

# BOHEMIANS AND GENTLEMEN

THE REPRESENTATION OF ARTISTS  
IN BRITISH SOCIETY 1850–1950



## THE PROLOGUE: THE FORMATION OF A NEW RESEARCH PROJECT

I began teaching in the Liberal Studies Department of the Central School of Art & Design in 1975. This was a time when all BA students chose (and studied together) courses offered by Liberal Studies in the History of Art and Design, Social Studies and Literature. When I ran a seminar called 'Artists in Literature' we read a range of texts from Tennyson's *The Lady of Shalott* (textiles) and Keats's *Ode to a Grecian Urn* (ceramics) to John Fowles's *The Ebony Tower* (painting). The Brontës provided women artists, in *Jane Eyre* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. One of the students' tasks was to invent and present to the group their own fictional artist. The Bohemian type figured large.

Meanwhile I completed my PhD on 'Writers and the English Countryside 1900–1930' at University College London and then used part for *The Countryside at War 1914–1918* (Constable). One of the themes of the book is the response of artists and writers to the war, not just through their creative work but also in their actual lives. I found myself contrasting the bravery of John and Paul Nash serving with the Artists' Rifles to the casually pacifist position of Bloomsbury artist Duncan Grant and his lover Bunny Garnett. And the recent TV series *Life in Squares* did little to allay my unease about artists sitting out the war in Charleston painting still lifes and portraits while turning a deaf ear to the explosions just across the English Channel on the western front.

In a later book, *The Holland Park Circle, Artists and Victorian Society* (Yale 1999) I studied a previous generation of British artists who, between 1850 and 1900, enjoyed extraordinary wealth and social status. They were celebrities, many living in grand studio-houses in Kensington, Chelsea and St John's Wood. Some were rewarded by the state with knighthoods, baronetcies and, in the case of Frederic Leighton, a peerage. They were hardly bohemians, indeed the majority wanted to be accepted as gentlemen – as did many of their nouveau riche patrons.

*Clouds: the biography of a country house* (Yale 1993) used material from my MA thesis at the Royal College of Art. I followed the life of a particular house from the mid-19th century when it was a famous location for art patronage to the end of the 20th century and its current role as a centre for the treatment of drug addicts and alcoholics. Richard Wyndham, the last aristocrat to own Clouds, was also an

artist, an art collector, a writer, a bon viveur and ‘champagne bohemian’. His preference for tying girl-friends up with ropes provided his some-time friend Wyndham Lewis with the excuse to dub him the ‘ape-flagellant’ in his book *The Apes of God* (1930). In 1948 he was shot dead in Lebanon reporting on the conflict between Arabs and Jews.

I thought he would make an exciting book – however it wasn’t enough that he had been one of the models for Charles Ryder in Evelyn Waugh’s *Brideshead Revisited*, or collected contemporary European art (Picasso, Severini) at a time when British taste was set against the modern, or left an extraordinary diary recounting his experiences in the war-torn Middle East. Who would buy a book about someone virtually unknown?

So I came by this circuitous route to my new project, ‘Bohemians and Gentlemen’, with walk-on parts for all the artists from my previous books, but also a place for that early seminar ‘artists in literature’, because my over-arching theme is how artists have been represented, categorised, manipulated and mythologised. And literature is at the heart of the project.

In this booklet I am presenting a series of possible chapters for a book that has yet to be written.

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A NEW RESEARCH PROJECT BY  
PROFESSOR CAROLINE DAKERS

## INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT

Artists are not exquisite ... the artist is an eternal type, solid, purposeful, observant – and, beneath it all, p-p-passionate, eh, Charles?

Evelyn Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited*, 1945

How do we understand the artist; how do we imagine he or she lives? Is our view formed by visiting exhibitions or artists' studios, reading criticism, biography or novels, looking at self-portraits and photographs, watching films? Do we feel we know Vermeer through looking at his paintings, reading a catalogue or Tracy Chevalier's historic novel or watching Colin Firth and Scarlet Johansson star in *Girl with a Pearl Earring*?

My aim is to examine the multi-faceted construction of the artistic identity, the imagined artist, and how it changed across an important period in British art history. I shall be looking at the public reception and perception of the artist and the artist's own performance for his or her public, a performance that could be influenced or even controlled by the dealer. I shall trace the relationship, sometimes the battle, between two supposedly oppositional images of the artist, the bohemian and the gentleman. I shall also trace the impact on these masculine concepts of the increasing presence of the female artist.

For the tricky definition of the bohemian I am borrowing from Grana & Grana (eds.), *On Bohemia. The code of the Self-Exiled*, 1990:

(1) an attitude of dissent from the prevailing values of middle-class society – artistic, political, utilitarian, sexual – usually expressed in lifestyle and through a medium of the arts;  
and (2) a cafe.

I shall be focusing on artists' self-portraits, photographs and memoirs alongside their treatment in biographies and interviews, in photographs and paintings, in cartoons and by the press; also fictional interpretations in novels and poetry.

My time-frame, between 1850 and 1950, is a key century for the artist in Britain. During this period artists experienced an extraordinary change in their status and wealth. And the change would appear to mirror the rise and then fall in the status of Britain as a world power. Fifty or more years of rising wealth and social status (it was dubbed the golden age for artists) gave way to another 50 years in which, for young modern artists 'neither income nor employment was easily found'.

From 1900 onwards grand studio-houses in Kensington were divided or demolished and artists instead occupied modest lodgings in Fitzrovia and Camden Town. The image (and reality) of the gentleman artist faded; the bohemian appeared to take centre stage. Only external events, in the form of the First and Second World Wars, alleviated their parlous state by offering employment on the home front and abroad.



Frederick Walker, *The Woman in White*, 1871, Tate. Life-sized poster made to advertise Wilkie Collins' play *The Woman in White*, which opened at the Olympic Theatre, London, October 1871.



Illustration by William Holman Hunt for Tennyson's 'The Lady of Shalott' in *Poems*, published by E Moxon and Co., 1857.



George du Maurier's own illustration of Trilby modelling, in his novel *Trilby*, published 1894.

## CHAPTER ONE WRITING THE ARTIST

'Is he [Walter Hartright, artist] a foreigner, or an Englishman? Is he respectable?'

'Sir! The immortal fire of genius burns in this Englishman's bosom, and, what is more, his father had it before him!'

'Never mind about his genius. We don't want genius in this country, unless it is accompanied by respectability – and then we are very glad to have it, very glad indeed.'

Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White*, 1860

This chapter identifies the emergence of the artist as a 'character' in 19th century literature. It traces its development through Thackeray and Dickens, Charlotte and Anne Bronte, Wilkie Collins, Disraeli, Christina Rossetti and Robert Browning, George Eliot, George du Maurier and Henry James; establishing definitions for 'bohemian'; drawing comparisons with France (eg Murger's *Scènes de la vie de bohème*, 1847–9).

Were the rules and expectations different for women artists in fiction? Arthur Huntingdon (Anne Bronte, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, 1848) regards his wife's plans to live off her painting as 'low, beggarly'.

And how relevant is the role of the artist as the illustrator of novels and poetry?



W.F. Yeames, *And when did you last see your father?* Walker Art Gallery, National Museums Liverpool.



*Our Royal Cousin*, Valentine Prinsep as Henry VIII photographed by Julia Margaret Cameron, 1874. Royal Photographic Society / National Media Museum / Science & Society Picture Library.

## CHAPTER TWO ENGLISHNESS

This chapter focuses on the artist as a gentleman, in particular concepts of manliness, of being English, being clubbable.

It will focus on the St John's Wood Clique and their major patrons, the nouveau riche collectors Gustave Christian Schwabe (the White Star Line) and Sir John Aird (the Aswan Dam). Also the links between artists painting English history, their collectors benefitting financially from the Empire and establishing gentlemanly credentials through the purchase of history paintings.

It will examine numerous write-ups of 'manly' artists and their activities, including, bizarrely, joining the Artists' Rifles:

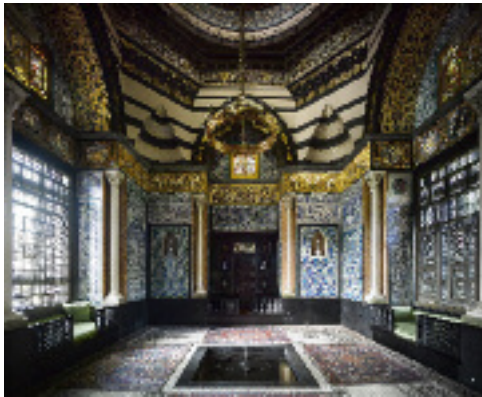
Not less admired was the little company of artists [Rifles]. Such splendid beards, worthy of Titian, and such fine faces! Imagine some dirty little scrub of a Frenchman picking off his Stanfield, or potting a Millais, in an affair before breakfast! But there would be plenty of Englishmen left to avenge them, and to paint good pictures afterwards.

*Once a Week*, 1860

It will consider novels defining appropriate and inappropriate behaviour for artists (eg Trollope and Wilkie Collins). Finally it will examine the increasing role of photography in presenting artists to their public.



Luke Fildes RA entertained by collector George McCulloch c.1897. Fildes is seated in front of his painting *An Alfresco Toilette*. Private collection

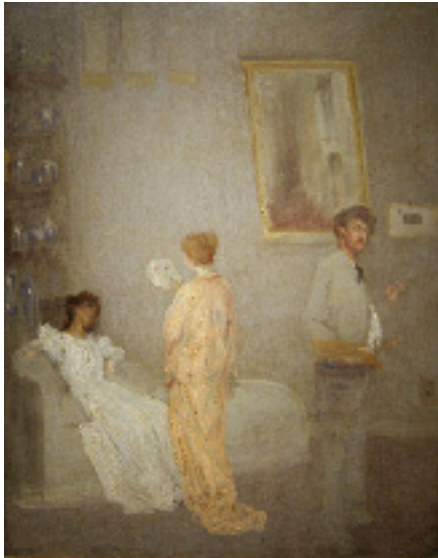


Leighton House Museum, Arab Hall.  
© Will Pryce.

## CHAPTER THREE PROPERTY

This chapter focuses on the status attached to owning property: artists investing in studio-houses in which to work and to show off their collections; nouveau riche collectors acquiring appropriate houses in which to display their collections, entertain artists and increase their status; architects and interior decorators benefitting all round. George McCulloch's collection will be one of the case studies, also houses designed by Richard Norman Shaw.

There are references also to Leighton's position in Holland Park (his palace of art by Aitchison) and as President of The Royal Academy. And extensive press coverage and magazine profiles, all laudatory.



James Abbott McNeill Whistler, *The Artist in His Studio*, 1865–6, Art Institute of Chicago.  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chicago\\_art\\_inst\\_whistler\\_artist.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chicago_art_inst_whistler_artist.JPG)



Dante Gabriel Rossetti by Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (Lewis Carroll), 7 October 1863, National Portrait Gallery



Whistler versus Ruskin. An appeal to the law. Naughty critic, to use bad language! Silly painter, to go to law about it! *Punch*, 7 December 1878.  
<http://www.qub.ac.uk/schools/SchoolofEnglish/visual-culture/painting/Whistler-Ruskin.html>

## CHAPTER FOUR ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT

Not all artists wanted to be ‘gentlemen’. From the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood to the New English Art Club, groups of artists and an increasing number of critics set themselves up against the establishment (they were anti-Royal Academy and pro-France). Chelsea became a focus *eg* Whistler, D G Rossetti and Oscar Wilde.

Significant public events fuelled debates about the role of the artist in society. They include the Whistler-Ruskin trial and the opening of the Grosvenor Gallery, both in 1878.

But are these rebels truly ‘bohemian’ or merely engaging in ‘product differentiation’? What about the gently mocking position of *Punch*, of Gilbert & Sullivan’s *Patience* and F C Burnand’s *The Colonel*.





George Cruikshank, scene from 'The Bottle', his 1847 series warning against excessive consumption of alcohol. Merchandising spin-offs from the series included tea trays and magic lantern slides.  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The\\_bottle,\\_by\\_George\\_Cruikshank\\_Wellcome\\_L0007411.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_bottle,_by_George_Cruikshank_Wellcome_L0007411.jpg)



Edward Burne-Jones, *Phyllis and Demophoon*, 1870, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. Maria Zambaco is the model for the faces of Phyllis and Demophoon. The painting was controversial and withdrawn from public exhibition because Demophoon was naked.



Edward Burne-Jones, *The Tree of Forgiveness*, 1881–2, Lady Lever Art Gallery, National Museums Liverpool. In the second 'acceptable' version, Demophoon is discretely draped but Phyllis has lost her wrap.

## CHAPTER FIVE SECRETS

This chapter focuses on some of the scandals that convulsed the art world and some that remained successfully hidden, on biographies and fictions that hide as much as they reveal.

W P Frith maintained a wife, a mistress and two large families. Here Frith's daughter Jane alludes, in her published autobiography, to the discovery by Mrs Frith of her rival.

The artistic temperament has its great and undoubted drawbacks, but such as they are they do not touch the children or young people of the household; and I can honestly say that, despite the trouble, the great trouble my father once gave my mother, I never remembered the smallest 'row' or unpleasant wrangle in our household ... There may be, there are, concealed lapses from the strict code of morals prescribed by Mrs Grundy.

J E Panton, *Leaves from a life*, 1902

Other case studies include George Cruikshank who also maintained two families, living a life of professed sobriety with his wife but keeping the cellar of his mistress stocked with wine; G F Watts and his divorce from the actress Ellen Terry; Tissot's relationship with his model Katherine Newton; Frederic Leighton, his model and their illegitimate son; Burne-Jones' relations with his model Maria Zambaco.

Censorship will feature, also the state's attitude towards the treatment of homosexuals, including the tragic persecution of Simeon Solomon who ended his days in St Giles' Workhouse.



Laurence Alma-Tadema, *The Tepidarium*, 1881, Lady Lever Art Gallery, National Museums Liverpool. Acquired by Thomas Barrett, Managing Director of Pears, to be used as an advertisement for soap, but considered too sexy.



Millais, *Bubbles*, 1885–6, Lady Lever Art Gallery, National Museums Liverpool. Purchased with its copyright by A & F Pears, it was used for decades as an advertisement after a bar of soap was added (with the permission of Millais)

## CHAPTER SIX CONSUMING THE ARTIST: SOAP, BISCUITS AND CHRISTMAS CARDS

This chapter focuses on the relationship between artists, industrialists like Pears and Lever and the ruthless commercial use of reproductions (Millais' *Bubbles*, Helen Allingham's country cottages) . This is about the popularisation of images, 'dumbing down'.

It will also cover the link between popularity and honours, commissions to paint the royal family and the distribution of copies of portraits across the empire (eg Sir Luke Fildes KCVO, portrait-painter of Edward VII and George V).



The murder of Basil Hallward. Illustration by Eugene Dete, from drawing by Paul Thiriat, published in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Paris: Charles Carrington, 1908 [1910].



The murder of Basil Hallward. Illustration by Madjeska, published in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. New York: Horace Liveright, 1930.

## CHAPTER SEVEN BURYING ARTISTS (AND ART)

Dorian Gray glanced at the picture, and suddenly an uncontrollable feeling of hatred for Basil Hallward came over him. The mad passions of a hunted animal stirred within him, and he loathed the man who was seated at the table, more than he had ever loathed anything in his whole life. He glanced wildly around. Something glimmered on the top of the painted chest that faced him. His eye fell on it. He knew what it was. It was a knife that he had brought up, some days before, to cut a piece of cord, and had forgotten to take away with him. He moved slowly towards it, passing Hallward as he did so. As soon as he got behind him, he seized it, and turned round. Hallward moved in his chair as if he was going to rise. He rushed at him, and dug the knife into the great vein that is behind the ear, crushing the man's head down on the table, and stabbing again and again.

Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 1890

This chapter contrasts the grand funerals and expensive memorials to Victorian artists with the collapse in value of their art and the fall in their reputations. Thousands attended Leighton's funeral in St Paul's Cathedral but his studio-house, once a 'palace of art' was instantly a white elephant. Henry James observed:

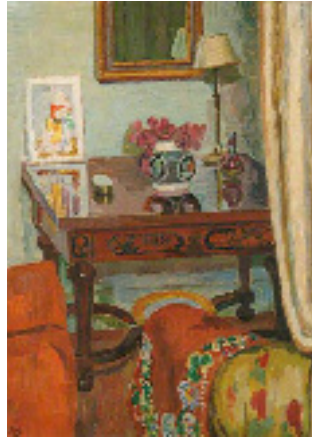
Lord Leighton's beautiful house, almost immediately after his funeral, was offered as a memorial to the nation if the nation would subscribe to buy it. The nation, scarce up from its genuflections at St. Paul's, but-toned its pocket without so much as scratching its head. Since then his two sisters ... have generously made known that they will present the house as a museum for relics of their brother if the public, in its commemorative enthusiasm, will collect the relics and keep up the establishment. Nothing is more presumable than that the public will do nothing of the sort.

Henry James, *Lord Leighton and Ford Madox Brown*, 1897.

St Paul's Cathedral as the location for 'great' artists will be contrasted with Wilde's *Dorian Gray* and the violent murder of Basil Hallward, and Henry James' novella *A Private Life* (1893) which creates a far-from-complimentary fictional version of Leighton. Also the increasingly powerful part played by critics hostile to Victorian realism and realists, including Roger Fry. He declared Alma-Tadema is like 'wholesome margarine'.



22 Hyde Park Gate, childhood home of Vanessa Bell and Virginia Woolf, rejected in favour of Bloomsbury.



Vanessa Bell, *8 Fitzroy Street*, Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne.



The Restaurant de la Tour Eiffel, 1 Percy Street, Fitzrovia. Favourite haunt of the Vorticists.

## CHAPTER EIGHT DOWNSIZING AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY: FROM KENSINGTON TO FITZROVIA (WHILE DREAMING OF PARIS)

While old Royal Academicians remained inside the establishment bubble, and inside their grand houses, a new generation of artists, without the support of wealthy patrons, could only afford modest, sometimes squalid lodgings in Fitzrovia and Camden Town; their 'clubs' were formed in pubs, cheap restaurants, and cafes, the traditional haunts of the bohemian.

But while both their paintings and their earnings were small in comparison to their predecessors, their unorthodox exhibitions and lifestyles gained attention and sometimes notoriety. Were they once again truly 'bohemian'? Diverse novels provide illuminating insights, including Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga*.



John Nash, *Over the Top*. 1st Artists' Rifles at Marcoing, 30th December 1917, Imperial War Museum.

Of the 15,022 Artists' Rifles fighting in the First World War, 2003 were killed, 3250 wounded and 533 posted missing. By this time not many were artists, though Edward Thomas and Wilfred Owen were among the dead.

'Binks's Patent Futurist Scarecrow', *Punch* 17 July 1918.  
© Punch Limited.



Illustration: Binks's Patent Futurist Scarecrow. The first and only one made by the Binks Scarecrow Co. Ltd.

## CHAPTER NINE: MEN AT ARMS

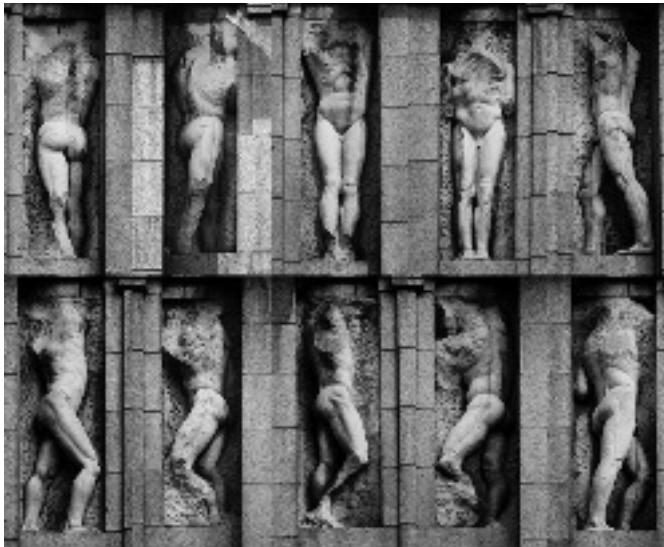
This chapter examines the varied roles of artists during and immediately after the First World War, as soldiers, pacifists and non-combatants and official war artists.

The focus is on the reactions of the government, the public and the popular press, including cartoonists, who were not always complimentary.

Also the extraordinary ability of 'Bloomsbury' to sit out the war at Charleston without attracting much criticism.



Jacob Epstein, Rima, Hyde Park London.  
<http://venicebiennale.britishcouncil.org/people/reference/jacob-epstein>



Photograph of Epstein's sculptures in the Strand after their mutilation  
<https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/236x/c3/ae/12/c3ae1230e5330f7f903eac7ef860f1c.jpg>

## CHAPTER TEN MODERNISM IS THE WORK OF THE DEVIL

The dining-room was very unlike the hall. The panelling had been stripped off, and the walls and ceiling were covered with a dead-black satiny paper on which hung the most monstrous pictures in large dull-gold frames. ... they seemed to be a mere riot of ugly colour.

The young man (Lancelot Wake) nodded towards them. 'I see you have got the Degousses hung at last' he said. 'How exquisite they are!' cried Miss Claire. 'How subtle and candid and brave! Doria and I warm our souls at their flame'.

Some aromatic wood had been burned in the room, and there was a queer sickly scent about. Everything in that place was strained and uneasy and abnormal – the candle shades on the table, the gaudy hangings and the nightmarish walls.

John Buchan, *Mr Standfast*, 1919

Fear of modernism and modern artists began before the First World War but returned with a vengeance with the peace. A major case study will be the demonising of the Jewish sculptor Jacob Epstein from 1907 through to 1950. Also attention given to the increase in art schools and, critically, to female art students. The context is provided by the conservative taste of the establishment (Tate and Presidents of the Royal Academy), attacks on art and artists in popular fiction and the popular press, especially cartoonists (David Low in particular).



Wyndham Lewis, *The Apes of God*, 1st published 1930.



Some of Wyndham Lewis's 'enemies', including Constant Lambert, Richard Wyndham, Tom Driberg, Cyril Connolly and Stephen Spender, private collection.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN CHAMPAGNE BOHEMIANS

'Where's the fucking stipend?' Wyndham Lewis to Fanny Wadsworth.

London Bohemia – the most pettifogging calculating Bohemia that ever reckoned in pennies ... Painters, musicians, writers – hangers-on, models, advanced young people, anybody who is openly at outs with the conventions, and belongs to nowhere particularly. They are often young fellows down from the University, and girls who are living their own lives, as they say. D H Lawrence, *Women in Love*, 1920.

The focus here is on one novel, Wyndham Lewis's 1930 *The Apes of God* and the people he attacked in it, his 'apes' – 'gossip-mad, vulgar, pseudo artists, good-timers'. They included Raymond Drey and his wife Anne Estelle Rice the Fauvist painter, Edward and Fanny Wadsworth, Sacheverell and Osbert Sitwell and the 'architectural painter' and pupil of Lewis, Richard 'Whips' Wyndham, the 'ape-flag-ellant'.

This is the artistic world between the wars which encompasses 'Bloomsbury' and Evelyn Waugh's 'Bright Young Things', presented to the public through fiction and the popular press. Osbert Lancaster called them 'culture-hounds'.

The immense increase in size and circulation of newspapers and magazines, the rapid development of the cinema industry, the coming of the B.B.C, the colossal expansion of advertising, and, later, the establishment of such organisations as the British Council, had transformed the pocket *Vie de Boheme*, which flourished in the late 'nineties into a vast army of salaried culture-hounds, an army which recruited its main strength from the younger generation of the upper-middle-class.

Osbert Lancaster, *All done from memory*, 1953



Agatha Troy painting Sir Henry Ancred in Final Curtain, 1947, illustrated by Robert Fawcett. [http://randomjottings.typepad.com/random\\_jottings\\_of\\_an\\_ope/ngaio-marsh/](http://randomjottings.typepad.com/random_jottings_of_an_ope/ngaio-marsh/)



Laura Knight, *Self-Portrait*, c.1913, given to the Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington in 1936.

## CHAPTER TWELVE MURDERING ARTISTS

'There's been some fuss about that young artist, Mr Redding, hasn't there? He's a very good-looking young fellow.'

'But loose .... Bound to be. An artist! Paris! Models! The Altogether!'  
Agatha Christie, *Murder at the Vicarage*, 1930

Ambrose Ledbury was the man who had that studio over Boulter's Mews. Powerfulness was his strong suit, and being above worldly considerations. He was rugged and wore homespun and painted craggy people in bedrooms, but his colour was amazing. He really could paint and so we could excuse a lot, but he was a professional heart-breaker.

Dorothy L Sayers, *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club*, 1928

Popular literature is the main focus in this chapter; the extent to which artists featured in the phenomenon now dubbed the 'golden age of murder'. Dorothy L Sayers, Margery Allingham, Agatha Christie and the New Zealand author Ngaio Marsh are the case studies, in particular Sayers' *Five Red Herrings* featuring the artists' settlement at Kirkcudbright and *The Documents in the Case*, Allingham's *Death of a Ghost* and Marsh's *Artists in Crime*. Most perpetuate the image of the artist as bohemian, sexually rampant, addicted to drink and drugs but sometimes genius.

Marsh is unusual in creating a serious and successful woman artist, Agatha Troy RA, who eventually marries her detective, Chief Inspector Alleyn. Troy appears first in *Artists in Crime*, published in 1938, two years after Laura Knight was elected a Royal Academician, the first woman to be elected RA since the 18th century.





Richard Wyndham, *Dinka Herdsman*, c.1935, Tate (East Anglia Foundation)



Duncan Grant, *South of France*, 1922, Tate

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN FLIGHT (OR BOHEMIANS ABROAD)

If made to work late in the evening, [my models] would invariably complain, 'But what about the lions on the road?' and I found this no less tiresome than, 'What about the last bus home?' The scale of wages that they demanded seemed peculiar only at first; later I regarded it as normal that they should insist on being given a coin of the lowest value, which, since it had a hole in the centre, could be worn round the neck.

Richard Wyndham, *The Gentle Savage*, 1936

This chapter focuses on real and fictional artists (and their writers) fleeing a conservative, homophobic, anti-Semitic establishment Britain between the wars. If Britain is no longer conducive to the production and positive reception of contemporary modern art is the only solution to leave, to seek a sympathetic audience elsewhere?

D H Lawrence's post-war bitterness is relevant. Gudrun goes to Dresden with Loerke: 'it will be amusing to take part in German Bohemian life' (*Women in Love*). Lawrence went much further, Italy, France, Australia and New Mexico.

For some, leaving London for Sussex or Wiltshire was far enough, though 'Bloomsbury' regularly left England for the south of France. Somerset Maugham settled at Cap Ferrat on the Mediterranean though the hero of *The Moon and Sixpence*, his fictional version of the life of Gauguin, had to die in Tahiti. The Sitwells established their furthest retreat in an Italian castle decorated by the Futurist artist Severini. Richard Wyndham, one of the models for Evelyn Waugh's artist-narrator Charles Ryder, spent a few months in the South of Sudan; Ryder escaped his wife and found fresh subject-matter in the jungle of Central America.



Eric Ravilious, *Tea at Furlongs*, 1939,  
Fry Art Gallery.



Lawn Road Flats, Hampstead, 1934, designed by  
Wells Coates  
[http://design.designmuseum.org/media/item/4202/-1/126\\_7Lg.jpg](http://design.designmuseum.org/media/item/4202/-1/126_7Lg.jpg)



Epstein's, *Jacob and the Angel* at Blackpool 1942.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN BACK TO THE HOME FRONT

'Imagine then my excitement at luncheon today. Everyone was talking about you....how you had broken away, my dear, gone to the tropics, become a Gauguin, a Rimbaud. You can imagine how my old heart leaped ... and what did I find? ... It was charm again, my dear, simple, creamy English charm, playing tigers ... Charm is the great English blight. It does not exist outside these damp islands. It spots and kills anything it touches. It kills love; it kills art; I greatly fear, my dear Charles, it has killed you.'

Anthony Blanche criticises the 'new' work by Charles Ryder;  
Evelyn Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited*, 1945

In the late 1930s artists from Nazi Germany fled to Britain in search of an alternative 'home' and freedom to work. Their arrival just before the Second World War brought international modernism to the heart of Britain (at least Hampstead), and considerable media coverage. However, Britain was hardly ready to embrace modernism, or its artists, and the majority moved on to the USA.

Meanwhile, many home-grown modernists shifted towards tradition and Englishness. Anthony Blanche accused Charles Ryder of 'playing with tigers'. John Piper and John Betjeman 'recorded' Britain.

While the tabloids continued to attack and ridicule the monumental sculptures of Jacob Epstein, the war provided an unusual opportunity for his work to be shown to a wider public. From 1939 his sculptures joined the entertainments on the front at Blackpool. And shortly before his death, in 1954, this 'mad, bad and dangerous' artist was deemed sufficiently 'gentlemanly' to be given a knighthood.



Caroline Dakers, Lisbon 2014 (Neil Burton)

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Caroline Dakers is Professor of Cultural History at the University of the Arts London. She is also Research Leader for the Culture & Enterprise Programme, and teaches on BA and MA Culture, Criticism and Curation. She currently supervises 5 PhD students.

Caroline graduated from University College London with a BA Hons in English Literature in 1974. She completed her PhD at UCL in 1982, and an MA by thesis in the Department of Cultural History at the Royal College of Art in 1988.

She began teaching part-time in the Liberal Studies Department of Central School of Art & Design in 1975. From 1986 to 1989 she was Acting Head of Liberal Studies. With the merger with St Martin's she became a Senior Lecturer in the Cultural Studies Department; then, from 1991 Co-ordinator of Cultural Studies for Central Saint Martins and Liaison Tutor in Cultural Studies for BA Fashion, Textiles & Jewellery.

In 2004 she established the humanities degree BA Hons Criticism, Communication & Curation with 22 students in the first year. She stepped down from being Course Leader in 2014, leaving a successful degree attracting students from all over the world, and a total cohort of over 150.

She has written a number of books including *The Blue Plaque Guide to London* (also illustrated), Macmillan, 1981; *British Railway Journeys*, Fourth Estate 1985–6 (4 volumes); *The Countryside at War 1914–1918*, Constable 1987; *Clouds, the biography of a country house*, Yale University Press 1993; *The Holland Park Circle: Artists and Victorian Society*, Yale University Press 1999; *A Genius for Money, Business, Art and the Morrisons*, Yale University Press 2011.

She has curated an exhibition at St James' Art Group, Jermyn Street, *Richard Wyndham The Gentle Savage*, 1993; also two exhibitions at Leighton House Museum: *Artists at Home, the Holland Park Circle*, 1999–2000; *George Aitchison, Leighton's Architect Revealed*, 2011. She organised a 2-day symposium on 'Recovering Fonthill' in 2014 sponsored by the Paul Mellon Foundation and CSM.

She is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and a member of the Senior Historians Group.

She is currently working on 'Recovering Fonthill', for UCL Press. A new edition of *The Countryside at War* is being published by IB Tauris, *Forever England. The Countryside at War 1914–18* (December 2015). She is in discussions with a publisher regarding 'Bohemians and Gentlemen'.

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Professorial Platform 2015

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