"Peeps," or "Smatter and Chatter": Late-Victorian Artists Presented as *Strand* Celebrities

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> I had not been at the hotel [in Switzerland] two hours before the parson put it [the *Strand*] into my hands. Certainly every person in the hotel had read it. It is true that some parts have a sickly flavour, perhaps only to us! I heard many remarks such as, "Oh! How interesting!" The rapture was general concerning your house. Such a house could scarcely have been imagined in London.[1]

Harry How's "Illustrated Interview" with the Royal Academician Luke Fildes in his luxurious studio house in London's Holland Park may have seemed a little "sickly" to Fildes and his brother-in-law Henry Woods, but such publicity was always welcome in an age when celebrity sold paintings. As Julie Codell demonstrates in *The Victorian Artist: Artists' Lifewritings in Britain ca. 1870–1910*, late nineteenth-century art periodicals played an important role in building and maintaining the public's interest in living artists. The *Magazine of Art*, for example, ran "Our Living Artists" from 1878, "The Homes of our Artists" from 1881, and "Half-Hours in the Studios," written by the editor Marion Harry Spielmann, from 1887. Visits to the studio—or "peeps," as the *Windsor Magazine* called them—were an essential element in the formation of British artists' celebrity. Codell describes how Spielmann's studio visits "upheld the academic values of respectability, institutional validation and national superiority."[2] Furthermore, these articles offered "evidence . . . that artists were thoroughly socialised, not alienated and suffering in garrets."[3] But as Woods's letter suggests, this work was not limited to art periodicals. The *Strand Magazine* also played a part in building the celebrity artist, just as it fuelled the popularity of Sherlock Holmes. Under the ownership of the entrepreneurial George Newnes, the *Strand* appealed to a wide middle-class readership with a mix of features and fiction that, as I will

demonstrate, often focused on art. In its first decade (1891–1902) the *Strand* copied features from the *Art Journal* and the *Magazine of Art* while also positioning artists within a broad class of professionals.[4] The long-running series "Portraits of Celebrities" and "Illustrated Interviews" focused on lawyers, politicians, writers, actors, philosophers, and philanthropists, as well as artists. Spielmann's values of "respectability, institutional validation and national superiority" are instantly recognisable in the pages of the *Strand*.

In this essay I examine the *Strand*'s treatment of artists as celebrities. The character of this "sixpenny illustrated monthly with an essentially middle-class circulation" influenced the magazine's choice of artists, style of interviewing, and staff of writers.[5] Doyle's biographer Andrew Lycett describes the *Strand* as "a journal to be savoured as a medium of instruction in the privacy of an aspiring middle-class home rather than perused as instant entertainment on a train en route to work."[6] Its "London-ness" was also important, for the *Strand* functioned as "a self-representational microcosm produced *by* London's professional class and *for* London's professional class."[7] Thus, the *Strand* defined celebrities as those possessing "a remarkable level of devotion and determination to excel in their fields" and, of course, a willingness to be "taken up."[8] The male artists (very few women were featured) were typically Royal Academicians who belonged to the Athenaeum, the Arts Club, and the Artists' Rifles and lived in Holland Park or St. John's Wood rather than "bohemian" Chelsea.[9] Furthermore, none of the writers engaged by the *Strand* to interview artists were regular contributors to the art periodicals. How, who worked between 1891 and 1896, is the best known now, but L. T. Meade, who interviewed Edward Burne-Jones in 1895, was one of the most successful fiction writers of the time; indeed, her stories in the *Strand* rivalled Arthur Conan Doyle's for popularity. Another woman novelist, Mrs. Desmond Humphreys, contributed stories about artists under the pseudonym of "Rita."

Other art contributors included Rudolph De Cordova, who was also an actor and screenwriter, and Frederick Dolman, a London County Councillor. Their skill was in appealing to a "public of cultivated persons."[10]

The *Strand*'s interest in the individual artist was short lived. No artists were included in the "Portraits of Celebrities" after 1898, and the last interview with an artist, Frank Dicksee, was published in 1902 (Alma-Tadema's "Reminiscences," published in 1909, repeated much of the text from his 1899 interview).[11] This shift can also be explained by the *Strand*'s middle-class circulation. Newnes and his editorial team decided their public preferred general articles on the arts, "Present-Day Painters of Beautiful Women," "~~A~~rtists' models. Women who have sat for men, and men who have sat for women," and challenges in depicting "The trouser in sculpture" alongside stories of adventure and romance. The position of the artist in British society was also changing. The younger generation of artists, many of whom were trained in Paris, were not as popular with the British public, nor could they afford to live in substantial studio-houses, opening their doors to journalists from the *Strand.* They were more likely to belong to the Chelsea Arts Club founded, like the *Strand*, in 1891; they did not fit the *Strand* mould.

The Importance of Illustration in the *Strand*

The *Strand*'s preference for the art on its pages and the artists it featured was populist; it especially valued the ability in both to tell a story. Although Newnes never achieved his goal to print "a picture on every page," illustrations were part of the monthly's allure.[12] The *Strand* capitalised on the success of earlier middlebrow magazines including *Punch* (1841) and the *Illustrated London News* (1842), the latter, according to Richard Altick, being the "first to make a policy of subordinating text to pictures."[13] The *Graphic,* founded in 1869, was one of the first successful rivals of the *Illustrated London News.*[14] Its founder, William Luson Thomas, believed

illustrations had the power to influence public opinion on political issues (and several of its contributing artists were later interviewed by the *Strand*). This richness of material meant that by the time the *Strand* appeared in 1891, it could appeal "to an audience with a considerable degree of *visual* literacy, fostered throughout the century by cultural texts."[15]

Newnes's appointment of an art editor who was also an artist was undoubtedly significant. William Henry James Boot (1848–1918) had studied at Derby School of Art, exhibited at the Royal Academy, and was Vice-President of the Royal Society of British Artists and a member of the Arts Club.[16] He engaged "some of the most talented, if conventionally respectable, authors and illustrators of the period."[17] Twenty artists were kept constantly employed to illustrate the short stories, and there was "casual employment for hundreds more."[18] The "*Strand* Club" was formed for its authors and artists along similar lines to the *Punch* table, "a kind of artistic and literary coterie, formed on the basis that each member should furnish either a story or a picture for the edification of the monthly gatherings."[19] The *Strand* was one of the first periodicals to include the names of the illustrators on the contents page.[20] A special feature in 1895 provided short biographies and photographs of a number of them, along with Newnes's thanks: "We are glad . . . to acknowledge our indebtedness to these gentlemen . . . whose work has had so great a share in building up the popularity of THE STRAND MAGAZINE."[21] The *Strand*'s women illustrators (there were a few) were not included in the article.

Newnes promoted the *Strand*'s commitment to illustration in other ways. The public could visit his offices in Burleigh Street, just off the Strand, where two rooms had been set aside as a public art gallery, furnished with a comfortable ottoman and hung with original illustrations from the *Strand* on display and for sale (figure 1). An article publicizing Newnes's gallery

explained, “All these drawings are offered for sale, but whether a possible purchaser or not, the passer-by will not waste the time occupied by a look around those two pleasant rooms.”[22] According to Reginald Pound, the *Strand*’s last editor, Newnes was “proud to pose as an art patron.”[23] Pound’s phrasing suggests that Newnes’s motivation was purely commercial, and there is no evidence he collected for himself. However, Newnes did inspire his rivals, as Pound notes: “Resolved not to be culturally outclassed, the Harmsworths made it known that the top floor of their new premises, Carmelite House, would be reserved for a permanent exhibition of contemporary art.”[24]

The *Strand* world was very small, and this was also true for its artists. Its most famous artist was Sidney Paget (1860–1908), the illustrator of Sherlock Holmes. He had trained at Heatherley’s and the Royal Academy Schools and, like the art editor Boot, exhibited at the Academy. Paget was living in a studio at 11 Holland Park Road in Kensington when commissioned by the *Strand*. Some of his close neighbours would feature in the magazine, including the head of the Victorian art world, Sir Frederic Leighton, President of the Royal Academy, whose palace of art was situated at 2 Holland Park Road. Both Paget and Boot were able to offer inside knowledge of the art world when it came to the selection of artists and possibly collectors. At the same time, the artists interviewed for the *Strand* had all been featured in the art periodicals. Newnes and his editorial team were hardly original in their choice; the originality came through the context provided by the magazine as a whole. Their artists were presented as equals among the *Strand’*s “broad class” of “reassuringly respectable” professionals.

The Inspiration for “Portraits of Celebrities” and “Illustrated Interviews”

"Portraits of Celebrities" and "Illustrated Interviews" were prominent features of the *Strand* as two of its "longest-running and most successful series."[25] According to Kate Jackson, they were "crucial to its function as a medium of cultural security and class cohesion."[26] "Portraits" began in the first issue with a total of eighty-nine articles across 1891; the "Interviews" began in July, with a total of six for the year (one a month). Pound believed the features had "much to do with consolidating the circulation and prestige of the magazine. . . . They were built-in attractions . . . buttresses of the loyalty of older readers who were nervous of change."[27]

A brief history of each celebrity ran alongside four mechanically printed copies of painted or photographed portraits that depicted him, sometimes her, from youth through to the present.[28] Jackson has pointed out the link between Newnes's concept and the popularity of "celebrity cartes," tiny portraits of the royal family, actresses, and other celebrities, on sale at stationers and collected into albums.[29] Newnes may also have seen F. G. Stephens's *Artists at Home* (1884), which included photographs by Joseph Parkin Mayall of each artist in his studio. The concept, summarised by Giles Waterfield in *The Artist's Studio* (2009), was not dissimilar to the approach of the *Strand*: "Though artistic, he [the artist] is reassuringly respectable. The studio is an extension of his personality, as a hard worker but also as a man of wealth and talent, and examples of his work usually animate the background."[30]

Edmund Yates, the journalist and editor of the *World,* inspired the "Illustrated Interviews." He pioneered the so-called "keyhole" journalism through his gossip columns and celebrity interviews.[31] His *Celebrities at Home*, published in 1879, ran to three volumes and included 300 articles from the *World* featuring aristocrats, actors, and writers, though no artists. Yates was himself interviewed by How in the *Strand* in 1893.[32] Pound noted the *Strand* added a "new dimension, aided by the camera. Readers were put on a footing of intimacy with the

famous men and women interviewed in articles that respected the civilities without being subservient."[33] This intimacy was especially manifest in interviews with artists who opened up their studios, their sanctum sanctorum. As Codell has noted, "The interview conferred celebrity and authenticity *in situ* at home in the studio."[34] In these articles, "Well-dressed bodies in well-furnished studios and homes with massive stairways and expensive goods recorded [the artists'] maturity, mastery, expertise and self-confidence."[35]

Lewis Hind called his visits to artists' studios "peeps" in an article published in the *Windsor Magazine* in January 1896, and the term conveys the voyeuristic element to the activity.[36] "Peeps" became so familiar in periodicals that they migrated to fiction. Henry James wrote a number of short stories from the mid-1880s exploring the damaging effect of such journalism to both the journalist and his or her subject. The narrator of "The Death of the Lion," published in the *Yellow Book* in 1894, is sent by the *Empire* to interview Neil Paraday in his home and "write him up." He encounters a rival sent by the *Tatler*, Mr. Morrow, who explains, "A great interest is naturally felt in Mr Paraday's surroundings. . . . I represent . . . a syndicate of influential journals, no less than thirty-seven. . . . I [also] hold a particular commission from *The Tatler,* whose most prominent department, "Smatter and Chatter"—I dare say you've often enjoyed it—attracts such attention."[37] James's "The Aspern Papers," first published in 1888, provides the most extreme example of this intimate, invasive, and ultimately destructive journalism. When the academic narrator gains access to the Venetian home of Juliana Bordereau, lover of the long-dead poet Jeffrey Aspern (based loosely on Shelley) and presumed holder of his correspondence, he is struck by her age: "So old that death might take her at any moment, before I should have time to compass my end. The next thought was a correction to that; it lighted up the situation. She would die next week, she would die tomorrow—then I could pounce on her

possessions and ransack her drawers."[38] The *Strand* writers, at least, could not be accused of pouncing. Their approaches were always polite, respectful and discrete.

The *Strand*'s Selection of Artists

As Codell's survey of the art periodicals reveals, a relatively small number of artists were featured repeatedly. Newnes's writers and photographers visited this same distinguished group, but they were not selected solely as artists. They had to conform to Newnes's (and the *Strand*'s) ideals, revealing in their lives, work, homes, and self-portraits the skills and expertise that defined the professional class. All appeared to possess "a remarkable level of devotion and determination to excel in their fields."[39] Many appear in Grenville Manton's illustration depicting the annual soiree at the Royal Academy, published in *Black and White* on June 27, 1891 (figure 2). The crowd greeted by Sir Frederic Leighton, President of the Royal Academy, represents both the subjects interviewed for the *Strand* and the readers of the magazine: "A continuous stream of carriages block the way of Piccadilly for hours, depositing the occupants at the door of Burlington House. Up the broad flower-lined stairway flocks the cream of London's fashion and beauty—and the Art, Literature and Science, the Services and the Law, Connoisseurship and the Aristocracy, all are worthily represented in this great annual Academy festival."[40]

The first "Portraits" in the *Strand* in 1891 featured major figures in the art world: John Ruskin, John Everett Millais, and George Frederick Watts. Millais was described in the characteristic language of the *Strand* as "a painter without rival in range, manliness, and vigour, and in bold and masterly brush-work."[41] In the twenty-first century "manliness" might seem an unusual attribute for an artist, but it was often repeated in the *Strand* and other late nineteenth-century magazines.[42] As Herbert Sussman demonstrates, in Victorian discourse manliness was

"the result of arduous public or private ritual and, for the Victorian bourgeois, of continued demanding self-discipline."[43] Thus, the *Strand*'s "Portraits" typically showed the artist working long hours in his studio and achieving rewards both financial and social. Philip Calderon, for example, received "the first medal awarded to any English painter" at the 1867 Paris International Exhibition; at the 1878 Paris Exhibition, he was selected to exhibit an extra number of works, received a first-class medal, and was created "Knight of the Legion of Honour."[44] He was also a Royal Academician.

While membership in the Royal Academy signalled an artist's professional expertise, it was also a fair indicator of fame. Newnes and his editorial team assumed, for example, that readers had visited (or were about to visit) the Summer Exhibition and would ~~know~~ be familiar with the artists' work. Indeed, the *Strand* often referred to recent or current paintings shown at the Academy. The May 1892 "Portrait" of Marcus Stone mentions that "Two's Company, Three's None," on show "in the present Royal Academy, is a fine example of Mr Stone's work."[45] The *Strand* supported the Royal Academy without reservation; the popularity of a painting at the Summer Exhibition was deemed a major indicator of quality. The *Strand* similarly emphasised ~~the familiar~~ links to the Academy and other British art institutions when featuring foreign artists. Those who had the misfortune to be born abroad were thus repackaged as English. Alma-Tadema was born in Friesland, but the *Strand*'s "Portrait" notes that he "received letters of denization from the Queen of England, having resolved to settle permanently in this country."[46] We also learn that his English wife, a fellow artist showing at the Academy, is the daughter of "Dr Epps, whose cocoa is of world-wide fame."[47] Needless to say, Epps's cocoa was prominently advertised in the back pages of the *Strand*.

Harry How Establishes the *Strand*'s Style of Interviewing Celebrities

As I have explained, many art journals were already taking readers into artists' studios. But unlike the *Magazine of Art*'s M. H. Spielmann, the *Strand*'s first writer of interviews was not a professional art critic. Harry How was a journalist who developed his own style—polite, enthusiastic, and curious—as he wrote up the great and the good of late nineteenth-century society for the *Strand*'s "Illustrated Interviews." The first artist to be interviewed in this series was Henry Stacy Marks, hardly a household name now but popular at the time for his comic paintings of animals. How's interview with Marks established a format for the rest of the series.

How highlights his own privileged access to the artist's home and studio, confiding, "Mr Marks has promised me to unburden himself of his past life."[48] This became a characteristic move, and in later interviews his narration emphasises the personal tour: "I had the great privilege of being taken from room to room by Sir Frederick Leighton."[49] He similarly explains, "The door [of the studio] is opened by Mr Riviere, who, beckoning me, in a peculiarly happy sort of way, pleasantly invites me to 'come into my workshop.'"[50] How invites the reader to share in this intimacy, if just for the length of the article, and the illustrations further promote this experience.

To that end, the artist was almost always photographed at work in his studio. Marks gazes at his painting, palette to hand (figure 3). Leighton, whom How visited the following year, is also positioned in front of a painting, holding his palette, but has chosen to be photographed gazing into the distance (figure 4). Both are seemingly caught at rest, perhaps contemplating their next brushstroke. How also uses the same phrases to describe the physical appearance of all the artists he visits, as if they had been bred to a formula. Leighton is "still one of the handsomest of men. . . . He speaks very softly, with combined gentleness and deliberation."[51] Luke Fildes is "tall, well-built, with expressive features, and eyes that never fail to gather in 'life'—he is undeniably

handsome."[52] The sculptor Hamo Thornycroft has expressive eyes "that almost speak. . . . He speaks very quietly and very quickly, and believes in hard work."[53] Thomas Sidney Cooper, though ninety years old, has "marvellously penetrating eyes."[54] How's language was even copied by other journalists. For example, L. S. Baldry, describing Marcus Stone in the *Art Annual* of 1896, declared the artist was "tall, athletic, and in the prime of life [with a] keen glance."[55]

All the celebrities interviewed for the *Strand* had worked hard to achieve their positions of eminence, and How's artists were no exception. The values extolled by Samuel Smiles, from *Self-Help* (1859) to *Life and Labour* (1887), pervaded the magazine. Marks's house is described as belonging "to a man who wants to work."[56] Leighton is "one of the hardest worked men in London . . . in his studio by half-past eight every morning, and previous to that hour he has had his first breakfast, glanced through *The Times*, opened his letters, and read for three-quarters of an hour besides."[57] Thornycroft, we are told, keeps similar hours: "He is always in his studio at half-past eight, and has, before now, held on to his mallet until two the next morning. A man who puts in eighty hours a week—as he has done just before the Academy—is not afraid of work."[58] Cooper simply works all day, his only recreation being his twice daily reading aloud from the Bible.[59] These artists fitted the *Strand* stereotype of hardworking manliness, for as Andrew Dowling argues, "The significance of work for Victorian masculinity [lay in] quantified effort and endurance."[60] This may also explain why How noted the members of the Artists' Rifles. While they were hardly in the same league as the professional soldiers featured elsewhere in the *Strand*, their readiness to defend their country indicated the "manliness" achieved by "demanding self-discipline."[61]

How's interviews with artists also managed to fit ideals of Victorian domesticity. As John Tosh has argued, these ideals were inexorably linked to masculinity: "The English placed

domestic values at the heart of their culture….The ~~. . . [and] the~~ domestic ideal was formulated and promoted by men."[62] Thus, the *Strand* presented artists as husbands and fathers who are fond of their children and their pets. For example, How links Fildes's physical youthfulness to a contented life with his wife and six children, whom he permitted to be photographed in his garden (figure 5). How fails to mention that Fildes was forced to accept portrait commissions to cover the cost of educating his six children. His real work was a grind.

~~How~~'s choice of artists interviewed were almost all living in and around London. All occupied substantial studio-houses, designed by themselves or in collaboration with successful architects.[63] Of the fifteen interviewed, five artists lived in Holland Park, Kensington: Leighton, Fildes, Thornycroft, Valentine "Val" Prinsep, and Stone. As has been mentioned, the *Strand*'s most famous illustrator, Sidney Paget, also occupied a modest studio in Holland Park Road. The presence of G. F. Watts (who lodged for twenty-five years with the Prinseps in Little Holland House) and Leighton, who was President of the Royal Academy, had established Holland Park as the premier location for artists. Those who could not afford houses in the area took small studios with bedrooms attached, just to be close to the leaders of the art world. ~~Harry~~ How, however, limited his visits to the more substantial studio-houses.

Leighton's house, designed in collaboration with George Aitchison, draws the most rapturous remarks from How: "I do not think there is another home in the land so beautiful as Sir Frederick's. It is the home of an artist, who must needs have everything about the place to harmonise as the colours he lays upon his canvases."[64] Visiting Fildes's house in Melbury Road soon after, How uses similar phrases. Noting again that this is the "home of an artist," he explains, "Everything has its own artistic place and corner; nothing fails to harmonize, nothing comes short of gaining the effect wanted."[65] His interview with Thornycroft, also living in a

house on Melbury Road, continues the theme: "There is no thoroughfare in London more inviting to those in search of all that is interesting, all that is instructive, than the Melbury Road. To think of standing in a garden and being able to throw stones—carefully, of course—on to the green lawns of Sir Frederick Leighton, Mr Val Prinsep, R.A., Mr Watts, R.A., Mr Marcus Stone, R.A., and Mr Colin Hunter, A.R.A."[66]

How, accompanied by the *Strand* photographer, always paid attention to the collections of paintings, engravings, furniture, and furnishings in the artist's house. Noting that the first interviews by How appeared from July 1891 alongside the first Sherlock Holmes stories, James Mussell has compared How to Holmes: "[Holmes] consistently demonstrates to Watson and the reader the presence of other histories connected to the objects around which we structure society. . . . In explaining the past histories of the various ornaments, artworks and bric-a-brac, Harry How, just like Holmes, recreates the biography of the individual through the objects they surround themselves with."[67] How presents readers with evidence of good taste (according to How's definition) in the home. In Marks's drawing-room, How singles out "some exquisite Chippendale furniture," walls painted "delicate sage green" and a dado of "pale warm blue."[68] How also draws readers' attention to artists' collections, noting that Fildes collects works by his friends David Murray and Henry Woods and owns a copy by William Etty of a Giorgione. Leighton collects the work of his friends as well as pieces by Delacroix and Corot, and his copies are of Michelangelo's "Tondo" and the Elgin Marbles.

How further established the artists' status by naming their patrons, who were invariably interviewed for the *Strand* or featured in the "Portraits of Celebrities" series. Sir Henry Tate, for example, is identified as the commissioner of Fildes's popular painting "The Doctor," while the engineer Sir John Aird and the merchant financier Gustav Schwabe are named as owners of

Fildes's Venetian paintings. Thornycroft recalls Waterhouse (the architect of Eaton Hall) bringing the Duke of Westminster to see "Artemis," which the Duke then commissioned to be completed in marble for Eaton: "It was the real beginning of my success, for on that I was elected an Associate of the Academy in 1881."[69] Links to the royal family were the most prestigious, so How strategically notes that Fildes is busy painting the Duke of York and Princess Mary ~~May~~. Similarly, readers are invited, along with How, to view the engraving given to Leighton by the Prince of Wales.

The Legacy of Harry How's Style in the *Strand*

How's final interviews appeared in the *Strand* across the first six months of 1896, after which he appears to have retired from journalism. Prinsep was interviewed by Framley Steelcroft later in the year. An unlikely choice, Steelcroft was a regular *Strand* feature writer associated with rather different subjects, such as "Explosions" and "Big Game Hunters." It would appear the *Strand* was unable to commission a more sympathetic writer, and certainly the piece on Prinsep presents a different emphasis. There is the familiar name-dropping, as we learn that Prinsep's neighbours and closest friends are Leighton and Watts and that he was commissioned to paint the Indian Durbar of 1876 for the Queen. However, Steelcroft's recounting of how Prinsep despatched a pig—used to model the "Gadarene Swine" for Lord Hillingdon—with a shot from his rifle appears distasteful when compared to the polite anecdotes recorded by How. Steelcroft gives us Prinsep's physical appearance, a normal feature of the interviews, but again his words conjure up something more worldly: "In stature, a burly giant of nearly six feet three; in worldly wealth, rich; in reputation, a painter of distinction. Mr Val Prinsep is one of the most conspicuous figures in contemporary artistic and literary circles—to say nothing of *le monde ou l'on s'amuse*."[70] Whereas How had written an appreciative description of Leighton's palace of art, Steelcroft

could only generalise about Prinsep's home. He calls it "a sumptuously appointed palace replete with all that wealth can purchase and high artistic feeling dictate," declaring that "to describe the residence in detail would be a mere string of superlatives."[71] He was presumably not allowed an intimate "peep" by Prinsep—and he attempted no further interviews with artists for the *Strand*.

In 1899, after an interval of three years (and the deaths of Leighton, Millais, and Burne-Jones), the *Strand* commissioned Frederick Dolman and Rudolph de Cordova to interview artists. Dolman, a journalist who also wrote for rival periodicals including the *Windsor Magazine* and the *Quiver*, was to become a member of the Progressive Party of the London County Council from 1901. One of his earliest pieces on artists, "An Artist's Life-Work: A Morning with Mr B. W. Leader, A.R.A.," which appeared in the *Quiver* in January 1897, uses language reminiscent of How's interviews. Dolman is met at the Surrey railway station by Leader who is, unsurprisingly, "sturdy and strongly-built, with a robust colour."[72]

Dolman's "peeps" for the *Strand* between 1899 and 1905 follow How's familiar formula: the artist is photographed posing at work (or about to work) in his studio (figures 6 and 7). The artists are all specimens of rude good health: "Sir Lawrence looks lithe and strong . . . dressed in the *negligé* style of the studio, the brown hue of his clothes seeming to set off the slight colour on his frank, energetic face."[73] Their good taste and their circle of famous friends are again acknowledged through their collections of precious objects. Stone, for example, shows off the pocket corkscrew owned by Charles Dickens, which "Dickens used always to carry himself when travelling, which was given to Mr Stone when the great novelist died."[74] Like How, Dolman shares with the reader the intimacy with which he was treated by his famous interviewees. He and Alma-Tadema, for example, "seat ourselves in a little recess at the end of the [billiard] room" and light cigars.[75] At Hubert Herkomer's house in Bushey, Dolman is

immediately welcomed: “On coming into the reception-hall he [Herkomer] at once recognised an old acquaintance in the representative of THE STRAND MAGAZINE—he has, of course, the portrait-painter’s memory for faces. The words of protest against ‘interviews’ and ‘interviewers’ died upon his lips as he promptly helps me off with my coat, and in a few moments I am most comfortably installed in the studio.”[76]

De Cordova’s contributions to the *Strand* overlap with Dolman’s. He was a Jamaican-born British writer, actor, and screenwriter, married to the writer Alicia Ramsay. He wrote for the *Strand* between 1899 and 1905, interviewing two artists: George Boughton in July 1900 and Henry Woods in January 1901. He adopts the familiar approach, seeming to draw the reader into an intimate conversation: “I . . . drew closer to the fire . . . and Mr Boughton got into a reminiscent mood.”[77] However, De Cordova remains in the background while Boughton and Woods provide most of the text for these interviews, recounting stories from their early careers, friendships with other celebrities, and names of eminent patrons. Woods’s diary entry for January 3, 1901, shows that he was far from impressed by De Cordova’s approach: “There is absolutely no literature in it and very little about my work. A good example of the work done by far too many journalists nowadays, who interview and rely entirely upon their victims.”[78]

De Cordova’s account of Alma-Tadema’s hall panels, published in December 1902, was an extraordinary puff focusing on the artist’s unique position in the art world as revealed through the gifts of paintings from his friends: “There are many halls whose walls are graced by valuable paintings, some of which may be, and undoubtedly are, the gifts of artist friends. No other hall, however, is entirely adorned by the gift of brother artists whose work has been specially designed and executed for a certain definite place and no other; for each picture was painted to fill its own particular niche in the wall of the house beautiful at St. John’s Wood where Sir

Lawrence Alma-Tadema lives."[79] In the choice of artist, at least, De Cordova follows the style How had established. Alma-Tadema—knighted, wealthy, English, eager to be written up—was the epitome of a member of the *Strand* Club, "the leading lights of the upper and middle classes, from royalty to members of the professional classes, who endorsed the magazine and appeared in its pages."[80]

The Position of Women Artists in the *Strand*

Noticeably absent from the *Strand* Club and its pages were women artists. Between 1891 and 1898, thirty artists appeared in the "Portraits" series, of whom three were women.[81] Between 1891 and 1901, none of the fifteen artists who appeared in "Illustrated Interviews" were women.[82] Rival magazines did feature women, including the *Queen*, which was targeted specifically at women, and the populist middlebrow *Windsor*, which ran a few in-depth interviews.[83] Therefore, the *Strand*'s treatment of women artists bears some examination. The paucity of women artists certainly reflected the *Strand*'s preference for Royal Academicians like Alma-Tadema (or at least Associates), but How's strategies for interviewing celebrities also functioned to keep women artists out of the magazine. Perhaps the invasion of a woman's studio was considered too intimate for *Strand* readers.

The three women artists featured in "Portraits" were not members of the Academy but belonged to less prestigious societies. The *Strand* carefully noted their marital status. Louisa Starr (or Madame Canziani) was distinguished by winning a gold medal for historical painting while studying at the Royal Academy Schools.[84] Mrs. Helen Allingham was distinguished by her election to the Royal Society of Painters in Water-Colours and also for being the widow of the poet William Allingham.[85] Miss Henrietta Rae had won no prizes but had been showing at the Academy for sixteen years, at a price: "Such severe study naturally precluded her from all the

ordinary enjoyment of social pleasures, a penalty which a woman who wishes to succeed as a painter must be prepared to pay."[86] However, the article tempers this grim insight by noting that she did have the good fortune to be married to "Mr E. Normand, the well-known artist; they work together in their home at Norwood."[87]

A few other women artists featured in the *Strand* almost by accident. Fanny Fildes and Laura Alma-Tadema, both exhibiting artists, were given only supportive roles as "help-meets" in the interviews conducted by How with their husbands. While the sculptor Mary Thornycroft was given some prominence in the interview with her son Hamo, this was because a painting hanging in Melbury Road depicted her at work modelling Princess Louise, the sculptor daughter of Queen Victoria (figure 8). While these three women artists receive scant attention next to the men being featured, there is an exception. In one of the *Strand*'s last interviews with artists, Dolman gives equal prominence to a husband and wife, Stanhope and Elizabeth Forbes, though only Stanhope's name features in the title. Dolman left London in 1901 to interview the couple at their home in Newlyn, Cornwall. His article notes Elizabeth Forbes's current exhibition in Bond Street, her role running the Newlyn Art School with her husband, and her painting *en plein air* using a moveable painting hut. She is photographed at work, the only professional woman artist to be featured in such a way in the *Strand*, and four of her paintings are illustrated in the article (figure 9).

The *Strand* did engage a number of women authors, including the bestselling novelist Elizabeth Thomasina Meade (1844–1914) whose scientific and medical mysteries under the name L. T. Meade competed directly with Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories.[88] Meade herself featured in "Portraits" in 1898, just after the conclusion in the *Strand* of "The Brotherhood of the Seven Kings," her serial story "featuring the criminal machinations of the sinister female gang

leader Madame Koluchy."[89] But like the women artists who featured in this series, Meade's "Portrait" emphasised her femininity and role as a mother rather than her creation of a murderous femme fatale. Her professional success as L.T.Meade was separated from her conventional role as Elizabeth Thomasina Meade. She conducted just one interview, with the artist Edward Burne-Jones, published in 1895. Meade's approach and language differed from the other interviewers', particularly How's, perhaps reflecting the unique status of Burne-Jones, who hardly fitted the energetic manliness of other *Strand* celebrities. Her introduction dwelt on the power of the imagination, providing a context within which to introduce Burne-Jones's unique oeuvre: "In an age which is essentially without reverence or mystery, he stands aloof from the busy crowd, and paints canvas after canvas full of vague mysticism, of almost childlike longing to reach the secret which has never yet been revealed on sea or shore. . . . He belongs to the age in which he lives, but he has never really mixed with it. He spends his days in the romance of the past."[90] Like How, Meade emphasised the sheer hard work of the artist but with a very different turn of phrase. She traced Burne-Jones's journey from Oxford where he studied with the intention of taking holy orders, his meeting with William Morris, and subsequent decision to follow a career as an artist even though he had no training. "Perseverance and genius overcame all obstacles," she claimed, "and, step by step, the great master ascended the steep Hill of Difficulty, until he finally reached his present lofty eminence."[91] For all her empathy, Burne-Jones was unwilling to agree to the usual intimate "peep" into his life. There was no photograph of the artist at work, and his family was absent. The *Strand* photographer was only permitted to snap the entrance hall, the home studio, and the garden studio. Burne-Jones explained, "My pictures are for the people—my inner life for myself and my friends."[92]

Another successful novelist, Mrs. Desmond Humphreys, wrote a few stories about artists in the *Strand* under the name "Rita." In "Told in the Studios: Three Stories of Artist Life" (1891), she presented women in stereotypical roles: the coquettish model who marries the artist and becomes a dutiful wife; the model who leaves her artist-husband for a life of sin and eventual suicide; and the wife who takes up a paintbrush to complete the work of a desperately ill husband.[93] There are no independent "women of the brush," nor do the male artists present bohemian characteristics. Even her fictional male artists behave according to the gentlemanly ideals established by the *Strand*. The *Strand* was not ready to embrace the New Woman in its features on or by women; its position was conservative and conventional.

Conclusion

In its choice of artists to interview, the *Strand* was not ground-breaking. It focused on Royal Academicians, leaders of their profession. Their works appealed to the *Strand*'s middle-class readership, the majority of whom lived in and around London and were already regular visitors to the Academy. These male artists fitted comfortably within the *Strand*'s definition of celebrity, along with politicians, lawyers, doctors, soldiers, actors, and novelists. What mattered was that all those featured could present evidence of their hard work and the rewards they enjoyed of monetary and material wealth, supporting the *Strand* as a medium for "cultural security and class cohesion."[94]

However, by the beginning of the twentieth century, many of the artists who fitted this definition were either dead (Leighton 1896 and Millais 1896) or approaching the end of their careers and lives (Watts 1904 and Prinsep 1904). They were not replaced by a younger generation of successful artists of similar social status. As Paula Gillett notes, the art world was changing: "The splintering of the art world into unstable movements and factions (together with

the emphasis on formal concerns over thematic content) . . . served increasingly to remove the painter from the mainstream of ordinary life."[95] Younger artists could not afford to build or live in substantial studio-houses; they neither supported (nor were supported by) the Royal Academy and would have rejected Prinsep's view of that "august body" as published in the *Strand*: "An artist should devote himself wholly and solely to the advancement of its high tradition."[96]

The work of the new generation, but not their lives, was being championed by critics in new art periodicals. The *Studio*, founded in 1893 by Charles Holme, disdained "peeps" into artists' homes and workspaces. The *Burlington Magazine*, founded in 1903 and considered the "first real art history periodical of the English-speaking world," openly attacked the art and artists associated with the Royal Academy (and thus, the *Strand*) for "deal[ing] in fatuities, mild parlour jests, tit-bits of curiosity."[97] Roger Fry, in particular, regularly denounced the Academy artists with their "veritable debauch of trivial anecdotic picture-making such as the world has never seen before."[98] In 1909, when the Academy showed George McCulloch's collection comprising work by every artist in the *Strand*'s "Portraits" and "Interviews," Fry's pen was poised to attack. Comparing the Academy to "a well managed and successful sixpenny magazine," Fry could only have been thinking of the *Strand*.[99]

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NOTES

[1] Henry Woods R.A. to Luke Fildes R.A., September 8, 1893, Luke Fildes correspondence, National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum.

[2] Codell, "The Artist's Cause at Heart," 144.

[3] Codell, *The Victorian Artist*, 2–3.

[4] *The Art Journal* was founded in 1845 and the *Magazine of Art* in 1878. Under the editorship of Marcus Bourne Huish (1881–92) and David Croal Thomson (1892–1902), the *Art Journal* also published, semi-annually, the *Art Annual.* These special issues were dedicated to the most prestigious and well-off artists, built around interviews *in situ.* For discussion of Frederic Leighton, see Codell, *The Victorian Artist*, 240.

[8] Sly, "Illustrated Everyman," 26.

[9] See Cowell, *The Athenaeum*, 47.

[10] Fawcett and Phillpot, eds., *The Art Press*, 6.

[11] Dolman, "Painters and Their Pictures, Mr. Frank Dicksee."; Dolman, "Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema."

[12] Pound, *Mirror of the Century*, 30.

[13] Altick, *The English Common Reader*, 344.

[14] Altick, *The English Common Reader*, 366.

[15] Jackson, *George Newnes*, 15; italics in the original.

[16] See Boot, *Trees and How to Paint Them in Water-colour.*

[17] Jackson, *George Newnes*, 87.

[18] Jackson, *George Newnes*, 108.

[19] Jackson, *George Newnes*, 100.

[20] Jackson, *George Newnes,* 101.

[21] "Artists of 'The Strand Magazine,'" 786.

[22] "A Description of the Offices of the *Strand Magazine*," 596–97.

[23] Pound, *Mirror of the Century*, 52.

[24] Pound, *Mirror of the Century*, 52.

[25] Jackson, *George Newnes*, 94.

[26] Jackson, *George Newnes*, 94.

[27] Pound, *Mirror of the Century*, 85.

[28] Sly, "Illustrated Everyman," 23.

[29] Jackson, *George Newnes*, 12.

[30] Waterfield, ed., *The Artist's Studio*, 11.

[31] Jackson, *George Newnes*, 45.

[32] How, "Edmund Yates."

[33] Pound, *Mirror of the Century*, 85; Codell, *The Victorian Artist*, 244.

[34] Codell, *The Victorian Artist*, 244.

[35] Codell, *The Victorian Artist*, 71.

[36] Hind, "How Famous Artists Work," 539.

[37] James, "The Death of the Lion," 271.

[38] James, "The Aspern Papers," 60.

[39] Sly, "Illustrated Everyman," 26.

[40] "The Royal Academy Conversazione," 666.

[41] "Sir John Everett Millais, Bart," 372.

[42] For more on the Victorian discourse of manliness, see Dowling, *Manliness and the Male Novelist*, and Sussman, *Victorian Masculinities*.

[43] Sussman, *Victorian Masculinities*, 13.

[44] "Philip H. Calderon," 154.

[45] "Marcus Stone," 496.

[46] "L. Alma-Tadema," 47.

[47] "L. Alma-Tadema," 47.

[48] How, "Henry Stacy Marks," 111.

[49] How, "Sir Frederick Leighton," 127.

[50] How, "Mr Briton Riviere," 4.

[51] How, "Sir Frederick Leighton," 134.

[52] How, "Mr Luke Fildes, R.A.," 111.

[53] How, "Mr Hamo Thornycroft," 267.

[54] How, "Mr T. Sidney Cooper," 227.

[55] Baldry, "The Life and Work of Marcus Stone," 2.

[56] How, "Henry Stacy Marks," 111.

[57] How, "Sir Frederick Leighton," 134.

[58] How, "Mr Hamo Thornycroft," 267.

[59] How, "Mr T. Sidney Cooper," 227.

[60] Dowling, *Manliness and the Male Novelist*, 9.

[61] Sussman, *Victorian Masculinities*, 13.

[62] Tosh, *A Man's Place*, 5.

[63] Sly, "Illustrated Everyman," 19.

[64] How, "Sir Frederick Leighton," 127–28.

[65] How, "Mr Luke Fildes," 111.

[66] How, "Mr Hamo Thornycroft," 267.

[67] Mussell, *Science, Time and Space*, 74.

[68] How, "Henry Stacy Marks," 113.

[69] How, "Mr Hamo Thornycroft," 277.

[70] Steelcroft, "Mr Val C. Prinsep," 603.

[71] Steelcroft, "Mr Val C. Prinsep," 615.

[72] Dolman, "An Artist's Life-Work," 99.

[73] Dolman, "Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema," 604.

[74] Dolman, "Mr Marcus Stone," 133.

[75] Dolman, "Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema," 613.

[76] Dolman, "Hubert Herkomer," 435.

[77] De Cordova, "Mr George Henry Boughton," 3.

[78] Henry Woods diary entry, January 3, 1901.

[79] De Cordova, "The Panels in Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema's Hall," 615.

[80] Jackson, *George Newnes*, 115.

[81] List of artists included in series "Portraits of Celebrities." 1891: John Ruskin, G. F. Watts, J. E. Millais, H. S. Marks; 1892: Marcus Stone, W. P. Frith, Benjamin Leader, Laurence Alma Tadema, Philip Calderon, Edward Poynter, Frank Dicksee; 1893: W. Q. Orchardson, Hubert Herkomer, Erskine Nicol, John Macwhirter, George Reid, Colin Hunter, John Pettie, David Murray, Hamo Thornycroft; 1894: Madame Canziani (Louisa Starr); 1895: Helen Allingham, E. Onslow Ford; 1896: John Smart, Edwin Austin Abbey, Valentine Prinsep; 1897: Henrietta Rae; 1898: Linley Sambourne, Solomon J. Solomon, H. H. La Thangue.

[82] List of "Illustrated Interviews" of artists in the *Strand:* By Harry How: Henry Stacy Marks, 1891; Frederic Leighton, 1892; Luke Fildes, 1893; Hamo Thornycroft, 1893; T. Sidney Cooper, 1894; Briton Riviere, 1896. By L. T. Meade: Edward Burne-Jones, 1895. By Framley Steelcroft: Valentine Prinsep, 1896. By Frederick Dolman: Marcus Stone, 1899; Alma Tadema, 1899;

Hubert Herkomer, 1900; Stanhope A. Forbes, 1901; Frank Dicksee, 1902. By Rudolph de Cordova: George Henry Boughton, 1900; Henry Woods, 1901; Alma Tadema [panels in his hall], 1902. By Alma Tadema: "My Reminiscences," 1909.

[83] For example, see Bright, "The Difficulties of a Lady Sculptor," published in *Windsor Magazine*.

[84] "Madame Canziani," 624.

[85] "Mrs Helen Allingham," 175.

[86] "Miss Henrietta Rae," 52.

[87] "Miss Henrietta Rae," 52.

[88] For more on Meade and Doyle, see Dawson, "Rivalling Conan Doyle."

[89] Dawson, "Rivalling Conan Doyle," 54; "Miss L. T. Meade," 674.

[90] Meade, "Sir Edward Burne-Jones," 16.

[91] Meade, "Sir Edward Burne-Jones," 25.

[92] Meade, "Sir Edward Burne-Jones," 26.

[93] "Rita" [Mrs. Desmond Humphreys], "Told in the Studios."

[94] Jackson, *George Newnes*, 94.

[95] Gillett, *The Victorian Painter's World*, 241.

[96] Steelcroft, "Mr Val C. Prinsep," 615.

[97] Fawcett and Phillpot, eds., *The Art Press*, 14; Waterfield, *The People's Galleries*, 306.

[98] Dakers, *The Holland Park Circle*, 273.

[99] Dakers, *The Holland Park Circle*, 273.

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