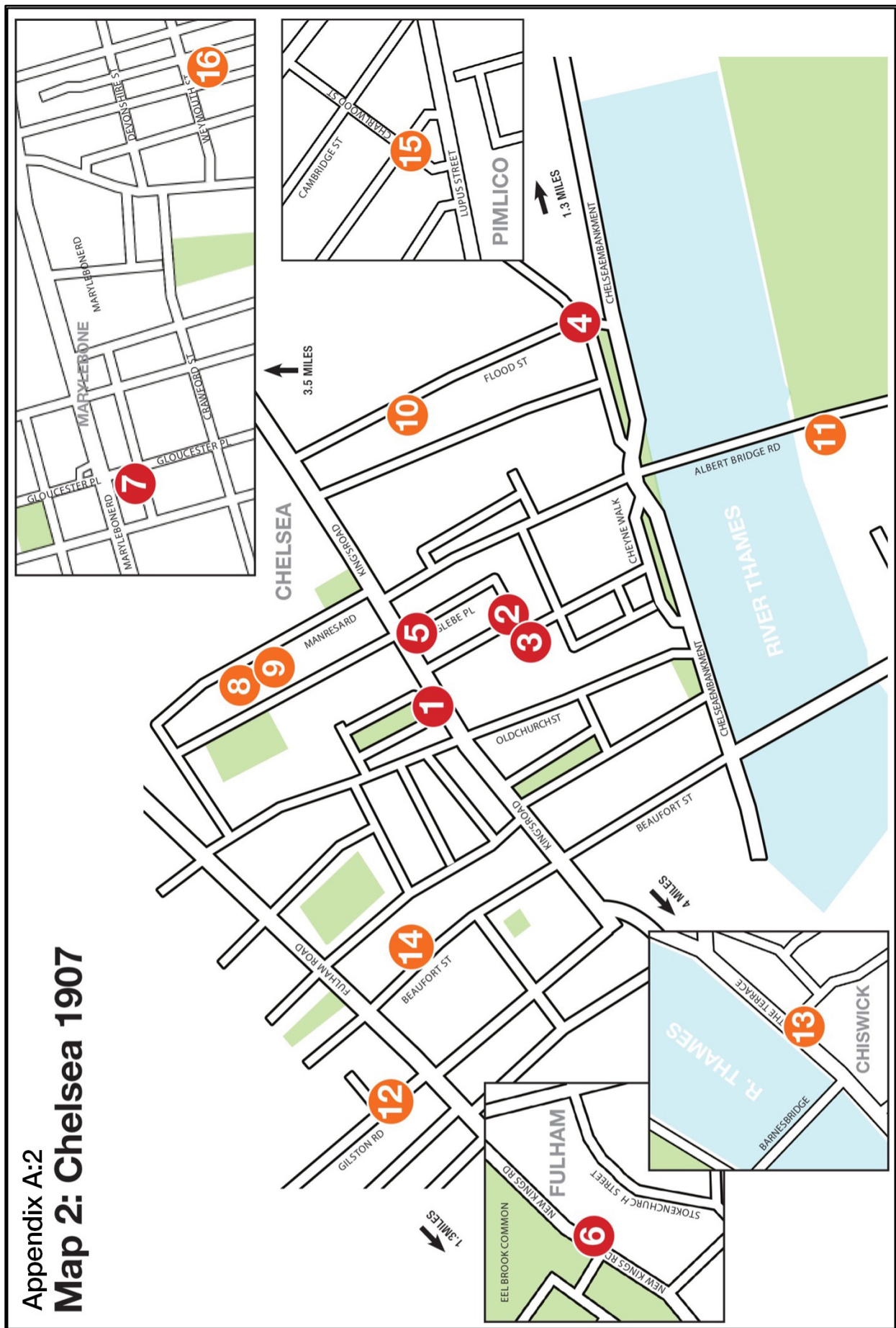


Appendix A:1 – Map 1: Chelsea 1901

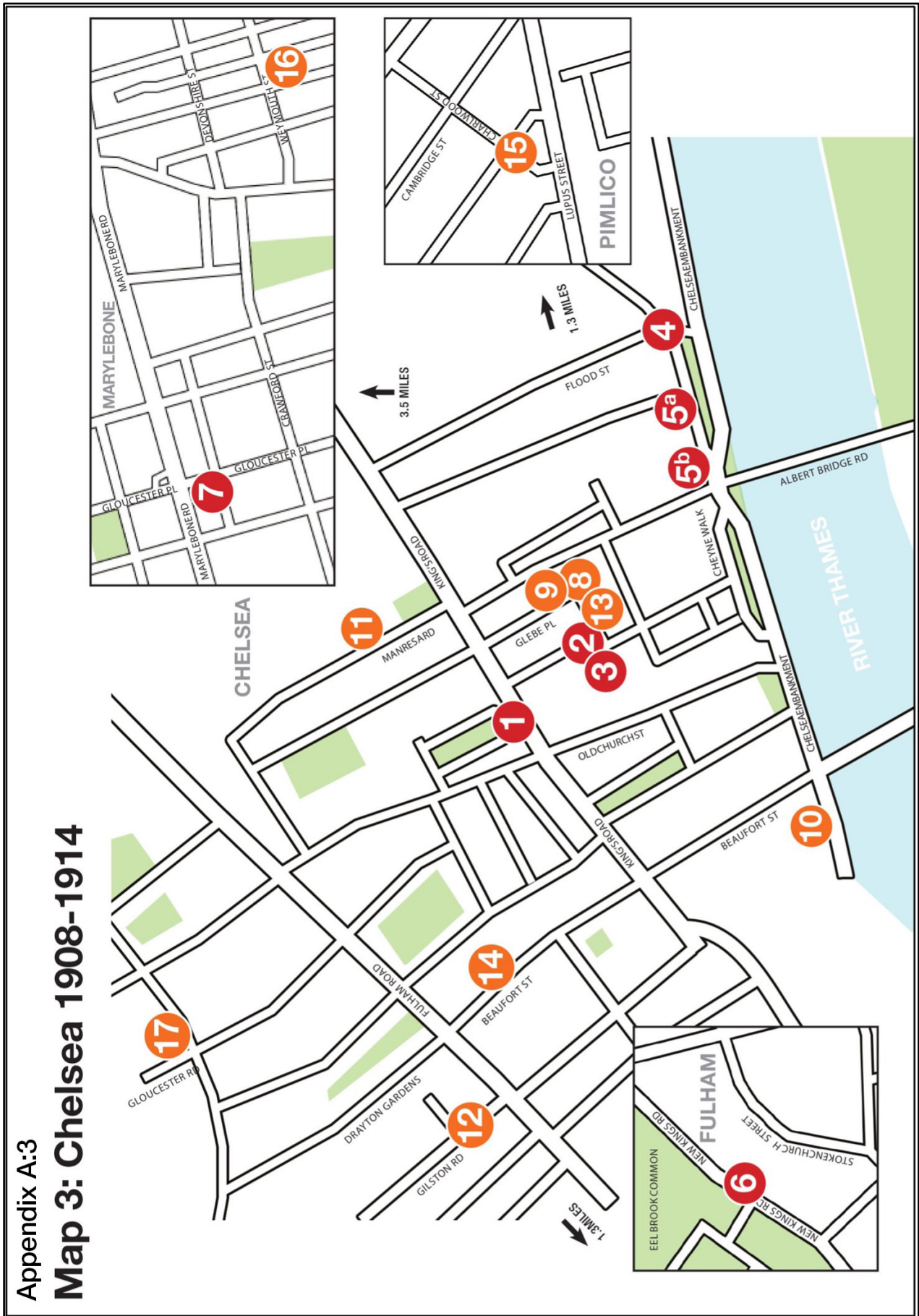


Appendix A:1  
**Map 1 - Chelsea 1901**

Appendix A:2 – Map 2: Chelsea 1907



Appendix A:3 – Map 3: Chelsea 1908-1914

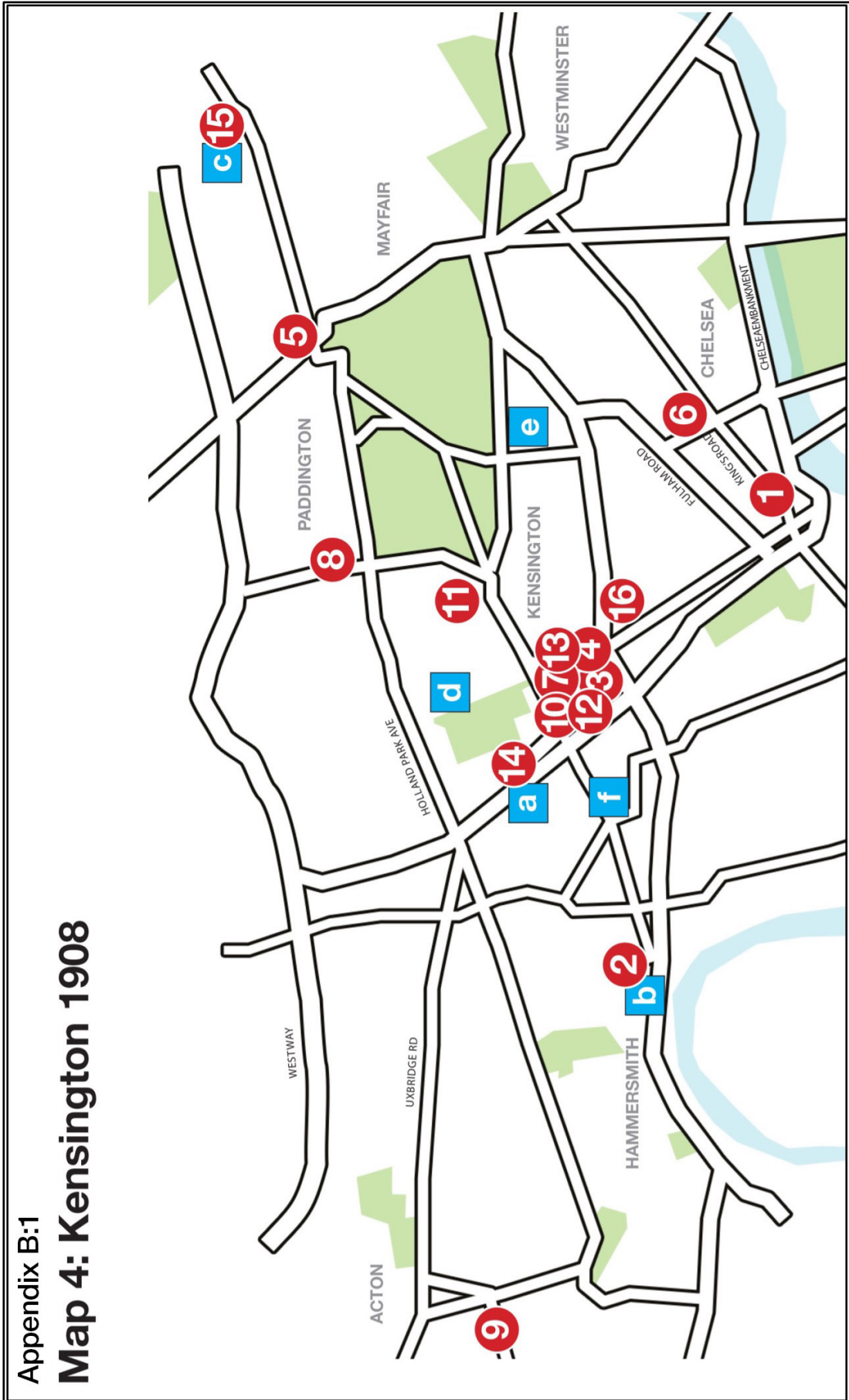


Appendix A:3  
Map 3: Chelsea 1908-1914

## Appendix A:4 – Map 1-3 Key

- 1** **Mary Lowndes & Barbara Forbes** (*Founders*), 259 Kings Road Chelsea (ASL Headquarters).
- 2** **Emily Ford**, 44 Glebe Place, Chelsea. (*Founding Committee Member*).
- 3** **Violet Garrard**, 43 Glebe Place, Chelsea. (*Founding Member*).
- 4** **Bertha Newcombe**, 1 Cheyne Walk, Chelsea. (*Founding Committee Member*).
- 5** **Bessie Wigan**, 1 Hans studio Glebe Place, Chelsea (1901) & 16 Glebe Place, Chelsea (1907). (*Founding & Committee Member*).
- 5a** **Bessie Wigan**, Studio 11 Cheyne Gardens, Chelsea (1910-12) Chelsea. (*Founding & Committee Member*).
- 5b** **Bessie Wigan**, 4 Cheyne Walk, Chelsea (1911). (*Founding & Committee Member*).
- 6** **Mary Wheelhouse**, 111 New Kings Road Chelsea.
- 7** **May (Mary) Heatherington Barker**, Devonshire Mansions, 107 Marylebone Road, London. (*Founding & Committee Member*) d.1912.
- 8** **Dora Meeson-Coates**, 9 Trafalgar Studios, Manresa Road, Chelsea & 55 Glebe Place (from 1911) (*Founding Member*).
- 9** **Mary Sargent Florence**, Trafalgar Studios, Manresa Road, Chelsea & 53 Glebe Place, Chelsea.
- 10** **Bethea Shore**, 40 Rossetti's Garden Mansions, Flood Street, Chelsea (1905-1910) & Munro Terrace (Riley St) Chelsea.
- 11** **Clara Billing**, 2 Albert Studios, Albert Bridge Road, Battersea & Studio in Wentworth block, Manresa Rd, Chelsea – (*Founding Committee Member*).
- 12** **Emily Harding Andrews**, Bolton Studios, Chelsea.
- 13** **Charlotte Charlton**, 12 The Terrace, Chiswick & 28 Glebe Place, Chelsea (1913).
- 14** **Ellen Caroline Woodward**, 129 Beaufort Street, Chelsea (1881 - 1910).
- 15** **Caroline Watts**, 83 Charlwood Street Pimlico.
- 16** **Christinia Herringham**, 40 Wimpole Street, Marylebone.
- 17** **Edith Letitia Shute**, 12 & 13 St Georges' Court, Gloucester Road (block 10-29) Kensington.

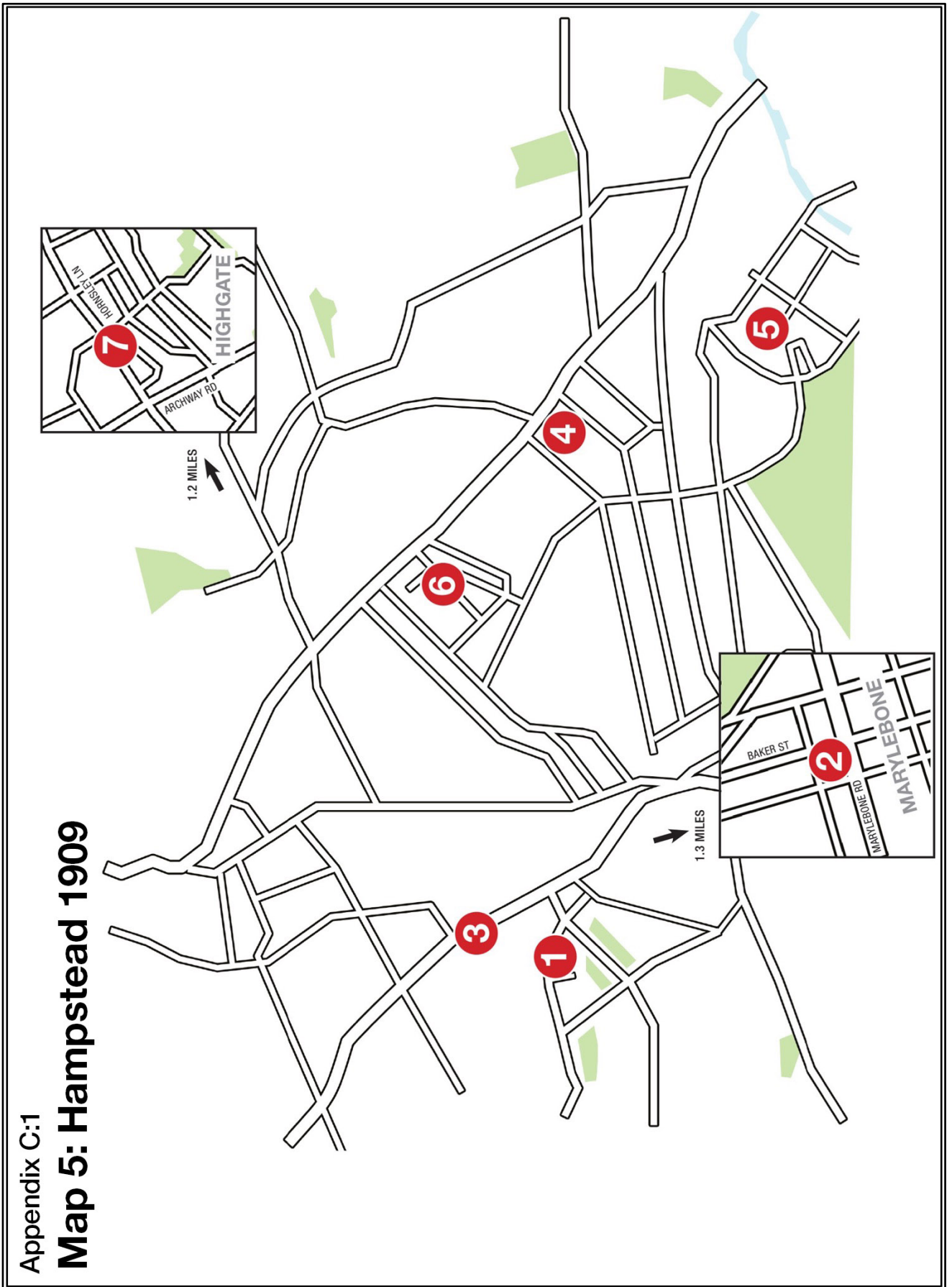
Appendix B:1 – Map 4: Kensington 1908



## Appendix B:2 – Map 4 Key

- 1** 400 King's Road, Chelsea (WSPU) *New shop opened as procession committee room*
- 2** Broadway Hall, 263 Hammersmith Road, Hammersmith. *Temporary work/committee room.*
- 3** **Artist Louise Jopling Rowe**, 7 Pembroke Gardens, Kensington.
- 4** **Mary Postlethwaite**, 27 Warwick Chambers, Pater Street, Kensington.
- 5** **Charlotte Lillian Sheppard**, 3a Seymour Place, Marylebone.
- 6** **Florence Haigh**, 4 Trafalgar Studios, Manresa Road, Chelsea.
- 7** **Laurence and Clemence Housman**, 1 Pembroke Cottages, Kensington.
- 8** Kensington Secretarial College, Queens Road, Bayswater. *Procession meeting held*
- 9** Standard Laundry, Bollo Road, South Acton. *Procession meeting held*
- 10** Edwardes Square Studios, Edwardes Square, Kensington.
- 11** **Evelyn Sharp**, 15 Mount Carmel Chambers, Duke's Lane, Kensington.
- 12** Studios, Mary Abbots Place, Kensington .
- 13** Pembroke Square Studios, Pembroke Square, Kensington.
- 14** **Agathonike Sabina Craies**, 33 Holland Villas Road, Kensington.
- 15** **Mrs Harry Silver**, 94 Charlotte Street, St Pancras. London
- 16** **Mrs Fredrick (Rose) Palotta**, 48 Hogarth Road, Earls Court, Kensington.
- a** Kensington Olympia Rail Station.
- b** Hammersmith and District Tube Station.
- c** Queens Hall, Langham Place (Langham St) London. *Banners officially unfurled and displayed before the procession.*
- d** 2 Campden Hill Square, London. *Artists, the Brackenbury sisters. Hold procession and open-air meetings*
- e** 43 Ennismore Gardens, London. *Mrs Charles Stewart holds procession workers meetings*
- f** 8 Edith Road, London. *Eleanor Maund holds procession workers meetings*

Appendix C:1 – Map 5: Hampstead 1909

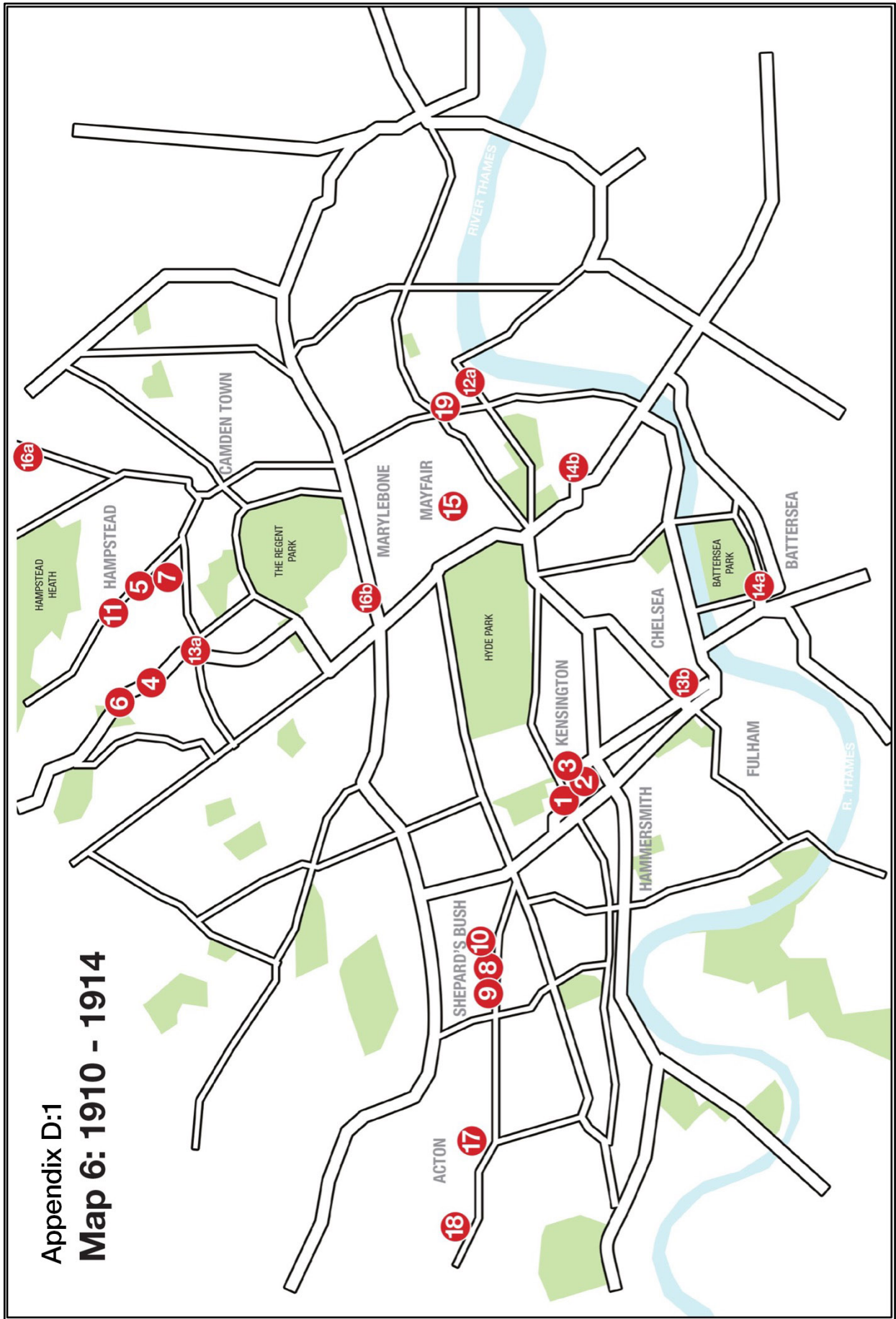


## Appendix C:2 – Map 5 Key

- 1** **Ethel Willis**, 53 Broadhurst Gardens, Finchley Road, Hampstead. **Suffrage Atelier Headquarters (1909-1910).**
- 2** **Agnes Hope Joseph & Sister Eva**, 192 Marylebone Road, London.
- 3** **Catherine Courtauld**, 1 Marlborough studios, 12a Finchley Road, Hampstead.
- 4** **Kathleen Shaw**, 3a Wychcombe Studios, England's Lane, Hampstead.
- 5** **Artist Eliza Turck** (dies 1910), 7 St. George's Square, Primrose Hill.
- 6** **Helen Copsey**, 18 Glenloch Road, Hampstead.
- 7** **Ambrose (Elizabeth Mary) Gosling**, 'Selwood', Hornsey Lane, Highgate, London.



Appendix D:1 – Map 6: 1910 – 1914



Appendix D:1  
Map 6: 1910 - 1914

## Appendix D:2 – Map 6 Key

- 1** **Laurence & Clemence Housman**, 1 Pembroke Cottages, Edwardes Square, Kensington.
- 2** **Suffrage Atelier Headquarters** (circa 1910-1911).
- 3** **Louise Jopling Rowe**, 7 Pembroke Gardens, Kensington.
- 4** **Suffrage Atelier Headquarters** (1909-1910), 53 Broadhurst Gardens, Finchley Road, Hampstead.
- 5** **Kathleen Shaw** (1909-1910), 3a Wychcombe Studios, England's Lane, Hampstead.
- 6** **Catherine Courtauld**, 1 Marlborough studios, 12a Finchley Road, Hampstead.
- 7** **Helen Copsey**, 18 Glenloch Road, Hampstead.
- 8** **Ethel Willis & Agnes Hope Joseph** (1910-1914), 4 Stanlake Villas, Shepherds Bush, Hammersmith.
- 9** **Suffrage Atelier Headquarters** (circa 1911-1914), 6 Stanlake Villas, Shepherds Bush, Hammersmith.
- 10** **Mary Esther Greenhill**, Studio, 262A Uxbridge Road.
- 11** **The Betterment Books Room**, Rosslyn-Hill, Hampstead. Suffrage Atelier exhibitions & sales (1913-1914)
- 12** 2 Robert Street, Adelphi Terrace. **Suffrage Atelier Exhibition space**. Official office or period (1913)
- 13a** **13b** **Louise Rica Jacobs**, Studio 60, Finchley Road, London (1911) & 25 Edith Grove, Chelsea (1913).
- 14a** **Pamela Colman-Smith**, 84 York Mansions, Prince of Wales Road, Battersea Park (1908-1911) &
- 14b** **Pamela Colman-Smith**, 3D Carlisle Place, Westminster (1913)
- 15** **Mildred Statham**, 30 Davies Street, Mayfair (1914).
- 16a** **Mrs Ambrose (Elizabeth Mary) Gosling**, 'Selwood', Hornsey Lane, Highgate (1909-1910) &
- 16b** **Mrs Ambrose (Elizabeth Mary) Gosling**, 10 The Manor House, Marylebone Road, London (1911).
- 17** **Katherine Gatty Gillett**, 96 Churchfield Road, Acton. Secretary (1912-1913).
- 18** **Eilian Hughes**, 20 Fordhook Avenue, Ealing (1911).
- 19** **Edith Craig**, 31-32 Bedford Street (Strand) London (1911-1913).

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