DWELLING ON THE EVERYDAY: HOUSES, GHOSTS, ELLIPSES

Edited by Helen Hills and Alice E. Sanger

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Banner image: Detail from a view of the studio at the Barbara Hepworth gallery in St Ives, Cornwall. (Photo: Ed Clews / Alamy Stock Photo)

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DWELLING ON THE EVERYDAY: HOUSES, GHOSTS, ELLIPSES

Helen Hills and Alice E. Sanger

Abstract

This introduction sets out the rationale, themes and organisation of the special issue.

Biographical note

Helen Hills is Professor Emerita of History of Art, University of York. She has published widely on baroque art and architecture and theory of architecture, particularly on the interplay of architecture, spirituality, gender, and social class in the long 17th century. Horrified by the complicity of art history with art and architecture in the work of marginalizing specific social groups depending on social class, poverty, gender, colour of skin, and geographical location, she has focused principally on women and on southern Italy, including Naples and Sicily. She taught at Queen's University (Canada), Keele University (UK), the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (USA), and the University of Manchester before moving to York, where she was the first ever woman professor of art history.

Alice E. Sanger is an associate lecturer and an honorary associate in the Department of Art History at The Open University. A former Rome Fellow at the British School at Rome, Alice has published on the devotional practice and art patronage of the Medici grand duchesses of the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and co-edited, with Siv Tove Kulbrandstad Walker, the anthology *Sense and the Senses in Early Modern Art and Cultural Practice* (Ashgate, 2012/ Routledge, 2018). She is managing editor of the *Open Arts Journal*.

Banner image: Detail from a view of the studio at the Barbara Hepworth gallery in St Ives, Cornwall. (Photo: Ed Clews / Alamy Stock Photo)

DWELLING ON THE EVERYDAY: HOUSES, GHOSTS, ELLIPSES

Helen Hills & Alice E. Sanger

Figure i.1: A carefully presented bedroom that meets expectations of respectability and august blood lines while dodging anything remotely risqué, courtesy of the National Trust: a bedroom, Wimpole Hall, Cambridgeshire. (The National Trust Photo library / Alamy Stock Photo; Chris Lacey)

The germ of the idea for this special issue started some years ago when Alice Sanger became intrigued by artists' houses and house museums, particularly the allure and apparent paradox of visiting famous people's former homes to be entranced with everyday objects. By 2020 when Helen Hills became involved, it was clear that we needed to address the ways in which scholarship – especially within art history – has approached this topic, together with its largely unexamined premises.

The house museum as tourist destination is a thriving industry. Scholarship, guidebooks, and coffee table books swirl around this industry, much of it uncritically. A particular fascination with places associated with creativity – artists' studios and writers' studies – marks these publications to the present (as the 2016 exhibition at the Petit Palais in Paris and its catalogue attest: Desveaux et al, *Dans l'atelier. L'artiste photographié, d'Ingres à Jeff Koons*). *The Guardian* ran a series, 'Writers' rooms: portraits of the spaces where authors create', between 2007 and 2009, which is now maintained on the newspaper's website, pointing to this enduring fascination.[1]

It is often assumed that a visit to the house of an artist or writer will necessarily reveal something about its erstwhile occupier that is ungleanable from any other evidence and that, in turn, illuminates key aspects of its owner's work as artist and crosses from 'public' into 'private'.[2] Many house museums epitomise the genteel life of a period, making for soothing visits evoking a nostalgic and comforting view of the past, more or less shorn of any unpalatable politics, not unlike what the National Trust achieved for aristocratic estates in the 20th century (Fig. i.1).

When it came to organizing a conference and to a related publication, while we were interested in a range of questions relating to artists' houses and museums,

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1   https://www.theguardian.com/books/series/writersrooms (accessed 27.04.2024).

2   Bell (2013). A simple distinction between 'public' and 'private' is itself ideological and obscures the degree to which the production of the supposedly 'private' is a discourse that is public: arguably there is little that is more ideologically controlled and surveilled than the 'family' and the 'home'. Much of that discursive control is state-led through 'public' health and educational agencies, as Michel Foucault demonstrated, but the extent to which the ideology of the domestic as 'private' is produced by architectural theory, which also serves to police it, has been incisively demonstrated by Mark Wigley. Further discussion is offered below.

Figure i.2: The former bar of the Colony Room, Soho, London: erstwhile haunt of many artists and writers. (Alamy Stock Photo; David Sandison, 2005)

we were averse to perpetuating the celebratory elision of property and persona. The questions that guided us for the conference and that continue to most interest us include: what, if anything, can be gleaned about artists from the places where they dwelled that is not borne out by other evidence? Who else, including servants, family, children, friends, visitors, and lodgers, occupied, lived, or worked in so-called 'artists' houses' and how have their lives been recognized or erased? Is the house where the artist lived that which is really most at issue, given that this might not have been the place that they felt most at home? (Fig. i.2) And what of those who were not rich and who lived in places where they left few traces?

What are the origins of the artist's house museum? And to what extent and how do those origins continue to inform house museums and the assumptions of curators and visitors? (Fig. i.3 & Fig. i.4). What are visitors reaching for when they visit these museums?

In order to address these questions, we decided to include studies of homes of non-artists and of people who were not famous, so as to allow to emerge the peculiar ways in which artists and their houses are treated by curators, visitors and scholars. And as we did

so, we became more intrigued by those places which are not celebrated but are quickly forgotten or ignored (Fig. i.5).

Hence we widened the call for papers, in somewhat Heideggerian terms, to include dwelling on the everyday, while retaining an emphasis on artists' houses, seeking to tease out what has been obscured in the scholarship. Our call for papers resulted in a symposium held online in July 2022 across two workshops. Contributors were drawn from a range of academic disciplines across the arts and social sciences, practitioners from architecture schools, artists, and museum curators. We chose papers from the workshops and invited others to complement them.

What is it in a house – whether of an artist or not – that holds or haunts us, how and why? In respect of artist house museums is this just a form of bourgeois property snooping, or of prying into other people's lives, a delusional search for intimacy?

We are interested in the sort of traces and touches that are left – intentionally or unintentionally – that sometimes strangely touch us. What are we to make of the strange and compelling coincidences that can take place, as another person's life crosses one's own,

Figure i.3: Kettle's Yard, Cambridge. The much enlarged and ever more white-cube-gallery-like presentation of the former home of collector Jim Ede and his wife Helen Ede. The Kettle's Yard website continues to attribute the arrangements to Jim Ede and to avoid engagement with the gender politics of this 'open' house and home. (Courtesy Kettle's Yard, University of Cambridge; photo: Helen Hills)

indirectly or obliquely? 'The real dwelling plight lies in this' Heidegger proposes, 'that mortals ever search anew for the nature of dwelling, that they must ever learn to dwell.' (1993, p.363). It is perhaps in searching for short cuts into how best to dwell that the torrent of visitors flock to museum houses.

But what are the risks associated with such temptations and enchantments? What role do matter and materiality, social class, gender, sexuality and racialization play? What of the sacred and sacrality? How might the houses and neighbourhoods that have been overlooked, destroyed, or occupied by adversaries, best be 'revisited'? How do the politics of erasure play out in relation to houses that have become formal museums and depend on tourism?

Much to our surprise, we found that scholarship on artist's houses barely touches on the origins and development of the institution of the house museum – which are, broadly speaking, 19th century – even though they are crucial to an understanding of many of their most significant and peculiar characteristics. It is important to address this lacuna. Hence the first essay, 'From Artist's House Museum to the Everyday', presents a brief history of the cult of visiting artist's homes and the emergence of the artist's house

museum, along with an identification of the key features and themes of that scholarship and impulse, in order to establish a key historical, cultural and critical context for the essays that follow. That same essay also offers discussion of the term 'home', together with an analysis of recent scholarship on the domestic house in relation to gender – again, crucial themes, which have remained under-examined in the scholarship on the house museum in general and particularly on artist's homes. We hope that that work of identifying perennial themes and problems allows them to be more readily identified when they crop up (or fail to) in the other essays presented here, including those essays not directly concerned with artists' museum homes.

This special issue

The essays collected here investigate from diverse points of view the relationships between places where people lived and what is left behind, salvaged, celebrated, or overlooked, but may sometimes be reactivated in powerful and unpredictable ways by those who come later. These papers examine houses as homes, as shrines, places where people lived and what remains after they have left, and how those places are memorialised. The question of the burden of the past,

Figure i.4: The contrived presentation of the ostensibly casual and everyday. Pebbles meticulously arranged and dusted on a table. Kettle's Yard, Cambridge (Courtesy Kettle's Yard, University of Cambridge; photo: Helen Hills)

Figure i.5: 36 Covent Garden, Cambridge: improvised blue plaques commemorate former inhabitants of this street who are not conventionally significant or famous (photo: Helen Hills)

its unfulfilled potential, and its painful obliterations, together with the ways in which these qualities may come to occupy houses and preoccupy their visitors (or vice versa), are key here.

Almost all the essays investigate – through diverse topics and methods – the ways in which the past resonates in houses no longer lived in, how it leaves its mark on places, and how people leave their mark on their dwellings, what traces are left and how they are celebrated, fetishized, banished or ignored. Which aspects of whose presence tend to get overlooked or even formally erased, by whom, and on what grounds? What are the risks of the temptations and blindspots of enchantment of the allure of famous people's homes? Might we learn as much (at least about ourselves) from the houses to which we do not readily respond?

Temporality as non-linear and occupying a significant but curiously unstable relationship with place plays out in strange crosscurrents and hovers in many of the essays in this volume, particularly those concerned with personal memory and the (contested) legacies of remembering or memorialising home and/or neighbourhood. Photographs often play a key role in these essays, raising further questions of interpretation, not least because photographs tend to present the

rosier aspects of life and they tend to infiltrate and get confused with memories and can even restructure them entirely.

Organization of this special issue

This special issue is divided into three sections.

Section I, *Setting the Scene*, comprises this introduction and 'From Artist's House Museum to the Everyday' (Helen Hills), an essay which traces the prevalent practices and habits of house museum visiting and curation to the emergence of the practice of visiting artists' homes and the development of the institution of the house museum in 19th-century Britain amongst rich and famous male artists and middle-class visitors. It argues that the specific historical circumstances of the rise of both the practice of visiting artists' houses, and the growth of house museums, continue to haunt the institution, presentation and interpretation of house museums to a remarkable degree.

Section II, *Whose House is it Anyway?*, focuses on the contestation of place on social, political and racial grounds. It investigates disputed ownership of specific houses, power struggles over property ownership, the right to interpret the past, whose voice is heard,

and in what circumstances can marginalized groups speak and be heard. The first two essays investigate elisions created by the managing or curating of historic houses to privilege or contest hegemonic narratives maintained by the powerful. The second pair of essays dwell on the transformation of place that occurs when specific groups and their histories are violently destroyed.

Section III, *Paying Homage, Seeking Grace*, investigates relics, saints' shrines, and 'devotional' practices in relation to homes, celebrated and obscure, and investigates problems of attestation and presentation in relation to haunting pasts and absences. The first two essays consider shrines, for saints and for revered family members. The essays in the second part examine houses inhabited by more or less famous people to inquire whether a house can live up to its erstwhile inhabitant after they have departed, and, by extension, what it is about the life in relation to the house that comes to matter and how.

Individual Essays

Section II, *Whose House is it Anyway?*, Part 1: 'Contesting Curation and Curating Contestation' offers essays by Elizabeth Chew and Isabelle Priest, both of which challenge prevailing assumptions that iconic houses can adequately be understood by simply celebrating their founding fathers. Both scholars depart from the point that such houses depended on labour, paid or unpaid, to build and maintain them, an aspect conventionally conveniently overlooked in hero-house narratives. And both engage with the controversies and tensions that arise when these issues are evoked in curating house museums associated with famous men.

In their uncritical celebration of a single famous inhabitant, house museums tend towards the conservative and reactionary. Elizabeth Chew's contribution here traces the tensions that arose at Montpelier, Virginia, home of James Madison, 4th President of the USA, when Descendants of the Enslaved who built and worked in the house and plantation became involved in its governance. Racist attitudes took shelter behind default positions (masquerading as neutral) that the house museum is necessarily for the celebration of the erstwhile singular exceptional hero, regardless of the circumstances.

This contribution is the transcript of an interview conducted in July 2023 when Elizabeth Chew was Montpelier's chief curator. She focuses on the role of the Descendants of the Enslaved at Montpelier and the resistance – which hit the national news in the USA – to their enhanced role in the presentation and curation of the house, its collections and exhibitions.

The discussion sheds light on racialising tensions in curating historic sites that were former places of enslavement across the eastern United States. Montpelier, established as a museum in 1987, has a long-standing history of working with Descendants of the Enslaved to incorporate their voices into the interpretation of the site, but in 2017 an exhibition, *The Mere Distinction of Color*, curated by Chew, which related stories of Enslaved individuals in the voices of living Descendants, ruffled some feathers. A few years later, ground-breaking efforts to create structural parity at the site – to share power and authority equally between Montpelier's governing body and Descendants – were thwarted by pushback from a faction within the institution's Board, leading to the firing of staff. Chew discusses this controversy and outlines the route to structural parity at Montpelier, eventually achieved in May 2022. Recognizing the role of Enslaved people in the presentation of houses which have long been recognized as significant in the history of the United States remains politically fraught and emotionally highly contested.

Isabelle Priest investigates the ways in which elite homes for artists in France in the interwar years, designed by acclaimed architect Le Corbusier, actively invisibilised servants. In a challenge to the heroicising narrative of architectural history that celebrates Le Corbusier's work in terms of modernist innovation, purist aesthetic, and modernism as supposedly inherently progressive, Priest demonstrates that these domestic buildings (Maison La Roche, Villa Savoye and the building in which Le Corbusier had an apartment, Immeuble Molitor) were far from progressive in social terms, by tracing the roles, working conditions, and accommodation of their domestic servants.

Priest draws attention to the paradox that while Le Corbusier is acclaimed as avant-garde progressive designer of modern buildings for modern ways of life, in point of fact the houses he designed – even for clients who were ostensibly culturally progressive – were conservative, even reactionary, when it came to their accommodation of servants. His architectural organization of domestic labour and social class amounted to systemic denial, effacement and subordination. Le Corbusier's much celebrated 'modernist' houses – built for those with supposedly little inclination for social conventions – radiating efficiency and cleanliness, were maintained by the semi-concealed labour of an old-fashioned servant class. The debasing architectural housing of these servants puts the lie to received notions that Corbusier's domestic architecture overthrew bourgeois stuffiness and obsession with social hierarchy in favour of a

progressive formal egalitarianism. This essay shows that the white and gleaming shiny surfaces, deemed by Le Corbusier to be modern and rational, actually required even more work than conventional surfaces and were anything but progressive and rational for those who had to clean them. Moreover, that domestic labour was undertaken by mostly female servants whose quarters were obscured, cramped and basic. Priest points out that this side of the coin is ignored both in the display of those houses open to the public and in the scholarship on modernism, both of which tend to maintain an illusion of a self-cleaning modern home, and thereby perpetuate uncritically Corbusier's self-serving narrative as socially progressive.

In the second part of Section II, *Whose House is it Anyway?*, entitled 'The Place of Memory', Rasha Saffarini and Robert Gaunt investigate memory and loss in relation to violent political eradication and cultural erasure to address ways in which lost places and photography structure memory and longing. They explore the power of place, the power of the place of memory and how lost places – especially places unjustly destroyed or appropriated – continue to haunt, possess and displace the dispossessed.

Rasha Saffarini's personal and poetic essay explores diasporic yearning and loss, circling around a grand and elegant house in Tulkarem, that once belonged to her family and which now stands inaccessible and abandoned, as a result of Israeli occupation of the West Bank.[3] The house – which Saffarini herself never knew – was built in the 1930s by her great grandfather, Zaki Saffarini, for Salah Al-din Amin Salah, mayor of Tulkarem – has been passed down in photographs and family memory and has come to assume a place of unjust loss, racializing destruction, and yet also a possible redemptive future. As the largest house in the area, it was peremptorily seized in 1946 by the British, who evicted Salah Amin and his family, in order to house one of their own generals. Salah Amin returned to his house on the departure of the British in 1948, but was soon forced to leave it again when he was driven into exile in 1959. In 2019, the house was purchased by the architect's grandson but he was not allowed by the occupying Israelis to use it. Saffarini's essay traces the obsessive haunting and fragmentation of belonging, longing, yearning, memories and loss of diasporic exile and is itself haunted by stories, proverbs, repeated and remembered, but not fully inhabited or owned. The experimental style of the essay evokes the splintering of the present and the past by eruptions of painful

truths of what could have, should have, and might have been; and what, in future, might, should and could – but is extremely unlikely to be – in future – in the torsion of injustice and dispossession. The instability of any possibility of dwelling or even imagining a dwelling in an invaded, occupied and destroyed landscape and place is conjured by ellipses and aporia, citations and riddled dreams.

Robert Gaunt remembers, with unabashed longing and nostalgia, the working-class community and neighbourhood of Brinksway, Stockport, UK, where he spent his childhood until the area was slated for 'slum clearances' and his family moved away. A former centre of heavy industry for 150 years, in the 1950s and 1960s, industrial, factory, and mill life were already running into hard times. Once the family moved, their Brinksway past was disavowed with embarrassed shame. His essay therefore marks Gaunt's stepping back across that abyss of shame and dispersal to reclaim his place in and with that place that was his. He draws on his own memories, conversations with other former residents, and especially on the photographs of the people and rituals in the area taken by Michael Danyliw, an amateur photographer, resident of Brinksway, and refugee from Ukraine during World War II. The haunting of the past and the loss of place are doubled, the community dispersed; and the sense of community, its rituals and ways of life are doubly lost as Gaunt and others shifted into more middle-class ways of life elsewhere. Hence, Gaunt sees himself as an 'outsider' to his own past, looking on, rather like the enigmatic Danyliw. Gaunt insists on the photograph's capacity to record memories and even to 'resurrect' the past. Gaunt's memories and most of the photos are set not in the back to backs and under-dwellings, but outside, in the street. Home was the extended neighbourhood, including pubs, factories, schools, back gardens, outside toilets, scrubbed front steps, mill chimneys, and the mill sirens that marked lunch breaks. But three remarkable photos depict the Danyliw household indoors: Marika snoozing on the sofa, Mrs Danyliw in curlers – an apparently frank portrait of a woman with no illusions – and a more mannered image of himself at work, loupe in eye, expertly mending a timepiece at his desk. The essay returns particularly fondly to the Sunday School Rose Fête and Parade, a proud event, marked by the respectable members of the community, which culminated in the crowning of a Rose Queen. A highly gendered – even eroticized – and stratified matrix emerges. Danyliw's photos testify to a stark gulf between the smartly groomed and expensively adorned participants in the parade – purposeful and assured of gaze and step, accompanied by proud mothers –

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3   This essay was written before Netanyahu's invasion of Gaza, 2023–4.

and the awkward, haphazard halting of the scruffy children, too poor to take part, who looked on from the sidelines. Gaunt's essay is a timely reminder of the rapid erosion of working-class culture and creativity and its precariousness in a country which continues to disparage it. One cannot help noting that this failure to value working-class culture is reflected in the fact the UK is almost unique amongst developed nations in still not having a state museum of folk art.

Section III, *Paying Homage Seeking Grace*, Part 1: 'Housing the holy' offers essays by Alice Sanger and Alessandra Batty which investigate shrines. Sanger tackles the miraculous flying House of Loreto, supposed home to Mary the Virgin Mother of Jesus, site of the Incarnation, and as such a particularly sacred place of Christian pilgrimage, while Batty examines small-scale popular shrines, including domestic shrines, at the other end of the scale.

Alice Sanger investigates the shrine at Loreto, an entirely exceptional home on several counts. This house, which occupies an originary role in the story of Christianity, flew from Palestine to Loreto – a sign of its miraculous nature. The Holy House is examined in terms of its allure to early modern pilgrims for whom even the house dust was precious. It is the setting in which the Annunciation took place and later the locus of the day-to-day life of the holy family. This essay probes the ways in which a tension between the extraordinary and apparently ordinary was negotiated and managed architecturally. Sanger shows that the early simple and unadorned qualities of the house, originally testament precisely to its necessarily humble yet divine origins, came to be steadily enriched with grand and aulic revetment and adornment, to celebrate the holiness of the shrine, show proper devotion to the Incarnation, and also to safely ensconce the holy in an upper-class register. In other words, the holy, initially housed in a poor and simple structure, came over the course of the 15th and 16th centuries to be accommodated like a king or a courtier, such that the holy as humble was unhoused to avoid its potential subversiveness socially and politically. In dealing with what is unhoused and chased out, as threatening to power interests on the rise, Sanger's essay resonates with those by Gaunt and Saffarini, despite the apparently stark differences in subject matter.

Alessandra Batty's examines informal shrines, 'dwellings of divinity among common folk', located both inside the house, often on a dresser in the principal bedroom, and outside on street corners, in order to investigate the role of women in their creation and care. The 19th-century Roman small-scale street shrines, located on corners or at entrances to neighbourhoods, mark informal devotional districts, and were erected and maintained by residents. As such, they simultaneously mark their residential neighbourhoods as devout and offer easy access for devotion in busy lives already overladen with work. These street shrines are usually devoted to the Virgin Mary or local saints, while domestic shrines present an array of photos of members of the family, now deceased. The astonishingly high number of street shrines in Rome – over 2,700 in 1855 – has dropped to less than a quarter of that number today. This is doubtless due to a decline in religious devotion in general in Italy, but also suggests that local neighbourhoods are no longer the live centres for informal and public devotion that they used to be (partly because of the relentless gentrification and touristification of the city of Rome). Batty relates the street aedicules to domestic shrines of family photographs of the dead, often set up in bedrooms or formal drawing rooms, both to honour the departed and to demonstrate the respectability of the family in terms of spiritual and domestic harmony. Street shrines and house shrines encourage and advertise the piety and respectability of their worshippers, neighbourhoods and families, and offer a special place for the divine and the dear departed to maintain their presence and relationship with the living amidst the hustle and bustle of everyday life, outside or in. Batty suggests that depictions by male artists of street shrines tend to present women as marginalized, which was not the case in terms of actual devotional practices. And it was and continues to be largely women who create and maintain, clean and dust domestic shrines. In both cases, the absence of an official priesthood or liturgy – traditionally the domain of middle- or upper- class and educated men – permits these shrines to serve to house and nurture female devotion, working-class affect, and family and neighbourhood pride in small but intense 'theatres' which were largely curated and orchestrated by women.

Essays by Edoardo Piccoli, Rosamund Cole and Helen Hills in Section III, *Paying Homage, Seeking Grace*, Part 2: 'Haunted Homes and Indices of Absence', examine hauntings of houses by former occupants. Central to their concerns are relationships between places of dwelling and the traces left behind, and how such traces satisfy, tantalise, and frustrate the latter-day visitor longing for connection with their former occupant.

Edoardo Piccoli's essay focuses on a modest rented flat in a working-class neighbourhood of Turin, used for many years as daily workplace by Franco Rosso, architectural historian, architectural draughtsman, and

friend and colleague of the author. Piccoli is concerned with the fleeting and the fragility of meaning and occupancy of both dwelling and possessions left behind after death. Having assumed, along with two colleagues, responsibility for documenting and ordering Rosso's archive for its conservation at the Turin Archive, Piccoli traces the process by which his initial sense of the flat and its objects as possessing an uncanny agency and continuity with Rosso's life was usurped by a recognition that this place had witnessed his mental decline and efforts to resist progressive amnesia, to an even more disturbing sense that the very work of ordering and curating was itself producing its own objects and subjects.

Piccoli poignantly contrasts Rosso's meticulous and elegant measured drawings, the product of many weeks of scrupulous field work and concentration, with his roughly scribbled notes and memoranda, pinned up on shelves and walls as aide-memoires, one testifying to the capacity to investigate and measure vaults hundreds of feet high and the other testimony to the loss of memory and control over daily life. The essay pays tribute to a judicious, frugal, and scrupulous work and world of its former inhabitant, at once down to earth and tangible yet also unknowable and far away. Friendship, collegial respect, and the recognition of the value and meaning of Rosso's work and possessions telescope in this essay forwards and backwards, inside and out, rather like the marvels of observation, imagination, and compression and expansion in scale, to be seen in Franco Rosso's formidable architectural drawings.

Musicologist Rosamund Cole investigates the soprano Lilli Lehmann's summer villa, which was built on the shores of the Mondsee, Austria, at the end of the 19th century. Lehmann, celebrated as the 'Berlin Nightingale' and a renowned expert on vocal technique, used her grand villa to shore up the hard-won successes of her career. On the one hand, the elegant rusticity of Mondsee provided a refreshing retreat from her professional life. On the other hand, Lehmann sought –not entirely successfully – to use her fashionable house to bolster her social status and marriage. In 2015 when Cole first visited, the 'Villa Lehmann', still privately owned, was largely as its original owner had left it. Cole's work was like that of a detective, searching the house and discovering long-overlooked and concealed documents and photos, which have subsequently been photographed and archived at the International Stiftung Mozarteum in Salzburg. Her essay provides the backstory to the house, its occupants and its collection, seeking to derive from the artefacts a sharper sense of life in the villa, the role of the house in the affair Lehmann's husband embarked on in it and the disintegration of their marriage.

Rejecting the notions that a person is coherent and the past reconstructible, Helen Hills challenges the common assumption that the artist's house is necessarily a representation of artist or/and their work to investigate the strange allure that visiting an artist or writer's house can nevertheless hold. She likens the practice to that of paying devotion to saints' shrines in the hope of miraculous insights or inspiration in a culture that elevates (certain) artists to the modern equivalent of glorified saints. Hills' essay focuses on a visit in the same day to two houses, Emily Dickinson's *Homestead* in Amherst, Massachusetts, and the house next door, *The Evergreens*, where Emily Dickinson's brother, Austin, lived with his wife, Susan Gilbert – probably also Emily Dickinson's lover. The first has been fastidiously curated in line with historical evidence and various notions of Dickinson the poet, 'a curiously exacting make-believe of time stopped still', while *The Evergreens* is an unnerving place in which past and present are open-ended, contradictory, fragmented and beriddled. Hills sets aside 'the puritanical belief in authenticity' to draw on Jean-Luc Nancy's notion of the portrait. For Nancy the object of a portrait is the absolute subject, 'detached from everything that does not belong to it', 'a taking place that is neither "interior" nor "exterior", but set toward and in relation': the face appears in the portrait only by way of 'the absence that resemblance precisely is' (Nancy, 2006, p.7, p.67). Hills uses this notion of the portrait to suggest that a visit to a house may bring into visibility something hitherto veiled or occluded precisely by the life and work (or ideas about them), as if the person remains in the house and has just stepped out. Hence a house may hold the subject insofar as they comported themselves to themselves, in private or in distraction. It holds the subject as accretion, a self-relation mediated through a departure from the self. Hills suggests that within a regime faithful to a clean order of linear history, the artist's house is inevitably reduced to a representational deadliness, and becomes little more than an institutional archive of a greatly extended single day. By contrast, an economy of salvation, that recognizes the possibility of presence in absence, that is open to time as non-linear, and that is able to resist representational imperatives, even while apparently depending on betrayal, might momentarily lift the veil.

Key Themes

Tensions and contradictions amongst the essays remain and it is not part of our project to erase these. Indeed, we hope they will lead to further investigation. Below we pick out some key issues.

House and Home

Is our focus on the home reactionary? Material feminists and socialist feminists long ago identified the home as site of oppression and patriarchal domination. There has been a vigorous and widespread critique of house and home in relation to sex, gender, and sexuality within feminist and queer theory.[4]

'The very regularity of home's processes is both inexorable and absurd', argues Mary Douglas, 'It is this very regularity that needs focus and explaining. How does it go on being what it is? And what is it?' (Douglas, 1991, p.287). Douglas suggests that 'home' is always a localizable idea (not 'how' or 'who' or 'when' but 'where') located in space, but not really a fixed space' (p.290). While Douglas fails to engage with the significance of the materials and materiality of the home, her insights about the tyranny of the home remain valuable. She argues that the ethnic domain of the home is 'structured domesticity', which 'creates its own time rhythms ... its own spatial effects and its own regulation of vision and perception of distance' (p.293). The home's technique is to use synchrony and order to protect fair access to the goods, movables and perishables. Synchrony and order 'effectively combine to show up delinquency' in a tangle of conventions and totally incommensurable rights and duties (pp.300–1). 'Even in its most altruistic and successful versions, [the home] exerts a tyrannical control over mind and body', because 'those committed to the idea of home exert continual vigilance on its behalf' (p.305).

Part of the reason for the emotional enmeshment of the house museum is that there are few words more evocative to bourgeois fantasy than 'home' and 'house'. 'Home' is a fragmentary and shifting concept, highly ideological and contested, and house and home are not identical (Mallett, 2004). Ranging from half-remembered nostalgic childhood homes, such as that conjured by Gaston Bachelard ([1958] 2014), to fantasies of family harmony, the cultural hegemonic notion of home as the bourgeois home is vital to a dominant USA-European imaginary and continues often unchallenged in the artist home museum (Harever, 1991; Hepworth, 1993).

J. Hollander has shown how Germanic words for

home – *Heim, ham, heem* – derive from Indo-European *kei,* meaning 'lying down' and something dear or beloved, in other words, a place to lay one's head (2004, p.64). In English the term 'home' derives from Anglo-Saxon 'ham' meaning village or settlement. From the 17th century 'two kinds of moralists' displaced the earlier meanings of the term. The concept of 'homeland' was appropriated by the ruling classes to provide a form of nationalism and patriotism aimed at protecting and extending their land holdings, wealth, and power. At the same time, the idea of home became the focal point for a form of 'domestic morality' aimed at protecting and controlling familial property, land, women and children.

Corporate, capitalist, and marketing interests have informed, trespassed, pilfered, infiltrated, and exploited notions of house and home. Governments of advanced capitalist countries, including the UK, USA, Australia, Canada and New Zealand have promoted the conflation of house, home, and family as part of an agenda to increase growth, shift the burden of responsibility for citizens' welfare from the state and its institutions to 'home' and the nuclear family (Mallett, 2004, p.66). Ideal Home exhibitions from 1950s on manipulated marketing techniques to sell commodities as pathway to happy homes. Notions of the ideal home often haunt the relationship between house and home (Chapman and Hockey, 1999).

The unself-aware but politically charged notions that continue to structure much writing on the house and home and the curation of house museums – idealized and exclusive conceptions of home as white, overwhelmingly middle class, harmonious, and socially respectable – have been challenged in terms of ethnicity, social class and disabilities by bell hooks (1991), Doreen Massey (1992), Madigan and Munro (1992), amongst many others (including Isabelle Priest, Rasha Saffarini and Robert Gaunt in this issue).

Despite the cultural significance and emotional weight of house and home, most people have very limited choice about the location or design of their houses, constrained as they are by governments, developers, architects, urban planners, politics, engineers, builders, interior designers and, above all, limited wealth. Yet the physical aspects of the house, including its location, design, site, and internal spatial configuration, have enormous impact on sense of identity, relationships, and patterns of interaction within and without (Saunders & Williams, 1998).

The extreme constraints of most people's houses may account in part for their fascination with the homes of social groups – including well-to-do artists

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4   See, for instance, Butler (1993); Grosz (1994); hooks (1990); Young (1980).

– in possession of sufficient economic and cultural capital to shape their own spaces in a purportedly 'individualistic' manner (see the essays by Priest and Cole). Partly because housing is over-determined by external forces, the 'house' or 'home' emerges as an idealized object of fantasy. Tucker suggests that the 'ideal home' of memory or yearning is where one 'would be fully fulfilled' (1994, p.184).

The house, then, becomes the overburdened locus of the dream of fulfilment in capitalist cultures which have shifted emphasis away from communal engagement for the greater good to aspirational fantasy of individual lives providing their own complete satisfactions.

Memory and family, home and neighbourhood, loss and dispossession loom large in several of the contributions (Batty, Cole, Saffarini, Gaunt and Piccoli). Romantic and nostalgic conjurings of lost homes, whether of childhood or other forms of loss, often yield to a confused search in a sentimental journey for irretrievable time and place, a sort of religious pilgrimage to a lost and promised land (Gaunt, Cole, Hills). In turn, this may prompt a search for some sort of corrective authenticity. Doreen Massey usefully insists that there is 'no single, simple "authenticity" as unique eternal truth' of an actual or imagined or reinvented place or home that can be used as a reference either now or in the past (Massey, 1992; 1994). By its very nature place is provisional and in flux, as explored here by Piccoli (Hills, 2017–8, pp.39–65). Indeed, rather than fixed or static, as is so often imagined, places–including houses– are endlessly coming into being, slipping away, and resurfacing unexpectedly, sometime in heavy disguise. Boundaries between outside and inside are necessary unstable and permeable (here Gaunt, Saffarini, Priest). Identities and meanings of places, houses and homes are inevitably plural, constructed, and contested (here Saffarini). Just because memory is unreliable, remembering homes lost and dreamed is not necessarily reactionary or to be sneered at (here Gaunt). As Marcel Proust showed, remembering the past can illuminate and transform the present (see also hooks, 1991, p.19; Massey, 1992, p.14).

What is evoked by house and home depends on cultural norms and individual fantasies, which are also culturally specific. Indeed, much of the scholarship has been dominated by an un-self-aware middle or upper middle-class voice and outlook (Jones, 2000, is a case in point). Many diasporic, marginalized, traveling and nomadic peoples do not assume that home is settled or safe or private or sharply differentiated from the outside world (here Saffarini). For the Warlpiri of the Tanami Desert in central Australia, home traditionally is where one hails from and the places where one has camped or stayed over the course of one's life (Jackson, 1995, p.22). Sara Ahmad (1999) has usefully challenged the oft drawn distinction between 'home' and 'away', arguing that they are not oppositional terms, that home encompasses movement and strangers, familiarity and strangeness, inside and out. Indeed, Sigmund Freud long ago pointed out that canny and uncanny are both homely and unhomely experiences.

Private / Public

The terms 'house' and 'museum' tend to be regarded as in tension with its apparent dualisms of private/public, universal/particular and mundane/exceptional. But it was 19th-century ideology that largely generated notions of the house as a 'private space', a retreat from the demands of the 'public' outside world, including the world of work (Dovey, 1985). And it is not coincidental that this was the key period for the house museum. Although any simple distinction between private and public has long been challenged, especially in relation to the domestic house, it readily re-emerges in discussions of 'homes' and of the house museum.

Material feminists long ago were troubled by and sort to address the distorting power of this powerful ideology in the domestic realm. Consider Charlotte Perkins Gilman in 1903:

> Let us begin with one especially dominant domestic myth, that fondly cherished popular idea – "the privacy of the home." In the home who has any privacy? Privacy means the decent seclusion of the individual, the right to do what one likes unwatched, uncriticised, unhindered. Neither father, mother, nor child has this right at home (Perkins Gilman, 1910, copyrighted 1903).

Before industrialization, most paid work was undertaken in the household and a distinction between where one lived and where one worked did not hold (the cardinal entertained distinguished visitors in his palace which was his home including even in his bedroom). Historians, sociologists, and geographers have successfully dispelled the notion of a distinction between domestic and workspace, private and public; and the notion of home as haven has been rightly chased out the back door (here see the essay by Priest).[5] The unequal division of housework–unpaid and unending – that unfairly burdens women and continues in most households, was first examined systematically by Ann Oakley in 1975. One person's haven or 'shrine'

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5   Duncan and Edwards (1996); Tosh (1996); Hepworth (1999), Jones (2000); Wardaugh (1999).

is place of thankless toil for another. And for many women, children, immigrants and illegally trafficked people, 'home' is a site of deprivation, abuse, violence, fear, imprisonment, and torture.

Scholarship to date on artists' houses has focused overwhelmingly on western European bourgeois notions of the house. Essays in this collection challenge those currents in multifaceted ways (Saffarini, Priest, Batty, Sanger). Curator Leslie Umberger has provided a useful corrective to the overwhelming emphasis in art history on upper class artists and commercially successful artists' homes, by investigating instead vernacular artists and their domestic and urban interventions. After all, the house is not necessarily where even its inhabitants feel most at home. The home is the site of much abuse and violence. Power relations and the complex ways in which they are architecturally imbricated are too often overlooked or over-simplified.

House as Engendering Gender

It is an ideological effect of domestic architecture and its theorization that it appears merely to house what it in effect produces, as Mark Wigley (1992) has brilliantly demonstrated. The house is the very institution which most sharply produces respectable masculinity by demarcating it as that which is maintained by labouring outside it and respectable femininity as that which is protected by its walls. The house serves to reproduce patriarchy, the labour force, and consumers for the market. And it is the very cradle of the generation of gendered difference.

Gendered assumptions have long infiltrated the design and theory of domestic architecture, mostly invisibly and insidiously, as cogently shown by Wigley (1992; 1993), Marion Roberts (1991) and others (including, Hills, 2004; Durning; Madigan & Munro, 1999). However, liberal and architectural determinist approaches continue to ignore issues of social relations and power imbrications. Even while Michel Foucault demonstrated that power relations are imbricated spatially, he overlooked gender.[6]

Feminist scholarship initially focused on the gender of architects or clients in order to identify gendered imperatives. They investigated houses designed by women architects for themselves and the implications for domestic design of feminist materialism (Hayden, 1981; Wright, 1977; Weisman, 1996). Scholars examined houses designed by male architects for female clients

hoping to uncover gendered assumptions (Bryden and Floyd, 1992; Crum, 2001; Friedman, 1997, 1998; French, 2003). Hence Farès el-Dahdah and Stephen Atkinson (1995) interrogated the Josephine Baker House in Paris in relation to architect Adolf Loos' pleasure. This early work was marked by an assumption that gender and gendering was inscribed in the person of architect or client and would therefore emerge in the architecture as a result.

The imbrications of masculinity and the house or 'home' remain too often unmarked, while discussions of 'gender' are too often restricted to discussion of women. Even where it occurs, the investigation of masculinity and architecture tends to remain somewhat unnuanced (Anderson, 1999, pp.130–53; Wagner, 1996, pp.183–221). The critical investigation of the inscription of masculinities in domestic architecture has received far less attention than that of femininities; unmarked masculinity still tends to be casually overlooked.

Scholarship focused directly on masculinity and architecture has tended to concentrate on gay sexualities (Hatt, 2007, pp.105–28) and, while this is important, the continued neglect of heterosexual masculinities still weakens interpretations of domestic architecture and 'home'. Davidoff and Hall in their fundamental study *Family Fortunes* (1987) offered ground-breaking analysis of questions of gender and social class in this regard. The imbrications of social class and colour of skin in spatial relations of power and how they manifest in domestic architecture have been explored by bell hooks (2000) and others (hooks, 2000, pp.203–9; Neely & Samura, 2011).

Most house museums are associated with famous men, but the scholarship tends to blithely disregard unmarked masculinity and the politics of gender. Several essays here focus on women (Cole, Sanger, Hills, Batty, Priest). More significantly, some expose gendered and classed dimensions in play (Priest, Gaunt, Batty). Hence Priest explores the gendered and classed relations produced by house design by tracing the presence of servants – mostly women – in houses that are better known for their famous architect and privileged inhabitants. Gaunt's essay on the Rose Queen exposes the gendered work of maintaining and parading working-class family respectability and its ideals of nubile femininity; and Batty's essay sheds light on gendered devotion in street and home.

House as Shrine

In an essay of 1904, Virginia Woolf tested the idea of a visit to Haworth as a 'pilgrimage'. Indeed, houses of artists and writers are often treated like relics or holy shrines by fans and scholars. Sanger's investigation of

6   For the inscription of gender in spatiality see Massey (2000). For a brilliant discussion of these issues in relation to visual art, see Pollock (1998).

a relic that is a house sheds light on the way that the notion of preserving a precious relic is at odds with the radical material changes carried out on the fabric of the House of Loreto; Hills argues that the tendency to sanctify or celebrate the artist in the house museum depends on a notion of 'already knowing' that artist, which then generates modes of presentation that are based on representation, and which in turn inevitably tend to work to betray their subjects. Batty investigates informal shrines of saints in streets in Rome and *altarini* of deceased family members in private houses, to suggest that invocations to saints and evocations of the dear departed have much in common.

The notion of home as shrine and place of sanctity haunts the very institution of the house museum, especially the homes of creative artists, and it is important to approach it critically. Maintenance of that shrine depended disproportionately on unpaid female domestic labour. Material feminists recognized this issue as central to any construction of 'home' from the 19th century on. Thus, Charlotte Gilman in 1903:

> The later sentiments of sanctity and the others have moved a little, but not much. *Why* it is more sacred to make a coat at home than to buy it of a tailor, to kill a cow at home than to buy it of a butcher, to cook a pie at home than to buy it of a baker, or to teach a child at home than to have it taught by a teacher, is not made clear to us, but the lingering weight of those ages of ancestor-worship, of real sacrifice and libation at a real altar, is still heavy in our minds. We still by race-habit regard the home as sacred, and cheerfully profane our halls of justice and marts of trade, as if social service were not at least as high a thing as domestic service. This sense of sanctity is a good thing, but it should grow, it should evolve along natural lines till it includes all human functions, not be forever confined to its cradle, the home.

Gilman recognizes that the domestic shrine was a sacrificial altar for female labour and women's intellectual and creative fulfilment:

> The domestic hearth, with its undying flame, has given way to the gilded pipes of the steam heater and the flickering evanescence of the gas range. But the sentiment about the domestic hearth is still in play. The original necessity for the ceaseless presence of the woman to maintain that altar fire–and it was an altar fire in very truth at one period – has passed with the means of prompt ignition; the matchbox has freed the housewife from that incessant service, but

the *feeling* that women should stay at home is with us yet.

Housing the Everyday

In order to shift the focus away from celebrating the great genius and collapsing house-work-and-artist into one, we turn to the everyday, partly because it is so often the everyday that visitors to artist house museums seem to respond to (or to look for).[7] While 'the everyday' has been pursued as a means to resist top-down, aulic, and upper class perspectives of cultural life, a key question must always be '*whose* everyday?' In this special issue, this question is explored by Chew, Piccoli, Gaunt, Priest, Batty, Saffarini and Hills. Others address houses that are as far from the everyday as it is possible to be – a lavish villa in an area of prime property for the successful (Cole), and an aulicized house, formerly supposedly humble, lived in by a Virgin mother (Sanger). As such, those essays tend to follow canonical notions of what constitute houses worthy of study, while nevertheless looking anew at these sites.

The notion of housing the everyday, as it intersects variously with neighbourhood, familial obligations, remembering and forgetting, loss and dispossession, is pursued in all the essays here. We are not under the illusion that the 'everyday' is innocent or provides access to 'authenticity'. Foucault brilliantly demonstrated that the everyday has been invaded by scrutiny in the effective governance of social subjects. The simple claim that everyday life is 'authentic' and resistant to hegemony or dominant forces fails to recognize this infiltration of everyday life that has been underway for centuries and that is exercised in relation to sexual practices, hygiene, family life, work, diet, education and health – and, above all, the house and home. The Rose Queen parade in Gaunt's essay also reveals systems of coercion that 'respectability' exerted on the inhabitants of Brinksway and their asymmetrical pressures in terms of gender. Despite the cosy memories, the status of the respectable depended on the exclusion of the unrespectable, and the excluded show up at the edges, unmoored and drifting through Danyliw's photos, unidentified and marginalized.

'The everyday' is recalcitrant, opaque, and often obscure. Freud long ago observed that the everyday is both real and fantasy, actuality and its guise, the home site of the canny and uncanny. It is certainly not as it appears to appear. It occupies a realm of desire

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7   Thinkers dealing with the everyday include, Day (2006), de Certeau (1984), Freud ([1901] 1961), Goffman (1959), Heller ([1984] 2016), Lefebvre ([1991] 2014), Smith (1987), Steedman (2005), Williams (1989). Also see, Gardiner (2000).

and fear, however much social propriety may require ritualistic and socially sanctioned practices designed to smother or detract from disturbing desires and fearful qualities. Karl Marx usefully challenged the notion that one can simply grasp the everyday that one dwells in and his insights remain useful (if little heeded). Marx dismissed idealist notions of readily grasped worlds, whether exterior or interior and described the self's understanding of culture as an illusion. For Marx ideology is a product of social and economic relationships and processes, rather than the result of mere reflection or thought. The way that the world appears to each person is the outcome of the particular material circumstances in which they live. While there is a relationship between the material conditions of everyday life and the way it is perceived, this relationship is distorted: 'if in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a *camera obscura*, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process' (Marx & Engels [1846], 1985, p.7). That is, the appearance of everyday life works to obscure the material circumstances – crucially the division of labour, the fetishism of the commodity – that gives rise to that distortion. This ideological outlook structures and conditions the way people live. Hence ideology cannot just be cast off by taking a second look. This is why the everyday must be considered in relation to the material circumstances of its production (Gaunt, Saffarini, Piccoli, Priest).

Micro-sociologist, Erving Goffman (1990) argued that individuals perform very differently, depending on contexts that they are in. These plural performances of self challenge the very idea that there is a stable unified individual to which a narrative biography or identity can be simply ascribed. While some assume that everyday life is mundane, routine, humdrum and repetitive, Michel de Certeau ([1984] 1988) argued that the everyday is practical, supremely singular, and capable of resistance to disciplinary regimes. Certeau rejects Goffman's dependence on the notion of the 'individual' as useful point of departure. For Certeau the social individual is too heterogenous and networked to form a useful basis for the analysis of everyday life. Not fully controllable or open to direct observation, the everyday is rather a realm of practice that is always irreducibly specific. He addresses the everyday not in terms of content, but in terms of 'form'. Saffarini's essay leans closest to this approach, despite the deprivation of any sort of 'everyday' contact with the house that is at the heart of her essay.

'But what sort of sense is constitutive of the everydayness?' asks Michael Taussig, 'Surely this sense includes much that is not sense so much as sensuousness, as embodied and somewhat automatic "knowledge" that functions like peripheral vision, not studied contemplation, a knowledge that is imageric and sensate rather than ideational'. Taussig's approach intersects with aspects of shimmer in the essays by Piccoli, Saffarini, and Hills which may appear to risk a return to romanticizing riffs. (Taussig 1992, p.14). But the estrangement of the everyday is a crucial part of it.

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FROM ARTIST'S HOUSE MUSEUM TO THE EVERYDAY
Helen Hills with Alice E. Sanger

Abstract
This essay traces the prevalent practices and habits of house museum visiting and curation to the emergence of the practice of visiting artists' homes and the development of the institution of the house museum in 19th-century Britain amongst rich famous male artists and middle-class visitors. It argues that the specific historical circumstances of the rise of both the practice of visiting artists' houses and the growth of house museums continue to haunt the institution, presentation and interpretation of house museums to a remarkable degree.

Biographical note
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Banner image: Detail from a view of the studio at the Barbara Hepworth gallery in St Ives, Cornwall. (Photo: Ed Clews / Alamy Stock Photo)

FROM ARTIST'S HOUSE MUSEUM TO THE EVERYDAY

Helen Hills with Alice E. Sanger

The Strange Spell of the House Museum

The houses of famous people, particularly of writers and artists, cast a strange spell on the cultural imagination of the educated and well-heeled, especially in western Europe, USA, Australia, and Canada. Hallowed, rather like saints' shrines (Fig. ii.1), they are deemed worthy of cultural pilgrimage to 'discover' some aspect of the artist, otherwise occluded. And scholarship and the curation of house museums play their part in this by conflating artist or writer, house, and oeuvre – as if in a necessary continuum that can be magically accessed by the present-day visitor. The celebration of the singular mythic genius as explanator of the artwork remains perhaps nowhere more alive and well than in the house museum – particularly house museums dedicated to visual artists and their attendant scholarship, which generally lack the more critical edge and greater sociological awareness that mark studies and presentations of the house museums of writers. This essay challenges the persistent conflation between artist's house, artist's work, and artist's house museum and relates it to the specific historical origins and development of this curious institution.

In Britain the house museum developed first and foremost for famous writers and, while the presentation of those museums still tends to be that of the 'hero house', relevant scholarship is more critical than for their visual artists counterparts (Young, 2019; Watson, 2010 & 2020). Indeed, with regard to visual artists' house museums, the celebratory narrative still holds sway in both curation and scholarship.

There are many reasons for this: familiarity with art remains an upper-middle class preserve; history of art is rarely taught in state schools; and visual art has a financial value which disproportionately benefits vested interests, the rich, the powerful, investors, collectors, auction houses, and museums (Bourdieu, Darbel & Schnapper, 1997). Yet the specific historical circumstances of the emergence of this museum type, and of the visual artist's house museum in particular, have much to answer for in this regard.

Eager interest in visiting houses once inhabited by writers, painters, sculptors, and architects is

Figure ii.1: Relic of the grille through which St Clare received Mass at San Damiano, Basilica of Santa Chiara, Assisi. (Courtesy of the Basilica di Santa Chiara, Assisi / photo: Helen Hills).

not matched in relation to former dwellings of mathematicians, scientists, engineers, politicians, or even musicians. There are more house museums in Britain dedicated to writers and artists than to any other group; and the motives of visitors appear to differ for this group, too. Visitors to Newton's house do not aim to understand better the discovery of gravity, but the notion that one might catch a flicker of the creative spark in the homes of artists and writers seems widespread.

Despite frequent justifications of artists' house museums as 'art historical treasures' ('a mother lode of historical evidence' (Corn, 2005, p.12)), artists' and writers' houses tend to be presented as enchanted places that offer visitors direct access to the artist's life and 'presence' of creativity, bypassing study and hard work (e.g. Bailey, 2019) (Fig. ii.2). Nicola McLeod's (2020) analysis of TripAdvisor reviews of four well-known British and American literary homes shows that a 'sense of being in proximity to the creative process itself' is an important motive. The study or studio in which the famous writing, painting, or sculpture actually took place holds a special allure.

Figure ii.2: Advertising poster for Kettle's Yard, Cambridge, house of Jim Ede, the collector, and Helen Ede (Courtesy Kettle's Yard, University of Cambridge / Photo: Helen Hills).

Figure ii.3: John Clare Cottage, Helpston. Sculpture of John Clare in courtyard. (Courtesy John Clare Trust / Photo: Helen Hills)

A striking lacuna in the scholarship on visual artists' house museums is critical engagement with the history of this curious museum type: a history which emerges as essential to understanding standard presentation and default modes of visiting of those museums today. This essay surveys the scene and relates key historiographical and curatorial habits to the emergence and rise of the house museum, particularly the institution of the visual artist's house museum in 19th-century Britain. Visiting writers' homes began in the 18th century, but the fashion of visiting the homes of visual artists was a later 19th-century development.[1] The legacies of those origins continue to play out across the field. Indeed, the hegemonic socio-political assumptions and upper-middle-class cultural anxieties of 19th-century England go a long way to explain the dominant cultural paradigms of this peculiar institution today.

One key aspect of this is 'the saintly shrine', which we delineate first, before identifying characteristics of artists' house museums (many of which are shared with saintly shrines). Finally, we trace the historical emergence of the house museum, particularly of visual artists, which helps account for those key characteristics, including the 'saintly' emphasis.

The saintly shrine

Artist's and writer's houses occupy a peculiar role as hybrids of shrines of saints and their relics and distinction markers for the educated and literate, now fortified by film and televised visits (Fig. ii.3).[2] Tourism to celebrity artists' homes shares with religious pilgrimages a ritualized journey in search of holy relics, authenticity, a flight from the mundane, hope for some sort of physical and spiritual connection with a venerated individual, enlightening insight into an exemplary life, and even some sort of redemptive experience. Indeed, it is reckoned that search for esteem and self actualization top tourists' motives (Fig. ii.4).[3]

The artist's house museum boasting the artist's possessions resembles saints' shrines with their holy relics in Christianity since Late Antiquity and occupies a culturally analogous position to them. Saints' relics

1   This differs from the long-standing practice of patrons' visits to artists' homes and studios, a point to which we return below. On the early history of visiting artists' homes see Hubertus Günther's essay 'Artist's residences since the Renaissance 1470-1800' in Brandlhuber & Buhrs (2013), pp.16–29.

2   The rise of tourism to film locations and the haunts of fictive characters, such as Harry Potter, is a significant, related and relatively recent development.

3   See Philip Pearce (2021). On tourism, see also MacCannell (1976); Urry (1990 & 2002); Graburn (2001).

Figure ii.4: John Clare Cottage, Helpston. A visitor in search of self-actualization and esteem? (Courtesy John Clare Trust / Photo: Helen Hills)

Figure ii.5: Reliquary of St Clare, Treasury Chapel of San Gennaro, Naples. (By permission of the Deputazione del Tesoro, Naples / Photo: © Marina Cotugno)

– things left behind by saints, including their bodies– occupied an ambiguous position at the crossroads of the mundane and the divine.[4]

The relic is at once historical, bearing the *gesta* (deeds) of the saint, but it is also celestial, representing someone glorified, invisible, and eternally alive, already justified in Heaven (Fig. ii.5).

It is this ability to occupy both directions, simultaneously forward and back, heaven and earth, and (unlike Christ) to be still unequivocally embodied, that give saints' relics their mercurial power and authority. Moreover, relics are frequently regarded not merely as prompts to holiness, but as the saints themselves, already living with God in the incorrupt and glorified bodies that ordinary mortals achieve only at the end of time. At the end of the world the saint's body will rise

and be glorified; in the meantime, the saint continues to live and to work through the relic. Crucially, the cult of relics emphasizes the body as the *locus* of the sacred: by extension, the sacred place is the *place of the body*. Indeed, the cult of relics in late antique and medieval piety located the holy in place: '*hic locus est*' (this is the place): the holy has its place and is in place, and is held in place (it cannot be accessed elsewhere; relics regularly refuse to move if they are not happy to be translated).

Like saints' shrines, house museums depend heavily on biographical narrative to provide 'intimate' glimpses of 'private lives'. The house stands in metonymically for the life. An artist's house museum is usually also part of a campaign towards securing the reputation of its erstwhile inhabitant. And in this the death of the artist is central to secure 'immortality' through the continuing existence of his/her house. Hence the artist's house museum at once mourns and disavows the writer's death. The death of the artist is at once insisted on and strangely denied in these museums: 'Death completes the birth of the poet to posterity' (Watson, 2020, p.23).

If the artist actually died in the house, this is presented as significant, an instance of something both 'private', 'intimate', and belonging indelibly to the house.

4   On the cult of relics, see especially Brown (1981); Dinzelbacher & Bauer (1990); Walker Bynum (1989), p.163; (1995); Dinzelbacher & Bauer (1990); Belting (1994), esp. p.xxi; Geary (1994), pp.12–6; 180–202; Bozóky (1996), pp.267–80; Joblin (1999), pp.123–41; Schmitt (1999), pp.145–68; Boesch Gajano (2005), pp.105–8; Scorza Barcellona (2005), pp.52–61; Armstrong (2021).

Hence a brochure declares that the Walt Whitman House 'provides an intimate glimpse into […] the poet's life […] through […] original letters, personal belongings, the bed in which he died, and the death notice that was nailed to the front door' (cited by Trubek, 2011, p.16). The couch on which Emily Brontë died features prominently in the Haworth Parsonage. This emphasis on the location of the artist's death as justification of the museum itself – after all, there is nothing more authentic than death – is shared with the celebration of saints. The locus where a saint died – that is, when they began their heavenly life – is a sanctified place.[5]

Nicola Watson argues that Dorothy Wordsworth's shoes, Henrik Ibsen's top hat, Charlotte Brontë's wedding bonnet, and Emily Dickinson's white dress present writing as textile that preserves the most intimate and indexical form of its wearer, and survives as witness to it (2020, p.20) (Fig. ii.6). This is akin to the *brandea* of saints. Following the sale of Francis Bacon's 'painting gloves', Jonathan Jones (2016) has pointed out how artist's belongings are treated like saintly relics: 'we revere not only artists but also their relics'. Watson (2020) has noted the ways in which visitors bring special objects to house museums and sometimes remove parts as they leave. These are practices shared with those who venerate saints, visit shrines, kiss and touch relics, and leave ex-voti behind.

House museums often treat the house like the saintly shrine. Paradoxically, the house emerges as a depositary and distillation both of what marked the artist out as extraordinary and of the most everyday and incidental in the artist's life and work (Fig. ii.7).

At once extraordinary and mundane, the artist's house and relics embody, like the saintly relic, the distillation of *virtus*, the presence of the auratic. Yet house museums, unlike saints' shrines, tend to be afflicted also by an insistent historicism, an earnest endeavour to deny the shrine, or at least to present it 'in its historical context'. This introduces a tension with regards to temporality. On the one hand, the relation of house, inhabitant, and artwork is posited as euchronic, that is a single privileged moment, conceived as originatory, with the implication that the rest of time extends in linear sequence to the present (Didi-Huberman, 2003). (Fig. ii.8).

Along with this comes much emphasis on material authenticity, a 'scholarly' emphasis on 'period' furniture and evocations of a past era. Simultaneously, the artist's world is presented in idealist terms as still alive and

5   The death of the artist of course also secures the value of visual artworks, by ensuring their number is now limited.

Figure ii.6: John Clare Cottage, Helpston. Showcase with relics. (Courtesy John Clare Trust / Photo: Helen Hills)

Figure ii.7: Kettle's Yard, Cambridge. The most mundane aspects of life attract house museum visitors. (Courtesy Kettle's Yard, University of Cambridge / Photo: Helen Hills)

Figure ii.8: John Clare Cottage, Helpston. The information board transforms the attempt to evoke the authentic cottage garden into a didactic encounter. Drawing attention like this to the 'cottage garden' destroys it. (Courtesy John Clare Trust /Photo: Helen Hills)

Figure ii.9: John Clare Cottage, Helpston. Emphasis on material authenticity and attempt to conjure poverty. (Courtesy John Clare Trust /Photo: Helen Hills)

present. It is the – implicit but unacknowledged – tension between these material and idealist modalities and between euchronic and anachronic temporalities that lies at the heart of the house museum and that ostensibly opens the possibility of a privileged encounter to visitors in a revelatory unveiling (Fig. ii.9).

Despite the usual insistence on authenticity (documents, show cases, original furniture), the artist's house museum is inevitably never quite how or where the artist actually lived. One of the saddest aspects of house museums is how little attention is paid to 'place' more widely drawn than mere property and possessions (Compare Figs ii.17 & ii.18). Indeed, location and place matter far less than accumulations of material relics. Hence some of the most iconic studios have been entirely dismantled and reconstructed in entirely different locations. Francis Bacon's studio, for instance, was translated in 1998 in its chaotic entirety from South Kensington, London to Hugh Lane Gallery, Dublin, and 'preserved as a holy – or unholy – sanctum' (Jones, 2008).[6]

Over 7,000 items, including books, magazines, canvases, pages, paint splattered walls, door and ceilings, congealed brushes, and half emptied oil paint tubes were catalogued and relocated with scrupulous attention to their abandoned disarray (Fig. ii.10). The move to Dublin was partly justified by Bacon's birth in Dublin in 1909 – as if somehow the essence of the artist was being returned 'home' in what he had left in his studio– a miraculous translation indeed – a sort of 20th-century version of the flying Holy House of Loreto. Bacon's studio has become a sort of revered artwork: 'Bacon joked', wrote the journalist Jonathan Jones (2008), 'that the daubs of paint he splashed on its walls were his only abstract works; now the studio has become his only installation'. Yet, it is more than mere installation: it is shrine, supposedly indexical of the artist's most intimate and creative impulses. While there is irony in the painstaking reconstruction of what was – ostensibly – carelessly discarded in distraction, part of the compulsion of the studio is precisely its feverishly messy, urgently inhabited quality – what Jones describes as a 'terrifyingly claustrophobic interior' – as if one is getting a glimpse inside the artist's very mind.

For Jones (2008), Bacon's studio is a 'pungent archive of a life lived in the magic space between mind and bodily act–the life of an artist'. His studio is seen as at once a redolently 'pungent' archive, a magic space, and a life – all, magickly, concertinaed together. Indeed, as Nicola Watson observes in relation to the writer's

6   On Bacon's studio, see Campbell (2000) pp.38–51; and for a celebratory, exhaustive study, see Cappock (2005).

Figure ii.10: The dismantled, translated, and reconstructed Francis Bacon studio. (Collection & image © Hugh Lane Gallery, Dublin. © The Estate of Francis Bacon. All rights reserved. DACS 2024)

house museum, it 'may be seen not so much as staging the scene of writing, but as staging scenes of reality which disavow the medium of the book, erasing it in favor of a fantasy of immediate intimacy with the author' (2010, p.21).

Historiography of the Artist's House Museum

Much existing scholarship on the artist's house museum depends on a series of interlinked assumptions: that artists' houses are qualitatively different from non-artists' houses; that they are innately worthy of study in their own right; that they are invaluable to an understanding of the artist, indeed, crucial to interpreting their work (Fuss, 1998 & 2004). Thus Everett (2021), despite claiming a Deleuzian schema, nevertheless posits the relationship between garden, palace or home and inhabitant-creator as one of identity. Hence Giverny is seen as personifying

'gentleness incarnate'.

Decades of scholarship and significant shifts in art history have robustly challenged the notion of the great genius artist and simple biographical narrative as sufficient explanator of artworks.[7] Yet in the world of house museums, that approach is alive and well and apparently gaining ground (Young, 2019, pp.17–19). Many of these studies reduce the artist and their work simply to what is readily projected onto what chances to remain of their house, and vice versa.

Harald Hendrix draws a distinction between house museums that were instituted by the artist-occupant and those established posthumously by supporters and fans (2008, p.8, pp.15–18). However, this distinction offers little critical insight into their discursive construction or cultural significance. Indeed, it is typical of the mechanistic taxonomizing that passes as

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7   The most significant include, Battersby (1989); Clark (1985); Didi-Huberman (2008); Pollock and Parker (1991).

scholarship in the field.

Most texts on artists' houses are non-scholarly. The fundamental claim that galvanises these publications is that each house has a unique story to tell. Yet, as Nicola Watson has pointed out, the presentation of each house tends to the formulaic (2020, p.5). Sumptuously illustrated coffee table books, such as Francesca Premoli-Droulers' *Writers' Houses* (1995) and J.D. McClatchy's *American Writers at Home* (2005) (both with photographs by Erica Lennard) seductively present supposedly privileged glimpses of corners, desks, beds, and views from windows of glamorized homes to offer apparently intimate, almost secret, insights into a life. Yet these are of course highly mediated and carefully staged presentations.

Such moves are at work in even the most perceptive scholarship. Diana Fuss' *The Sense of an Interior: Four Writers and the Rooms that Shaped Them* (2004) draws carefully on authors' writing to suggest significant connections and inspirations located in their homes. While there is much that is illuminating and sensitive in this study, it steps uncritically into the fantasy of the dwelling as supplying privileged access to the 'life' of the author, even to their 'experience'.

Hence Fuss claims:

> A writer's domestic interior opens a window onto both author and text, reminding us that what we may first perceive to be the timeless and universal truth of writing cannot be so neatly extricated from the complex particularities of its spatial and material origin'.

While the emphasis on particularity and on the precise spatial and material conditions of an artist or writer's circumstances are useful, the 'spatial and material origins' on which she chooses to focus are excessively narrowly drawn (basically the house) and tend to exclude wider economic, political, and social issues, unless they are perceived as being congruent with the house and life. Fuss elides much in claiming that the interior 'opens a window' – itself not coincidentally at once metaphor and literal material component of a house – as if the opening of such a window necessarily provides unmediated access to 'both author and text', and as if it illuminates both simultaneously and equally. Further, the assumption that Fuss claims to be challenging – that 'we' believe 'timeless and universal truths of writing'– is not much more than a convenient straw man.

The 'reputation of house museums in contemporary culture is deathly, dubious, or quaint, to put it kindly',

suggests Linda Young (2019, p.15).

There is even something of a vogue in recent years for approaches which mock house museums and the practice of visiting them. Liz Workman's *Dr Johnson's Doorknob – And other Significant Parts of Great Men's Houses* (2007) takes up a cudgel against both the masculinizing myths of genius and the insidious, apparently innocent, displacement or projection of these myths onto banal objects in their houses. Anne Trubek's *A Skeptic's Guide to Writers' Houses* (2011) investigates the 'irrational allure of writer's houses', running critically counter to the romanticizing gazing in rapt awe at a writer's chair. While we remain sceptical of approaches that elide house and former occupant, we do not share the tone of derision. One important trope in the scholarship on house museums is a search for and evocation of access to the 'intimate'. A typical manifestation of this is Nuala Hancock's *Charleston and Monks' House: The Intimate House Museums of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell* (2012), which reads the houses in question as providing access to emotions and intimate domestic experience of the protagonists, largely disregarding the degree to which these houses were highly stylized and carefully crafted presentations of self and home. We wish to take seriously the search for the intimate, even while sceptical about the claims to its recovery, unified location, or any simple designation of 'public' or 'private'.

In *Flaubert's Parrot* Julian Barnes asks, 'Why does the writing make us chase the writer? Why can't we leave well alone?'. Yet even those who deliberately eschew studying 'major' artists, and who reject the notions of coherent lives and coherent oeuvres – and hence find any notion of coherence between the two entirely unpersuasive – may find that museum houses hold a strange compulsion.

Artists' homes are frequently imagined, depicted, fashioned, and presented as 'palaces of art', works of art in their own right.[8] Maria Golovteeva characterizes the Villa Khnopff, home of Fernand Khnopff (1858–1921), a figure much glorified in Belgian Symbolist art, thus: 'his house corresponded with the fin-de-siècle idea of an artist's home in itself reproducing a work of art' (2022, p.229). Indeed, photographs of Villa Khnopff were frequently published in contemporary journals, as not only a living space, but a place of work, of art collecting and production. Artists' houses which were designed by their artist-inhabitants, such as the Mackintosh house – since 1981 an integral part of the Hunterian Art Gallery

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8   For example, Brandlhuber and Buhrs's (2013) anthology is entitled, *In the Temple of the Self: The Artist's Residence as a Total Work of Art.*

Figure ii.11: Studio drawing room at the (reconstructed) Mackintosh House, Hunterian Museum, Glasgow. (Photo: Hemis / Alamy Stock Photo).

in Glasgow – hold a particularly compelling appeal for those who would collapse biography and artwork. Indeed, that interior was staged by the Mackintoshes as a showplace for their work (Fig. ii.11).

Nicola Watson has recently energised what remains a largely uncritical and sleepy field by proposing that writer's and artist's house museums are a significant cultural form, primarily designed to 'effect' a figure of the author (2020, p.4). The writer's house museum, she argues, serves to construct a 'writer' by evoking a writer's life and work through objects strategically positioned in a pseudo-domestic space (p.11). (Fig. ii.12). These objects conjure precisely that which is not there through supposedly materializing the writer's effects, whereas it is 'the writer' that is the effect of these materializations. Hence a sleight of hand underpins these museums. The writer's house museum, argues Watson, is a paratextual approach to text: what the house museum represents and stages depends on a notion of the author as the embodied origin of their works and the house as the materialization of at once the writer's presence and absence. Such house museums are peculiarly 'dedicated to displaying what is not there, although it was once there – the author'

Figure ii.12: Kettle's Yard, Cambridge: house of Jim Ede, the collector, and Helen Ede. The presentation of the house seeks to secure simultaneously both the materiality and the immateriality of the artist. (Courtesy Kettle's Yard, University of Cambridge / Photo: Helen Hills)

(p.11). For it is absence that the artist museum most strongly requires, permitting – indeed inviting – a projection of the visitor's yearnings into its suggestive spaces. Such house museums deliberately broker an affective encounter between reader and author. Watson argues that the writer's house is best considered as a discursive and narrative construct that serves to produce this figure 'through the presentation and design of his / her belongings, as "effects" within quasi-domestic space' (2020, p.4). Hence both the materiality and the immateriality of author or artist are simultaneously established through the construction of this conjuring place, most often conceived in national and even nationalistic terms.

The Gender of House Museums

Overwhelmingly, house museums celebrate famous men, as if their work and success were conjured from within, and – perhaps to emphasise their supposed meritoriousness – as if they were more or less isolated from the world. This is the double reactionary whammy of the institutions of museum and home. The 'home', Charlotte Perkins Gilman declared in 1903, is 'an ancient and repressive institution, ill-suited to the needs of modern social progress in general and women specifically':

> The woman who does her own work is not usually a writer and has little time for reading. Moreover, her difficulties, though great, are not of the sort that confound the mistress of servants. The housewife is held to her work by duty and by love; also by necessity. She cannot 'better herself' by leaving; and indeed, without grave loss and pain, she cannot leave at all. So the housewife struggles on, too busy to complain; and accomplishes, under this threefold bond of duty, love, and necessity far more than can be expected of a comparatively free agent. (Charlotte Perkins Gilman, 1903).

Few house museums exist where the principal resident was a woman and had children. The best known is the residence in Hartford maintained in honour of Harriet Beecher Stowe. It stands next to the Mark Twain house and receives one-fifth of the visitors that Twain receives (Trubek, 2011, p.7). In part the paucity of house museums dedicated to women is symptomatic of the difficulties women faced in achieving fame or fortune.

But – more significantly – the institution of the artist's museum house is itself gendered. Indeed, the emergence of mass visits to these institutions was from the off steeped in a form of romanticizing gendering. Virginia Woolf pointed out that the display of Thomas Carlyle's cosy domesticity and well-furnished writing suppressed the cockroach reality of Jane Carlyle's housework (1932, p.23). The act of visiting such homes might be seen as driven by sentimental nostalgia and as celebrating a misogynistic institution, what Mary Douglas calls 'the tyranny of home' (1991, p.287).

Artists often did work from home and thus the conflation of house and work is understandable. But the burden of the overlap between home and workplace falls particularly heavily on women, whether as artists, spouses, or servants in terms of household responsibilities, childcare, extra work generated by maintaining a studio, and negotiating the use and boundaries of domestic space (Anderson, 1996; Flisbäck & Lindström, 2013). The unequal gendered division of the rewards and work of social representation, cultural reproduction, and childcare are at the heart of these issues, as Lara Perry (2017) and many others have shown.[9]

The domestic house is itself a machine for reproducing patriarchy, hierarchy, and the subordination of women.[10] The imbrications of domestic architecture, gendered identities and sexualities are complex even before adding a working studio to the mix. Much architectural history has interrogated the relationships between architecture and gender, but these currents have barely filtered through into the artist's house museum curation or scholarship.

The writers' house is the paradigmatic house museum in Britain. They led the way historically and remain dominant. Linda Young reckons that writers' houses represent about 60% of British house museums, with visual artists at less than 10% (2019, p.2). The most recently established house museums are also dominated by writers: Dylan Thomas (2003), John Clare (2005), Agatha Christie (2010), Thomas Hardy (2010) Elizabeth Gaskell (2014) (2019, p.2), which indicates, argues Young, 'a determined investment in the idea that great writers should be represented in domestic situations' (2019, p.7)

House museums tend to conjure the illusion that the (long dead) resident has momentarily left the room soon to return to resume unfinished work (Fig. ii.13). The cliché is everywhere found of the occupant who 'has just walked out', suggesting that part of the appeal in making such visits is to slip into a deliriously wilful

9   See also Dimitrakaki (2013).

10   See Wigley (1992); Hills (2003); Borden, Penner & Rendell (2000).

Figure ii.13: 'Just popped out': smocks at the studio. Barbara Hepworth Gallery, St Ives, Cornwall. (Photo: Ed Clews / Alamy Stock Photo)

enchantment (Fig. ii.14). Indeed, the artist's house museum is often set up to suggest that the author is still living there: pen, paper, and ink on a desk, teacups on a side table, an open newspaper, palette and brushes just waiting to be taken up again. A strange temporality is invented: at once then and now, always and never – a magical temporality which also, as it were, permits the visitor to slip in and out of the dead artist's shoes.

Any such encounter that the house supposedly offers would never have been permitted during the lifetime of its now celebrated inhabitant. It is as if visitors want to be deceived. The house museum offers an illusion of an imaginary continuity between one life and another. Nicola Watson observes, 'all these ways of (re)housing the writer consistently speak of the reader's need to make and find the writer "at home" – disregarding the fact that the writer is dead and that in life would not be "at home" to the general public' (2020, p.11).

Hence the museum denies what permits it to exist. The artist's death sanctifies the house but is presented as if temporarily suspended. House museums stage that absent body with a particular insistence on the artist's chair, the artist's desk, the artist's bed. House museums,

Nicola Watson argues, 'assert the ongoing "aliveness" of the writer by locating him or her in a specific domestic time and space' (2020, p.11).

Crucially, museum houses tend to be presented as discrete from the world, sanctuaries where the artist was 'free' to 'express' themself. Economic conditions, social constraints and worldly privilege are rarely explored with much conviction.

Period furniture is acquired to convey 'authenticity', as if a specific temporality is historically truthful (which it is not), and as if material artefact is its guarantor. With ostensible scholarly scrupulousness, the Jane Austen House in Chawton, Hampshire, acknowledges that the small table in the sitting room *may or may not be the one* on which Austen actually wrote. Thus this little table elegantly diverts potentially pressing political questions into mere historicist accoutrement – under the guise of avowed scruple. Rather than engage with or effectively represent the class conditions of labour and leisure that enabled Austen to write, the provision of this table – *which might or not be the actual one* – implies that it was specific items of furniture – in this case, a table rather than a desk – that made Austen's writing possible and that sufficiently evoke specific

Figure ii.14: Kettle's Yard, Cambridge: house of Jim Ede, the collector, and Helen Ede. The museum fetishizes the lived-in home, while its extensions and presentation resemble ever more the 'White Cube' museum. (Courtesy Kettle's Yard, University of Cambridge / Photo: Helen Hills)

Figure ii.15: John Clare Cottage, Helpston: attempts to evoke poverty do not ring true. (Courtesy John Clare Trust /Photo: Helen Hills);

material conditions. This amounts to showcasing a skillet to account for labour relations in a kitchen, or a bed to discuss gendered power relations or sexuality. Items of furniture – whether daintily presented as authentic or not – are routinely deployed as supposedly effective witnesses to specific and complex socio-economic conditions.

Such attempts at 'authenticity' or 'reconstruction' more often than not betray larger historical truths. Attempts to depict John Clare's house in Helpston, for instance, as if it were still inhabited by a large family of poverty-stricken landless labourers falter from the minute one enters the fragrant rooms or touches the high quality oak handrails that health and safety requires on the stairs, from levels of cleanliness unknowable in impoverished households without running water, to the fact that Clare's house was less than half the size of the current museum. Attempts to stage poverty – a stained cloth, hanging supposedly

to dry – are betrayed by inattention to detail: it is suspended on an impossibly shiny new washing line (Fig. ii.15).

Visitors to Clare's cottage are invited to try on neatly ironed laundered smocks in pristine condition as if this clothing might magically endow modern middle-class visitors with insight into the lives of dispossessed peasants (Fig. ii.16).

Even more dismayingly, visitors are encouraged to take a walk 'through the landscape that Clare knew', thereby trampling Clare's own passionate conviction of the wrongness of privatization of land by enclosure. And the betrayal of the principles of the man the house purports to celebrate is intensified in the failure to draw attention to the lifeless sterility of the industrialized farmland that surrounds the cottage (Fig. ii.17). It ignores the ecological damage done over the years by the privatized large-scale farming that Clare opposed and disregards his prescient treasuring of

Figure ii.16: John Clare Cottage, Helpston. Smocks for visitors to dress up as peasants. (Courtesy John Clare Trust / Photo: Helen Hills)

Enclosure came and trampled on the grave Of Labour's rights, and left the poor a slave.

A silent man in lifes affairs, A thinker from a Boy, A Peasant in his daily cares, The Poet in his Joy.
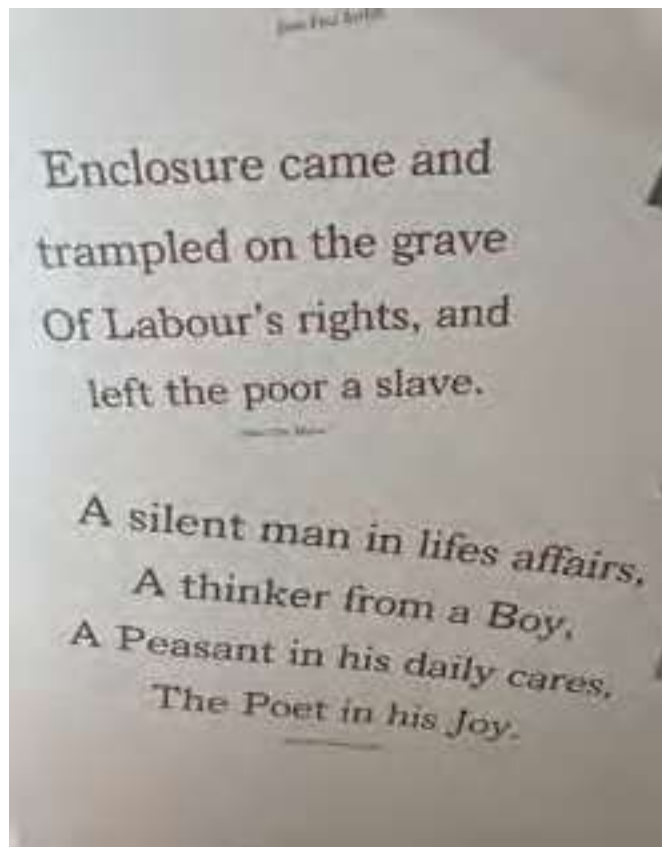
Figure ii.18: John Clare Cottage, Helpston. Clare's poetic protests against enclosure are reproduced in the museum. (Courtesy John Clare Trust /Photo: Helen Hills)

Figure ii.17: Sterile and private: the consequences of enclosure that Clare dreaded and hated are horribly exposed in the industrially farmed fields immediately behind John Clare's Cottage, Helpston. (Courtesy John Clare Trust / Photo: Helen Hills).

common lands, nature, wildness, and wet (Fig. ii.18).

The artist's house museum stages a fantasy, one replayed as authentic reconstruction. In short, house museums depend on and usually insist on the singularity and peculiarity of artists and their works, and the 'home' as haven, more or less impervious to critical analytical approaches, ignoring sociological issues and troublesome politics, and uninterested in thoughtful critique of the institution itself. Contentious political issues tend to be banished along with the woodworm.

The Emergence of the Hero House Museum

Museums as institutions tend to be conservative; and house museums tend to be the most conservative of all, not simply uncritical, but overflowing with contradictions. Much of this flows – more or less continuously and largely unchallenged – from their origins.

In Britain, houses of writers were the first to emerge as desirable places to visit and to become museumized and they remain the dominant type of house museums. Linda Young reckons writers' houses represent ca.60% of house museums in Britain, while visual artists' houses stand at less than 10% (2019, p.1). This indicates not only that literary fame was and is regarded highly

in Britain, but the interlacing of the development of museums with nationalism – language being indelibly associated with the nation – and fine writing a marker of its genius. The practice of visiting artist's houses and the cult of the author or writer is of long-standing – Stratford-on-Avon was firmly established well before the end of the 18th century as a key destination for fans of Shakespeare – but the celebration of the home of the creative artist really gained hold in 19th-centry Britain – the height of 19th-century male national hero worship. Indeed, the artist house-museum had an active role to play in developing and sustaining this ideology.

The practice of open studios of affluent, well-connected, successful, male Victorian artists is directly related to the cult of the artist's house museum and continues to inform visiting and curatorial habits.

The first British house museums – Sir Walter Scott's house at Abbotsford and architect Sir John Soane's house in London, both established by the artists themselves in the first decades of the 19th century; Shakespeare's Birthplace in 1847; and Robert Burns' Birthplace in 1881 (Young 2019, p.19) – in many ways established the form for the house museum that remains 'firmly located within the sociology of upper middle-class culture' (p.3). Despite a myriad indications to the contrary, the 'home' was presented as representing a 'truth' of private life that ordinary visitors could grasp, as well as monuments to their male hero occupants, whose classical collections were displayed idiosyncratically, advertising their erudition, and beautifying and dramatizing their houses for the public eye.

Scott encouraged fans to visit him at his Gothick fantasy house in the Scottish borders, Abbotsford. After his death in 1832, visitors were allowed into his study, where his desk, chair, and writing implements were displayed as if he still worked there. Gradually the rest of the house was opened to the public and admission fees (as opposed to tipping the housekeeper), a marker of formal museumization, began in the 1870s (Young, 2019, p.5). Sir John Soane's Museum was bequeathed to the nation in 1837. Soane regarded his house as a sort of *Gesamtkunstwerk* and stipulated in his will that the layout and furnishings must remain unchanged (Knox, 2009, p.15). Despite the fact that there was no collection to materialize the soul of the hero, Shakespeare's Birthplace was the third house museum in Britain (1847) (Fox, 1997, pp.23–7). Its name evoked the Christian Nativity and the house was immediately referred to in sacred language as shrine, temple, and place of pilgrimage (Thomas, 2012). Promoted by a committee of gentlemen 'on behalf of the nation', it drew together in a powerful concoction, notions

that language, high culture, nationhood, successful masculinity, and the sacred were universal, unified, and unifying. An epigram on the flyleaf of William Howitt's *Homes and Haunts of the Most Eminent British Poets* (2nd edn., 1847) encapsulates this: 'An indissoluble sign of their existence has stamped itself on the abodes of all distinguished men, a sign which places all kindred spirits in community with them'.

This hero's house museum type began to consolidate in the 1880s in the heady days of the British Empire. And the practice of visiting these houses was part of a new assertion of cultural hegemony of the rapidly expanding, self-regarding and increasingly wealthy middle-middle and upper middle classes (Young, 2019).

The Artist at Home: Orchestrated Glimpses

The artist's house as museum was partly a consequence of artists' strategic self-promotion from early modern times on, the capacity to cash in on new market opportunities to gain higher social and economic status. Successful artists have long been – and had to be – brilliant self-promoters and entrepreneurs. The mythologizing of artists' lives and places of work was part of this.

Early modern artists' studios tended to be private spaces, associated with conceptualizing and design, rather than with the manual work of art making, which took place in the workshop (Cole & Pardo, 2005, p.3, p.18). But over time the studio became the place of labour, a transformation that 'made the artmaking carried out there newly appreciable as a public kind of act' (p.23). This space theatricalized the artist's work, a consequence, Cole and Pardo argue, of art writing, including biographies based on antique models, which 'turned the arcane things artists did into *gesta*, deeds worthy of commemoration' (p.24, p.25).

Just as scholars' studies were microcosms, places where anything and everything might be on display, 'soon there was nothing that the artist's rooms could not contain. The place of painting and sculpture was now simultaneously a domestic space and a stage, an anatomy theater and a laboratory, a kitchen and a monastic cell.' (Cole & Pardo, 2005, p.25) (Fig. ii.19).

Paying visits to artists and their studios has a long tradition, but before the mid-19th century, such visits were largely reserved to aristocrats, princes, patrons, and fellow artists. In 19th century Britain two concomitant developments fed directly into the establishment of artists'/ writers' house museums: the cult of the artist – dependent on a notion of the exceptional genius author/ artist – who was also deemed hard-working, productive, and respectable –

Figure ii.19: Dining room at Brantwood House (home of John Ruskin), Coniston Lake District. The dining room is an immaculate stage set from which performers are absent. (Photo: Simon Staply / Alamy Stock Photo)

combined with a new fashionability of visiting artist's homes, especially amongst the well-heeled middle classes.

Gaining pace, then, in the 19th century, the practice of visiting the homes of living artists was enmeshed with nationalism, colonialism, industrialization, the rise of the railways, the development of commercial tourism, mass readership (and attendant commercial interests), and the surge in the art market. Convulsive changes of industrialization, colonialism, and capitalism generated anxieties about controlling or 'recovering' national history (Mandler, 1997, p.3). The rising status of a certain sort of Victorian artists was allied to contemporaneous rise in the popularity of biography, itself linked to cultural nationalism. Heroicization in meritocratic terms of individual 'great men' permitted the vaulting of contentious issues including exploitation of labour and resources at home and abroad. Artists were part of a 'progressive' adaptive elite, able to exploit the opportunities of colonialism and industrialization that they could get their hands on, and some were able to turn the combination of nationalism and anxieties about rapid social change to their own advantage.

While it is too complex to explore here, the significance of the culture industry – mass culture's subjection to the organizational principles and values of industrial capitalism – in this should not be underestimated.[11] Dirty profits from empire, commerce, and industry were rinsed in cultural capital and fuelled a booming art market. In order to show off their

supposed cultural sophistication, knowledge, skills, and refined taste as connoisseurs, artists had to admit visitors to their studios and homes. That willingness to admit spectators and colleagues is an indication of their ambition and confidence, as well as their hunger for economic and publicly visible cultural capital.

The cult of the artist and the practice of visiting artists' houses assumed a particular fashionability in voguish rich districts of London and Paris/France (Esner, 2018, pp.15–30). It was closely linked to a romanticizing cult of the genius artist, highly respectable, successful, rich and well-connected men. The great and the good included very few women: the Brontës of Haworth Parsonage remain well-known exceptions.

Emphasis on artists as subjects, suggests Julie Codell, forged a new role for them as 'representatives of Englishness and creators of a national culture in their art and in their lives' (2000, p.284). Hence cultural tourism helped turn filthy profit into lustrous sophistication. The fascination for artists and their scrutiny as 'public property' sprang in part from a tension between their recent material success as a class that elevated them to a new national profile, and stereotypes of them as degenerate and bohemian (p.284; the most celebrated claim that artists were free spirits was John Ruskin's *A Joy Forever* (1857)).

Seeking out the homes of the famous was early supported by publications, including Howitt's (1847) already mentioned. Successful artists and their elegant homes were regularly featured in magazines, gazetteers, and guidebooks. Most of the artists who attracted such attention were men who were also abundantly rich – often from gargantuan profits of industry and empire – and who had built themselves lavish homes in fashionable neighbourhoods.

Early on, publications celebrating artists' houses, such as Frederick Fairholt's *Homes, Works and Shrines of English Artists with Specimens of their Style* (London, 1873), were illustrated with wood engravings, but it was photography that lent charisma to these 'peeps' into ostensibly private lives and homes. Photographs of artists at home enlivened popular series in magazines, lending a supposed modernity, informality, and privileged access. Series of 'peeps' of artists and studios appeared in *Strand* and *Art Journal* in London, in *L'Illustration* in Paris, and other magazines across Europe (Wat, 2013). These 19th-century British magazine articles combined attention to artists and their private lives with an emergent interest in photography, ostensibly offering an unmediated snapshot of an artist's life. For instance, 'Artists at Home', a series published in 1884, issued in six installments, consisted of four photo-engravings, after photographs by J.P. Mayall,

11 Adorno and Horkheimer, 'The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception' in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944).

Figure ii.20: The artist Samuel Cousins pictured in his sitting room. One of a group of portraits by the photographer Joseph Parkin Mayall first published in the magazine series 'Artists at Home', 1844. (Photo: Chronicle / Alamy Stock Photo)

depicting artists usually in their studios, accompanied by short biographies written by F.G. Stephens of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Of the 24 artists in 'Artists at Home', all were men, and all but one were Royal Academicians. It was all most respectable (Fig. ii.20). Most of the artists featured were upper class men and many were very rich indeed, such as John Everett Millais. The only women included in similar publications of the period were Kate Greenaway, Helen Allingham, Henrietta Rae, Rosa Bonheur, and Elizabeth Thompson (Codell, 2000, p.291).

Photojournalism of this type directly fed into the presentation of the artist's/writer's house museum as affording a sort of informal, intimate access to the artist (Emery, 2012). Despite their apparently casual tone and supposedly intimate snapshot glimpses, these articles were highly contrived and aimed at securing respectability, institutional validation, and national celebrity for these artists (Dakers, 2019, pp.311–31). Featured artists were usually presented as worldly wise, well-travelled, and as connoisseurs with significant

art collections. In any case, the combination of social respectability, powerful networks, self-promotion, and celebration of supposed individual male genius free to 'express' itself in a purpose-built studio, untainted by contact with the outside world, are all themes which continue to reverberate in many artist museums and in much of the scholarship to this day.

Emphasis on their hard work, 'productivity', and the commercial success of their art sought to counter notions of decadence. In a period when the average annual income was below £100, many of these artists were grabbing over £5000, the equivalent of the annual income of a high court judge (Dakers, 1999, p.3). Artists struck manly heroic poses in front of their own artworks in highly contrived images: Samuel Cousins RA, for instance, poses grandly in his sitting room, surrounded by prints of his own works on the walls (Fig. ii.20). An early review in *The Art Journal* observed, 'these plates do not show us the artist really at home; or at least they show them only as they are at home to the photographer … the owner of the studio has

posed himself gracefully at the right point' (Milk, 2009). The whole thing was carefully orchestrated by the artists with the photographer a willing accomplice.

Thus W. Meynell's 'Artists' Houses', published in *The Magazine of Art* in 1882, included Alma Tadema's North Gate home in Regent's Park in London, while Helen Zimmern's 'Artists' Homes' in the same magazine (1885) presents 'Mr Pettie's at Hampstead' (p.91). Brief accounts of each house and artist are laced with romanticizing wonder at the exotic world of 'the artist', a creature quite unlike ordinary folk, untouched by vulgar ambition, concern about money or status. Accompanying texts scrabble to identify something special that pertains to the strange and wonderful 'world of the artist', making much out of little:

> Mounting the steps […] suspicion strikes us that this house may have, after all, other than a commonplace tenant, for the sides of the portico are decorated with a dado of stamped leather – a decorative idea that probably would only have occurred to an artist (Zimmern, 1885, p.91)

These artists promoted themselves as 'cultural legislators' and painted enormous canvases which trafficked in 'great ideas' (Dakers, 1999, p.2). Meanwhile, these 'glimpses into the lives and homes of the household names of art' played a major role in promoting their work (p.3). Aspects of the artist's appearance and personality might be commented on, too.

Artists exerted a particular fascination and were much scrutinized, studied, and biographised. Artistic excitable sensibilities and highly strung emotions were endorsed, almost became fashionable, provided they were housed in the male breast (Battersby, 1989). Magazines touting the great contemporary (male) artist in the studio seem to have commanded a good deal of middle-class interest, insofar as this can be adjudged. That gay male artists featured significantly amongst the most famous artists and most celebrated self-styled London homes of these publications and open studios surely added an extra frisson to the peeps behind the scenes (Hatt, 2007, pp.105-128). Laurel Brake (2000) has suggested that a notable strand of 'gay discourse' marks the discussions of artists' homes as featured in *The Artist and Journal of Home Culture*.

A voyeuristic pleasure delighted in the intersection between what was supposedly public and what was ostensibly private, a chance to 'peep' into the intimate, usually obscured, aspects of domestic life of a significant socio-cultural elite. The photographs and accompanying short biographies present the artists and their studio homes in highly artificial habitus as if naturalised, as exotic and exceptional, rather than as highly privileged men, actively promoting their own social networks. As such they are complicit in artists' own claims to high social status, celebration, and fame as ostensible inevitable consequence of their individual exceptional merits (Murray, 2022).

Despite all this gendered and classed exclusivity, their art is presented as part of a 'culture' supposedly shared by all (Codell 2000, p.286). In 1856, defending the mania for artists' biographies, *The Art Journal* referred to artists as 'public property', to 'the sanctity' of their homes, and the 'solitude' of their studies (Codell, 2001, pp.1-35). Arresting is the absence of pause at the contradictory nature of these characterisations. Indeed, the whole charade depended on those very contradictions. Artists were seen as national heroes and icons, exceptional figures inspired by genius, successful meritocrats worthy of imitation, and as depositaries of what was best of the nation and times. Bourgeois publications tended to feature artists with an emphasis on their market success, class position, and evident domesticity and this also helped defray anxieties about assumed Bohemianism and degeneracy that might have damaged their reputation and market potential.

In turn, artists' self-promotion propelled and drew on the cult of the artist in terms of masculinity, nationalism, and high social class from the late 19th century until the end of World War One. The photos and 'peeps' formed part of the fabrication and naturalisation of a highly exclusionary image of the nation, since the famous artist was deemed to represent the nation and express something quintessentially 'English' or 'British', just as artworks were categorised in terms of national schools. In turn, racializing and class specific notions about nationalism informed which sort of artists were deemed worthy of this particular selection and celebration. The biographical discourse of 'brother artists', combined with proclaimed national unity and shared common culture, amounts to a masculinist racializing nationalism, albeit in the best possible taste.

Show Sundays as Origins of House Museum Visiting

The practice of visiting artists' houses on 'Show Sundays' was crucial to the Victorian cult of eminent artists and, like the magazine 'peeps', was generally associated with the Royal Academy. On 'Show Sundays' the public could visit artists' studios to view work about to be sent to the Academy for the opening a few weeks later of the annual Summer Exhibition at the Royal Academy (Dakers, 1999, p.18). They provided an excuse to inspect artists' homes and even occasionally

catch sight of the artists themselves in their domestic environment. In many ways, 'Show Sundays' established the parameters of visiting artists' homes today.

These open days emerged most markedly in Holland Park, a prestigious area of London, home to prominent and rich artists, including George Frederick Watts and Frederic Leighton (Dakers, 1999, p.25). These artists were rich mentors of the aristocracy and exercised enormous clout in relation to social, patronage and cultural networks and behaviour of the rich and powerful. Before the rise of the super-rich Victorian celebrity artists, artists generally lived in modest houses, with not much more than an enlarged studio window to let in extra light to mark its use as a studio. But the glorious 19th-century celebrated artists were far more architecturally ambitious and ostentatious. Their Holland Park houses were designed by leading architects, including Philip Webb, George Aitchison, Richard Norman Shaw, and J.J. Stevenson (p.3). Those houses commissioned for artists in Holland Park now sell for multimillions of pounds: even better than visiting an artists' house is owning one.

The rise of the artists' house as place of pilgrimage and special fascination bears close relationship to the stately home and to an urge amongst the powerful to ensure that 'culture' and 'heritage' are presented as best shaped by the rich and powerful.[12] The middle classes, however, found artists' houses more accessible than the 'Grand Manner' of the great country estates. A growing critique saw aristocratic homes as 'drably conservative', as resisting modernity and progress, while artists' houses were presented as modern, progressive, and driven by hard work and merit rather than merely bloodlines (Mandler, 1997, p.3, p.17). The 19th-century aristocracy 'appeared to have abdicated its cultural role in favour of philistine […] projects of religious uplift and agricultural improvement' (p.17). Certainly, after World War One there was less willingness to accept aristocratic leadership. Part of the middle-class fascination with artists' homes, as presented in 19th-century magazines, beside their wealth and success, lay in their new technologies, modern studio fittings, quixotic interior décor, and carefully displayed art collections.

Artists' houses are often seen in passive terms, more or less as 'containers': indices of shifting socio-economic status of the artist, places of comfort and convenience for their owners, repositories of fashionable taste in art and architecture. But they were more actively productive than that. Julie Codell

suggests that the home studio 'crossed boundaries by masculinizing the home, usually identified with Victorian femininity' (2000, p.295). While this may be true, in architectural theory from Renaissance times, the studiolo or study was gendered male, identified with intellectual activity and the 'keeping of accounts' by the male head of household in a house otherwise registered as a female and feminizing domain (Wigley, 1992, see below). If the studio and the work undertaken there was masculinized in the otherwise feminized domestic space, something analogous in terms of social class can also be identified in interpretations of the studio. In 19th-century Britain 'the studio appeared to 'restore' the idealized cottage industry that appealed to Victorian nostalgia for a presumed pre-industrial unity of work and life' (Codell, 2000, p.295). The presentation of the studio as a privileged place, innocent of alienation, outside the market's tawdry touch, a place of integrity and truth is perpetuated in many house museums today.

Ideological assumptions about male artists and genius – which were marked tendencies in the emergence of the middle-class practice of visiting artists' house-studios – tended to produce reductive readings of such houses. Hence for years Margaret Macdonald Macintosh's contribution to the Mackintosh house design was overlooked and attributed to her husband, Charles Rennie Mackintosh.[13]

In recent years scholars have investigated 19th-century artists' homes in relation to female friendship networks and emergent feminist communities.[14] In any case, it is vital to engage the notion of the artist's house as encompassing far more than one stellar inhabitant. Children, spouses, extended family, caretakers and cleaners, au pairs and servants were also involved, though usually presented as a distraction or playing a minor role.

The Paradox of Auratic Intimacy

The artist's house museum depends, in various ways, on a notion of the auratic. Rituals of house museums are haunted by the cult of the saint, a paradoxical form of supposed intimacy secured through contact with a material relic, usually something humble and quotidian. Visitors are particularly fascinated – perhaps even more than by elements related to the extraordinary achievements of the artist's work –- by the most

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12 A useful critique is provided by Peter Mandler (1997).

13 On the critical reception of MacDonald and Mackintosh see Helland (1994) who argues that the process of casting Mackintosh as a modern artist and architect involved shifting the responsibility for their decorative projects to MacDonald.

14 See Rose (2016).

quotidian aspects of the house and artist's existence–aspects of everyday life with which the visitor is already familiar. Thus although the desk of a writer might be a special focus and even fetishized, far more banal objects may receive undue attention: the bathroom, the kitchen, the favourite tea cup.

Is this symptomatic of the cult of the artist in a culture that celebrates the individual artist-genius as a form of modern-day saint? Is it a manifestation of a yearning for identification by assuming the place of that figure? Perhaps this is a means of imagining oneself as the celebrated figure by simple displacement of activities already familiar to the visitor but now transposed: their favourite cup, sharing the view from their study window, imagining lying in their bed. What compels the heady desire to take their place?

As noted above, rapidly changing conditions of the art market prompted a re-emphasis in late 19th-century Britain on outmoded concepts like creativity and genius, eternal value and mystery – qualities which were located, not so much in the artworks, but at once in the artist and his house. In a prophetic essay written in 1935, Walter Benjamin argues that the processes of reproduction threatened the auratic quality of the artwork: 'Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be' (Benjamin, [1935] 1963, p.3).

Arguably it was partly this perceived loss that activated a (reactionary) emphasis on the unique irreplaceability and authority of the artist' house, even as staged in photographs and as reproduced in the house museum. Benjamin names that which is lost in the age of mechanical production 'the aura' of the work of art (p.4). The 'aura' is 'the unique phenomenon of a distance however close it may be' (p.5). It is the nostalgic yearning for the auratic and a literalistic approach to the auratic, that treats the place where the artwork was supposedly most authentically itself – the home of the artist where it was made – as auratic place – that propels the house museum and visitors to it.

However, while the unique existence of the work of art determined its history, the longing for restoration of authenticity and authority that precisely bypasses the artwork guarantees the disregard of that history. Something of the paradox of intimacy and melancholic unattainability of the photograph and the former home, the punctum of the teacup on the writing desk by the window.

Benjamin argues that 'the desire of contemporary masses to bring things "closer" spatially and humanly […] is just as ardent as their bent towards overcoming the uniqueness of every reality by accepting its reproduction' ([1935] 1963, p.5). Insofar as the house museum is an ersatz substitute, or representation of the lived-in house, the artworks are bypassed and the masses perform their rituals in a place which betrays them. The mechanical reproduction of the artwork has served to enhance the aura of the artist and that which purportedly attaches least reproducibility to him or her.

Largely absent from the artist's house museum are actual   . They are mostly safely ensconced in art galleries and museums elsewhere. Instead, reproductions hang on the walls. It is as if the visitor is searching for the auratic effect of the artwork in the circumstances of its making – now denuded of the specificity of its history and politics – indeed of everything apart from the most literal – and commodifiable – domestic setting. This it is not just an apolitical practice, but an anti-political practice.

The visit to the saint's shrine was undertaken to activate *virtus*, that connection between the earthly body remains and heavenly presence that was made possible through the relic. The artist's house museum is its very obverse. No body, no saint, only the promise of *virtus* in the mystification of the auratic in objects. Ah yes, and a few reproductions.

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WHOSE HOUSE IS IT ANYWAY? MONTPELIER, VIRGINIA, HOME OF JAMES MADISON, AND RECENT CONTROVERSIES

Elizabeth Chew interviewed by Helen Hills and Alice E. Sanger

Abstract

In 2022 a major controversy erupted at the home of the 4th President of the United States, James Madison's Montpelier in Virginia, USA, about the place and role of Descendants of the enslaved in major historic plantation sites in the United States. The controversy, which focused on the sharing of power and authority equally between Descendant Communities and governing boards of museums and historic sites, led to the scandalous sacking of senior staff (later reinstated). Here Elizabeth Chew, Senior Director of Museum Programs and Chief Curator of James Madison's Montpelier, reflects on the experience of the events with Helen Hills and Alice Sanger in July 2023.

Biographical note

Elizabeth Chew is, since January 2024, the CEO of South Carolina Historical Society in Charleston. She was formerly (2015–23) Vice President for Museum Programs and Chief Curator of James Madison's Montpelier in Orange, Virginia. At Montpelier, she oversaw the Curatorial, Education, Archaeology, Preservation, and Research departments and the Robert H. Smith Center for the Constitution. An art historian, she holds a BA from Yale, an MA from the Courtauld Institute of the University of London and a PhD (supervised by Helen Hills) from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She has worked at museums and historic sites since 1985. As curator at Monticello for thirteen years, she researched and implemented projects to interpret women, domestic work, and slavery. At Montpelier, she led projects to complete the furnishing of the Madison house and to return slavery to the plantation landscape, including the exhibition *The Mere Distinction of Color,* winner of six national awards. She has taught art history and museum studies at the University of Virginia, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, James Madison University, Wake Forest University, Davidson College, and Johns Hopkins University and published and lectured widely on ways that art and architectural patronage relate to gender, race, and family politics.

Banner image: Detail from a view of the studio at the Barbara Hepworth gallery in St Ives, Cornwall. (Photo: Ed Clews / Alamy Stock Photo)

WHOSE HOUSE IS IT ANYWAY? MONTPELIER, VIRGINIA, HOME OF JAMES MADISON, AND RECENT CONTROVERSIES

Elizabeth Chew, South Carolina Historical Society in Charleston

(interviewed by Helen Hills, University of York, and Alice E. Sanger, The Open University)

AES: Let's open by asking about your expectations and hopes with the role at Montpelier, when you first took it up, and your background to contextualize that.

Figure 1.1: Montpelier House and part of the estate with cabins of the Enslaved, *c.*2023 (Photo: Montpelier, Virginia / Aaron Watson Photography)

EC: I'm trained as an art historian. I have a BA and MA in Art History and I was working in art museums before I began my PhD. My research included a study of Lady Anne Clifford, a seventeenth-century English aristocrat, who fought with extraordinary courage and tenacity to regain lands and property from which she had been illegally dispossessed. It took me travelling to remote abandoned castles in Cumbria and Yorkshire and taught me that the past never truly goes away and that there are many ways of inhabiting architecture, including against the grain, which Lady Anne very much had to do – such as sleeping in the ruined bed chamber where her own mother had died. I was very interested in gender and its relationship to architecture. My PhD research showed me that I am fascinated by and want to understand better the ways in which objects, material culture, architecture, and people – with all

their complexities – intersect. After my PhD, I wanted to work at an historic site rather than an art museum. First, I worked as curator at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, an intensely significant place in US history. And then I had an opportunity to come here – to James Madison's Montpelier, also in Virginia (Fig. 1.1).

I realised, while working at Monticello, that the interpretation of slavery, an honest, direct, and complete interpretation of slavery, was something that I was deeply interested in doing. Until then, I'd been concerned principally with gender and women, but Monticello presented an irresistible opportunity to engage with race and slavery and the founding era of the US. And I realized how little understood it all is, especially the connections between slavery and its legacies that are still with us today. This is largely because history – and slavery in particular – is taught very poorly here, and also because historic sites fail to take advantage of the opportunities they have to tell the whole story, including those that are less palatable.

Figure 1.2: Montpelier House and part of the estate with cabins of the Enslaved, *c.*2023. (Photo: Rick Seaman, courtesy of The Montpelier Foundation)

Montpelier (Fig. 1.2) has been known in the museum field since the 1990s as a place that works with the Descendants of the Enslaved. By the way, the definition of 'Descendant' is not based on being a card-carrying DNA descendant of a named person; it's really any descendant of the African diaspora who identifies with the work here. Here we make everyone welcome. The inclusion of those community voices made the work that was done here much more authentic, deeper, and better. The public responded wonderfully to it. That was why I was eager to come to Montpelier.

Additionally, the President of The Montpelier Foundation, Kat Imhoff, had gotten 11 million dollars from a philanthropist, David Rubenstein, who is interested in founding-era history. So we had a lot of money to do a lot of good work and she wanted me to come here and lead that. That was an incredible opportunity in 2015 when I came here. I did imagine that – because of the great team here and the

opportunity to hire new people and the potential for important well-funded work. We would do amazing things and we did, but never, never, in all of eternity did I have any inkling of what was to follow.

AES: Can you tell us more about that?

EC: In 2017 we opened an exhibition called *The Mere Distinction of Color* (Figs. 1.3, 1.4), which was the culmination of over 25 years of partnership between members of the Descendant Community and Montpelier staff. The exhibition was ground-breaking in the way it presented slavery in that the stories of enslaved individuals were told in the voices of their living Descendants.

Figure 1.3: Montpelier House, detail of the display *The Mere Distinction of Color*, 2017. (Photo: Montpelier, Virginia / Chris Danemayer)

The exhibition won six national museum awards. The exhibition's success led to the convening in 2018 of a group of Descendants from sites across the American South, academics, and museum professionals to create what we called a 'Rubric of best practices for Descendant engagement', based on what we'd learned at Montpelier. Though it hadn't yet been achieved at Montpelier, the ultimate best practice was the sharing of power and authority *equally* between Descendant Communities and governing boards of museums and historic sites. The Rubric was widely circulated and published in the field of historic sites – sites that interpret enslavement, and also other sites, including, for instance, sites that interpret Japanese internment in the US during World War II and sites of Native American genocide. In short, many significant historic sites have found the document a useful tool for Descendant work. And, indeed, this led to all of the drama of the last few years.

Figure 1.4: Montpelier House, detail of the display *The Mere Distinction of Color*, 2017, showing Descendant's history with visitor. (Photo: Montpelier, Virginia)

HH: Tell us about the emergence of those controversies.

EC: Although the Descendant community had worked with staff here since 1992, until 2019 it was an 'extractive' relationship, in that all the authority was held by the Montpelier staff. The Descendants shared their family histories with Montpelier and contributed to projects, but they were not paid, not yet organized as a group, and they were not invited to take decisions about projects to be undertaken and who would be involved. Beginning in 2001, Descendants regularly organized reunion gatherings every few years. In 2019 they held a gathering the night before the Juneteenth celebration at Montpelier. (Juneteenth commemorates the full emancipation of enslaved people in the US at the end of the Civil War. Since 2021 it has been

a federal holiday.) At that meeting, the Descendants voted to create what we call a 501(c)(3) non-profit organisation – a registered charity – to represent the Descendant community, the Montpelier Descendant Committee – MDC for short. At that time, the leadership at Montpelier was completely sympathetic and was collaboratively working towards the goal of creating a relationship of structural parity or shared power and authority. This decision meant that for the first time, the descendants of enslaved persons at a major national historic site would be co-equals in sharing governing power and responsibility for the very site that enslaved their ancestors. It was momentous.

For a variety of reasons, based on personal decisions, the President at Montpelier and the Chairman of the Board left in late 2019 and early 2020, which occasioned a complete leadership change. That was followed quickly by a change in the way the Montpelier administration and leadership interacted with the MDC and eventually growing distrust, unease, and finally accusations and even sackings of staff, including me.

HH: Could you reflect on how the emergent controversy was informed by wider cultural currents in the United States?

EC: I see this now as part of the 'culture wars' related to the Trump presidency. The Board was broadly supportive of what we had done. But there was a faction of the Board that viewed what we had done vis-à-vis slavery as having 'gone too far'. To them slavery and the US Constitution – of which James Madison was the principal architect – were not aspects of the same history, but elements that they saw as diametrically opposed. They claimed that we had swung too far towards telling the story of slavery and they wanted to swing back to emphasizing Madison and the Constitution. Hence, they elected a Board Chair who was in favour of our privileging the Constitution and talking less about slavery. But the staff understood that discussing slavery and exploring its legacies, with the collaboration of Descendants, and working towards structural parity with the Descendants was part of the DNA of the organization and central to its vitality and *raison d'être,* so we were bewildered and uncertain as to how to move forward. All of this was happening as COVID was starting, and we were shut down as of mid-March 2020 which made matters even more difficult.

When the new President took office in April 2020, he and the new Board Chair immediately got off on the wrong foot with the Descendants Committee, by failing to comprehend who they were and how important they were in the history of Montpelier.

A few weeks later, in late May 2020, George Floyd was murdered by a police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The Descendants Committee approached the Montpelier Foundation and asked if they would like to create a joint statement denouncing yet another murder of an unarmed Black man by police – which would have been such an important opportunity for a strong and unique statement. But the Board of Directors did not agree to it. They took issue with specific points of language suggested by the MDC. So that fell apart. The relationship between the Montpelier Board and the MDC did not improve even though the Board voted in summer 2021 to work towards establishing structural parity with the MDC. Negotiations broke down completely in March 2022 when the Board announced it would not seek to achieve structural parity with the MDC. That was pretty shocking. After all, the MDC was created by the Descendants precisely to represent the Descendants. Instead the Board announced that they alone would determine with whom it would seek 'structural parity' – by selecting individuals with whom they wished to work. In short, members of the Board wanted to choose their own Black people because the MDC was 'too difficult.'

The national press swiftly took this up. *The Washington Post* covered it particularly well (AP, 2022; Brown, 2022; Editors 2022a, 2022b; Schneider, 2022a, 2022b). When two colleagues and I spoke to reporters, we were fired for siding with the Descendants and against the Montpelier leadership (see Schneider & Brown, 2022).

That was mid-April. Ultimately, in mid-May, the Montpelier Foundation Board gave way, many members resigned, and the MDC nominated candidates for 50% of the seats on the Board. That meant structural parity was achieved on 16 May 2022. I was asked to return as Interim President and CEO, and I rehired my colleagues. We were then finally able to achieve structural parity with the Descendants at Montpelier (see Lukpat, 2022).

HH: In terms of the visual presentation of the house, what sort of issues were the sticking points where the Board felt that things were going 'too far'? What specifically represented the 'too far-ness'? What were the precise points at issue? Or was it always kept deliberately rather vague?

EC: In particular, there are two films in the exhibition at Montpelier that elicited the strongest reaction. One is about the legacies of slavery; it includes images of police shooting an unarmed black man, images of lynching, it shows the preponderance of people of colour among those incarcerated. Basically,

it shows aspects of the systemic racism that's still with us in terms of mass incarceration, police brutality, economic inequality, and educational inequalities. It's quite graphic in the way it portrays these things. And that was a primary issue.

And then there's another film that is 100% based on primary source documentation about Dolley Madison (1768–1849) (Fig. 1.5), wife of James Madison, who sold off a family of enslaved people to whom she had been close for 30 years. Despite a long-standing relationship with her maid and the maid's family, she sold them one by one, because she needed money after Madison died.

HH: When was that?

EC: That was in the mid-1840s. And it was all true. We didn't make it up. You know it's very, very hard for modern people to understand what it would be like to be enslaved, but it is perhaps easier to grasp what living every day with the terror that somebody you love or someone you are close to could be literally sold away – and you would never see them again and never have any way to find them again. We thought that people would be able to relate to that, in a visceral way. That was why we chose that particular story. That was what we were going for.

We wanted this exhibition and the films to have emotional impact on people. That approach is very different from the means adopted by many other sites which have sought to interpret and convey slavery, where it has remained kind of an abstracted, you know, a sort of academic subject without any emotions attached. We chose to take the opposite approach and seeking to engage emotionally with visitors.

HH: Yes, that's very interesting. Let's come back to that in a minute. These two films, were they shown on continuous loops? What was the context in which they were seen?

EC: They're part of *The Mere Distinction of Color* exhibition I mentioned earlier which is about the institution of slavery in the US and, in particular, about the lived experience of enslavement here at Montpelier. The exhibition examines slavery from both an economic and an ideological point of view. And that's also, of course, a political standpoint, in terms of how the Constitution protected slavery, which it absolutely did. Basically, the argument is that Slavery was central to the success of British colonies in North America, and to the success of the new nation.

HH: And the objections were largely to these two films? Or were people not specific about what they objected to?

EC: No, no, it was never overt. It was mostly along the lines of 'oh, we want to uphold the Constitution', as if discussing slavery somehow threatened that. The new President and the Board Chair set up what they called 'the Constitution Initiative', which was never clearly defined. Staff were expected to be enacting an ill-defined notion that we disagreed with. It was used to set the Constitution and its legacies in opposition to a discussion about slavery and its legacies, whereas we saw those two elements as intimately and necessarily interrelated.

AES: Were they trying to suppress these films or the exhibition?

EC: They really couldn't do that, you know, without drawing attention to themselves, which they didn't want at this point. They didn't do that. They were just trying do a kind of 'corrective', I think, but without being clear what they were 'correcting' or why it needed to be 'corrected' in a specific way. It was very opaque.

HH: I assume at Montpelier an account of the creation of the constitution was also staged?

EC: We told the whole story. We tell the entire story and we tell the entire truth about James Madison. He was a brilliant political theorist. The Constitution would not exist without him. He was the fourth president of the United States. He was a member of Congress and Secretary of State prior to being President. He played a very important role in the founding of the country. And he was a slaveholder. His livelihood, his entire life, was based on the institution of slavery – people held in bondage. He never freed a single person.

Figure 1.5: Montpelier House, James Madison's desk. (Photo: Bill Adams, courtesy of The Montpelier Foundation)

When he sat at his desk in the room where he did research for the Constitutional Convention (Fig. 1.5), envisioning a national government based on liberty and self-government, from the window he would have seen people that his family held in bondage, cultivating tobacco and other crops, for his benefit.

Those two things coexisted. And I'm still kind of fascinated by people who can't acknowledge that those two realities existed side by side. Many Americans cannot do that, because it fundamentally challenges something that they think they learned in school – the American exceptionalism narrative. It's primarily older people in this camp, but there are also younger people, too, as we've seen from Trump supporters; and I think it's very much related to what was unleashed when Trump became president.

HH: Maybe we can go back to that. What I find very interesting is that if the staging had been – maybe as in some other places – just material objects on display, such as the cabins where Slaves lived, and some facts and figures about slavery, it might have been easier to stomach. But those films showing power relations in action really don't let people off the hook so easily.

EC: There are also a number of displays where living Descendants talk about their family, their stories, what they learned, how their ancestors' stories inspired them, and what they're most proud of. You're literally standing in front of a photo or film of a person living in the world today who is talking about their family history (Fig. 1.6).

It's much harder to dismiss that: someone who walks the earth with you today is telling you this truth about their family. That's really one of the most powerful aspects of the display.

Then we have some powerful graphics. There's a graphic that takes three different years during the Madison family's ownership of Montpelier and shows the number of people who lived here in each year, the number of those who were free and white, and the number of those who were Black and Enslaved (Fig. 1.7). It's a tiny percentage of white privilege and a huge percentage of black enslavement in every case. Those kind of displays really open people's eyes.

HH: I suppose it also means that history can't be put back in the box. It's connecting it up with the present and it implicates people now and that's what makes some feel affronted?

Figure 1.6: Montpelier House, Descendant's Histories: display detail. (Photo: Montpelier, Virginia / Chris Danemayer)
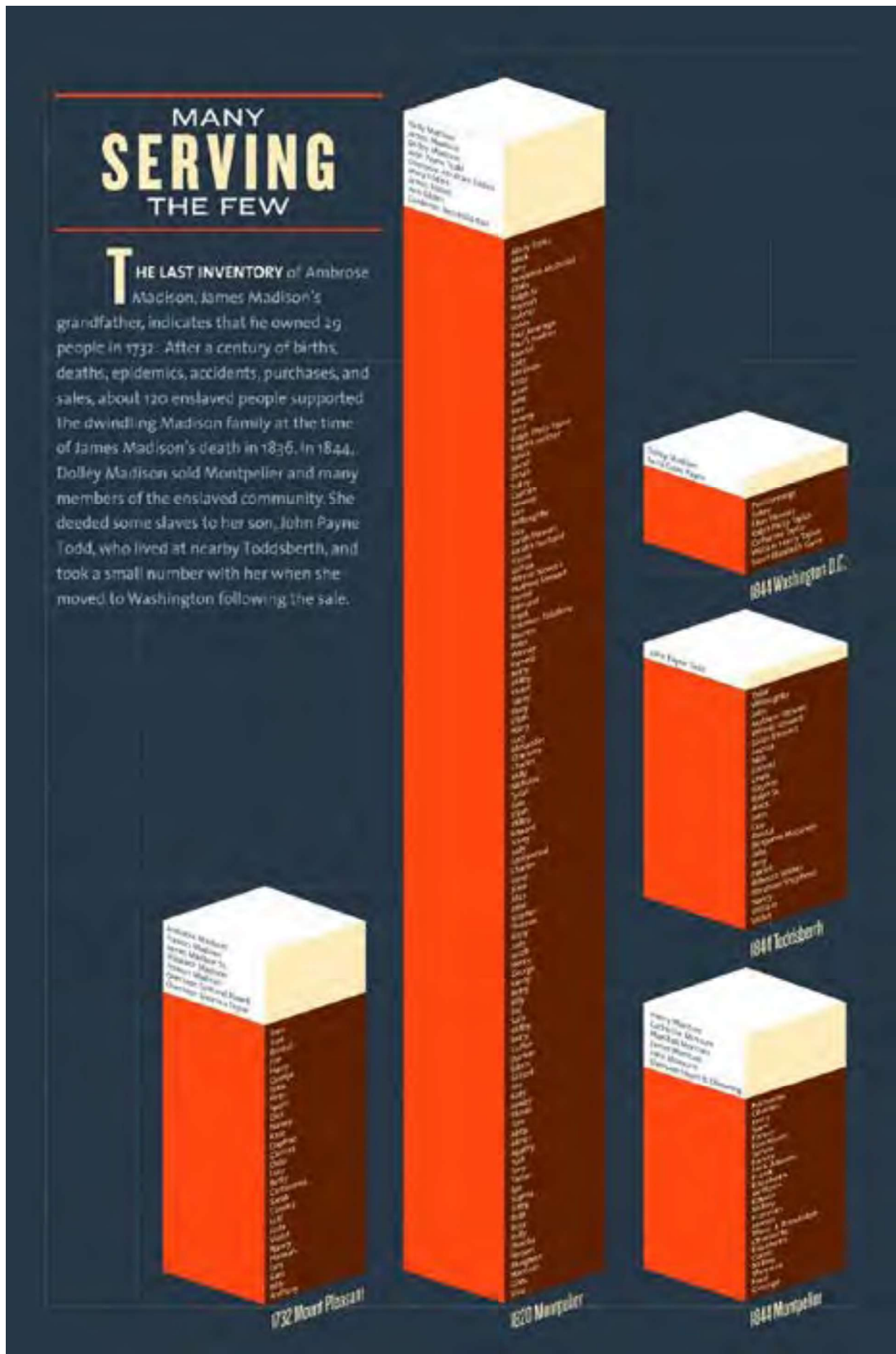
Figure 1.7: Montpelier House, graphic from the display *The Mere Distinction of Color*. (Photo: Montpelier, Virginia / panel designed by Chris Danemayer)

EC: The critics would say we are trying to make people feel ashamed of being American, or of being white, or of having ancestors who held slaves. We aren't trying to make anyone feel guilty. We are not trying to implicate anyone. We want to help them see the whole American story. My family's been in the American South since the seventeenth century and every branch of my family tree contains slave holders. It's just a fact. One example is Ron DeSantis, governor of Florida and political candidate, who is trying to rewrite the story of enslavement in African American history for students in Florida. He claims 'woke' teachers want white students to learn about slavery so that they feel ashamed of being white. What that history should do is make you try hard to understand the past and do better now. It's about living in the present in a *different* way.

AES: Alongside the kind of push-back from the Board and from officials at Montpelier that you've described, what about visitors' feedback? How did they respond to the films or the exhibitions or to the house?

EC: What you get is people at one extreme end of the spectrum or the other, not the middle. We see comments like 'this really opened my eyes', 'I can't believe I didn't know this before', on the one hand, and on the other: 'how dare you do this: you're dissing the founders, you're lying. Slavery occurs in the Bible and hence it is sanctioned'. But most of the comments are favourable; the negative comments are maybe 20%.

HH: Is that written feedback on cards?

EC: Yes, they leave it on cards at the exhibition and they write emails to us or they put it on TripAdvisor.

AES: Did you notice any kind of change with the demographic of the visitors?

EC: We haven't done any scientific survey, but just by looking around it's very clear that we have more visitors of colour than we did before. And we're way better known in the US because of what happened, in the museum field especially, but, I think, at large as well. We're a small site in a rural area which remained a private estate and didn't open to the public until 1987, so it's quite new as well.

HH: Is that seen as a positive?

EC: I actually see it as positive because we are young and sort of scrappy and small and if you think of Mount Vernon – Washington's plantation – or Jefferson's Monticello (Fig. 1.8) as being the Titanics, well, we're a little speedboat that can get things done. It's helped.

Figure 1.8: Monticello, Virginia, Thomas Jefferson's House. (Photo: Corkythehornetfan)

HH: Can you tell us about comparable places or analogous places and the ways in which slavery and its legacies are tackled there.

EC: Mount Vernon is sort of the colossus, open to the public since the 1850s. George Washington is widely known as the 'father of the country'. People, on the whole, don't know much about him as a person, but they know of him as the victorious Revolutionary War Hero and First President. It's all much, much larger than life. Fascinatingly, the organization that has run Mount Vernon since the 1850s is the Mount Vernon Ladies Association, founded by a group of women who wanted to save the house from ruin and who raised money to buy it. But it's always been a kind of shrine to Washington and it's under very conservative leadership. There have been Descendants involved there since the 1980s, people who came and made themselves known and heard. But there's been nothing like what we have here. They have never been involved in any kind of interpretation projects. Their displays and tours do refer to slavery, but it's far less of a focus than it is here.

And there's Monticello. I worked there between 2000 and 2013, and we made great strides. The week before I got there, the leadership announced – in concurrence with historians and scientists – that Jefferson and Sally Hemings, who was an enslaved woman, had six children together. That was a moment of great change. Being there at that time is what helped me see what was possible. They are trying to do the right thing, but being so famous makes it very hard.

HH: It's more difficult because the stakes are higher, it puts pressure on to remain celebratory?

EC: Yes. Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence. The Monticello organization has much more money and they appeal to a much wider spectrum of the public and of philanthropists. It's been open to the public since the 1920s and there's a picture of the Monticello house on the American nickel, the five cent coin. As a place to visit it is much better known than Montpelier.

HH: Yes, it's hard to a challenge to that. You alluded earlier to the sort of myth – the heroic myth – that remains such a dominant narrative and is still very significant culturally.

EC: It is profoundly ingrained and hard to shake. But young people do give me some sort of hope for the future. There's a rising generation of young professionals of colour in the field who are incredible. It's going to be very tough for them, but if they can hang in and be in charge, we're gonna be okay.

HH: What about school groups coming to Montpelier?

EC: We do great programmes for school children about slavery. And when we have push-back it's almost always from parent chaperones. That also reflects what's happening in school systems around the country, including in Virginia. The school systems here are locally controlled and there's lots of push-back to teaching about race and gender by local school boards all over the country.

Happily, this year we saw the school visits to Montpelier return to pre-COVID levels. And we see no indication that schools are boycotting us, as we feared.

HH: In terms of the visual presentation of the past, are the films still on show?

EC: Everything that I've mentioned and more is still there. I worry that the way we present the site could undermine our efforts, however. The main experience is a guided tour of the main and upper floors of the house, furnished – based on primary source research – as elite living spaces, while *The Mere Distinction of Color* exhibition is self-guided and is located in the cellars and the reconstructed slave dwellings and work buildings adjacent to the house. We intend for the house tour to be an integrated conversation about everything, not just the Madison family, so that you can't forget how the house got there and that it kept functioning due to the labour and skill of enslaved people on whom the Madisons were dependent, as creators of their wealth but also as cooks and maids.

HH: What does the presentation of the upper rooms consist of?

EC: The main and upper floors are furnished as elite living spaces with expensive antiques and art. Some might argue that we don't care as much about the self-guided part in the cellar that is about Black people. But the people who give the tours are trained in telling the full – we use the term 'whole truth history'– of telling the complete story and not just focusing on the Madisons upstairs and then enslaved people elsewhere.

HH: That's interesting because one could think that guided tours means it's more controlled.

EC: Oh no, not at all. Because they have a lot of leeway. I mean, they design their own tours. They're given themes that they're expected to cover, but they have a lot of agency, which makes it an interesting job.

AES: You mentioned James Madison looking out of the window of his home and seeing enslaved people at work. To what extent are the opportunities for visitors to engage with the experience of Madison at the house emphasized or de-emphasized? Is that something you're trying to get away from? And what about the treatment or presentation, say, of his desk, of his belongings, and so on, within the house?

EC: We really want people to understand Madison's centrality to the conception of the Constitution, the ideas, his depth of education, and the preparation of his political and theoretical work. Understanding the US Constitution is, as we know, tremendously important right now. And this is one of the best places to do it – here in the context of everything else that we talk about. We get deeply engaged in the Constitution while never letting anybody forget what else Madison was doing.

Madison's grandparents established the plantation in the early 1720s. They were part of the first wave of migration of the Virginia tobacco planter elite – moving from the Tidewater area on the coast up here into the Piedmont for opportunities for more land, more slaves, more tobacco, more profit. His parents built the big brick house in the early 1760s. Madison is born in 1751 and he is here his entire life until his death in 1836. He spends much of the time between 1801 and 1817 in Washington DC. when he's Secretary of State and then President and prior to that he served in Congress when it was in Philadelphia. So, you know, he's back and forth and he's away a lot of the time. When he's away, either his brothers or overseers are in charge. And like Jefferson, he's deeply interested in scientific agriculture, but only on paper, never in actual practice. They're deeply hypocritical, in more sense than one.

HH: So the house was central to his political career, to his social standing, the estate to his wealth, his connections, his identity?

EC: Yes. His parents built this very ambitious brick mansion in the mid-1760s, which he then enlarges twice in his adult life, and uses as one crucial way to amplify himself.

HH: Very successfully. And what happened after Madison died?

EC: Very, very successfully. In the 1830s there was an economic downturn in the Upper South based on

the collapse of the tobacco industry, both locally and internationally. Many Virginia slaveholders started selling people down to the Deep South – to the states of Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, even Texas – to labour in the cotton fields. Cotton planters were enjoying massive success due to the international demand for cotton fabric. Madison sold sixteen people to Louisiana in 1834. The internal slave trade was still legal, though the international trade was abolished in 1808.

Madison died, trusting that his widow, Dolley, would be able to sell the papers from his public career to keep body and soul together. But that didn't happen and she ended up having to sell Montpelier and move to Washington where she lived in genteel poverty. In fact, their former slave, Paul Jennings, wrote a memoir in which he mentions bringing her food and money. He was by then free and she was old and poor. She died in 1849.

Lots of things were sold over time. Dolley had a troubled son from her first marriage as well. So it's a good story.

HH: To what extent is the house like a National Trust house with authentic furniture to 'represent' the past?

EC: It is a National Trust house technically. The US National Trust owns way fewer houses than the British one does, but the Trust does own this property. However, it is operated through what we call a Co-Stewardship Agreement. The private foundation that employs us does 100% of the work, including all the fund raising; and the Trust owns the property.

People do flock here to visit, but way fewer than visit Mount Vernon and Monticello because Madison is less well known than Washington and Jefferson. And Montpelier is in a fairly remote, rural area. And it's new in the grand scheme of things.

A branch of the duPont family owned Montpelier for most of the twentieth century, and they greatly enlarged and expanded the house and changed it a lot. The house remained in that state until shortly after 2000 when a massive restoration was undertaken to return it to its appearance in Madison's lifetime.

And probably only about a quarter to a third of the collections are original. Of course, whether that matters or not is a matter of opinion, but we have a lot of things that are stand-in period antiques furnishing the house. As we all know, these are stage sets basically.

HH: The question of Trump and the culture wars has come up several times. How does the situation you describe at Madison fit in relation to the current fight in the USA over which specific groups of children do or do not get access to specific areas of knowledge or teaching in their schools?

EC: This came into focus with the 1619 Project. That really put these issues in the national consciousness. Mostly because of the push-back.

HH: Can you say a bit more about this?

EC: The 1619 project was led by a New York Times journalist called Nikole Hannah-Jones. She, together with a number of prominent historians, journalists, and other writers, created an impressive body of work around 1619, the year that the first enslaved people arrived in Virginia, the first permanent British colony and the first to have slavery. 2019 ended up being a big anniversary for that, with attendant efforts at commemoration. Our display at Montpelier was one of the projects that commemorated it. The argument was that this nation would not have existed without the institution of slavery and that many of the founders worked very hard to protect slavery, because it was in their self-interest economically and politically – and every other kind of self-interest – to do so. That is simply anathema to many Americans. And it is anathema even to some well-regarded academic historians in prominent institutions.

It was really a fascinating moment to see academic arguments on the front pages of newspapers. The backlash against what we did was huge and ferocious.

I don't know if you heard this: Nikole Hannah-Jones was offered a tenured position at UNC School of Journalism (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Hussman School of Journalism and Media) and was going to take it when there was a gigantic backlash and the Board changed its mind.

I think that helped to put an illuminating spotlight on a lot of the things that we're trying to do here – and that other historic sites are trying to do – in such a way that otherwise might have been lost to a larger public, including people who think that what we're doing is to try to destroy the founders, destroy the country, make everybody feel guilty about being American, those kind of arguments.

HH: The degree to which these things are sharply politicised, partly through endowments, in the USA, seems much more overt than in this country where things still are more subterranean …

EC: Fascinatingly, I had a visit here just a few weeks ago from British colleagues who have a grant to see how sites in the US are interpreting slavery, with an eye to undertaking interpretations of slavery at National Trust sites in Britain, which I think is incredibly exciting. The difference is it was totally visible here and more invisible there, which makes it so much harder.

HH: Yes, it'll be very interesting to see what sort of backlash occurs. Can you briefly comment on places which are undertaking similar projects or experiencing backlash similar to your experience for context?

EC: Nothing has been as overtly politicized and publicized as what happened here. There are a number of sites of former plantations outside of New Orleans. Many of them are the last gasp of 'Midnight and Magnolias' Old South mythology. But one of them, Whitney Plantation, was expressly founded as a memorial to enslaved people. That's their entire remit. They have the house and an incredible collection of New Orleans antiques, and their entire focus is on slavery. Amazingly they haven't had the kind of criticism that we have and I think it's because we are the home of a Founding Father. That's what makes all the difference. People can tolerate it when it's not in the context of …

HH: … the heroic narrative …

EC: … A George Washington or a Thomas Jefferson or James Madison, yes. And there's another site: James Monroe, the fifth president, owned a plantation called Highland near Monticello in Charlottesville, and only lived there for a short period of time. They're doing incredible work there with Descendants, but it's largely under the radar, because they literally live in the shadow of Monticello and draw little attention. Monroe was a president and kind of a younger founder, but not as well known as the others.

AES: Do you have any closing remarks about the future of Montpelier and historic sites like it?

EC: I think that the future of sites like this is as places for the kind of conversations that we need to have. I mean, as Americans in particular, but also as citizens of the world. These are the kinds of places where we can deal with these issues. There's been research in the US that people trust what they see or hear in museums more than what they hear in the news media, which I just love. So, while that remains true, I believe we have a responsibility to make these conversations happen. Here we can do it only on a tiny scale. Figuring out how to take what we can do here and do it in a bigger way – that is really important and that is why what we do here matters so very much.

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MAINTAINING THE MACHINE:
SERVANTS IN LE CORBUSIER'S HOUSES FOR ARTISTS

Isabelle Priest

Abstract

This essay examines the private houses Swiss-French architect Le Corbusier designed from 1922 to 1935 in relation to the work of cleaning and domestic labour. Of the fifteen houses Le Corbusier designed during the period many were for artists and avant-garde figures working in the art world. While these buildings were based on principles for a 'new' and 'modern' architecture – centred around discussions of cleanliness, hygiene, progress and equality – these were houses in which the presence and necessity of domestic servants were still taken for granted.

This essay argues that, despite their ostensible outwardly unconventional aesthetics, the social and spatial organisation of domestic labour in the houses Le Corbusier designed in and around Paris were based on conservative and traditional gender hierarchies and class roles. The essay identifies that these houses reinforced existing class and gender relationships and that despite being aware of long-running discussions to improve the burden of domestic labour, Le Corbusier's designs have more in common with the conservatizing architecture of previous centuries.

The designs staged clearly differentiated architectural approaches towards owners and servants, men and women, including in the types of spaces, size of rooms, fenestration and finishes, as well as access to washing facilities and leisure space. Le Corbusier's designs underestimated the impact of social and technical changes and, moreover, responded to contextual pressures by designing houses which rendered servants less spatially and socially visible than ever before. The essay raises important questions about how progressive and modern Le Corbusier's architecture really was.

Biographical note

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Banner image: Detail from a view of the studio at the Barbara Hepworth gallery in St Ives, Cornwall. (Photo: Ed Clews / Alamy Stock Photo)

MAINTAINING THE MACHINE: SERVANTS IN LE CORBUSIER'S HOUSES FOR ARTISTS

Isabelle Priest

This essay examines a tension in the design of up-market domestic houses and party residences by the architect Le Corbusier (Charles-Édouard Jeanneret) between 1922 and 1935 for avant-garde figures, in relation to the role and accommodation of servants and the work of cleaning. While this architecture was mooted and justified as 'new' and 'modern', these were houses in which the presence and necessity of domestic servants were still taken for granted. Servants' domestic work was integral to the architecture and organisation of these houses, and their design was underpinned by entrenched conservative social class and gender hierarchies towards live-in staff and this type of labour.

In recent years, a good deal of research on cleaners and cleaning has been conducted in architectural history and other disciplines. Scholars including Mary Douglas, Dolores Hayden and Marion Roberts have focused on themes around dust, dirt, ritual purity and pollution, as well as the politics of cleaning and domestic work (Douglas, [1966] 2002; Hayden, 1981; Roberts, 1991). More recently, discussions on cleaning and cleanliness, as well as cleaners and domestic servants, have focused on proclaimed 'mundane' and 'everyday' settings, such as non-architecturally designed homes (Anderson, 2000; Campkin & Cox, 2007). By contrast, this essay focuses on the iconic, canonical architecture of Le Corbusier, described by Adrian Forty as 'among the most famous [for the] expression of the beauty of cleanliness' (1986, p.157). It traces assumptions inherent in the homes built for artists between 1922 and 1935 about every-day domestic work. While the architecture and occupants of these homes were presented as avant-garde and unconventional, the dependence on servants continued, based on implicit, apparently unexamined assumptions that the avant-garde artist occupants would employ servants, and that cleaning work would be undertaken according to traditional roles based on class and gender hierarchies. Hence, this investigation raises significant questions about how 'modern' Le Corbusier's architecture really was.

In the final chapter, 'A coat of whitewash: The law of Ripolin', of *L'Art decoratif d'aujourd'hui* (*The Decorative Art of Today*), published in 1925, Le Corbusier writes: 'Imagine the results of the law of Ripolin. Every citizen is required to replace his hangings, his damasks, his wallpapers, his stencils with a plain coat of Ripolin. His home is made clean. There are no more dirty, dark corners' (1987, p.188).[1] Together with *Vers une architecture* from 1923 (*Towards a New Architecture*, 1927), the book became a key manifesto for a 'new' architecture, later characterised by Le Corbusier and other architects of the period as 'international style' or 'modernism'.[2] *The Decorative Art of Today* is part of a narrative advanced by Le Corbusier in writings and architectural design against traditional crafts, ornament and decorative schemes in favour of an architecture based on cleanliness and hygiene. Yet while the rhetoric was that this was a 'clean' architecture, it was largely domestic servants, in particular lower-class unmarried women from rural areas far from Paris, who undertook the heavy burden of this cleaning work, as part of their multiple daily tasks. The roles of these servants corresponded closely to those of servants in more conventional upper- and middle-class households of the time and previous generations. This conservatizing and classist aspect of these house designs has been largely overlooked by architectural historians, who have tended to obediently look where Le Corbusier pointed to.

Architectural features introduced and justified in the name of cleanliness and hygiene by Le Corbusier and other architects of the period included: smooth white walls (an absence of sculptural decorative relief and moulding), linoleum flooring, fitted furniture, chromed steel, glass surfaces and an abundance of plumbing. The notion of hygiene came to be fetishised, guiding entire architectural decorative schemes. However, as Mark Wigley observes: 'The argument is not about hygiene per se. It is about a certain look of cleanliness. Or, more precisely, a cleansing of the look, a hygiene

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1   Translations of quotations from French to English are by the author.

Ripolin is the brand name of a hard impermeable, washable enamel paint that was invented at the end of the nineteenth century and promoted for its anti-bacterial properties.

2   By the late 1920s, architecture was becoming more international through open competitions and as architects travelled and met overseas. In 1928, Le Corbusier was one of the 28 founding members of Congrès internationaux d'architecture modern (CIAM), an organisation designed to promote a common, 'international' style based on modern principles, from which the movement got its names.

of vision itself' (1995, p.5). These changes were, he argues, treated as an image or theme of health. Nadir Lahiji and D.S. Friedman also interpreted the location of washbasins in the hallways of the private house designs by Le Corbusier and Adolf Loos as a staging of cleanliness: they have more a conceptual function 'cleansing the eye' than a practical one (1997).

This essay moves beyond cleanliness and its staging as an aesthetic, apolitical concern to examine its practical and social implications. Unlike nineteenth-century domestic service, which has inspired much historical research, these canonical twentieth-century houses have yet to be examined from this point of view. Despite increasing political pressures and social changes towards greater egalitarianism at the time, and long-running discussions from the nineteenth century about the re-organisation of domestic work to help bring about greater equality, this essay demonstrates that the houses exhibited entrenched conservative social values when it comes to lower-class people, servants, cleaning and being looked after. The houses were reliant on a body of domestic servants that lived alongside the owners, and Le Corbusier made very few concessions to the improvement of the social and spatial organisation of servants and domestic work in these houses. He also deliberately invisibilised domestic work and servants for the advancement of his architecture. And, if anything, Le Corbusier's architecture required more cleaning than ever, since although dust and dirt tended to be hidden by the colourful, patterned and deep pile fabrics used in earlier architecture, they would have been strikingly visible on the white, shiny surfaces of this 'new' architecture. Hence, Le Corbusier's designs may have created the need for a more intense cleaning and domestic programme for the servants.

Architecture for the avant-garde

Figure 2.1: Villa Fallet, designed by Le Corbusier between 1906 and 1907, La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland. (Photo: Florian Monheim, Bildarchiv Monheim GmbH/Alamy Stock Photo)

Already a well-established designer of private houses and buildings before 1918, Le Corbusier re-emerged in the early 1920s following a period of intense reflection. During these years, which coincided with the 1918 influenza pandemic, Le Corbusier developed his theories on art and architecture alongside Cubist artist and writer Amédée Ozenfant, soon to be one of his first clients. It was at this point Charles-Édouard Jeanneret reinvented himself as Le Corbusier. The buildings he produced after this period mark a clear aesthetic departure from his earlier heavily timbered Swiss chalet houses, weighty bourgeois villas with external carvings, wallpaper, internal ornamentation and panelling, and modest worker dwellings based on the vernacular (Fig. 2.1). In their dramatic staging of a rhetoric of modernity, ostensibly 'modern' in design, the private houses Le Corbusier designed from 1922, as well as his writings, established him as an international architect for an ambitious client class.

The architecture designed by Le Corbusier during this period required affluent, avant-garde and ambitious, mostly male, clients with cultural capital. Many of these houses were designed for clients who were either artists or were closely connected with the arts. Of the fifteen private house projects Le Corbusier designed between 1922 and 1935, seven were for painters/sculptors, including his own home on the upper floor of the Immeuble Molitor, Paris, and five houses were designed for clients working in the arts: two for art collectors; one for a novelist and critic; one for Le Corbusier's brother, a musician; and one for Le Corbusier's father and mother, an enamel artisan and piano teacher, respectively. Of the remaining three, one was for an insurer and two were exhibition houses to showcase a new domestic architecture for the Deutscher Werkbund, a German association of artists, designers and architects.

At first sight, all these houses look uncompromisingly modern and appear to incorporate Le Corbusier's newly formed theories of architecture outlined in his manifesto, the Five Points of Modern Architecture (1923). These included: raising the building on a grid of pilotis, free ground plans and absence of load-bearing partition walls, free design of facades and use of curtain walling, horizontal ribbon windows to increase light and sense of space, and flat roofs with garden terraces for relaxation and wellbeing, as well as an absence of traditional decorative schemes. Clients commissioning these buildings were socially ambitious, going against convention and clearly wanted to be seen as avant-garde, progressive and unconventional by commissioning an unconventional home. In these ways, the houses conferred on their clients a striking

degree of cultural capital. However, paradoxically, domestic servants remained an implicit part of the daily mechanics of the building, and an unproblematized expectation of this supposedly progressive client class.

Outdated and reactionary, not revolutionary

Servants and domestic staff were an accepted feature of upper-class and upper-middle-class life in 1920s and 1930s Paris. In the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, a well-kept home with complicated to clean decorative schemes was a symbol of economic and social status, since it demonstrated that the owners employed numerous competent domestic staff. While most servants were behind the scenes, some servants, such as butlers and footmen, were on public display (Cox, 2006, pp.78–9).

Between 1926 to 1946, there were 42 entries on census and electoral role registers for live-in servants across the nine Parisian residential projects designed by Le Corbusier.[3] The people who lived and worked in these houses were, in age and origin, typical of domestic servants working in France during the inter-war years. Of the 34 servants recorded as living alongside the artists and owners that commissioned them and subsequent owners, there were 22 women and 12 men – almost twice as many women as men. Men's roles included valet, chauffeur, gardener and cook, while the women were more likely to be categorised as domestique/maid. The average age of the servants in these houses over the period also increased, from twenty-nine-years-old in 1926 to forty-four in 1946, as it did across France as people decided to avoid domestic service in favour of other work.

Had Le Corbusier wished, he could have drawn on a strong current of feminist thinking in relation to addressing the 'women problem' of domestic labour. He would not have had to invent ideas anew on how to transform or reorganise domestic work to create more socially equal and less gendered spaces. Dolores Hayden's work on material feminism demonstrates that from the nineteenth century across Europe and the United States, prominent theorists and activists argued for the rationalisation and transformation of domestic work to address wider inequalities between men and women. For Robert Owen in England, Charles Fourier in France and Friedrich Engels, the goal was moral and economic – to free women from constraints of domestic work to enable them to participate in the burgeoning industrial economy (Hayden, 1981, pp.33–

56). Others, including Melusina Fay Peirce, Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Mary Livermore, demanded economic remuneration for women's household labour and a transformation of the spatial design and material culture of homes, neighbourhoods and cities (pp.62–203).

Material-feminist architectural ideas ranged from cooperative apartment buildings that, through economies of scale, could incorporate the latest innovations used on the upkeep of larger buildings such as vacuum cleaners and dishwashers. Other ideas included developments where residents participated communally in household work, or kitchen-less homes and centralised public kitchens, dining rooms, childcare and laundry services run by trained workers. Many of these theorists put their ideas into practice, including Peirce who attempted to centralise housework in a commercial project on Bow Street in Cambridge, Massachusetts (1869), and Ebenezer Howard and his associates Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker's cooperative quadrangle Homesgarth with 32 kitchen-less apartments at Letchworth Garden City (1909). At architect Max G. Heidelburg's scheme for the Feminist Alliance there were to be no corners, no wallpaper, only fold-down beds, built-in bathtubs and all hardware would be dull finish (Hayden, 1981, p.200). Hayden writes: 'They tended to see themselves as creating, for the first time, truly modern housing' (1981, p.229).

Historian Robert Fishman has shown that Le Corbusier made extensive marginal notes about cooperative quadrangles in his copies of Howard's works (in Hayden, 1981, p.237). Avant-garde in social terms, these communities largely used revivalist forms of architecture – half timbering, thatched roofs, leaded windows, inglenook fireplaces and panelling. However, as early as 1922, Austrian-born architect Rudolf Schindler designed for his wife and their friends a house with shared domestic workplace, private studios for each inhabitant and outdoor patios instead of conventional living rooms. It was designed using glass, wood and a concrete slat-built system. Despite this important current of feminist ideas, when it came to designing private houses for his avant-garde clients, Le Corbusier's spatial arrangements resembled the conventional houses of upper-middle classes that had preceded them, even those of two centuries earlier, described by Norbert Elias in The Court Society ([1969] 1983). Schindler House also showed that the architectural characteristics Le Corbusier used, and attributed to an architecture of cleanliness and hygiene, were not new. Indeed, by contrast with the work of the material feminists, Le Corbusier's architecture was classist and patriarchal.

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3   This includes: Maison Ozenfant, Maison La Roche, Maison Jeanneret, Maison Lipchitz, Maison Miestchaninoff, Maison Cook, Maison Planeix, Villa Savoye and Immeuble Molitor.

Marion Roberts has demonstrated that from the 1920s, the ideas promoted by material feminists failed to evolve into mass-appeal solutions, and instead a more conservative, gendered ideal took root. This ideal rejected the communalised domestic work of material feminism in favour of the detached or semi-detached middle-class suburban home, and the working man and his isolated housewife who did not work and may have done her own housework or employed servants/dailies to do it for her (Roberts, 1991, pp.25–40). The houses Le Corbusier designed between 1922 and 1935 subscribed to this model of villas located on the then-green, spacious unbuilt edges of Paris. Villa Besnus (1922–3) is in Vaucresson, fourteen kilometres from the centre of Paris. Maison Lipchitz (1923–5), Maison Miestchaninoff (1923–5) and Maison Cook (1926–7) are all in Boulogne-Billancourt, a western suburb eight kilometres from the centre of Paris, as is Le Corbusier's his own home on the upper floor of the Immeuble Molitor, Paris (1931–4).

Figure 2.3: Elsbeth Böklen in front of Maison Weissenhof-Siedlung, designed by Le Corbusier, in Stuttgart, Germany, 1928. (Photo: Mercedes-Benz Classic (archive number 6075)).
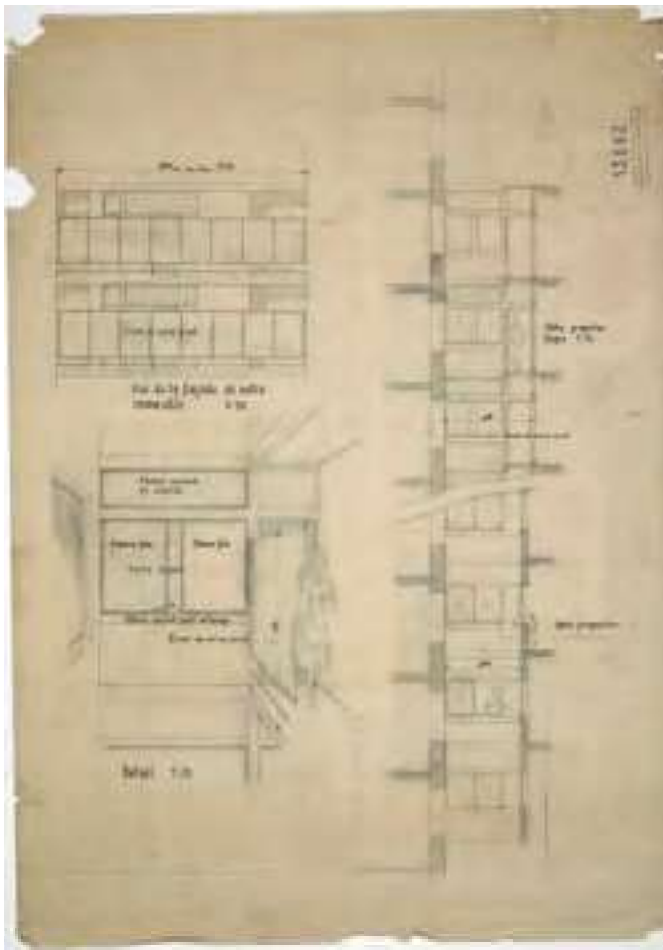

Figure 2.2: Domestic staff walking through the service atrium of L'Immeuble Molitor, Paris, designed by Le Corbusier, 1931–34. (Photo: Fondation Le Corbusier/ADAGP (drawing number 13862)).

The houses Le Corbusier designed reinforced these social attitudes, staging clearly differentiated architectural approaches towards men, and upper- and middle-class women (mostly wives of artist-clients) and lower-class women. These emerge most directly in the comparison between one of the working drawings of Le Corbusier's own apartment block L'Immeuble Molitor (Fig. 2.2) and a published photograph of the exhibition house for the Deutscher Werkbund Maison Weissenhof-Siedlung (1927, Fig. 2.3). The drawing shows a sequence of four maids at work in narrow service passages across seven storeys of the apartment block. The women wear traditional dresses with aprons and work alone. The photograph, in contrast, shows a woman leaning against a car outside a building that exhibits Le Corbusier's 'new' architecture. Dressed in fashionable flapper-girl clothes, she appears as a woman of money, leisure, adventurous spirit and cultural capital – the kind of woman who might live in the house behind her. In essence, the houses Le Corbusier designed in this period sustained and promoted existing entrenched class-based roles for women.

An antiquated modernism

By the mid-1920s, the average new-built house included many of the technologies designed to lessen the burden of domestic work, including plumbing, heating and ventilation. These were also found in Le Corbusier's designs. Yet, despite these modern conveniences, service and servant spaces still occupied a significant proportion of the floor plans Le Corbusier designed for his artist clients. Of the nine houses he designed in the Paris area between 1922 and 1935, servant quarters comprised on average 27 per cent of house internal area – surprising given their proclaimed self-maintaining characteristics and the absence of attention afforded to domestic work and staff in subsequent research. The lowest percentage of servant space was at Villa Cook (1926–7) with fourteen per cent, before an additional maid's room was constructed in the garden in 1929. Maison La Roche (1923–5) had 20.1 per cent and Maison Jeanneret (1923–5) had 24 per cent.

Le Corbusier's designs for houses in and around Paris also incorporated approximately the same proportion of service space at the start of the period as the end. The earliest house, Maison et atelier Ozenfant (1922–4), had 33 per cent dedicated to service functions, Villa Savoye (1928–31) had 38 per cent. This is despite substantial social changes taking place, and when it might be expected for service space to decrease or adapt to non-residential staff and improving technologies. In the 1911 France census, there were 887,000 domestic workers of both sexes,

whereas by the 1921 census this had dropped by 20 per cent to 707,000 (Martin-Huan, 1997 p.80). Yet, by the mid-1930s these artist-owners no longer employed the number of domestic servants as the houses had been designed for a few years earlier (Table 1). In 1931, Le Corbusier designed eleven bed spaces for servants in Immeuble Molitor, but in the space of ten years from 1936 to 1946, the numbers of servants recorded living and working in the building had dropped to just over half of the spatial capacity. Likewise, Maison Jeanneret employed two servants in 1926, then none after that. Maison Planeix employed one servant in 1931 and none from 1936. Only Villa Savoye, the home of an insurance executive, had the same number of servants across the three censuses after it was built. It was difficult for employers to fill vacancies. The socio-economic class of these clients remained largely the same, yet even within the period Le Corbusier designed these houses, it was clear from the occupancy of the earlier houses that fewer servants being employed than planned. Le Corbusier's designs underestimated the impact of social and technical changes and did not adapt to the changing context. Essentially, the designs showed a resoluteness that these clients and their homes should be cared for by servants.

The floor plans of the houses in this period also demonstrate that considerable attention went into designing the service spaces. 38 types of service space can be identified across the plans, each with highly specific uses. All the house designs had a kitchen/ *cuisine*, scullery/*office*, utility room/*buanderie*, laundry

House	Maximum beds spaces for staff	1926	1931	1936	1946	Notes
Ozenfant	1	X	1	X	1	Inhabitants changed
La Roche	2	2	2	2	2	
Jeanneret	3	2	X	X		
Lipchitz	1		X	2		Inhabitants changed
Miestchaninoff	1		X			
Cook	1-2		2		1	Additional maid room added in 1936. Inhabitants changed
Planeix	1		1	X		
Savoye	7-10		2	2	2 (1945)	Other servants travelled from Paris with the Savoye family
Immeuble Molitor	11			10	6	Inhabitants changed

Table 1: Numbers of live-in domestic staff in the houses recorded in 1926, 1931, 1936 and 1946 censuses in relation to total number of bed spaces. 'X' means the information is available, but no domestic staff were present; where there is a gap, the house is not listed in that year's record.

Figure 2.4: Buanderie sink, Villa Savoye, designed by Le Corbusier, 1928–31. (Photo: Isabelle Priest, 2012)

Figure. 2.5: The lingerie, Maison La Roche, designed by Le Corbusier, 1923–25. (Photo: Isabelle Priest, 2012)

room/*lingerie*, garage and one maid's room/*chambre de bonne*. Many contained a flat for the concierge/ *loge de concierge*/*conciergerie*, a service stair/*escalier de service* or service lift/*ascenseur de service*, service corridors/*passerelle de service*/*dégagement*, coal store/ *charbon*, storeroom/*débarras*/*réduit*, cloakroom/*vestiaire*, cellar/*cave* and rubbish sluice/*vidoir*. Several had a drying room/*séchoir*, service terrace, broom cupboard, gardener's flat and chauffeur's flat.

All these spaces would have been used during the daily routine of residential domestic staff. Servants would have been designated specific responsibilities and specifically enclosed spaces in which to carry out their domestic tasks. This division into multiple rooms had more in common with the suite of service spaces Elias describes in the architectonic structure of upper-class Parisian houses/hôtels during the ancien régime (1983, pp.41–65) than the models of domestic work that followed the period as outlined by Roberts (1991, pp.43–73). Many of the spaces Le Corbusier designed for servants were the same as those that had been designed into the hôtels of the ancien régime, including servant bedrooms, service corridors, sculleries, the fruit store/*fruitier* and cold store/*garde-manger*. In the *passerelle de service*, located before the owners' spaces, servants would have awaited the commands of their employers in constant readiness both during the ancien régime and in the 1920s/1930s. Le Corbusier even added to the list of service spaces not included in Elias' account of ancien-régime hotels. These included the *buanderie* and *lingerie,* which would have been used by servants for washing laundry or ironing, mending and storing it (Figs. 2.4 and 2.5). By comparison, there were also remarkably far more types of service space than spaces provided for the artist-owners, which comprised approximately seven types of space: entrance hall, dining area, living area, bedrooms, bathrooms, sun terraces and studio/*atelier*. The many service rooms segregated servants from view of the owners while they carried out the domestic duties.

Divide and rule: separate and unequal

In multiple ways, the role and spatial organisation of these service spaces within the houses Le Corbusier designed for these artists embodied the greater importance of their supposedly avant-garde owners over their servants. The service spaces were divided into many rooms, each with a specific purpose. By contrast, the owners' spaces were often open plan and designed according to Le Corbusier's '*Cinq points de l'architecture moderne*' ('Five points of modern architecture') in *Vers une architecture*. In his own flat at Immeuble Molitor, for example, the entrance hall had two huge doors the width of walls that could be opened so that the rooms flowed freely from the atelier at one side of the apartment through the hall, sitting area and dining area at the opposite side (Figs. 2.6 and 2.7). All the spaces could be opened into one huge, free-flowing area. The kitchen, where the servant would have prepared Le Corbusier and his wife's meals, was, by comparison, next to the dining area in a separate enclosed room with an ordinary single

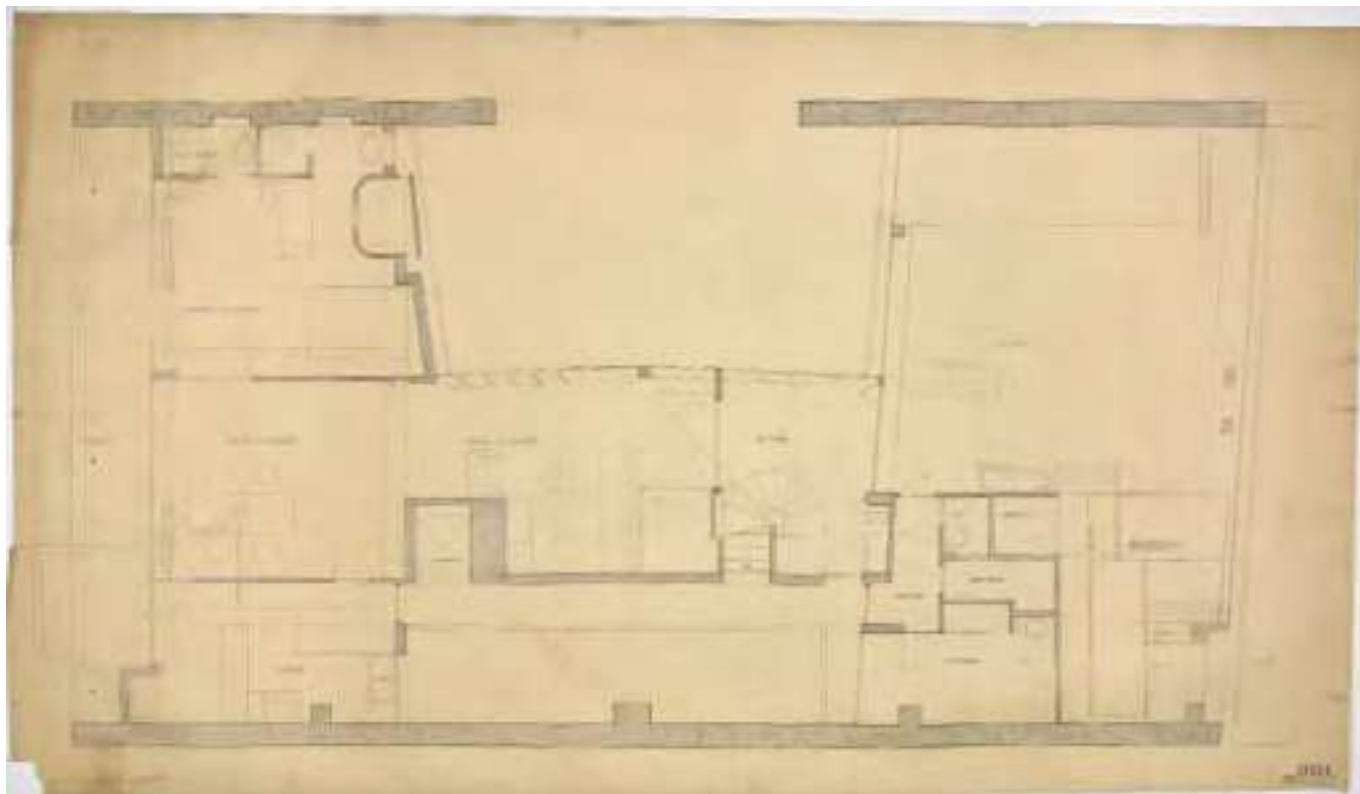Figure 2.6: Plan of Le Corbusier's seventh floor flat showing service quarters, Immeuble Molitor, designed by Le Corbusier, 1931–34. (Photo: Fondation Le Corbusier/ADAGP, (drawing number 13524)).

Figure 2.7: Large doors open from the studio through to the hall and beyond, the small door to the maid's bedroom, Le Corbusier's flat, Immeuble Molitor, designed by Le Corbusier, 1931–34. (Photo: Isabelle Priest, 2012)

Figure 2.8: View to the maid bedrooms past the washbasin from the main entrance. The chauffeur's apartment is behind the wall on the right of the ramp. Villa Savoye, designed by Le Corbusier, 1928–31. (Photo: Isabelle Priest, 2012)

doorway. Servants occupied more individual rooms, but they could not be opened and interlinked to form bigger spaces. The individual service spaces also occupied a lower proportion of the total area of the house, so each room was considerably smaller than the owners' spaces, too. The servants had a wider range of specific tasks to carry out, they but had less space to do them.

This division of service spaces into many rooms segregated servants from each other and prevented them from carrying out tasks communally or in communication (which might have led to their pleasure and distraction). Many of the individual types of service space were highly gendered too, demonstrating a hierarchy between male- and female-occupied domestic roles. The maid bedroom, for example, would have been occupied by a female servant. Male servants employed in the roles of concierge, gardener and chauffeur, across all Le Corbusier's residential projects in the period, however, were allocated their own more spacious apartments with multiple areas/rooms, often including kitchens, WCs, shower rooms and their own

front doors. The gardener at Villa Savoye had his own house in the grounds. The chauffeur had an apartment on the ground floor next to the garage (Fig. 2.8). These apartments enabled male servants to live with their families, whereas female servants would have had to leave their jobs to marry or cohabit.

There was not just a hierarchy between male and female servants, the houses carefully separated men and women from each other too, which did not occur in the owners' areas. At Villa Savoye, for example, the chauffeur's flat shared the ground floor with the maid bedrooms, but there was no direct internal doorway from the chauffeur's flat into the corridor where the maid's bedrooms were, or even into the main house. While he enjoyed a degree of privacy, his only access was via the external servant or main entrance, where he could be seen.

There were, nevertheless, some changes that Le Corbusier implemented to domestic service spaces in these Parisian houses between 1922 and 1935. In the contemporaneous home Maison de Verre (1928–32), designed by Pierre Chareau for Dr Jean Dalsace, also

in Paris, for example, the kitchen and maid quarters form a separate, linked wing at a 90-degree angle to the main building housing the owners (Overy, 2007, p.85). This model is more akin to the ancien-régime hotels, described by Elias. In those plans, the house opened from the street into a courtyard. The principal public rooms of the house were at the rear of the courtyard, and the private areas in the wings either side. The servant areas were at the front of these wings along the street boundary (Elias, 1983, p.44). Likewise, nineteenth-century Parisian apartment buildings were split with work service spaces on the ground floor or basement, multiple floors of private apartments above and servant bedrooms in the attic. Servant spaces were allocated to areas with the least attractive qualities: a lack of daylight or privacy on the ground or basement floors, or inconvenience of access, exposure to poorer conditions and extremes of temperature in the roof space. Servant bedrooms, for example, were known for their unpleasant extremes of temperature (Martin-Fugier, 1979, p.119). Within Le Corbusier's designs, there is no such standard distribution of service spaces across the organisation of the houses according to floor levels.

Le Corbusier's designs exhibited a different logic. Instead, they grouped service areas alongside other menial spaces, seemingly to rationalise workflows.

At Maison La Roche, service areas were grouped over three floors around the service stair, much like the *basse cour* in the hôtels of the ancien régime. At Le Corbusier's flat in Immeuble Molitor the maid's bedroom was at the studio end of the apartment. The other service areas, such as the kitchen and scullery, were at the opposite side of the main stairwell, but there was direct access along the communal corridor without having to enter Le Corbusier's apartment (Fig. 2.6). This spatial arrangement of grouping service spaces with other workspaces, demonstrated that servants' work was an integral part of the domestic running of the house. They were designed so servants could switch between tasks quickly and efficiently. Yet, at the same time, this arrangement meant that servants were always on duty, always workers, only useful for their domestic labour. No private life or life apart from work was afforded to servants in the design of these houses, where arguably there had been some separation in previous centuries. At Maison Jeanneret, the maid's bedroom was a 5.8 square metre room next to the entrance door on the ground floor, which was shared with the chauffeur's apartment, garage and studio. The maid would have been always on call to answer the door to visitors, deliveries as well as all her other daily tasks.

Service areas were, of course, still located in the
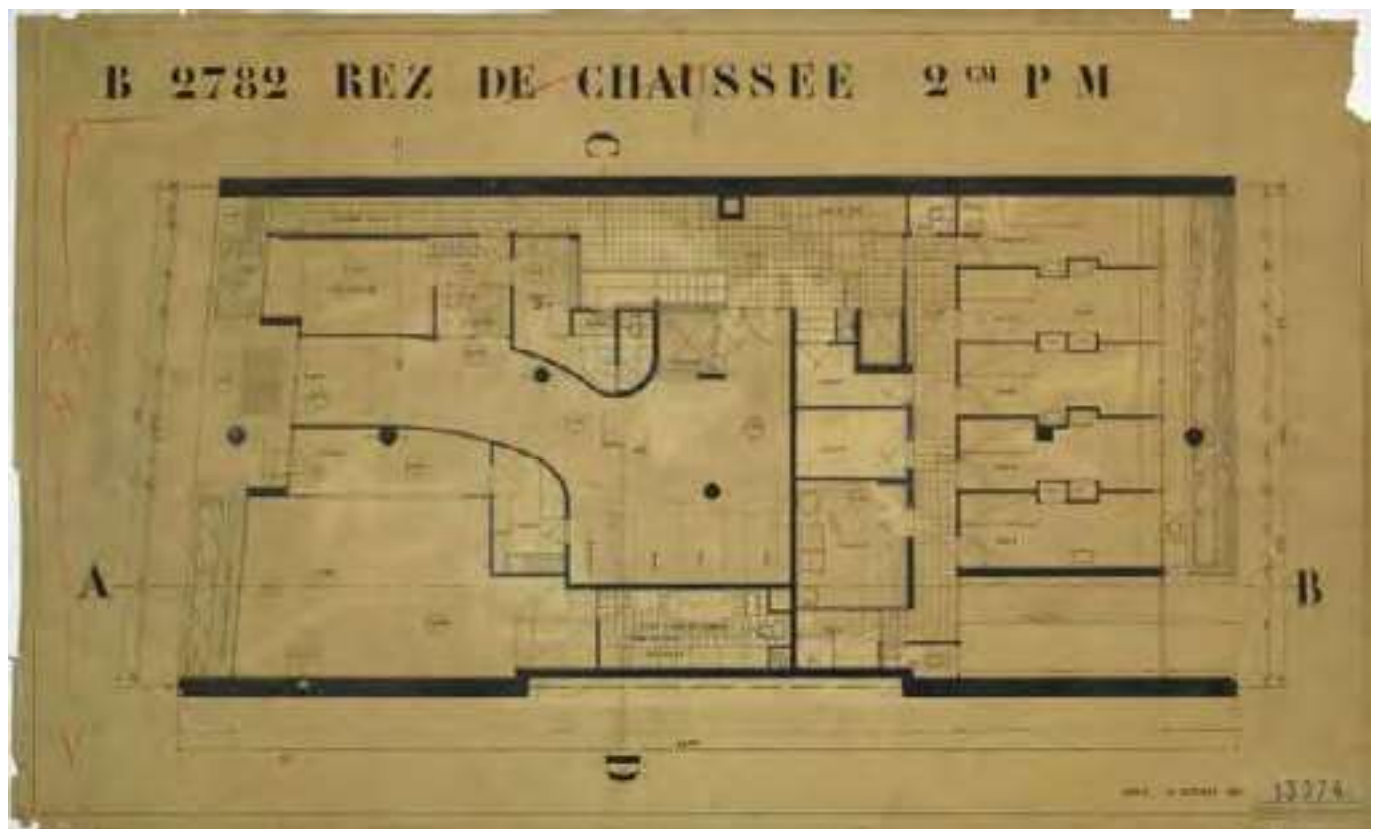
Figure 2.9: Ground floor showing the five maid bedrooms, the conciergerie, buanderie, drying room and rubbish store at Immeuble Molitor, designed by Le Corbusier, 1931–34. (Photo: Fondation Le Corbusier/ADAGP, (drawing number 13374A)).

Figure 2.10: Windows on landing, Maison La Roche, designed by Le Corbusier, 1923–25. (Photo: Isabelle Priest, 2012)

Figure 2.11: Le Corbusier's kitchen with frosted windows, Immeuble Molitor, designed by Le Corbusier, 1931–34. (Photo: Isabelle Priest, 2012)

least attractive areas of the site. However, it seemed that the priorities of what constituted an attractive area had changed. At Immeuble Molitor, Le Corbusier made a point that the maid bedrooms for the other apartments were relocated from the top floor, where they would have been in nineteenth-century apartment blocks, to five servant bedrooms on the ground floor behind the reception and *buanderie*, and five in the basement, next to the plant room and cellars (Fig. 2.9). He wrote: 'Rooms for domestic staff are located on the ground floor so that they do not have to suffer the often terrible conditions… The roofing has been reserved, as should always be the case, for the best apartment in the building [his own], in the midst of slates, flowers, grass areas and shrubs' (in Sbriglio, 1996, p.89). Relocating these bedrooms to the ground floor and basement would have meant they received less daylight, views and fresh air. At Villa Savoye, the servant bedrooms on the ground floor were shadowed further by the overhanging first floor. Maison La Roche and Maison Jeanneret were located on a mews surrounded by buildings, so less light would have reached the *conciergerie* and servant bedroom on ground floor. Le Corbusier's own maid's bedroom by his studio on the sixth floor received less daylight because the window opened onto an internal stairwell. The positioning of service spaces emphasised servants' status as second-class citizens, there to serve and not entitled to the light, views and space he promoted for clients.

This contrast between servant areas and owners' spaces was extended to almost every element of these houses by Le Corbusier. Fenestration selected for the service areas was largely characterised by vertical narrow repeated bars (Fig. 2.10) – not the expansive ribbon windows found elsewhere. Much of it was also frosted – in the *office* at Maison La Roche and in the kitchen onto the service corridor at Immeuble Molitor – which limited daylight and external views, possibly to avoid servants being distracted from their work (Figs. 2.2 and 2.11). Frosted glass prevented people seeing in, too.

There were also telling differences in the interior finishes and decoration. In the concierge flat at Maison La Roche, the servant areas were significantly more colourfully painted than the rest of the house. The bedroom area was painted light green (Fig. 2.12) and the adjoining living area was painted a pale burnt sienna. Elsewhere, the shared *vestiaire* and toilet were painted deep ultramarine and golden yellow (Fig. 2.13), while the service corridor and stair were cerulean blue and a light raw sienna. The only colour used in the rest of the house was light pink in the dining room and light blue in part of the living room. At Villa Savoye, the

owners' bedroom was the most colourful internal space. On the outside, however, the service quarters' exterior walls were painted deep green, rather than white. Likewise, across the houses, the pipework in the servant spaces was left exposed, but not elsewhere. And in the basements – where the servants would have spent significant time fetching items from storerooms, operating the heating systems and doing laundry – the spaces were left with unfinished blockwork walls and exposed concrete slab ceilings, joists and floors. Another difference across the majority of the houses was the use of wooden parquet floors in the servant bedrooms only. In the owners' bedrooms, Le Corbusier's insisted on the use of linoleum for its hygienic qualities. This became a source of disagreement with Le Corbusier's client sculptor Jacques Lipchitz who commissioned Villa Lipchitz. In a letter dated 21 March 1924, Lipchitz writes to Le Corbusier that he wants neither linoleum nor parquet flooring (Lipchitz, 1924).

Likewise, the maids' bedrooms lacked separate toilets or washing facilities, which contrasted with the abundance of sanitary ware in the client spaces. Le Corbusier's own bedroom at L'Immeuble Molitor boasted a large separate shower, bath, toilet, bidet and two washbasins, all in view of the bed. The master bathroom at Villa Savoye, a lavish space, was bedecked with a sunken bath and built-in tiled chaise longue, open to the bedroom. Live-in maids would have washed at the basins in their bedrooms or in the *buanderie* (Overy, 2007, p.178). There is evidence that clients were sometimes more generous in this regard than Le Corbusier. Raoul La Roche eventually allowed the concierge at Maison La Roche, Monsieur Perrin and his wife, to use the guest bedroom opposite the *conciergerie* on the ground floor because he felt that their accommodation was not big enough (Official guide, Maison La Roche, 2012). This would have allowed the Perrins to use the ensuite bathroom (Fig. 2.13). But this appears to be exceptional, and the absence of toilet and washing facilities for the live-in maids emphasises the classed treatment of personal hygiene among household members. Servants were not afforded the same architectural opportunities to exhibit their bodies as the owners while bathing either (no open-plan ensuite bathrooms or tiled chaise longue). Not all bodies were equally worthy of display or leisure.

These different finishes and features articulated the different status of the servants. There was one architectural approach for servant spaces and another for owners' spaces, and gendered approaches between male- and female-occupied service spaces as well. Designed with the most basic features, as well as more

Figure 2.12: The conciergerie bedroom (foreground) and living space (background), Maison La Roche, designed by Le Corbusier, 1923–25. (Photo: Isabelle Priest, 2012)

pared back and economical, or less hygienic, in their finishes, reinforced services areas as merely functional, productive workplaces and inferred the inferior status of servants. In contrast, for owners, the houses were places of space, leisure, relaxation, recuperation, health and artistic creativity. At a more conceptual level, the commissioning clients were served, whether by plumbed-in heating and hot water, or for food, laundry and cleaning, without any of the mechanics or working spaces on show – that is invisibly.

Through the frosted glass, a hidden servant infrastructure

This essay has demonstrated that, despite the outwardly unconventional appearances of the houses Le Corbusier designed between 1922 and 1935, the social and spatial organizing of servants was traditional. Spatially and programmatically, the designs divided owners and servants by class and gender, based on entrenched ideas and structures. The architectural designs were a continuation of existing conservative approaches to domestic labour and the treatment of service staff. They did not attempt new ways of organizing this work or challenge conventional classist and sexist assumptions about domestic labour.

Rather than remove the requirement for servants or imagine houses without them, Le Corbusier seems to have responded to upper-class avant-garde pressures by designing houses which rendered servants less spatially and socially visible than ever. Paul Overy suggests that 'after the social and economic upheaval which followed World War I, wealthy Europeans were even more inclined to mask extravagant lifestyles under a

Figure 2.13: Shared cloakroom, Maison La Roche, designed by Le Corbusier, 1923–25. (Photo: Isabelle Priest, 2012)

semblance of hygiene, austerity and "plain living"' (2007, p.77). Likewise, Jacqueline Martin-Huan argued 'to invest in intellectual and moral achievements' this class had to 'reject ostentatious luxury and ancillary possession' (1997, p.82). This essay's argument, therefore, goes one step further. It was no longer so acceptable, no doubt particularly for avant-garde clients, to have servants so, for the advancement of Le Corbusier's architecture, it was necessary to make them more invisible than before.

To some extent Le Corbusier's arrangement of servants around workflow efficiencies placed them in closer proximity to the owners' spaces than might be expected – and closer than those in, for example, Maison de Verre, where they were in a separate wing. The servant quarters were also often in view on first approach to the houses. At Maison La Roche and at Atelier Ozenfant, the *conciergerie* is the first door visitors seen (Fig. 2.14). However, inside and out, Le Corbusier deployed architecture to hide and invisibilise domestic servants and their domestic work.

The use of frosted glass in service areas was, as noted, one method; invisibilising through architectural promenade was another. The *conciergerie* may have been the first part of the house visitors encountered at
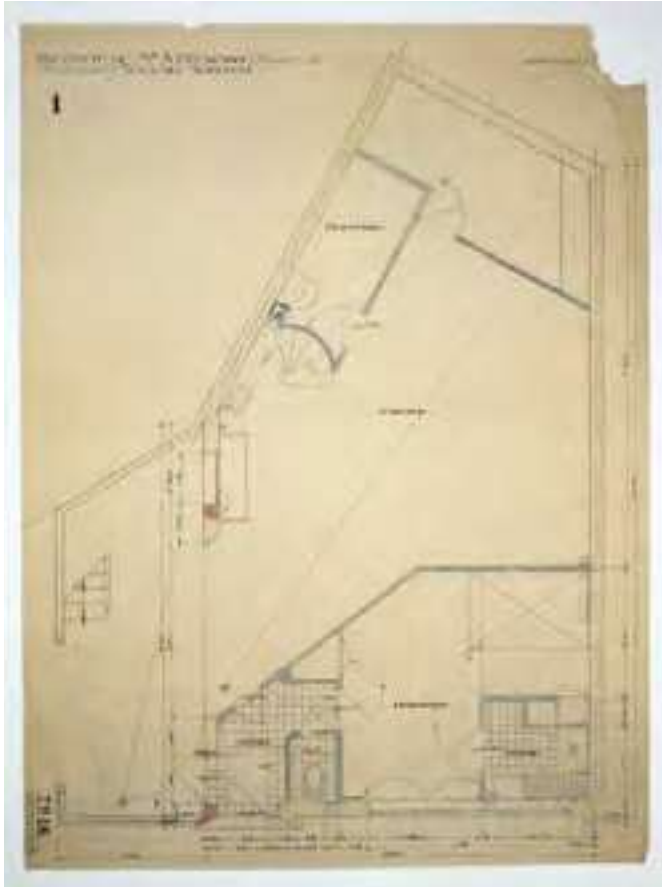
Figure 2.14: Ground floor plan showing conciergerie, Atelier Ozenfant, designed by Le Corbusier, 1922–24. (Photo: Fondation Le Corbusier/ADAGP (drawing number 07816))

Maison La Roche and Atelier Ozenfant, but at each Le Corbusier deflected attention away from it. At Atelier Ozenfant, attention was diverted up the spiral stair to the front door marked by a bare bulb. At Maison La Roche, the *conciergerie* entrance was so understated – a single plain frosted glazed door without architraves – it would have been barely noticed or mistaken for part of the garage (Fig. 2.15). At Villa Savoye, the *buanderie* and the chauffeur's flat were on the ground floor, flush with the floor above on the first elevation on arrival, but visitors would have passed by this elevation to the entrance on the other side of the house. Inside Maison La Roche, there were three doors off the hall (two of which led to service areas), but visitors' attention would have been drawn to a large stair to the rear that led to the *piano nobile*. At Villa Savoye, visitors would have been encouraged up the ramp directly ahead from the entrance door, away from the service spaces on the other side of the plan, behind the washbasin (Fig. 2.8).

Servants were, however, most hidden at Immeuble Molitor. The ground floor and basement service areas, including the servant bedrooms and conciergerie apartment, were accessed via separate entrances on Rue Nungesser et Coli and Rue de la Tourelle. There was a separate lightwell with a pulley system around which were the service passages, cleaning cupboards, separate toilets, *vidoir*, service stair, service lift and direct rear access into the apartment kitchens. All around these houses, service spaces were designed for maids and servants to arrive, carry out their duties and leave unseen (Fig. 2.2).

The servants and service spaces were not just invisibilised within the architecture of these houses itself, but no contemporaneous descriptions or photographs of the servants or their quarters exist either. And in Le Corbusier's own writings, domestic servants, their accommodation and the principal spaces they occupied were overwhelmingly neglected. Le Corbusier wanted people to believe the self-maintaining and self-cleaning principles set out in 'A coat of whitewash: The law of Ripolin' were principal characteristics and advantages of his architecture. Indeed, the most striking representation of these houses as modern, technologically advanced and more socially equal is in a letter he wrote to his mother. He wrote that a potential client Colette Sidonie Gabrielle (1873–1954) wanted to live in a 'Corbusière' as she believed it would allow her to dismiss her servants, whom she described as 'vampires' (in Samuel, 2004, p.29). The letter suggests that once complicated decorative schemes are removed, the need for servants also disappears. These narratives have endured and tended to be uncritically perpetuated by architectural historians in subsequent historiography – and these spaces and the stories of the servants who lived and worked in them are still ignored by the contemporary guides and publications about these buildings today.[4]

A flouter of regulations and general disinterest

Despite Le Corbusier's apparent interest in the work of the material feminists, his designs failed to engage in improving servants' conditions. Service areas were pared back in terms of materials; they were also meagre in size and provision, often flouting regulations. For example, from the end of the nineteenth century to the start of World War I, maid bedrooms were the object of significant political discussion, designed to ameliorate living conditions and encourage people into domestic

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4   At Maison La Roche, where the conciergerie and kitchen were first opened to the public in 2009, the pamphlet made no reference to these areas. At Le Corbusier's flat in L'Immeuble Molitor the spaces are not given descriptions, and at Villa Savoye the servant bedrooms on the ground floor are open to the public as exhibition spaces and the chauffeur's flat and other basement service spaces are still used as offices and storerooms.

Figure 2.15 Exterior showing discreet ground floor concierge entrance door and window to right, Maison La Roche, designed by Le Corbusier, 1923–25. (Photo: Isabelle Priest, 2012)

service. Regulations introduced in 1904 prescribed that servant bedrooms had to be a minimum of eight square metres (Martin-Fugier, 1979, p.132). Yet, in Maisons Jeanneret, Lipschitz, Miestchaninoff and Villa Savoye, all the single maid bedrooms had room sizes as much as two square metres below the minimum regulations – only Maison Cook met the requirements at 10.5 square metres.

The designs of these artist houses during the period also showed that Le Corbusier believed servants' material requirements to be minimal. This is in sharp contrast to his professed views in *The Marseilles Block* that a room 'should be complete, satisfying all individual needs and encouraging personal activity, reading, drawing, sewing, weaving, pottering about, thinking, meditating' (1953, p.17). In his designs for these houses, the maid bedrooms were only provided with a washbasin, cupboard, sometimes a table and stool. These were all items required by 1900 legislation (Martin-Fugier, 1979, p.123). But, again, Le Corbusier was prepared to break the rules. The maid's bedroom

at Maison Jeanneret, for example, did not have a washbasin – it was crossed out and moved to the hallway for shared use (Fig. 2.16).

Le Corbusier's clients were arguably more concerned by their servants' living conditions than he was. During the design process of Maison La Roche, for example, in a letter dated 2 September 1924, Raoul La Roche wrote to Le Corbusier to express concerns about the tightness of space in *conciergerie* bedroom (La Roche, 1924). Initially, the maid's room at Villa Miestchaninoff did not have a washbasin, until Oscar Miestchaninoff insisted on it, as outlined in a letter to Le Corbusier dated 27 March 1925, he even chose the washbasin himself (Miestchaninoff, 1925). Le Corbusier's architecture frequently disregarded regulations on servant spaces. He was apparently out of step with his client's wishes in this regard as well. It appears he was disinterested in the conditions of these spaces and repeatedly, whether about size or provision, had to be prompted to fulfil minimum legal requirements, let alone anything more which could have
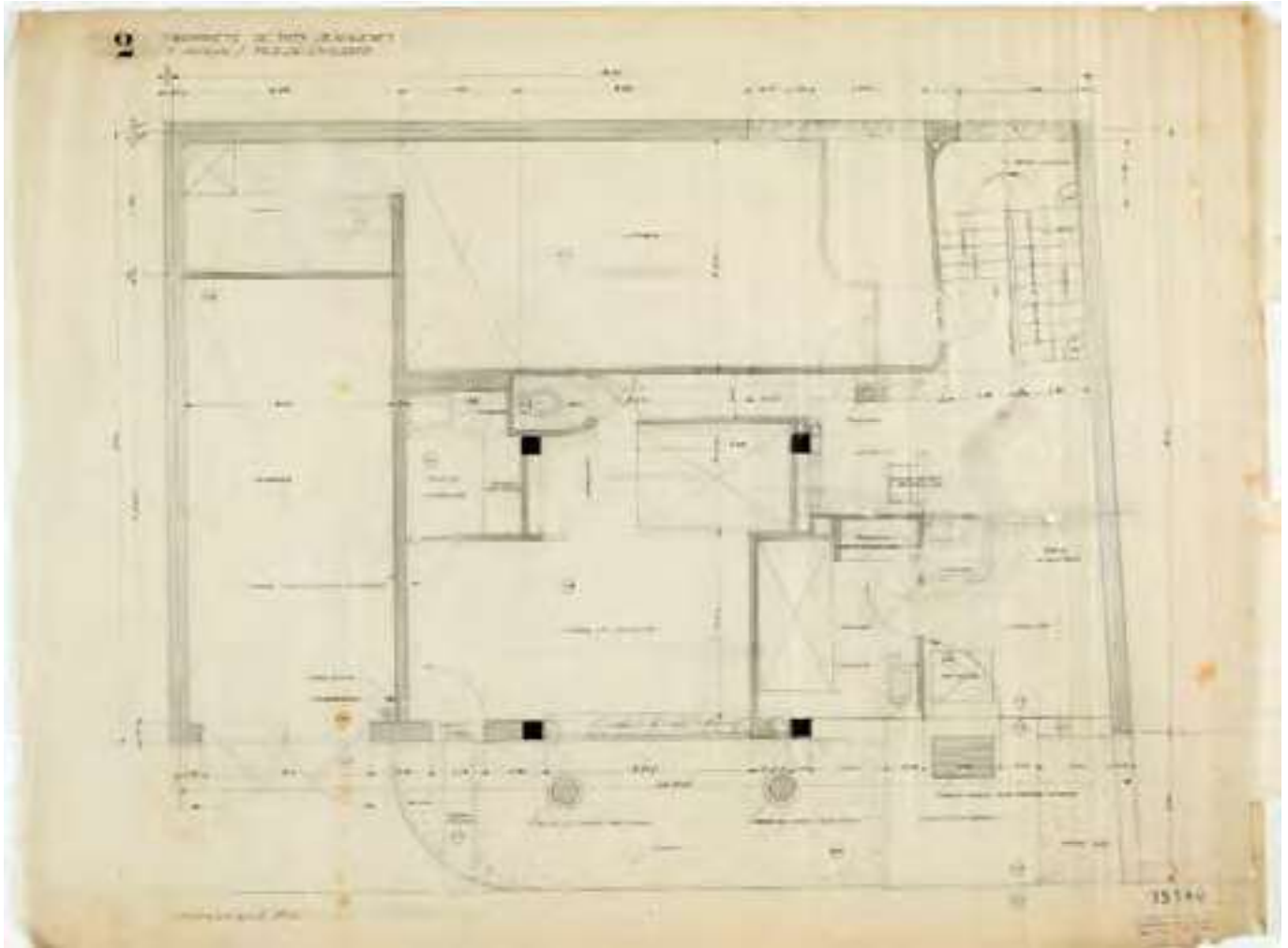
Figure 2.16 Ground floor plan, Maison Jeanneret, designed by Le Corbusier, 1923–25. (Photo: Fondation Le Corbusier/ADAGP (drawing number 15140))

been more progressive and socially inclusive.

Conclusion – Corbusier, the conservative

Flora Samuel found that Le Corbusier, 'when it came to advising his mother on employing a maid, he was emphatic that she should be paid well above the going rate' (2004, p.27). This evidence was used to argue for the central influence that feminism played in Le Corbusier's work. His own writings played a crucial role in propagating the image of his architecture as 'new' and modern. Cultural circles that included the artistic and arts world clients who commissioned his first private houses after World War I, and subsequent historians, were ready to adopt and support Le Corbusier's outwardly different architecture and its rhetoric.

This essay has examined the accommodations made for cleaning carried out by servants. Despite an ostensible aesthetic progressivism, it has found that the houses Le Corbusier designed for artist clients between 1922 and 1935 were conservative, even reactionary, when it came to the role of servants

and the labour of cleaning. The service spaces and servants' quarters were designed to distinguish those who worked and lived in them as second-class citizens. The service spaces were arranged for work efficiency. Servants were afforded less space. They were segregated in enclosed rooms that were positioned in the least attractive areas of the house. There was a hierarchy in fenestration and use of more economical finishes. Male servants were given more space, including leisure areas, than female. Servants were discouraged architecturally from mixing with each other, particularly men and women. In short, there was a sharp contradiction between the exiguous provision for live-in domestic staff and penny-pinching servant spaces, and the self-professed claims of the 'liberated dwelling' and bold assertions such as 'a house is a machine for living in' set out in *Vers une architecture.*

Le Corbusier could have drawn on innumerate sources for ideas on how to design more progressive, even egalitarian, houses. He knew of the long-running discussions from other theorists, designers and architects, including Ebenezer Howard and Raymond

Unwin's garden cities in England. Nevertheless, the houses Le Corbusier designed between 1922 and 1935 for his educated artist clients were dependent on an invisible staff of residential domestic servants. Their labour was carefully designed into the buildings, and the buildings depended on it for cleaning, maintenance and all manner of domestic tasks, as they would have done in other conventional middle to upper class homes of the time.

Not only did Le Corbusier embed traditional, conservative approaches to domestic work and live-in servants in these buildings, he failed to foresee the social and technological changes taking place around him. By the end of World War II, these artist owner-occupants no longer employed any, or as many, servants as the houses had been designed for. His constant approach to the architecture of domestic work over the period refused to accept the changing economic and social roles of the lower and upper classes. Indeed, the correspondence between Le Corbusier and some of his clients expressing their concern for the service areas, suggests his clients were more actively progressive than he had been prepared to be. He and his wife Yvonne, after all, were one of the few households in this study to employ a live-in servant in 1946.

In spite of triumphalist claims about modernity, cleanliness and hygiene, the presence of servants in his houses proved that Le Corbusier's architecture was far from self-maintaining. His architecture sought to hide this and to screen out the servants living in these homes and their domestic work, even more than had been done in earlier architecture. They were allocated small task-specific rooms, invisibilised through architectural promenade, frosted glass and separating spaces, and then through his writings and representations of his architecture. This representation continues today. Many of the service spaces are still out-of-bounds, used as storerooms and offices for staff that open the houses to the public. These spaces have been neglected in subsequent scholarship concerned to perpetuate myths of the great modernist and moderniser male genius architect.

Architecture has frequently been the domain of the upper middle-class male. In relying heavily on Le Corbusier's rhetoric and ignoring the evidence of his buildings, architectural historians of all genders have advanced this image, too. They have allowed architectural history to be concerned with the male narratives of upper-class clients and architects, rarely incorporating servants, lower-class people, and particularly women. Consequently, the contribution of servants has largely been omitted from the history of modernism. However, the omissions are more significant than that. These houses and these architects became, through their outwardly different aesthetics, the seemingly progressive lifestyles of their owners, and because men like Le Corbusier promoted them, the model for mass housing post-war. The houses Le Corbusier designed between 1922 and 1935 helped establish the example where eventually the suburban housewife had to do all housework. That became the respectable option. As women also joined the industrial economy, this meant many had to juggle their professional jobs and the work at home as well. To whose advantage was that?

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IF, I WOULD.
Rasha Ahmad Saffarini

Abstract
Designed and built by Zaki Saffarini in the 1930s, the house of Salah Al-din Amin Salah, the former mayor between 1930 and 1933 and head of the municipality of Tulkarem, was abandoned because of three events: British imperialism in the 1940s, Zionist invasions in 1948, and Salah Amin's permanent exile in 1959. In 2019, the house was purchased by the architect's grandson even though he was not able to use it.

In this piece, the house is documented in dialogues between first- and third-generation refugees to explore how memory is absorbed as well as the role of counter-memory in diasporic contexts. This piece is a diary of stories, poems, and images that narrate the recollections of the mayor's family and neighbours, collected through conversations with his son, daughter, daughter-in-law, and the architect's family. However, the narrative is situated within the author's diasporic sense of being Palestinian, which is acquired through the cultural practices she has cultivated from her ancestors to cling to the rights of ownership.

Therefore, the fragmented recollections captured are interrupted by the author's outlook in response to living under occupation yet also in exile, echoing the fraught relationships between the land, the distant native of Palestine, and the intrusive invader. As such, the narrative fluctuates between the past and present, while also gazing at the future of the house and the author's return. To do this, the diary is approached in four ways, expressed as: 'was', 'would have been', 'is', and 'would'. Two conditional verb tenses, 'was' and 'is', present a glimpse of the reality of the house. The other two describe an ambition for what home may be which can only be achieved in the unreal event of a post-occupation world.

This piece is based on a site-writing method in the MA program at the Bartlett School of Architecture. The course 'Critical Spatial Practice' was led by Polly Gould, Jane Rendell, and David Roberts.

Biographical note
Rasha Saffarini is an architect and researcher focusing on the role of critical and creative practice in understanding the social, political, and religious qualities of cultural heritage in the 'current yet not' Middle East, its ecologies and dwellers. She studied architecture at the American University of Sharjah and has gained her MA in Architecture and Historic Urban Environments at the Bartlett School of Architecture (University College London).

Banner image: Detail from a view of the studio at the Barbara Hepworth gallery in St Ives, Cornwall. (Photo: Ed Clews / Alamy Stock Photo)

IF, I WOULD.
Rasha Ahmad Saffarini

Approach

'If ___, I would _____.', my piece of writing, emerged during the interminable days of the epidemic in 2021. It was only then, as I went to sit every day on the same chair, in the same corner of my bedroom, next to the same window through which I hoped to add a hint of greenery to my routine, that I came to realize that perception of 'belonging' for the one living in diaspora can assume the status of an obsession. It is not only confined to the perception of home, but it seeps through what I was able to learn from my parents (and their parents) as they recollected their past in Palestine. The struggle to collect the memories I need to perceive home is fragmented since the disruption to everyday life brought by exile means that my ancestors forget certain memories and highlight extreme ones. All the same, I depend on the memories that my family chose to share, underlying that my sense of belonging is bound to suffer such inaccuracies.

Excerpts from 'If ___, I would _____.'

(1) I begin here, even though I should have begun there.

<div dir="rtl">فاعذرني إن نطقت بلسان المستعمر.</div>

'So, forgive me if I spoke in the tongue of the colonizer.'

_____

*If I am italicized, I have more to say.

*If I am grey, I should not be shared.

*If I am blank, I fear revealing what I bear.

(2) I repeatedly return to pictures of remnants that seem foreign yet familiar. A fragment of an age that seems utopian; impossible if I may say, but it could have been real.

Instead, it is a shadow of what *was* and what *would have* been. A mirror of what my life *is* and an excerpt from what it *would be*.

(3) As my family and I were conversing about the construct of home, my father showed us several photos of a house that was designed by his grandfather for the previous mayor of Tulkarem, Salah Al-din Amin Salah, between 1930 and 1935 (Salah, M., 2023). His political stance led to his exile, leaving his home amid turmoil. The house seems to stand, but barely. I listened to my family discussing the potential of restoring the house. The murmurs of hope this met with were intriguingly tragic. We all chose to ignore the realities of the house, in a way that Palestinians have acquired by habit, akin to learning how to grow an olive tree in silky deserts.

This piece was meant to ignore the reality of diaspora and imagine returning home through the past owners' recollections. However, I confess that I failed to stay entirely loyal to the idea. I was torn between bitter reality and hopeful dream, meandering between the past, present, and future. Instead, I wrote this, for my memory fails to recall what I never experienced. My memory fails to live in the stories, proverbs, and tongues my parents have tried to pass on to me. It morphs them into fragments and becomes an imprint of their past; yet it sits in a dusty drawer, like a dancer in a windowless room.

<div dir="rtl">.وعلى بال مين ياللي بترقص في العتمة</div>

'And on whose mind is the person that dances in the dark.'

Regarding what 'was'

(4) Figure 3.1: Photos of the house and the beginning of the British invasion, showing the adjacent school filled with British tanks in the 1940s (top right). Image shared by Salah's son, 2021 (Salah Amin's family shared images with the author through WhatsApp to use as research material for 'If, I would' as part of the author's postgraduate studies).

(5) windows reaching skies
    doors for *giants*
    magnificent and mighty
    trespassed by *Blighty*
    sipping on my tea,
    wryly
    as it might be
    a lesser sign

_____

Giants refers to the grandness of the house when it was built. According to the son, the house was influenced by Ottoman and Egyptian architecture, standing out between the smaller houses in Tulkarem at the time.

*Blighty seized the mukhtar's house as a residence for a British general in the 1940s. According to the daughter, Salah and his family were ejected by the British and Israeli militants without any notice to take their clothes. They resided with Al-Tamimi family until the British left in 1946 (R. Salah, 2021).

*Lesser signs are the small signs preceding the final signs of the end of the world and the day of Judgement.

Regarding what 'would have been'

(6) Figure 3.2: A photograph of the son on one of the terraces. Shared by Salah's son, March 2021.

(7) Influenced by recollections of the son:
   If Churchills' hiccups did not cut through a nation's cake, slicing tiers of land, stuffing those masquerading under modernity with a glass of waste, embellished with fizzles and crystal,

من برّا رخام ومن جوّا سخام

      'Marble on the surface and smut inside'
   the British would not have travelled across the globe in the name of   . They would not have trespassed, dragging the natives out, sleeping on their beds contently. They would not have replaced children with tanks in Madrasat AlFadilliyah, the school adjacent to home, doing away with education in Tulkarem. The house would not have been repainted to pastels to suit the colonizer's palette.
   'The house was too beautiful, too grand, not to be taken by Brits' said the son in a short phone call.
   Home would not have become a hideaway for Palestinians and a shooting site for the Jewish refugees. It would not have withered in silence as the deprived native crawled in to find their source of living, stealing wires and blankets. It would not have been abandoned and left to decay.

فالجنة بلا ناس ما بتنداس

      'Paradise without its people is unapproachable.'
   _____

*Churchill's hiccups, refers to scribbles the British drew on our maps, by which we came to be absurdly dominated, reducing us to the nothingness, as reflected in our abandoned homes and divorced nation.

*A shooting site refers to the Zionist attacks in 1948 that caused the families to separate from each other and from their home for safety (Salah, R., 2021).

*The deprived native crawled into the mayor's house multiple times between the 1980s to 1990s, breaking the windows to steal furniture, wires, and kitchen and bathroom accessories (Salah, M., 2021).

*Paradise without its people is a Palestinian saying that refers to home as a paradise that has no joy if it has no people.

(8) Influenced by recollections of the second daughter:
   If we were not sold and made to settle for the scattered crumbs in enslaved greediness,
   I could have spent my youth climbing that one bulky eskadenya (loquat) tree in the southern garden while my mother's yelling echoed from the kitchen, embarrassingly overshadowing the speakers of Al Rawda Mosque. I would have ignored her, picking the sour droplet-shaped fruit, running back to the kitchen, and sprinkling it with salt. I would have been fed each morning by the kind trees, an orange one day, a watery pomelo the other, or mulberries if I could have grabbed them before the season's end.
   I left my grandmother's home after a late night of recollecting memories I have never encountered before. Yearning left me with a starving stuffed belly that day. My mother had left green and yellow eskadenya fruits on the counter that travelled from my uncle's garden in Amman to our rented residence, bruised in places yet flavourful and decadent in their freshness.
   _____

*Scattered crumbs is the current map of the West Bank. We are trying to hold on to an absurd map of scattered circles that have long been sold by the East and West. The nation was broken from its state as an   , then to portions, to scattered leftovers. Nonetheless, the cattle continue to settle for their condition in modern   .

*The speakers refer to regained religious freedom. I marked the first day of the holy month of Ramadan of 2020 from the news of yet another invasion as Israeli militants cut the cords of Al-Aqsa's speakers, forbidding Athan (call for prayer) and inhibiting the collective Iftar in the mosque.

(9) Influenced by recollections of the second daughter:
   If we had not turned our Qibla towards nothing but a sophisticated strain of a   ,

I would have heard that the mulberries would be red and white, thin and sweet, shaped like baby fingers. The bush would have been growing by the short fence of the southern yard, creeping into Al-Fadiliyah school. I would have occasionally sprinted to the plants, only to find tinted red lips and mischievous smirks on the other side as the school bell rang. I would have ensured ever-lasting friendships with those children. We would have grown old together and never apart.

Envy swarmed my mind. I left my desk once more, seeking distractions. My *left side* reached for a dazzlingly inadequate *silver spoon*, honouring dishonour as I collected the grains of rice on my bowl with the spoon, forgetting my ways.

_____

Left side refers to the diminished blessings as Muslims reach out for food with their left hand instead of their right, believing that the devil feasts from their plates alongside them.

Silver spoon refers to a Jordanian-Palestinian colloquial story between the British and Bedouins of Jordan, about the colonial Generals who were once invited by the   to a traditional Bedouin feast with powerful Jordanian tribes in order to form political relations. Each side of the Majlis was divided linguistically and traditionally. One side had porcelain plates and silverware, while the other did not. The British stopped eating, repulsed by the Bedouins eating with their hands. The tribal leaders noticed, and one of them looked at the king and said, 'tell your friends that God removed the barrier between our hands and our food, as we are clean, while he placed a barrier between them and their food as they are not.'

Regarding what 'is'

(10) In this ever-lasting crisis, we tend to count the days, the months, the years. Commemorating digits remind us of the ongoing tragedies. Ruminating only to belong to the nothingness, circling back to Jahilliyah. As Salahuddin Al Ayubi once said,

كيف أبتسم وبيت المقدس أسير؟ والله إني لأستحيي من الله أن أبتسم
وإخواني هناك يعذَّبون ويُقتلون.

'How can I smile and eat while the Holy City is a prisoner and while my siblings are being tortured and killed there.'

Although my feasts are succulent, and my smirk has never been wider, loathing is driven by prohibition of home. Then again, faith is bliss.

ولقد خلقنا الإنسان في كبد

'And we have created man in *travail*' (The Quran, 9:13)

_____

Travail refers to the tribulations a human is always occupied in overcoming, as Allah created us in that struggle.

(11) Figure 3.3: The current state of Salah Amin's previous house. Image shared by Eng. Adnan Saffarini Office, March 2021.

(12) I am East, held captive by West, claiming I am West, that I am theirs, that I was in despair, as I wait the day when the sun rises west and sets east.

'فلا تقوم الساعة حتى تطلع الشمس من مغربها'

'The Hour (of Judgement) will not occur before the sun rises from the west', a hadith by Prophet Mohammad PBUH (Ibn Majah, 2014, 5:4068).

(13) Figure 3.4: The current state of the Majlis. Image shared by Eng. Adnan Saffarini Office, March 2021.

14. But home is now a stranger
    stranger to its home
    as its home is to me
    nonetheless,
    it would be home.

(15) Figure 3.5: The current state of one of the terraces. Image shared by Eng. Adnan Saffarini Office, March 2021.

Regarding what 'would'

(16) Influenced by recollections of the architect's grandson, the friend:

If we chop down the _____ and the European Pines, my days would be spent in the orchard. My ears would tune to the chirps and rustling leaves while I skip in and out of the metal gates, but in their silence a loud shriek. I would be embraced by a lush Mediterranean garden all around, shifting from one terrace to another each season. The playful branches would tickle the stone that cools the rooms that would shelter me during the peak of Tulkarem's summer. I would be welcomed by the shimmering specks of pollen floating along the central path to home. The aroma would cease to prickle my nostrils and would dive deep into my subconscious, as it should. My child would pick several roses and they would needle her little fingers in return. She would run straight to the kitchen with tears held back vigorously and a basket full of petals, asking for a refreshing glass of rose juice that would perfume the rooms and wake home.

فلا بد مع الورد من إبر الشوك

'And with a rose, *thorned needles must be accompanied*', an Arabic saying.

Thorned needles must be accompanied refers to the reward that must be preceded by difficulties.

(17) Influenced by recollections of the son's wife:

If we tasted the air we are meant to breathe, if we grew the *Akkoub* we are meant to eat, if we plucked out the blasphemous _____ tree we are not meant to grow, if we migrated through the borders we are not meant to accept,

rose and orange mist would flutter through my windows, perfuming the quiet rooms. Red and blue cripples of light from the stained windows would paint the ornamented tiles and the side of my face, waking me up to what could be another spring day. My stomach would rumble of ecstatic hunger from the aroma of political ownership. I would skip on the gritty limestone, tickling my naked feet, to pick some figs, lemons, and Yaffa oranges. The orange tree would lean over me, facing the sun, welcoming the cold breeze while greeting rays of warmth. As I would fight with the branches to steal their fruits, swirling grumbles would gather rabbits under the kind shade for another feast.

My stomach turned and my throat parched, so I left my script to quench an ever-aching longing. As I sipped on a glass of desalinated tap water, four concrete walls confined me, twisting my tongue in mockery. Rubbing the sulk off my face, I spotted clotted residues of ink on the palms of my hands. There it was, *Kufur,* written on everyone's forehead, accompanying me through a time I cannot call religion and a place I detest calling home.

Akoub is a wild cactus that is heavily popular in Palestinian cuisine as well as medicine. However, it is banned by the Israeli project from being picked for food amongst Palestinians.

Gritty limestone was imported from Haifa, a nearby city of Palestine (Salah R., 2021).

Kufur [Kuh-fuhr], refers to infidelity.

(18) Influenced by recollections of the second daughter:

If the sky soothed to deep blue, if flocks hovered freely, if the true anti-Semite war industry hushed, we could finally learn the sounds of rustling *vines*. In the western garden, the bulky trunk of the cypress tree would extend beyond the pigeon tower and over the little pool, sheltering my children from the sun and sprinkling them with parts of it, motherly, as the citrus scent would linger on their healthy skin. Our friends from Shuweikeh and Dar Azzomar would walk up the hill to the garden as the smell of grilled tomatoes and cumin invited them. Across the pool, the damp stone of the summer patio would shelter us with a glass of hot tea with freshly picked sage while the wind blew each warm and breezy summer day. We would collect the green almonds and sprinkle them with salt for our cousins visiting from Demashq. The hinges would not rest, creaking whilst visitors walked in and out of the patina gates. I would naturally leave the five doors open every evening. We would share our fresh produce from the lush trees with our neighbours. As Arabs say,

نولكأيف عرزنو انلكأف اوعرز

'They plant for us to eat, and *we plant for them to eat*.'

Until then, the sage, olives, olive oil, and salted white cheese cubes travel in large golden tins across the notorious Allenby Bridge, slightly souring, slightly bittering.

_____

Vines can no longer be heard or seen as Israeli destructions shapeshift to seize all aspects of life. Citrus trees and vineyards in Tulkarem fall ill and cease to produce. Women and men fall chronically ill and healthy reproduction is reduced as an Israeli pesticide company is located close by the remains of the Palestinian neighbourhood (Abusarhan & Qumsiyeh, 2000).

We plant for them to eat colloquially refers to the values of hospitality in Arabs.

(19) Influenced by recollections of the second daughter:

If the 'green-washed' forest shuddered its mountains, if tree trunks grew through the foreign concrete that buried them, if they demolished them and their dams, the hills would bathe its rocks with runoffs, flowing to the sides, to the plains, and to the valleys, ending the drought. Collective footfalls would echo from the stairs of the tower, anticipating rain. The pigeons would slumber in their little holes as we grab our brooms to clean the roof and onion well, waving to Dar Al-Ashkar as they dust their crowns. Rain would fall heavily to sustain Palestine's hill people. In a blink, large droplets would tap on our ceilings in various tempos and eventually flood down embedded stone pipes to quench the underground chamber. Yet, the divine would overflow the garden with the staple of life. We would gather in the kitchen quietly, humbled by the thunders and showers. My father would open the remaining pomegranates, generously hurling each half for each grandchild before he fed himself. The trees, and birds would live in the luxury of bathing in the freshest water sent from paradise until the next winter, and the next, and the next. As the prophet (PBUH) once said to Bilal Bin Rabah,

أنفق ولا تخافن من ذي العرش إقلالا.

'*Spend and don't fear* the lessening the value of your throne.'

Until then, we all seem to be drowning in a sea of our sins, occupied with temporary frills as the sun gets *closer and crueller.*

_____

Spend and don't fear refers to the culture of generosity and hospitality amongst Muslims and Arabs.

Closer and crueller is the sun on doomsday.

Closing

(20) I end here,

وإلا بروح ورا الشمس

'Or I would banish behind the sun'.

_____

'Or I would banish behind the sun' is a colloquial statement about the consequences of speaking what should not be spoken of.

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MEMORY AND PLACE IN THE BRINKSWAY PHOTOGRAPHS OF MICHAEL DANYLIW

Robert Gaunt

Abstract

In this essay, I bring memories of the creative working-class community of the lost neighbourhood of Brinksway, Stockport, England to a new audience. I have done this by way of my own memories and those of others who also lived there, though mainly through the photographs of Brinksway life that were taken by Michael Danyliw in the 1960s. Within the ageing Brinksway diaspora there is a growing desire to preserve the photographic evidence that we were there and this was how we lived. I give particular attention to the work of the Sunday School and the folk-art event of the annual Rose Fete parade, as an example of working-class creativity. I recall the texture of the physical and social environment of Brinksway before its demolition under slum clearance, including the contentious issues of working-class respectability and social mobility. As a young witness to all this, I bring my own account of losing contact with the Brinksway community and finding my way back there sixty years later. Our fond memories of what was lost are sustained by Michael Danyliw's photographs, and this essay is an attempt to help to preserve the photographs and the memories they help to sustain.

Biographical note

Robert Gaunt works in social care and is an independent researcher with an interest in overlooked working-class creativity. His MA thesis 'Arthur Dooley: His Place in Post-War British Art History' (Manchester Metropolitan University, 2014) examined the importance of this overlooked, politically motivated sculptor from Liverpool.

Banner image: Detail from a view of the studio at the Barbara Hepworth gallery in St Ives, Cornwall. (Photo: Ed Clews / Alamy Stock Photo)

MEMORY AND PLACE IN THE BRINKSWAY PHOTOGRAPHS OF MICHAEL DANYLIW

Robert Gaunt

This is the story of the life and death of a northern English working-class community and its resurrection through photography. It is about the people who lived in the Brinksway neighbourhood of Stockport in the 1950s and 1960s, until the whole area was cleared away in the early 1970s to make space for the M60 motorway. I was born there in 1957 and I left when I was 6 years old.

Piecing together this story of Brinksway's past has produced unexpected shifts in my own sense of identity within the Brinksway diaspora, but my main concern here is with promoting the recognition and memorialisation of the working-class community and culture where I spent my infant years. I want to bring the story of Brinksway, and the photographs of amateur photographer Michael Danyliw, to new audiences. In turn, I hope this will preserve these photographs, record aspects of the past and prompt memories of a lost community. The impetus to do so comes from the accounts of Brinksway life by the ageing members of the online Facebook group Brinksway Clan, a network of 1000 former residents, including Danyliw's daughter Marika Anders. Their frequent call is for these photographs to be in a book or museum.

In analysing these photographs, I am using Annette Kuhn's ideas about 'memory work' as a pragmatic and democratic procedure for examining images, such as family photographs, which prompt memories, associations, reflections and interpretations in a radiating web connecting 'historical events, structures of feeling, family dramas, relations of class' (Kuhn, ([1995] 2002, pp.4–5). My photo analyses engage with the ideas of working-class respectability and social mobility, the social distance people might travel from their original class roots. My own memories link with those of others who used to live in Brinksway. This has been done through posts on the Brinksway Clan Facebook page, as well as my face-to-face meetings with Clan members, and my discussions with the surviving members of the Brinksway Methodist Sunday School who still meet regularly.

I can comfortably belong in the photographs that are contemporaneous with my time there, where I have some lived memory of the events they picture: but I must tread more carefully at the edges of those photographs that were taken after I left Brinksway, when I stopped belonging. By way of social mobility, I have become an outsider who has acquired some of those middle-class contextual ways of thinking. I have a toe hold in the camp of those who have 'a sense of belonging to the public and national as well as the domestic and local realm' and who can explain themselves without fear of being misunderstood (Hanley, 2009, pp.xxi–xxii). I feel I must maintain some kind of respectful distance from the photographs of the Brinksway Clan members whom I recognise in Carolyn Steedman's description of those who have led 'lives for which the central interpretive devices of the culture don't quite work' (in Kuhn, 2002, p.9).

In the early 1960s, Brinksway had already been a heavily industrialised area for over 150 years. In 1845, Friedrich Engels looked down from his train going over the railway viaduct and described Stockport as 'one of the duskiest, smokiest holes, and looks […] excessively repellent' (Engels, [1887] 2005, p.84) I remember my infant schoolteacher in 1964 asking us to count how many factory chimneys we could see from the classroom window. We counted thirty two. People who lived there can still list over a hundred different manufacturing companies that were based in Brinksway, including a cotton mill, engineering works, cement works, tarmac works, a tannery, a bleach works, an iron foundry and several textile manufacturers (Gaunt, 2022a). When Shelagh Delaney's play *A Taste of Honey* was made into a film in 1961, director Tony Richardson made extensive use of Brinksway's gritty darkness, the cobbled streets and the ubiquitous factory chimneys, to convey the grim northern setting. In this smoky valley, squeezed behind the iconic Stockport viaduct, a thriving community lived and worked in back-to-back terraces, with several lively pubs, a public washhouse, my infant school, a synagogue, a cinema and the Brinksway Sunday School, which was right next door to our house.

Sunday Schools were first established in Stockport in 1784 (Wild, 1891, p.3) by a Wesleyan preacher and several philanthropic gentlemen, supposedly concerned about the functional and moral education of workers of all ages (Wild, 1891, p.8). Some of the children they taught in the Sunday School and employed for unusually long hours in their mills, were recruited from workhouses and foundling hospitals in London (p.8) Throughout the 19th century, Stockport's Central Sunday School was remarkably successful. It was, according to Wild, 'the largest Sunday School in the world' with a hall that held 3,000 people, and 5,000 scholars (p.xxvii). It prided itself on fostering self-

improvement, not only for working-class students who had gained their Sunday School Certificates (p. xxviii), but also for middle-class teachers and officers who went on to become town mayors and hold other high civic posts (p.xxiii).

Subsequently, in 1801, a branch school was established in Brinksway (p.xxxi). The enlarged Brinksway Sunday School Hall that I remember attending, was built in 1885 (p.285). It was a large sooty-black building worthy of a Lowry painting, a thriving temperance alternative to the many rowdy pubs, such as the Egerton Arms, tellingly known as The Crackers, where it was not unusual for men to drink away half their wage packet.

When I look back now on those days before we left, when I was aged 6, Brinksway often seems monotone, influenced no doubt by the black-and-white photographs that connect me to the past there. But there are also occasional splashes of colour, like the day my dad took me with him into The Woolpack pub to buy his cigarettes. I was captivated by the smoke, the heady scent of beer, the electric lights twinkling on the glasses and brasswork behind the altar-like bar, and the exaggerated happiness of the drinkers. I thought I might be looking at heaven. I recognised it from the pictures I had seen on the wall at the Sunday School and now it was right here in the Woolpack. In that miraculous moment, the two community institutions which were poles apart in the adult Brinksway world, were in harmony in my childish imagination.

The now lost streets of Brinksway formed the architectural landscape of my infant years. It was the home of a working-class community, where men made creative use of their job skills. I remember the man who worked at the tannery and brought home patches of leather to make dolls' clothes, or the welder who made his own wrought-iron figures. The women's creativity tended to be channelled into devising and performing in a calendar of sober social events, including concerts, amateur stage shows and parades, at the Sunday School, the most important being Rose Fete, a folk art event rarely seen today.

Michael Danyliw, a Ukrainian World War II refugee, lived a few streets from our house in a typical two-up-two-down terrace with just one tap (in the kitchen). When Danyliw was printing his photographs in the cellar (not on Thursdays, when the coal delivery made the air too gritty), his wife and daughter had to carry the water down to him in buckets (Anders, 2022a). His photographs of family and community captured the texture of our lives and rituals; they are the evidence that we were there, and that this was how we lived. He took hundreds, possibly thousands, of photographs of many aspects of Brinksway life:family portraits, studio portraits, street photography and local people at work, rest and play. He documented the bitter strike (1966–68) at the Roberts Arundel engineering works, where my granddad worked in the 1950s, and which polarised Brinksway families. His photographs of the strike are held in the TUC archive in Manchester (Anders, 2022a). For this essay, I focus mainly on his photos of the Sunday School Rose Fete, partly because I am in them, so I already have more familiarity with their context, and also because I think they demonstrate the social class make-up of Brinksway, as well as offering clues to aspects of working-class respectability and social mobility which I examine.

The idea of working-class respectability looms large in this Brinksway story and in my memories of the varied ways we lived. Sociologist Mike Savage and colleagues remind us that for most of the 20th century our main pre-occupation with social class has been around the question 'Who was respectable, and who was not?' (2015, p.31). From the early 20th century, respectability has been attributed to the culture of those working in non-manual jobs (Savage et al., 2015, pp.33–5). Cultural historian Lynsey Hanley's interest in social class was stirred by reading Richard Hoggart's The Uses of Literacy (1957), in which she recognised the shape and texture of her own life 50 years later on. In a similar way, my own reading of Hanley caused me to recognise my own experience of being 'neither rough nor posh, neither rich nor especially poor' and of growing up '"respectable" in an area perceived, from the outside and to an extent from within, as "rough"' (Hanley, 2016, p.7). From Hoggart's experience in the 1930s to mine in the 1960s and Hanley's in the 1980s, many of the obstacles to equality remained in place. Quoting Hoggart's introduction to George Orwell's The Road to Wigan Pier, Hanley writes: '"Each decade we shiftily declare we have buried class," […] yet "each decade the coffin stays empty"' (2016, p.xiv).

Hanley pithily describes rough working-class people's 'not giving a shit' (2016, p.7) as a strategy to maintain the appearance of autonomy and dignity by refusing to comply with society's pointless demands that you should strive to be respectable in circumstances where you feel defined and defeated by the lack of economic, social and cultural capital. In contrast to this adoptive stance of nihilistic disaffection, she sees the respectable working class as having at least some power to change things for the better, and as keen on self-improvement in order to avoid further exploitation of themselves, their families and their communities. In this way, as Hanley puts it, the respectable working class are those who do 'give a shit' (2016, pp. 3–28).

Other markers of distinction on the 'respectable-rough' spectrum that I recall as a small child were clean faces (no snot) and combed hair (see the Brylcreem liberally applied to my freshly barbered hair in my Rose Fete parade photos) (Fig. 4.1). On the 'sober-toper spectrum', my dad was a regular pub drinker several nights a week, but he was proud to distinguish himself from other drinking fathers by always bringing his wage packet home unopened for my mum to have first take of what was needed for the family budget before he got his spends.

Every child was welcome at the Sunday School, but it was mostly the children like Marika, my sister and me, from those families who had enough to get by, who attended and took part in the annual Rose Fete parades. I remember these kinds of families whom Hanley describes as keen to keep up the appearance of dignity and self-respect in an environment where getting on seemed unlikely and falling seemed all too easy (2016, p.7). The idea that there was a respectable working class is a contentious issue among members of the Brinksway Clan (Gaunt, 2022b), and I agree with Hanley that 'there is nothing inherently good or bad about being respectable' (2016, p.11). Though for some of us, who thought life could be better than being

ground down by the limitations of manual work and minimal education, participating in the Sunday School parades and keeping up appearances with a freshly creamed step and a line of clean washing meant a lot in an environment of restricted opportunities.[1]

My engagement with these photographs has given me a tentative route back towards the Brinksway community after an absence of sixty years. There are only a handful of people in the Brinksway Clan group whom I can remember, and there are only two who remember me, although many knew my parents and my grandmother. The photographs which show me in the Sunday School events of the early 1960s serve to situate me, although only a young child, as part of the heart of the Sunday School community. Consider this photograph of me at the tea-and-cakes reception after the Rose Fete parade (Fig. 4.1). It was posted by Marika Anders on the Brinksway Clan Facebook page (6 August 2020), with the assumption that I was Mrs Cooke's son. Recognising myself in this photograph was my opportunity to begin to assert my own Brinksway identity: that's me! I love this photograph for the sense of togetherness that it embodies. Our neighbour Mrs Cooke on the left is leaning in towards me; Mrs Danyliw is leaning in towards her; and Mr Danyliw is taking the photograph. It represents our Sunday School community as a kind of second family, my recovered affiliation with the lost and wider Brinksway community, even though time has distanced us geographically and socially.

The night before the Rose Fete our dads would go into the parks to gather privet branches and decorate the Sunday School Hall with them, along with the hundreds of roses we had made from tissue paper (Fig. 4.2). The real roses for the queen's bouquets came in a wheelbarrow from Beryl Manley's dad's allotment garden.

Before the parade started, there would be the crowning ceremony inside the Sunday School hall, performed by Mrs Gosling, who had been a senior figure there for as long as anyone could remember (Fig. 4.3). Her forebear Joseph Gosling is listed as an officer at the Central Stockport Sunday School in 1804 (Wild, 1891, p.16). A teenage girl was crowned Rose Queen. A girl of about nine was crowned as Rosebud Queen, with the retiring Rose Queen and retiring Rosebud Queen looking on. For the parade, a retinue

Figure 4.1: Michael Danyliw, *Untitled*, c.1962. Photograph. Private collection. (courtesy of Marika Anders)

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1 'Creaming the step' was the phrase we used in Stockport for the practice more widely known as 'donkey stoning' which involved using a block of chalk-like substance to colour the doorstep. The doorstep was scrubbed clean and the donkey stone was rubbed over it to brighten it.

Figure 4.2: Michael Danyliw, *Untitled*, c.1962. Photograph. Private collection. (courtesy of Marika Anders)

Figure 4. 3: Michael Danyliw, *Untitled*, c.1962. Photograph. Private collection. (courtesy of Marika Anders)

of infant girls threw rose petals before each Queen, a cortege acted as train bearers for each Queen (Fig. 4.4) and at the rear marched an entourage of middle-aged women, the Ladies Circle, who had done all the organising Fig. 4.5). A regular participant might start as a petal thrower, graduate through the hierarchy year by year and one day enter the Ladies Circle. The role of Rose Queen brought with it multiple responsibilities in the social life of the Sunday School, which included: hosting stage shows with music and

Figure 4. 4: Michael Danyliw, *Untitled*, c.1962. Photograph. Private collection. (courtesy of Marika Anders)

Figure 4. 5: Michael Danyliw, *Untitled*, c.1962. Photograph. Private collection. (courtesy of Marika Anders)

dancing for the entertainment of other Rose Queens from neighbouring Sunday Schools, as well as attending their events (Collins & Anders, 2022). Towards the fag end of the industrial era, amid the grim architecture of 19th-century mills, crumbling back-to-backs and raucous pubs, the Sunday School Rose Fete provided a colourful annual community spectacle that we were proud of.

Looking at the 1962 photograph of Marika getting ready at home for the Rose Fete parade in her Rosebud Queen outfit, I am immediately reminded of the iconic, anonymous photograph on the cover of W.G. Sebald's novel *Austerlitz* (Figs. 4.6 and 4.7).

Figure 4. 6: Michael Danyliw, *Untitled*, c.1962. Photograph. Private collection. (courtesy of Marika Anders)

Figure 4. 7: Cover of W.G. Sebald, *Austerlitz* (© 2019 Carl Hanser Verlag GmbH & Co. KG, München)

Both show a child dressed for a Rose Queen pageant (Sebald, [2001] 2011, pp.258–9) and both have a Stockport connection. In James Wood's introduction to *Austerlitz*, he recalls that he discovered this photograph of the boy wearing his cape while researching in Sebald's archive. It is on a postcard with 'Stockport: 30p' written on the reverse side in ink (2011, p.xxi). Sebald was teaching at nearby Manchester University between 1966 and 1969, and may have had reason to revisit in later years, after the introduction of decimal currency in 1971. Not surprisingly, nobody in Brinksway Clan recognises this child, an actual person lost to history, whose photograph Sebald employs to illustrate his novel's central theme (according to Wood) of saving the characters therein from silence and forgetting and, by implication, about the impossible desire to save everyone who ever died from being forgotten, including the boy from Stockport (Wood, 2011, p.xxii). Wood's ideas about contesting the forgetting of what has been erased chime with those of the Brinksway Clan who seek some reassurance that
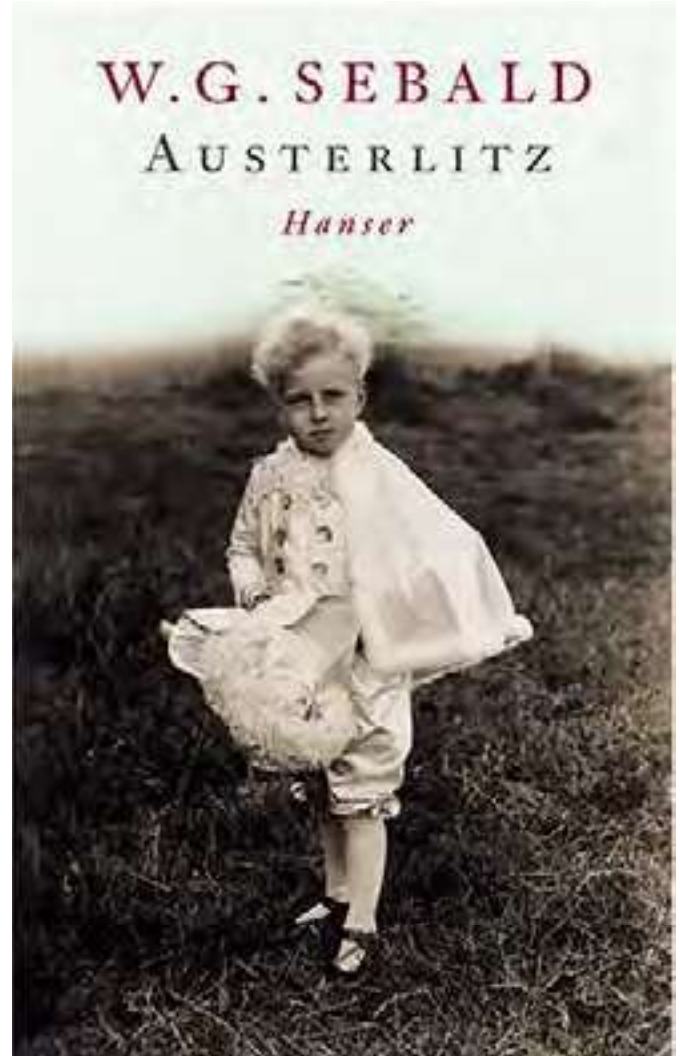
Brinksway will be remembered, and the significance I accord to the uncanny coincidence of Sebald's and Danyliw's photographs seems to echo this. Sebald's found photo could be anywhere and nowhere, as suits his novel's theme of lost identity, but Danyliw's photo is firmly situated in the back garden of their terraced house, with the outside toilet as back-drop, the caring presence of Marika's mum and the admiring gaze of their neighbour Mrs Chandley leaning over the garden fence, unable to go to the parade as she was looking after her sick husband that day (Anders, 2022a). Marika's parents paid a small fortune for her Rosebud outfit. It was a bespoke child-sized copy of a bridal dress specially made by a high-end Manchester wedding outfitters. The headdress was made with swan's down feathers (Anders, 2022a), as impressive as the heron feathers in the Sebald photo. Sebald's photo speaks of losing one's bearing, of displacement and no man's land; I see in Danyliw's photo the coordinates of working-class respectability: home, family, community, loving care and Marika's progress into the future.

In this 1963 photograph (Fig. 4.8), I am playing the role of crown bearer for Rose Queen Lynn Chapman. We are coming over the Woolpack Bridge, which spans the River Mersey, and looking up the hill behind us you can see the pitched roofs of the Sunday School from where we have just emerged after the crowning ceremony. The crowd on the left are spilling out from The Woolpack pub to watch us. For once, captured in the same frame are the Sunday School and the Sunday drinkers. I like to read this image as a gesture of respect from those in the pub, towards those in the parade: the drinkers toasting the abstemious. I see myself here as taking my first steps on the road to becoming middle class. Lynn would go on to train as a nurse, a vocation which, in 1963, seemed to us like the height of respectability, having moral worth and social importance. Nodding approvingly, neighbours in shops would mention how they had seen Lynn in the Infirmary in her beautiful blue uniform and cape. Healthcare offered a pathway for social mobility that several of us followed, including myself, away from the factories and building sites where our parents worked. It was what the Sunday School founding fathers would have hoped for. My own experience of nurse training was as an alternative to university, where I had quickly dropped out of a French Studies degree course, partly for want of cultural capital, having spent the school holidays working in a factory in Stockport instead of slumming it in France. Living away from our parents in the nurses' home, working for a qualification, and rubbing shoulders with middle-class doctors was not a million miles from the life of a university student.

In a different picture of the same parade we are coming down Heaward Street where Danyliw lived (Fig. 4.9). The kerb we march beside seems to draw a social fault line between those of us in the parade, and some of the kids who might be from struggling families. Not every child could be in the parade. Not every child had a dad in work: most dads were in the pub, some were in prison, some had disappeared from the scene. I can remember kids in filthy clothes and single mothers with no furniture, who had slipped through the welfare safety net and were beyond the reach of the Methodist social teaching ideal.

However, when I discussed this idea of a social divide between those who had very little and those who had a bit, with other, older members of the Brinsway Clan, several people said there was no such division (Gaunt, 2022b). They remember differences in people's financial circumstances, but they do not

Figure 4.8: Michael Danyliw, *Untitled*, c.1963. Photograph. Private collection. (courtesy of Marika Anders)

Figure 4.9: Michael Danyliw, *Untitled*, c.1962. Photograph (detail). Private collection. (courtesy of Marika Anders)

Figure 4.10: Michael Danyliw, *Untitled*, c.1962. Photograph. Private collection. (courtesy of Marika Anders)

feel it amounted to a social division. One member refuted the label of respectability, seeing it as divisive, something imposed by outsiders or retrospectively, by people like me, who had moved on through social mobility. They remember instead, the readiness in the Brinksway community to help each other out. It was different outside the community, where children felt a certain stigma when they made friends in more affluent neighbourhoods. It was only when Marika visited the homes of schoolmates from other neighbourhoods that she realised that a single tap and no bathroom was unusual, that it was 'poor' (Anders, 2022b). There may be a tendency to romanticise working-class mutual aid in hard times, but there was also a darker side to social relations. One Rose Queen's mother was ostracised for transgressing social norms by having a child outside marriage (Anders, 2022b). The threat of male violence was never far away; a wife with a black eye was not an uncommon sight. Even the sober, gentler men assumed the dominant role at home, insisting that wives brought up the children while they went to work, even when the woman had higher-paid skills (Anders, 2022b).

In this photograph (Fig. 4.10), we see the pipe band leading the Rose Fete parade through the Lowry landscape of back-to-back houses, mills and chimneys, where working-class lives were played out in all their complexity. Several of my aunties worked as sewing machinists in the textile factory visible here behind the houses, and my grandma set her clock by its one o'clock hooter. There was still a lot of marching back then. The war had ended 19 years before, but the dust still hadn't settled. The Sea Cadets still practised bugling late into the evening in their drill hall opposite our house. When at play, we fought the Germans in the school playground and outside the public bomb shelters on the sandstone ridge. My mum would often open the shoe box with her father's war medals and the photographs of the young soldiers and sailors she had known, some of whom never returned. The ghosts

of the war were everywhere, and we, the young baby boomers, were paraded like the angels of the recent peace.

In another photograph, my scowling little sister Elaine, a petal thrower, is guided by our neighbour Margaret Cooke along the Heaward Street cobbles, the street where Danyliw lived (Fig. 4.11). Behind them is Mrs Wood, her daughter Jacqueline (Collins) would eventually be the last ever retiring rose Queen in 1969. I love this photograph which was given to our family by Mr Danyliw in 1963. I see in it the record of those Brinksway lives and the love they shared, similar to the 'love as treasure' that literary theorist Roland Barthes saw in the photograph of his parents and which he feared would one day disappear forever when there was no one remaining to attest to it ([1980] 2000, p.94). Barthes expands on this idea of love to include the ideas of Good(ness), Justice and Unity that he hopes photographs might preserve for history (2000, p.94). Barthes' claims for his photograph might sound grandiose now, but I can see here the neighbourly love of everyone who has worked to make this annual event for us as part of The Sunday School's endeavours to be good, fair and community-minded. Danyliw created the future memory of the Rose Fete parade for us, mitigating against its eventual forgetting, until it disappears forever when none of us are left to bear witness to it.

I also think about the group of young women visible at the rear of the parade. Brinksway did not last long enough for my sister and me to become adults there. I feel a certain nostalgia for what might have been, had we been able to carry on living there and to fully take our part in the next generation of our community. There is a double poignancy at work in Danyliw's photographs: he created a visual record of the fleeting Rose Fete spectacle, there and gone in a day, and also

Figure 4.11: Michael Danyliw, *Untitled*, c.1962. Photograph. Private collection. (courtesy of Marika Anders)

the wider record of our daily lives before the slum clearance and the dispersal of our neighbourhood.

Whenever my family spoke about Mr Danyliw, voices always dropped to a hush. I picked up snatches of whispered conversations about his time as a forced labourer under Nazi persecution when he was ordered to dig mass graves. I could tell that people looked up to him. There was something different about him that was treated with respect. At that time, we all understood him to be Polish. I learned only recently, from his daughter Marika that this was a deception he had used at the end of the war to avoid forced repatriation under Operation Keelhaul, back to Ukraine, then part of Stalin's Soviet Union, and the prospect of a Gulag prison, which was the fate of his cousin (Anders, 2022a, 2023a). The Lviv area of modern-day Ukraine, where Danyliw was born in 1920, was then situated in Poland. Danyliw's war-time identity card starts with his nationality as Ukrainian, crossed out to Lithuanian, crossed out to Polish. At the end of World War II, his homeland was occupied by the Red Army and ceded to the Soviet Union at the 1945 Yalta Conference (Epstein, 1965, pp.22–6). Western Allied soldiers deceived and physically forced displaced Soviet citizens and prisoners

of war into repatriation to the Soviet Union, following an agreement struck with Stalin at the Yalta Conference in 1945 (Epstein, 1965, pp.22–6). As a condition of his unclear refugee status, Danyliw had to report regularly to Stockport Police up until 1964 (Anders, 2022a).

Danyliw's precarious post-war status and his appetite for photography call to mind Susan Sontag's observations that 'photographs […] help people to take possession of space in which they are insecure' (Sontag, [1977] 2002, p.9). She continues that '[p]eople robbed of their past seem to make the most fervent picture takers' and that '[p]hotography has become one of the principal devices […] for giving an appearance of participation' (p.10). Danyliw lacked confidence in spoken English, so he sent his wife to the night school photography classes, which he wanted to attend, and she relayed the lesson to him at home. As a prolific image maker for our community, he successfully swapped words for images as his mode of entry into Brinksway social life, including the sharing of copies of his prints with his neighbours. Sontag writes about the evidential qualities of photography so that '[s]omething […] seems proven when we are shown a photograph of it' (2002, p.5). Consider the importance of 'evidence'

Figure 4.12: Michael Danyliw, *Untitled*, date unknown. Photograph. Private collection. (courtesy of Marika Anders)

Figure 4.13: Michael Danyliw, *Untitled*, date unknown. Photograph. Private collection. (courtesy of Marika Anders)

for a man whose wartime papers had proved he was Aryan and therefore allowed to live and work. The photographs he took of his respectable working-class life formed the dossier that proved he belonged here, in England, in Brinksway, with his family in Heaward Street. According to his daughter, he was an obsessional compiler of documentation, receipts, bills, official letters. He knew the life and death significance of

having the correct papers (Anders, 2022a).

Many of those who remember life in Brinksway talk of the happiness of home in spite of the difficult material conditions. Danyliw captures the intimacy of homelife: Marika asleep, Mrs Danyliw in her hair curlers (Figs. 4.12 and 4.13). The bottle of milk on the table is a middle-class taboo, like elbows on tables, and a signifier of working-class interiors in kitchen-sink

dramas. When I discussed the significance of the milk bottle with his daughter, she assured me that these were candid photographs taken without any arranging of props (Anders, 2023b). These relaxed, domestic photos of his family contrast with those taken in the Sunday School setting, showing his wife and daughter in their best clothes and formal postures. This was a time when staying in to wash your hair was an actual evening event. Behind Mrs Danyliw, the wallpaper has been repaired using off cuts from different patterns. Looking at these two photographs recalls for me the heat of the coal fire and the comfort of the big sofa, the satisfaction of feeling safe at home.

Danyliw's self-portrait shows him at home mending a neighbour's clock (Fig. 4.14). The clocks lined up on the shelf above him are waiting for repair: clockmaking was his original trade before the war. Danyliw was an active member of the Stockport Photographic Club and won at least one competition prize (Anders, 2022a, 2022b). There are several surviving versions of this print, trying out different framings, and so I can imagine it might have been intended for viewing in the context of the photographic club under the genre of self-portrait or men at work.

60 years later, I am considering its merits in the context of the different lives and times that Danyliw experienced in the course of the world events in the mid-20th century and that ultimately landed him in Brinksway. Working there as a clock mender seems to represent his experience of moving like a time traveller, transitioning from one period and identity into another, from wartime refugee (in various guises) into respectable peacetime citizen, fixing time where it does not suit his purpose. By posing with the loupe in this photograph, Danyliw brings my attention to his eyes. The eyes that once witnessed atrocities now examine clock mechanisms and silver nitrate grains in the dusty cellar-dark room.

As an amateur photographic documentarian of 20th-century working-class life, Danyliw differs from other North-West notables like Shirley Baker (1932–2014) who studied Pure Photography at Manchester College of Technology, and later at London Regent Street Polytechnic and London College of Printing. After graduation she worked as a professional photographer and lectured at Salford College of Art and at Manchester Polytechnic (Levy, 2014–23). Baker's work on the Salford and Manchester slums, however warm-hearted, was more of an anthropological exercise, her view was always from the outside. Danyliw's work was more akin to that of photographer Vanley Burke, who records his own community in Handsworth, Birmingham, where the Black immigrant experience of

Figure 4.14: Michael Danyliw, *Untitled*, date unknown. Photograph. Private collection. (courtesy of Marika Anders)

racism was a barrier to integration and equality. Like Burke's, Danyliw's photos record his own community under stress attempting to hold on to working-class dignity, self-respect and cultural practices as they were about to be cleared away.

In another image Marika and her friends are sitting on the seesaw in the local park (Fig. 4.15). One of these children lived above The Egerton pub, where their father was landlord, and would spend a lot of time at Marika's house to escape the chaos of that establishment. I read in it the various factors that might tip these children's life chances, one way or the other. Vanley Burke uses a similar visual metaphor in his photograph of the African Caribbean community of Birmingham (Fig 4.16).

Sontag writes of the democratic humanistic photographers who offer a generous affirmation of the variety of everyday life which generates a compassionate response from the spectator (2002, p.99). In 2022, I showed a selection of Danyliw's photographs to surviving members of the Sunday School at their Sunday Service, they 'oohed' and 'aahed' in warm approval. With his straightforward framing of the everyday in all its varieties, Danyliw's photography

might fit within Sontag's classification of democratic humanist, picturing his adopted community and claiming his place in it.

Our infant school closed down in 1964, and we sold our house for £100 (about a month's wages) to an elderly lady who reckoned she would die before it was knocked down. The spectre of the coming motorway was haunting the valley, and people started to move out of Brinksway. Arriving in our new neighbourhood, I was given every encouragement to dissociate myself from Brinksway. I was not to go around saying that my dad used to drink in The Crackers, or that my mum used to go to the washhouse.

I became an outsider at this point, not only from my own past but from what happened next: the running down and demolition of Brinksway, and the traumatic effect on those who stayed until the very end, trapped between the motorway and the river, with demolition all around.

Take this photo of Marika as a teenager about five years after we had moved away, still taking part in the Rose Fete parades, but increasingly feeling the pinch of living in a place with narrowing expectations and opportunities (Fig. 4.17). She and her parents were among the last to leave. Her school careers advice was to try hairdressing or typing, while I was already riding the magic carpet of grammar school that was taking me even further away from where I had started.

As an adult, I started to haunt the lost streets of Brinksway, inspired by Jeremy Deller's inclusion of the last of the Rose Queens in *Procession*, the parade he devised for the Manchester International Festival in 2009. I sent him some photographs of the Brinksway Rose Fete for his folk archive, another attempt to slow the tide of obliteration. The traces of the lost streets continued to inspire my own creativity. Here I am on the same bridge where I had paraded 45 years previously (Fig. 4.18). The Woolpack pub was still there, but I was the only customer that afternoon. It closed soon after, for ever. The Mersey still flowed beneath the bridge, cleaned up now. But the dominant flow was the motorway traffic a few yards away, humming tunelessly.

Figure 4.15: Michael Danyliw, Untitled, date unknown. Photograph. Private collection. (courtesy of Marika Anders)

Figure 4.16: Vanley Burke, *Young men on a see-saw in Handsworth Park*, 1984. Photograph. 50.8 x 33.64 cm. (Vanley Burke / DACS/Artimage)

Figure 4.17: Michael Danyliw, Untitled, c.1968. Photograph. Private collection. (courtesy of Marika Anders)

Behind me there is a car showroom, supplying the car-owning dream we thought we wanted, the modern future for which we cleared everything away, but which now looks empty and toxic.

When I walk around Brinksway today, there is hardly anything remaining from the past. The roads we paraded along and the park we played in have disappeared under the motorway tarmac. If I stand on the forecourt of the car showroom, I can just about work out where I was born. I stand there straddling two lifetimes and pretend to knock on the door of our old house as if it's still there. No one is in. I can walk along the same path that Rita Tushingham and Dora Bryan took in the opening sequence of *A Taste of Honey*, down to where I used to play out on Morley Street, but nobody is playing out today.

A postmodern office block in the shape of a huge glass pyramid stands in the place between the Sunday School and my grandma's house (Fig. 4.19). Today it stands empty: a hollow monument to the decline and death of the area. This year, I pasted an enlarged copy of one of Danyliw's Rose Fete photographs on the pathway by the side of the glass pyramid, with a chalked inscription 'Brinksway Rose Fete 1962' (Fig. 4.20). It disappeared soon after, presumably taken down by the security guards. The erasure of our history continues.

In 2022, I arranged a reunion evening for members of the Brinksway Clan at a pub in Stockport; the formerly

Figure 4.18: Annie Harrison, *Untitled*, c.2009. Photograph. Private collection. (Photo: author's own)

Figure 4.19: Smith & Brown, *Stockport Pyramid*, Stockport, 16 November 2014. Photograph.
(Photo: http://www.smithbrownaccountants.co.uk/, CC by 2.0)

Figure 4.20: Annie Harrison, *Untitled*, 22 January 2023. Photograph. Private collection. (Photo: author's own)

surviving Brinksway pubs having all closed down. The photographs of the evening show us as a circle of friends, in which I am now included. But when I look at them today, I cannot help wondering if we are at our own wake, with the oblivion of amnesia not far away. We shared our photographs and our memories. We shared our different life stories and the routes they had taken, all of us faring reasonably well. We are nostalgic for the lives that we had in Brinksway. We miss the certainties of the times that the altered landscape seems to have forgotten now that its traces are wiped away. The folk-art events of the Sunday School were part of the social glue we now find missing in society. We cannot go back to it, but want to keep it alive in some way. Some of us think that Michael Danyliw's photographs are the true monument for the lost Brinksway. In 2022, I went to meet his daughter Marika, who now lives in Frankfurt, our first meeting since we were in the parades 60 years ago, like two ghosts of our former selves. She has the archive of the many photographs her father took of community life in Brinksway in the 1950s and 60s. We hope to

exhibit them and to find an archival home for in them in the North-West, before the photographs and our memories are lost for ever.

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DWELLING AND THE EVERYDAY AT LORETO
Alice E. Sanger

Abstract

In early modernity the Marian shrine of the Holy House at Loreto, or Santa Casa di Loreto, developed as a major pilgrimage site. Tradition held that, in the late 13th century, the house had been miraculously transported from the Holy Land via Dalmatia to its final resting place, a hill top in the Marches of Italy. Pilgrims journeyed to the shrine in the belief that they were encountering a sacred relic like no other – a small building that had been the birth- and dwelling-place of the Virgin Mary and the childhood home of Christ. In this extraordinary place, then, devotees might imagine holy figures at their most everyday.

At Loreto, visiting the shrine involves navigating the vast basilica built in the later 15th century to house the Holy House. The relic itself, positioned at the basilica's crossing, is encased in an elaborate marble shell constructed in the early 16th century, which is adorned with intricate relief sculptures by leading sculptors of the day. But despite its extensive decorations and trappings added over centuries, the Holy House itself is architecturally underwhelming, modest in proportions and vernacular in style. This essay examines the appeal of the shrine for early modern pilgrims, in relation to the significances of the coexistence of degraded materials, bricks and dust and spectacular adornment, to argue that the 16th century re-housing of the relic is suggestive of the potential social subversiveness of the shrine: in sum, that the austere marble casing is designed to contain the risk that ordinary devotees might dwell too much on the everyday.

Biographical note
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Banner image: Detail from a view of the studio at the Barbara Hepworth gallery in St Ives, Cornwall. (Photo: Ed Clews / Alamy Stock Photo)

DWELLING AND THE EVERYDAY AT LORETO

Alice E. Sanger, The Open University

The Santa Casa or Holy House of Loreto occupies a paradoxical position between far and close to the everyday. On the one hand, it is the home of the Virgin Mary and a sacred relic, the setting of the Annunciation and the place where Christ spent his early years. As a locus of pilgrimage and miracles it is special, privileged and grace-giving. For early modern pilgrims, the auratic and cultic significance of the Holy House lay in its status as site of the miracle of the Incarnation and dwelling place of holy figures and also in its curious arrival in Loreto so far from the Holy Land. Legend holds that the building was transported to Loreto near the Adriatic coast in the Marches of Italy via a series of miraculous flights (Fig. 5.1).

On the other hand, the house might be considered 'everyday', because it was once a home, a place where people lived and where ordinary, domestic things happened. Christ and his family were humble, and the house readily attests to a humble lifestyle lived within its walls. If separated from the trappings and embellishments of later times, the house is small and rustic, modest, then, in scale, materials and design.

Positing the Holy House as a locus of devotional activity and devotional energy, I want to test how far dwelling and the everyday formed part of the shrine's potentiality, allure and effects. I'm seeking to bring into sharper focus the friction between uniqueness and ordinariness at the Santa Casa in early modernity and

Figure 5.1: Madonna of Loreto, frontispiece to the English edition of Orazio Torsellino's *Loretanae Historiae Libri Quinque* [Rome, 1597], 1614–30. (© The Trustees of the British Museum, licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0)

Figure 5.2: Caravaggio, *Madonna of Loreto*, 1603–05. Oil on canvas, 260 × 150 cm. Church of Sant'Agostino, Rome. (Photo: Album / Alamy Stock Photo)

the significances of this in relation to religious devotion and architecture.[1]

Caravaggio's Roman altarpiece that evokes the shrine, with its beguiling admixture of the ordinary and the extraordinary, provides a useful starting point (Fig. 5.2). In the *Madonna of Loreto*, the Virgin, with faint halo, pauses in a gloomy doorway, supporting the infant Christ on her hip. Two people kneeling before the Virgin, apparently pilgrims to the Holy House, are not only shabbily dressed but actually grubby, the notorious dirty feet of one clearly visible at the spectator's eye level (McCormack, 2013, p.1). The pilgrims' poverty does not seem to bother the holy figures, who gaze sympathetically on their visitors. Christ even extends his small hand in a gesture that seems to be a blessing. The setting, such as it is, is achingly mundane. The doorframe has chipped masonry; plaster on the adjoining wall has fallen away to expose brick.

Caravaggio's altarpiece is an unconventional depiction in any number of ways. Of particular relevance here is that the scene offered an accessible point of contact for even the humblest devotee, exemplified by the demonstrable lowliness of the pilgrims kneeling at the Virgin's door. The painting's relatability to a lower-class audience proved contentious. Giovanni Baglione (1642) lamented that it was because of the 'muddy feet' and other 'frivolities' in the picture that 'the populace made a great fuss over it' (translated in Puglisi, 1997, p.414).[2] Baglione's comments are pertinent here because they signal the threat of the ordinary in relation to the sacred.

During the renaissance the rustic structure that is the shrine of the Holy House was propped up, adorned and added to in spectacular fashion. The year 1500 saw the completion of the vast Basilica della Santa Casa, built over the Holy House (Fig. 5.3). At this point the house was shored up by walls built in the fourteenth century, but under papal patronage in the early sixteenth, it was covered or clothed in a gleaming and

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1   Recent research on Loreto has richly extended in multiple ways the understanding of the shrine's effects. The bibliography includes Marcia Pointon (2005 & 2008); Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood (2010); Karin Veléz (2019); Brundin, Howard and Laven (2018); and Margaret Meserve (2022).

2   '... fece una Madonna di Loreto ritratta dal naturale con due pellegrini, uno co' piedi fangosi, e l'altra con una cuffia sdrucita, e sudicia; e per queste leggierezze in riguardo delle parti, che una gran pittura haver dee, da popolani ne fu fatto estremo schiamazzo.' (Baglione (1642) La vita di Michelangelo da Caravaggio, pittore in Le vite de' pittori, scultori, et architetti ..., Rome, reproduced in Hibbard, 1983, Appendix II, p.354).

Figure 5.3: View of the Basilica and Piazza from the Palazzo Apostolico. (Photo: Richard T. Rogers)

Figure 5.4: *View of the Holy House of Loreto, Italy*, 1800s. Engraving. (Photo: colaimages / Alamy Stock Photo)

intricately sculpted marble casing (Fig. 5.4). In other words, the house that was by that time housed already by the basilica was re-housed in a second shell. This casing begs the question: why re-house a house? What is suggested by the coexistence of degraded fabric,

bricks and dust, and magnificent adornment, in relation to the building's significances as the home of the Virgin and Christ? In other words, what did the re-housing do to the shrine as a house?

In Willem du Tielt's early seventeenth-century woodcut (Fig. 5.1) the Holy House is shown without these embellishments as a basic, single-storey brick building with a tiled roof. Despite their differences, Caravaggio's altarpiece (Fig. 5.2) and du Tielt's woodcut have in common the suggestion of the Holy House as a humble abode. The woodcut evokes the shrine's founding myth: this simple structure near the Adriatic coast was transported from Nazareth by angels in the late thirteenth century, first to Dalmatia, and then to the Marches, finally settling on the hill-top at Loreto (Grimaldi, 1991, p.13; Jones, 2008, p.84). The image (Fig. 5.1) shows the house in flight, carried by angels, with the Virgin and Child sitting atop. It hovers above the sanctuary and walled town that evolved to support the shrine. The town's skyline is dominated by the dome of the Basilica della Santa Casa. That Basilica was designed to house the Holy House at its crossing, with the dome rising above (Figs. 5.4, 5.5).[3]

While the juxtaposition of the ordinary and the extraordinary is not unusual in the practice of relic devotion, but rather a characteristic of relic devotion at large, and, indeed, of the divine, the form of the Loretan relic is unusual and its presentation and architectural embellishments produce very specific effects. Marcia Pointon remarks:

> Unlike most other shrines, the constructed architectural space that attracts pilgrims is not a container for a relic. It is the relic itself. Here are no bones of a saint or nail of the true cross, but a building. Thus the basilica is a kind of giant reliquary within which the walk-in relic of the Virgin's house, an architectural feature in its own right, is protected and celebrated.
>
> (2005, p.131)

3   In 1469, the bishop of nearby Recanati had proposed a new church at Loreto to accommodate the ever-increasing number of devotees to the shrine. The project was subsequently sponsored by pope Paul II, who, in 1470, confirmed the site as miraculously founded (Santarelli, 2019, p.11). The shrine houses a cult image of the Virgin and Child – Our Lady of Loreto – which, at least since the early 16th century, has been in the form of a wooden sculpture (p.36). In tracing the house's precarious founding narrative – the story of a house that flew – Nagel and Wood have demonstrated a shift in focus in the sources during the later fifteenth century from the sacred image of the Virgin inside the house to the house itself (2010, p.204; also see: Brundin, Howard and Laven, 2018, p.302).
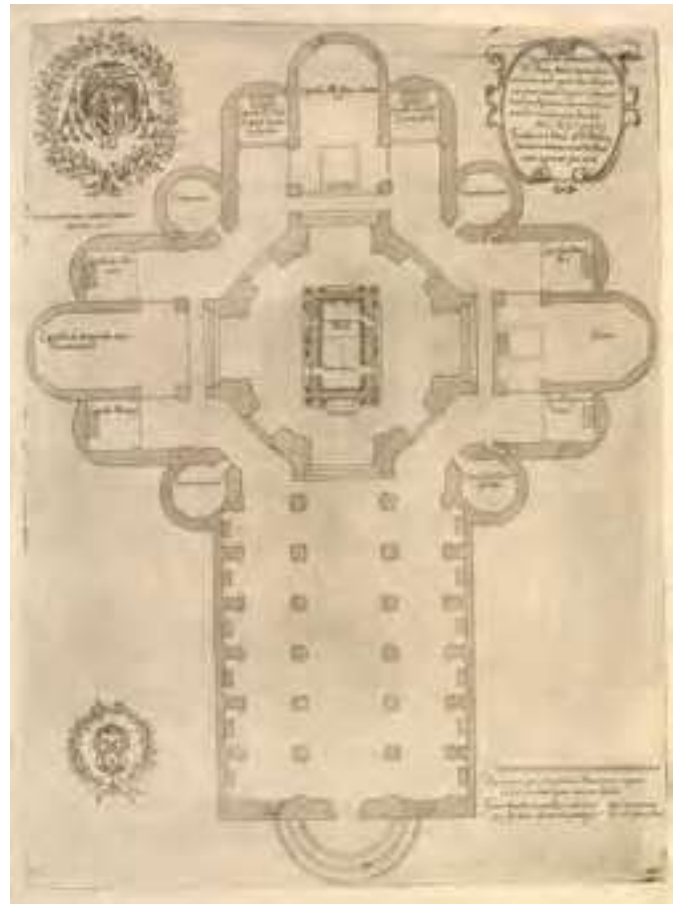

Figure 5.5: *Floor plan of the of the Basilica at Loreto*, 1567. Engraving. (© The Trustees of the British Museum, licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0)

Moreover, the particular form of the shrine emphasises its liminality and status as a heterotopia. Foucault comments that heterotopias 'always presuppose a system of opening and closing that isolates them and makes them penetrable at one and the same time' (1997, p.355). At Loreto, contact with the relic is dramatised in the movement from exterior to its interior as a literal and symbolic crossing of the limen.
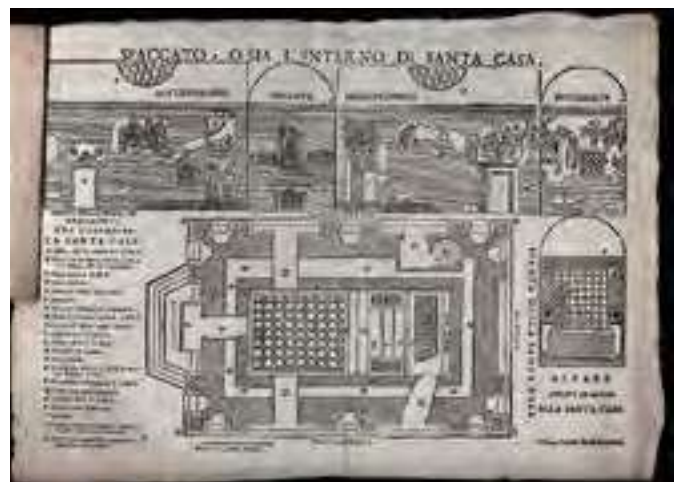

Figure 5.6: Federico Sartori, *The four internal walls of the Chapel of Loreto, with a floor-plan*, 18th century. Woodcut. (Wellcome Collection)

Figure 5.7: Interior of the Holy House of Loreto, view of the altar. (Photo: Odyssey-Images / Alamy Stock Photo)

Michel de Montaigne, visiting Loreto in spring 1581, found the house 'very small …, very old and mean-looking, built of brick, longer than it is wide' (1983, p.107). Towards one end of the gloomy and modestly appointed space he noted a metal grille partition dividing the interior in two (Figs. 5.6, 5.7). While this part was 'crude, old, and without any show of richness', behind it was the 'principal' part of the shrine, accommodating its focus of veneration, the sacred 'image of Our Lady' (p.107). In contrast to the rest of the space, this part, Montaigne recorded, was 'so heavily adorned with rich votive tablets … that all the way to the ground there [was] not an inch of space empty and not covered with some plate of silver or gold' (p.107). Montaigne struggled to find a place for his ex-voto amid so many, but, having done so, noted an everyday detail: the building's fireplace covered by some 'old curtains' (p.107).

As Montaigne's description shows, the *sacello* in the sixteenth century was maintained in two parts, one rustic and suggestive of the relic's 'authenticity', and the other richly adorned, albeit that the quantity of precious donations displayed there meant some slippage between the two (Pointon, 2008, p.255). At Loreto, the attraction of shrine as humble was coupled with an alluring excessiveness of display, given the number of votive offerings housed inside.

The crude interior walls of the Holy House were a key focus of attention for pilgrims. The account in the Medici court diary of the pilgrimage of Maria Maddalena d'Austria, grand duchess of Tuscany, who visited Loreto in 1613, indicates her desire to 'adore [the] sacred walls' of the Holy House, because this place, the diary notes, was where Saint Anne had given birth to and nourished the Blessed Virgin (Tinghi, 1613, fol.630r.). Even taking on board the grand duchess's privileged access to the shrine, the image created

is suggestive of the wider gendered potential of the Loretan pilgrimage. In this image conjured by/for the elite female pilgrim, the space of the holy house is intimate, feminine, maternal and matriarchal.

Just stepping inside her simple house probably encouraged emotional and imaginative connection with Mary. Karin Veléz comments that '[p]ilgrims to Loreto were encouraged to imagine Mary in her most human light, as a mother residing in the small house' (2019, p.161). The sense of close connection for pilgrims with the Virgin's 'simple domestic life' at Loreto was an effect linked to published texts, notably the *Meditations on the Life of Christ* (Howard, 2016, p.150). Visiting the shrine might thus bring pilgrims closer to the supposed day-to-day experience of holy figures. Sermonising in 1669, preacher Luigi Lazzari asserted that '[Christ] lived here within, prayed here, slept here, ate here, thought here, worked here … [and] touched the Santa Casa infinite times' (quoted in Veléz, 2019, p.96).

As soon as they got inside, pilgrims also touched the walls of the house, a practice encouraged by contemporary pilgrim guidebooks that frequently refer to this practice (Veléz, 2019, p.96, incl. n.67). Kissing the walls was common, an act the Jesuit Louis Richeome referred to in his pilgrim's manual *Le pelerin de Lorete* first published in 1604 (1629, p.251), and Cesare Franciotti recommended in his early seventeenth-century (1616 & 1625) guide (manuale di preghiera) (Grimaldi, 2001, p.35). While touching relics with hands or lips has a history going back to early Christianity (Klein, 2015), relic devotion at the Holy House stressed the haptic and sensual to an unusual degree, given its surfaces were more accessible than most relics in early modernity (Veléz, 2019, p.96). Relics, generally sealed within impenetrable reliquaries, tantalisingly and paradoxically invite touch but also prohibit it: devotees might touch such containers if not the relic inside. In contrast, the Holy House is a 'walk-in' relic (Pointon, 2005, p.131)

The publication of pilgrims' manuals, including those by Richeome and Franciotti, indicate the developing appeal of the Holy House to pilgrims, while playing their part in its growing popularity and spiritual significance. Their proliferation also suggests concerns for visitors' spiritual preparedness for pilgrimage and a need to manage pilgrims' activities at the shrine and on the road to and from, as well as the allure of the shrine for readers who would never get there at all. But Loreto's popularity for visitors brought with it risks to the integrity of the relic. Montaigne noted that pilgrims were 'forbidden to scratch anything' from the walls of the house and above all were not allowed to remove matter from the interior because there were so many

visitors that 'if it were permitted to take anything away, there would not be enough to last three days' (1983, p.108).

Figure 5.8: Envelope souvenir containing dust from the Holy House of Loreto, 18th century (Wellcome Collection)

Figure 5.9: Pilgrim's bowl from the Holy House of Loreto (© The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge)

Items available from the many souvenir vendors at Loreto, however, provided sanctioned ways to take home a trace of the Holy House. Visitors could purchase envelopes containing dust from the walls of the shrine (such as Fig. 5.8) (see Grimaldi, 2001, p.38; Veléz, 2019, incl. p.98; and Meserve, 2022). Dust was also incorporated into pilgrim bowls, typically decorated with an image of the shrine's sacred sculpture of the Virgin and Child (Fig. 5.9; on this artefact, see Howard, 2017, pp.149–50). These items

complicate rather than simply strengthen the Holy House's connection with the everyday. Removal of dust from the shrine, as an act of maintenance, was part of the effort to uphold order there. Although materially and commercially commonplace, and seeming to emphasise cleaning and the domestic realm, dusty sweepings from the Holy House were contact relics and thus rendered special and separate and untainted by abjection. Their value as sacred souvenirs highlights the intertwining of domesticity and sacrality at Loreto that is evidenced and negotiated in the architectural embellishment of the exterior of the shrine, to which I now turn.

Figure 5.10. Basilica della Santa Casa, the nave leading towards the Holy House (Photo: Guido Paradisi / Alamy Stock Photo (detail))

For modern visitors to Loreto, much as for early modern pilgrims, access to the shrine is (stage) managed from (at least) the moment of entry into the grand piazza in front of the Basilica (Fig. 5.3). Once inside the Basilica, visitors are guided onward to the crossing and the shrine itself (Fig. 5.10). Approaching the relic means taking in the massive oblong form of the Holy House, or rather the casing that has been made integral to the relic. The casing is a stunning work of architecture and sculpture. Punctuated by columns with Corinthian capitals which support a cornice topped with a balustrade, it is adorned with seven large and two smaller marble reliefs by leading sculptors of the Cinquecento, including Andrea Sansovino. The reliefs depict episodes from the life of

the mother of Christ and the flight of the Holy House to Loreto. Meanwhile, Medicean and pontifical arms are strategically placed on the casing to call visitors' attention to the involvement of elite (male) patrons in its construction.[4]

Entering the house therefore demands taking in the dramatic architectural distinction between the relic and its casing: the exterior, elegant, classicising and grandiose, and the interior, crude, vernacular and modest. If Caravaggio's painting of the *Madonna of Loreto* dwells on the humble and ordinary at the expense of the miraculous, a different dynamic takes place architecturally at the Santa Casa, as the lavishness of the exterior threatens to overwhelm the ordinariness of the house itself. To explain this friction, Brundin, Howard and Laven comment that a 'tension between simplicity and embellishment eloquently reminded the pilgrim not only of the humility of the sacred home, but also of the need to venerate and glorify it as a holy relic' (2018, p.42). But the difficulty with this reading alone is that it suggests that expensive ornament and richness immediately denote sacrality. Mary was humble, as was Christ. It follows that their home was humble and sacred. Why, then, the excessiveness of the marble casing? A further comparison with Caravaggio's altarpiece, despite its contrasting dynamic, provides a way in.

Caravaggio's *Madonna of Loreto* was disruptive because of its portrayal of and appeal to lowly people. The Santa Casa produces a comparable tension. While special and miraculous, it nevertheless offered lower class pilgrims a simple domestic context that they could easily relate to. This appeal carried with it the risk that such pilgrims might identify with it too readily and deeply in terms of dwelling. Meanwhile, the casing distinguished and elevated the humble house above this risk. The exquisitely worked marble of the screen identified and declared the ostensibly humble shrine as papal, aulic and upper class. It emphasised not only sanctity and otherworldliness but eliteness, lest the pilgrim, seduced by the fact of the material humbleness of the house and enabled by their proximity to it, lose sight of that. In other words, the 'eloquent reminding' activated at the shrine was of the ordinary pilgrim's lowly place in the social hierarchy.

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4 The commission of the shrine's marble casing was instigated by Julius II (reigned 1503–13) from Bramante. It bears pontifical and Medici arms alluding to the roles of popes Leo X (d.1521) and Clement VII (d.1534) in supporting the project (Papetti, 1991, p.7; Santarelli, 2019, p.37). On the reliefs, see Weil-Garris (1977).

Figure 5.11: View of the west façade of the Holy House, including, Andrea Sansovino, *Annunciation of the Virgin*, 1518–22. Marble, 136 x 336cm. (Photo: Ivan Vdovin / Alamy Stock Photo)

The reliefs of the casing also exert control over popular devotion effected by the relic as place of (sacred) dwelling. On the east wall one image reminds pilgrims of the Santa Casa's miraculous flight. Others set out major events of the Virgin's life, thus visually articulating the grand narratives connected with Mary that pilgrims might struggle to conjure from the humble relic-house alone. Sansovino's *Annunciation* (Fig. 5.11), which occupies the privileged position on the casing's west wall and thus faces the nave, seems well placed to urge pilgrims to dwell on the mystery of the Incarnation of Christ when inside the shrine.

Close viewing of the reliefs and their potential for didacticism are suggested in the account of the pilgrimage of grand duchess of Tuscany, Maria Maddalena d'Austria, who, on exiting the house, was guided around the exterior and was also shown the Medici family arms (Tinghi, 1613, fol.632r.). This activity underscores this elite pilgrim's privileged access both to the shrine and to knowledge, but also suggests how the reliefs were used to uphold the official narrative of the Holy House, by signalling sacrality, decorum, learning and aesthetic value as if they are simply one. Meanwhile, the grand duchess's agency as a powerful woman visiting Mary's house was absorbed or contained in a wider project of Medicean and papal power.

The Santa Casa is house in both senses: site of the Incarnation, and Mary's and Christ's home. Its spiritual power rests in no small part with its potential to

compensate for the absence of the Virgin herself. As Nagel and Wood comment: '[W]hat was the house of the Virgin if not the reliquary of a forever absent relic, the Virgin's body itself?' (2010, p.198). Thus, the shrine is relic *and* reliquary (of the Virgin's absent body) and, as room and home, must surely also signify the (Virgin's) womb.[5] Mary's virginity is also alluded to outside, not only in the *Annunciation* relief, but in the casing's austerely white and intact surfaces, which shield the house-as-womb relic and are made integral to it. The marble screen stresses, then, the shrine's distinctive, auratic character – its claim to uniqueness – gesturing to the wholeness and integrity of both Mary and relic.

But, in tandem, the marble casing works to disguise femininity, as well as poverty and domesticity. Its idealising narratives and rich and classicising ornament emphasise (papal/masculine) order, authority and upper classness. In his brilliant essay 'Untitled: The housing of gender', Mark Wigley remarks on sexuality and renaissance architectural theory that 'ornament represents and consolidates the order of the building it clothes, which is that of man. It is used to make that order visible' (1992, p.357). Ornament at Loreto, I suggest, assumes the image of masculine order that might be under threat in the house itself.

Caravaggio's altarpiece with its grimy pilgrims and beautiful but somewhat down-at-heel Madonna was disruptive because it reached out to a lowly audience. At Loreto, as the popularity of the shrine increased, a similar juxtaposition of the sacred and the everyday or lower class needed to be realigned in favour of the upper class and the learned. The rehousing of the house-relic via the marble embellishment of the exterior emphasised sanctity and (masculine) authority over commonplaceness, wresting the threat of the ordinary back to the extraordinary. In other words, spectacular architectural adornment at Loreto was used to (try to) manage its potential as politically or socially subversive: to contain the risk that it would be the poor pilgrims – and not the rich and powerful – who would be the ones to feel most at home in the Virgin's former everyday dwelling.

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SHRINES AT HOME AND ON THE STREET: INFORMAL RELIGIOUS DEVOTION IN ROME CA. 1800-1960

Alessandra Batty

Abstract

This article brings into focus women's unique dimension in living their faith. Emphasis is on two types of evidence: the street shrines commonly known as madonnelle *and the private shrines made of photographs (*altarini*) in 19th and 20th century Rome. Whilst the former are now a tourist attraction and the bibliography on the subject has been growing steadily, the domestic photograph shrines (*altarini*) are poorly documented and virtually unknown. However, their crucial role as a focus for private, family-oriented devotion is undeniable. Looking at these installations through the lens of female participation, it is possible to highlight the distinctive experience of women's devotion in public and private spheres. Despite the crucial differences between the two types of shrine (in terms of material, assemblage, usage, chronological span etc), both are indicators of specific cultural practices, the root of which can ultimately be found in the experience of/with the body that women nurture throughout their lives.*

Biographical note

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Banner image: Detail from a view of the studio at the Barbara Hepworth gallery in St Ives, Cornwall. (Photo: Ed Clews / Alamy Stock Photo)

SHRINES AT HOME AND ON THE STREET: INFORMAL RELIGIOUS DEVOTION IN ROME CA. 1800-1960

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[W]omen around the world have always been central in all religions. That's partly because women have always had a huge stake in developing their relationship with the divine, in getting closer to God, to what they see as the most true, the most beautiful, the most powerful; but also because women deal with the real everyday important issues of life and survival – with birth, with life, with marriage, with issues around illness and well-being and of course death.

(Woodhead, 2013)

Keeping watch over a busy thoroughfare from the corner of the Sforza Cesarini palace in Rome, the *Madonna dell'accoglienza* by Mimmo Paladino was inaugurated in 2018 (Fig. 5..1): it is the crowning jewel of a project aimed at restoring around fifty Marian shrines of the remaining few hundreds currently located in Rome. The stated objective of the Fondazione Giulio e Giovanna Sacchetti that sponsored this initiative is 'recuperare l'antica tradizione devozionale' (to recuperate traditional, popular devotion). Unequivocally, Paladino has created a work of art: the illusion – strengthened by the similarity in background colour of both building and image – that Mary is reaching beyond the flat mosaic into the worldly life of the city is but one of the marvels of this work. Yet Paladino's Madonna differs from the Marian street shrines of Rome in that it is placed out of reach, in a position for aesthetic contemplation rather than for interactive religious devotion.

The *madonnelle,* as the street shrines of Rome are popularly called, date back to at least the middle ages, and many still remain *in situ* today. Almost all include images of Mary, and often also of Christ and saints. A first census, published in 1853, counted 2,739 such shrines of which 1,421, slightly more than 50%, were dedicated to the Virgin. The present count appears to be about 600: the decline in number is due to urban alterations and a convoluted legislation that effectively

Figure 5.1: Mimmo Paladino, *Madonna dell'accoglienza*, 2017–18. Mosaic, 100 x 70cm. Rome, Corso Vittorio Emanuele II, 284. (Courtesy of Fondazione Giulio e Giovanna Sacchetti, Milan, Italy)

discourages much-needed repairs. But it is also possible to argue that cultural practices have changed: contemporary times are not conducive to the practices that nurtured the creation and survival of these installations.

The *madonnelle* have recently become attractions, largely thanks to tailored websites promising to reveal hidden facets of an 'unknown Rome' (see, for example, Lown, 2019; Dveris, 2021). Attention to these shrines has gained strength, with a number of publications focusing on their location, state of preservation and artistry. Alessandro Rufini's catalogue of 1853, organised by city quarters and streets remains, however, a vital resource. Openly animated by personal devotion, the author painstakingly listed images in all existing *media* – even paper – including locations of *ex voto,* lamps and ornaments (Rufini, 1853, pp.viii-ix). Other significant studies include the illustrations of selected shrines by Gaspare De Fiore (1960), Nica Fiori (1994) and the series-in-progress of eight books by Maria Cristina Martini (2010–22. A good bibliography

is in Ricci, 1999, p.57). These studies are important for classifying and locating the shrines, but they offer little insight into how ordinary people, especially women, interacted with and experienced these installations.

The *madonnelle* are most often described as 'devotional' and 'popular' installations (Pina, 2015; Cenci, 2013; *Anon*, 2019; for a useful corrective to the demeaning use of the adjective 'popular', see Ricci, 1999, p.36). The frequent conflation of the two notions is at the root of an approach blighted by a condescending attitude to both the shrines and the social classes that created and worshipped at them. Architectural history tends to treat them (if at all) as accessorial decorations to the buildings; as far as the role they played for the lower social classes, this is usually pigeon-holed as the folkloristic expression of popular faith.[1]

Madonnelle on the walls of Rome were not painted by great masters, with the (partial) exception of a talented pupil of Raphael, Florence-born Perino del Vaga (1501–47), who painted the *Immagine di ponte* in an elaborate frame designed by Sangallo the Younger (1484–1546); the work is now barely legible. What is at times downright poor craftsmanship, coupled with precarious structures to support them, makes the *madonnelle* vulnerable to being dismissed and diminished. The designation 'popular art', however, fails to do them justice and is, at least partially, misleading: the *madonnelle* are significant in revealing threads of informal religious devotion and urban social, political and religious networks amongst the lower classes, which usually are invisibilised through both urban interventions and art historical taxonomies of the canon ('quality' or 'taste').

I suggest instead that the *madonnelle* were the dwellings of the divine among common folk, who took care of and nurtured them throughout the year. Popular affection gave rise to devotional forms that ran parallel to, seemingly undisturbed by, official practice and doctrine. In the shrines, the divine was simultaneously present on heaven and earth, and available for engagement even by the very poor: on some exceptional occasions, communication would take place through the movement of the eyes. Below, I offer brief accounts of two supernatural events that occurred in 1796 and 1835, with special attention to the way women's participation has been made invisible and ridiculed.

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1 For the related question of *meridionalismo* and the denigration by scholars and art historians as well as by mainstream Italian hegemonic notions of femininity and lower classes, see Hills (2019).

The participation in and experience of these installations by women is not equivalent or reducible to that of men. There is now a strong scholarship that investigates women's religious devotion, but it is overwhelmingly focused on upper-class women. I argue here that lower class women's devotion to these shrines was equally significant and assumed specific forms. This 'street devotion', unlike that of enclosed women, is almost entirely undocumented and remains largely ignored, but I hope that by careful consideration of female participation (including agency, female genealogies, the gaze, haptic and familial roles), the distinctive experience that women enjoyed can be at least plausibly hypothesised.

The unique role played by women in carving a sacred space for the deceased of the family within the private sphere is a third strand of this paper. Once again, genealogy, the gaze and the haptic are pivotal. In that domestic environment in which social conventions, moral customs, religious prudery and ultimately the law relegated women until well into the 20th century, they effectively challenged the customary assumption that the 'holy' was necessarily formal and institutional by installing *altarini* of the deceased, which functioned as a focus of inter-generational devotion for entire families.

Street-shrines as the dwelling of the divine

Customarily placed at an intermediate height, the *madonnelle* are high enough to be suggestive of the supernatural entity of Mary/Jesus/Saints, but low enough to be taken care of, adorned, touched and caressed and to participate in their worshippers' worldly sorrows and hence can mediate between heaven and earth (Fig. 5.2). Rufini's census demonstrates the pervasiveness of this intimacy/proximity: on many streets there could be several shrines with *ex voto*, candles and votive lamps (even today, in some areas of Rome such as Trastevere or Monti, there remain shrines on most street corners). Rufini saw the shrines as a search for an un-mediated relationship in an everyday setting: 'almost as if the Romans' longing towards such a good mother and lady was not adequately expressed in such rich and venerable churches, their devotion inspired them to set up images of the Virgin Mary on every corner, every crossroads and every square' (1853, pp.v–vi). Marian devotion was exceptionally pervasive: the proliferation of images in official and unofficial settings lent to the city being compared to an open-air Marian sanctuary (Dejonghe, 1969, p.17).

On some special occasions, street shrines became glorious altars and the focus of celebrations running parallel to the official rites of the church: of 344

Figure 5.2: Anon., *Madonna dell'orazione*, XX cent. Painted terracotta. Rome, Viale Trastevere c.a 76/a. (Photo: author)

annual street celebrations listed by Rufini, 269 took place on 15 August (Feast of the Assumption), 73 on 8 September (Mary's nativity) and two on other occasions (Annunciation, 25 March, and Our Lady of the Rosary, 7 October) (1853, p.302). When Pius XII issued *Munificentissimus Deus* (1950), that officially sealed the dogma of Mary's Assumption, he did little more than give official stamp to popular Marian devotion.

Street shrines permitted a more informal, more accessible relation with the divine, devoid of the inscrutable mysteries officiated by a Church dominated by stiff conventionalism (services were held in Latin, which fell outside most people's education, and notoriously lasted hours; time that the majority could only exceptionally spare). Worship at the *madonnelle* was a public matter, inter-generational and knitted the community around a shared belief system, with close involvement of those living in the neighbourhood in the setting up of ornaments, lights and candles. On special feasts, children were usually tasked with recouping at least part of the money invested in the decorations by asking passers-by for a few coins 'pe' ll'artarino' (for the shrine) (Zanazzo, 1908, p.176). The observance of Mary's assumption at the Madonna on Via Baccina, for example, was said to be carried out 'con molta pompa' (with great pomp) (Rufini, 1853, pp.4–5). A lithograph of the 1820s by Antoine Jean-Baptiste Thomas (1791–1834), *La Madonna di settembre* (1823/1830), represents this street shrine as surrounded by a crowd, and sumptuously lit by candles and high braziers

festooned with wreaths of green foliage (Fig.5.3; it is the same shrine as Fig.5.5). The *madonnella*, encased in an aedicule with a tasselled canopy, was considered miraculous and became a magnet for the recitation of litanies by those hoping for indulgences applicable to the souls in Purgatory.[2] A kneeler below the image and a font for the holy water – quite common in street shrines – completed the para-liturgical setting (Rufini, 1853, pp.4–5).

Up to the 1870s, when streetlights were introduced in Rome, the lamps and candles burning at the shrines were the only source of illumination at night. There is no doubt that they performed a utilitarian function, although the claim that the advent of public lighting caused the disappearance of the *madonnelle* (as if the latter's function was to provide light during the night; see, for example, Martini, 2010–22, vol. 6, p.4) is unconvincing. The ubiquity of the shrines, with their flickering candlelight, threaded patterns of light across the whole city, especially in the poorest and most densely populated parts, acting like an itinerary of brightness through darkness, from the blindness of the soul to the gleam of faith. More importantly, candles metonymically suggested the omnipresent eye of the divine, ever alert, casting a protective and loving gaze over the city. Italian has inherited directly from Latin

2   An indulgence is the remission by the Church of the temporal penalty due to forgiven sin, in virtue of the merits of Christ and the saints (Cross & Livingstone, 2005, *s.v.* Indulgences).

Figure 5.3: Antoine Jean-Baptiste Thomas and François Le Villain, *La Madonna di settembre. Preghiera presso un'edicola sacra all'arco dei Pantani*, 1823–30. Colour litograph, 33.1 x 50.7cm. (Source: Rome, Museo di Roma, Archivio iconografico / Photo: Alfredo Valeriani)

the overlap of the concepts of 'light' and 'sight' with the terms luce (from *lux*) and lume (from *lumen*), both meaning 'light' but also figuratively 'eye' because of the gleam that radiates from them (see the example in *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*, 1691, vol.3, p.971). Eyes and light are thus closely intertwined. In the shrine, the divine was simultaneously present on heaven and earth and readily accessible, un-mediated, irrespective of social standing.

Sight and seeing have been privileged channels of communication between the divine and worshippers in street shrines. These, in fact, are not merely recipients of devotions but socially embedded agents that respond to human petitions, react to abuse and may perform miracles. Two well-known episodes of heaven/earth intercommunication occurred in 1796 and 1835, when hundreds of *madonnelle* were reported as miraculously having moved their eyes. With regard to women's participation, the 1796 event is of particular interest for its 'official' account that erased the record of any female involvement; the miracles that occurred in 1835 feature gullible women lending faith to a hoax.

Both miracles took place at difficult times for the people of Rome: in 1796 the Papal State was menaced by Napoleon's armies and in 1835 it faced a cholera epidemic (Turi, 1990; Cattaneo, 1995). In the wider historical context, there was also an exceptional boost to Marian devotion in the 19th century with the papal declaration of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception (1854), and an unprecedented number of laypeople and peasants witnessing apparitions of Mary (La Salette, France, 1846; Lourdes, France, 1858; Knock, Ireland, 1879) and rapturous conversions (for example, Marie-Alphonse Ratisbonne in 1842).

In 1796, numerous *madonnelle* in Rome and suburbs were seen to move or open and close their eyes: the sheer number of incidents seemed to prove that the events could not be attributed to hysterical delusion but were of supernatural origin. Carlo Cecchelli commented that 'the whole city burn[ed] of a mystical fire' (1931, p.441). Archbishop Giovanni Marchetti recorded many such occurrences in his *De' prodigi avvenuti in molte sagre immagini specialmente di Maria Ss* (1797): an account that sought to instil fear and intensify hostility towards the impious French armies (Messori and Cammilleri, 2001; for Marchetti, see Caravale, 2007, *s.v.* Marchetti).

What is deemed to have taken place at the Madonna dell'Archetto, the popular name for the image of Maria Santissima *causa nostrae laetitiae,* received rapturous response from those who witnessed it (Fig.5.4). Mary's image moved her eyes, 'giving a loving look to everyone,

Figure 5.4: Domenico Muratori, Maria Santissima *causa nostrae laetitiae*, 1690. Majolica terracotta, 58 x 55cm. Rome, Cappella della Madonna dell'archetto. (Photo: author)

as if she were flesh and bone, turning her eyes [*lumi*] from one side to the other' (Marchetti, 1797, p. 9). Marchetti's account omits any reference to women: the trustworthiness of the event relies entirely on multiple male witnesses. Almost 180 witnesses were called to testify to the miracles before an official commission; of these, less than ten per cent were women. The male/female disparity is even greater for those who were willing, upon request by the commission, to be examined: women were almost exclusively called as witnesses when it was impossible to do otherwise, as when the miracle occurred in a female convent. The attitude displayed by the seven nuns of the Monastery of San Salvatore in Capite, who called upon male onlookers 'per comprovare maggiormente il fatto' (to further prove the deed) (Marchetti, 1797, p.245) is symptomatic.

The miraculous opening/moving of eyes in 1835 proved to be more contentious: satirical poet Giuseppe Gioacchino Belli in a sonnet entitled *Semo da capo* (Here we go again) ridiculed the event as 'yet another of the priests' ways to make money'. Belli's poem, however, offers insight into female engagement with the shrines: only women gather in front of them to acknowledge the supernatural event and make penance:

Currete, donne mie; currete, donne,	Hasten, o my women; o women, hasten,
A ssentì la gran nova ch'hanno detto:	To hear the great news that is spreading:
Ch'a la Pedacchia, ar Monte, e accant'a Gghet-to	That on the Pedacchia, at the Monti and next to the Ghetto
Arïoprono l'occhi le Madonne.	The *madonnelle* have opened their eyes again.
…	
Dunque dateve, donne, un zércio in petto,	And so, o women, strike your breasts
E ccominciate a ddì *ccrielleisonne*…	And start to recite the *Kyrie eleison*…

(17 November 1835; Belli, 1886, p.384; author's translation)

Whilst women engaged with the miracle, men are hinted at only at the end as the 'indiscreti' (insolents) casting aspersions about the cash revenue for the Church from the miraculous *madonnelle*. Marchetti's female unreliability finds an echo in the women of Belli, naïve and eager at the same time to lend credence to sheer gossip and prostrate in penance. Their emotional response is assimilated to an expression of irrationality that is unique to them: in the women of Marchetti and Belli, the emotional becomes irrational and *vice versa*.

Female unsuitability to fully participate in the life of the Church found its traditional cornerstone in the writing of the Fathers, with their 'undeniable influence of prejudices unfavourable to woman' (Declaration *Inter insigniores*, 1976, 1). That in 19th-century Rome (the heart of the Papal State) female religious education was so dissimilar from boys' to the point that it could be ranked as 'virtually negligible' (Lupi, 2001, pp.73–6) is noteworthy. The girls' textbook was (S Robert) Bellarmino's *Dottrina*: a manual arranged in easy-to-memorise questions and answers. Interestingly, when a debate arose among the Roman clergy about the adoption of a new and more intellectually challenging text for the youngsters, the *Dottrina* was reputed the only possible choice for female schools, since the lay (female) tutors were deemed incapable of teaching anything other than mnemonic formulae (Lupi, 2001, pp.83, 93). Accordingly, lay teachers – considered poorly prepared doctrinally – were reserved for girls; boys' education was in the firm hands of ecclesiastics. Aside from religious training, among the few institutions in Rome devoted to the education of the girls of the *basso popolo* (De Sanctis, 1865, p.318) were the Maestre Pie Filippini, whose *curriculum* suggestively combined catholic doctrine, training in domestic works such as sewing and essential skills like reading; writing was the privilege for those aspiring to become

Figure 5.5: Bartolomeo Pinelli, *Il facinoroso ravveduto avanti l'immagine di Maria SS. al Portico di Ottavio*, 1831. Etching, 32.1 x 43cm. (Source: Pinelli, 1831, Pl. 42)

teachers or embrace religious life (Lirosi, 2017, p.178). Irrespective of their social standing, women were legally barred from high school and university until 1874. As for their suitability for work, crucial legislative changes took place only around 1920 (Pazè, 2013, pp. 37–9). Protestant theologian Luigi De Sanctis argued that low levels of education were instrumental in feeding the wells of superstition: he advocated an education that helped in recognising the hoax of events such as 'the *madonnelle* opening their eyes … and other miracles invented by the priests' (1865, p.266). Unsurprisingly it was mostly women, he contended, to fall easy prey of the priests' overarching authority.

Giggi Zanazzo's *Usi, costumi e pregiudizi del popolo di Roma* (1908) confined women's fields of action to finding a suitable husband, rearing a family and healing the sick. Many of the remedies listed by the author in these areas syncretically combined religious elements with popular customs (for the mystification of popular religion, see Zardin, 2001) and were sourced directly from women (Zanazzo, 1908, p.7). Penance afforded by moving on one's knees, for instance, was deemed to be worthy of heavenly reward: the spinsters wishing to marry – as well as the wives longing for children – used to climb St Peter's steps on their knees whilst holding

a lit candle (Zanazzo, 1908, pp.132–3, 137); the wives abused by their husbands walked the distance between St. Pudenziana and St. Maria Maggiore on all fours or on their knees (Zanazzo, 1908, p.136). Grignion de Montfort identified the kneeling posture with the outwards devotional attitude of the 'gens simples et humbles' (the common people) in prayer, be they on the road by a *madonnella* or in a church ([1712–13], 1995, pp. 115-16).

Engravings by Bartolomeo Pinelli (1781–1835) depict women habitually kneeling on the pavement or on the shrine step. In Pinelli's representations of what purported to be 'everyday life', women are portrayed engaging emphatically and full heartedly with the shrines; men generally hover uneasily in the background. Women are those who are *ostensibly* in prayer: whether alone or in pairs, interceding for a member of the family or presenting their babies, their bodily stance is outwardly devotional with the hands held in prayer and the eyes fixed on the image with expressions of intense absorption, as in the etching showing the wife obtaining her husband's repentance from a life of crime through prayer (*Il facinoroso ravveduto avanti l'immagine di Maria SS. al Portico di Ottavio,* Fig.5.5; the caption of the preparatory drawing

Figure 5.6: *Preghiera avanti l'immagine della Madonna agli archi della Pilotta*, 1830. Etching, 32.4 x 42.9cm. (Courtesy of RISD Museum, Providence, RI, USA)

Figure 5.7: Bartolomeo Pinelli, *Le litanie a Tivoli*, 1809. Etching, 28 x 19cm. Pinelli, 1809, p.33. (Courtesy of George Peabody Library, The Sheridan Libraries, Johns Hopkins University)

emphasises that the wife's prayers had obtained the man's conversion: https://www.calcografica.it/disegni/inventario.php?id=D-CL1347#&gid=1&pid=D-CL1347).

The *Preghiera avanti l'immagine della Madonna agli archi della Pilotta* (Fig.5.6) shows a painting of the Virgin with hands crossed on her chest in a Lady of Sorrows stance. Pinelli's women, at the centre of the scene, are closest to and in engagement with the shrine (either kneeling or praying more 'conversationally'), whilst men are relegated to the sides, physically distanced from it.

The distinct positions and manners of both men and women are replicated almost faithfully in other etchings by Pinelli. *Le litanie a Tivoli* (Fig.5.7) depicts a small evening gathering of five women, two men and a girl around a street shrine lit by a lamp to recite the litanies (the final part of the rosary) in honour of Mary. The women gather nearer to Mary in a mixture of postures (kneeling, standing or 'conversational'), absorbed in their devotional prayer whilst men keep at a distance. A woman at the back is not praying, but talks to a girl

Figure 5.8: Luigi Barocci, *La novena del S. Natale. Che suole praticarsi in Roma innanzi alcune immagini della Vergine Ss. esposte nelle pubbliche vie da alcuni pastori così detti piferari*, 1850. Engraving, 37 x 54. (Source: Barocci and Fabi Montani, 1850, Pl. 37)

who listens attentively. The eyes of the two meet, as the faces are turned towards each other: the mother pointing towards Mary signals that the subject of the conversation is the Lady in the shrine (women's pedagogical role in the transmission of faith has been at the centre of Church debates for years: see, for example, Matteo, 2012; an appraisal of the responsibility placed on women to instruct the children in faith in modern times is in Morse, 2007, esp. pp.174–9). In compositional terms, the two etchings show similarities that may well have to do with the artist's preferences; however, the contrast between female engagement and male detachment, *and* the expressive postures

chosen by Pinelli to depict women's rapport with the *madonnelle* may be suggestive of the artist's intention to convey a unique relationship with the divinity of the shrine, one made of familiarity and confidence. It may be interesting to note that the several versions of the *litanie* feature the same involvement/detachment opposition even when the character number is greatly increased (for example, the watercolour version that went for auction at Christie's in 2014 (Christie's, 2014).

The etching *La novena del Santo Natale* (Fig.5.8) by Luigi Barocci (19th century) displays a deeper bodily involvement with the depiction of a young woman who is the only one to approach a *madonnella* with a bunch

of flowers. Her hand becomes the conduit between the transient and the imperishable world through the medium of the image: touching the lifeless matter and in turn being touched by it. All other characters, be they the men playing the pipes or the religious figures, remain at a distance. Jean-Luc Nancy (2008, p.14) defined Christianity as the 'invention of the religion of touch, of the sensible, of presence that is immediate'. The carnality of the Christian God is a unique circumstance bypassing the (formerly) unbreakable hindrance between heaven and earth: the body. The opening passage of John, describing a God 'which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched' (1 John, 1:1) unravels a *fil rouge* running from the New Testament onto the mystical experiences of modern female saints that puts the stress on the capability to perceive the divine through the senses. The public location and the accessible height make the *madonnelle* privileged sites where it might have been possible to express a want that, according to Florisoone, is unique to the Christian believer: the 'intense urgency and the freedom to worship with his/her flesh as well as with the heart' (1952, p.168; author's translation). It is with John's 'Word [that] became flesh' that this unfathomable experience of the divine becomes fully possible once again, because it had already been possible.

Evidence for women involved in rituals whereby the haptic sense takes centre stage is scattered throughout modern times and only needs to be recalled *par exempla* for possible similarities with practices taking place at the shrines. Rufini lists two cases of street shrines with statues: a *madonnella* in Via di Ripa Grande and another in Via di San Francesco (1853, pp.113, 85–6). The latter, in particular, enjoyed intense devotional activity: at the time of Rufini, there had been seventeen miraculous interventions – the majority of them involving women, to judge from the type of offerings left *in situ* (hearts and a plait of hair; there is no space here to even touch upon the practice of the *ex voto*, for which see Weinryb, 2019). Both *simulacra* were dressed with a silk garment: possibly a replaceable robe that made them akin to a small-scale version of large devotional statues. The care of the shrine statuettes and their silk robes must have been firmly in the hands of women. Similarly to the larger liturgical statues, the practice of dressing and undressing sacred images is an established female prerogative. Whether these are the oblates of the convent of the Bambino Gesù in Via Urbana with the statuette of Jesus, which was picked up every day by a nun to be kissed and pampered (Marcovecchio, 1991, p.65; a medieval example of a

doll-crib for Jesus is discussed by Walker Bynum, 2020, p.66), or the many anonymous members of unofficial lay sororities taking care of church statues (Silvestrini, 2005, p.19), bodily contact with the divine is, with hardly any exception, a female privilege. Ethnographic scholarship insists on the matrilineal character of this practice, which is often handed down from mother to daughter (Arduini, 2010).

The shrines and their figures lent themselves to being manipulated, caressed, adorned and physically worshipped. Philosopher Luisa Muraro recalls the affective relationship enjoyed by women with Jesus' cross:

> [T]here is no god or goddess in this world without related female stories. I will always remember the poor women of my village during the Good Friday celebrations, how they kissed the large wooden crucifix that was offered by the priests to the faithful's devotion. We, the girls, knelt or sat on the front benches and were able to see everything.
>
> (2012, pp. 46–7; author's translation)

The image of the girls witnessing the pious women as a symbolic handover of a devotional practice from older to younger generations – as noted in Pinelli's etchings – opens to further perspectives on the concept of the neglected female genealogies developed by Luce Irigaray (for example, [1993] 2007, pp.7–14) or the potential that women harbour for one another (Battersby, 1989), with the emphasis on their proactive role in forging bodily ties that are exclusive to them. Muraro's reflection on religious practices stemming from the experience of motherhood concerns the horizontal and vertical relational engagement ('relationality') informing female devotion which is, finally, what makes it unique and proper to women.

The private dimension of the *altarino*

In the domestic sphere, it is women who created and maintained shrines that acted as centres of household devotion: the *altarini*. The fashion for these installations strictly focusing on the family seems to have been in the period between the end of the 19th century until the late 1960s, perhaps as a reflection of historical events (the two world wars and migration waves within Italy and abroad) that had the potential to shake the cohesion of the traditional household structure. The short lifespan, coupled with their material fragility, contingent familial status and the association with the less privileged parts of Italy (Rome and the south) has contributed to the scholarly neglect of these

Figure 5.9: Conti family, *Altarino*, 2022. Mixed media. Rome, private collection. (Courtesy of Teresa Conti)

family shrines, with the notable exception of Rosario Perricone's analysis of Sicilian traditions through historical photographs (2006, 2018).

Most *altarini* were situated in the main bedroom. The accent on devotion and intimacy differentiated the *altarino* from the advertisement of social and financial status embodied by the aristocratic 'gallery of ancestors' (Barthes, [1980] 2000, p.12): outside of the intimate sphere the *altarino* had no worth *per se* nor for the public at large; only the inner circle of the family and intimate friends of the deceased imbued it with significance. In other words, its value was not reliant on external, added elements (be they material or spiritual) but was solely confined to the affective sphere of the person who set it up and her immediate circle.

The *altarino* consisted of photographs of the deceased family members; these could be surrounded by flowers, religious images and objects such as rosary beads and candles. They were permanent installations in that they survived for as long as the persons caring for them survived. The *altarino* was not seasonal such as, for the example, the Mexican altar for the *Dia de los muertos*. Its presence marked a discreet location where the family members that passed away remained present to the younger generations.

The *altarino* of Fig.5.9 is a small installation on a corner table of a bedroom in Rome where the hierarchy of affection is conveyed through size

and position of the portraits. Photographs of the deceased are arranged in a semi-circle on a cloth and interspersed with religious objects (candles, a bottle of holy water in the shape of the Virgin Mary, rosaries, sacred images) and flowers. The mother, father and husband of the shrine-maker are in single frames with a candle lit in front; a photo of a female family friend is also placed individually but is smaller in size, whilst the husband's parents feature together in a single frame, at the right hand side of the table. Various *santini* surround the photographs as an implication that all subjects represented are now sharing the same holy dimension (perhaps the blue tablecloth, with its embroidered butterflies, is suggestive of the sky and, metaphorically, heaven). The religious objects are all mass-produced, inexpensive artefacts reproducing well-known, familiar devotional iconographies, such as the card of Our Lady of Loreto. The deceased who were most important in the creator's life are visually larger and centrally placed: whilst alive, they have been at the heart of her world and thus remain in the *altarino*. By grouping, marginalising and enlarging pictures, the *altarino* offered the possibility to create and stage affective hierarchies in a way that is not possible in our cemeteries.

The essential component of the *altarino* was the photograph of the deceased(s); other features were ancillary. At the end of the 19th, beginning of the 20th century, photography opened the possibility of owning

Figure 5.10: Evangelisti family, *Altarino*, 2022. Mixed media. Rome, private collection. (Courtesy of Barbara Evangelisti)

what had been hitherto the privilege of the wealthy classes: a relatively affordable self-portrait. Irrespective of the age or occasion when it was taken, 'this' portrait (commoners rarely possessed more than one or two) was used on the cemetery memorial, as the *persona* whereby their immediate family wished to remember and publicly display them. In the private setting, it was incorporated into the domestic shrine.

In many a domestic *altarini,* photographs were carefully arranged to stage and re-produce relationships amongst the deceased (especially husband and wife) and the sequence of generations. The *altarino* of Fig.5.10 is placed on the bedroom chest of drawers in a Roman house. Under the merciful gaze of Padre Pio is the careful re-composition of a family: the double frames host husband and wife, who have been re-united. Besides couples' re-forming, this *altarino* also articulates old and new generations: the most recently deceased are placed in the centre in individual frames and are surrounded by photos of parents, uncles

and in-laws who 'embrace' and protect them. The smallest portrait at the front is a *luttino* of the youngest deceased member of the family, particularly precious and poignant. Similar to the customs and practices in a cemetery, flowers are regularly refreshed and large candles are lit in November, the month of the deceased. This *post-mortem* re-composition of the family through photographic portraits gains force from the specific allure of photography as a suspension of time (Perricone, 2006, p.210), whereby they may be seen to engage in a dialogic gaze exchange with the living. Barthes ([1980] 2000, p.111) defined this unfathomable energy of photographs as the power 'of looking at me straight in the eye'.

The affective importance of a family member could be recast by more-or-less subtle alterations in the position of their image. Shrines changed as members died or lost their former pre-eminence within a family: as dynamic installations, they embodied affection, desires and family perspectives of those who tended

Figure 5.11: Domenico Lanciano, *Altare familiare*, 1995. (Source: Lanciano, 2005, p.212)

them. Just as the shrines could emphasise the role of some family members, they could marginalise or even erase the memory of disturbing figures. In short, the *altarino* allowed the staging or re-shaping of an idealised family circle, a form of domestic blissful eternity. Romanticising effects were intensified by displaying protagonists in their best attire, looking carefree and sometimes smiling: the conflicts, issues and tensions of real life are completely erased. The almost mystical allure of photography, notwithstanding the contradictions and ambiguities that are intrinsic to its process, was crucial to the power of the *altarino* to perpetuate the illusion of imperishable life and the creation *a posteriori* of an ideal household. Close physical proximity of the photographs to each other produced bonds that may or may not have existed in real life, and that were now established for eternity, since 'in private use a photograph is read in a context which is still continuous with that from which it was taken. […] There is still that prising away of an instant. But there remains a continuity' that speaks of an intimacy once experienced, and the memory that has been left in the present (Berger, 1997, p.44).

Altarini tended to be made and cared for by women. It was they who assembled, selected, manipulated, arranged, cleaned and dusted these shrines. Women reserved the space in the house and organised the display with optional tea-lights, flowers, votive statuettes, crucifixes, beads, devotional images and large votive candles during November. Thus, the *altarino* lent itself to a continuous everyday stimulation of affections and of the senses, both visually and haptically. In the *altarino*, the bodily contact with family members could be re-enacted and renewed via the frequent manipulation, caressing and kissing of photographs; the care for the deceased's photographs was a continuation of the care for the living that the woman once performed towards her household.

An *altarino* from Badolato Marina (province of Catanzaro, Calabria) shot in 1995 (Lanciano, 2005, p.212) is unusual for the co-presence of living and dead family members (Fig.5.11). This shrine consisted entirely of photographs: according to Domenico Lanciano (2022), there was no hierarchy in their disposition, no grouping of members nor chronological canons; the portraits were arranged to fit the space that was available. An extended, all-encompassing relationality was staged here, without distinction between members who were alive, dead, near or far; they remained part of her world and of an extending network. A few photographs were placed on a *credenza* (dresser); photo-portraits unapologetically ranged along the

wall above the furniture, as if they were its extension, embodying affections that were part of the everyday life of the woman and her pride to display.

Albeit personal, unofficial installations, *altarini* permitted the staging of an entire family to unite in a devotional space, close to the divine. The installation acted both as a re-construction of an ideal(ised) family and also as a space in the home. This was singled out for its devotional overtone: a place where an individual or the entire family could gather round and get together with family members already departed.

Aldo Fabrizi's (1905–90) poem *La notte di Natale* (Christmas night) highlights the power of the *altarino* to challenge the too-hasty equation of the holy and the church, and commonly held notions of the domestic as a secular sphere. It features a poet at pains because he felt he could not honour the birth of Jesus properly in a church that has betrayed its liturgical traditions. Going back home, however, he was assaulted by the question of where he could pray in such a 'secular' space. The *altarino* solved the dilemma.

– 'Mo' che faccio …' – poi ho detto	– 'What can I do now …' – then I said:
– '… perdoneme Gesù si pregherò quassù'	– '… forgive me, Jesus, if I pray up here.'
e pensanno a n'armonium effatato	And as I was going with my mind to an enchanting organ
sentivo er sono più scommunicato	I could [still] hear that unholy sound
a mentre che a'la radio	and whilst at the radio
parlava er Santo Padre,	The Holy Father was talking,
io me so' inginocchiato	I knelt
davanti all'artarino de mi madre.	in front of my mother's *altarino*.

(in Radio Spada, 2018; author's translation)

Conclusion

This paper aimed at illustrating two foci of devotional activities where women featured prominently: street and domestic shrines in modern and contemporary Rome.

Through the lens of the miraculous *madonnelle* moving their eyes in 1796 and 1835 and the etchings of Pinelli and Barocci, women emerge as exceptional devotees. Despite being marginalised from the mainstream religious life and denied a proper education on matters of faith, women appeared to be able to carve devotional practices for themselves where the senses took centre stage. A last, emblematic example of both the unfavourable narrative women were subjected to and their exceptional levels of faith, is a figure like

the 18th-century Fortunata Panciani, a destitute girl who was officially in charge of the care of a *madonnella* in the Ospizio apostolico. Fortunata's enduring piety and efforts in fostering the devotion towards Mary were eventually rewarded by a miracle. Unsurprisingly, however, it was a male witness who substantiated the supernatural event (Bombelli, 1792, pp.31–2).

Within the domestic walls, women's roles shifted from devotees to creators: the perpetuation of inter-generational ties through the installations commonly known as *altarini* (a visual focus for intimate, family devotion) was due to them. Thanks to the *altarini*, the past was made resonant in the house and a new, unblemished family narrative was arranged in the present.

Although the street and domestic shrines are fundamentally different in terms of location, publicity, outreach and materiality, they have in common their lack of collateral (subversive, anti-mainstream) narratives. Rather, they are two significant attempts to de-institutionalise and de-centralise specific religious devotions in order to practice them without intermediaries and in the everyday living space, be it the street or the house.

I wish to thank Helen Hills and Alice Sanger for their scholarly advice no less than for the constructive, detailed comments provided throughout. I am also grateful for their willingness to accept this paper notwithstanding its marginality with the wider theme of the author's house. It has been impossible to acknowledge as fully as would have been fitting the many studies on gendered devotion directly relevant to my topic. All translations are by the author.

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THE FRAGILE AGENCY OF THE DRAFTSMAN'S HOUSE
Edoardo Piccoli

Abstract

Dismantling an architectural scholar and draftsman's apartment leads to an interrogation of the concept of agency of buildings and place. The setting is a rental flat in an Italian working-class neighbourhood, a place of life and work for an architecture historian, a specialist in survey drawings, who used it as his workspace for decades. Upon entering the apartment, the rooms and objects within it appeared as physical and spatial entities testifying to a deep connection with the former owner. The objects, the interiors, and the building itself seemed to possess an 'agency' that had resisted the departure of the human dweller and acted with disquieting power over those in charge of reordering his archive. Further investigation, however, also revealed that this same place witnessed the progressive vanishing of memory of the draftsman and scholar during the last years of his occupancy. The fragility of the bond between individual and place was exposed. The house as a physical space still proved to be essential in the mediation between archival legacy, memory, and history; however, it did not do so as a static time capsule, rather, as a place for reflections and activities extending well beyond the walls of the house itself.

Biographical note

Edoardo Piccoli is Associate Professor in Architectural History at the Politecnico di Torino, where he teaches and participates in Ph.D. programme in *Architettura. Storia e progetto* and conferences. Board member and co-founder of the Construction History Group at the Politecnico di Torino, his research focuses mainly on early modern architecture with specific interests in French and Italian architecture and construction history. He has edited books and contributed essays and chapters to collective works and exhibition catalogues. He has written essays on Guarino Guarini, Bernardo Antonio Vittone, and baroque vault construction. He has been involved in historical research applied to heritage sites and in support of restoration projects, such as the Cavallerizza and Palazzo Carignano in Turin and the military Citadel in Alessandria.

Banner image: Detail from a view of the studio at the Barbara Hepworth gallery in St Ives, Cornwall. (Photo: Ed Clews / Alamy Stock Photo)

THE FRAGILE AGENCY OF THE DRAFTSMAN'S HOUSE

Edoardo Piccoli, Politecnico di Torino

Entering the house

The dismantling of an architectural scholar and draftsman's apartment brought the author of this paper to interrogate the concept of agency of buildings and place. In 2013, the author and two other curators crossed the threshold of a rental flat, for the first time not welcomed by its owner, who had become too ill to continue using it as his daily workplace (Fig. 7.1). The three curators[1] had been entrusted by the scholar's family with managing the donation of his professional archive, a testimony of forty years of largely solitary work, to the Turin chapter of the Italian National State Archives. A preliminary inventory was to be drafted to validate the donation by Minister's decree.

An engaged intellectual since youth, the flat's dweller had been born in a family of modest means; an electrician in training, after earning a high-school degree at night school, he obtained an Architecture degree at Turin's Politecnico.

Studying while working, benefiting from some support from grants and external aid, Franco Rosso (1939–2019) majored in History with a thesis dedicated to a modern architectural masterpiece: the dome of San Gaudenzio in Novara by Alessandro Antonelli (1798–1888). He then pursued an academic career, playing a major role in Turin as an architectural historian and a politically engaged, outspoken intellectual, from the 1970s through the '90s, frequently acting in public defence of architectural heritage (Pianciola, 2019).

While Rosso's studies in urban history were defined by the dialogue with French historiography, a rarity at the time among architectural scholars, his writings dedicated to construction and the building site (such as the 1977 book on *Alessandro Antonelli e la Mole di Torino*) were elaborated in an intense dialogue with other polytechnic historians and stood out for their remarkable reliability and precision (De Pieri & Piccoli, 2012). Rosso's approach to buildings combined the

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1   Cesare Pianciola, Isa Ricci, and the author, with help from Mirko Mantovan.

Figure 7.1: Franco Rosso's apartment: the entrance corridor. (Photo: Maurizio Gomez Serito, 2014)

study of archival sources with particular attention to the materials of construction. His primary and trademark research tool was the architectural survey, conceived as a personal, and often physically demanding enquiry into the anatomy and physiology of building (Cavaglià, 2021, p.89).

Hundreds of survey drawings in pencil and ink, a product of thousands of hours of fieldwork and draftsmanship, had thus accumulated (Fig. 7.2) in the small rental flat Rosso had used as a workplace for over forty years and which was located just above his family's apartment. Together with the drawings were photographs, archival transcriptions, manuscripts of published and unpublished essays, books, and other objects associated with Rosso's activity, such as his drawing and surveyor's instruments. The scholar's last major research project, whose development had been interrupted by the onset of a degenerative disease, was in itself worthy of special attention and conservation. It consisted of a detailed survey of the Dome of Guarino Guarini's Holy Shroud Chapel: a mass of

Figure 7.2: Franco Rosso's apartment: the main room; on the walls, works by Piero Rambaudi. (Photo: Maurizio Gomez Serito, 2014)
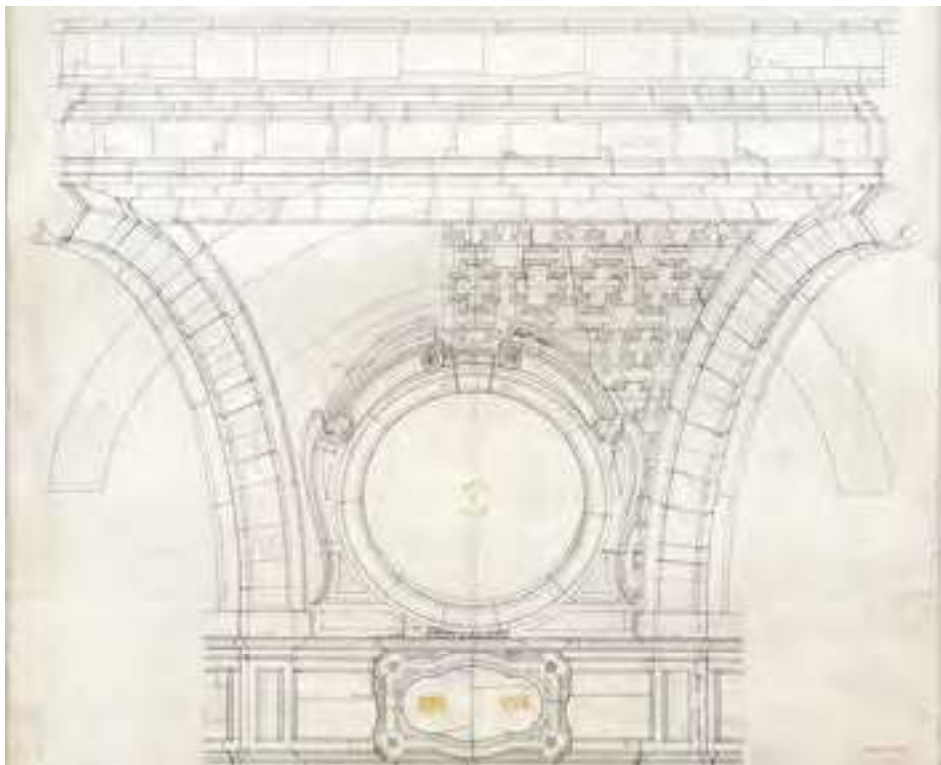

Figure 7.3: Franco Rosso, inner elevation of a spherical pendentive from the Shroud Chapel survey, c.1995. Pen and pencil on paper, original scale 1:20. (Photo: Archivio di Stato di Torino, fondo Franco Rosso)

sketches, notes, photographs, and drawings (Fig. 7.3), some of them perfectly achieved and of breathtaking clarity, others unfinished and no less captivating. Tragically, this documentation had become of crucial importance because of the 1997 fire that had seriously damaged the Chapel. Future scholars would need to interrogate the original construction largely through our draftsman's lens.

The task the three curators set to fulfil was, indeed, imbued with a sense of loss. Franco Rosso was at that time living in a nursing facility, in a state of ever-increasing disconnection from his surroundings. His caretaker, forced to terminate the contract on his upstairs apartment, had felt that the best way to honour his memory was to donate all of his working papers, no strings attached, to the State Archives. And

Figure 7.4: Franco Rosso's apartment: the former kitchen (Photo: Maurizio Gomez Serito, 2014)

Figure 7.5: Franco Rosso's apartment: the small drawing room (Photo: Maurizio Gomez Serito, 2014)

so, as the scholar and draftsman's life and personality inexorably slipped away, his apartment was opened on borrowed time, to sort and reorganize the books and papers. The rental contract was expiring and only a few months were available before it was repossessed by the landlord.

Agency and place

As the three curators entered the house, several months after its owner's last visit, its rooms and the objects appeared almost instantly as 'non-human actors', physical entities with which the former inhabitant had once engaged deep connections. As in other literati and artists' houses, or 'habitats' (Motycka Weston, 2017, p. 86), a variety of different artefacts seemed to be endowed with an autonomous agency: the owner's drawings, books, and manuscripts, the watercolours of artist friends hanging on the walls (in his youth Rosso had been a passionate art critic), the furniture, as well as the building itself, with its position and connections to the neighbourhood. This agency had resisted the departure of the human dweller and could still act with haunting and disquieting power over

those in charge of reordering the archive, by activating memories and suggesting unforeseen connections with the former inhabitant's life and work. At the opening of every drawer , at every step taken further into the privacy of the scholar's life, some of these connections seemed to be revived.

The owner had left a personal mark also on the organization of the interior space. The apartment, a working-class flat originally laid out as a well-partitioned environment (not so distant from the Croix-Rousse apartments surveyed by Pierre Mayol in de Certeau, Giard &Mayol, 1994, p. 96), had been turned into a fluid, flexible workplace. While the interior partitions had not been modified, some doors had been removed and the rooms had lost their original functions. The kitchen had become a storage room (Fig. 7.4); the living room, a large drawing room; the bedroom, a smaller drawing room and a library (Fig. 7.5). Furniture had been reduced to a minimum and was composed of small cupboards, open shelves for storage, and tables of different sizes for drawing and working, with sparse chairs and stools punctuating the floor. The configuration of every corner into a

Figure 7.6: Franco Rosso, second from left, visiting Piero Fogliati's atelier in 1984. (Photo: Ernani Orcorte; Archivio di Stato di Torino, fondo Franco Rosso)

workspace was, in fact, so pervasive, that the curators ended up discarding normal classifications of the household and began considering the flat as a unified domestic landscape, possessing a peculiar topography: the trestle table and drawing tables as plateaux, the tiled floor as a continuous plain; the shelves and cupboards as mountain ranges, valleys, and caves.

While this analogy helped to gain perspective on the many scattered objects and their position, there was little time to consider its deepest implications. The curators' task was antithetical to the conservation 'as found' of the apartment and its content. As in an archaeological dig on a dense urban site slated for future construction, it was therefore decided that the state of the rooms and their content was to be summarily recorded. Surveying the surveyor's house, a simple plan was drafted. Rooms and furniture items were numbered, so that the original placement of objects and documents could be situated. Photography was used, calling in a photographer, he too among the scholar's friends. And yet, as the photographer drifted through the flat, the curators knew that the outcome would be less a formal documentation, than a tribute to the peculiar, unique interaction between the apartment's contents, the ghostly absence of its owner, and the natural light filtering in the rooms on a bright summer day.

Weeks into the curatorial work, the houses of other artists and literati had come to mind: houses where objects were also abundant and meaningful without possessing any predictable order or visible hierarchy. Francis Bacon's atelier, which was dismantled in London and reassembled, as a shrine, in Dublin (Cappock, 2005); the Turin house and memorial of Carol Rama (Ghiotti & Mundici, 2014); the workshop, also in Turin, of Piero Fogliati, a constructor of precise, elegant kinetic machines. The association with Fogliati's metal workshop was suggested by a *mise en abyme*, a photograph pinned to a cupboard recording Rosso's visit to the artist, accompanied by the art critic and friend Mirella Bandini (Fig. 7.6). A framed drawing by Fogliati, in Rosso's corridor, reinforced the connection. Not a workers' flat anymore, nor a conventional bourgeois apartment, had the house been used as an atelier? The analogy, as a working hypothesis, could suggest new interpretations of this notoriously meticulous scholar and draftsman's modus operandi.

The fragility of the link between person and place

As the first days of work passed, a more complex reality was revealed. The position of most documents did not correspond to earlier memories that the
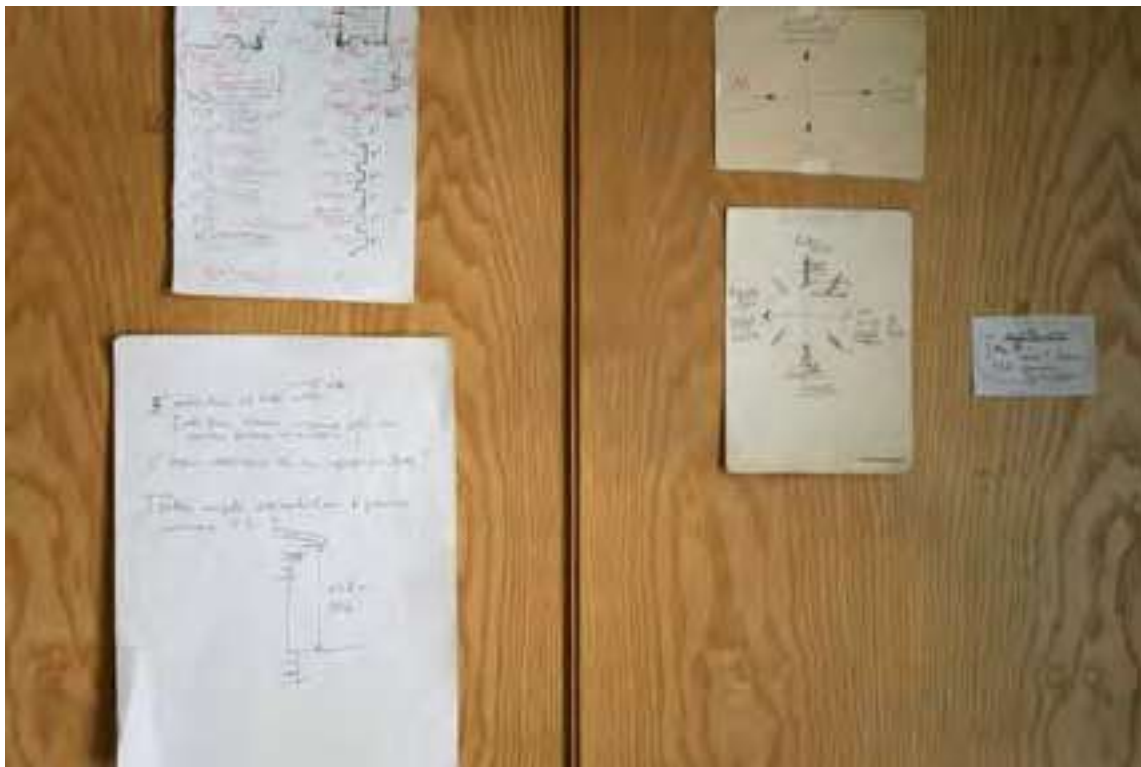
Figure 7.7: Franco Rosso's apartment: notes on the small drawing room cupboard. (Photo: Maurizio Gomez Serito, 2014)

curators had of the apartment. Most of the papers and drawings had no apparent order. A large number of survey plans, related to different projects, were spread open on the drawing tables, offered in plain view; others were stacked in cabinets and cupboards, and sometimes randomly packed together in tight rolls; books, handwritten notes, and archival folders were distributed piecemeal through the flat, stacked on shelves, and sometimes on the floor.

It soon appeared that the house, and the objects within it, with their puzzling disorder and sometimes disquieting presence, testified to yet another process: the progressive vanishing of memory of the apartment's dweller in the last years of his occupancy. The more the living space and its content were interrogated as documents, immersed in different temporalities, the more the fragility of the bond between individual and place was exposed, leading to a questioning of the very concept of 'agency'. The fragility of the link between people and places has been investigated by anthropologists and historians, who have observed that the connections creating a sense of belonging must be repeatedly and ritually reaffirmed. The production of locality (Appaduraj, 1996; Torre, 2011) is not given once and then remains static. In a house, the production of place involves both ordinary, everyday actions – as Anne Perrin Khelissa notes: 'the first temporality in which the domestic image and object are inscribed comes from habit, from a time made up of repetitions,

reiterations' (in Bartholeyns et al., 2021, p.47) – and more complex rituals such as reordering one's personal belongings from time to time, receiving visitors, or moving furniture to adapt the house to one's changing needs. In Rosso's flat, the connection between the dweller, the apartment, and its contents had been compromised with the fading away of these ritual actions. The proof was provided by the accounts of the scholar's only family member and caretaker, who had witnessed his progressive estrangement from the apartment. The process had developed over a long period, culminating in several weeks of compulsive, and ineffective, attempts to reorder the working papers, leading to their haphazard placement. Finally, it led to the abandonment of the apartment and the scholar's retirement to the living quarters in the family flat, downstairs in the same building.

There was proof, too, that there had been attempts to reverse or slow down this process. The scholar and his caretakers had attempted to strengthen the domestic space's ability to keep connections alive, possibly following guidelines suggested by physicians. Following a recent repainting, the watercolours of artist friends had been hung up almost as on display in a picture gallery; all over the flat, notes and slips of paper with telephone numbers and names, taped on bookshelves and wardrobes (Fig. 7.7), were easily recognized as safeguards for orientation in space and time, which had become increasingly difficult.

Figure 7.8: Approved design for the addition of two stories to the building in Corso Palermo, Turin, 1952. (Archivio Storico del Comune di Torino)

As these elements were revealed, the interpretation of the apartment also changed. While it could no longer be considered as channelling the memory of its dweller in his more active days, the flat remained relevant in the process of making sense of his archive, supporting the curators in the transition between remembrance, documentation, and heritage. However, it did not do so as a static time capsule, rather, it came to be seen as a battlefield, where the signs of a progressive, and inexorable, loss of control had been deposited side by side with the legacy of the owner's work. A place where amnesia had fought a battle over memory.

As the possible reasons for the unsettling placement of many objects were understood, a more detached approach to the inventory was sought, less reliant on intuition or personal recollections. Dragged down, perhaps, by their scholarly habits, the curators – an architectural historian, an archivist, a philosophy teacher – increasingly looked at the apartment as the site of an enquiry, and at the position of objects as clues, or symptoms, to evoke Carlo Ginzburg's *Morelli, Freud and Sherlock Holmes* (1980).

It then also became possible to make sense of the fragments of lost order that had been preserved in some more remote regions of the apartment's topography: Viollet-le-Duc's *Dictionnaire*, stored in a closet under a window; a collection of original drawings by Crescentino Caselli, the brilliant architect-engineer and pupil of Alessandro Antonelli, lying untouched on the bottom shelf of a cupboard; the folders of the archival research on Turin under Napoleon, stacked in a remote corner (yet all together, forming a unity) on the kitchen floor; the fragile, light-sensitive tracing paper rolls of the 1970s Mole Antonelliana survey, carefully sealed and safeguarded by black anti-UV protective film. One of the most precious documents in the apartment was pinned inside a cupboard door: the checklist of the meticulously planned Shroud Chapel survey, providing an essential point of access to the whole research

project. By recombining the information provided by these *caches* (Boltanski, 2015) with the more scattered landscape of other objects and visual clues, different trajectories of investigation, 'thought in terms of complementarity' (Tigrino & Torre, 2020, p.682) were opened, extending an invisible network of connections with the author and his working papers beyond the apartment itself.

The inventory slowly morphed into a historical enquiry into the scholar's work, immersed in the political and cultural life of late 20th-century Turin. The drawings by Rambaudi, Fogliati, and Gandini on the walls, paired with the early published texts by Rosso as an art critic, and with the invitations to art gallery exhibits recycled into work notes, hinted at a structural connection between the intellectual and draftsman and the vibrant Turin art community of the '70s and '80s. They also suggested that this scholar had nurtured an interest in artistic production and drawing which went well beyond its use as a surveyor's and historian's tool. Rosso's surveys began thus to appear in a new light, as documentary evidence of the debate on art, technical drawing, craftsmanship, and industrial production, which had developed in post-war Turin. Once the attention was extended from the apartment to the urban setting, insisting 'on a notion of living that also involves what is outside' of the house (De Pieri, 2013, p.xxi), other layers of meaning began to emerge. Research in the city archives revealed that the building itself, a turn-of-the-century rental house that had slowly grown in height from two to six floors, strictly with no elevator, fit perfectly among the speculative building types that Rosso had studied as a historian, during his research on Alessandro Antonelli's activity as a landlord and developer (Piccoli, 2019; Rosso & Brino, 1972) (Fig. 7.8). The position of the house in the working-class neighbourhood where our scholar had been born (Fig. 7.9) suggested that a relationship of 'open causality' was at play (Gribaudi, 2006, p.121) between Rosso's

Figure 7.9: Turin, Corso Palermo. Rosso's flat is on the right. (Photo: the author, 2016)

Figure 7.10: Drawings of the Franco Rosso Archive stored at the Archivio di Stato di Torino. (Photo: the author, 2018)

biography, his profession, and Turin's social history. In a choice consistent with his unconventional academic itinerary, Rosso had kept his residence in a part of the city where personal identities had been defined, throughout the 20th century, mainly by one's work and political engagement.

The vanishing agency and the apartment's lives

In the initial approach to the house and archive, the assumption of an 'agency' embodying the apartment and its content was revealed as a powerful tool; it invited a careful observation and respectful interaction with place, space, and artifacts; it suggested networks of sense and invisible connections between possessions, past events, and human agents.

As the daily work of 'making heritage' (Heinich, 2009) proceeded, however, the curators' activities proved to be an obstacle to the deeper understanding of such immaterial bonds. By dismantling the apartment and rearranging its content, 'agency' was revealed as an ambiguous concept, evading the curators' grasp. Was the agency in the house, in the documents and drawings, or the curators' gaze? How did the agency of the inanimate objects react to the changes in their position? Once the documents and objects were rearranged in numbered boxes, ready to be shipped to the archives, where did the agency go? What parts of it had survived in the photographs taken in the early days, or in the cursory list that travelled with the boxed items toward the state archives?

The act of archiving as a 'way of knowing' (Yaneva, 2020, p.185) is not meant to lead to a closure or a final verdict, and therefore, these questions should

remain open. In the years following the three curators' investigation of the apartment, the networks of sense involving the collection's items would be extensively rediscussed by the curators of the final inventory, performed in the controlled environment of the State archives (Fig. 7.10);[2] then they would be, and still are, questioned further by each new scholar accessing the fund, feeling and touching the original documents or gazing at their digital avatars.

Only the apartment would be closed to further direct enquiry. Its role, a crucial one in many aspects, deserves a few final remarks. The Italian *Vocabolario della Crusca* provides a concise definition of the early modern apartment as an 'aggregate of several rooms, which forms a free dwelling, and separated from the rest of the house' (V.C., 1691, vol.2, p.119). This definition reflects quite closely what was learned from the observation of Rosso's workspace: during the scholar's lifetime, the fourth-floor flat had functioned as a space in which the individual dweller, as an early modern *virtuoso* engaged in mostly solitary practices of useful knowledge, enjoyed full jurisdiction and freedom of action. While luxury had been conspicuously absent from the scholar's life and work, the apartment itself had been kept by him as a carefully curated possession: a haven where the creative activities of his profession – drawing, reading, writing, and meeting select friends

2   Maria Paola Niccoli, Roberto Caterino, and Giusi Andreina Perniola curated the inventory at the State Archives, with the aid of Valentina Galante. Franco Rosso's library is housed as a single collection at the Biblioteca centrale di Architettura 'Roberto Gabetti', Politecnico di Torino (Caterino, Perniola and Piccoli, 2019).

– could be performed in full. Its low cost, its rental status, as well as its humble, nondescript character were qualities resonating with the dweller's intellectual passions as well as with his hold on reality. The same can be said for the position of the flat in Rosso's native neighborhood, right above his family living quarters. As in Montaigne's tower, or in Cornelis Meyer's one-room Roman apartment (Connors, 2015), a connection between the house and the ethical and political positions of its dweller had sealed the unwritten agreement between person and place.

All of this had taken place on the fourth floor of a simple brick-and-mortar box, with concrete floors and wooden windows. A testimony to the flexibility and down-to-earth, indisputable efficiency of so many twentieth-century rental flats, the apartment had functioned perfectly for decades, with minimal maintenance. It had beautifully performed its duties even in the more difficult last years of the owner's activity, adapting to his changing needs. Even after its dweller was forced to abandon it, it had sheltered the documents and drawings that were to be his public legacy. Forced into becoming a temporary archive by its invasive new daytime dwellers, the collection curators, it had provided them a safe and comfortable workplace. It had become a 'site of epistemological reshuffle' (Yaneva, 2020, pp.180-94), where the former owner's creative and scholarly practices had been scrutinized and discussed, *in situ*. Once repossessed by its landlord and rented again, it entered other lives and other histories.

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THE NIGHTINGALE'S NEW NEST:
A GLIMPSE INSIDE LILLI LEHMANN'S SUMMER VILLA

Rosamund Cole

Abstract

In 2015, the author was invited to visit a Villa in Scharfling am Mondsee that had belonged to the world-famous opera singer Lilli Lehmann, whose life and performance style were the focus of her PhD research. The Villa was preserved largely in its original state, as proven by photos discovered there, which showed Lehmann and her family enjoying it together. Objects and pictures found in the house are used along with extracts from Lehmann's diaries and correspondence between her and Victor Maurel, her intimate friend, to retell some of Lehmann's story including her relationship with the famous baritone. Focusing in particular on the time when Lehmann built this house, the article reveals some of the emotions beneath the surface of the family photographs and speculates that Lehmann may have given her husband the house as settlement to avoid a scandalous divorce. Some of the valuable works of art by painters such as the secessionist Carl Moll, Albin Egger-Lienz, Hans Volkmer and Bernhard Zickendraht as well as previously unknown portraits of the singer were discovered and identified by the author using accompanying documentation found in the Villa. These are also revealed in the article in photos taken by the architectural photographer Günter Wett, whose 2017 documentation of the house shows it in its unaltered condition.

Biographical note

Rosamund Cole worked as a Senior Lecturer for Singing at Leeds College of Music before gaining her PhD from the Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM) in 2018 (Supervisor: Prof. Richard Wistreich) supported by a full AHRC studentship. She has been invited as a guest lecturer at Royal College of Music, Detmold Musikhochschule, the RNCM and the Salzburg Festival Conference 2019. During her PhD she held a full AHRC Kluge Scholarship at the Library of Congress, Washington DC and was awarded a scholarship from the American Musicology Society to research the Lilli Lehmann House. Prior to academia, she worked as a full-time soloist for opera houses in Germany including die Bühnen der Stadt Köln, Staatstheater Darmstadt, Stadttheater Heidelberg and Theater Erfurt. She also worked for the National Theatre in Prague and Opera North, which sponsored her vocal training which she undertook at the National Opera Studio, London, and the Royal Northern College of Music.

Banner image: Detail from a view of the studio at the Barbara Hepworth gallery in St Ives, Cornwall. (Photo: Ed Clews / Alamy Stock Photo)

THE NIGHTINGALE'S NEW NEST:
A GLIMPSE INSIDE LILLI LEHMANN'S SUMMER VILLA

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Figure 8.1: *Lilli Lehmann's lakeside house in Scharfling am Mondsee, Austria with her husband Paul Kalisch standing before it, c.1900–03, from an old photo album found in the Villa.* (Photo: Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)

Lilli Lehmann's summer villa, still known as 'Villa Lehmann' (or Scharfling 5), is a large, fin-de-siècle house built on the shores of the Mondsee, 30 km east of Salzburg, Austria, in the mountainous lake district of the Salzkammergut (Fig. 8.1). The villa was built in 1899 for the internationally famous opera singer Lilli Lehmann (1848–1929). In 2015, I discovered it preserved in a relatively unchanged condition, full of the original contents. In the face of preparations for its sale, and in collaboration with the International Stiftung Mozarteum (ISM) and Professor Eva Rieger, I succeeded in procuring a large proportion of the contents for the ISM Bibliotheca Mozartiana and Mozart Archive in Salzburg.[1] In 2017, with support from Professor Rieger, I arranged for the whole house to be professionally photographed. Juxtaposing these images taken of the villa from 2017 with those taken more than 100 years before, this article examines the significance of

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[1] The themes discussed in this essay are further detailed, alongside other aspects of Lehmann's work as a performer, writer and director, in the forthcoming PhD publication (Cole, 2024).

the house in relation to the singer's personal life and artistic career, and the role the house played in the private drama that was unfolding for Lehmann in her relationship with her husband, the opera singer Paul Kalisch, and his relationship with their niece, Hedwig Helbig.

Lilli Lehmann (Fig. 8.2), still famous in opera circles today, was in her own time a household name. She was dubbed the 'Berlin Nightingale' (Lehmann, 1914, p.439) and was viewed widely as the greatest soprano in the world, working regularly with the famous composers of her time including Richard Wagner, Gustav Mahler, Johannes Brahms and Richard Strauss (Andro, 1907, p.4).[2] She built her stellar 55-year career in Germany, made her fortune in the USA and left her mark for posterity in Austria, in particular in Salzburg, spending her money not only on building the villa there, but also by helping make Salzburg the 'Mozart city' that tourists flock to see today.

Figure 8.2. Franz Xaver Setzer, Lilli Lehmann aged 72, 1920. (Photo: Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)

At the time she built the villa, Lehmann was reaching the pinnacle of her career as a professional opera singer, being already hugely famous in Europe and the USA. She had been singing professionally almost without pause since the age of 16 (Lehmann, 1865). Brought up in genteel poverty by her mother, Marie Loew, who taught her to sing, she and her sister, Marie Lehmann (1851–1931), earned and managed all their own money and singing careers, both rising to international fame and gaining an exceptional level of financial autonomy for women in the nineteenth century (Lehmann, 1896).[3] Aged 22, Lilli Lehmann was awarded a secure position at the Berlin Court Opera and at 27 was honoured with the title of Royal Court Singer in Berlin and thus a guaranteed pension on retirement. She joined Wagner for his first festival performance of the Ring Cycle in Bayreuth. By the age of 30, she had already sung 143 roles and given 1,030 performances of operas and numerous concerts, including for royalty, both in Germany and abroad.[4] For example, in 1878 she was invited as the star soloist at the court of the Swedish king.

In the ensuing years, Lehmann conquered the operatic world on both sides of the Atlantic. In 1885, she daringly gave up her secure contract in Berlin in favour of several years on concert tours in America supported by the influential businessman William Steinway and also singing on a 'star contract' for the Metropolitan Opera, New York. The Met's opera pay ledgers for 1886 show her to have been the most highly paid artist there that year, performing mainly the most notable Wagner roles such as Brünnhilde (*Die Walküre*) and Isolde (Fig. 8.3).[5]

3   Lehmann, was the highest paid singer on the ledgers at the Metropolitan Opera in 1886, earning $16,800 in the accounts examined, only a fraction of her entire salary for that season. (Handwritten scraps of paper found in her diary show that in 1896 she was paid $1,250 for Isolde at the Metropolitan Opera and $1,495 for a recital. In her letters to Maurel in 1900 she related that she would expect approximately 3000 marks per concert. She was however generous with her money and aware of the financial discrepancy between her own pay and that of her husband, she provided extra financial support for her husband, setting up a pension fund for him in 1896 noting this in her diary on 13 February that year.

4   These figures are calculated by the author using the Repertoire list, begun in 1865, that Lehmann kept for recording details of all her performances throughout her career.

5   Metropolitan Opera Archive, New York, Account Ledgers (1886, 73, p.89) show Lehmann was paid $16,800, more than all the other performers listed in the Met account ledgers at this time.

2   There are numerous descriptions of Lehmann in this vein such as Therese Rie, recycling Mendelssohn's quote about Jenny Lind in relation to Lilli Lehmann: 'She is one of the greatest artists that I have experienced; the greatest that I know' (in Andro, 1907, p.4), similarly Paul Gerhardt: 'The audience, must without exception have realised, that this is one of the greatest, most exquisitely perfect singing artists of our time' (1893, 12. January). (Translations by the author).

Figure 8.3: Lehmann as 'Isolde' in the Covent Garden (London) production of *Tristan und Isolde* in 1884, aged 36, just before she went to America to make her fortune in a 'star contract' that was frequently repeated until she finally retired from the USA in 1902. (Photo: Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)

Writing to Victor Maurel in 1899, Lehmann called herself a woman of iron' and indeed proved herself to be a determined woman of action (1899a, fol.12).[6] A previously unknown early portrait of Lehmann suggests a refusal to conform, in that it shows a rather sceptical-looking young woman with folded arms that seem to suggest she was photographed reluctantly (Fig. 8.4). In later life, she charmed and impressed those around her with her intelligence and wit, but also infuriated some with her forthright manner, success, power and foresight. During her career, Lehmann broke the societal norms for women in numerous ways, not

6 'I still had to suffer because everyone said: "Ah what a breath of a voice, ah how she has lost", and all these other good things, but I was a woman of iron, I stayed my path and little by little the mixed voice entered [started to function] and I was saved.' ('J'avais encore à subir que tout le monde disait ah quel souffle de voix, ah comme elle a perdu – et toutes ces bonnes choses, mais j'étais femme comme le fer, je marchais ma route, et peu à peu, la voix mixte entrait et j'étais sauvée' (Lehmann, 1899a, fol.12).

least in her catalogue of achievements for the city of Salzburg. She was one of the main driving forces behind the fundraising for the new Mozarteum Conservatoire in Salzburg. To this end, she organised regular Mozart performances resulting in the annual *Mozart Feste* for which she was artistic director 1902–14, and created a proto-Salzburg opera festival, more than a decade before Max Reinhardt adopted the project. Lehmann was also the main donor who enabled the purchase of Mozart's birthplace for the city of Salzburg as well as the Zauberflöten-Häuschen (the wooden pavillion in which Mozart is said to have completed and rehearsed parts of his opera *Die Zauberflöte*).

Figure 8.4: *Lilli Lehmann at about 18 years old*, undated, *c*.1867. Previously unknown photo portrait of Lilli Lehmann discovered by the author in the attic of the Lehmann Villa in 2015. (Photo: Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)

Lehmann was a pioneer in many other areas, including being one of the earliest artists to make commercially successful recordings (Lehmann, 1906/7–97). Beside her work as a singer, she was also one of the earliest female opera directors and the first in Salzburg. In 1920, in conjunction with the start of the new Salzburg Festival run by Max Reinhardt, Lehmann published a detailed account of her 1910 production of *Don Giovanni*, perhaps asserting her position as having established the original Mozart Feste that had preceded the Festspiele (Lehmann,

1920, pp.3–7, 21–3). Furthermore, unconventionally for a woman at this time, she published several books and authored often controversial articles outspokenly criticising current fashions in staging and the attitudes of young singers to the profession. In her article 'Arti', for example, she roundly criticised Mahler and Roller's recent production of *Fidelio* (Lehmann, 1904–05). Her contribution to musical life, in particular in Salzburg, was widely recognised in her lifetime with several awards and international honorary fellowships. Despite her many contraventions of usual conventions for women, she succeeded in establishing herself as a central figure in the cultural establishment of Austria and Germany, her fame as such extending also to the USA, France and Britain.

Lehmann's success as an opera singer was mainly built on the patronage of the aristocracy and on social networking. Her diaries and autobiography show her awareness of this and are full of accounts of her contact with higher echelons of society, including, her stay with the Princess Marie of Wied in 1893, which is described in detail in her diary (Lehmann, 1894 fol. 10/01). The potential impact on Lehmann's social status and economic success was therefore an important consideration in her choice of location for the houses she built. Ten years before building her holiday home in Scharfling am Mondsee, Lehmann had managed – at great tax advantage – to secure three plots to build villas for herself and her sister in the prestigious new Grünewald district on the outskirts of Berlin, among the elite of the capital. Equally astute was her choice to build in Scharfling am Mondsee, in the Salzkammergut, the charming lake district area near to Salzburg, popular as a holiday destination for the established artistic community.

It was a ravishing and easily accessible location, just below the Schafberg mountain and on the edge of the Mondsee lake. There was a connecting steamboat at Scharfling across the lake to Mondsee town. Across a rough track was the villa's private bathing hut where swimmers could change and little wooden steps led them directly into the dark water of the 'lovely Mondsee' (Lehmann, 1914, p.438). Paul Kalisch's painting of the landscape around the villa (Fig. 8.5) shows its optimal position on the edge of the Mondsee, with the sparsely populated village of Scharfling, its pier just beyond and fields stretching back to the forest and mountains behind.

This quiet place was already full of happy personal memories for Lehmann and she had an established social circle there. Lehmann had first visited the

Figure 8.5: Paul Kalisch, *View of Scharfling am Mondsee*, date unknown, c.1900–12. Oil on wood. The painting is apparently based on a photograph in the album at the villa, suggesting that the photos may have been taken by Paul. (Photo: Günter Wett; Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)

Mondsee lake when she was 29 years old, with her mother and sister. Years later, she set down her first impressions in her autobiography:

A true horn of plenty pours forth over me happy reminiscences at the name of this almost unknown little spot of earth. As early as 1878 Mamma, Riezl [Marie Lehmann, Lilli's sister], and I arrived there by accident. Distant from Salzburg about five hours by carriage, we found at the Mondsee a small, old inn frequented by peasants, famed for its good table, where just two Viennese families had stayed for many years alone, and where two remaining tiny rooms were kept ready for transients who ascended the Schafberg from there, at the foot of which lies Scharfling, a steamboat landing place … so we remained at that little spot that ever pleased and made us more happy the longer we knew it, and in the neighbourhood of which so many dear friends lived.

(1914, pp.438–40)

Lehmann's choice of Scharfling am Mondsee for her villa was, however, also an advantageous financial investment. Like Grünewald, the Salzkammergut was a fashionable area for rich and cultured Austrians to spend their summers, in part due to the Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph I, whose court settled annually in Bad Ischl, 30 km southeast of Scharfling am Mondsee.

As a result, a new train line was built connecting Salzburg with Bad Ischl and Mondsee. Lehmann therefore chose to buy land at the foot of the hill where the train ran, just below the station at Scharfling so she could walk home from the station through the woods, after visiting Salzburg or Mondsee to attend or sing in performances.

Lehmann occasionally came into contact with members of the court there. In her autobiography she commented on her delight when, in 1878, she was recognised by royalty at Scharfling am Mondsee:

> I met, also, at Scharfling, Archduke Rudolf, the heir to the Austrian throne, who arrived by steamboat with a large company to make the ascent of the Schafberg, from which one enjoys a glorious view of the Austrian Alps. Heavily veiled, I was standing near the landing and was much astonished when I saw the Crown Prince walk straight up to me, addressing me with the words, 'Ah, the Berlin nightingale!' I was thunderstruck by his memory and affability, for, as far as I knew, the Crown Prince had seen me only once, in the distance, when he was in Berlin, at a Thursday court concert.
>
> (1914, p.439)

Having grown up with almost nothing and worked so hard to earn her fortune and status, this recognition from royalty was another satisfying indicator that she had now 'arrived' in society.

Owning a holiday villa in this fashionable area consolidated Lehmann's social status and afforded plenty of opportunities to work and socialise with other friends in her artistic circle, including the composers Karl Goldmark and Ignaz Brüll, the music critic Eduard Hanslick, the actors Charlotte Wolter and Franz Tewele and the writer Hugo von Hofmannsthal. There were also friends from the Vienna Secession, such as Gustav Klimt, whose house was on the nearby Lake Attersee, and Carl Moll and his stepdaughter Alma Schindler (who was later married to Lehmann's friend Gustav Mahler). Alma's diaries describe Lehmann socialising at her stepfather's parties in Vienna and paint an utterly different image of Lehmann to the stern matron depicted in paintings hanging at her Villa. This Lilli is the life and soul of the party: beautiful, irreverent, witty and vivacious. The parties are full of boisterous dancing, singing and kissing, suggesting the social life in the Salzkammergut may also have been anything but staid:

> She [Lehmann] was the most boisterous of all. Between the main course and the dessert she carried the plates out and, seeing how much Klimt had eaten, she said: 'You know, Moll, the way your president stuffs himself! Enough for the whole Secession.' [...] Altogether she was so witty, sang, joked, danced. Yes indeed, they danced, even a quadrille. That meant every man had to kiss his partner. Carl, never one to miss a chance, grabbed Lilli and gave her a couple of smacking kisses. She laughed heartily. He said he'd been given them, she said he'd taken them.... This evening [10 March 1898]: tarot party with the Zieres, Frau Duschnitz, Spitzer, Lehmann, Hellmer, Epstein & Klimt. After dinner, we took black coffee in the studio, danced and sang. Lehmann sang Rubinstein's duet 'Über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh', with Mama, and Marie Lehmann danced a pas de deux, then we all sang glees and had a whale of a time. After we'd danced our fill, the party ended at 3:30.
>
> (Mahler, [1898] 2000, p.8, p.12)

Lehmann says in her autobiography that she built the Villa around 1898, however, a contract the author found in the house shows she bought the land in Scharfling from Josef Wesenauer on the 30 August 1899. She had her villa built in the typical rustic style of the area, with the work undertaken by Johann Auer, a master builder from Mondsee. The original ground-plans and designs, dated 27 December 1898, lay forgotten in drawers in the house. Later Kalisch, who had originally trained as an architect, developed the house with the grand addition of a decorative tower, closing up the open arcades on one side to improve the insulation of the ground floor, where he would eventually have his study, drawings of which are contained in the collection. His painting of the view from the mountain behind their Villa shows the house before the tower was built on in 1912 (Fig. 8.5). Attractive architectural drawings of the Villa still hung in the stairwell in 2017. These show the house in its original design (Figs. 8.6 & 8.7). Kalisch's alterations, visible in a modern photograph of the Villa (Fig. 8.8), appear to be more a demonstration of ownership and wealth than practical improvements.

Staying at Villa Lehmann

The invitation extended to me in 2015 by Martin Schulz and his mother Erika Schulz, the elderly Austrian owner of the house, to stay in the Villa had been the

Figure 8.6: *Architectural Drawing of the original North view of Lehmann Villa at Scharfling am Mondsee*, date unknown, c.1899. (Photo: Günter Wett, Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)

Figure 8.7: *Architectural Drawing of the original East view of Lehmann Villa at Scharfling am Mondsee*, date unknown, c.1898. Watercolour on paper. (Photo: Günter Wett, Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)

Figure 8.8: East view of Lehmann Villa at Scharfling am Mondsee, 2017. (Photo: Günter Wett, Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)

result of a search for the provenance of diaries and letters held in America, during my PhD research there. I was astonished on arrival at the Villa's well-preserved state. It felt as if at any moment Lehmann might walk in from her daily constitutional walk with her Dachshund, 'Baby'. Shortly after the visit I documented my memories:

August 2015, Scharfling am Mondsee

That first night in the villa it was very hard to sleep on the ancient, lumpy horsehair mattresses, surrounded by paintings of Lilli's niece, Hedwig, whose strange story of her relationship with her uncle and haunted gaze disquieted me. After some time the only solution seemed to be to give up on sleep and the firmly closed drawers of the chest of drawers and desk in the next room beckoned [Fig. 8.9]. Closer investigation revealed a folded scrap of paper with the words 'Look Down!' written on it, inviting me to investigate further in the drawers below. Erika Schulz … evidently amused by the bursting curiosity of the 'English girl', had left this for me to find. Now, tentatively I pulled open the heavy drawers and surveyed their contents. Within lay a treasure trove of notebooks, letters, legal documents, photographs, autographed scores, handwritten writings by Lehmann and some of her famous friends, her most precious autographed books, delightful knick-knacks such as a little brass letter stamp with a dachshund jumping up (the family's favourite dog) and miniature scissors; luxurious personal items: ivory, inlaid fans and exquisite gossamer thin, embroidered handkerchiefs belonging to Lehmann's most famous student, the soprano Geraldine Farrar, Marie Lehmann

and Marie Loew in silken 'étuis', all wrapped up carefully in tissue paper by Erika's sister-in-law: 'Tante Mimi Schulz', perhaps already 30 years previously. I heaved out a large, heavy photo album and discovered pictures of the house in c.1900–03, proving to my astonishment and excitement that it had indeed scarcely been changed at all in over a hundred years. It was however not just one chest of drawers, all the cabinets and every surface were filled with Lehmann's possessions and the walls hung with her portraits, many familiar from her autobiography [Fig. 8.10]. The rooms were still furnished with the original furniture, curtains, books, porcelain, the beautiful light fittings and even their writing paper and some of Kalisch's own home-made saucy greetings cards preserved in a paper-cabinet [Fig. 8.11].

(Cole, 2015)

I was fascinated by the collection because it was overflowing with objects from Lehmann's life. Each one documented another relationship or event of her so familiar biography, but also proffering new and intimate detail that added material flesh to the ghosts I had already summoned up in my research: the collection of souvenir teaspoons from her journey on concert tours around far reaches of the USA, a cabinet full of old glasses and delicate porcelain, a silver salver engraved with her name, monogrammed silver cutlery,

Figure 8.10: View of first floor Salon at Villa Lehmann, 2017. It shows some of the numerous portraits of Lehmann that hung in these rooms, many of which appear in her autobiography, *Mein Weg*. The lampshade shows portraits of Lilli Lehmann, Marie Lehmann and Minna Wagner. (Photo: Günter Wett, Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)

Figure 8.9: View of first floor 'Salon' at Villa Lehmann, 2017. The chest of drawers and desk contained most of the documents and personal effects that are now archived at the ISM. (Photo: Günter Wett. Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)
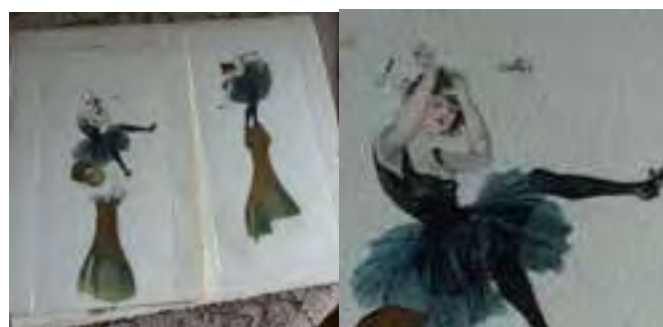

Figure 8.11 (& detail): One of a series of three saucy greetings cards probably made by Paul Kalisch, found in a cupboard still full of original supplies of writing and drawing paper. A pretty waitress is shown balancing on top of a giant champagne bottle which she bends down to open causing it to explode and her to lose her footing. (Photo: Rosamund Cole, 2015. Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)

her beautiful travel clock from New York in its leather case, a portrait of her dog 'Baby', mother-of-pearl opera glasses, Lehmann and her sister's bronzed baby shoes. For the following years the house became a place of pilgrimage for me, and I was eventually asked by the family to create an inventory in preparation for its sale. As a result, I was permitted to search the whole house and discovered concealed cupboards in the wooden sitting room panelling containing a long forgotten, exquisite Jugendstil coffee set; several valuable clocks; documents, such as all the family wills forgotten in a cabinet in the hallway as well as previously unknown portraits in the attic and intriguing personal items, including silk umbrellas in a hand-embroidered, monogrammed case. The architectural photographer Günter Wett photographed the entire house, and the author was employed by the International Stiftung Mozarteum to catalogue the entire collection in preparation for it to be stored permanently at the Mozart Archive in *Mozarts Geburtshaus* and the Bibliotheca Mozartiana in the Mozarteum Conservatoire, Salzburg.

The décor within the Villa matched the rustic style without. Built over three main floors, the house had a substantial attic and cellar. On the ground floor

Figure 8.12: Chest decorated with lilies that match the decoration in sitting room painted by Paul Kalisch. (Photo: Günter Wett; Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)

Figure 8.13: View of the downstairs living room in Villa Lehmann Vila in Scharfling am Mondsee. (Photo: Günter Wett; Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)

Figure 8.14: Lilli Lehmann, Paul Kalisch and Hedwig Helbig sitting in downstairs living room in Lehmann Villa in Scharfling am Mondsee (original photographer unknown) (Photo: Günter Wett; Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)

were two entrance halls at the front and the back of the house; a living-dining room; a small, modern kitchen; a sitting room; a second reception room and small anterooms. On the first floor was a room used as a library leading to a small sitting room, two large bedrooms, a modernised bathroom and a small bedroom. In the upper rooms on the second floor was a main bedroom with a balcony and a fantastic view over the lake plus some anterooms used for storage. Further steps led to substantial attic spaces. There were cellars, which I did not view. The main living room on the ground floor was panelled with wood, which Paul had hand-painted with a pattern of lilies in honour of his wife (Fig. 8.12). He had also decorated some wooden furniture including a wooden chest with the same motif. The furniture was in the traditional, countrified style typical of the area: a pine dining table, turned chairs, a bench, plate rack and a tiled oven. All of these are visible in the 1903 photo album and still present in 2017, when the collection was photographed (Figs. 8.13 & 8.14).

The significant collection of art preserved in the villa in 2015 demonstrated Lehmann and Kalisch's fashionable tastes, social standing and status. Lehmann had written an inventory of all the works of art they had bought including a large collection of portraits of her and her family by notable painters, sculptors and photographers, all of which were kept at the Villa. The couple seem to have been good at spotting burgeoning talent and had their portraits captured by several young artists who later became famous, including the renowned Austrian portraitist Albin Egger-Lienz, who also painted Lehmann's niece Hedwig Helbig (Fig. 8.15), and Bernhard Zickendraht.[7] A significant photographic portrait in the Villa collection was by Theodor Hilsdorf, a celebrated photographer of cultural icons such as Cosima Wagner (Toth, 1989). Furthermore, her list showed the collection had originally included a work by the Norwegian artist Peder Severin Krøyer sold previously and a wintry view of the Karlsplatz in Vienna by Lilli's friend Carl Moll still hanging in the house in 2017 (Fig. 8.16).

The villa afforded Lehmann and Kalisch the opportunity to relax and recover from their exhausting opera seasons, pursuing their hobbies of painting, reading poetry and writing articles, plays and books,

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7　There was a photograph and information at the Villa about another painting by the Norwegian painter Peder Severin Krøyer which had been sold by Mimi Schulz in the 1980s. The portraits of Lehmann and Kalisch by Egger Lienz are now preserved in the Landesmuseum in Linz, Austria.

Figure 8.15: Albin Egger-Lienz, *Hedwig Helbig*, no date. Private Collection. (Photo: Günter Wett)

Figure 8.16: Carl Moll, *Schneelandschaft Karlsplatz Wien*, 1902, hanging in the living room. Private Collection. (Photo: Günter Wett)

all evidenced by the considerable collection of manuscripts, art works and first editions of books that were still preserved in the upstairs rooms. Paul was a keen amateur artist and, as well as many light-hearted drawings and caricatures (Fig. 8.17), the collection had several artworks by him including paintings and two busts of Hedwig (Fig. 8.18). Amongst the artists visiting the house was the young Munich painter Hans Volkmer who stayed regularly. Volkmer undertook several portraits of the family, often basing them on photographs, which have also been kept as part of the collection in the Villa. The results of his work were still displayed in the Villa in 2015.

Volkmer coached Paul in his painting technique and Lehmann's diaries of 1902 reveal that he also was helping her in producing the anatomical drawings for her famous treatise on singing: *Meine Gesangskunst* (How to Sing), completed and published in 1902 (Fig. 8.19). It appears that the Villa offered

Figure 8.17: Paul Kalisch's desk showing his gold leaf and several hand-drawn postcards he had sent Lilli Lehmann including, on the upper left, a caricature of Lilli, in which Kalisch has depicted Lehmann as an Eagle of Germany and himself kissing her claws. (Photo: Günter Wett; Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)

Figure 8.18: Interior view showing a bust of Hedwig Helbig by Paul Kalisch, on the dresser and, on the left, the portrait of Lehmann as a young girl made famous through publication in her autobiography. (Photo: Günter Wett; Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)

Figure 8.19: Illustration from Lilli Lehmann and Hans Volkmer, *Meine Gesangkunst* (1902) 1st Edition. (Photo: Bibliotheca Mozartiana, International Stiftung Mozarteum, Salzburg

a conducive setting for Lehmann's writing and its purchase coincided with a considerable increase in her productivity as a writer, publishing not only her treatise but also newspaper and magazine articles, a biography, political leaflets and her editions of sheet music. As her energy to perform on stage waned, these writings functioned as publicity of her work as a singer, teacher and director; preserving memories of her career and productions she had directed for posterity; disseminating her strident views on singing and staging and also on animal rights and arguing her own case publicly when potential scandals arose and needed managing.

Discord in the rural idyll

Careful image management was an area that Lehmann had repeatedly shown herself to excel in throughout her career often evading near scandal. The villa in Scharfling provided the backdrop for the collection of images contained in the photo album depicting Lehmann and Kalisch as a happy couple, enjoying their fashionable new holiday home with their devoted niece (Fig. 8.20). Some of these photographs were subsequently published in newspapers and magazines presenting to the world the couple's good fortune and warm relations. However, preserved beside this album lay clues to a more complex narrative that belied this picture of contentment: a signed book published in both French and German (translated by Lehmann) and part of a personal letter. The book was by Lehmann's intimate friend, the renowned French baritone Victor Maurel, dedicated admiringly to her after their first performances together as Don Giovanni and Donna Anna in Berlin 1898. The letter belongs to a large collection of 79 intimate letters in French between the two artists written between December 1898 and March 1902, now held in the Maurel-Gresac Papers at Yale University Library.

Figure 8.20: Lilli Lehmann, Paul Kalisch and Hedwig Helbig together, *c.*1902, from the photo album found in the Villa. (Photo: Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)

These letters reveal that already in December 1900 she had become very disillusioned about Paul Kalisch and their marriage. She admits how she no longer felt attracted to Paul, and simply pitied him, describing him as vain and conceited, pathetic now in his drudgery at Wiesbaden theatre, his face made almost unrecognizable by illness and suffering from rheumatism, everything being red, swollen and cramped (Lehmann, 1900b). She wrote to Maurel apparently distressed at some amorous indiscretion on Paul's part while he was working in Wiesbaden, and she was evidently considering undertaking proceedings to lead to divorce. Like Lehmann, Maurel had recently had marital problems which had led to his eventually getting divorced, However, he advised her against this course and attempted to help the couple by meeting with Paul on the pretext of sharing his expertise in acting skills, to talk to him about their problems. It seems that as a result Lehmann may have persisted in the marriage in the hope that things would improve, perhaps with the help of rest at the summer Villa.

Lehmann's diaries in this period seem to indicate that the marriage to Paul and warm relations continued even after their separation, with Lilli continuing to ensure financial provision for him and even at her death ensure her continued support. The Villa collection bears witness, too, to this loving side

of their marriage through Paul's furniture decorated with lillies; hand-painted boxes given to Paul from Lilli, a photograph of them announcing their wedding, in this case signed wittily by each with: 'Unter die Haube! – Lilli' (transliterated: 'Under the veil! – Lilli', meaning 'Just Married!') and 'Unter dem Pantoffel! – Paul' (transliterated 'Under the slipper! – Paul', meaning 'Under her thumb!)' (Fig. 8.21); and charming caricatures, including one from 1899 showing Lilli greeting Paul at the gate of the Villa in a Japanese style robe that she also wears in some of the photographic portraits of her in the old photo album (Fig. 8.22).

Tensions between Lehmann and Kalisch, however, continued as a description of a visit by Alma Mahler to the new holiday home reveals. In it, she describes a marital tiff she witnessed between Kalisch and Lehmann, which presents Kalisch unusually as controlling Lehmann. This was unique as other reports of their relationship always emphasise his emasculated role in the relationship, focussing on him as the lower earning, less competent singer and brow-beaten husband.

Figure 8.21: Lilli Lehmann and Paul Kalisch postcard announcing their recent wedding signed by both with humorous captions, 1888. (Photo: Falk; Mozart Archive/ International Stiftung Mozarteum)
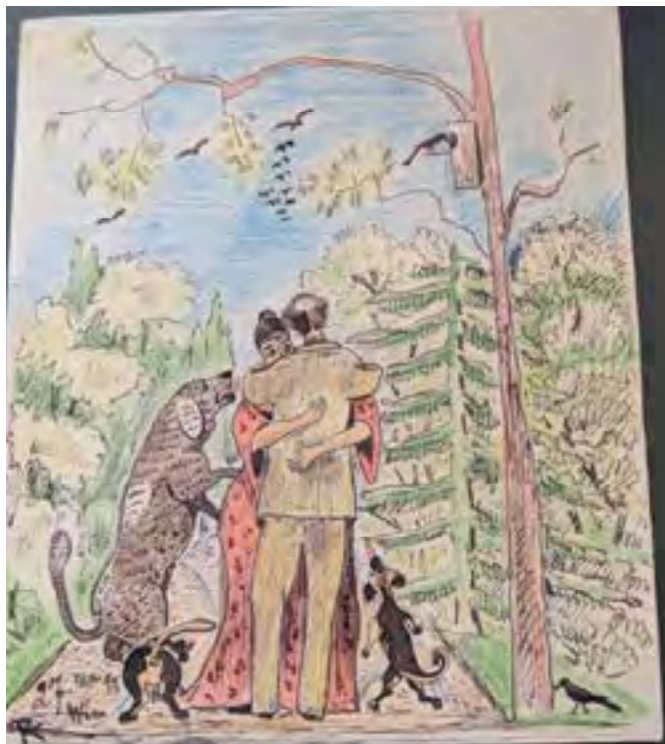
Figure: 8.22: Paul Kalisch, caricature postcard for Lilli, dated 27 May1899. (Photo: Günter Wett; Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)

> Thursday 9 August 1900
> … The house in Scharfling is nice – if not particularly well kept. The dining room is entirely of wood, very attractive. In the bedrooms, none of the beds had been made. Over Kalisch's desk hangs a banner with the words 'Patience and Renunciation' embroidered on it. I said it didn't much look like renunciation to me (which in my opinion is a compliment). But he was so offended that he left the room. He tyrannises her. And she – such a hot-blooded woman that she'd kill for love or hatred, he winds her around his little finger … And she's so beautiful!
>
> (2000, p.311)

The plaque that provoked the argument was still hanging in the sitting room in 2017 (fig. 8.23).

By 1907, however, it seems the role of the Villa had finally changed from a place of retreat for the couple to a means of safe, scandal-free escape from the marriage. Divorce at this date would have been a disgrace for Lilli and may have affected her livelihood and that of all her dependents, including Paul who she made arrangements to support financially throughout his life, even after their separation. Legal documents in the Villa in Scharfling showed that Lehmann had placed the

Figure 8.23: Plaque in Villa Lehmann exhorting: 'Patience and Renunciation', referred to by Alma Mahler in 1900, photographed 2017. (Photo: Günter Wett. Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)

Villa in Paul Kalisch's name on 27 October 1907. She also admits to having erroneously claimed ownership of the property as it had been paid for in part with funds from Kalisch. It seems highly unlikely that Lehmann would have made such a mistake and rather probable that this was a face-saving demand on Kalisch's part, that provided him with potential financial compensation instead of a divorce. Eventually, Kalisch would begin a relationship with Lehmann's niece Hedwig, towards whom the couple had previously taken a semi-parental role and Paul would live with Hedwig until he died in 1946. The potential scandal of this later constellation had evidently not escaped the notice of other researchers and questions have remained about the causes and date of the marriage break up. Amongst the old correspondence in the Villa were letters to Mimi Schulz asking her to elucidate on the relationships but Mimi refused to cooperate. It appears however that there is as yet no evidence of an overlap with Paul's relationship with Lehmann and her niece.[8]

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8   The American Musicologist Lim Lai (1981), in his long article about Lehmann, suggested that the singer and Victor Maurel had a love affair while they were away in the USA in 1899. It might therefore be logical to assume that the suspected affair with Maurel was the reason for the disintegration of Lehmann's marriage to Paul Kalisch, although evidence seems to show that this was not the case. Lai based his conclusions on the fact that Lehmann declared she had bought a ring she and Maurel had planned to buy and asked him to wear it 'for several days and nights, and then give it to [her] so [she could] wear it for the rest of [her] life' (p.185). It is however unclear if this romantic suggestion was reciprocated. After initially in 1898–99 going on tour together in America, singing the main roles in performances such as *Don Giovanni*, Maurel and Lehmann enjoyed a long and intense correspondence, the subject, however being their shared passion for singing and interest in vocal technique.

For Lehmann, the summer villa was the site of a consuming passion at this time: the first edition of her vocal treatise *Meine Gesangskunst*, dedicated to Hedwig Helbig. Lehmann had written her treatise in parallel with Victor Maurel in whom she felt she had found an intellectual equal. They passionately exchanged views on their treatises as they wrote them. These two separate projects became intertwined as the two artists discussed ideas and even carried out teaching experiments on each other's vocal students to prove their theories. Through this shared intellectual project, they became intimate friends and despite the inference that they may have become lovers, on balance, there is a lack of convincing evidence for this despite the wealth of existing correspondence. Certainly, Lehmann's letters show that she was very dependent on Maurel for emotional support during this period and it seems may have hoped for greater intimacy. In one of her letters to Maurel she wrote:

> I would be very interested to know if you had thought of me toward midnight on the night after my departure. I was dreaming of you so natural[ly] that I would really like to know if one of your thoughts had been so strong that I dreamt it.[9]

(1900a, fol.56)

Evidence I have uncovered all point toward an admiring friendship, as the signed photograph found in the collection at the Library of Congress suggests (Fig. 8.24). This was written in 1898, early on in their friendship when they first travelled together to perform in New York. Her dedication seems ambiguous, but it is perhaps significant that she uses her married name Lilli Lehmann Kalisch which was not often the case. Maurel's last letter to Lehmann was written on 18 October 1902 after which, despite all protestations of love, there seem to have been no further communication and no regretful comment in Lehmann's extant diaries. Maurel later married Fred de Gresac, a successful film-script writer who was in later life renowned in Hollywood circles as a lesbian. The apparent breach in Lehmann and Maurel's communications suggests, that this was not a relationship that rivalled Lehmann's marriage and

in balance was probably not the cause of its eventual disintegration and the loss to Lehmann of her summer Villa, far more likely her focus on writing her book and furthering her career contributed to a gradual growing apart of her and Paul Kalisch's relationship.

Figure 8.24: A portrait of Lilli sent to Victor Maurel with the ambiguous dedication: 'A Monsieur Victor Maurel, un artiste qui ne semble pas seulemeent de l'être, amicalement. Lilli Lehmann Kalisch Berlin New York 1898'. (Photo: US Library of Congress, Photographic Collection).

The exact date Lehmann ceased to stay in the house in Scharfling is unclear but by 1914 when she visited Salzburg, she would stay in the city, at the home of Dr Franz Stibral, the president of the Mozarteum, as a paying guest, presumably while Kalisch and Hedwig stayed in the Villa in Scharfling (Stibral, 1918, p.3). Though it is unclear when Paul and Hedwig entered into a relationship (Fig. 8.25), they remained together for many years, and were eventually buried together in the cemetery in Mondsee town.

Paul and Hedwig survived World War Two despite Paul being from a famous Jewish family, and being classed in Nazi records as being Jewish (Brückner, 1938). They were perhaps protected by their local popularity and status as members of Lehmann's family. Nevertheless, tellingly, Kalisch sold the house on to

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9   'Je m'intéresserai beaucoup à savoir si vous avez pensez à moi la nuit après mon départ vers minuit. Je rêvais de vous si naturel que je voudrais bien savoir si une pensée de vous a été assez forte que moi je la rêvais' (1900a, fol.56). For more detail about this correspondence please refer to Cole (2019).

Hedwig Helbig on 11 February 1939, suggesting that they were well aware of their perilously insecure position and viewed Helbig, a baptised Christian, as less likely to have the house removed from her than Kalisch. A large collection of photos and letters found in the collection in the Villa show that Paul Kalisch and Hedwig Helbig enjoyed a close friendship with the actor and Nazi sympathiser Werner Kraus both prior to and during WWII. It seems plausible that this relationship afforded them both protection despite Paul's Jewish roots. The Villa, after Paul's death in 1946, continued to be Hedwig Helbig's home until she died.

Figure 8.25: *Paul Kalisch and Hedwig Helbig, c.*1900-03, from the photo album in the Villa. (Photo: Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)

Conclusion

Lehmann's professional influence was far reaching. In her independent thinking and financial self-sufficiency, she embodied an emancipated lifestyle that many other women in Germany and abroad admired and sought to emulate, some of them seeking to follow her path as an opera singer as a way of achieving financial autonomy. The Villa played its part in this aspect of their story too. It served as a repository of items that not only documented her biography but also bore witness to this influence in the form of letters and tokens from former students from Japan, the USA and Europe, many of whom had attended her summer academy at the Mozarteum which she started in Salzburg in 1916.[10]

Study of her diaries and letters has led me to the conclusion that Lehmann's move to build a Villa near Salzburg was part of her plan for the next phase in her life after she had stopped singing and it had its roots in a larger plan that is also revealed in her correspondence with Victor Maurel. Study of these letters shows that already in 1899 she envisioned creating a conservatoire in which a new approach to singing would be undertaken and fantasised about this with Maurel: 'We will work together and I hope very much that in some years we will have some results which will render far better things than any book, don't you agree?'[11] She also discussed with Maurel a new way forward in teaching, proposing undertaking new masterclass type lessons in which students and teachers would discuss and share their ideas with each other:

> Do you know the idea of giving singing lessons in public doesn't leave me? I care about it. It is about having a clear idea and finding some sensible students who would help with the idea. It would be necessary to speak in public with artists who are prepared to leave aside their false shame of not wanting to speak of their faults ... It would be a social event for singers and so I am sure it would work.[12]

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10 One example of this was Geraldine Farrar who stayed in contact with Lehmann throughout her career and some of her letters and presents were amongst the extant collection in the villa. Another example was Antoinette Sher-Gil, a frustrated singer who wrote to Lehmann from Shimla in India describing how Lehmann's gramophone recordings allowed her to transcend her stifling reality The International Sommer Akademie still continues in a similar form.

11 'Nous allons travailler ensemble et j'espère bien qu'en quelques années nous aurions [*sic*] des résultats qui vaudront mieux que tous les livres.' Letter from Lilli Lehmann to Victor Maurel. Gresac Papers. Yale University. GEN MSS 1363 – Beinecke, p. 26. (23. September 1899).)

12 'Et savez-vous que l'idée de faire des leçons de chant devant le public ne me quitte pas? J'y tiens, il ne s'agit que de former l'idée bien et de trouver quelques élèves bien raisonable [sic] qui puissent aider à l'idée. – Il faudrait aussi parler en public aux artistes, qu'ils se depouillent [*sic*] d'une vergogne fausse de ne pas vouloir se [*sic*] dire ses [sic] fautes, et combien ce serait artistique de travailler avec eux, qui se sont donnés la peine, de faire une vraie étude sur la question de l'art du chant. Il [*sic*] serait une affaire sociale des chanteurs, et sur ce point-là, la question tournerait du bon coté [*sic*] j'en suis sûre.' Letter from Lilli Lehmann to Victor Maurel. Gresac Papers. Yale University. GEN MSS 1363 – Beinecke pp. 100–101. (26. September 1900).

This vision echoes very much Richard Wagner's plans, with which Lehmann is likely to have been familiar, to build a conservatoire to educate performers in his special performance style. (Hey and Hey, pp.245–6). Hey cited here the pamphlet written and distributed by Wagner on 16 September 1877, describing his vision for his new school for performers of his musical-dramatic works. Lehmann, perhaps inspired by these ideas then went on indeed to build herself not only a home near Salzburg to retire to but eventually a conservatoire to work in as she began to stop singing professionally. There she indeed followed through her plan to set up innovative international summer master-courses to which the finest young musicians continue today to travel each summer to study with experienced professionals and exchange ideas with their peers. The building of the Villa can therefore be viewed as the first stepping stone in realising this plan, despite it eventually having to be relinquished due to the collapse in her marriage.

Figure 8.26: Illustration from a 1910 tourist guide showing of the Villa and discovered in the collection, under the title 'Villa der Kammersängerin Lilli Lehmann' despite it already at that time belonging to Paul Kalisch. (Photo: Verlag Brandt, Gemunden)

A tourist guide from 1910 shows a picture of the 'Lilli Lehmann Villa' suggesting its allure for visitors to the area (Fig. 8.26). It continued to be known locally as the Lilli Lehmann Villa or Villa Lehmann even right up to modern times. Scharfling 5 and its entire contents was eventually inherited in 1951 by Hedwig Helbig's neighbour, Maria ('Mimi') Schulz, the mother-in-law of Erika Schulz, who had cared for Hedwig in her old age

and during her final sickness. The family kept the house respectfully, some rooms preserved almost like a shrine until Erika finally moved out in 2018. Martin Schulz, her son, tells how he as a child was not permitted to play in the upstairs salon and library which contained most of the Lehmann collection (Figs. 8.12–8.13). His paternal aunt 'Mimi' had very carefully put all Lehmann and Kalisch things into the chest of drawers and writing desk, beautifully packed away for posterity until the house was finally sold and its contents procured, appropriately by the International Stiftung Mozarteum which owes so much of its foundation to the work of Lilli Lehmann.[13] Now many of the images, paintings and other artefacts are kept at the Mozart Archive in Mozart's Geburtshaus which Lehmann largely supported buying for the city of Salzburg and the most important documents, books and music are stored in the Bibliotheca Mozartiana that was also built in large part through her efforts.

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ENCHANTMENT IN AMHERST: WHY VISIT AN ARTIST'S HOUSE?

Helen Hills

Abstract

This essay explores the appeal of visiting the homes of famous people long dead – a common but curious practice too often taken for granted – through the lens of a visit I made in 2014 to Emily Dickinson's house in Amherst, Massachusetts. I suggest that this practice is the secularized counterpart of Catholic pilgrimages to and devotion at saints' shrines, seeking grace or a miraculous intervention of some kind. And occasionally even now such things do take place.

Biographical note

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She has published widely on baroque art and architecture and theory of architecture, particularly on the interplay of architecture, spirituality, gender, and social class in the long 17th century, including *The Matter of Miracles: Neapolitan Baroque Architecture and Sanctity* (Manchester UP, 2016). Horrified by the complicity of art history with art and architecture in the work of marginalizing specific social groups depending on social class, poverty, gender, colour of skin, and geographical location, she has focused principally on women and on southern Italy, including Naples and Sicily. She taught at Queen's University (Canada), Keele University (UK), the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (USA), and the University of Manchester before moving to York, where she was the first ever woman professor of art history. Her most recent publications include: editor of Silver: Transformational Matter (The British Academy & Oxford University Press, 2023); author of 'Mattia Preti's credenzas: Trust and betrayal in colonial Naples' in *Capodimonte: Un sito reale e un museo tra locale e globale* (Naples, Arte'm, 2023), pp.122–37; 'Nomadic silver: Refinement, transaction, transformation', in M. Bol & E. Spary (eds) *The Matter of Mimesis: Studies of Mimesis and Materials in Nature, Art and Science* (Leiden, Brill, 2023), pp.135–55; 'All that glitters is not gold', *Art History*, vol.45, n.2 (2022), pp.431–39; 'Those who flee and those who see: Poussin's drawing and withdrawing', *Textual Practice*, vol.37, n.5 (2023), pp.725–53.

Banner image: Detail from a view of the studio at the Barbara Hepworth gallery in St Ives, Cornwall. (Photo: Ed Clews / Alamy Stock Photo)

ENCHANTMENT IN AMHERST: WHY VISIT AN ARTIST'S HOUSE?

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Why visit the house of an artist or a writer – or indeed of anyone once they no longer live there? After all, it's a curious practice, if one thinks about it. To visit an artist's house, as opposed to engaging with their work, appears to depend on notions of the person as coherent, the past as reconstructable, and the house as a *representation* of its inhabitant or of their work – all assumptions which are, at best, questionable. Is it that, in some strange way, by stepping through the same doors, looking out at the same views, as the artist once did, one hopes to receive miraculous access to the secrets of inner lives and creative work? It is partly the impossible tension, the incommensurability between the mundanity of objects and the extraordinary writing that was produced there that haunts such visits.
The house of an artist (like a portrait) is claimed as 'expression' of their 'inner life', as if that 'inner life' were magically instantiated into bricks and plaster and the chair by the window. This is to treat the house in terms of mimesis or representation, to assume at once both the difference of an original from a copy and yet the identity of a pure self-expression of inner life. But neither copy nor identity are adequate to the situation. A house clothes the subject, and presents the subject to the outside world, to intimates, family, and visitors. It stages and reveals, but it also betrays. As Freud pointed out, there is nowhere so uncanny as the bourgeois home.

In this essay, I visit two houses: one coherent, unified, and heavily imbued with *history as representation;* and the other, in many ways, its obverse, a place where history and the past seem to be curiously suspended and yet simultaneously cascading like motes in the air, a place of inattention, decay and disrepair, a place of relics and strange enchantment. In one, the order of time is linear, and place is static, while in the other, place and time emerge as brightly intensive, fluid, and mobile. This essay examines the curious compulsion to visit an artist's house in relation to the question of what set those two houses so sharply apart.

A strong degree of identification with the departed artist often drives such visits. 'It is not every day', writes Diana Fuss in her book about writer's houses, 'that one gets to sit in Emily Dickinson's cupola or lie on Sigmund Freud's couch […] a guilty pleasure, the culmination of a persistent desire to occupy, if only for a moment, the private lives of celebrated authors' (Fuss, 2004, p.v). Fuss conjoins house, furniture to the body and inner life of both artist and visitor, as if one leads necessarily to the other. This is not unlike visiting the home of aristocrats and to imagine oneself in their bed, chair, bath, or garden seat as their equivalent. As if the mere act of visiting such places were capable of dissolving the centuries of land grab that their estates represent, as if buying the entrance ticket could possibly dissolve the potency of accumulated power relations (rather than add to that asymmetry). Yet, that usurpation of the artist prompts in Fuss a 'guilty pleasure'. To what, then, are due the pleasure and the guilt?

The desire to inhabit the private life of the artist extends to searching for some sort of sign or miraculous visitation from them by occupying their haunts. There is in play a sort of mystical identification with them through what is assumed to be their everyday, that is sought through the visitor's own bodily experience of inhabiting the spaces the artist took for granted. As if the place where they felt 'at home' and that shaped them every day but unself-consciously might share its secrets, inform and form the visitor. And, as if, in the most mundane and quotidian aspects of the lost life, the most significant clues might be found.

Paying a visit to an artist's house, then, is more uncannily akin to visiting a saint's shrine or holy relic than one might care to admit. In the Catholic economy of the relic, a relic is a trace which guarantees aura. What is temporary is not physical distinctiveness, but the decay of material being. A saint's relics – the remains of the saint or *brandea* (anything that had direct contact with the saint) – offer a connection between a mortal life lived on earth and the glorified saint in heaven. It can even bestow *virtus*, a form of grace, on the devout pilgrim. The relic is believed to possess *virtus*, transmitted by touch. Thomas Aquinas even justified the cult of relics in terms of sacred housing and as a consequence of the cult of saints, 'temples and organs of the Holy Spirit which lived in them and worked through them'.[1] Gregory the Great suggested that the *virtus* of the saints works through their living bodies and their mortal remains, and sanctifies the places marked by their contact (1979, pp.246–8). That virtus, although apparently spontaneous, is derived from God and faith in God. It is above all

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1   Saints should be accorded religious honour 'quae fuerunt templa et organa Spiritus Sancti in eis habitantis et operantis' (Aquinas, ST, 3a, q.25, art.12).

Figure 9.1: *The Homestead*, Amherst, exterior in the snow, 2014. (Photo: Helen Hills)

through place, especially the *sanctus locus* – where the saint died or lies buried – that this grace occurs. Hence, the shrine-relic-reliquary is a privileged site of *dislocation* that allows access to and works analogically in relation to the divine.

Relics become relics through their staging in a reliquary: a relic without a reliquary is just another bone. The artist's house corresponds to the reliquary or shrine that seems merely to house the precious remains, but in fact confers that preciousness upon them. Hence, visiting artists' homes might usefully be seen as a secularized form of the ancient religious practice of paying pilgrimage to saints and their relics. Against rhyme or reason, it is hoped that insights into and epiphanies from the glorified artist might emanate from their home and possessions and be bestowed on the pilgrim. Arguably, this is also part of a wider cultural practice that tends to elevate artists to the modern equivalent of glorified saints.[2]

In 2014, I was lucky enough to visit Emily Dickinson's

house in Amherst, Massachusetts (Fig. 9.1).[3] Dickinson's poems have long enthralled me, and I expected to find her home immensely moving. The conditions were right for a pilgrimage: it was snowing; the roads were treacherous; I had to rely on public transport in the land of the motor car; the bus timetable was unpropitious. A real pilgrimage, then. I was full of expectation.

Diana Fuss examines Dickinson's house in relation to her poems, in order to unpick the well-entrenched legend of the poet as reclusive neurotic, who shunned intimacy, locked herself in, peering out to incoherent glimpses of heaven (Fuss, 2004). That is the poet of Joseph Cornell's magical box, *Towards the Blue Peninsula – for Emily Dickinson* (1953), in which we look from a whitewashed, partly-caged, quasi-institutional interior,

2   For the Romantic myth of the artist as genius and misunderstood isolated figure 'outside' society, yet as uniquely gifted to express universal truths, see Battersby (1989).

3   The Homestead was built by Emily Dickinson's grandfather Samuel Fowler Dickinson in about 1813. When Emily Dickinson was born here in 1830, it was a two-family dwelling, in which Samuel Fowler Dickinson and his younger children lived at the east wing and his elder son Edward Dickinson and his family, including Emily, on the west side. In the 1830s, Edward Dickinson moved his family to a house in Pleasant Street, but they returned to The Homestead in 1855 and Emily Dickinson lived there until her death in 1886 (Fuss, 1998).
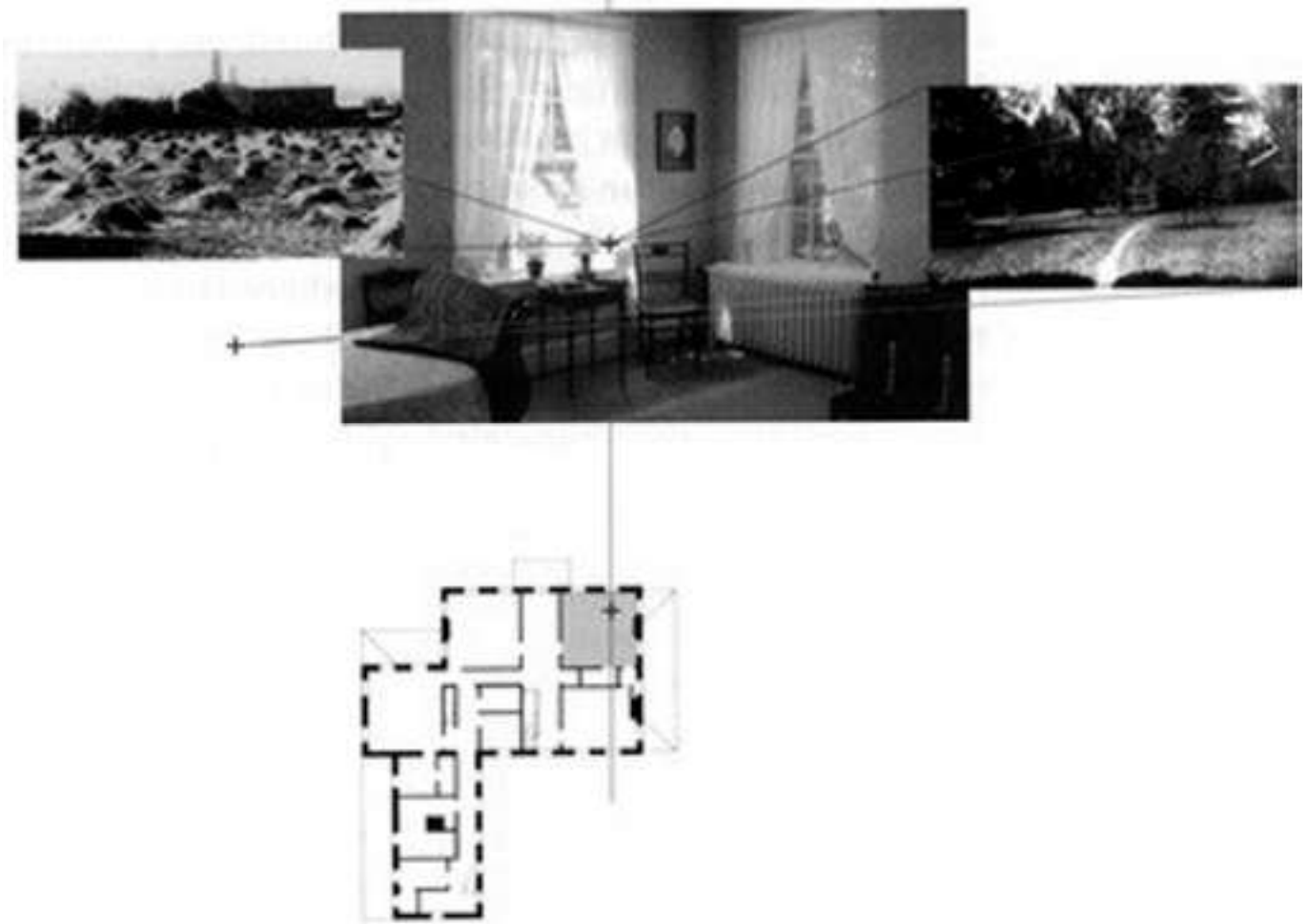
Figure 9.2: Diana Fuss, 'Interior chambers: the Emily Dickinson Homestead', diagram tracking Dickinson's views from her room. Architectural drawing by Joel Sanders, architect, for *The Sense of an Interior: Four Writers and the Rooms that Shaped Them* by Diana Fuss, 2004. (Courtesy of Diana Fuss and Joel Sanders)

through an opened window to a celestial blue sky. Fuss makes connections between the threshold, windows, doors, and views of the house and the openings in Dickinson's poems, even linking particular poems to specific architectural elements. For Emily Dickinson, suggests Fuss, as for Marcel Proust, Sigmund Freud and Helen Keller,

> the architectural dwelling is not merely something we inhabit, but something that inhabits us. They understand interiority itself as a built structure, as 'image merely made.' Nowhere is this more the case than in the modern conceptualization of the recesses of human memory, depicted in Emily Dickinson's poetry as the interior of a house:

> > Remembrance has a Rear and Front.
> > 'Tis something like a House –
> > It has a Garret also
> > For Refuse and the Mouse –
> > Besides the deepest Cellar

> > That ever Mason laid –
> > Look to it by its Fathoms
> > Ourselves be not pursued –[4]
> >   (Fuss, 2004, p.2)

If Dickinson's poem warns against being driven unaware by the dark depths of the house, Fuss is not so easily deterred. She treats Dickinson's home rather like a detective, searching for clues, for traces of the rumpled lives that shaped and inhabited it, rather as Walter Benjamin suggests in his famous essay, but without his awareness of the necessity of reading against the grain (Fuss, 1998).[5] Using photographs taken from Dickinson's bedroom window, Fuss seeks to pinpoint what the poet might have seen (Fig. 9.2). But the views and lines of sight emerge like pins in dead butterflies: what they identify they leave lifeless.

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4   Diana Fuss, 'Sense of an Interior', p.2.

5   See Benjamin's discussion (1973) of the nineteenth-century bourgeois interior in relation to the detective novel.

Figure 9.3: Basilica of Sta Cecilia in Trastevere, Rome: shrine to St Cecilia, with Stefano Maderno, *St Cecilia* (1600), marble sculpture, and polychromatic marble intarsia adornment, including porphyry roundel dedicated to Cardinal Paolo Sfrondato. Photo: Helen Hills

What my camera shows is what Dickinson saw. I see what she looked out at. Far too reductive; far too literal. An obstinate hope that representation might in some way both resemble and reveal. Benjamin's starting point for his investigations is not a reality whose appearance is already 'true', but rather 'the object riddled with error (doxa)' (1973, p.103). For him, the object is not 'in truth', but a means of excavating a reality disguised in delusion and myth. In particular, Benjamin is at his most suspicious where the world view is presented as stable, ordered, decisive, and systematic.

I approached Dickinson's house without believing in either house or history in terms of stability or representation.[6] But how disappointing my visit was. And how stupidly predictable: although I was alert to flaws in notions of the 'authentic' and of an unmediated surviving witness, all the same, in my soul, I craved the whole, the inviolate miraculous relic and the miracle. As if stepping over the threshold, trespassing into her space, spying, and eavesdropping on an intimate life – the life that both was and was not disclosed in the writing and the daily living that supported it – might be partly (painstakingly) glimpsed, or miraculously revealed, as if my visit might somehow return to me something lost, restore the poet, and restore my faith in the place of writing.

It was, then, a strange, slightly furtive, uneasy act of would-be pilgrimage, undertaken in bad faith, as it were. In many ways, it has its counterpart in the shrine of St. Cecilia in the basilica of Sta Cecilia in Trastevere, Rome (Fig. 9.3). Here saint Cecilia's miraculous relics are preserved, and here she lived, her house reputedly below the later basilica. Stefano Maderno's seductive sculpture of 1600 brilliantly encapsulates the dream of finding the saint at once within reach, at home, dead yet uncorrupted, of time stopped still (Fig. 9.4). When St. Cecilia's body was miraculously rediscovered in 1599, Cardinal Paolo Sfrondati commissioned the sculpture to celebrate the saint, and his own miraculous *inventio*, or finding, of her relics.[7] A flurry of contemporaneous publications insist that the sculpture shows Cecilia's body exactly as it was revealed in the excavation by Cardinal Sfondrati. In other words, the body really

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6   The issue of representation is complex. Briefly, it implies that the visual represents something that already exists or existed somewhere else. For discussion of this, see Hills (2016, pp.14–22, 26–9).

7   For a reading of this sculpture as a 'fulfilment of contemporary liturgical concerns,' see Kämpf (2001). For an early study of the statue, see Muñoz (1913–14). For a discussion relating the sculpture to the basilica, see Nava Cellini (1969).

Figure 9.4: Stefano Maderno, St. *Cecilia*, 1600. Marble, Sta Cecilia in Trastevere, Rome. (Photo: Helen Hills)

is there; the saint really was exactly like that (Bosio, 1600, pp.170, 172–3; Boldetti, 1720, p.300). The seventeenth-century texts insist upon the authenticity of the sculpture as much as on the authenticity of the relic: 'Vidimus, cognovimus, et adoravimus' (we saw, we recognized, we adored), claimed Cesare Baronio's *Annales Ecclesiasticae* of 1604 (pp.507, 604). It's the

seventeenth-century equivalent of Fuss' carefully aimed photographs. And Cardinal Sfrondato celebrated his own discovery and witness with a prominent porphyry roundel (Fig. 9.4). Shrines do not celebrate saints alone.

Maderno's sculpture assumes the appearance and role of a relic (Fig. 9.4). Relics are magical objects in that they can be simultaneously past and present, alive

Figure 9.5: *The Homestead*, Amherst, ground floor rooms, 2014. (Photo: Helen Hills)

and dead. They testify to the saint's deeds, connect to the saint in heaven in glory, and yet are also humble bone, mortal remains on earth here and now. Hence the sculpture, standing in for the relic, works to hold in place the claim that the saint's miraculously intact and uncorrupted body and its equally miraculous *inventio*, her resting place, her home, and the saint in glory might somehow be unified in this special, singular place, at once touched and touching, in the special economy of the relic, in which part is whole, a saint at once in heaven in glory and also on earth in the bone.

It was perhaps something like a secular version of this marvellous conjunction that I sought at Dickinson's house: a magical unmediated access to the writer *as she really was* before fame reduced her to representation. As if standing in that room, seeing the chair where she used to sit, touching her desk where she wrote, might, like *brandea,* through simple bodily contact, through humble touch, magically impart *virtus.* A shard of *integritas* somehow make it through.

It was not just that the bus dropped me off long before the house was open, and I had to kick my heels in the icy cold. Even once inside, the house seemed remote, curated, and busily inhabited, not by Dickinson – or her poems or her family – but by the carefully controlling museum eye. Her bedroom, where she used to write, was austere and sparsely furnished, but institutionally so. The whole house was as if done up for sale, estate agent approved, spick and span, entirely respectable. It was National Trustified, everything polished, preserved, and compromised (Fig. 9.5). The house had withdrawn into itself, and in its place everything was just an object, scrupulously sourced. Governed by a belief in time as unstoppable and linear, here was underway a curiously exacting make-believe of time stopped still. Objects were treated as authentic guarantors of truth charged with holding in place lives that might be measured and where the past and present might meet along a straight line of continuous stable time.

The past. It's a risky business. It is often hyperbolically construed as either reconstructable or as sheer absence and utterly meaningless. But any engagement with the past requires recognizing the dubious nature of ultimate solutions and recognizing instead that a fragment holds more than any whole. Dreams of recovery or reconstruction overlook the fact that life and survival themselves already depend on ellipses, aporia, and loss, such that historical investigation of any kind faces radical disjuncture and discontinuity. And indeed, in a strange way, ellipses, aporia, and loss are what bind one to the past, spread the shimmer of enchantment, the last gasp of the imperilled. Rather than a lost integral whole, one is searching for the relation between a boundary and an opening, between an orbit and a hole.

And, in a way, I found it. For, just as I was about to leave *The Homestead*, someone mentioned that *The Evergreens*, the house next door was open (Fig. 9.6). This was a rare event. In that house had lived Emily

Figure 9.6: *The Evergreens*, Amherst, exterior in the snow, 2014. (Photo: Helen Hills)

Figure 9.7: *The Evergreens*, Amherst, the entrance hallway, 2014. (Photo: Helen Hills)

Dickinson's brother, Austin, and his wife, Susan Gilbert Austin, who was also, almost certainly, Emily Dickinson's secret lover (ED Museum, n.d.).

I did not expect much. But as I stepped inside, the appealing peeling state of the house hinted that it would offer what *The Homestead* had denied (Fig. 9.7). In a state of semi-collapse, the house presented a kaleidoscope of time and light and what was left behind. Ceiling laths lay like ribs exposed where plaster had fallen in great chunks on the floor; around the light switches, blind fingers searching, had traced dark smears; papers spilled over the edge of a drawer; a radio in the kitchen, just where you'd want it, its knobs butter-stained (Fig. 9.8).

The Evergreens presented itself as a haphazard assemblage, as if someone had just stepped out or as if someone had always stepped out, a place of fragments, dust, and trivia. A place where time was

Figure 9.8: *The Evergreens*, Amherst: 'Someone has just stepped out', 2014. (Photo: Helen Hills)

Figure 9.9: *The Evergreens*, Amherst, prints from Europe, 2014. (Photo: Helen Hills)

far from still, but on the gallop, limping, disintegrated, sidling, leering. Exoticizing photos of European tourist spots and African animals turn yellow in the sunlight (Figs. 9.9 and 9.10); lustres on the mantelpiece glisten dimly under a soft coating of dust; a marble sculpture swoons (Fig. 9.11), while the wallpaper unfurls from the wall in a great arc, like a peacock opening up its tail, like Rapunzel letting down her hair. The fine dust of friendships, flirtations, and secret yearnings still hung in the air. I cannot entirely explain the charm of the house, but it still weaves a spell over me.

'All old things are the property of the dead', writes Maria Stepanova in *In Memory of Memory*, her kaleidoscopic reflection on her family's history after her aunt's death (2021, p.482). And the old things in *The Evergreens*, unlike those in *The Homestead*, are unmistakably someone's possessions, while those who owned and used them seem at once close by and

Figure 9.10: *The Evergreens*, Amherst, exoticizing prints, 2014. (Photo: Helen Hills)

Figure 9.11: *The Evergreens*, Amherst, mantelpiece, 2014. (Photo: Helen Hills)

yet definitively absent. They're not coming back, but furniture and objects await them, just as they were, trapped in a sudden end state, because their previous owner, the only person who could have freed them, is no longer amongst the living. As if, at any minute, someone might come back in, *as if I almost might be that person.*

I feel it is my duty to write about the house, which is alive with ghosts and their possessions (Fig. 9.12). But why is it my duty? To whom do I owe this duty when those people choose to stay in the shadows? Perhaps it is the enchantment I felt in that strange house that I want somehow to prolong and share by evoking that encounter, that shimmer again; perhaps it is a sense of possession; more likely it is the sense of loss, a loss that is not hidden or papered over, or repaired. A house not ruled by a puritanical belief in authenticity, but squatted in by contradiction, fragmentation, and riddles that launched themselves at some unknowable time ago carelessly into the air.

The Evergreens, unlike *The Homestead*, is unburdened by fame and reputation. Liberated from the task of representing Dickinson, it is not a representation of its inhabitants' lives, even less of their work, and instead

is free to be a *figure* of it. Objects and furnishings and rooms encounter each other in a forgotten but not obliterated human constellation.

The Evergreens comes to stand in almost like a face, to offer the sense of the other, such as is given truly only in the portrait, as conceived by Jean-Luc Nancy (2006). For Nancy 'the object of the portrait is, in the strictest sense, the *absolute* subject: the subject detached from everything that does not belong to it, withdrawn from all exteriority' (2006, p.220). This is precisely not a hermeneutics of depth; that is, it is not the revelation of something secret, interior or anterior from behind a superficial presentation. For Nancy, interiority takes place *within* exteriority:

> 'Exposition' is this *setting within* and *taking place* that is neither 'interior' nor 'exterior' but *set toward* or *in relation*. We might say that the portrait *paints exposition*, *that it puts it (in) to (the) work*. [But] here […] 'work' does not refer to the particular 'painting' as an object or thing. Rather, it refers to the painting *as relation*. In this sense, then, it is *the subject* that is *the work of the portrait*.
>
> (Nancy, 2006, p.227)

Figure 9.12: *The Evergreens*, Amherst: 'Why Visit an Artist's House?', 2014. (Photo: Helen Hills)

'The value of the face as the sense of the other is truly given only in the portrait (in art)', writes Nancy.[8] Maggi Hambling's unusual self-portrait, *Maggi Hambling* (oil on canvas, 1977–78, National Portrait Gallery), is particularly apt here (Fig. 9.13). In a constellation around Hambling's face are objects – the sort of things one imagines one might come across in her house – each charged with a significance that is intimated but not made explicit.

By extension, Nancy's discussion of the portrait may be used to suggest that the artist's house brings into visibility something that was actually hitherto veiled and occluded by the life and even by the work. A paradox of a presence precisely through absence. As if the person in herself is in the house, remains in the house. And has just stepped out.

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8   'Of course,' writes Nancy, 'there is nothing to prevent the portrait from showing the rest of the body so long as its sole function is to carry the face, so long as it remains, in short, in reserve, a resource on which the look can draw. […] Indeed, we could perhaps go so far as to say that the portrait marks a break with nudity (without repressing it) since it exposes another sort of nudity altogether, that of the subject' (2006, p.222-3).

The house does not resemble anyone. Resemblance depends on absence, as Maurice Blanchot's discussion of the portrait insists:

> It gradually becomes clear that a portrait does not resemble because it looks like a face; rather resemblance begins and exists only with the portrait and in it alone; resemblance is the portrait's work, its glory or its disgrace, expressing the fact that the face is not there, that it is absent, that it only appears by way of the absence that resemblance precisely is.
>
> (1991, p.32)

And certainly, during my visit, *The Evergreens* was a house of veils and screens, of lace curtains partially drawn across windows, of silvered mirrors barely able to bear reflections anymore, their work done, their lustre like an insect husk (Fig. 9.14).

The artist's house becomes another subject, both insofar as the house is the subject (the object) and insofar as the house is the place in which a subject (the artist) comes to light. The house becomes the depository par excellence of collected possessions, and betrayer of the trace, the indexical (the marks on

Figure 9.13: Maggi Hambling, *Maggi Hambling,* 1977–78. Oil on canvas, National Portrait Gallery. (NPG 1562)

Figure 9.14: *The Evergreens,* Amherst, screened window, 2014. (Photo: Helen Hills)

the wall around the bedroom light where fingers have stumbled in the dark), the hidden. The house may hold the subject insofar as they comported themselves to themselves, precisely – in private, in distraction. And it does so precisely because it is not a composition of the self, but an accretion. It holds the subject, not as a *representation* of the artist (staged in terms of what is already known), but rather in terms of what is unintentioned, *in addition*, and hence a self-relation mediated through a departure from the self. The house offers an opening to an undisclosed interior. An interior that exceeds the oeuvre, the individual works, even the face. 'The relation that makes up the portrait comprises three moments: the portrait resembles (me), the portrait recalls (me), the portrait looks (at me)', writes Nancy (2006, p.228).

The house resembles, recalls, and looks. Perhaps the artist's house emerges as secret depositary, place of enchantment, only when the artist has left it carelessly behind.

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A pilgrimage to the house, that special homage, is the insertion of the self, a form of intercession and veneration in relation to the saint / artist. It is not about how it was; it is, rather, about what we see when we look back; how the contours of the past appear. Even how the corpses are exposed as the snow melts.

Figure 9.15: *The Evergreens,* Amherst, objects everywhere, 2014. (Photo: Helen Hills)

Yet, if reconstruction, however painstaking, inevitably falls short of the mark, to conceive the past in terms of sheer absence or utter annihilation is also a mistake. Something of the past always remains, if only as a haunting presence or revenant.

Secular society takes the idea of salvation, which is what drives the pilgrimage to the saint's shrine, out of the equation and in one stroke the whole construction loses its balance. Without a belief in salvation, the 'conservation' of the artist's house becomes no more than an institutional archive: a museum, a library, a warehouse, allowing a sort of conditional and limited immortality – a greatly extended single day, the only version of eternal life that is possible in the emancipated new world.

'What unites all the minorities, puts them in the same boat', writes Maria Stepanova,

> is other people's sense that their subjectivity is incomplete: women *who need to be looked after*; children who *don't know what's best for them*; black people who are *like children*; the working classes *who don't know what's in their own interests*; the dead for whom *nothing matters any more.*

> (2021, p.374)

In our present age, despite shrill concern with our own ostensibly renewed sensibilities and professed alertness to the difference of others, how readily we still trample on the dead. 'The dead have no rights', Stepanova bluntly reminds us, 'their property and the circumstances of their fate can be used by anyone and in any way' (2021, p.373).

The two houses are differently possessed by possessions which belonged to the dead: Emily Dickinson's home contains objects that belonged to her and others deemed to fit historically; *The Evergreens* is strewn with objects and furniture, some new, some old, a wireless and a rocking horse, and it is all in keeping, keeping something open (at least until the curators come creeping in) (Fig. 9.15).

The more I think about *The Evergreens*, the more it seems like a series of unfulfilled dreams. Maybe such a house, that enchanted enchanting house, can reveal only in so far as it exposes an absence, an absence that, in turn, is a condition of presence – though one that has never quite stepped through into the clean order of history (Fig. 9.16).

Figure 9.16: *The Evergreens*, Amherst, 2014. (Photo: Helen Hills)

Postscript: I am not concerned with what has happened to The Evergreens since my visit or whether it is or is not anything like it was that day in 2014. It is not the place, but the sense of the encounter that interests me. Enchantment is not set in stone or bricks and mortar and was never meant to be.

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