

A Study of Winifred Knights, 1915-1933

Rosanna Eckersley

Department of Art History and World
Art Studies
University of East Anglia

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

November 2015

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Abstract

Winifred Knights, 1899-1947, was a student at the Slade School of Art from 1915, where she developed a decorative manner of rhythmic, repetitive forms, one form of cautious modernism. In 1920 she was the first woman to win the Rome Prize in Decorative Painting. The award was for three years at the British School at Rome. Knights often chose to base her paintings on biblical subjects, or the lives of saints. She was not religious and I argue that these stories, which were well-known in Britain at the time, were vehicles to represent the lives of women and families in the unsettled years during and after WWI. Many women artists have depicted domestic scenes, but Knights chose the exterior and multi-figure compositions, including many self-portraits. She used these compositions to explore women's vulnerability, rebellion against male control, maternity and the self-sufficiency of a women's community. Personal material is present in all her work and much of it deals with the traumas she suffered. My thesis argues that her paintings' engagement with the viewer is not restricted by this material: the themes she explored resonated with contemporaneous viewers, as they do today. The argument closely examines Winifred Knights' paintings, including their art historical sources. It draws on her correspondence and on the social conditions of Britain and Italy. The small number of her oil paintings is no measure of Knights' success as artist and woman. Indeed, the many dimensions of life as artist, woman, mother and wife were important to Knights. While previous studies of women artists have regarded biography as artistic source material or distraction, I argue that it is central to understanding Knights and her contexts. This thesis therefore argues that the many aspects of a complete life fed into Knights' painting and can be seen in her sensitive depictions of women's lives.

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Acknowledgements

This thesis has taken four and a half years to write, studying part-time, and over this period many people have helped me towards the completion of my project. I would like to thank the archivists, curators and owners of public and private collections who have so generously given access to their collections. The time that they have given to discuss Winifred Knights' work has been very useful. Some private collectors have chosen to remain anonymous, but I thank them here. Staff at the British School at Rome, Canterbury Cathedral Archives, James Allen's Girls' School, University College Art Museum, University College London Special Collections and the University of Kent Special Collections were particularly helpful.

This is an opportunity to thank individuals. My conversations with John Monnington, the artist's son and with Catherine Monnington, the artist's grand-daughter, have been invaluable to my work. I have been teaching Art History whilst working on my thesis, and conversations with my students, particularly at Birkbeck College and the Open University, have been thought-provoking. I wish to thank the staff and students at the University of East Anglia with whom I have discussed my work. I cannot thank everyone individually, but must mention Sarah Monks, my second supervisor, and UEA student members of the British Art Discussion Group, 2011-2013. The comments that I received on my work at the Postgraduate Research Seminar in March 2014 helped to clarify ideas and open up new avenues. Most importantly, my supervisor, David Peters Corbett, has been unfailingly supportive. His advice has enabled me to challenge myself and without this my thesis would not have come to fruition. I owe him great thanks.

I could not have done this without my friends as encouragement and distraction. Sheila Leaman and Jane Mercer will know how much our regular meetings have mattered to me. Thanks also to Jane Pimlott, Jim Cartwright, Alison Bowler, Sarah Booker, Peter Philpott, Max Wright and to my cousins Simon and Caroline Jaquet and Marion, Don and Jan Anderson.

My husband Adrian was a source of continuing strength throughout the process of researching and writing, believing I could do this, and I thank him for putting up with Winifred Knights over these years. My sons Tom and Richard, my daughter Joanna and Richard's partner Emma sustained interest in my work over this long time and supported and encouraged me. My heartfelt thanks are due to them and also to Joanna's partner Ben, more recently a family member. Joanna and Emma remind me of what it means to be a young woman and for this, as my project focused on one woman, I am grateful.

Finally, I would like to thank Andrea Fredrickson, curator of University College Art Museum. Andrea first introduced me to the work of Winifred Knights and without her I would not have started down the path of the PhD. Those who know me best will understand how much it has meant to me to work on and complete this thesis. I therefore dedicate my work to Adrian, Tom, Richard and Joanna.

A Study of Winifred Knights, 1915-1933

Introduction

Winifred Knights painted women, children and families in outdoor, public spaces at a time when most women artists depicted the home environment. Knights' different focus was in response to the events of her life, which were sometimes traumatic. Her art education was the same as that of her male contemporaries, yet gender was important in shaping her career and determining the focus of her art. Her style was indebted to early Italian art, particularly Piero della Francesca's uncluttered compositions and clear colouration. She was not religious, but stories from the Bible were popular during her lifetime and, knowing this, she often used biblical subject-matter to communicate with her viewers, using this material to explore women's lives with a distinctive sensitivity that draws the viewer into paying close attention to her work. Although she died relatively early, Winifred Knights lived a full life. She studied in London and Rome, enjoyed her years as a single young woman, married and became a mother. These experiences, and the traumas she suffered, were the subjects of her art.

My aim has been to provide readings of Knights' work, drawing on her life and on the artistic and social circumstances of her time. Winifred Knights was accepted as a student at the Slade School of Art in 1915, so this date is an appropriate starting point for the thesis. Her last completed painting, *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours*, was installed in Canterbury Cathedral in 1933. Due to this, 1933 is taken as the end-point to my thesis, with a coda describing the artist's later unfinished painting and drawings. Uncertainty and social conservatism were dominant features of inter-war British society. Both were responses to recent war and some unrest at home.¹ The hope for 'peace in our time' was first voiced in 1927.² In this social context marriage and maternity were particularly valued and,³ moreover, in the 1920s 'new feminists' believed

¹ Charles Loch Mowat, *Britain between the Wars 1918-1940* (London, Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1955), 24.

² The phrase was first used by Stanley Baldwin. See William D. Rubinstein, 'Britain's Elites in the Inter-War Period, 1918-1939: Decline or Continued Ascendancy?' *Journal of the British Scholar Society* 3, no.1 (September 2010), 154. doi: 10.3366/brs.2010.0302..

³ Pamela Horn says that 'of the twenty pieces of legislation enacted between 1918 and 1927 and designed to improve the status of women, almost all were concerned with enhancing their status as wives and mothers.' Pamela Horn, *Women in the 1920s* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd. 1995), 61.

women had different needs from men.⁴ These circumstances are referenced throughout the thesis. In this context, Knights' work was an integral part of a life that included and valued 'feminine' interests in clothing, food, relationships and family. Throughout my thesis I show how a woman-centred life *made* her artwork, rather than merely providing background or even restriction to the parameters to her work. The last two decades have seen the development of Life Writing as an approach to working on written texts. Throughout the thesis I draw on Knights' letters, statements and life history in order to place her work in a set of social and emotional contexts that illuminate her career as a woman artist in the earlier part of the twentieth century. This approach, investigating inter-connections between biography and literary or historical works, illuminates work, life and their interrelations. The literary scholar Laura Marcus has recently proposed this mode of enquiry as illuminating for women artists – even though some connections are necessarily speculative or arise from interpretation of both works and life.⁵ Use of biography to uncover meaning in Winifred Knights' painting is particularly apposite because of the nature of her personal investment in her work. Examination of Knights' letters suggests links between life and art. For instance, after her first son was stillborn in 1928 she wrote: 'I suppose by all this failure to produce a family painting is indicated! [punctuation sic]'.⁶ These connections are supported in my text through reference to the historical circumstances of the years c. 1915-1933.

The Representation of the People Act of 1918 gave women a partial franchise, but feminists campaigned for women's rights throughout the 1920s.⁷ The thesis discusses two approaches to feminism in some detail. Both approaches are of particular relevance to the period covered by the thesis, but also applicable more widely. Feminists who focus on equality are concerned with equal rights regardless of biological or social differences between the genders. Difference feminism takes account of the particular experiences of women (motherhood is one example). Difference feminists aim to secure women's rights, acknowledging that their needs may be dissimilar to those of men. Concerned with these needs, during the 1920s one influential group in

⁴ See for instance the 'new feminist' argument that mothers should have allowances to support maintenance of children. In Susan Kingsley Kent, *Making Peace: The Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 119-132.

⁵ Laura Marcus, with particular reference to Dorothy Richardson's novel series *Pilgrimage* as a form of Life Writing. In Laura Marcus, Jo Winning, Scott McCracken and Deborah Longworth, Panel Discussion following Longworth's lecture titled Dorothy Richardson's *Pointed Roofs*. Senate House, London, 15th May 2015.

⁶ Letter from Winifred Knights to her aunt Millicent dated 8th March 1928. Knights' Letters (University College London: Special Collections), hereafter cited as Knights' Letters.

⁷ Feminism became less of a social force in the 1930s, when, with challenging economic circumstances at home and a worsening international situation, women's concerns moved towards solidarity with class, political parties and nation. Johanna Alberti, 'The turn of the tide: sexuality and politics, 1928-31', *Women's History Review* 3, no. 2 (June 1994), 169-190. DOI: 10.1080/09612029400200053, 185-186.

the feminist movement moved away from equal rights to difference feminism.⁸ Considering these two strands of feminism, Winifred Knights did not want her work judged according to her gender,⁹ yet her experience as citizen and worker, as well as her emotional investment in maternity and family, and the ways she explored these themes in her art, were significantly unlike the preoccupations of her male contemporaries. My thesis therefore acknowledges the considerable disparities between ways men and women lived in society in the early twentieth century. There is a long and substantial body of feminist scholarship that has enabled me to write on these themes, including approaches to motherhood, to art history and analysis of the place of women in inter-war Britain.¹⁰ This scholarship, with historical and recent examples of Life Writing,¹¹ and my own

⁸ Kingsley Kent, *Making Peace*, 119-132.

⁹ See for example letter from Knights to her mother dated 24th November 1920. Knights' Letters.

¹⁰ The literature includes, focusing on the 1920s and 1930s: Johanna Alberti, *Beyond Suffrage: Feminists in War and Peace 1914-28* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan Press Ltd. 1989); Deirdre Beddoe, *Back to Home and Duty: Women between the Wars 1918-1939* (London, Boston, Sydney and Wellington: Pandora, 1989); Susan Kingsley Kent, *Making Peace: The Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993); Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, literature and conservatism between the wars* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991); Sheila Rowbotham, 'Battles around Boundaries: Conflicting Strategies after WWI', in Rowbotham, *Women in Movement* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992). Primary sources for inter-war feminism include: *Time and Tide 1*, 1920; Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* [1929], (Edinburgh: R. and R. Clark Ltd., 1931). For mothers and children: Alison Bartlett, 'Theory, Desire and Maternity: at Work in Academia', *Hecate* 32, no 2 (2006), 21-33, at Academic Search Complete, Ipswich MA, accessed 11th December 2014, also at Academia. edu, available at https://www.academia.edu/2257588/Theory_Desire_and_Maternity_At_Work_in_Academia, accessed 28th August 2015; Bartlett, 'Thinking through breasts; writing maternity', *Feminist Theory* 1 (2000), 173-188. DOI: 10.1177/14647000022229146; Sheila Rowbotham, 'To Be or Not to Be: The Dilemmas of Mothering', *Feminist Review* 31 (Spring 1989), 82-92. DOI:10.1057/fr.1989.8; Roberta Guerrina, 'Equality, Difference and Motherhood: the case for a feminist analysis of equal rights and maternity legislation', *Journal of Gender Studies* 10, no 1 (2001), 33-42. DOI: 10.1080/095892301300050555; Melanie Bailey Mills, 'Intersections between Work and Family: When a Playpen can be Office Furniture', *Women's Studies in Communication* 31, no 2 (Summer 2008), 213-217. DOI: 10.1080/07491409.2008.10162535. For feminism and daily life: Rita Felski, 'The Invention of Everyday Life', *New Formations* 39 (London: Winter 1999-2000), 15-31. Scanned copy at University of Virginia, <http://people.virginia.edu/~rf6d/felski.the-invention-of-everyday-life.pdf>. For Art History and Dress History: Rosemary Betterton, 'Prima Gravida: Reconfiguring the maternal body in visual representation', *Feminist Theory* 3 (December 2002), 255-270; Rachel Epp Buller, *Reconciling Art and Mothering* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012); Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard eds. *Reclaiming Female Agency* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2005); Deborah Cherry, *Painting Women* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993); Katy Deepwell, *Women Artists between the Wars* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010); Laura Doan, 'Passing Fashions: Reading Female Masculinities in the 1920s', *Feminist Studies* 24, no. 3 (Fall 1998), 663-700. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3178585>; Alicia Foster, 'Dressing for art's sake: Gwen John, the Bon Marche and the spectacle of the woman artist in Paris', in Amy de la Haye, and Elizabeth Wilson eds. *Defining Dress* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999); Helen Hills, 'Feminism and Visual Culture', *Art History* 36, no. 2 (April 2013), 461-463. DOI: 10.1111/1467-8365.12013; Andrea Liss, *Feminist Art and the Maternal* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); Kendra van Cleave, 'Fashioning the College Woman: Dress, Gender, and Sexuality at Smith College in the 1920s', *The Journal of American Culture* 32, no. 1 (March 2009), 4-15. DOI:10.1111/j.1542-734X.2009.00689.x.

¹¹ See for instance Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth* [1933], (London: Virago Limited, 1978) and Brittain, *Testament of Friendship* [1940], (London: Virago Press, 2012). Recent examples include: Lyndall Gordon,

experience as worker and mother, has helped me to argue that a biographical approach can illuminate Knights' work and its contexts. I use these methods to offer richer and more substantial readings of Knights' work than it has received to date. Reading Knights' life, the life of a woman artist in early twentieth-century Britain, enriches our understanding of the work which was made in interrelationship with her social positioning and unfolding life as an historical actor.

Winifred Knights was born on 5th June 1899, in Streatham, south London, the oldest of three sisters. Her parents were well-to-do, her father a company secretary,¹² and she was educated initially at St Helen's, a private school in Streatham. In January 1912 she was moved to James Allen's Girls' School in Dulwich, a well-established independent girls' school.¹³ The teaching of botany through practical work in the school grounds in Dulwich was probably a factor in developing Knights' observational skills, witnessed in the detail of many later drawings and paintings.¹⁴ Winifred Knights was precociously talented.¹⁵ Consequently, when she was sixteen her parents took her away from school and enrolled her at the Slade School of Art, where talented women students were taken seriously.¹⁶ Here tutors Henry Tonks and Derwent Lees recognised her talent and shaped her development.¹⁷ Knights was infatuated with Lees, who

Divided Lives: Dreams of a Mother and Daughter (London: Virago, 2014); Jackie Kay, *Red Dust Road* (London, Basingstoke and Oxford: Picador, 2010) and Kay, *The Adoption Papers* (London: Bloodaxe Books, 1998); Sheila Rowbotham, *Threads through Time: Writings on History and Autobiography* (London: Penguin Books, 1999); Mary S. Lovell, *Bess of Hardwick* (London: Abacus, 2006); Carolyn Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman* [1986], (London: Virago, 2005); Jeanette Winterson, *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal* (London: Vintage, 2011).

¹² Knights' father was the Secretary to a company. For this information see: *James Allen's Girls' School Roll*, unpublished material (James Allen's Girls' School Archives); John Monnington, the artist's son, interviewed by the author (19th July 2013).

¹³ Knights attended St Helen's School in Streatham from September 1907 to December 1911 and James Allen's Girls' School from 17th January 1912 to 28th July 1915. See *James Allen's Girls' School Roll*.

¹⁴ Cynthia Pullen, librarian and archivist at James Allen's Girls' School, has described 'the major development of our Botany gardens at the same time as she [Knights] was at the school. Created from the mid-1890s on, by 1915 they included order beds, a small wood, peat bog, salt march, pebble beach and pond... All the girls worked on the various plots while at school, often for whole afternoons at a time.' Cynthia Pullen, email with reference to Knights' time at James Allen's Girls' School, unpublished material (8th June 2011). For drawings see for example: a duck's wing, labelled *aged 12* (James Allen's Girls' School); a drawing labelled *Plums, Worcestershire, 1936* (private collection: the collector wishes to remain anonymous).

¹⁵ Her talent was clear from an earlier age. See for instance drawings of flowers, labelled *Winifred Knights aged 8. Sketchbook*, unpublished work, (private collection: the collector wishes to remain anonymous).

¹⁶ For instance, the studies and careers of Gwen John, Edna Clarke Hall, nee Waugh, Ida Nettleship and Gwen Salmond, who were students at the Slade in the 1890s. See Alison Thomas, *Portraits of Women* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1994), 233.

¹⁷ For entry to Slade see Eileen Palmer (Knights' sister), account of Winifred Knights' life, in Basildon Bond Lion Brand Notebook (University College London Art Museum: unpublished work, probably 1980s). This account hereafter cited as 'Eileen Palmer, account of Winifred Knights' life'. For Knights' development as an artist see for example, a letter from Knights to Audrey Clarke mentioning a 'lesson

once touched her hand and, she recounted, he became unable to draw 'if I stare at him too much', suggesting that the infatuation was perhaps mutual.¹⁸ Winifred Knights was slim, with sleek dark hair, finely arched eyebrows, a narrow face and full lips - a striking beauty who stood out amongst her contemporaries. She adhered to a Slade School regulation stipulating that female students put their hair up,¹⁹ and a photograph taken a few years' later shows that she kept this style. It also testifies both to her beauty and her awareness of it: Knights is at the right of the group (**plate 1**). She is clearly posing for the camera, studiously informal, a woman to be looked at merged with woman artist, displaying her painter's hands.

Her artistic self-assurance as student at the Slade is reflected by the large body of work she made as a girl and young woman, including many drawings and watercolours.²⁰ This work, and its context, particularly at the Slade, is the subject of Chapter One of my thesis: 'Women, girls and virginity in Winifred Knights' early work'. The images of women, girls and fairies that are the subjects of much of Knights' early work were executed in a late Pre-Raphaelite style. These include a fine illustration to Christina Rossetti's poem 'Goblin Market', in the form of a tondo (c.1915, University College London Art Museum): predatory goblins offer fruit to a young girl. Her features are modelled on the artist's and the image perhaps figures underlying fears. *The Wise and Foolish Virgins* views male attention more positively. The watercolour (1915, James Allen's Girls' School) produced for the Slade Sketch Club, is focused on female desire, blocked by a locked door. It was painted during a period of growing societal appreciation that women had sexual feelings.²¹ Knights spent a year away from the Slade from summer 1917, suffering from trauma after witnessing the Silvertown TNT Explosions in London's East End.²² After returning to the Slade her work demonstrated an attachment to the forms of Decorative Painting, illustrated in her tempera on canvas *Village Street: Mill-Hands Conversing* (1919, UCL Art Museum) which includes repetitive forms and colours and a narrative stilled into impassivity. She was joint winner

on Old Masters' from Derwent Lees. The letter later annotated as '1915, probably October'. Knights' Letters. In a letter to her aunt Millicent, 18th November 1918, Knights writes: Tonks 'is our head now. He is a great man'. Knights' Letters.

¹⁸ Winifred Knights to Audrey Clarke, 1915, 'probably October', Knights' Letters.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ For this early work see particularly UCL Art Museum and private collection (Catherine Monnington).

²¹ Dagmar Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe: A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 17-18.

²² Knights' sister Eileen Palmer noted that: '1917 July [Winifred] Left Slade because of Air Raids. Un-nerved by the Silvertown explosions, which she saw from the top of a tram-car [punctuation sic].' Eileen Palmer, account of Knights' life, UCL Art Museum.

of the Slade Summer Composition Prize for the painting.²³ It reveals an interest in women, mothers and children, as individuals and within a community, a concern that was carried forward into her later work. Chapter Two, 'The Deluge', focuses on Knights' painting representing the flood (1920, Tate Collection), which is very likely a metaphor for the horrors of WWI on the home front. It was executed only two years after the War concluded, when ways to understand and commemorate the conflict were not yet set. Knights changed her first idea for the image, which showed Noah, his wife and their family calmly queuing to enter the Ark, to an image that represents the terror of families caught up in the cataclysm and their desperate efforts to reach safety. Critics understandably praised this dramatic painting.²⁴ I use W.H.R. Rivers' 'The Repression of War Experience'²⁵ to suggest that an earlier trauma returned in 1920 and argue for a relationship between the trauma and the painting. I suggest that a confrontation with this trauma is channelled through a self-portrait, probably influenced by representations of Lot's wife, who looked back to Sodom and Gomorrah and was turned to a pillar of salt.²⁶ The figure sees a world changed beyond recognition, but unlike Lot's wife she is not disabled by what she sees, a positive representation of female agency.

The Deluge was Knights' entry for the Rome Prize in Decorative Painting and she became the first woman prize-winner, going on to study at the British School at Rome for three years. A photograph (**plate 1**) shows Knights in the cortile of the British School at Rome (commonly known as the BSR), which was designed by Edwin Lutyens. Her arm is resting on fellow student Colin Gill and she seems very much in charge, although Gill was seven years older than her.²⁷ Knights' poise, style and a confident self-awareness are also clear in contrast with the other women's slouched unease, her energy ready to be employed, once the photographer has moved on.²⁸ Yet when writing home she did not always manage to articulate such confidence. Chapter Three,

²³ Emma Chambers, 'Redefining History Painting in the Academy: The Summer Composition Prize and the Slade School of Fine Art, 1898-1922', *Visual Culture in Britain* 6, no. 1, (2005), 94.

²⁴ See for example: *The Daily Sketch*, (8th February 1921); *Liverpool Courier*, (9th February 1921); *Manchester Guardian*, (11th February 1921); *Daily Sketch*, (8th February 1921); *Morning Post*, (February 1921); *The Observer*, (13th February 1921). All reviews in this thesis are taken from *Scraps: Newspaper Cuttings Provided by The General Press Cutting Association Ltd.*, a *Scrapbook* of reviews of Knights' work (compiled by Knights' mother, Gertrude Knights, with titles in her handwriting), UCL Special Collections.

²⁵ W.H.R. Rivers, 'The Repression of War Experience', *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine* (11: Section of Psychiatry: 1-20, 1918). NCBI Resources, at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2066211/>, accessed 12th November 2014.

²⁶ Genesis (King James, 1611, Chapter 8).

²⁷ Colin Gill was 1915 Rome Scholar in Decorative Painting. He returned to Rome in 1920 to complete his studies.

²⁸ For photograph see University College London Special Collections. It is dated 1921 on the reverse in Knights' mother's handwriting.

'Winifred Knights and Italy in the 1920s: gender and conservatism', covers Knights' Italian pictures, from 1921 to c.1930, when the artist finished her last Italian subject in England. Her Italian paintings (as well as *The Deluge*) are witness to her considerable talents, developed at the Slade and at the British School at Rome (known as the BSR). The BSR, which was founded in 1901, provided finance for art scholars in Decorative Painting from 1913.²⁹ The scholars were expected to work with minimal supervision.³⁰ Nevertheless, a 'big decoration' was a specified task,³¹ although the subject was not set. Winifred Knights chose to paint *The Marriage at Cana* (c.1923). She was not particularly religious, rather her choice and treatment of the subject illustrates an understanding of the Bible that is characteristic of the age.³² Knights did not represent the dramatic moment when Jesus turns water into wine, and the viewer's attention is instead drawn to the many groups of men, women and families, painted in a fine detail that is not clear in ordinary reproduction.

The British School at Rome was dominated by archaeologists and Knights had few women friends to provide support.³³ Her correspondence reveals a struggle to concentrate, fluctuating

²⁹ For lists of Rome Prize winners see: T.P. Wiseman, *A Short History of the British School at Rome* (London: British School at Rome, 1990), 26-29; Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *The British School at Rome: One Hundred Years*, (London: British School at Rome/RA, 2001), 210-223.

³⁰ Knights wrote (probably to her mother) that 'I'm afraid the painters are rather in the background, it is all archaeology...perhaps it is all the better, we shall be able to do more what we like', 5th November 1920, Knights' Letters. Knights did not receive a schedule of work until late April 1921. See letter from Evelyn Shaw (Secretary to the BSR, based in London) to Knights, 29th April 1921. In Knights' folder: 'Miss W.M. Knights Rome Scholar in Decorative Painting 1920 and Post-Scholarship Correspondence since 3rd April 1924' (BSR Archives, Rome).

By contrast, Thomas Monnington, who arrived at the BSR as a probationary scholar early in 1923, was sent a schedule of work in April 1923, evidenced by a letter from Evelyn Shaw to Monnington dated 6th April 1923. In Monnington folder, 'W.T. Monnington Probationary Scholar 1922 Rome Scholar 1922 Painting and Post-Scholarship Correspondence since 4th January 1926' (BSR Archives, Rome). Painting tutors visited the BSR only occasionally. In a letter to her mother dated 13th May 1922 Knights recorded Dermot O'Brien's 'great help' in choosing a subject to copy. Knights' Letters. All further references to letters in the introduction to my thesis are to this collection unless otherwise stated.

³¹ Winifred Knights to her mother on 28th May 1921.

³² For instance, Callum G. Brown states that in the 1910s -1930s 'Something like 60 per cent of children were enrolled in Sunday schools, and attending religious services of one kind or another was extremely common'. Callum G. Brown, *Religion and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2006), 160. There are few references to religion in Knights' letters; her son John Monnington confirms that she was interested in the 'building...institution' of the church, not religion. See conversation between John Monnington and the author dated 16th October 2011.

³³ Colin Gill's sister Marjorie (who spent just three months in Italy), a painter named Miss Southby and Lilian Whitehead, 1921 Rome Scholar in Engraving, are mentioned in her letters. See letters from Winifred Knights to her father, 7th January 1921 and 23rd April 1921; letters to her mother dated 22nd January 1921 and 14th December 1922.

belief in her work, problems in finishing anything,³⁴ and mood swings that alternately support and contradict the confident, stylish self shown in the photograph (**plate 1**): '1) I am quite well 2) I feel very lonely sometimes ...5) Nixon [1920 Rome Scholar in Engraving] is quite under my thumb no need to worry in that quarter now'.³⁵ It seems likely (although firm evidence is lacking) that her insecurity fed into *The Marriage at Cana*, for the painting includes passive, unhappy women, assertive men and a woman artist determinedly drawing, her back to the crowd. She left Rome in autumn 1923, but returned to Italy in 1924 to marry Rome Scholar Thomas Monnington, against her parents' wishes.³⁶ Throughout her years in Italy Winifred Knights worked slowly and meticulously, and besides *The Marriage at Cana* completed just *Italian Landscape* (1921, Tate Collection). Her paintings ignore the political contexts to which she was exposed (she was not strongly political),³⁷ but partially address the social contexts of her time. *Italian Landscape* figures modern buildings and a mother in traditional peasant costume. I relate the painting to the artist's interest in maternity as well as to inter-war social conservatism and associated belief in marriage and family as the proper focus for women's lives. Knights left Italy for the last time in 1926 and completed two Italian subjects, *Santissima Trinita* and *Figures in a Boat, Lake Piediluco* (both private collections) in England around 1930. *Santissima Trinita* depicts a rest during a pilgrimage, set against a mountainous background. Women are sleeping in a hayfield, their peaceful forms barely interrupting the neat pattern of piled haystacks, while others are washing in a stream. The painting is a vision of sorority that the artist did not experience at the BSR. There are many self-portraits and the women wear the peasant dress that the artist chose for herself (**plate 1 and plate 2**).³⁸ The painting was enthusiastically reviewed when exhibited in 1927.³⁹

In early 1928 Knights' first son was stillborn. She wrote of that spring: 'I haven't felt it this year. I can't somehow, and the thought of the first cuckoo makes me retch.'⁴⁰ Later that year she was commissioned to paint *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours*, a rearedos for St Martin's Chapel, Canterbury Cathedral, completed in 1933 and forming the centrepiece to renovation of

³⁴ She writes that it is 'heartbreaking' she has done so little work. Letter from Winifred Knights to her mother dated 10th August 1921. And in another letter to her mother, dated Thursday March 1922, she writes: 'My bally picture stands very still although I work at it every day. This place is difficult to work in.'

³⁵ Winifred Knights in a letter to her mother, 17th March 1921.

³⁶ Eileen Palmer, account of Winifred Knights' life.

³⁷ For instance: 'There has been a lot of unrest and strikes just lately, now it is carnival time and people are trying to be gay.' See letter from Winifred Knights to her mother, 4th February 1921.

³⁸ Her dresses were copied from the peasant dress she admired in Italy. She drew a 'peasant dress' that was being made for her in Anticoli Corrado, on the edge of the Abruzzi. See letter from Winifred Knights to her mother, 30th May 1921.

³⁹ See for example: *The Evening Standard*, (9th April 1927); *Glasgow Herald*, (11th April 1927); *The Manchester Guardian*, (13th April 1927).

⁴⁰ See letter from Winifred Knights to Aunt Millicent, 8th March 1928.

the Chapel in memory of Alfred, Lord Milner. The reredos, with a brief examination of her late work, forms Chapter Four, 'Iconography and meaning in Knights' *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours, Canterbury Cathedral*'. In a letter to Dean George Bell of Canterbury, concerning the commission, artist David Young Cameron noted Knights' 'such rare gifts', showing how highly she was regarded by painters associated with the artistic establishment.⁴¹ I use the extensive records for the commission, in Canterbury Cathedral Archives and the University of Kent, to show the interplay between artist and commissioners. Knights asserted her ideas for the painting against those of Dean George Bell, whose artistic sensibility was not fully developed at this time (he went on to commission British art in the 1940s, when Bishop of Chichester).

I examine some of the many studies Knights made as she developed her composition and argue that her choices were informed by re-emergence of the grief and trauma of her baby's stillbirth, at a time when maternity was strongly valued. I discuss inter-war attitudes to stillbirth, showing for instance that mothers did not see their dead babies, and that this fits with restrained responses to all deaths in the years following WWI. In autumn 1933 Knights was described as a 'shy... 'little Quakeress' ...who is charming',⁴² a description of bearing and costume (she still wore peasant dress, with skirts touching the ankle). She was probably already pregnant, but was self-contained, not daring to hope. Yet she is a figure of maternal care in a later photograph that includes her second son, John Monnington, born in 1934 (**plate 2**). Knights' later life included the disruptions of WWII,⁴³ and was much occupied with her son John. But her late drawings have the same beautiful line as the earlier work, showing that she had not lost confidence in her abilities. Her letters from this period are frank in articulating disappointment in marriage to Tom Monnington.⁴⁴ However, she used her married name on some drawings even in the 1940s, an indication of self-

⁴¹ David Young Cameron to George Bell (Dean of Canterbury Cathedral), 16th July 1928, Milner Memorial File (Canterbury Cathedral Archives). For Cameron's career during this period see Bill Smith, *D.Y. Cameron: The Visions of the Hills* (Edinburgh: Atelier Books, 1992), 87-102.

⁴² See letter from Herbert Baker to Dean Hewlett Johnson, 31st October 1933. Baker describes Knights and her husband, who had arranged to take *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours* to Canterbury: 'Her husband, who is one of our best young painters, is going down with her. You will like him and he is not so shy as his 'little Quakeress' wife, who is charming [last phrase added in pen]' Hewlett Johnson Archive, University of Kent Special Collections.

⁴³ Winifred Knights was very nervous of WWII bombing and moved around to avoid this. John Monnington, the artist's son, stated that 'all the war because of problems with explosions we had to be somewhere else...Carnarvon...Coventry...finished up with the Courtaulds in Scotland'. John Monnington, interviewed by the author, 19th July 2013. All further references to the interview in the Introduction cited as John Monnington Interview. See also letter from Winifred Knights, in Stirling, to her Aunt Gertrude: 'I am afraid you had it again last night badly...Wonderful to be so far from the War. They do not realise it at all here.' (the letter dated Wednesday 15th 1944).

⁴⁴ See for example letter from Winifred Knights to her aunt Millicent, 28th June 1946.

conception as uniting artist, woman and wife.⁴⁵ Knights' plans from c.1934 for a large *Flight into Egypt* are evidence of a continuing interest in maternity. According to her son she drew some details of this on the canvas,⁴⁶ but of this project only drawings survive.⁴⁷ During WWII she led a peripatetic life, travelling between friends' and relatives' homes to avoid the bombing (perhaps a return of earlier war trauma).⁴⁸ She continued drawing,⁴⁹ and intended working more seriously.⁵⁰ Knights died of a brain tumour on 7th February 1947⁵¹ while her son was at boarding school.⁵²

I have attempted to recover the interlinked artistic, historical and biographical circumstances in which Winifred Knights worked. I have addressed historical circumstances as minutely as possible, for, as Carolyn Steedman says, 'specificity of time and place has to be reckoned with when making an account of anybody's life'.⁵³ Two examples illustrate this point. *The Deluge's* dramatic impact seems to derive partly from the artist's experience as a sensitive young adult who was old enough to experience the horrors of WWI's Home Front with an adult sensibility, yet not quite old enough to serve on the War Front.⁵⁴ I describe Knights and her artistic contexts as British (not English), taking my cue from the Imperial context of the British School at Rome, which prepared students for careers as public artists in the countries of the United Kingdom and the Empire.⁵⁵

⁴⁵ See for instance a drawing of crocuses signed 'Winifred Monnington 1942' (private collection: the collector wishes to remain anonymous).

⁴⁶ John Monnington says there was 'a tracing of [the] work...bridge, donkey, Mary' on a large canvas in her studio in Leyswood, Sussex. The canvas was 'squared up... [with] rushes, little 14c asides'. John Monnington Interview.

⁴⁷ See two private collections: the collectors wish to remain anonymous.

⁴⁸ See Eileen Palmer, account of Knights' life; Judith Collins in: *Winifred Knights 1899-1947* (London and Rome: The Fine Art Society plc and Paul Liss in Association with the British School at Rome, 1995), 11.

⁴⁹ For this see drawings in the British Museum and in a private collection (the collector wishes to remain anonymous); letter from Knights to her Aunt Florence (dated Friday 20th 1946).

⁵⁰ She wrote that she was going to London to find a studio and had made 'a start' in the 'direction' of 'work'. Knights to her aunt Gertrude (dated Friday 25th 1946).

⁵¹ Collins, 'Winifred Knights 1899-1947', 11.

⁵² John Monnington Interview.

⁵³ Carolyn Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman*, [1986], (London: Virago, 2005), 6.

⁵⁴ Experience of WWI varied markedly according to segments of a generation, as Vera Brittain describes: 'in the eyes of...ex-High-School girls, who had sat out the War in classrooms' insulated from the war, at Somerville 'I was...ludicrously boasting of...experiences in an already démodé conflict.' Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth* [1933], (London: Virago Ltd. 1978), 493.

⁵⁵ Alan Little, BBC Special Correspondent, discussed England and Scotland's shared interests before WWII, with the Empire as a binding factor. He commented that large-scale employment in nationalised industries worked in a similar way after WWII. Alan Little, 'Report on the run-up to Scottish Devolution', *BBC I News* (10 pm, 11th September 2014). Knights' letters do not mention nationality, but with a Scottish mentor and friend (David Young Cameron) and patrons who had homes in both England and Scotland (Virginia and Stephen Courtauld and David Balneil) she probably saw nationality in broad terms.

Close consideration of one artist and her work is valuable. Knights is perceptive and delicate in her engagements with women's lives. She is confident *and* sensitive in arranging composition and in applying colour and meticulous detail. Such attention sheds light on a talented individual and interesting body of work. Moreover, my thesis provides a case study for the circumstances in which women (and men) paint, situations leading to bursts of creativity and problems that constrain artistic production. Because of this I present the artist's life and work together, chronologically, so that close attention is paid to Knights' experiences at the Slade, the BSR and to her times as a mother. Yet Knights' artwork is my dominating concern and my thesis avoids what Katy Deepwell has characterised as an

emphasis upon obstacles faced, even when overcome, [which in some books centred on individual women artists] created a fascination with women's emotional problems and their personal failures or shortcomings rather than an interest in what they had produced.⁵⁶

When aspects of Winifred Knights' life do not provide narrative elements in her art they are not addressed in detail. In particular, her sexual feelings are clearly important to the early 'Goblin Market' illustrations, but adult sexuality is not a dominant feature in her later work (although an undercurrent to *The Marriage at Cana*).

Knights did not 'overcome' personal interests, for these were surely as powerfully important as her artistic vocation, which she was committed to.⁵⁷ While her opportunities to learn were as great as any male contemporary, the ethos of an overwhelmingly patriarchal society must not be discounted. That male and female students could be treated differently and consider themselves differently was seemingly taken for granted. Knights sometimes used a conception of herself as a vulnerable woman as a reason (or excuse) for artistic insecurity, particularly in her communications with Evelyn Shaw, Secretary to the BSR, based in London.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, her focus on women and children and use of self-portraiture does not just derive from insecurity, but as much from belief in her needs and value as a woman, demonstrated by adolescent desire in *The Wise and Foolish Virgins* (1915) and hopes for a family in later compositions, particularly

⁵⁶ Katy Deepwell, *Women Artists between the Wars* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 2.

⁵⁷ John Monnington says that Knights considered herself 'an Artist' even when she was a mother. See John Monnington, in conversation with the author, 26th October 2011.

⁵⁸ See for instance letter from Winifred Knights to Evelyn Shaw, 22nd June 1922, Knights' File (BSR Archives).

Italian Landscape and *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours*.⁵⁹ These concerns, with the position of women during and after WWI, are a major consideration of this thesis.

However, Winifred Knights' motifs were not simply drawn from her experience as a woman. There were classes at the Slade on the 'old masters', and in Italy she visited galleries and churches containing early Renaissance art.⁶⁰ The sources are often clear in her work and it is obvious she had a wide knowledge of both past and contemporary art. Sources for the *Deluge*'s central self-portrait surely include Michelangelo's Eve looking back to Paradise as she is driven from the Garden of Eden (1508-1512, Sistine Chapel) and representations of Lot's wife, probably including the twelfth-century stained glass in Canterbury Cathedral. The circle around Jesus in Knights' *Marriage at Cana* (c.1923) derives from Piero della Francesca's grouping in *The Queen is Received by King Solomon* (*The Story of the True Cross*, 1452-1466, Arezzo). In the same work a man with bent knees lying on his back probably comes from poses in Seurat's *Bathers, Asnières* (1884, National Gallery) and *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* (1884-1886, Art Institute of Chicago), showing that Knights' art historical knowledge was not confined to the early period.⁶¹ The structure of her *Italian Landscape* is adapted from representations of the Flight into Egypt, the influence clear in both southern and northern examples of Renaissance art that show the Virgin and Child against a sweeping view (a *Landscape with the Rest on the Flight into Egypt*, Joachim Patinir's workshop, c.1515-1524, the National Gallery, is one example).

Much 1920s British painting used representational subject-matter with elements of pre-war modernism (for instance, blocks of colour, limited pictorial depth) to explore tradition and continuity: Knights' paintings were informed by such artistic and societal conservatism.⁶² After

⁵⁹ For adolescent desire see for instance letter from Winifred Knights to Audrey Clarke (undated, annotated by Knights' sister as '1915, probably October'). For maternity see Knights to her aunt Millicent dated March 8th 1928, following her first son's stillbirth: 'it is a dangerous pleasure this mother business for it has given me the desire for more experience of it...' I have not been given access to letters which mention Knights' adult sexuality and which are in a private collection.

⁶⁰ See for example: letter from Winifred Knights to her mother dated 4th March 1921; letter from Winifred Knights to Evelyn Shaw dated 22nd June 1922. Knights' File, BSR Archives.

⁶¹ Mark Stocker describes modern echoes in *The Marriage at Cana*: 'the prevailing stillness and airlessness evoke the work of a more recent Italian master, Giorgio de Chirico. The trilby-hatted wedding guest lying in the middle ground is a witty reference to Georges Seurat's painting *La Grande Jatte*.' Mark Stocker, 'Wellington booty: modern British art at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa', *Apollo* 171 (1st January 2010), at <http://www.readperiodicals.com/201001/1985263231.html>, accessed 11th December 2014. Giorgio de Chirico's use of space and lonely, disconnected figure probably influenced Knights' *Marriage at Cana*. Ubaldo Oppi, a member of the Italian Novecento group of artists, is an additional contemporaneous influence, if she knew his work. See for instance Oppi's dramatically shelving space in *Portrait of a Lady* (c. 1922, private collection).

⁶² For instance, William D. Rubinstein notes that 'perhaps the most striking feature of British politics during the inter-war period...was it's immunity from extremism'. Rubinstein: 'Britain's Elites', 11.

WWI French, Italian, Spanish and German artists similarly explored tradition, as Elizabeth Mundy and Jennifer Cowling have noted.⁶³ The British School at Rome, where the first painting scholarship was awarded in 1914, was an outpost of the British establishment. In this conservative environment Rome Scholars in Decorative Painting, guided by visiting tutors such as David Young Cameron, were expected to develop careers as artists of public murals. Early Italian painters, for instance Piero della Francesca, as well as much later and contemporary painters such as Puvis de Chavannes and Augustus John, were important models for this art, which was employed in narrative murals for public buildings, for instance at St Stephen's Hall, Westminster, by Colin Gill, Thomas Monnington and Alfred Kingsley Lawrence (1925-1927). Knights' style was clearly influenced by the same artists as her male contemporaries who studied at the BSR, but unlike her male contemporaries she did not work on public mural commissions, choosing instead to draw her material from her private experience and the lives of women and children.

There has been minimal scholarly work on Knights, the majority focused on the issue of style. Alan Powers' 'Decorative Painting in the early Twentieth Century— a Context for Winifred Knights' provides a background to Knights' compositional practice, by linking 'decorative painting' to Puvis de Chavannes, Gauguin and Maurice Denis, as well as Augustus John and Stanley Spencer.⁶⁴ Discussing Knights' tempera *Village Street, Mill-Hands Conversing* (1919, for which she was joint winner of the Slade Summer Composition Prize) Emma Chambers links composition to motif. The painting includes 'un-modulated colour...to unify the rhythm of the undulating horizontal line of figures across the foreground from right to left [which] show Knights' desire to apply the techniques of decorative painting to modern-life subject matter.'⁶⁵ Alan Powers' point is similar, that in public commissions 'decorative painting' did not imply 'any lack of seriousness'.⁶⁶ But in another essay Powers describes the St Stephen's Hall murals as 'elegant and empty', thereby linking British Decorative Painting to a *merely* decorative form of art. Although he champions Knights in contrast with these, he states that 'her obsessive calculation of each painting...brought the completed works following 'The Deluge' dangerously close to a finality that excluded life.'⁶⁷ My thesis acknowledges Knights' careful planning for each painting and to this end examines some of her many preparatory drawings. Yet it also shows that influences from personal life and

⁶³ Elizabeth Cowling and Jennifer Mundy, *On Classic Ground: Picasso, Leger, de Chirico and the New Classicism 1910-1930* (London: Tate Gallery, 1990), 11-28.

⁶⁴ Powers in *Winifred Knights*, 14.

⁶⁵ Chambers, 'Redefining History Painting', 95.

⁶⁶ Alan Powers, 'Public Faces and Private Faces – Narrative and Romanticism in English Mural Painting 1900-1935', in John Christian (ed.), 65.

⁶⁷ Powers, *Winifred Knights*, 17.

contemporaneous society (including the expatriate environment of the BSR and other aspects of inter-war social conservatism) came together to produce images in which narrative and emotion are sometimes subdued, but which are never empty.

The abstract to a thesis completed in 2012 by Lyrica Taylor (access is restricted until 2019), seems instead to concentrate on Knights as a religious painter, considering that these 'visionary paintings [connect] on a personal level with Christianity'.⁶⁸ While acknowledging the importance of biblical subjects to Knights' work, my thesis takes a different approach. There are few references to religion in her letters and none to any belief. Her son has also stressed that she was not religious.⁶⁹ Importantly, when examining Knights' work as a whole such an analysis is problematic. For instance, her fine early illustrations to 'Goblin Market' were very likely informed by emerging sexuality. Her *Deluge* draws on art historical precedents for the subject (such as Turner's *The Deluge*, 1805, Tate Collection), and arguably on reactions to WWI, as much as on the biblical story, and her *Marriage at Cana* is as much about multiple interactions between groups of women and men as about turning water to wine. An analysis of Knights as essentially a religious painter must, additionally, eschew her *Village Street: Mill-Hands Conversing* and *Figures in a Boat: Lake Piedelucio* (1924-1930) with its lovely landscape and a stiff-backed woman ignoring her male companions (an intriguing comment on inter-war relationships). Well-known biblical subject-matter was important to her work, but used to explore interactions between women and families. This subject-matter provides an 'interlocking of past and present'⁷⁰ that

⁶⁸ 'While largely forgotten until the present day, Winifred Knights (1899-1947) was one of Great Britain's most profound early-twentieth-century artists...This dissertation will demonstrate how Knights's visionary paintings are all about the artist, but this is not hubris. She is instead connecting on a personal level with Christianity and, in the process, inviting the viewer to share in her vision that is as personal and spiritual as Stanley Spencer's imagery. The theme of resurrection runs throughout the series of Winifred Knights's paintings'. Lyrica Taylor, 'Abstract' to *Winifred Knights (1899-1947) and Early-Twentieth-Century British Modernism, with a Catalogue Raisonné*, PhD thesis, unpublished work, University of Maryland, abstract available at Digital Repository at the University of Maryland at <http://drum.lib.umd.edu/handle/1903/14042>, accessed 5th August 2014 (the PhD thesis to be available digitally on 17th April 2019).

⁶⁹ John Monnington made this point, on 26th October 2011, in a conversation with the author. The conversation is hereafter cited as 'John Monnington Conversation.' Also see email from Richard Palmer (the artist's nephew) to Sacha Llewellyn in which he states, referring to the 1940s, 'I do recall that there was little evidence in the house of any active connection with the local Parish Church' (16th November 2014). Sacha Llewellyn, who has known John Monnington since 1994, says that John is distressed that his mother and her work are being miss-represented when she is described as religious. See conversation between Sacha Llewellyn and the author, 11th November 2014. There are also only three references to religion in Knights' Letters.

⁷⁰ In his brief analysis of Knights' *The Marriage at Cana* Tony Mackle says that 'A mixture of modern clothes and Renaissance tunic-style dress helps to underline the interlocking of past and present.' Tony Mackle, 'Religious Visions' in Ted Gott, Laurie Benson and Sophie Matthieson (eds.) *Modern Britain 1900-1960: Masterworks from Australia and New Zealand Collections* (Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 2007), 177.

gives her images particular seriousness and emotional weight, but without demonstrating a personal connection with Christianity.

Although 'the theme of resurrection', also mentioned by Taylor,⁷¹ is crucial to *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours*, and implicated in the subject-matter of *The Marriage at Cana*, I argue throughout the thesis that Knights' work is *most importantly* informed by her experience as a woman in the early twentieth century. The wish for return to *this* life was surely central to Knights' feeling when she painted *The Resurrection of the Dead Child* and is likely to have been the first response of viewers in the 1930s. Finally, to conclude the literature survey, a recent essay by Sacha Llewellyn, 'The Deluge, 1920', forms a chapter in *British Murals and Decorative Painting 1920-60*, published in 2013.⁷² It provides an overview, relating the painting to WWI and one of its clear precedents, Nicholas Poussin's *Winter-The Deluge* (1660-1664, the Louvre).⁷³ Llewellyn's research has led to interesting sources, particularly connecting the central child with Verrocchio's *Putto with Fish*⁷⁴ and Vittore Carpaccio's *St Jerome and the Lion* (1509, Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni, Venice), its monks running from the lion.⁷⁵ She states that in *The Deluge* the people fleeing are 'terrified, innocent victims who help each other to safety'.⁷⁶ In contrast, my thesis does not argue for a single interpretation. For instance, another effective way of reading the painting would be as a hopeless struggle for survival, and evidence for this view can be found in the detail of the Ark moored entirely out of reach, and on the detail of the biblical account that only Noah and his family survived.

My thesis argues against the dominant focus on decorative style in the literature on Knights' work. Studies by Emma Chambers and Alan Powers detailed above are influential examples of this strand in the scholarship. Knights was marginalised by the ambition for public art projects of Thomas Monnington, Alfred Kingsley Lawrence and other male artists associated with the British School at Rome. Knights' choices were not for public art and she drew her material from her private life, from her experiences as girl, woman, worker, wife and mother. The ways she articulated these experiences were sensitive and original. She worked with the pressures women

⁷¹ Lyrica Taylor, 'Abstract' to *Winifred Knights (1899-1947) and Early-Twentieth-Century British Modernism*, unpublished.

⁷² Sacha Llewellyn's 'The Deluge, 1920' in Alan Powers (ed.), *British Murals and Decorative Painting 1920-1960: Rediscoveries and New Interpretations* (London: Sansom and Company, 2013), 119-137.

⁷³ Ibid, 122, 126.

⁷⁴ Llewellyn says the sculpture was purchased by the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1888; that Knights wrote mentioning she had seen this sculpture; that she drew it in her sketchbook for the painting. Sacha Llewellyn, 'The Deluge', 128, 130. *Book of Studies for the Rome Scholarship* is in a Private Collection and I have not seen it.

⁷⁵ Llewellyn, 130.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 122.

faced in the early twentieth century as they struggled to establish independent, yet woman-centred lives. She explored the opportunities women took for solidarity with one another and the satisfactions of focus on work and maternity. It is because of these issues I draw on biography and Life Writing in order to explore and explicate the significant qualities of Knights' work.

Winifred Knights' attitude to her work was not the same as that of her male peers at the British School at Rome, and this is evidence of the distinctive quality of her ambition. Correspondence in the BSR Archives reveals Alfred Kingsley Lawrence's frustration at the work he was set as a student at the BSR. Clearly concerned that the tasks largely consisted of 'designs for imaginary settings' he was keen to take up 'an opportunity' to paint a decoration at the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle at the same time as completing his scholarship. Any personal vision for his art is not mentioned.⁷⁷ Lawrence's practical approach to painting contrasts with Winifred Knights' greater personal engagement with her subject-matter. She obviously found focusing on work difficult when not emotionally invested in the subject and in her first months in Italy could not find a direction for her work: 'I have started many little things and I give them up almost immediately. I have never been so bad before.'⁷⁸ She was enthusiastic when, later that year, she found a subject that excited her imagination, sensing it would sustain her interest: 'It is going to be gorgeous, late evening time, dark purply brown hills...'⁷⁹ She strove to complete paintings to her own exacting standards and if she could not meet these standards was prepared to forego the chance to exhibit her work, as she wrote:

Will you please tell me if it is absolutely necessary to show my work on October 1st. I hate the thought of anyone seeing my picture in its present stage....several times I have wanted to give it up and start afresh it is so frightfully bad but the thought of all the money I have spent trying to do it has saved it from destruction [punctuation sic].⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Letter from Alfred Kingsley Lawrence to Evelyn Shaw (Secretary to the BSR, based in London) dated 6th January 1925. File of Correspondence, 'A.K. Lawrence, Rome Scholar in Painting 1923'. BSR Archives. See also: letter from A.K. Lawrence to Evelyn Shaw dated 8th March 1925; letter from Desmond O'Brien, visiting tutor to the BSR, to Evelyn Shaw, dated 7th January 1925. A.K. Lawrence File: *ibid*.

⁷⁸ Letter from Winifred Knights to her mother dated 4th February 1921. In the archives I have examined there is more evidence for Knights' approach to her work than for Lawrence's, due to the greater volume of Knights' letters. However, letters from Colin Gill to Evelyn Shaw give further support to my point about male artists' attitudes. See letter from Colin Gill to Evelyn Shaw dated 14th November 1920 and letter from Gill to Shaw dated 9th June 1921. File of Correspondence, 'Colin Gill Rome Scholar 1913 Painting and Post-Scholarship Correspondence since 20th July '21 Died Nov 1938'. BSR Archives.

⁷⁹ Letter from Winifred Knights to her mother dated 24th July 1921.

⁸⁰ Letter from Winifred Knights to Evelyn Shaw dated 27th September 1925. Knights' File, BSR Archives.

Unfinished areas in her *Marriage at Cana*, as well as comments in her letters, are witness to her difficulties in tackling and completing a large scale painting,⁸¹ while her choice to select material that mattered personally to her comes across from the many small details, such as a family chatting to a toddler and a woman artist drawing. The viewer is drawn to observe these intriguing details at least as much as to the miracle that is about to take place. In contrast, letters from male students at the British School at Rome show their single-minded ambition to establish public careers as decorative painters. The different priorities of male and female artist were already clear from the competition for the Rome Prize in 1920, when 'the deluge' was the set subject. Knights focused on the plight of women and families attempting to escape rising seas, the care of mothers for their children and contrasting male focus on personal survival. In his *The Deluge*, by contrast, Leon Underwood chose to particularly demonstrate skills in figure drawing, including the contrapposto. He presumably considered that such skills would impress the Rome Prize judges and therefore semi-nude figures dominate both foreground and mid-ground (**plate 34**).

Although she was able to integrate personal material successfully into a large scale work when she painted *The Deluge*, in Rome Knights faced great difficulties in completing a decorative painting to her exacting personal standards for aesthetic and emotional conviction, at the scale stipulated by BSR rules, that is 'not less than 30 square feet in size.'⁸² Overwhelmed, very probably, by the male-dominated institution, she struggled to realise her vision at this daunting scale. Her needs were better met when she could explore women's lives, her own experience and the Italian landscape without the pressures of conforming to institutional demands, her greater confidence evidenced, for instance, by *Santissima Trinita* (1924-1930). Later, in England, it is likely Knights had no ambition to participate in the mural commissions that men who had studied at the BSR worked to obtain. Focusing on male public contributions to society, these schemes did not represent women's experience. Knights would, almost certainly, have had no interest in mural schemes that ignored human sympathy and the care that women and men can give one another. When she finally accepted a public commission, in 1928, the subject, 'Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours', gave her ample opportunity to work on episodes of charity and resurrection that fitted her needs and were therefore easier to manipulate.

Feminist attitudes to maternity and women as workers have informed my study. During Knights' lifetime all norms were set by men. Success outside those norms stood out as unusual, and

⁸¹ For instance, 'I have come up here [Anticoli Corrado, a village popular with artists in the summers] on condition that I do studies only for my decoration, otherwise I might be sent straight back to England. I have been doing a small painting on wood of the Tiber Valley one I started months ago...[punctuation sic]'. Letter from Winifred Knights to 'Dearest', probably her mother, dated 19th July 1921.

⁸² Letter from Evelyn Shaw to Winifred Knights dated 29th April 1921. BSR Archives.

Knights was hailed as a woman for winning the Rome Prize: an article describing the Prize was headed 'Woman Artist's Success'.⁸³ It is clear, therefore, that gender was important to ways Knights conducted both career and private life, and texts exploring the impact of gender differences in defining women's lives and their access to work have provided a model for my approach.⁸⁴ After women were granted a partial franchise by the Representation of the People Act, of 6th February 1918, British feminists looked beyond the vote to other areas of inequality and women's particular needs.⁸⁵ In the early 1920s the objectives of the Six Point Group (founded in 1921)⁸⁶ and the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship (known as the NUSEC)⁸⁷ were both 'strict equality, and the issues which concerned women as mothers of children.'⁸⁸ However, the two groups increasingly diverged as 'new feminists', led by Eleanor Rathbone, President of the NUSEC, focused on issues that accepted difference, working for 'endowments' (family allowances) to be given to mothers as support for children.⁸⁹ In contrast 'old feminists', members of the Six Point Group, concentrated on equal rights. Johanna Alberti, writing as a feminist historian, places the break between 'old' and 'new' feminists with Eleanor Rathbone's address to the Annual Council of the NUSEC in March 1925:

at last we have done with the boring business of measuring everything that women want, or is offered them by men's standards, to see if it is exactly up to sample...we can stop looking at all our problems through men's eyes and discussing them in men's

⁸³ *The Daily Mirror* (8th February 1921). In fact Knights was only the third prize-winner (after Colin Gill and Jack M. Benson), the prize having been suspended during WWI. Her success was therefore not statistically remarkable, but the *Mirror's attitude* is important.

⁸⁴ For example, Roberta Guerrina, 'Equality, Difference and Motherhood: the case for a feminist analysis of equal rights and maternity legislation', *Journal of Gender Studies* 10, no. 1 (2001), 35. DOI: 10.1080/095892301300050555.

⁸⁵ 'What is feminism?' in *The Woman's Leader*, 17th July 1925, quoted in Susan Kingsley Kent: *Making Peace: the Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 118. Equal Franchise was granted on 2nd July 1928.

⁸⁶ Members included Margaret (Lady) Rhondda, Winifred Holtby and Vera Brittain. Margaret Rhondda founded the journal in 1920. The organ for 'new feminism' was *The Woman's Leader*.

⁸⁷ The NUSEC was the successor organisation to the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) after WWI.

⁸⁸ Johanna Alberti, *Beyond Suffrage: Feminists in War and Peace 1914-28* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan Press Ltd. 1989), 139.

⁸⁹ Sue Bruley, *Women in Britain since 1900* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd. 1999), 79-80; Deirdre Beddoe, *Back to Home and Duty: Women between the Wars 1918-1939* (London, Boston, Sydney and Wellington: Pandora, 1989), 139. It was considered that these allowances, given by the state, would better support children than the so-called 'family wage', (wages given to men factored for maintenance of families). Rathbone also intended this as means to eventual equal pay because men would be unable to claim that they required more pay than women. See Kent, *Making Peace*, 119. However, new feminists' demand that Maternity and Infant Welfare Centres provide information on birth control for married women was from the standpoint of women's 'needs as mothers', not from their equal rights. *Ibid*, 131-132.

phraseology. We can demand...what women need to fulfil the potentialities of their own natures.⁹⁰

'New feminism' fits with the societal concerns of inter-war Britain. Nevertheless, the NUSEC was wary of unintended consequences from the 'new feminist' position and was opposed to 'protective legislation', intended to safeguard women industrial workers. The NUSEC was therefore disappointed with the 1926 Factories Act which banned women from painting buildings using 'lead based paints'.⁹¹ By protecting only women the Act compromised equal rights to employment. Hence 'old' and 'new' feminism turned on just the issue of difference and equality that face the researcher when considering Knights' work: how much to regard her work as a special case due to her gender, and whether a difference-blind approach will accord her art the weight it merits, considering the social circumstances of her lifetime.⁹² The inter-connections between a woman's life and woman-centred subject-matter shaped Knights' work throughout her career. I therefore refer to her as 'woman artist', not simply 'artist'. Yet in her choice of style and biblical motifs she was not different from the majority of successful Rome Scholars, who were male. Aware of discrimination, conscious of her talent (equal to her contemporaries') and wishing to be treated without gender bias in her chosen profession, Knights wrote that 'People seem sorry for men who didn't win [the Rome Prize] – why? They had just the same chances as I, and more'.⁹³

Winifred Knights' life and her inter-war woman-centred art resonate with issues that have compromised equality over a longer time-frame and on into the present day. Contemporary feminist mothers see that while their partners may be regarded as more reliable for becoming fathers, *they* must be careful to conform to workplace norms, set by men.⁹⁴ Alison Bartlett (an academic specialising in Gender Studies) says there is a 'public discourse which pit[s] maternity against work', so that women have to 'juggle and balance these aspects of identity (while men do

⁹⁰ Elizabeth Rathbone, *Milestones* (11th March 1925), quoted in Alberti, *Beyond Suffrage*, 164. For similar comments see 'What is feminism?' in *The Woman's Leader* (17th July 1925), 195, quoted in Kent, *ibid*, 118.

⁹¹ This Act extended the 1920 legislation which forbade preparation of lead-based paints by women. Johanna Alberti places the NUSEC opposition to the years 1924-1927. Alberti, *Beyond Suffrage*, 177.

⁹² For another discussion of difference and equality in the 1920s see Sheila Rowbotham, 'Battles around Boundaries: Conflicting Strategies after WWI', in Sheila Rowbotham, *Women in Movement* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 239-253.

⁹³ Letter from Knights to her aunt Millicent, 29th September 1920; see also Knights to her mother, 24th November 1920.

⁹⁴ Melanie Bailey Mills, 'Intersections between Work and Family': When a Playpen Can be Office Furniture', 213; Jennifer Thatcher, '50/50: women are still woefully under-represented in the art world argues Jennifer Thatcher', *Art Monthly* 367, no. 6 (June 13th 2013), available at <http://www.artmonthly.co.uk/magazine/site/article/50-50-by-jennifer-thatcher-june-2013>, accessed 28th August 2015.

not)'.⁹⁵ It is clear that Knights' experience as student, worker and parent was also different from her male peers, though she had the same education. The difficulties in juggling work and family emerge from the stories of other women painters. For instance, Henrietta Ward, 1832-1924, and her husband were professional artists who worked at home. But she was solely responsible for managing the house and servants, while working on major paintings such as *'God Save the Queen'* (1857) and giving birth to eight children in the 1850s and 1860s.⁹⁶ Winifred Knights similarly had to cope with competing responsibilities. The multi-dimensionality of woman's role tested her concentration and dedication to her career. She found planning meals for her husband difficult.⁹⁷ After the birth of her son John Monnington her focus on painting was never fully restored: her son says 'she was obsessed with me'.⁹⁸ She did not survive beyond the central mothering years (her son John was twelve and a half when she died) and it is realistic to assume her concentration would have improved, had she lived longer. Feeling the 'demands [and] pressures' of contemporary employment, Alison Bartlett says: 'I want to resist the idea that my work and my parenting are in conflict or somehow compromise each other. I want to restore the pleasures, reciprocity and potentials of a rounded life. These provide much more enabling and energising narratives.'⁹⁹ Knights' focus on her work fluctuated and her total output of oil paintings was small, yet the amount of completed work is not a defensible gauge for determining 'success' or 'failure'. Indeed, the time spent on her private life fed into her woman-centred art. Knights' *artwork* is my chief concern, but her best work came from a 'rounded life' and I show how the multi-dimensionality of life (work, marriage, maternity...) *made* her paintings.

Knights' life is a case study for the conflicting circumstances in which female artists fashioned their careers in the 1920s and 1930s, but whether gender was a bar is in her case difficult to determine. It is unclear why she was not part of the group that included other former BSR students who worked on the St Stephen's Hall, Palace of Westminster, mural project (completed in 1927) and the Bank of England murals (1928-1938). Perhaps she showed no interest in the work or even rejected approaches from David Young Cameron, who organised both schemes.¹⁰⁰ Such mural schemes foregrounded the male-dominated national and institutional endeavours of treaties, war and banking, and gave no space to women's experience of work and family. If she

⁹⁵ Alison Bartlett, 'Theory, Desire and Maternity: at Work in Academia', 21. Melanie Bailey Mills, also an academic and mother, makes a similar point. Mills, 'Intersections between Work and Family', 213.

⁹⁶ Deborah Cherry, *Painting Women* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 35-36.

⁹⁷ See a letter from Winifred Knights to Aunt Millicent. The letter is undated, but annotated by Eileen Palmer as '1925-6?'

⁹⁸ John Monnington Interview.

⁹⁹ Bartlett, 'Theory, Desire and Maternity', 30.

¹⁰⁰ Smith, *D.Y. Cameron*, 95-97, 99-101.

rejected approaches from Cameron this response would therefore be understandable. Perhaps, too, she was not approached simply because she worked slowly. Both Knights and her husband had private incomes (his was the larger),¹⁰¹ but this resource did not deflect Thomas Monnington from his career. He presumably had the greater ambition to publicly demonstrate his worth. Katy Deepwell explains how Edith Granger-Taylor's painting *Allegory* (1935, based on Botticelli's *Mystic Nativity*) satirises women artists' common reliance on their male artistic counterparts - women carrying satchels are pursuing men holding opportunities, represented by umbrellas.¹⁰² The story of Knights' career is different because she was older than her husband and her first and greatest success came before they met. There is, too, no evidence in letters or photographs that she felt inferior to men, personally or artistically.

Contemporary sources that articulate gendered experience, including novels and poetry, have furthered the development of my analysis of women and daily life. Vera Brittain, whose fiancé and brother died in WWI, shows how even a confident, independent woman could like Knights develop war trauma, as intense as a man's. In 1919, when Brittain heard that a woman friend had died suddenly, she

pushed the thought of her away...sick...of death and loss. But...I looked one evening into my bedroom glass and thought, with a sense of incommunicable horror, that I detected in my face the signs of some sinister and peculiar change...was I beginning to grow a beard, like a witch? Thereafter my hand began, at regular intervals, to steal towards my face.¹⁰³

Charlotte Mew's 'The Cenotaph' similarly focuses on women's experience after WWI. She more clearly articulates their emotional dependence on men. In 1918 the Imperial War Graves Commission had decided to bury all war dead on the battlefields,¹⁰⁴ and Mew contrasts Europe where 'wonderful youth was shed' with the home front and the 'desolate, passionate' hands of lonely 'lovers' and 'mothers' who spread flowers around the empty tomb of a new Cenotaph.¹⁰⁵ Written in the post-war years, although set in the late nineteenth century, Dorothy Richardson's *Revolving Lights* (part of her absorbing series *Pilgrimage*) reverses Mew's image of dependence in an exploration of a modern young woman's dilemma. Miriam, the series' central character,

¹⁰¹ John Monnington Interview.

¹⁰² Deepwell, *Women Artists*, 54-55.

¹⁰³ Brittain, *Testament*, 484.

¹⁰⁴ Principles set out by Sir Fabian Ware (Vice-Chairman of the IWGC) and in a report by Frederick Kenyon, director of the British Museum. Michele Barrett, 'recovered history: Subalterns at War', *Interventions* 9, no. 3 (2007), 472. DOI: 10.1080/13698010701618703.

¹⁰⁵ Charlotte Mew, 'The Cenotaph' [1921], in *Collected Poems and Prose* (London: Virago Press, 1982).

describes her erstwhile fiancé: “poor little man. I am afraid, now that I am not going to marry him, of hurting and tiring him...When I go to see friends in the evening, he waits outside.”¹⁰⁶ The young woman’s dilemma is different in Winifred Holtby’s *South Riding*. In this novel (published in 1936, after the author’s death) Holtby addressed the emotional life of Sarah Burton, a headmistress who wants love and career, and is eventually self-sufficient enough to settle for only career.¹⁰⁷ Of Knights’ work only *The Deluge*’s central self-portrait mirrors the firm independence of Holtby’s Sarah Burton and Richardson’s Miriam. But in Chapter Three, for instance, I show how in *Figures in a Boat*, *Lake Piediluco* Knights depicted a small rebellion against male control that is perhaps more typical of the age. Through the eyes of Miriam, Richardson examines everyday events and empowerments: ‘the fish [cooked by Miriam’s friend Miss Dear] smelled very savoury...the lovely little loaf and the wholesome solid fish would cost less than a small egg and roll and butter at an A.B.C. How did people find out how to do these things?’¹⁰⁸ Writing in the same period Virginia Woolf also concentrates on conventionally gendered activity, for instance describing Mrs Ramsay helping her son James cut pictures from a magazine.¹⁰⁹ The minutiae of women’s lives become absorbing in these writers’ hands. Knights’ work gives a similar dignity to the everyday, for example in *Santissima Trinita* in which women just sleep, wash their faces and dry their hair. This contrasts with the “heroic’ male world’ of History Painting,¹¹⁰ represented in Knights’ time by WWI images such as John Singer Sargent’s *Gassed* (1919, Imperial War Museum).

Nineteenth and early twentieth-century women painters often chose subject-matter from the private sphere. Berthe Morisot’s *The Mother and Sister of the Artist* (1869-1870, Washington), Mary Sargent Florence’s *Children at Chess* (c.1903, Tate Collection) and Gwen John’s *Chloë Boughton-Leigh* (1904–1908, Tate Collection) illustrate this point. Mary Cassatt’s *Baby John Being Nursed* (1910, private collection) places breast-feeding in the home. Winifred Knights is thus unusual in the ways she elides public and private spheres when representing women. For example, *Italian Landscape* and *The Marriage at Cana* show women breast-feeding: the first in a field by the Tiber, the second within a multi-figure composition and group meal. Both paintings

¹⁰⁶ Dorothy Richardson, *Revolving Lights* [1923], in *Pilgrimage Vol. III* (London: Dent and Cresset Press, 1938), 261-262. Richardson set her novels before WWI, but they were written in the inter-war period.

¹⁰⁷ Winifred Holtby, *South Riding* [1936], (London: Reprint Society, 1949), 485-487, 490-492.

¹⁰⁸ Richardson, *The Tunnel* [1919], in *Pilgrimage Vol. II* (London: Dent and Sons Ltd. and the Cresset Press, 1938), 259. See also Miriam’s bicycle lessons. In Richardson, *The Tunnel*, 172-173, 226.

¹⁰⁹ Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* [1927], (Harmondsworth, Middlesex and London: Penguin Books, 1964), 18-19.

¹¹⁰ Victoria Kelley, *Soap and Water: Cleanliness, Dirt and the Working Classes in Victorian and Edwardian Britain* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 95.

show large pendulous breasts full of milk. Two drawings of breast-feeding in a private collection show these representations were the result of close life study.¹¹¹ The social norms of both British and Italian inter-war society supported mothering, so that Knights was not working against society in putting woman-centred concerns into a public context.

The public contexts inscribed in Knights' work provided opportunities to explore a range of traditionally gendered activity. Bread or meat is the usual food in representations of the Marriage at Cana, but, interested in food,¹¹² Knights chose local watermelon for her very Italian version of the subject. Her individual choice of clothing is shown in the photograph taken at the BSR (**plate 1**). Making and adapting clothes for dances and fancy dress parties was important to Knights: she enjoyed the activity, perhaps more easily than the hard graft of painting,¹¹³ but it appears she did not regard this as a lesser occupation than painting (a point surely inapplicable to male artists at this time). That her artistic interests extended beyond fine art is unsurprising, given her gender and time, for as Patricia Mainardi has said: 'women have always made art...They have put their creativity...into the needlework arts, which exist in fantastic variety wherever there are women'.¹¹⁴ This thesis concerns painting, so the significance lies in ways these interests fed back into Knights' painting. Her keen eye for dress and fabric is clear throughout her work, from the slightly over-dressed women in the foreground of *Ludlow Fair and Cattle Market* (1919, UCL Art Museum), to the blankets that cover peasant dress in *Santissima Trinita*.

It is fortunate that there is extensive correspondence in the public domain, that much of Knights' artwork is in public collections and that I have been granted access to private collections. Katy Deepwell notes that 'remarkably few women in this period left their personal correspondence or estates to public archives and most ...monographs have been based on private...collections of letters, papers and diaries'.¹¹⁵ Such research has to be taken on trust, restricting scholarly re-evaluation. In contrast, the correspondence referred to here is open to public scrutiny.¹¹⁶ The sources for this thesis have included: a recorded interview with John Monnington; letters in UCL Special Collections, the BSR, Canterbury Cathedral Archives and the University of Kent; paintings and drawings in the British Museum, Fitzwilliam Museum, Tate Collection, UCL Art Museum and private collections in London and Scotland. Using these sources I show how the

¹¹¹ This collector wishes to remain anonymous.

¹¹² See, for instance, letter from Knights to her mother, August 1922.

¹¹³ See, for example, letter from Knights to her mother, 9th December 1924.

¹¹⁴ Patricia Mainardi, 'Quilts: the Great American Art' [1973], in Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (eds.), *Feminism and Art History* (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), 331.

¹¹⁵ Deepwell, *Women Artists*, 9.

¹¹⁶ Some letters are in a private collection and I have not been given access to these. This collector has very generously given me other help and time and I am very grateful for this.

artist's sensitive rendering of experience drew on her life as girl and woman in the early twentieth century. Despite its derivation in the narrative of her life, Knights' work clearly communicated with its contemporaneous audience *and* satisfied her needs. For instance, *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours* is an effective response to the commission in memory of Alfred Lord Milner,¹¹⁷ a painting that pleased the liberal humanitarian Dean George Bell,¹¹⁸ was 'very much admired' by the public at Canterbury¹¹⁹ and provided a memorial to her own dead son. This is the first account to examine Winifred Knights' art and her 'rounded life' in its multi-dimensionality, to show how her paintings worked as vehicles for her narrative and to draw conclusions about her choices and execution of motifs for herself and for the viewer.

¹¹⁷ As well, all members of the Committee were Imperialists. Members were responsible for raising funds to renovate St Martin's chapel and to finance the reredos, and included D.Y. Cameron, Herbert Baker, Leopold Amery, Neville Chamberlain, Rudyard Kipling. Milner Memorial File.

¹¹⁸ See George (G.K.A.) Bell, 'The Church and the Artist', in *The Studio*, 124, no. 594, (September 1942), 81.

¹¹⁹ Letters from Dean Hewlett Johnson of Canterbury Cathedral to Hugh Thornton, 19th June 1936 and 8th September 1937. Hewlett Johnson Archive, University of Kent.

Chapter One: Women, girls and virginity in Winifred Knights' early work

Winifred Knights' talent and youthful facility is evidenced by schoolgirl drawings, watercolours and work produced while studying at the Slade School of Art. Chapter One of my thesis focuses on this early work, although *The Deluge* (1920) for which the artist won the Rome Prize during her final year at the Slade, is discussed in Chapter Two. The first section of the present chapter examines watercolours painted between c.1913 and 1917, including some images representing coming-of-age events for women or girls: Rapunzel's long hair clutched by the Prince as he climbs into her virgin's tower; contact with strange little men in the *Goblin Market* watercolours; and an interpretation of the New Testament parable 'the Wise and Foolish Virgins', in which a desolate virgin leans on the locked door separating her from Christ. Knights' interest in women and girls is still very apparent in *Ludlow Fair and Cattle Market*, a watercolour dated 1919, in her tempera on canvas *Village Street: Mill-Hands Conversing* (also 1919), and in a circular watercolour dated 1918 (**plate 8**) examined in the second part of the chapter. Her artwork from c.1918-1919 has a less insistent emotional charge than the earlier work examined in the chapter, but she begins to examine maternity, and efforts towards both female independence and sorority, themes continued into her later work.

Fairies and goblins and girls: Knights' watercolours c.1913-1917

In July 1917 Winifred Knights painted a young woman in a long green dress, viewed from the side to display the bright orange lining of her slashed sleeve and matching orange slippers. She turns to the viewer, showing her dark, loosely gathered hair and her finely arched eyebrows. Her costume and jewelled foreground band, or *feronniere*,¹²⁰ indicate that (despite pen and paper) the artist has placed the young woman in the fifteenth or sixteenth century (**plate 3**). The watercolour is painted on the top left of a letter, now mounted for display. It is small, taking up about one sixth

¹²⁰ Leonardo's *The Lady with an Ermine* (c.1482-1483) and *La Belle Feronniere* (attributed to Leonardo c.1490-1496) have forehead bands (the *feronniere*). The band on *La Belle Feronniere* includes a jewel, and the sitter is looking at the viewer. Knights probably knew these from reproductions and they may have been sources for her watercolour. Alesso Baldovinetti's profile *Portrait of a Lady* (c. 1465) shows a similar band. The painting was in the National Gallery from 1866, so Knights probably knew it.

of the page,¹²¹ but the fine detail encourages the viewer to look closely and observe highlights on hair, shading on dress, fine pencil lines indicating a table top and writing paper, and the young woman's hand lightly holding a pen as she pauses in her writing to face the viewer. The letter below the image, dated Friday July 6th 1917, identifies the young woman, writer and artist, as Winifred Knights, and explains her imaginary time-travel to the viewer and reader: 'Dearest Auntie/Here is your niece in one of her former existences writing to thank you very very much for the lovely surprise she found when she came down to breakfast this morning [punctuation sic].'¹²² Taking the combination of fantasy and self-portrait as a starting point I will develop ideas outlined in the introduction to the thesis, where I noted how Winifred Knights drew on personal experience when addressing issues significant to women's lives. Motherhood and the family are themes throughout her career, but adolescent love and sexuality occur as major themes only in the work discussed in the present chapter. Focusing on some of the artist's little-known watercolours depicting women, girls and young women, some with accompanying men, this section of the chapter analyses images completed no later than 1917, selected from the considerable body of work for c.1913-1917, and includes images depicting fairies and all the illustrations to 'Goblin Market' that I have found. The majority of these images are undated, but approximate dates can be proposed through examining the artist's increasing confidence in treating the human form. I then turn to an extended analysis of *The Wise and Foolish Virgins* (c.1915, James Allen's Girls' School). The watercolour is the first work to integrate private concerns with overtly religious subject-matter, a combination that became central to Winifred Knights' later work. The work also demonstrates her continuing interest in young women and sexuality, so that this section relates to the beginning of my chapter.

Women's access to paid work increased in the years before and during WWI. There was some acceptance of women's right to choose contraception and a growing awareness that women had sexual feelings. However, alongside this liberalisation, Victorian attitudes to virginity and marriage persisted, 'marriage promising the fulfilment of ...[the] major social and cultural aspirations' for girls and young women.¹²³ Knights' case illustrates the educational opportunities for prosperous, talented, artistic women: education at James Allen's Girls' School, Dulwich (January 1912-July 1915), with the award of both Silver and Gold medals of the Royal Drawing Society during these

¹²¹ An approximate size based on standard letter paper (part of the letter is obscured by the mount).

¹²² Winifred Knights in letter to her aunt, 6th June 1917, illustrated with self-portrait, private collection (Catherine Monnington). The aunt's name is not given in the letter.

¹²³ Selina Scott, 'Young Women, Employment and the Family in Inter-war England', in Krista Cowman and Louise A. Jackson (eds.), *Women and Work Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 137. Scott refers specifically to the period 1918-1939, but this point applies equally to the years covered by this chapter.

years, and her role as artist already set at the age of sixteen when she was removed from school and enrolled in the Slade School of Art.¹²⁴ Yet, despite such opportunities, women artists were treated differently from their male peers. Persistent gender disparity is important for the argument pursued here and throughout the thesis. Letters in the British School at Rome Archives, written in the 1920s, illustrate these factors, particularly when Knights' letters are compared to those of male contemporaries. Her letters to Evelyn Shaw (Hon., Secretary to the BSR, based in London) are friendly, tentative, honest and sometimes apologetic, for instance: 'I can't get away from the feeling that I must do something to be worthy of the scholarship and directly I begin to think that, it is fatal for it stops me doing anything.'¹²⁵ Shaw's letters are encouraging, showing, too, the self-confidence of an older male: 'you are unduly depressed about your work. It is absurd that you should feel ashamed of it...Others I know will feel quite differently about it'.¹²⁶ In contrast, Colin Gill's letters, and those of other male students, are business-like. Gill addresses Evelyn Shaw as an equal, 'dear Shaw'.¹²⁷ Gill discusses anxieties about prospects for a career as Decorative Painter, a contrast to Knights' ontological fears.¹²⁸

Women's sexuality is another, often interrelated, facet of the argument I shall develop. Winifred Knights enjoyed men's company, as is evident from her letters written whilst studying at the Slade and at the School at Rome. For example, in a letter written in 1923 from Italy she says she is free of an engagement (to painter Arnold Mason), going on to detail plans to visit a Miracle Festival with 'a v. beautiful lover [sic]'.¹²⁹ Due to its focus on women, girls and virginity contemporaneous gendered sexual attitudes and feelings are important when considering Knights' early work. I shall show, for instance, how excitement at male attention is figured by *The Wise and Foolish Virgins* and how this excitement contributes to the image's power. Yet a fear of predatory male attention is apparent in the 'Goblin Market' illustrations, particularly powerfully in the small circular illustration (c. 1915, UCL Art Museum). This fear is not expressed in any of the artist's letters of

¹²⁴ *James Allen's Girls' School Roll*, unpublished material (James Allen's Girls' School Archive). For information on medals see Collins: *Winifred Knights*, 7.

¹²⁵ Letter from Winifred Knights to Evelyn Shaw, 13th October 1921. See folder titled *Miss W.M. Knights Rome Scholar in Decorative Painting 1920 and Post Scholarship Correspondence since 3rd April 1924 married W.T. Monnington Died 7th February 1947*, British School at Rome Archives. The folder hereafter cited as Knights' Folder.

¹²⁶ See letter from Evelyn Shaw to Winifred Knights, 27th September 1923, Knights' Folder, BSR Archives.

¹²⁷ For example, letter from Colin Gill to Evelyn Shaw, 9th June 1921. In folder, *Colin Gill Rome Scholar 1913 Painting and Post-Scholarship Correspondence since July '21 Died November 1938*, BSR Archives.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ See letter from Winifred Knights to her Aunt Millicent, 23rd May 1923, Knights' Letters, UCL Special Collections. All further references to letters in this chapter are to the same collection unless otherwise stated.

the same date. Finally, Knights' examination of women and girls' lives up to and including 1917 shows the appeal of fantasy and the past.

I begin by examining the subject-matter and sources for Knights' early work featuring girls and fairies. This work is indebted to the Pre-Raphaelite subject-matter and style of, among others, Edward Burne-Jones, John Byam Liston Shaw and Eleanor Fortescue-Brickdale, working in the late nineteenth century and (except for Burne-Jones) into the twentieth century. Byam Liston Shaw's *Silent Noon* (1894, Leighton House Museum) depicts a girl in white lying across the foreground space, while her minstrel lover stares at her, holding her lifeless hand. In Burne-Jones' *The Garden Court* (1885-1890, Buscot Park) curving briars are background to a crowded frieze of beautiful, slim young women, their backs gracefully bent in sleep. Many of Knights' early images are similarly set in the past or draw on fantasy or stories such as *The Arabian Nights*. Examples include a lady in medieval costume riding side-saddle. Another drawing depicts a woman in a sea-chariot among waves: her chariot is a coiled shell and her horse rears up as a huge wave, Hokusai-like, threatening to engulf her.¹³⁰ The source-matter for an unfinished pen, ink and pencil drawing depicting a young woman in heavily patterned full Elizabethan dress (**plate 4**)¹³¹ may include the sumptuous full gowns of Burne-Jones' *Clara von Bork 1560* and *Sidonia von Bork* (both 1860s, Tate Collection, **plate 5**), or Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Monna Rosa* (1867, private collection),¹³² all of which engage the viewer's eye as much with fabric as face, as does Knights' depiction. Her pen and ink image of Scheherezade, her sister Dinarzade and the Sultan¹³³ is probably adapted from the illustration by H.J. Ford on page 3 of Andrew Lang's edition of *The Arabian Nights Entertainments*, dated 1898, for the composition is similarly crowded, with the girls close to the picture plane, a hanging Turkish lamp and Scheherezade gesturing to illustrate her story. In H.J. Ford's version the Sultan is a menacing figure behind Scheherezade, while Knights has emphasised oriental luxury, the Sultan leaning impassively against sumptuous cushions, a brass-topped cedar-wood table, the girls' wide trousers and sashes.¹³⁴ Knights, like Ford, renders Scheherezade employing the art of story-telling to preserve her life. In contrast with Scheherezade, however, the Sultan is impassive, listening in, not yet having spoken to delay her execution, perhaps not sufficiently engaged by her story. Despite the

¹³⁰ See private collection (Catherine Monnington).

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Although the painting was in private hands at this time reproductions of *Monna Rosa* were available. Knights may have known the illustration in H.C. Marillier, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, an Illustrated Memorial of His Art and Life* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1899), 147.

¹³³ See private collection (Catherine Monnington).

¹³⁴ Andrew Lang (ed.), *The Arabian Nights Entertainments*, illustrations by H.J. Ford, (London: Longmans Green and Co. 1898), 3.

clear debt to H.J. Ford, Knights' fascination with exotic, fantasy past and the power of art in a girl's hands is interesting, particularly considering that the artist was no more than sixteen when she produced this work. A fine watercolour depiction of a woman in a purple robe is another example of an interest in middle-eastern subjects. Her slim, graceful figure forms a reverse curve to the tree's behind her, while the background is a walled and moated oasis with mosque and minarets, entered through a Moroccan keyhole arch (**plate 6**). A range of images of graceful fairies come from the same private collection, while University College London Art Museum holds *Illustration to Andrew Lang's Fairy Tales and Melisande*.¹³⁵ Although these watercolours are undated, comparison with Knights' few dated watercolours shows that all of the images I have mentioned belong to the period 1913-1916.

Fairly widespread belief in the supernatural, including the spirit world, fairies and goblins, stemmed, at least in part, from the long-term impact of publications on evolution (including Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, 1859 and *The Descent of Man*, 1871), a revived interest in folklore, and the carnage of WWI. Alfred Russel Wallace was one of those convinced of the 'reality of spirit manifestation and spirit communication' because 'the very existence of an *immaterial* spirit...could not be explained by the struggle for *material* existence'.¹³⁶ Public acceptance of divine intervention at the Battle of Mons (by bowmen, St George, or angels) is indicative of belief in the supernatural in the uncertain circumstances of WWI, although the origin for this intervention was *The Bowmen*, a story by Arthur Machen published in September 1914.¹³⁷ Turning to fairies, the Cottingley Fairy photographs, published in *The Strand Magazine* in 1917, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's later use of the images to substantiate the existence of such creatures, in the 1920s, shows how belief in fairies persisted.¹³⁸ In poems influenced by traditional Irish tales, such as 'The Stolen Child' (1889) and 'The Song of Wandering Aengus' (1899), William Butler Yeats pictured fairies as enticing and dangerous,¹³⁹ while for Arthur Rackham they were 'primitive and highly sexed' (for instance *The fairies are exquisite dancers*,

¹³⁵ Hereafter called UCL Art Museum.

¹³⁶ Malcolm J. Kottler, 'Alfred Russel Wallace, the Origin of Man, and Spiritualism', *Isis* 65, no. 2 (June 1974), 188. Article Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/229369>.

¹³⁷ See discussions in: David Clarke, 'Rumours of Angels: A Legend of the First World War', *Folklore* 113 (2002), 151-173. Article Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1260673>; David Clarke, 'Rumours of Angels, a Response to Simpson', *Folklore* 115 (2004), 99-104. Article Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30035145>.

¹³⁸ Alex Owen, 'Borderland Forms': Arthur Conan Doyle, Albion's Daughters, and the Politics of the Cottingley Fairies', *History Workshop* 38 (1994), 48-49. DOI: 10.1093/hwj/38.1.48

¹³⁹ See for example W.B. Yeats, 'The Stolen Child' in *Crossways* (1889) and 'The Song of Wandering Aengus' in *The Wind among the Reeds* (1899), in Augustine Martin (ed.), *W.B. Yeats, Collected Poems* (London: Vintage, 1999), 16-17, 55-56.

illustration to J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*).¹⁴⁰ In contrast to Yeats and Rackham, Knights was influenced by versions of fairies as delicate and graceful,¹⁴¹ developing these in her work, for instance a pen and ink drawing of a fairy gathering her skirts together as she floats gently to earth (**plate 7**). Her images of goblins, on the other hand, draw on conceptions of the goblin as a degenerate form of humanity who is ruthless, cunning and grotesque. Sources for this imagery include: social Darwinism and its associated theory of degeneration; fear and mistrust of little-known groups, including other races, particularly Jews, and the industrial working class.

But although Knights' circular *Goblin Market* image (**plate 8**) includes a stereotypical caricature of a Jewish man, to the viewer's right, it would be inappropriate to attribute ideological racism, class prejudice or eugenicist attitudes to such a young artist. Certainly influenced by these ideas, however, Knights was surely also aware of descriptions of goblins in George MacDonald's popular children's book *The Princess and the Goblin*, first published in 1872, where the queen represents a degenerate form of human. She has a nose 'broader at the end than its extreme length, and her eyes, instead of being horizontal, were set up like two perpendicular eggs...her ears were very nearly in the middle of her cheeks.'¹⁴² This idea of the grotesque,¹⁴³ a caricature of everyday humanity, is present in Knights' watercolours, too, although her images do not replicate MacDonald's descriptions. Knights illustrated Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market' a number of times and must have been familiar with the poem. Not aimed at a child readership, the verses are redolent with implied sexuality. She probably knew Dante Gabriel Rossetti's illustrations to the poem, dated 1862, and Laurence Housman's animalistic goblins (published in Macmillan's 1893 edition). Other influences on Knights' early fairy and fantasy work doubtless

¹⁴⁰ Leslie Atzmon, 'Arthur Rackham's Phenomenological Landscape: in-betweens, Goblins, and Femmes Fatales', *Massachusetts Institute of Technology Design Issues* 18, no. 4 (Autumn 2002), 78. DOI:10.1162/074793602320827451.

¹⁴¹ See for example Eleanor Fortescue-Brickdale, illustrations for Alfred Lord Tennyson, *Idylls of the King* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1913). Knights would have known something of the images of fairies and goblins produced by illustrators in Britain during the periods Audrey Dussot calls the first and second golden ages of illustration in Britain (the 1860s and 1890s). Audrey Dussot, 'Laurence Housman (1865-1959): Fairy Tale Teller, Illustrator and Aesthete', *Cahiers Victoriens & Edouardiens* (April 2011), 8-9. MLA International Bibliography, EBSCOhost, accessed 28th August 2015. Images from the second 'golden age' and beyond include H.J. Ford's illustrations for Andrew Lang's *Blue Fairy Book* (1889) and later volumes such as the *Lilac Fairy Book* (1910). See also Warwick Goble's illustration to 'The White Cat', 'I was accordingly laid in a cradle of mother of pearl, ornamented with gold and jewels'. In Dinah Craik, *the Fairy Book: the Best Popular Fairy Stories Selected and Rendered Anew*, illustrations by Warwick Goble [1913], (London: Macmillan and Co. 1979), 176.

¹⁴² George MacDonald, *The Princess and the Goblin* [1872], (London and Glasgow: Blackie and Sons Ltd. 1928), 177.

¹⁴³ See Colin Trodd, Paul Barlow and David Amigoni (eds.), *Victorian Culture and the Idea of the Grotesque* (London, Ashgate: 1999).

included stories in the range of children's books published from the mid nineteenth century onwards, as publishing aimed at children expanded.¹⁴⁴ Knights may have known Mrs Molesworth's *The Cuckoo Clock* (1877), in which Griselda, a little girl, has exciting adventures with a cuckoo clock that comes to life. The cuckoo has magical powers, but according to him fairyland is even more exciting, known only to those with a particular sensitivity. Griselda says,

'if you are a fairy you might take me with you to fairy-land', to which the cuckoo responds: 'And as to those who have been there, [to fairyland] you may be sure of one thing - they were not taken, they found their own way...They may have been taken to the neighbouring countries, but not to fairyland itself.'¹⁴⁵

For Rudyard Kipling fairies were mysterious in a different way. At the beginning of Kipling's *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906) Puck makes a clear distinction between the ancient magic of the People of the Hills and a debased type of fairy, "little buzzflies with butterfly wings and gauze petticoats, and shiny stars in their hair, and a wand like a school-teacher's cane for punishing bad boys and rewarding good ones".¹⁴⁶ At the end of the novel Puck describes how the People of the Hills (the 'pharisees') escaped to France during the Reformation, where "yet awhile folks hadn't tore down the Images".¹⁴⁷ So in *The Cuckoo Clock* fairies represent superior, unobtainable magic and in Kipling they range from free 'little people' to sexually sadistic and pantomime supernatural. In Knights' work fairies are beautiful, alone, almost virginal (**plate 7**). In contrast to Kipling, Knights kept the sadist's touch for goblins. She may have noted the different representation of fairies and fairyland by female and male writers, and perhaps this influenced her.

Returning to more general representations of fantasy past and 'former existences', children's novelist E. Nesbit was writing during Knights' childhood. Her novels are fantasies of childhood adventure, moving between present and past, as we saw in Knights' watercolour and letter with which I began this section. They also sometimes move into the future. In *Harding's Luck* poor lame Dickie time-travels to Elizabethan England:

¹⁴⁴ Laura C. Stevenson says that 'after 1860 it became possible for a person with no other means of support' to work as a children's writer. Laura C. Stevenson, 'Literary Ladders in the Golden age of Children's Books', *Sewanee Review* 119, no. 3, (Summer 2011), 439, at *Project MUSE*, EBSCO host, accessed 28th August 2015.

¹⁴⁵ Mary Elizabeth Molesworth (Mrs Molesworth), writing as Ennis Graham, *The Cuckoo Clock* (London, Macmillan and Co. 1877), 68.

¹⁴⁶ Rudyard Kipling, *Puck of Pook's Hill* [1906], (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd. 1951), 14.

¹⁴⁷ The fairies, or 'Pharisees', cannot bear the destruction of images and "cruel Canterbury bells ringin' ...for more pore men an' women to be burnded [sic]." Ibid, 268.

and now Dickie literally did not know where he was. ...was he Dickie Harding who had lived at New Cross...or was he that boy with the other name whose father was a knight, and who lived in a house in Deptford with green trees outside the windows?¹⁴⁸

While there is no evidence that Knights read E. Nesbit's novels when she was growing up, her knowledge of these books is a distinct possibility.

I have already noted how Knights' attraction for a fantasy past is clear from the drawing and letter referring to 'former existences'. The link is reinforced by the following quotation from another letter, written when the artist was studying at the Slade School of Art. She describes an interaction with Derwent Lees, teacher at the Slade:

Lees Its [sic] you who do these fairy tale drawings for the Sketch Club.

WMK How did you guess?

Lees By the drawing on the side of your board...Then he had another look at my lady...How ridiculously like you she is. Can't you see it?..

Lees It is a very strange thing... that when one is drawing from imagination one invariably gets ones own likeness or at least a part of ones likeness [spelling, punctuation and layout sic].¹⁴⁹

So, alongside settings in the past, and fairyland, the early work discussed in this section of Chapter One concentrates on the female form. With connections to late Pre-Raphaelite art the slim, elongated bodies in Knights' drawings and watercolours clearly relate to her features and slender shape, recurrent use of self-portraits (and part self-portraits) further bearing out Derwent Lees' comments quoted above. Examples include an unfinished pen and ink drawing of *Rapunzel* (**plate 9**); a woman in an oriental setting (**plate 6**); aspects of the central figure (Laura or Lizzie) in the circular 'Goblin Market' illustration (**plate 8**); the virgin to the viewer's right in *The Wise and Foolish Virgins* (**plate 10**) and the fairy (**plate 7**). Why did Knights focus on women and girls, at this historical moment, before and during WWI? She had two sisters, and she attended a girls' school, so prior to her studies at the Slade her sisters and friends were surely the most available models. At the Slade the majority of students were female, perhaps reinforcing an established interest in the female form and fantasy versions of this form.¹⁵⁰ Knights' letters show awareness

¹⁴⁸ E. Nesbit, *Harding's Luck* [1909], (London: Henry Froude, Hodder and Stoughton, 1913), 7.

¹⁴⁹ Winifred Knights, in a letter to Audrey Clarke, 25th January 1916.

¹⁵⁰ It is perhaps significant that the great majority of Knights' many life drawings at the Slade depict women, even though women students studied the male nude at this time. For life drawings see UCL Art Museum and private collection (Catherine Monnington).

and satisfaction in the ways she stood out from the mass of other students, as a talented artist and as a woman. There seems to be no contradiction in being praised for her artwork and for her looks. In fact, she was well aware of the effects of dress and hairstyle so that a clear demarcation between artwork and self-presentation is, arguably, inappropriate. A quotation from one of her letters, written in autumn 1915, demonstrates this point. She describes her new hairstyle and includes self-portraits labelled 'front' and 'side'. She writes, 'now it is most weird and therefore very satisfactory...I am going to have my real photo taken soon...and you will be able to see (it) (hair) [punctuation sic].'¹⁵¹

Knights would have known nineteenth-century artworks depicting beautiful women lost in reverie, and was perhaps influenced by those that combined narcissism with virginal innocence. She might, for instance, have been familiar with Julia Margaret Cameron's photograph *Mary Ann Hillier as Mary Mother* (1869).¹⁵² Burne-Jones' *The Mirror of Venus* (1898, Lisbon) shows woman's self-regard as a group gaze into a pool.¹⁵³ James Abbot McNeil Whistler's *Symphony in White, the Little White Girl* (1864, Tate Collection) is more ambiguous, for while the girl half-gazing in a mirror looks young, virginal, her mirror image is weary.¹⁵⁴ Influenced by these examples, or others like them, Knights' early twentieth-century self-portraits are narcissistic. However, in her single-figure compositions at this time any sensuality is muted. Looking at later stages of the artist's life we can see that she continued combining self-portraiture (shown for example in *The Deluge*, 1920, and *The Marriage at Cana*, 1923) with a more private regard for dress and her own body. The latter is documented in a letter to her mother, in 1922, in which she describes locking her studio door, taking her clothes off and looking at herself in her new full-length mirror.¹⁵⁵ To sum up, the fairy and fantasy images show Knights' interest in the self-absorbed female and young woman's body, while sexuality is important in other watercolours that I go on to. These watercolours represent women with men, or women desiring men. The 'Goblin Market' illustrations reveal a fear of intrusive male attention. Conversely, in *The Wise and Foolish Virgins* it is desire instead of fear.

¹⁵¹ Winifred Knights in letter to Audrey Clarke, 1915.

¹⁵² The photograph is an albumen print, in the National Portrait Gallery collection.

¹⁵³ This painting and its representation of women and a mirrored surface is discussed in Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 133.

¹⁵⁴ Knights admired Whistler's work, so probably knew this painting. For her comments on Whistler see letter from Winifred Knights addressed 'Dear Auntie', 2nd January 1918.

¹⁵⁵ Letter from Knights at the BSR to her mother, 25th January 1922. She mentions that Thomas Ashby (the School Director) has given her the mirror.

To explicate these points I will give an extended analysis of Knights' 'Goblin Market' illustrations, following this with an examination of *The Wise and Foolish Virgins*. All the 'Goblin Market' illustrations are original interpretations of Christina Rossetti's poem. The final one I discuss stands out as an intense, claustrophobic image of sexual threat (**plate 8**) and a composition that would satisfy an established, mature artist. The analysis does not address religion in Christina Rossetti's work, except with brief reference to the temptation of Eve, because my sense is that the poem's Christian implications were not greatly important to Knights when working on her images. 'Goblin Market' describes Laura and Lizzie, two sisters who are so close they sleep together, 'Golden head by golden head'.¹⁵⁶ Goblins offer the sisters a fantastic range of fruits, including "Lemons and oranges,/Plump unpecked cherries/ Melons and raspberries".¹⁵⁷ Though the goblins are grotesque, 'One had a cat's face.../One crawled like a snail',¹⁵⁸ they fascinate Laura. Having no money to pay for their wares, she 'clipped a precious golden lock,/She dropped a tear more rare than pearl,/ Then sucked their fruit globes fair or red.'¹⁵⁹ Seeing her sister pining away after eating goblin fruit (longing to encounter them again, but now unable to hear their cries), Lizzie ventures out to meet the goblins. She pays them a penny, but when she refuses to eat their fruit the goblins turn on her, 'Tore her gown and spoiled her stocking' and stamping 'on her tender feet/Held her hands and squeezed their fruits/Against her mouth to make her eat', throwing her penny back.¹⁶⁰ Because Lizzie keeps her mouth shut, and has offered payment, she is able to return to her sister uncorrupted by experience. The fruit juice smeared on her face is an antidote for the sister's enchantment, who as she licks it finds 'That juice was wormwood to her tongue,/She loathed the feast'.¹⁶¹

The first *Goblin Market* watercolour examined here (UCL Art Museum, **plate 11**), shows the two sisters in a narrow valley that bisects the image at right-angles to the picture plane. The sisters are in the foreground of the image, beside a bed of blue irises, and turning away from trays of fruit offered by strange little men who emerge from dark woods in the hill to the viewer's right. Lizzie, here pictured with dark hair, seems to urge her blonde sister Laura on towards the unthreatening green hill to the left. Their golden water-pot is upright, perhaps symbolising innocence retained,

¹⁵⁶ Christina Rossetti, 'Goblin Market' [1859], in Christopher Ricks (ed.), *The New Oxford Book of Victorian Verse* (Oxford: OUP, 1987), 288.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 284.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 285.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 286.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 293-294.

¹⁶¹ Rossetti, 'Goblin Market', 295.

so far.¹⁶² The small watercolour is undated, but stylistic evidence suggests it was made before Knights commenced her studies at the Slade. Most goblins have human faces with animal ears. Some have exotic and sinister attributes: an eye-patch; prominent teeth with a wide Chinese moustache; a hook nose with slit eyes and a black beard (this one is presumably a Jew); one with a pug nose is plainly stupid. In the second illustration, a watercolour in portrait format in a private collection (Catherine Monnington) the goblins are dwarves, with Fly Agarics toadstool hats (**plate 12**). They are formed up into a curving procession, those in front pulling on Lizzie's dress, trying to gain control: is Lizzie, who nervously clutches her upper arm, by implication only too aware of this predatory sexuality? Another, more complete, illustration in the same collection (in landscape format) represents one of the sisters with a frieze of semi-naked goblins (**plate 13**), their bent backs and thin knobby limbs witness to poor diet as well as life underground. High hills, scrawny silver birch saplings and stony ground stand out against the dying day, detail on hills dispersed by low light so that the hills dominate as blue-grey blocks of colour. This is, undoubtedly, an insecure location, and time of day, for a young girl. The first and last goblin in the procession holds a lantern, to light the way and perhaps check for escapees, but Laura (or Lizzie) is held fast by hair and dress. The girl may be Laura, overwhelmed by the attention of so many little men. Delighted, one goblin sniggers behind his hand, another holds his head up in triumph, while two others look at the viewer, inviting him/her to share their delight at the prize. The goblins' aprons, with their empty pockets, suggest the watercolour was planned for an advertisement. Taking this possibility into account, underlying links between capture, rape and goblins are still possible, any attack planned for off-stage at the left (the sinister side).¹⁶³ The girl's dress is already half off one shoulder and her expression distanced, as if she has lost control. To reinforce the point, her blue dress is the same shade as the lonely, desolate hills behind. In literature goblins, or Little People, were often associated with rape, to those who, like Laura and Lizzie, wandered too far or too late in wild, primitive country. In Arthur Machen's story 'the Novel of the Black Seal' (1896), Mrs Cradock takes a short cut by the Grey Hills: 'late that night ... [she was] found on the ground by the limestone rock, swaying her body to and fro, and lamenting and crying in so heart-rending a manner'. Eight months' later she gives birth to a boy, a simpleton possessed by 'the secrets of

¹⁶² The illustration is set in the evening, when the sisters 'went with pitchers to the reedy brook'. While Lizzie urges Laura home ('Come, Laura, not another maiden lags') Laura lingers, bewitched. As a consequence, she can no longer hear the goblins' cries. Rossetti, 'Goblin Market', 288-289.

¹⁶³ The left is the sinister side, from the spectator's viewpoint. Knights would probably have known the association between the left and evil, drawn from the position of the unrepentant thief at the Crucifixion. It is perhaps important here.

the underworld' who at death 'strove to escape the grasp of writhing demons'.¹⁶⁴ There is implied goblin rape (for adult understanding) in George MacDonald's *The Princess and the Goblin*. Doubts surface about the real paternity of young miner Curdie, supposedly a miner's son, when his mother tells how "not very long" before he was born, she came across a group of goblins:

'it was pretty dark, and in some parts of the road where the rocks overhung, nearly quite dark...I was suddenly surrounded by about half a dozen of the cobs...they all began tormenting and teasing me in a way it makes me shudder to think of even now...They had torn my clothes very much'.¹⁶⁵

Rossetti's 'Goblin Market' is also set in remote country and in the evening, but the representation of sexual experience is contrastingly subtle because both Laura and Lizzie want something of this, as Knights' images show, although the poem and the second illustration I have described show the value of self-restraint.¹⁶⁶

Illustration for the Goblin Market by Christina Rossetti is the title of a large watercolour (44.0 x 58.0 cm) in UCL Art Museum (**plate 14**). It is signed 'W.M.K. Winifred Margaret Knights' and dated 24.11.13 at the bottom left, a date nearly two years before Knights began her studies at the Slade. A goblin triumphantly holds up Lizzie's penny as she hesitates, having not yet taken the offered biscuit. Like the previous image this one was probably intended for an advertisement: there are boxes and trays of biscuits, and Lizzie is glamorous in a blue gown and full wavy hair,¹⁶⁷ doubtless explaining why she seems un-concerned by the little men's attentions. The colouring is more cheerful than in the previous image, with vivid green grass on the hill to the right and the pink glow of a sunset touching sky and hills. While the goblins emerge from dense woods in the first of the series (**plate 11**) here the trees are well spaced out, as if the consequence of husbandry in a parkland. But whatever Knights' original intention, the hybrid forms of goblins are more disturbing than in the previous image, certainly to today's viewer: they are clothed, more human than animal, joyless running, dancing grotesques, like horrible little boys, contrasting with

¹⁶⁴ Arthur Machen, 'The Novel of the Black Seal' [1896], in Arthur Machen, *Tales of Horror and the Supernatural* (London: The Richards Press, 1949), 37-38, 40.

¹⁶⁵ George MacDonald, *The Princess and the Goblin* [1872], (London and Glasgow: Blackie and Sons Ltd. 1928), 238. For this point see Fiona McCulloch, "A Strange Race of Beings': Undermining Innocence in *the Princess and the Goblin*", *Scottish Studies Review* 7, no. 1 (Spring 2006), 62. At Arts and Humanities Citation Index, ESBC host, accessed 11th December 2014.

¹⁶⁶ In the poem Laura says, "Twilight is not good for maidens" and she later refuses to eat the goblins' fruit. Rossetti: 'Goblin Market', 287, 293-294.

¹⁶⁷ There seems to have been a 'Fairy Biscuit Competition in 1914, for which Knights won a prize'. In Andrea Plummer, Felicity Boucher, Louise Malcolm, Nadine Longford, Naomi Speakman, with assistance from Dr Andrea Fredericksen, *Object Report: UCL MA Museum Studies*, unpublished work (UCL Art Museum, nd.), 24. However, the accompanying 'Goblin Market' illustration does not represent this image.

Lizzie's perfect form. Perhaps influenced by sighting adolescent schoolboys at Dulwich College (the College was close to James Allen's Girls' School), Knights' watercolour erodes the Romantic division between innocent childhood and male maturity. This divide was questioned in some popular literature that she is likely to have known, including Peter and the Lost Boys in J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, who 'far from being innocent and godly because of the closeness to their birth...are completely amoral beings who have no notions of good or evil.'¹⁶⁸ And, turning back to Knights' watercolour (**plate 14**), we may wonder at the fallen water-pot and its meaning: here at the very least it is knocked over and disregarded, but perhaps it is a further symbol for threatened virginity, so clearly represented by fruit and juice in Rossetti's 'Goblin Market'. The goblins in this watercolour, the previous one and the image I turn to next, contrast with the more obviously animalistic forms in illustrations by Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Laurence Housman (**plate 15 and plate 16**).¹⁶⁹ In Rossetti's and Housman's illustrations, and in a stained glass panel by Margaret Agnes Rope (1905, private collection, **plate 17**) any implicit association with sexual attack is modified by the presence of purely animal forms. Conversely, Knights' goblins are closer to descriptions in *The Princess and the Goblin*¹⁷⁰ and therefore more representative of unpleasant male threat. Yet because Knights' watercolour was planned as an advertisement there is a mismatch between girl, goblins, desire and narrative: Lizzie obviously wants a biscuit, but how could she possibly desire anything the goblins have to offer?

The small tondo (17.4x17.4 cm, UCL Art Museum, **plate 8**)¹⁷¹ is the most powerful of the series. Knights' use of watercolour technique and design is confident and sophisticated, with a convincing figuration of sexual threat and desire, inviting the viewer to look closely at a pale, long-haired girl bending to take fruit from a goblin, as if gifts from such little people cannot pose a threat. But the impact on the viewer is different. Compressed within a small space, close to both the surface of the picture plane and to the girl, the intentions of the grotesque men, obviously adults, seem horribly clear. Sexual threat is therefore greater, as well as more successfully

¹⁶⁸ Glenda A. Hudson, 'Two is the Beginning of the End: Peter Pan and the Doctrine of Reminiscence', *Children's Literature in Education* 37 (2006), 316. DOI: 10.1007/s10583-006-9014-4. In Mrs Molesworth's *The Cuckoo Clock* Aunt Grizzel's comments on Griselda's new playmate point to an underlying fear of untamed sexuality; at five years old his extreme youth as well as his class, "A little gentleman", make him "less objectionable" than she had feared. Mrs Molesworth, *The Cuckoo Clock*, 191.

¹⁶⁹ Dante Gabriel Rossetti, illustrations to Christina Rossetti, *Goblin Market and Other Poems* (London and Cambridge: Macmillan and Co. 1862), frontispiece and title page; Laurence Housman, illustration to Christina Rossetti 'Goblin Market' (London: Macmillan and Co. 1893), illustration facing 2.

¹⁷⁰ These 'frightful creatures' included 'Prince Harelip'. The goblins had no toes, except for the Queen who had two toes on one foot and one on the other. The goblins are illustrated as little men, or dwarfs. MacDonald, *The Princess and the Goblins*, 74-76, 174-176, 212, 273, 282.

¹⁷¹ The verso contains a pencil self-portrait drawing for the image.

resolved, in this image than in the large 'Goblin Market' illustration examined above. There is a marked difference in size between goblins and maidens in all the illustrations. The difference is particularly noticeable in the tondo because this girl is surrounded by goblins, any physical advantage negated by their presence as a group. It is not clear which sister is depicted (we see no visible penny, for example) so there is a narrative tension: the girl looks like a virgin, but will she remain one? All but one of the goblins are naked. They are close by and invading the girl's personal space, their brown forms contrasting with her delicate skin and white, blue-edged dress as she sits among them. A goblin holds the girl's golden hair - another hands her fruit; a hook-nosed little man behind her holds out a tray with more fruit on it. The sole entirely animal form, a semi-clothed rat-like creature in the background, signals the animal natures of all.¹⁷² The girl's pose, sitting turned to the viewer's left, is echoed by the naked goblin in the extreme foreground who holds a strawberry, his back showing a rat's spine as he turns to look up at her, his bald head standing for the particular threat of an older man to a young woman. His back bends, flexibly, like a snake's, a bend reflected by the counter-bend of the goblin facing the viewer. The snaking rhythm was perhaps drawn from images of Eve tempted in the Garden of Eden.

While later than illustrations to the poem by Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Laurence Housman the watercolour easily equals these in emotional intensity and formal dexterity, as would be publicly evident were the image better known. The date of the work is uncertain. It was given as 1914 on a label written by Knights' mother, Gertrude Knights,¹⁷³ but this date is unlikely in view of the watercolour's compositional and technical sophistication. Gertrude Knights had also written 1916 on the label before crossing 1916 out,¹⁷⁴ evidence of confusion about the date. We know from Knights' letter quoted above that she was working on fairy drawings in 1915, and 1915 is in my view the likely date for this image. There is a noticeable similarity between Lees' self-portraits and the goblin looking at the spectator in the image, particularly when considering Lees' etching dated c.1917 (**plate 18**).¹⁷⁵ Knights' watercolour, then, perhaps records ambivalent feelings about his attentions (although the connection must be treated with caution as there is no documentary evidence for the link). The naked goblin facing the viewer, who lasciviously bends hands and

¹⁷² A caricature of a Jewish man (a hook-nosed goblin) was also used in the first illustration I described, as noted earlier. Christina Rossetti's descriptions of goblin physiognomy are selective, leaving much to illustrators' choices. However, the rat form comes from the poem, 'One tramped at a rat's pace' and 'Cat-like and rat-like'. Rossetti, 'Goblin Market', 285, 291.

¹⁷³ The label was attached to the work when donated to UCL Art Museum.

¹⁷⁴ An image of the label is reproduced in, Andrea Plummer, Felicity Boucher, Louise Malcolm, Nadine Longford, Naomi Speakman, with assistance from Dr Andrea Fredericksen, *Object Report*, 15.

¹⁷⁵ Derwent Lees: *Self-portrait*, etching, c.1917, National Portrait Gallery. See also Derwent Lees: *Self-portrait* (1910s) red chalk, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

back, exposing his bottom, is the pivot of the work's disturbing sexual charge: while passing his victim a fruit he looks at the viewer, as if implicating him/her for looking without intervening, confident that, like Eve, she will eat and his (metaphoric) rape come off.¹⁷⁶ The nude Cupid to the viewer's left in Bronzino's *An Allegory with Venus and Cupid*, c.1545, is probably a source for the figure (the work was bought for the National Gallery Collection in 1860, so Knights probably knew it). Due to the themes of love and lust in Bronzino's painting and the grouping around a central female turning to the left, close to the viewer, Knights' composition as a whole is likely to have been influenced by the painting. The image of Derwent Lees is another possible influence, as suggested above. If Lees is a source Knights perhaps intended a caricature, sinister sexuality an unconscious by-product. In contrast to Bronzino's ideal nudes this girl's clothing suggests a need for protective covering against predatory naked men, their fruits like tempting sweets held out to trick a child before a rape. The ways the men are individualised and caricatured (including the pug nose and hook nose, both also part of the first 'Goblin Market' illustration) emphasise the threat. These forms were likely influenced by popular belief in degeneration of the species, of which Henry Maudsley wrote:

it means literally an *unkinding*, the undoing of a *kind*...In proportion therefore to the complexity of evolution is the possible diversity of degeneration: the more complex the organism the greater the number and variety of its diseases; the more varied and beautiful animal forms are, the greater are the varieties of the examples of ugliness and degradation which they furnish.¹⁷⁷

Following this theory degenerate forms are particularly dangerous to virgins. Virginity can only be lost once, so is very precious, as Lizzie knows, but if lost to a degenerate being the species itself may be unkinded. Additionally, in the early twentieth century first intercourse was considered dangerous to women because of resultant anger against the man, 'psychological turmoil', even when this occurred within marriage.¹⁷⁸ The topic, with associated penis envy, was explored by Sigmund Freud in his article 'The Taboo of Virginity', describing the woman's 'hostile bitterness against the man'.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ It has also been suggested that the pose references the Annunciation (here a gift of 'untainted' life perverted into a goblin's gift). I am grateful to members of my Foundation in History of Art class for this idea. Birkbeck College, University of London (15th January 2013).

¹⁷⁷ Henry Maudsley, 'Concerning degeneration', in *Body and will, being an essay concerning will in its metaphysical, physiological and pathological aspects* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1884), 240.

¹⁷⁸ Anke Bernau, *Virgins: A Cultural History* (London: Granta Books, 2007), 24.

¹⁷⁹ Sigmund Freud, 'The Taboo of Virginity' [1918], quoted in Anke Bernau, *ibid*, 24. Quotation taken from Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, (James Strachey trans.), (London: Hogarth Press, 1957), 205.

Although Christina Rossetti's poem describes Lizzie restoring Laura to psychic health, annulling a symbolic rape, it is not obvious that Winifred Knights envisaged such an outcome. The implications are open because the girl's identity is uncertain and the narrative incomplete. Instead, what is abundantly clear is that the girl is fascinated and tempted by fruit and associated visual and tactile fore-play. Such enjoyable fore-play was described by Freud, writing in 1905 that: 'if the excitation spreads from [visual stimuli] to another erotogenic zone – to the hand, for instance, through tactile sensations the effect is the same: a feeling of pleasure on the one side, which is quickly intensified by pleasure arising from preparatory changes [in the genitals]'. According to Freud the consequence was 'an increase in tension...responsible for producing the necessary motor energy for the conclusion of the sexual act',¹⁸⁰ but for early twentieth-century women fore-play could be just safe flirtation with sex. For women temptation and loss of control were inevitably linked to first sexual experience and traditionally associated with the story of Eve. Knights was surely influenced by the story when illustrating Rossetti's poem, with Eve tempted by the serpent and taking the apple.¹⁸¹ There are additional biblical sources for the concept of temptation and images of Susanna and the Elders are pertinent to my theme, with their emphasis on exposure to touch, which is such an important part of this image. Examples include similar compositions to Knights' tondo, particularly the seated figure of Susanna in Guido Reni's *Susanna and the Elders*, 1620-1625. In the work the older men, to the left, are uncomfortably close, a similarity to Knights' goblins. One has hold of Susanna's scanty drapery, the other enjoins her to accept the rape, his fingers to his lips (like the goblin facing the viewer in Knights' watercolour). Gabriel Scorodumoff used a tondo form for his coloured print version of Reni's painting (1779, **plate 19**). Susanna's lower body is turned to the viewer's left, as in Knights' watercolour, but, reversing Reni's composition, she twists towards the intrusive men to our right. Perhaps both images were prototypes for Knights' watercolour. The painting was acquired by the National Gallery in 1844 and the watercolour by the British Museum in 1859, so Knights may have known both.

Contrary examples suggest she was thinking of virginity when composing her work. The girl's white, blue-edged dress and her position in the picture space echoes the virgin's blue robe, her simple turn to the viewer's left and the similarly crowded foreground space in Botticelli's *Madonna of the Magnificat* (c.1485, Uffizi Gallery, **plate 20**), with the Christ Child's pomegranate a further

¹⁸⁰ Sigmund Freud, 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality: III. Transformations of Puberty' [1905], in James Strachey (trans. and ed.), *Sigmund Freud 7: on Sexuality* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 130-131. The essays were first published in English in A. A. Brill (trans.), (New York: Journal of Nervous and Mental Diseases), 1910.

¹⁸¹ The apple described in the Bible (King James) as 'fruit'.

visual link. The virgin's pose in Raphael's *Alba Madonna* (1511, now in the National Gallery of Art, Washington) is another possible source. In these examples the virgin's touch is important, yet tenderly wistful, in contrast with an uncomfortably close touch in Knights' watercolour.¹⁸² She probably knew the paintings from illustrations or prints, so influences on her thinking should not be discounted. Informed by narrative as well as pose, she brought some of these influences together. Touch on fabric in *Susanna and the Elders* is turned to touch on hair and hand in *Goblin Market*, and the goblins' lascivious adoration echoes the worship of the *Madonna of the Magnificat*. Moreover, as in *Susanna and the Elders*, or Burne-Jones' *Briar Rose* series, the narrative is incomplete, passage from virginity to adulthood or innocence to rape not finalised.¹⁸³ The goblin is passing the fruit, but it is not yet passed, narrative held in a moment of stasis before resolution. In this image, as I have shown, connections between desire and sexuality are complicated, but virginity is in balance because sex is a threat and its pleasure is absent.

Women had greater independence during WWI than previously, as they took on jobs vacated by men,¹⁸⁴ but changing attitudes to women's sexuality are more relevant to the conflicted touch in the *Goblin Market* tondo and the sensual, delicate touch that I will associate with *The Wise and Foolish Virgins*. Historians of the twentieth century have placed the changes into the period Knights worked on these images, so that in 1900 defending 'women's rights to sexual pleasure and...to respect and love was very much a minority venture', while 'one of the great dramas of the early twentieth century...would be the effort to eroticize marriage...[and] to make women's sexual agency and experience be understood as a positive good, rather than a source of shame and dishonor [sic].'¹⁸⁵ *The Freewoman*, a fortnightly journal, was founded at this time, in 1911. The

¹⁸² Raphael's *Alba Madonna* was in the Hermitage collection during the years examined here.

¹⁸³ For discussion of the Briar-Rose series see Larry D. Luchmansingh, 'Fantasy and arrested desire in Edward Burne-Jones's Briar-Rose series', in Marcia Pointon (ed.), *Pre-Raphaelites re-viewed* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 123-139.

¹⁸⁴ See for example a description of 'The wartime business girl...dining out alone' in *The Daily Mail*, 17th April 1916, quoted in Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge* [1965], (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan Press Ltd. 1991), 132. Wartime freedoms did not outlast the war. For this point see Dan Todman, *The Great War* (London and New York: Hambledon Continuum, 2005), 180.

¹⁸⁵ Dagmar Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe: A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 17-18. See also Susan Kingsley Kent, who quotes Sheila Jeffreys on "the years of the First World War [when] the question of women's right to sexual pleasure was raised by some of the foremost proponents of sexual reform' ...feminist sex reformers emphasized 'care for the woman, both her right to sexual pleasure and her right to bodily integrity". In Susan Kingsley Kent, *Making Peace: the Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 162, note 28. Quotations from Sheila Jeffreys, 'Sex Reform and Anti-Feminism in the 1920s', in *The Sexual Dynamics of History* (London: London Feminist History Group, 1983). For a discussion of nineteenth-century women's sexual experience, and its representation in private letters and diaries that describe women's sexual pleasure (and therefore qualify Herzog's account of change), see Peter Gay, *The Bourgeois Experience, Victoria to Freud: Volume 1, Education of the Senses* (Oxford: OUP, 1984), 71-119.

journal fostered frank discussion on 'contraception, marriage and divorce law reform, prostitution, venereal diseases, illegitimacy, and homosexuality' with a 'heated debate early in 1912 about female chastity. Were women less lustful than men by nature, and therefore their moral superiors?'¹⁸⁶ But, despite such liberalisation, a range of attitudes to women's sexuality persisted. Inevitably, more traditional views were held by conservatives and misogynists, some anti-suffragists, for instance, regarding women's sexuality as "the dark and dangerous side of the women's movement". Feminists campaigning for the suffrage could be equally suspicious, with a focus on sexuality being "objectionable and mischievous".¹⁸⁷ Conflicted attitudes to sex and sexuality are illustrated, too, through strands of the socialist movement. Concern for working-class women with their large families was highlighted by the publication in 1915 of *Maternity: Letters from Working Women*, in which one working-class woman wrote that 'fathers ought to control their bodies for the sake of the mother and child'.¹⁸⁸ Such comments highlighted the reality of working-class experience: women's sexual pleasure depended on the ability to control fertility and working class women could not afford contraception.¹⁸⁹ But another strand of socialist thinking considered that sex could be liberating. Edward Carpenter (better known for advocating homosexual comradeship) published pamphlets for heterosexual women: *Woman and her Place in a Free Society*, *Marriage in a Free Society* and *Sex-Love and its Place in a Free Society*. The *raison d'être* of the pamphlets, which were re-published together in 1896 as *Love's Coming of Age* and reprinted many times, was to free sex from association with shame and advocate the pleasure and spiritual fulfilment it could provide.¹⁹⁰ Havelock Ellis (also a socialist) argued for women's enjoyment of sex in his *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Volume Three*, published in 1903, a view suggested in 1913 in the different context of *The Lancet*:

¹⁸⁶ Les Garner, *A brave and Beautiful Spirit: Dora Marsden, 1882-1960* (Aldershot, Avebury: 1990), 60, quoted in Lesley A. Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change in Britain since 1880* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan Press Ltd. 2000), 91. Hall states that 'the life-span of *The Freewoman* was short; in 1913 it mutated into *The New Freewoman* and subsequently, as *The Egoist*, became almost exclusively a literary modernist journal, but it had been a significant moment'. *Ibid*, 91.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 90-91.

¹⁸⁸ Margaret Llewellyn Davies (ed.), *Maternity: Letters from Working Women* [1915], quoted in Stephen Brooke, *Sexual Politics: Sexuality, Family Planning, and the British Left from the 1880s to the Present Day* (Oxford: OUP, 2001), 30.

¹⁸⁹ A range of contraceptives was on sale in the early twentieth century, including diaphragms and sheaths, but due to the cost many poor women relied on abortion. Brooke, *ibid*, 28-29.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 20-21.

intercourse in the absence of sexual feeling on the part of the woman is very likely to be unsatisfactory even with a normal condition of the parts. Much of the domestic unhappiness that the practitioner sees has its origin in this cause.¹⁹¹

During this period “free unions” outside marriage were attractive options to some socialist women wary of the ‘gender oppression’ of marriage.¹⁹² Women looking for opposite-sex companions as prelude or even alternative to marriage advertised friendship in magazines such as *The Link*.¹⁹³ The magazine’s editor, Alfred Barret, and newspapers including the *London Evening News*, organised ‘lonely soldier correspondence’ which catered to the needs of women and men for whom the war had ‘disrupted older patterns of courtship and created a footloose population of young men eager to correspond with, court, and sometimes marry young women.’¹⁹⁴ In contrast, National Vigilance Association members cited protection of women and the home as reasons for going to war, also drawing attention to prostitution’s threat to the ideal of home and family.¹⁹⁵ Young girls’ hero-worship of older men in uniform (perhaps similar to Knights’ fascination with Derwent Lees) was sometimes intense, and included “trying to flirt, or do something more than flirt, with young soldiers”.¹⁹⁶ In London, in November 1915, twenty young women were prosecuted for this type of ‘soliciting’, and discussions of public morality included complaints about ‘sexually aggressive [girls] kissing convalescent soldiers too helpless or too polite to resist’.¹⁹⁷

I will now turn to information on sex that was available to girls such as Winifred Knights. Marie Stopes’ *Married Love* was not published until 1918, three years after Knights completed *The Wise and Foolish Virgins*. The book was aimed at women and was designed to enable the enjoyment of sexual relations. But before this date, increased acceptance of women’s sexuality had resulted in publications intended to de-mystify sex and reproduction. *What a Mother Should Tell Her*

¹⁹¹ Victor Bonney (Surgeon to the Chelsea Hospital for Women), *The Lancet* 2, July to December 1913 (October 11th 1913), 1060. The article’s topic is a rare anatomical abnormality.

¹⁹² Brooke, *Sexual Politics*, 24.

¹⁹³ These advertisements drew on an ‘older tradition of matrimonial advertisements’. In H.G. Cocks, “‘Sporty’ Girls and ‘Artistic Boys’: Friendship, Illicit Sex and the British ‘Companionship’ advertisement, 1913-1928”, *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 11, no. 3 (July 2002), 462. At *Academic Search Complete EBSO host*, accessed 14th December 2014.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 466-467.

¹⁹⁵ Susan R. Grayzel, *Women’s Identities at War* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 129, 131. Susan Kingsley Kent says that ‘Recruiting efforts drew explicitly upon images of the rape and sexual mutilation of women to increase the ranks of the army and navy’. She also explains that reports from Belgium of widespread German rape, mutilation and killing of civilian women in 1914 and 1915 fuelled anxiety for the protection of British women (although not all these reports could be verified). In Kent, *Making Peace*, 26 and 22-25.

¹⁹⁶ *The Vigilance Record*, paper of the National Vigilance Association (March 1915), quoted in Grayzel, *Women’s Identities*, 131.

¹⁹⁷ Grayzel, *ibid*, 135.

Daughter had Knights' age group in mind, and a contemporary reviewer described it as containing 'a slight leaven of sentiment' but handling the subject 'in a delicate and tactful manner'.¹⁹⁸ Dr Mary Scharlieb's *What it Means to Marry: Or Young Women and Marriage* and Walter Heape's *Preparing for Marriage* were both published in 1914 by the National Council of Public Morals in its 'Questions of Sex Series',¹⁹⁹ the former described as supplying information to young people 'in good taste and not too much of it, on the subject of sex'.²⁰⁰

Having given this information as context for the artist's focus on touch and sexuality I now regard these themes from the viewer's perspective. In the *Goblin Market* tondo haptic sensations are overwhelming and unpleasant: the fruit over-ripe, it will turn to pulp at our touch; the naked goblins' joints too knobby; the girl so delicate, if we thought of touching her we would be implicated in the rape.²⁰¹ Outlining with pen around the goblins and cross-hatching 'to define shapes in the naturally thin, translucent paint',²⁰² for example on the foreground goblin's hair, is, in contrast to treatment of the girl, harsh and in itself uninviting to the touch. This figuring of touch, so different from Dante Gabriel Rossetti's sensuous treatment of Laura and Lizzie sleeping (**plate 15**), begs the question: what sort of market we are looking at? Neither Christina Rossetti, nor Knights (or those others who illustrated the poem) show real markets, with the opportunity to feel and weigh in the hand without commitment, where, as in department stores, 'visitors were allowed to touch...allowing customers to handle the goods promoted sales'.²⁰³ Due to more personal contact, and its attendant risks, the goblins are arguably more pedlars than market sellers, an association pertinently illustrated in the story of Snow White, in which the wicked stepmother disguised as a pedlar flatters Snow White into taking too-tight lacings, a poisoned comb and finally an apple. For twenty-first-century viewers, where cutlery has replaced communal eating and food is handled outside wrappings mainly within family settings, the very intimacy with

¹⁹⁸ Isabelle Thompson Smart, MD: *What a Mother Should Tell her Daughter* (with *What a Father Should Tell his Son*) (New York and London: Funk and Wagnell, 1911), reviewed in 'Sexual Hygiene', *The Lancet* 1, January to June 1913 (January 4th 1913), 52.

¹⁹⁹ Both books were published in London (Cassell and Co. 1914) and were cited and reviewed in 'Society and Sex Problems', *The Lancet* 1, January-June 1914 (April 25th 1914), 1202-1203.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 1202.

²⁰¹ A talk at Tate Britain was useful when I was considering these ideas, particularly Lynn Nead's comments on the material surface in Rossetti's paintings. Lynn Nead and Michael Hatt, *Representations of Sexuality in Victorian Art*, Tate Britain Talk, 27th November 2012.

²⁰² Andrea Plummer, Felicity Boucher, Louise Malcolm, Nadine Longford, Naomi Speakman, with assistance from Dr Andrea Fredericksen, *Object Report*, 7.

²⁰³ Constance Classen, writing with reference to nineteenth-century department stores, in Constance Classen, *The Deepest Sense: A Cultural History of Touch* (Urbana, Chicago and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 193.

which the goblin hands fruit to Laura (or Lizzie) is disquieting. The interaction was probably almost as unnerving in the early twentieth century.

Returning to the artist, none of Knights' letters suggest she found men at the Slade, teachers or pupils, sexually predatory, taking advantage of a young girl. Indeed, reading her letters in full it is apparent how much Knights savoured the sensation that male attention was directed specifically at her; she obviously enjoyed the notice taken of her by Derwent Lees. So, visual evidence must have precedence in order to understand the uneasy sexual charge in the *Goblin Market* tondo, whatever its date. The evidence suggests that the watercolour works to picture fears and desires for the viewer, and probably also for the artist. In my discussion of *The Wise and Foolish Virgins* I will argue for significant connections between Knights' documented experience and the work's mood (although such connections cannot be proved), but contextual evidence for the *Goblin Market* tondo is, as I have said, problematic due to its uncertain date. Nevertheless, awareness of how art can express unconscious fears, and period-specific attitudes to sexuality and virginity, provide a good background to understanding this watercolour. Conservative attitudes to women's sexuality therefore perhaps fed into an unconscious distrust of older men, expressed in Knights' tondo. The more confident sexuality expressed in *The Wise and Foolish Virgins* perhaps derived from a more conscious openness to sexual experience. Yet, conversely, repressed distrust of older men in positions of authority is an alternative explanation to *The Wise and Foolish Virgins* and the content of Knights' letters, with fear surfacing in the series of *Goblin Market* watercolours. Due to her youth it is unlikely that Knights had heard of Freud's work on sexuality, dreams and repression at this time: the first English edition of *Studies in Hysteria* was only published in 1909 with *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1913. Also, Freud's ideas took time to become popular currency.²⁰⁴ But if repression is a universal, not dependent on Freud's writings, then it is an explanation for the mixed responses to sexuality in Knights' artwork during the period c.1913-1917.

The following section offers a close reading of *The Wise and Foolish Virgins* (pen, ink and watercolour, c.1915, 30.0 x 12.05 cm, James Allen's Girls' School, **plate 10**); it draws on the discussion of attitudes to sexuality that was given above. The section also examines Knights' pen and ink drawing *Rapunzel* (**plate 9**) and makes further reference to the 'Goblin Market' illustrations. *The Wise and Foolish Virgins* is fairly small, at 30 x 18 cm, yet it is striking due to the artist's skill in conveying emotion as well as composing the scene. The watercolour is mounted

²⁰⁴ Sigmund Freud and Joseph Breuer, *Studies on Hysteria* [1895], first English translation A. A. Brill, 1909; Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* [1900], first English translation A. A. Brill, 1913.

and framed with the biblical text. Within the depicted space a half portion of a grey stone arch provides a further framing, and we see four young women facing us, holding lamps, and, beyond, a starry deep blue sky, and distant temple buildings. Three of the young women are walking resolutely forward. One is lost in reverie, leaning towards the arch, her understated sensuality anticipating the attitude of a fifth young woman, who is leaning her head, dejected, by a firmly shut door to the viewer's right. This young woman is close to the foreground and her tall figure occupies vertical space like a full-length portrait. She dominates the image, due to her position, size and her pose. Her right foot, in a brown sandal, is on the door-step and her long arms are stretched up, as if she had been beating on the door, demanding entry, but is now giving up hope. Plants are already climbing over the door, suggesting she hopes in vain.²⁰⁵ Her tall body is at right angles to the picture plane and the curve of her figure is emphasised by the silhouette of tight indigo skirt, smoke curling up from her untended lamp mimicking her sensual form. The slender figure and hairstyle show this is a self-portrait, or part self-portrait: in a letter written in early autumn 1915 Knights described being obliged to put her hair up, due to Slade School regulations, and the accompanying sketch shows a similar hairstyle to the virgin's.²⁰⁶ The watercolour depicts the five foolish virgins, all late for Christ, the Bridegroom. The work shows a range of responses to such tardiness, from careful tending of a lamp, in the picture's centre (behind her another virgin rushes forward), to desperation, as already stated. It shows varied dress and hair, from modest veiling to flowing locks and modern (early twentieth-century) hairstyle, blouse and skirt, which also suggest differing attitudes – how modest are these virgins, for example?

The virgins' guttering lamps are too feeble to soften the harsh white moonlight on their faces and the strong shaft of light from the Bridegroom's chamber passes over their heads. Elongated figures and the painting's strong lines and limited palette of whites, browns and indigo were almost certainly drawn from late Pre-Raphaelite painting, particularly Burne-Jones.²⁰⁷ But the subject-matter comes directly from the Bible. The parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins is told in Matthew Chapter 25, informing the reader that the Last Judgement may come at any time. The parable treats this idea of readiness, for while the five wise virgins went to meet the Bridegroom, their lamps already filled, the foolish virgins 'took no oil with them'. Matthew describes how as the

²⁰⁵ This is probably laurel, a symbol of victory. It is a hardy evergreen which also symbolises eternal life, but for those inside the door.

²⁰⁶ Letter from Winifred Knights to Awdrey Clarke [sic], (1915, comments in the letter suggest it was written in October 1915).

²⁰⁷ For example see the *Rose Bower* (1890) from the *Briar Rose* series, Buscot Park, Farringdon, and Burne-Jones' interpretations of the Perseus legend in Southampton Art Gallery and Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart, dated 1875-1888.

Bridegroom 'tarried' all ten virgins fell asleep, to be woken at midnight when he arrived. Having enough oil, the five wise virgins 'trimmed their lamps' successfully, but the foolish virgins left to buy oil. Meanwhile, the wise virgins 'went in with [the bridegroom] to the marriage'. When they returned the foolish virgins found the door shut and said, 'Lord, Lord, open to us', but the bridegroom answered 'I know you not. Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh'.²⁰⁸ There are many painted versions of the story, and it was popular in medieval sculptural ensembles. The foolish virgins are often shown without oil, or enlarging on Matthew represented as immodest, including 'disheveled [sic] with open hair'.²⁰⁹ But Knights' image is mixed, with two virgins decently veiled. She closely followed the elements that are mentioned in the Bible, showing her knowledge of the text. The virgins have therefore returned from buying oil and are simply too late for the Kingdom of Heaven. In Knights' version both the locked door and the shaft of light that by-passes the foolish virgins emphasise this predicament.

Examining both *The Wise and Foolish Virgins* and *Rapunzel*²¹⁰ I will show the importance of touch and its connection to desire. A discussion of the position of a young artist at this time will give further substance to my argument that the images are charged with emotional intensity. While undoubtedly representing the interests of an early twentieth-century teenage artist, they are not merely precocious work of a juvenile. Indeed, *The Wise and Foolish Virgins* is, in particular, a sophisticated interpretation of the source material. The Bible's contents were very widely known during Knights' youth, when 'religiosity marked the social values of almost the entire society'.²¹¹ My interpretation hinges on the right-hand girl, reaching up in despair, her hands surely representing those of the artist.

The watercolour is stylistically in keeping with Knights' work during this period, but as a biblical scene it stands out from her other early work and anticipates later images – stories from the

²⁰⁸ Matthew, Chapter 25.

²⁰⁹ Joan A. Holladay, in John M. Jeep (ed.), *Medieval Germany: An Encyclopaedia* (New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 2001), 39.

²¹⁰ *Rapunzel* was perhaps planned for an illustration and two of the 'Goblin Market' illustrations were obviously intended as advertisements (a watercolour in UCL Art Museum titled *The Frog Prince* is another possible illustration), but I have found no evidence that the images were published in any form. A commercial association does not undermine ways Knights communicates emotion to the viewer, in my view. It has been suggested that Knights' parents intended that she would become an illustrator. For these plans see Judith Collins, *Winifred Knights*, 7. Also see conversation between Catherine Monnington, the artist's granddaughter, and the author, dated 16th January 2012. In a letter from Winifred Knights to her aunt Millicent, dated 18th November 1918, Knights says that 'a lady artist' has suggested she illustrate James Ellroy Flecker's collection *The Golden Journey to Samarkand* (1913), as well as *The City of Dreadful Night* by James Thompson.

²¹¹ Callum G. Brown, *Religion and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2006), 40. Brown is referring to the years 1900-1914.

Bible, miracles and the lives of saints became the subject of her major paintings. It was almost certainly painted for the Slade Sketch Club, 'where subjects were generally literary or Biblical in origin'.²¹² In a letter to her friend Audrey Clark (undated, but later annotated 'most likely late 1915') Knights describes how Slade Sketch Club subjects are set once a month and judged in a lecture room in front of male and female students. She says that she sent in 'two sketches, one to illustrate "the Parable of the Ten Virgins" and one a circus'. She comments that Henry Tonks 'criticised the pictures', giving her three out of four possible marks for each, so we can assume he liked *The Wise and Foolish Virgins*, as the image is now known.²¹³ Use of watercolour as well as pen and ink contrasts with other examples of Sketch Club work that I have found: pen and ink in Stanley Spencer's *Scene in Paradise* (1911) and pencil, pen and ink in William Roberts' *The Resurrection* (1912) and *David Choosing the Three Days' Pestilence* (1912).²¹⁴ It is therefore possible that Knights continued working on the image after the Sketch Club entries were judged. But all these four are detailed: the Club gave students the opportunity to work up detailed compositions (in common with the Summer Composition Prize), in contrast with their more usual experience in the Life Room.²¹⁵ The watercolour was given to James Allen's Girls' School by the artist's son, John Monnington, where it is currently displayed with the text from Matthew Chapter 25 and a label identifying it as *The Wise and Foolish Virgins*. Evidence indicates that the image and text were framed together in 1997.²¹⁶

²¹² Susan Owens and Emma Chambers, in Emma Chambers (ed.), *UCL Art Collections* (London: UCL Art Collections, 2008), 116. The Club was an opportunity to work on full-scale compositions rather than 'sketch', as Herbert Hone clarifies when describing a different 'after-hours sketch club' formed by students in the early twentieth century. Joseph Hone, *Henry Tonks* (London and Toronto: William Heinemann Ltd. 1939), 77.

²¹³ Letter from Winifred Knights to Audrey Clarke, (undated: annotated by Eileen Palmer as 'most likely late 1915'). It is not clear whether the marks Tonks gave were good or very good. There are to date no studies of the Slade Sketch Club to clarify this point.

²¹⁴ Andrew Gibbon Williams, *William Roberts* (London: Lund Humphries, 2004), 13.

²¹⁵ See for example: Emma Chambers, 'Slade School influences on the Camden Town Group 1896-1910', in Helena Bonett, Ysanne Holt, Jennifer Mundy (eds.), *The Camden Town Group in Context*, May 2012, at <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/emma-chambers-slade-school-influences-on-the-camden-town-group-1896-1910-r1104373>, accessed 19th December 2014; Emma Chambers (ed.), *UCL Art Collections: An Introduction and Collections Guide* (London: UCL Art Collections, 2008), 12, 112.

²¹⁶ For the framing and dimensions see e-mail from Cynthia Pullen: '... I have been down to look at the picture this morning. As you may recall, it is bolted to the wall in our school office area, so the information I can get is based only on the front measurements, which are as follows: The Wise Virgins [sic] picture is 12ins by 7ins wide. The Bible text list is 12ins by 6.5ins wide. And the overall picture, with both pieces mounted and framed is 27ins by 23ins wide. As for whether it was framed when we got it, or framed here, I am not sure. I am trying to contact someone who worked in the Art Dept. at the time, who may know, and I will get back to you as soon as I can. Just looking at the light pine wooden frame, it is similar to those we tend to use for pupil artwork around the building, which might indicate that we did the framing.' Cynthia Pullen, Librarian and Archivist, James Allen's Girls' School, e-mail to the author, unpublished material (21st November 2012). Pullen states, in a later e-mail, 'The Art technician

Precedents for Knights' composition include *Love Locked Out* (1889, Tate Collection) where Anna Lea Merrit placed a door as division between earthly and eternal life. Merrit's child, in his despair at the locked door, leans on the door jamb and feebly pushes the door, a similar gesture to Knights' right-hand virgin. In both paintings trailing plants have grown up around the locked door (**plate 21**). The composition of George Frederick Watts' *Love and Death* (1885-1887) is similar, with a door and plants, but here Death is in the foreground, while the door represents entrance to the House of Life.²¹⁷ Knights may have seen both paintings as they entered the National Gallery of British Art collection in 1899 and 1897 respectively. Watts' work was particularly well known, and continuously on show, in the early years of the twentieth century.²¹⁸ In Dante Gabriel Rossetti's poem 'The Blessed Damozel', published in 1850, there is also a physical boundary between the living and dead. Knights is likely to have known the poem's 'golden bar of heaven' that separated the Damozel from her lover,²¹⁹ and probably also reproductions of Rossetti's painting of the same name.²²⁰ *The Wise and Foolish Virgins* was a popular subject for sculptors and painters from the middle ages onwards. Winifred Knights was, very likely, familiar with some versions from illustrations, from visits to galleries and museums,²²¹ and even from lessons on 'Old Masters' at the Slade.²²²

On the facades of medieval cathedrals in Northern Europe the virgins were depicted as part of the ensemble representing the Last Judgement as described in Matthew. Christ was generally shown in the tympanum with the foolish virgins to his left (sinister) side, either in the same panel

remembers that all the pictures were framed at the time of the donation to JAGS, in order for them to be displayed here at an exhibition. So prior to 1997 they were probably not together, but I can't swear to that!' Cynthia Pullen, e-mail to the author, unpublished material (27th November 2012).

²¹⁷ Barbara Bryant, 'George Frederick Watts 1817-1904: *Love and Death*', in Andrew Wilton and Robert Upstone (eds.), *The Age of Rossetti, Burne-Jones and Watts: Symbolism in Britain 1860-1910* (London, Tate Gallery, 1997), 166-167.

²¹⁸ The popularity of this idea is further indicated by an illustration by T. Dayrell-Reed in *The Tramp: an Open-Air Magazine*. The illustration accompanies a poem on the facing page by J.T. Beazley. Both are titled *The Visit*. The illustration shows a doorway framed by trailing plants with black-cloaked figures on either side of the open door. The poem suggests that the figures are lovers, with one newly dead. See *The Tramp: an Open-Air Magazine* 1, March-September 1910 (March 1910), 74-75.

²¹⁹ Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 'The Blessed Damozel' [1850], in *The New Oxford Book of Victorian Verse* (Oxford and New York: OUP, 1987), 269.

²²⁰ Dante Gabriel Rossetti: *The Blessed Damozel*, 1875-1878, Fogg Art Museum, Harvard; *The Blessed Damozel*, 1879, Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight.

²²¹ Emma Chambers says, referring to students who studied at the Slade between 1890 and 1910, 'Outside the formal classes, students were also encouraged to study the Old Masters at the National Gallery and British Museum'. Chambers, 'Slade School influences on the Camden Town Group', 2012. Winifred Knights' studies began later, in 1915, so Chambers' discussion provides evidence towards a likelihood, but is not conclusive evidence.

²²² For these lessons see letter from Winifred Knights to Audrey Clarke, (undated probably October 1915). Knights does not give specific details.

or below the tympanum.²²³ The wise virgins were shown to his right, indicating that 'the virgins function as the ultimate metaphor for preparedness for entry into heaven, symbolised architecturally in the church building beyond the door.'²²⁴ Bern's Munster (1421) clearly illustrates the link between the virgins and judgement with the wise and foolish virgins on the jambs flanking the main door, above it a scene of the Last Judgement and in front a large figure of the Archangel Michael. On the west facade of Notre Dame de Strasbourg (c.1280) the foolish virgins are in the same position, and alongside a seducer holds an apple. But in an earlier example, on the north side of Basel's Münster, the Die Galluspforte portal dated 1180, the door symbol occurs twice. It is on the cathedral door itself and on the sculptural panel above the door (below the Last Judgement), where the foolish virgins are separated from Christ by a door, while he blesses the wise virgins (**plate 22**). Other representations that feature a door, as in Knights' image, include a print of Pieter Breughel the Elder's *The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins* (engraved by Phillips Gale) published by Hieronymus Cock in 1560-1563. In the lower sections of the work the foolish virgins' disreputable behaviour is represented by dancing (the wise virgins use time more prudently), while in the upper register to the viewer's left Christ lets the wise virgins into heaven through a door. Finally, to the right, the foolish virgins find a barred door. Martin Schongauer's ten separate engravings, dated 1469-1482, are very different from the examples I have described. They were in the British Museum collections, close to the Slade School of Art (with the engraving after Breughel's painting) from the nineteenth century. Knights may, therefore, have been familiar with Schongauer's clear representations of the virgins without oil. In one a virgin wipes her eyes, her empty lamp tellingly upside down.²²⁵ By implication all these examples link the descendants of Eve with behaviour almost as reprehensible as sexual intercourse: loose hair; empty, upturned lamps; dancing. It is not recorded that Knights knew Alfred Lord Leighton's fresco at St Michael's and All Angels church, Lyndhurst, New Forest. If she did know the work it would be pertinent as the foolish virgins are sorrowful, unlike the examples previously discussed. Millais' illustration (1864) for 'The Parables of Our Lord', wood engravings by the Dalziel Brothers, depicts intense sorrow and is a more obvious source (**plate 23**). Both Knights' and Millais' interpretations are close to the account in Matthew: they omit 'loose' behaviour, having gone to buy oil for their lamps the foolish virgins are just too late for the Bridegroom. Both Millais' and Knights' right-hand virgin are desperate, and in both instances desire seems as important as disappointment.

²²³ In contrast, Knights' view is from the spectator's viewpoint, the foolish virgins to the viewer's left.

²²⁴ Joan A. Holladay, *Medieval Germany*, 395.

²²⁵ The engraving is titled *Third Foolish Virgin*. The version at the British Museum is after Durer, probably by Israhel van Meckenem, c.1465-1600.

Why did Knights paint just the five foolish virgins when the set subject was, according to the letter cited above, 'The Parable of the Ten Virgins'? Explanations include an interest in this expressive, dramatic section of the parable. Perhaps Knights felt that sexual desire was better expressed through the foolish virgins' disappointment than the others' easy acceptance into the Kingdom of Heaven, or thought of herself as a foolish virgin for her interest in Derwent Lees. Certainly, regardless of biographical explanation, the virgin to the viewer's right in Knights' watercolour is yearning as she reaches up. Her face is hidden so that pose, downcast head, and hands feeling the door, convey this yearning, while the press of her delicate hands acts as a frustrated substitute for touching the bridegroom himself. The sensuality of the virgin's touch contrasts with markers for sight: cold light on the other virgins' faces; weak light from the virgins' lamps; modest veiling. Other images that Knights made during the years 1913-1917 similarly depict touch and frustrated desire. I have previously examined the *Goblin Market* watercolours, and in one of these goblins pull Lizzie's dress so that as Lizzie turns away she rejects their fruit and touch, for her sister's sake. There is a clear sexual undercurrent in *Rapunzel* (plate 9). The fairy tale describes a Prince climbing the rope of Rapunzel's hair hanging from her tower-prison, where a witch has kept her from contact with men. In Knights' unfinished pen and ink drawing the Prince's connection to Rapunzel (a self-portrait) is visual and tactile as he prepares to climb her hair. 'Rapunzel' is a children's story, with a sensual undertone available to the adult viewer. Knights' fascination with the combination of sight, touch and male attention is apparent from this work and was recorded in a letter, probably written in October 1915 (in the same letter she describes putting her hair up). She writes about Derwent Lees, teacher at the Slade, admiring her drawing of hands and how his hand touches hers:

well, he [Lees] sat down as before, saying 'this really is a very good drawing, very good, I like this mysterious effect you have got' Really Awdry I could see nothing mysterious in it. Then, 'you have got quite a snaky appearance into that finger.' Long gaze, very exciting. Now this Awdry which happened as he spoke is very difficult to explain so I will draw it if I can [Knights illustrated the incident, labelling it 'Hands!!'] You see that he sat on the donkey stool, sideways and left a huge space of seat by the drawing board [punctuation and spelling sic].

I who had to sit on the floor ached so there, that I thought there would be no harm in supporting myself by putting up my hand on the seat of the donkey thus: [Knights drew a close-up of her hand on the seat] well he began talking away and very soon I became aware that his hand [double underlining] was touching mine like this. [Knights drew this

scene] Awdry he must have known and felt my hand plainly, because I felt his. Yet he kept it there and when I had a chance I took mine away when he wasn't looking at me. Well I had a lesson [with Lees] until 4pm on Old Masters. It was a ripping lesson for me you can imagine [punctuation and spelling sic] .

An excerpt from later in the correspondence suggests Knights is controlling her teacher: 'Awdry, He can't draw if I stare at him too much. I have some of his drawings that he has done for me lately and they were awful and he knows it because he tried to excuse himself to me [punctuation sic].'²²⁶ While the excerpts given here have the flavour of an adolescent crush (Knights was sixteen), her interest in Lees actually lasted some months. Her letter written about the Sketch Club Critique, from which I quoted earlier in the chapter, suggests her interest was already waning in the same term: 'Lees gave me a very nice lesson on Tuesday but that has been all and I have got sick of the Dark one and Lees and felt quite good up to today. My very latest craze is a fair student who is lame...'²²⁷ Yet a letter written early the next year shows Knights was still fascinated by Lees and wished to please him, noting for instance, 'Lees gave me a ragging about bad contours...I felt very sad and must have looked it too for at 3.45 Lees came back and in a very sweet voice told me that it was much better...'²²⁸ But this intense fascination with an older man in a position of authority must be understood in context of contemporaneous gender imbalance at the Slade, where young men were much less in evidence than young women, women students vastly outnumbering their male peers.²²⁹

Taking evidence from the first of Knights' letters quoted above, it seems very possible that contact with Lees' hand was the inspiration for the right-hand foolish virgin's slim hand, her touch and her presence as a self-portrait. Lees was perhaps also inspiration for the equally sensuous male touch in *Rapunzel*.²³⁰ It is important to note, however, that there is no certain evidence for the connections that I have posited. Focusing again on *The Wise and Foolish Virgins*, the virgin's hands and fingers are sensual and delicate as they make contact with the door, but conversely it is difficult to imagine how such slight fingers could hold a brush. Discussing hands in the work of

²²⁶ Letter from Winifred Knights to Audrey Clarke, (undated: annotated by Eileen Palmer as '1915, probably October'). Knights ended the letter with: 'Please for pity's sake destroy this letter because it is rather dangerous', suggesting an only partly suppressed sexual charge.

²²⁷ Letter from Winifred Knights to Audrey Clark, (undated: 'most likely late 1915').

²²⁸ Letter from Winifred Knights to Audrey Clarke, dated Wednesday 26th January.

²²⁹ Katy Deepwell, *Women artists between the wars* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 49.

²³⁰ Knights describes putting her hair up in the same letter. Her accompanying sketch, with coiled hair on either side of her head, is similar to the right-hand virgin's hairstyle, providing evidence for my point with reference to *The Wise and Foolish Virgins*. See letter from Winifred Knights to Audrey Clarke, (undated: annotated as '1915, probably October').

another woman artist, Artemisia Gentileschi, Mary D. Garrard says they are ‘the locus of agency, both literally and symbolically’ and that Gentileschi’s women have hands that ‘hammer and paint, grab and hold, push and shove, with extraordinary ease’.²³¹ Leaning on the closed door in the *Wise and Foolish Virgins* Knights’ long, delicate right hand with bent fingers of her left hand just visible (the ‘snaky’ fingers Lees had praised), shows a less determined sense of self than apparent from either Gentileschi’s work or Knights’ writing hand discussed at the beginning of the chapter. Lees’ attention had, arguably, softened her determination. This hand was, as were Gentileschi’s, formed with an artistic touch shaped in a man’s world.²³² Considering conditions in the early twentieth century, according to Katy Deepwell the Slade ‘had three times as many female students as male consistently between 1912 and 1946’. Yet until 1928 it had ‘no female members...[among its] teaching staff’,²³³ a male dominance in positions of power and responsibility that mirrored society as a whole. The context of few male students and an all-male teaching staff, and associated gendered attitudes, does to some extent explain both Knights’ crush on Derwent Lees and the sensual yearning for Christ the Bridegroom in *The Wise and Foolish Virgins*, along with the ways these are expressed through hand and touch. Moreover, changing attitudes to women’s sexuality, outlined earlier, are, I feel, significant. A clearer picture emerges when setting such context with Knights’ letters about Derwent Lees, and then looking again at *The Wise and Foolish Virgins*. Winifred Knights painted *The Wise and Foolish Virgins* in these somewhat conflicted circumstances, where limited sexual empowerment for women was condoned by some. Her letters are a precious biographical source for a mutual fascination. They also show a young woman who, in the liberal circumstances described earlier, understanding the premium on her looks, had a developed (although not necessarily active) sexuality. But while the *letters* indicate Knights’ power over Lees, demonstrated by his inability to draw when she is looking at him, the power-play is reversed in *The Wise and Foolish Virgins*, as it shows a young

²³¹ Mary D. Garrard, ‘Artemisia’s Hand’, in Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (eds.), *Reclaiming Female Agency* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2005), 64.

²³² In view of these conditions, in the man’s world of the seventeenth century, Garrard describes Gentileschi’s *Judith and Her Maidservant with the Head of Holofernes* (c.1625, Detroit Institute of Arts). The painting depicts the moments after Judith decapitated Holofernes. Garrard says that her hands combine determination, ‘with her right hand, she claims authority, gripping Holofernes’ sword’, with the physical vulnerability of women as the ‘flat palm’ of her left hand ‘rises rhetorically [in]...a visual cry of alarm’ at the prospect of discovery. *Ibid*, 64-65.

²³³ Katy Deepwell, *Women artists*, 49. However, there was at least one woman tutor before this date, for Lisa Tickner mentions, ‘in 1897, during Gwen John’s tenure at the Slade, one of the tutors, Miss Elder’. Lisa Tickner, ‘Augustus’s Sister’: Gwen John, Wholeness, Harmony and Radiance’, in David Fraser Jenkins and Chris Stephens (eds.), *Gwen John and Augustus John* (London: Tate Publishing, 2005), 33. Knights herself refers to a ‘Miss Smith (tutor to women students)’, but she presumably held pastoral/administrative duties. See letter from Winifred Knights to Audrey Clarke, (undated: annotated as ‘1915, probably October’).

woman's frustration,²³⁴ cautioning the viewer to focus closely on the image. For the viewer, the work's emotional conviction rests on the ways Knights has interpreted a well-known parable through a girl yearning for the Bridegroom's warm flesh, immobilised by her virginity as she touches the unyielding mass of a locked door. Moreover, due to its figuration of a segment of a woman's life-cycle this watercolour is integral to any examination of Winifred Knights' artwork and career. With later oils such as *Italian Landscape* (1921), *The Marriage at Cana* (c. 1923), and *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours* (1933), it is a vivid representation of women's experience that, arguably, draws on specific circumstances.

As a woman training in a man's world Knights' artistic (and probably sexual) touch was not fully developed in 1917, when she wrote the letter with which I began this section, but in the artworks examined here she was confident enough to express the concerns of a young woman living in the early twentieth century. She responded to source material from the Bible, literature and a fantasy past with images that show an already distinctive artistic touch, while using the established late Pre-Raphaelite style with which she was familiar. In the images examined below the expression of emotion is less direct. Yet the focus on women and girls is as noticeable, shown in the unreal freedom of the open road in *Ludlow Fair and Cattle Market*, 1919, and depicted as a fragile female agency in *Village Street: Mill-Hands Conversing*, also dated 1919.

Images of Modern Life and the Summer Composition Prize, 1918-1920

The first section of this chapter began with Winifred Knights' self-portrait, in which she sets herself back in the past, pausing to regard the viewer (**plate 3**). The same year, 1917, William Orpen painted a very different self-portrait, *Ready to Start* (Imperial War Museum, **plate 24**), in which the artist is shown in a tin hat as he warily regards the viewer. Orpen's image is, like Knights', placed in a domestic environment. But his persona already reveals wartime trauma, for, as Angeria Rigamonti di Cuto says, 'bottles and soda siphon dominate the painting, suggesting these are what enable him to be ready to start'.²³⁵ Although living on the Home Front throughout WWI Knights was traumatised, as well, in her case by the devastating Silvertown explosions in

²³⁴ Letter from Winifred Knights to Audrey Clarke, *ibid.*

²³⁵ Angeria Rigamonti di Cuto, 'Staging the Modernist Self', *Visual Culture in Britain* 13, no. 3 (November 2012), 315. DOI:10.1080/14714787.2012.716980.

London's East End, which killed sixty-five and rendered 2,000 homeless.²³⁶ As a consequence of the trauma she left the Slade for the academic year 1917-1918, and returned to her studies only in autumn 1918.²³⁷ However, this dislocating experience did not emerge in the artist's painting until 1920, where, as I shall argue, Knights faced her trauma in *The Deluge*. The painting includes a self-portrait which is as honest a representation of an individual in crisis as Orpen's, painted three years earlier. Yet, even without facing her trauma, Knights' artwork following her return to the Slade is noticeably different from that produced prior to autumn 1917, when detailed fairy and fantasy watercolours were influenced by late Pre-Raphaelite art. Her response to the female form in 1918 and 1919 is, in particular, new. In a circular watercolour dated 1918 (**plate 25**), in which she has given herself blonde hair, Knights depicts a much more confident young woman than in the earlier images.²³⁸ Other paintings show women in scenes of modern life, a theme I shall develop.

There is a change in style, Pre-Raphaelite detail giving way to starker, plainer forms. Although Knights employs the tondo form for a second time in her circular watercolour of 1918 (**plate 25**) the style as well as content is very different from the *Goblin Market* tondo discussed earlier. Here the composition is unified by orange tones on three different fabrics, while contrasting bold patterns (stripes, circles) also accentuate decorative design. Shapes and colours are relatively simple in pictures of women in the countryside from the same date, seen for instance in two from a private collection (Catherine Monnington) and *Back Kitchen Door, The Nook, West Hoathley* [spelling sic], *Sussex*, 1918, which is in UCL Art Museum and dated on the accession label. It is evident that changes in Knights' style occurred alongside changes in her life. She refers to the end of the Summer Term 1917 in this way: 'It will be horrid because so many are leaving and I might never see them again'.²³⁹ Yet in autumn 1918, after her return to the Slade, when writing of her 'funny year' in the country Knights says she gained 'much in certain ways that are worth more than the actual, technical study which I missed...There are many beautiful things hidden behind sprout-picking and the cleaning-out of pig-stys [sic].'²⁴⁰

There are not enough securely dated works for us to be certain that Knights' year in the country led directly to the change in style I have noted, but *Back Kitchen Door, The Nook...*(1918) and a

²³⁶ See for instance, Sheila Marriner, 'Sir Alfred Mond's Octopus: A Nationalised House-Building Business', *Business History* 21, no. 1 (January 1979), 28. DOI: 10.1080/00076797900000002. The impact of witnessing the explosions is treated in Chapter Two of this thesis.

²³⁷ See Eileen Palmer, account of Winifred Knights' life, UCL Art Museum, unpublished work.

²³⁸ The circular watercolour (1918) is in a private collection (Catherine Monnington).

²³⁹ Letter from Winifred Knights to Aunt Grace (24th June 1917).

²⁴⁰ Letter from Winifred Knights to Aunt Millicent, (18th November 1918).

watercolour of a woman working beside farm buildings (Catherine Monnington collection, **plate 26**), dated 1918 by the artist, together support my idea that her art during this period is bolder in composition than that examined in the first part of this chapter.²⁴¹ In one of Knights' most interesting watercolours from this time, *Ludlow Fair and Cattle Market* (1919, University College Art Collection, watercolour and pencil, 29.5 x 32.2 cm, **plate 27**) she also reveals an interest in the everyday that was missing in her earlier work. Ludlow is an ancient town positioned in the Welsh Marches and in the lee of escarpments of the Shropshire hills. It has a Norman castle and many beautiful half-timbered and Queen Anne buildings. The town was important politically in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as the administrative capital of Wales and had a thriving glove manufacturing industry into the nineteenth century, but by the mid nineteenth century it had no major industry and was 'largely reliant on its traditional role as a market town'.²⁴² It is interesting, then, that Winifred Knights has chosen to depict features of the modern Ludlow of 1919. The road's insistent diagonal, cutting through from foreground to deep space, the solid blocks of plain orange-roofed houses and an orange and cream striped awning in the right foreground, as well as the rhythm of arches and gasometer cylinders, give the image a more obviously geometrical structure than apparent in *The Wise and Foolish Virgins* and the *Goblin Market* watercolours examined earlier in the chapter. In developing this style Knights was undoubtedly influenced by her studies at the Slade where, as well as intensive practice drawing the human form, students were encouraged to work on Decorative Paintings for the Summer Composition Prize, for entry to the British School at Rome and for careers as mural painters. Her depiction of the Fair as a family-centred occasion is characteristic of her concern with women, so different from A.E. Housman's view of the same fair in his popular cycle of poems 'The Shropshire Lad' (a version which also emphasised the town's rural links):

The lads in their hundreds to Ludlow come in for the fair,
 There's men from the barn and the forge and the mill and the fold,
 The lads for the girls and the lads for the liquor are there,²⁴³

Instead of the town's ancient buildings, or the activities in a fair, Knights has shown the narrow road leading to a fairground tent as scattered groups (couples, women with babies or children) walk towards the fairground or buy tickets for a performance in the orange-striped tent. In the foreground a well-dressed woman talking to her children has Knights' profile, although not her

²⁴¹ See private collection (Catherine Monnington).

²⁴² David Lloyd, *The Concise History of Ludlow* (Ludlow: Merlin Unwin Books, 1999), 10, 115-116, 141.

²⁴³ A.E. Housman, 'A Shropshire Lad', Poem XXIII [1896], in *The Collected Poems of A.E. Housman* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1939), 38.

dark hair. As the road draws the viewer into the picture space, he or she sees seemingly modern houses to the left, a railway bridge, gasometers (now called 'gas holders') and the Shropshire hills in the background.²⁴⁴ The right foreground is occupied by the edge of a gypsy caravan, a tent and a ticket booth. The left side shows well-tended allotments abutting onto houses in the background. Here the fences are un-gated so families can easily reach their plots, but the allotments are shown securely fenced in the picture's foreground. Two small groups of gypsies are depicted outside the fencing, on the public, common land. Among these a gypsy woman, standing with her arms crossed, is a portrait of the artist (see **plate 27 and plate 1**). Knights has not shown features of the Cattle Market or any fairground rides, but the viewer can discern a couple taking their seats in the tent. There is a range of contemporary dress: with jackets and coats, and hats in particular distinguishing taste for summer boater, feathered hat or fashionable close fitting cloche with a narrow brim, while to the viewer's left gypsy women (two with their heads covered by shawls) contrast with such modernity. 1919 was early in the post-war period and ways to remember the war and understand its effects not yet fully addressed.²⁴⁵ But, although no disabled veterans are depicted, discreet signs of recent war include a sailor with his girlfriend, or wife, and a pensive girl in black who is probably a young widow. No fathers are shown (each child is accompanied by two women) perhaps because de-mobilisation did not begin until the Peace Treaty was signed, on 28th June 1919.²⁴⁶

My analysis will focus on representations of women, children, individuals and community in *Ludlow Fair and Cattle Market*. The image is spatially generous with a high horizon-line revealing the Shropshire hills and gasometers marking modernity. As well as houses there are allotments, small families strolling in the mid-ground and in the foreground the edge of a fair. With all these elements a range of readings is possible, for example exploring relationships between landscape

²⁴⁴ Gas holder is the 'updated name' for a gasometer. See 'UK Condemned: The great gasometer', *BBC News* (Thursday, January 28, 1999), at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/264609.stm>, accessed 24th September 2014.

Ludlow's Cattle Market was on Corve Street during the immediate post-WWI period, close to the railway line. Lloyd, *Concise History*, 141. Knights simplified the house forms, but many of the Georgian houses in the town are similarly three-storied and symmetrical. See illustrations in Lloyd, *ibid*, 117, 129. Town gas was manufactured in Ludlow, but I have not found the gasometers' locations. For town gas see David Lloyd, Roy Payne, Christopher Train and Derek Williams (eds.), for the Ludlow historical research group, *Victorian Ludlow*, (Bucknell, Shropshire: Scenesetters, 2004), 115-16. I visited Ludlow in August 2014: the position of Knights' railway viaduct, or aqueduct, is not coherent within the town's physical geography. Knights therefore combined motifs in her watercolour.

²⁴⁵ Many local men served in WWI. 138 died on active service and others were maimed. The WWI Memorial was unveiled on 29th October 1922. Clive Richardson, *Till Ludlow Tower Shall Fall: Ludlow's Sacrifice in World War One* (Ludlow: Ludlow Historical Research Group, 2010), inside front cover, 72.

²⁴⁶ It has been suggested that the amount of empty space in the image and well as the long shadows make subliminal reference to recent war. I am grateful for this idea to a discussion with my students at Birkbeck College, University of London (15th January 2013).

and man-made features, tamed nature in the mid-ground allotments and towering hills behind. In focusing on women and children my analysis is therefore representative of other ways geographical space could be analysed in a reading of the watercolour. I shall argue that contrast between families to the right and left of the image is a key to how the narrative functions. Through positioning, pose and costume the artist draws the viewer's attention to both groups. Both groups are interesting and, in addition, Knights has displayed her personal involvement, although less insistently than in the work discussed in the first section of the chapter. *Ludlow Fair and Cattle Market* is a genre scene, naturalistic in its depiction of modernity, while also avoiding the unpleasant realities of post-WWI society such as disabled veterans appearing at places of entertainment. Its emphasis on family life and the centrality of women is consistent with such genre scenes, and the juxtaposition of middle classes with the poorer other is also part of the tradition, shown, for example, in George Clausen's *Spring Morning: Haverstock Hill* of 1881 (Bury Art Gallery) where middle-class women and children stroll on the pavement while workmen repair the road. In Ford Madox Brown's earlier *Work* (1852-1865, Manchester Art Gallery), the full range of classes is compressed into a small space, Brown's sympathy for the near-destitute weed-seller and ragged motherless children highlighted by impatient upper-class riders whose passage is blocked by workmen and workless poor.

These examples indicate how in contrasting work and leisure Knights developed *Ludlow Fair and Cattle Market* within an established form, with a significant difference between gypsies to the viewer's left and the groups arriving at the fair to the right. Although painted in the immediate post-war years, the image shows no sign of the war trauma Knights suffered from. Instead, she provides a calm and spacious area for her characters to interact and to remain apart. As a scene of everyday life we understand *Ludlow Fair and Cattle Market's* narrative through pose, expression, even understated comedy (the children's faces as their mother attends to their responses, the disreputable gypsy man selling tickets). Those people visiting the fair are well dressed, in their Sunday best (not necessarily middle-class), strolling, and at leisure, yet in orderly groups.²⁴⁷ Two women and a young boy are walking along the path and the older woman, perhaps the grandmother, is arm-in-arm with the young woman in black, who must be the boy's mother. A woman beside the tent, sporting an ostentatiously feathered hat, holds her baby's hand as her companion indulgently regards mother and child. And close to the ticket-seller another mother, standing next to an older woman, looks down at her children, checking that they want to attend the fair. The boys' faces, grotesque cartoons of indifference in one and eagerness in the

²⁴⁷ My discussion is focused on couples and women, as I have said, but two men walking away, in the background, may be fighting.

other, stand out beside their mother's pale blue costume, neat hair and delicate earring (a reminder of Knights' *more* grotesque goblins close to a young girl in her *Goblin Market* watercolours). Contrasting with fairground leisure, the gypsies to the viewer's left are casual workers. One gypsy, the Knights' self-portrait, is regarding those strolling to the fair. She is, perhaps, the minder for the slouched figure on the ground, who must be begging. Further to the left a seated gypsy woman hands her baby to her companion as she looks towards those paying to enter the tent: she appears to have spied the chance for work as the crowd builds up, maybe telling fortunes. The gypsy caravan, placed so close to the tent, also illustrates how the fun of the fair depends on itinerant workers who can easily move to the next venue. How can we understand this contrast between mainstream and its (racial) alternative? I have already examined Knights' illustrations for Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market', discussing in particular the sexual threat to Laura and Lizzie from a degenerate form of humanity. *Ludlow Fair and Cattle Market* is spacious, much calmer and not crowded in comparison with these earlier images, which were very possibly influenced by the highly-charged atmosphere of the Slade, including the influence of Derwent Lees as teacher.²⁴⁸ The contrast between mainstream and alternate other is appropriately gentler.

Gypsies were a home-grown exotic, at least to a nineteenth and early twentieth-century urbanised elite, their lifestyle fascinating and part-admirable, an enthusiasm pioneered by George Borrow (1803-1881). Borrow learned Romany and fused close observation with romanticism.²⁴⁹ This nomadic way of living was depicted in images such as Herbert von Herkomer's engraving *A Gypsy Encampment on Putney Common* (published in *The Graphic* in 1870) and later in Alfred Munnings' *The Fairground* (1912, private collection) while in 1852 Matthew Arnold evoked the romance of escape from civilization and its association with primitivism in his poem of a poor scholar

Who, tir'd of knocking at Preferment's door,
 One summer morn forsook
 His friends, and went to learn the Gipsy lore,

²⁴⁸ Lees was committed to an asylum in 1918 so he was not her teacher when she returned to the Slade. Henry R. Lew, 'Derwent Lees', in Ted Gott, Laurie Benson and Sophie Matthieson eds. *Modern Art in Britain 1900-196: Masterworks from Australian and New Zealand Collections* (Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 2007), 65.

²⁴⁹ See for example Borrow's descriptions of East Anglian Isopel Berners in *Lavengro* [1851], described by Seton Dearden as 'more a piece of fiction than a piece of life...enlarged into a phenomenal woman'. Seton Dearden, *The Gypsy Gentleman* (London: Arthur Barker Ltd. 1939), 109, 112.

And roam'd the world with that wild brotherhood...²⁵⁰

Notions of the romantic outsider were reinforced and celebrated by the Gypsy Lore Society. The society was founded and based in Liverpool and was scholarly *and* romantic in investigating gypsy life. In July 1908, for instance, *The Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* included articles on 'The Tarot', 'Transylvanian Gypsies', 'Some Rumanian Gypsy Words' and 'Welsh Gypsy Folk-Tales'.²⁵¹ In the previous volume (1907-1908), in an article titled 'Gypsy Language and Origin', John Sampson questioned whether 'we [are] at all nearer the answer to the old question – the gypsies' original home and race, and the period and cause of their dispersal?'²⁵² thereby revealing interests in race and origin that were typical of the period. A contemporaneous 'fascination...with landscape, the outdoors and travel' is reflected in another publication, *The Tramp: An Open Air Magazine*, which has been characterised as emphasising 'the anti-touristic...that which is not contained in guide books.'²⁵³ The publication, copiously illustrated with black and white photographs, was actually wide-ranging. For instance, it described walking holidays, the 'Futurist Manifesto' and even gave advice on types of baggage:

a trunk...is bound to have a hard time...if it is going to be hoisted in cranes, shot down holds, taken in springless carts over the meanest apologies for roads...it must have a tough body, be well protected at the corners...and be well made in every detail.²⁵⁴

Articles in the magazine on caravanning and Wyndham Lewis's 'Le Pere Francois: (A Full-Length Portrait of a Tramp)'²⁵⁵ are more apt for my topic, representing early twentieth-century fascination with vagabonds and life on the road. Augustus John, a member of the Gypsy Lore Society, adopted the gypsy lifestyle himself, living in a caravan for two months of 1905 with his family, which included his wife, his mistress and their children. Lisa Tickner says that his 'Romany affiliations and identifications...were intense', yet his pictures appealed to an audience attracted to the gypsy life as well as to 'a bohemian fad' and 'a peculiar form of masquerade'.²⁵⁶ But gypsies could also appear threatening due to the impact of their unsettled lifestyle on the mainstream, for

²⁵⁰ Matthew Arnold, 'The Scholar Gypsy' [1853], in *The Poems of Matthew Arnold* (Oxford: OUP, 1913), 231.

²⁵¹ *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*: New Series 2, no. 1, 1908-1909 (July 1908), v.

²⁵² *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* New Series 1, no. 1, 1907-1908 (July 1907), 5.

²⁵³ Helen Southworth, 'Douglas Goldring's *The Tramp: an Open-Air Magazine* (1910-1911) and Modernist Geographies', in *Literature and History* 18, no. 1 (Spring 2009), 37. DOI: 10.7227/LH.18.1.3.

²⁵⁴ Edith A. Browne, 'Kit Notes', *The Tramp: An Open-Air Magazine* 1, March-September 1910 (July 1910), 391-2.

²⁵⁵ Percy Wyndham Lewis, 'Le Pere Francois (A Full-Length Portrait of a Tramp)', in *The Tramp: An Open-Air Magazine* 1, (September 1910), 517-21.

²⁵⁶ Lisa Tickner, *Modern Life and Modern Subjects* (New Haven and London: Yale, 2000), 62.

a growing body of opinion saw Travellers as being out of step with modern society. Along with longstanding beliefs about the lazy and lawless nature of Gypsies came newer concerns about their unsanitary habits...Added to this were commonly expressed sentiments that they were escaping from paying taxes and consequently evaded the responsibilities that came with modern living.²⁵⁷

Writing as an academic cultural geographer, Peter Kabachnik highlights similarities between perceptions of 'nomads, refugees, the homeless, internally displaced persons, and economic migrants' in contemporary England. Kabachnik uses the words 'place invaders' to describe individuals perceived as threatening 'because they enter the 'wrong' place...[according to] essentialist conceptions that represent places as isolated, static and natural, with fixed boundaries...if people understand place in this way, mobility becomes invasive'.²⁵⁸

In view of the attitudes outlined above it is understandable that Knights placed her gypsies on common land and firmly outside the ordered and tended allotments from which they are separated by fencing.²⁵⁹ In other respects she has followed the romanticised image of gypsies represented through the Gypsy Lore Society and Augustus John's images. His belief that 'the life of the gypsies offered the sense of close-knit community lost in modern urban living [and a] sense of primitive closeness' was demonstrated in a charcoal drawing titled *Wandering Sinnite* (1908-1909) exhibited at the New English Art Club in 1909.²⁶⁰ Knights knew John's paintings:²⁶¹ he was much admired in the early twentieth century by artists connected with the Slade²⁶² and his decorative style almost certainly influenced Knights' style. Idealised images of his family include gypsy costume. *A Family Group* of 1908-1909 (also known as *Decorative Group* **plate 28**), which was shown at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1910, is probably a source for Knights' figures of two

²⁵⁷ Becky Taylor, 'A People on the Outside', *History Today* 61, no. 6 (6th June 2011), no pagination. History Today, the Archive, at <http://www.historytoday.com/becky-taylor/britains-gypsy-travellers-people-outside>, accessed 20th December 2014.

²⁵⁸ Peter Kabachnik, 'Place Invaders: Constructing the Nomadic Threat in England', *The Geographical Review* 100, no. 1 (January 2010), 90-91. DOI: 10.1111/j.1931-0846.2010.00008.x

²⁵⁹ The allotments were probably established during WWI attempts towards British self-sufficiency in food production. Gypsies were not publicly known to have taken part in the War, and while it is unlikely that Knights was making any connection to this perceived rejection of war service, some viewers perhaps saw the watercolour in this way. See 'Gypsy War Heroes, the Ultimate Sacrifice', *Gypsy Roma Traveller: History Month*, at <http://grthm.natt.org.uk/war-heroes.php>, accessed 1st December 2014.

²⁶⁰ Tim Batchelor, David Fraser Jenkins and Chris Stephens, in David Fraser Jenkins and Chris Stephen (eds.), *Gwen John and Augustus John*, London (London: Tate Publishing, 2004), 130. The image was also Frontispiece to the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society New Series* 2, no. 1, 1908-1909.

²⁶¹ Knights wrote that Stanley Spencer 'is the most wonderful painter in England now, not even excepting [Augustus] John'. Letter from Winifred Knights to Aunt Millicent (undated, annotated as '1926').

²⁶² For example see William Rothenstein, *Men and Memories Vol. 2, Recollections of William Rothenstein 1900-1922* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd. 1932), 84.

gypsy women with a baby. John's wife Ida had died five days after giving birth (and also before *A Family Group* was painted), but John represents her in the centre of the work holding her child, her head covered by a shawl. The woman to Ida's right, shown in profile with long brown hair, is Dorelia, John's mistress.²⁶³ Winifred Knights portrays the same central group in her watercolour, although her gypsies are seated. She shows the baby's mother handing the child over to the woman with long brown hair, an idea not stated in John's painting, but implicit in the dominant position of Dorelia in John's painting because she took over care of Ida's children following Ida's death.

Augustus John's *A Family Group* is in portrait format and the six family members are set together close to the surface of the picture plane. Depicting an imaginary time, it shows unity in a family fractured by death in the actual time when the painting was made. Knights' gypsy group works differently. It is one element in a work which contains more imagined space than in John's painting. Within this space the viewer is able to associate and contrast groups of people and objects (for instance buildings, gas holders, a gypsy caravan), as I suggested earlier in my analysis.²⁶⁴ Taking another example to highlight the use of space, in Knights' earlier *Goblin Market* tondo both goblins and girl, Laura or Lizzie, are compressed together and close to the viewer, drawing attention to the claustrophobia of un-welcome touch. By contrast, in *Ludlow Fair and Cattle Market* the overt 'place invaders',²⁶⁵ in their gypsy shawls, are spatially distanced from the other groups and their caravan is hidden behind the fairground tent.²⁶⁶ Knights has constructed an appropriately unthreatening distance between mainstream and other, just as she has factored in distance between leisure on a fair day and the gas holders that contribute to the comfort of modern living.²⁶⁷

In the same way, the gypsy standing to the left presents a more independent representation of the artist than Knights' (part) self-portrait as a mother attending to her children's whims, to the right. These two are spatially separate and emotionally unconnected, alternative women's experience. At first reading, too, the gypsy women figure an idealised view of gypsy freedom, as

²⁶³ Batchelor, *Gwen John and Augustus John*, 128-129.

²⁶⁴ There is similar use of space, with a wide roadway and modern buildings, in *Leaving the Munitions Works* (1919, watercolour, 27x32 cm, private collection) which I first became aware of while completing my research. The watercolour was exhibited in *The Great War as Recorded through the Fine and Popular Arts* at Morley College, September 5th 2014 to October 2nd 2014.

²⁶⁵ Kabachnik, 'Place Invaders', 90-91.

²⁶⁶ The two men selling tickets are gypsies, separated from their customers by a table. Due to their contemporaneous costume they are less identifiable as 'other' than are the gypsy women.

²⁶⁷ Georges Seurat devised the same type of contrast between leisure and industry in his *Bathers at Asnières* (1884). However, the painting was purchased by the National Gallery through the Courtauld Fund in 1924 and Knights is unlikely to have known it in 1919.

in Mathew Arnold's 'Scholar Gypsy' and Augustus John's *Romany Folk* (c. 1907, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff), a view of mother, children, donkey and caravans set in seemingly remote country. The politics of Knights' image is different. While her own figure stands out from townfolk and other gypsies, hinting that we women might prefer her gypsy life, those gypsy women with the baby are looking to their men-folk selling tickets as much as to the gathering crowd. Knights therefore figures gypsy dependence on mainstream society and parallel gendered dependence, linked in a modern money economy. Her representation of gypsies therefore contrasts with John's deliberate separation of woman from modern society, for him part of a project to romanticise women, the 'signifiers of meaning and plenitude in his art.'²⁶⁸ Looking closely at Knights' watercolour, *Ludlow Fair and Cattle Market* is no more a definitive expression of opportunity available to early twentieth-century women (sexual or more general independence) than visible in *The Wise and Foolish Virgins* analysed in the first part of my chapter. Yet to the left Knights' self-portrait does demonstrate a confident female agency as she literally stands out against dependence, a confidence that the artist spent her career battling to sustain.

This chapter has, so far, addressed issues of self-portraiture, sexuality, the position of women and their relationships to groups in Knights' early work, showing for instance how setting women within or against groups or community can indicate dependence or some confidence. Female agency, an implicit theme, is treated more directly in the final section of the chapter. Examining Knights' entry for the Slade School Summer Composition Prize, *Village Street: Mill-Hands Conversing*, I show how her work reveals uncertainty, although she was already a successful student at the Slade. In considering Knights in this way I do not claim, or intend to imply, that Knights would have been more successful if she had not been a woman, or a woman born in 1899. A similar trajectory of successful work, good work and scant work could be traced for some male artists, if for different reasons. Indeed, the power of Knights' work, when it is powerful, comes partly from her faltering confidence. Understanding Knights' work in this way, as restricted and facilitated by the circumstances in which she lived, liberates her career from value-judgements of success, failure, and points between.

Winifred Knights was joint winner of the Slade School of Art Summer Composition Prize in 1919, for her tempera on canvas *Village Street: Mill-Hands Conversing* (91.5 x 122 cm, University College, London, **plate 29**).²⁶⁹ The size of the painting is not overwhelming, to the viewer, but

²⁶⁸ Lisa Tickner, *Modern Life and Modern Subjects* (New Haven and London: Yale, 2000), 77.

²⁶⁹ The setting probably represents aspects of Roydon, Essex. A watercolour with an almost identical composition, in UCL Art Museum, is presumably a preparatory sketch for *Village Street: Mill-Hands Conversing*. It is titled *Royden Mill, Essex* [sic], 1919 (the title is on the accession details and is not in

Knights had not previously completed an image at nearly this scale. The size, combined with a new medium, was surely a real challenge.²⁷⁰ The composition is dominated by simple blocks of mill buildings, painted in shades of warm brown and khaki, with to the viewer's left some light green on low buildings in the mid-ground. Strong shadows darken the browns, particularly on the tall structures to centre left and houses at right mid-ground, although the sky is a uniform, overcast grey. The painting is finely detailed, with hills, tiny farmsteads and rows of haystacks representing distant views. Men are talking animatedly among the mill buildings, or bending to work, and in the mid-ground to the viewer's right a woman calls to her husband, nagging him to attend. In contrast there is little movement in the foreground. Here six women and one man are a passive semi-circle as they half-listen to a young woman in a red jacket gesticulating as she talks, or argues, with a young man. Outside this semi-circle women frame the central group to the left and right. Knights has painted both men and women in the same shades of khaki and warm brown as the buildings, so that black (the woman's dress, a jacket) and red (the jacket, a red blouse and a collar) stand out. She has re-used motifs from earlier work. The woman in a straw boater to the right, with her face in profile, is the mother bending to her children in *Ludlow Fair and Cattle Market* and the landscape is reminiscent of the same watercolour's Shropshire hills.²⁷¹ Knights' use of the golden section breaks into the semi-circle I have described, drawing the viewer's attention to the foreground man listening to the woman and to the deep space of the street in which a woman calls to her husband. *Village Street: Mill-Hands Conversing* is therefore dominated but not controlled by the mill buildings.²⁷²

The term Decorative Painting was in wide use at this time as a description of large-scale images, often murals, as evidenced by reviews of Knights' work, when the painting was on show in February 1920, as part of the first stage of her entry for the Rome Prize. Decorative paintings included rhythmic, repetitive shapes and narrative was often subordinated to patterns of shape and colour. The sub-genre was informed by early Italian art and use of tempera was therefore popular. Knights has used this style and the image is also painted in tempera's flat colour.

Knights' hand). Winifred Knights certainly knew Roydon: she was there from 9th August to 20th September 1919. See Eileen Palmer, account of Winifred Knights' life. Knights combined sources in *Village Street...* (an approach also used in *Ludlow Fair...*). This is particularly apparent from the hill depicted to the right background, as there are no steep hills near Roydon.

²⁷⁰ Unfortunately Knights' letters do not describe her work on *Village Street: Mill-Hands Conversing*.

²⁷¹ Knights also re-used motifs from *Village Street...* in later work. The mill dominating the sky is repeated in the building to the left, perhaps also a mill, in *The Deluge*. The row of neat haystacks in the background re-appears in *The Deluge* and *Santissima Trinita*.

²⁷² There are few earlier British paintings of mill or factory buildings in either the nineteenth or early twentieth century, although Eyre Crowe's *The Dinner Hour, Wigan* (1874, Manchester Art Gallery) similarly sets women in front of factory buildings. It is unlikely that Knights knew Crowe's painting.

Perhaps not wishing to break the decorative unity of her composition, none of the women in *Village Street: Mill-Hands Conversing* is shown looking out at the viewer, to draw him or her into the narrative. I argued in the Introduction to my thesis that Knights was marginalised by the ambition for public art projects of male artists associated with the British School at Rome and that her choices were not for public art. The Slade Summer Composition gave students opportunities to practice working on subject and style appropriate for public art. Perhaps Winifred Knights already felt uncomfortable with the sub-genre Decorative Painting and, uncertain, sacrificed engagement with the viewer to style. However, such a shortcoming was not noticed in the *Evening Standard*, of 19th February 1920, when the reviewer commented on style and subject:

the efforts of the rising generation in what may be called orthodox art are to be seen to advantage at the Grafton Galleries...To a layman Miss W.M. Knights seems to have the most intelligent idea of the conditions of decorative painting...her complete panel, representing apparently a female evangelist to mill-hands in the dinner-hour, shows a nice idea of how to build up a solid composition in flat tones.²⁷³

The critic P.G. Konody, took a similar approach in his review for *The Observer*, drawing modern life subject-matter and style together. He compares Knights with another entrant for the Rome Prize, saying that:

of the four artists whose designs for the decoration of a building met with the approval of the judges, Miss W. M. Knights and Mr G.C.L. Underwood would appear to stand the best chance of success in the final competition, with the odds slightly in favour of Miss Knights. Both of them follow the tendency towards primitive simplification and direct expressiveness which is so much in vogue among the present generation of Slade students...Miss Knights has wisely chosen a subject taken from modern, every-day life, with an equally modern setting of factories and workmen's dwellings.²⁷⁴

Turning back to 1919, James Wilkie won joint first prize with Knights in the Summer Composition Competition (he was also a finalist, with Knights, for the 1920 Rome Prize). His *Reconstruction: A Horse and Cart with figures in a Sandpit* (UCL Art Museum, **plate 30**) is surely a metaphoric

²⁷³ *The Evening Standard* (19th February 1920).

²⁷⁴ Konody continues that, in contrast to Knights, Underwood 'has tried to rival the Primitives on their own ground in painting an 'Entombment' with a lunette showing the 'Adoration.' Naturally, Miss Knights' design impresses one as the more sincere and original of the two, since it is based on the intelligently adapted principles of quattrocentist art...He furthermore had to contend with the difficulties of dramatic action... [avoided by] Miss Knights's choice of a simple subject...Miss Knights reveals a subtle refinement in her colour arrangement which is not to be found in her most dangerous rival's work.' P.J. Konody, *The Observer* (22nd February 1920).

reference to post-war reconstruction. Wilkie's men at rest pay court to Decorative Painting in their stilled action (particularly an old man sitting to the left and a young man standing in front of the horse). But with other men digging, and a central work-horse flanked by cart and wheelbarrow, it is, unlike *Village Street: Mill-Hands Conversing*, essentially a genre scene in the Victorian tradition of according dignity to outdoor labour. Interestingly, Wilkie's *Deluge*, dated 1920, showing the Ark's interior, was also too busy to qualify as a Decorative Painting, undoubtedly one reason it did not win the Rome Prize. But, comparing *Village Street* with *Reconstruction*, Wilkie's intentions are clearer: to show labour; also, to contrast youth and age in the old man sitting, exhausted, and the young man standing, relaxed, an optimistic gendered image for the early post-war period. In Knights' painting the woman in a red jacket is trying to press her point, but her open hands suggest her efforts lack force. In the painting other women are passive, some slumped, at best mildly curious, and there is no indication of support to this fellow woman. What is the artist striving to communicate about women's efforts, less than one year after the WWI Armistice? It is not clear, although the woman in red may be a preacher (or perhaps agitating workers to demand higher wages). But her difficulty in pressing her point, to a man, is evident.

Winifred Knights' central concern was with making work, a point made by her son.²⁷⁵ She was not consciously a feminist or active politically, so that gendered material is sometimes apparent only upon close examination. For instance, in *Ludlow Fair and Cattle Market* differences between representations of modernity (the gasometers) and tradition (the fairground tent) are at least as obvious as those between different types of women, gypsies and paying visitors to the fair, as I suggested earlier. Yet gender-specific concerns are a common thread linking all her work. Writing in *Representing Women*, in a chapter titled 'Memoirs of an Ad Hoc Art Historian', Linda Nochlin talks about the young women art students she encountered in 1970 at Womanhouse, California, an exhibition and performance space run by young women in a disused mansion. She contrasts Womanhouse with her own very different life:

in the works on view in the rickety 'domestic' setting, the aggressive emphasis on the representation of women's bodies as well as the sense of the unrelenting oppressiveness of women's lives was novel and disturbing...Yet as a Vassar woman and a seasoned professional, I was surprised at the unremitting fascination with domesticity and sexuality

²⁷⁵ The artist's son John Monnington stated that Knights considered herself 'an Artist' even when she was a mother. Conversation with John Monnington, 26th October 2011.

that marked the work on view and surprised too to find that women art students actually needed so much support and encouragement to do their work.²⁷⁶

Knights' narratives also address female agency. Ranging from confident sexual yearning in *The Wise and Foolish Virgins* and its disappearance into passivity in the *Goblin Market* tondo, for instance, the work reveals some of the insecurity that Nochlin saw in the lives of young women artists working in the Womanhouse project. Knights' insecurity, and the uncertainty of women of her generation, surfaces in *Village Street: Mill-Hands Conversing* and also in her later work, evidenced by the passive women in *The Marriage at Cana* (c.1923). She often lacked confidence in her painting and her difficulties in completing work, both in the 1920s and in later years, are a refrain in her letters,²⁷⁷ a connection to Nochlin's observation, so much later in the century, that women artists needed encouragement.

Many successful women painters have focused almost exclusively on the subjects of women, the family and domestic contexts. Factors determining their choices include easy access to female models in friends and family, issues of propriety in venturing beyond the domestic environment (particularly in the nineteenth century), and a natural affinity with such 'feminine' subject-matter.²⁷⁸ Berthe Morisot, who painted *The Cradle* (1872, Musée d'Orsay), depicting the artist's sister with her baby, is an example of this focus. Victorian artist Henrietta Ward (1832-1924) exhibited '*God Save the Queen*' at the Royal Academy in 1857.²⁷⁹ The work shows a mother and children at the piano as they learn the national anthem. This artist's later historical images such as *First Interview of the Divorced Empress Josephine with the King of Rome* (1870, private collection) also concentrate on domestic contexts, her *Queen Mary Quitting Stirling Castle* (1864, location unknown) depicting the Queen as 'tall and erect [and]...dignified' beside James' cradle,²⁸⁰ surely generated contemporaneous viewers' sympathy as it was well known this was Mary's last sight of her son.²⁸¹ Vanessa Bell's oeuvre largely comprises images of women, women's leisure, for example *Studland Beach* (1912, Tate Collection), and interiors such *A Conversation* (1913-

²⁷⁶ Linda Nochlin, *Representing women* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999), 31-32.

²⁷⁷ For instance, in 1946 while staying in Argyll, Scotland, Knights wrote that she was working again, but that it was hard after so long, and the rain made her 'lazy'. Letter from Winifred Knights to Aunt Florence, dated Friday 20th 1946.

²⁷⁸ For these points see, for example, Deborah Cherry, *Painting Women* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993) and Linda Nochlin, 'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?' [1971], in Linda Nochlin, *Women, Art and Power and Other Essays* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989), 145-178.

²⁷⁹ The location of *God Save the Queen* is unknown. The engraving is illustrated in Cherry, *Painting Women*, Plate 14.

²⁸⁰ Cherry, *ibid*, 193. The painting's location is unknown but the engraving is illustrated as Plate 38, *ibid*.

²⁸¹ Victorian artist Elizabeth Thompson (Lady Butler), who specialised in battle scenes, is a notable exception to the generality I describe. Her paintings include *After the Roll Call* (1874, Royal Collection).

1916, Courtauld Gallery), while Gwen John's work is further demonstration of the idea of the woman artist, female protagonist and interior (for instance, see *The Student*, 1903-1904, Manchester Art Gallery).

Other women's art has had a broader focus, while still concentrating on female subjects: Evelyn de Morgan (1855-1919) chose outdoor, classical settings for paintings such as *Ariadne in Naxos* (1877, de Morgan Foundation), while in early twentieth-century Germany Kathe Kollwitz focused on women and children living in desperate poverty. But, considering that 'Woman', as a principle, to be envied for her procreative power, feared for her dangerous sexuality, or fetishised for her beauty, has haunted the art of men since the Bronze Age, forming its dominant themes and images'²⁸² it is perhaps not so much the focus on women that is notable in the work of women artists, as the way they combine this with particular treatment of the female form. Such treatment can avoid overt sexualisation and objectification. Close attention to the examples that I have given above illustrates my point as the female form is not depicted as a passive object waiting for the male gaze, with Evelyn de Morgan's *Ariadne in Naxos* an obvious exception.

Against this background what is notable about the expression of female agency in Winifred Knights' paintings? I have already described how the representation of women set in private space was a common subject for artists such as Vanessa Bell and Gwen John. For her gender and period Knights is unusual in her integration of the female form into multi-figure narratives set in public space, a response perhaps generated by the greater presence of women in the public sphere during and after World War One. But the self-belief she depicts is often fragile. A female agency not bolstered by the private space, it is instead exposed to sexual threat, war and to modern working conditions, shown by *Village Street: Mill-Hands Conversing*. If the artist's vision falters at all, and I think it does, this is partly due to the challenge in figuring women's part-independence, part insecurity, within narrative painting designed for the public sphere (the unfamiliar size of the canvas for *Village Street: Mill-Hands Conversing* was probably an additional difficulty, a point raised earlier). There are isolated examples of women artists in the inter-war period who combined great talent, motherhood and single-minded determination to focus on art production. Barbara Hepworth is one example. But concentration on a career and wholehearted belief in its trajectory was not easy, in the inter-war years. Winifred Knights fits this profile. Her *Village Street: Mill-Hands Conversing* demonstrates how in art as well as life she is periodically forceful, periodically uncertain. For instance, the confident artistic touch shown in the painting's

²⁸²Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, *Reclaiming Female Agency* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2005), 11.

mill buildings and landscape beyond stutters into uncertainty in her representations of women in the foreground, where they are mildly interested, unsuccessfully arguing. Perhaps the uncertainty emerged because of a feeling she should concentrate on decoration, a sub-genre that did not easily meet her needs, particularly at a large scale. Indeed, the viewer cannot easily choose whether to identify with the central, active female or her slumped women listeners. The image, then, is the defining example for the argument that Knights' uncertainty is sometimes expressed in artwork as well as biography.

Her artistic uncertainty is therefore a painterly equivalent to the difficulties of asserting self, of being forceful, in the post-war years. With the slumped listeners, mildly curious passer-by and mid-ground female nag the work is almost an anti-feminist statement, reinforcing the gendered status-quo. During the early post-war period of fractious labour relations, and against continuing revolution in Russia,²⁸³ the painting's politics also perhaps suggest disquiet with regard to group (or proletarian), action.²⁸⁴ If this explains *Village Street* at all, and I think it does, for reviewers it was predominantly a successful composition and representation of modern life, as noted in contemporary reviews. Completed a year later, *The Deluge* is the topic of my next chapter. Despite the undoubted merits of narrative, emotion, and form in the works I have analysed throughout this chapter, *The Deluge* stands out and shows that Winifred Knights' painting should be taken very seriously. Executed when the artist was only twenty-one it also demonstrates the artist's precocious facility, as has the work examined in Chapter One.

²⁸³ For labour relations see: Charles Loch Mowat, *Britain between the Wars 1918-1940* (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd. 1955), 24; David Peters Corbett, *The Modernity of English Art* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 60.

²⁸⁴ Knights expresses similar distrust of community in *The Deluge*.

Chapter Two. *The Deluge*

Winifred Knights' *The Deluge* in the Tate Collection is dated 1920. The painting is 152.4 x 183 cm and at this scale the viewer must both stand back from the canvas and move to look closely in order to appreciate scale, drama and tiny narrative details. *The Deluge* (plate 31) is a scene of utter desperation as men, women and children run from the Flood, according to Genesis sent to punish Man for his sins.²⁸⁵ In the painting's background buildings disappear as the water rises. In the foreground one young woman (in long brown skirt, grey coat and red blouse) pauses to glance back at the waters. Tall, with long, lean face, severely neat hair and strong bare feet she is the pivot of the image. She stands close to the viewer, as if at the front of a stage, like a remnant of a Greek chorus. She is part of the narrative, yet also witness and commentator. As dawning understanding of inevitable destruction momentarily disables the instinct for flight she draws the viewer to experience narrative and emotions figured in the painting: awareness and blindness to imminent destruction, self-interest and fear. Behind her a small frightened girl looks at the viewer, reinforcing the invitation to imaginatively inhabit such desperation. A grey concrete wall cuts through the painting's centre, close to young woman and girl and at right angles to its picture plane. Both foreground and mid-ground are organised around this dividing line. Left of the wall people flee from a broken dam, forming urgent diagonals as, intent on survival and oblivious of others, they move towards higher ground beyond the wall. Yet two women have paused. They look up together, stretching to heaven, long arms and hands embodying last futile prayers. In the mid-ground a mother, in red, and a father are pulling their daughter over the wall and out of the waters. A woman close by salutes their efforts. In the foreground family values are also represented by the maternal care of a mother cradling her baby.

To the viewer's right, beyond the wall's dividing line, self-interest dominates as men and women climb a steep grey hill. A man comes first in this Darwinian race, with a greyhound's speed ironically symbolising how instinct obscures knowledge. Following the account in Genesis, any triumph will certainly be short-lived, as 'all the high hills...were covered'.²⁸⁶ In the mid-ground, at the foot of the hill, another man represents cowardice and selfishness. He looks across the waters to a tiny woman marooned in a house-top – does he regret abandoning her? Deeper into

²⁸⁵ For account of the flood see Genesis, chapters 6-8.

²⁸⁶ The motif of a steep hill surely derives from Genesis, Chapter 7, 'And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills that were under the whole heaven, were covered'. In addition, a medieval stained glass panel in Canterbury Cathedral shows Lot's wife petrified while Lot and his children hurry up a steep hill.

the picture space more hopeless efforts are represented by three minute people clambering onto a remnant of land, now an 'island' in deep water. Beyond the group strips of plough-land and pasture are marooned in the waters, ironic signs of plans for the next season. The artist adapted the motif from the background to her watercolour *Leaving the Munitions Works* (1919, 27 x 32 cm, private collection, **plate 32**), which was a positive representation of the home front. Neat haystacks on the same 'island' and an un-gated wall point to sudden abandonment of careful husbandry.²⁸⁷ Concrete houses, plain as barracks, to the viewer's left, look solid, but the lower floors are submerged – even modern materials cannot withstand the flood. The line of houses leads to a stark grey and brown ark, out of reach for all refugees. Beyond are tidy walls of a deserted hill-farming community, with below more dwellings, almost engulfed. The Ark, with its simple, undecorated design, is more like a boat requisitioned by the navy than a haven for Noah and his family. Contrary to the specifications recorded in Genesis, it has no visible, welcoming door (although it is presumably already full of Noah, his wife, family and animals).²⁸⁸

The colours are sombre, overall: steely grey, ochre, khaki brown. Similarly sober colouration dominated some of the works in the Nation's War Paintings Exhibition, at the Royal Academy from 12th December 1919 to 7th February 1920, and perhaps these influenced Knights' choices for her image of impending disaster. For instance, C.R.W. Nevinson's *Paths of Glory* (1918), *After a Push* (also known as *Shell Holes*, 1917), and *Reliefs at Dawn* (1917), all of which are now in the Imperial War Museum Collection.²⁸⁹ *Reliefs at Dawn* is executed in shades of brown, while greys dominate *After a Push*, with brown in the muddy shell hole near the surface of the picture plane. Knights would have seen the same artist's large *Harvest of Battle* (1919, Imperial War Museum, also known as IWM) at the same exhibition. The painting is predominantly monochrome in colour. The sober palettes used in Wyndham Lewis' *A Battery Shelled* and Paul Nash's *The Menin Road* (both 1919, IWM) are also noticeable. Both paintings were shown in the exhibition.

Knights' palette of greys, ochre and brown makes touches of red stand out, on the young woman's blouse, the small girl's dress, on the mother pulling her child to safety and on the dress

²⁸⁷ Knights has taken the motif of haystacks from her much calmer *Village Street: Mill-Hands Conversing*.

²⁸⁸ For the biblical account see Genesis, Chapter 6.

²⁸⁹ *Reliefs at Dawn* and *After a Push* were also shown at the Leicester Galleries in March 1918. The exhibition was titled Exhibition of Pictures of War by C. R.W. Nevinson. The artist exhibited *Paths of Glory* on the same occasion. Aware that official war artists were prohibited from exhibiting images that depicted dead bodies, Nevinson attached a strip of brown paper diagonally across this work, inscribed with the words Censored in capital letters. *Paths of Glory* has the same sober, almost monochrome colouration as the other paintings I have described. If Knights attended the exhibition the painting would certainly have attracted her attention. For the exhibition history of Nevinson's paintings see Michael J.T.C. Walsh, *C.R.W. Nevinson: This Cult of Violence* (New Haven and London: Yale, 2002), 20, 208-209.

of a girl who looks back at the rising seas. The red links girls and women (the artist had used red in a similar way in her *Village Street: Mill-Hands Conversing* the previous year, but with red set against a warm brown palette). Red is not present in the WWI paintings described above. In this instance Knights was probably influenced by Nicholas Poussin, who used orange in a similar fashion to Knights' red in his *Winter-The Deluge* (1660-1664, the Louvre). The orange is used to draw the viewer's attention to important characters, for instance the child being helped to safety by his parents.²⁹⁰

In *The Deluge* faces are pale, showing fear. Knights has painted faces, fingernails, clothes and feet in great detail, but, influenced by contemporaneous modernism, other areas are simpler. The steep hill is, therefore, unvaried in colour and texture and not marked by feet scrambling for safety. The viewer can see elements of Vorticism, with early Italian art, in water flowing over the broken dam like half-molten iron. Below it is turning to tubular, corrugated waves. Mid-ground water and waves, water and foreground land, are joined abruptly, like collage pieces. The stylized (although less ordered) mud in Wyndham Lewis' *A Battery Shelled* and the waves in *Scene from the Life of St Mark* by Paolo Veneziano (1345), in San Marco, Venice, are among possible influences.²⁹¹ Knights has shown a brief break in the rain, and late afternoon light from front left touches faces and accentuates the wall's dividing line. Men and women cast long shadows, stressing the urgency of flight as night approaches. A tiny bar of light on the horizon could be a symbol of the redemption to come for Noah, after forty days and nights, but for the present a broad diagonal shadow in the mid-ground shows the imminence of the next torrential rains. There is harsh shading on faces, which picks out fear and highlights bone structure. But shading on clothes gives weight and emphasises effort as well as waning day. Knights has not used aerial perspective's softened glow, but, influenced by early Renaissance art, used her detailed background of fields and boundary walls to mark doomed vestiges of a way of life.²⁹² Other features combine Renaissance with conventions taken from History Painting and artists such as Poussin: a high horizon to focus attention on the foreground and buildings placed as staging posts to take the eye into the painting's depth.²⁹³ Some other British painters employed high

²⁹⁰ Nevinson's *La Mitrailieuse* (1915, Tate Collection) was on show at the Leicester Galleries from September to October 1916, in Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings of War by C.R.W. Nevinson (Late Private RAMC). The painting is predominantly monochrome in colour, with the red of a French soldier's breeches standing out as an area of strong colour. However, there is no evidence that Knights knew this painting. For information on Nevinson's exhibitions see Walsh, *C.R.W. Nevinson*, 208-209.

²⁹¹ Knights would have known the former. She probably knew the latter through illustration.

²⁹² This detailed representation is almost certainly informed by early Renaissance and Pre-Raphaelite painting.

²⁹³ Thus in my view contradicting Alan Powers' suggestion that *The Deluge* 'achieve[s] an almost Vorticist flat geometry'. Alan Powers, 'Public Places and Private Faces - Narrative and Romanticism in English

horizon lines and minutely detailed backgrounds during the years after WWI, using these conventions to depict the magnitude of wartime suffering and destruction. Nevinson's *The Harvest of Battle* is one example.

Rhythms of shapes and colours provide coherence and unity to the pictorial field, while the many diagonal shapes generate a sense of dynamism, something entirely lacking in the artist's *Village Street: Mill-Hands Conversing*. The steep grey diagonal hill to the viewer's right mirrors triangular bodies running towards the right, with grey and brown repeated across the groups. A different pattern, of rectangular ochre and grey buildings, lies behind. The neat rhythm of rounded haystacks (ochre again) is replicated by distant hills, whose rich brown links background with the costume of the young woman in the extreme foreground, who looks back towards the waters. The patterns of gesture are similar to dance, although more urgent: bending to hurry up the hill, arms stretched in fear or in relief, like the expressive dance steps in one of Wyndham Lewis' *Kermesse* watercolours (1910, Yale Center for British Art, **plate 36**). Yet the woman in the foreground, who looks back at the waters, employs her hands differently. Her desperate prayer is shown by the *orans* posture (**plate 37**) as she appears to ward off the future while she looks back to the past.²⁹⁴ Or - she can be read as the soloist in a grim dance of death. Knights used repetition (poses, the shapes of buildings) in her relatively emotionless *Village Street: Mill-Hands Conversing*, but in *The Deluge* repetition and decorative pattern work for the narrative. Colour, posture and one-directional movement therefore provide superficial unity to desperate refugees. But on closer examination terror has fractured this 'community' into family units and individual focus on self-preservation, ironically underlining the emotional isolation of individuals in a crowd. Note, for example, the profile of a man wearing a dark waistcoat to the viewer's left - his neck muscles are tense and his mouth open as he looks ahead, determined on flight. In the foreground a woman's body takes the same diagonal. Her nose is similar to the man's, but her neck is soft, as, instead of looking ahead, she leans to her cradled baby. Contrasting shapes combined with uniformly sombre colours underline physical and emotional distance between present and former lives (as well as physical distance from safety in the Ark).

In the introduction to this thesis I suggested that the Decorative Painting associated with the British School at Rome did not suit Winifred Knights' needs. In Chapter One I reiterated the point

Mural Painting 1900-1935', in John Christian (ed.), *The Last Romantics* (London: Lund Humphries in Association with Barbican Art Gallery, 1989), 68.

²⁹⁴ The *orans* prayer posture is represented in Byzantine art. Examples include: a sixth-century mosaic of St Apollinaire in St Apollinare-in-Classe, Classe, Ravenna and the ninth-century Byzantine Virgin known as the *Greek Madonna* in Santa Maria della Porta, Ravenna. Knights has adapted the motif, for the hands are close together, unlike early Christian prototypes.

with reference to her *Village Street...*, when the struggle to produce a work fitted to the idea of public art worked against communication of the artist's private experience. Knights also struggled to complete a public artwork when she painted her *Marriage at Cana* in Italy (c.1923, Te Papa Tongarewa Museum, Wellington, New Zealand). However, the visual evidence from *The Deluge* suggests that in this particular instance Winifred Knights was comfortable with her style and not intimidated by the relatively large size of the canvas. Perhaps this was because she had something urgent to say about her experience and had been furnished with a well-known subject that facilitated connection between her art and its spectators. Perhaps, also, this was due to her combination of decoration with elements of Vorticism, the style therefore suiting her needs of a narrative concentrated on trauma, community and family, focused through the pivotal image of the central young woman. The next section will outline the history of the Rome Prize in Decorative Painting, relating this to early Italian art and 'moderate' modernism in the 1920s. Examining the image more closely and setting *The Deluge* in its historical context, I will then consider how the painting represents and reinforces individual and public interests. I will argue that, although drawing on historical versions of the biblical story, *The Deluge* relates to experience during and in the aftermath of WWI. The artist worked to represent a catastrophic event that fractures community into frightened family groups alongside men focused on survival, a painting that suited her own needs as well as satisfying viewers in the years following the First World War.

The Deluge was Winifred Knights' winning entry for the Rome Prize in Decorative Painting, tenable for three years. The prize gave the winner a studio with living accommodation at the British School at Rome and a stipend of £250 per year.²⁹⁵ The British School at Rome was founded in 1901, modelled on both the British School at Athens (established in 1884) and on national academies in Rome such as the French Academy.²⁹⁶ From its inception the School was intended to promote "the study of Greek and Graeco-Roman archaeology" and to be "in the most comprehensive sense, a School of Roman and Italian studies", including "every period of the

²⁹⁵ T.P. Wiseman, *A Short History of the British School at Rome* (London: The British School at Rome, 1990), 14. Rome Scholars were obliged to produce regular work in order to retain the Prize, as testified by a letter from Knights to her mother on 28th May 1921. Knights' Letters, UCL Special Collections. All further references to letters in this chapter are to the same collection, unless otherwise stated.

Scholars worked much on their own, their work critiqued irregularly by visiting tutors, including David Young Cameron (also known as D.Y. Cameron), George Clausen and John Singer Sargent).

²⁹⁶ The British Gold Medal Travelling Scholarship to Rome pre-dated the BSR. The Scholarship was instituted in 1771 and the British Academy of Arts in Rome was its host. By 1901 the British Academy of Arts in Rome was 'essentially a life class.' Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *The British School at Rome, One Hundred Years* (London: The British School at Rome, 2007), 148.

language and literature, antiquities, art, and history of Rome and Italy”.²⁹⁷ However, funding for art students was only agreed in April 1911, when the 1851 Great Exhibition Commissioners, administrators of profits from the Great Exhibition, agreed to finance three Rome Prizes, in Architecture, Decorative Painting and Sculpture.²⁹⁸ The first Rome Prize in Decorative Painting was awarded to Colin Gill in 1913 and the second to Jack M.B. Benson in 1914.²⁹⁹ Gill and Benson’s studies were interrupted by war service and the Prize was suspended for the duration of the First World War. The School closed from 1916, and the Prize was re-instituted only in 1920, when Winifred Knights became the first woman prize-winner. Although the award was, therefore, relatively new in 1920, the subject-matter of ‘the deluge’ was appropriately serious for a Rome Prize, whose very name drew on associations with the French Prix de Rome and high art. Knights’ choices were inevitably shaped by competition conditions: a required size of 60 x 72 ins (152.4 x 183 cm); length of time to complete the work (competition rules allowed eight weeks); and subject.³⁰⁰ A need to demonstrate proficiency in figure drawing is demonstrated by the nudes of the other finalists, that is Arthur Outlaw, Leon Underwood and James Wilkie (**plate 33, plate 34 and plate 35**). However, the range of interpretations within the set subject shows that expectations were not narrow and Knights was, then, able to produce an image that is dynamic in line,³⁰¹ simple in form with some surprising details, and has a narrative charge that, although unresolved, is successful in drawing the viewer into empathy with the emotions expressed. Contemporary reviews in the press did not connect the painting to WWI, although an association was perhaps implied by one reviewer, who said that ‘the scene is dominated by terror of the waters, and the group is splitting out in sharp lines as though there had been an explosion.’³⁰² Indeed, evidence shows that connections between ‘the deluge’ and war were taken for granted in

²⁹⁷ Quotations are taken from ‘Clauses I and II of scheme for proposed School approved by Provisional Committee, 25th October 1899’. In Wiseman, *Short History*, 2.

²⁹⁸ Some funding had previously been provided for architecture students by RIBA. From 1919 an anonymous donation provided funds for a Rome Scholarship in Engraving. Wallace-Hadrill, *The British School*, 59. The Commissioners also provided finance to convert the pavilion designed by Edward Lutyens for the Rome International Exhibition into permanent premises for the School. Wallace-Hadrill, *ibid*, 40-41.

²⁹⁹ For lists of Rome Prize winners see: Wiseman, *Short History*, 26-29; Wallace-Hadrill, *British School*, 210-223.

³⁰⁰ *Catalogue to the British School at Rome Exhibition of Works submitted in Open Examinations for the Rome Scholarships in Architecture, Sculpture, Decorative Painting and Engraving and for the Henry Jarvis Scholarship in Architecture Together with the Words Submitted for the Final Competitions for the Rome Scholarships Awarded in 1920* (Royal Academy Galleries, Burlington House, February 1921), 5.

³⁰¹ Alan Powers, in John Christian (ed.), *The Last Romantics*, 68.

³⁰² *Manchester Guardian* (11th February 1921). All reviews in the thesis are taken from *Scraps: Newspaper Cuttings Provided by The General Press Cutting Association Ltd.*, a *Scrapbook* of reviews of Knights’ work, unpublished work (compiled by Knights’ mother, Gertrude Knights). UCL Special Collections.

the early twentieth century. A link was made, for instance, here somewhat optimistically, in a speech given by Lloyd George in 1914. He said that the War 'is bringing a new outlook to all classes. The great flood of luxury and sloth which had submerged the land is receding, and a new Britain is appearing'.³⁰³ I shall conclude that association with national and personal war trauma on the home front is a persuasive explanation for the image's frozen instant of fear.³⁰⁴ Knights' image is therefore informed by artistic, biblical and literary sources associated with trauma as well as post-war circumstances, her particular use of modern style an apt vehicle for picturing the trauma. The gaze of the solitary female, close to the picture plane, is instrumental in drawing the viewer to awareness of imminent destruction. Knights has taken her own features as blueprint for the figure, as is clear from photographs of the artist (**plate 1 and plate 2**). Therefore, the artist herself looks back at the trauma she has re-created, emphasising her involvement and understanding. Taking a biblical interpretation her understanding is simply that she is damned. But looking more widely at the post-war context in which the image was painted, and considering it as a metaphor for wartime destruction, the figure's hesitation is intriguing: does her awareness include full understanding of the enormity of destruction, of what it means for post-war society, or of how to act in the new circumstances after the catastrophe?³⁰⁵

During the early post-war period (1918-1920) there was no settled response to the War (it was not yet viewed as a great mistake, for instance), and my analysis will show that *The Deluge* and its unresolved narrative is a powerful exploration of suffering on the home front, of individual as well as collective war trauma and of a gendered response to suffering at this historical juncture. Knights would have known how the Church of England favoured war.³⁰⁶ She was well acquainted with the Bible. She would have seen the beginnings of commemorative practices between 1918-1920. My analysis will therefore include issues of Christian culture in the post-war context. In view of this Christian heritage, and including Psalm 23, I will additionally offer counter-readings to the main argument, suggesting that the painting may represent survivors, not the damned. Drawing evidence and argument together, I will conclude that the image can best be understood as an

³⁰³ Lloyd George, 19th September 1914, later published in *The Great War*, 14, quoted in Arthur Marwick [1965], *The Deluge* (London: Macmillan Press, 1991), 89.

³⁰⁴ See anonymous reviewer: 'Miss Knights has shown a deluge that looks like something petrified', in 'Art 'Way Down East' Whitechapel Has No Use for Cubist Puzzles', *Evening News* (16th June 1923).

³⁰⁵ Arthur Marwick writes: 'Of course, when people talked of 'The Deluge', as I do in the title of this book, they were thinking of the shattering effects of the war on an existing, and on the whole happy, state of life'. In Marwick, *The Deluge*, 49.

³⁰⁶ See for example, Callum G. Brown, *Religion and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2006), 89-90.

important and successful figuration of partial understanding in 1920, at a transitional moment (for woman artist and her public) between recent war and later settled commemorative practices.

The recent war inevitably overshadowed the period. In the art world there was general retrenchment from pre-war avant-garde experimentation. The immediate post-war years were uneasy, including: demobilisation, which side-lined women's part in employment; the 1918-1919 influenza epidemic, and inflation. Strikes (London police strikes in 1918 and 1919 and a general railway strike in 1919) signalled difficult worker/employer relations as well as declining living standards, while the Clyde Dockers' Strike in January 1919 generated a fear of revolution.³⁰⁷ There was some recognition of war trauma, and construction of war memorials in Britain provided focal points for reflection in the aftermath of War.³⁰⁸ The Nation's War Paintings Exhibition (1919-1920) and the Imperial War Museum's first exhibition (1920) were further reminders of recent conflict.³⁰⁹ Many works on show were documentary or offered consolation. *The Deluge's* connection to war is, in contrast, neither documentary nor directly consolatory, for in rising waters and the Ark out of reach of the damned it patently demonstrates responses to the biblical story. Yet the painting plainly connects to the post-war world: in modern costume, skirts, trousers and belts; in simple concrete shapes of buildings; in pictorial echo of a trench in the lower flooded area, bounded on one side by a weir and on the other by a wall, a similar view to the trench in John Nash's *Over the Top* (1918, IWM).³¹⁰

In *The Deluge* relationships of form and colour are used successfully to communicate the narrative to the viewer (although the outcome of the narrative remains unresolved). Knights' winning entry for the Slade Summer Composition Prize of 1919, *Village Street: Mill-Hands Conversing*, had, by contrast, followed demands for decorative painting that emphasised relationships of colour and form, with the narrative subordinated to these considerations.

³⁰⁷ Charles Loch Mowat, *Britain between the Wars 1918-1940* (London: Methuen and Co. 1955), 23-40.

³⁰⁸ For war trauma see, for example, W.H.R. Rivers, 'The Repression of War Experience', paper given to the Section of Psychiatry of the Royal Society of Medicine, 4th December 1917, published by the *Lancet* in February 1918 and in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine* 11 (Section of Psychiatry, 1918), scanned copy of original print version at NCBI Resources:

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2066211/>, accessed 21st December 2014.

For war memorials see the War Memorials Archive (The United Kingdom National Inventory of War Memorials). It lists 40,511 WWI memorials, including for example, crosses, plaques and stained glass windows. However, many of these were placed after 1920. See War memorial Archive at <http://www.greatwar.co.uk/organizations/ukniwm.htm> accessed 21st December 2014 and Imperial War Museum, War Memorials Search, at <http://www.ukniwm.org.uk/server/>, accessed 21st December 2014.

³⁰⁹ Both brought together images from two wartime schemes, one commissioned by the British War Memorials Committee and the other by the Imperial War Museum. See Paul Gough, *A Terrible Beauty* (Bristol: Sansom, 2009), 11-12.

³¹⁰ There is a boundary wall enclosing allotments to the right in Knights' *Leaving the Munitions Works* (1919, private collection), another possible source.

Decorative paintings were commonly integrated with public space, as in Puvis de Chavannes' *Winter* (1889-1893) in the Hotel de Ville, Paris. In Britain decorative painting was associated with images where pleasing and rhythmic arrangements of form and colour dominated narrative, as Emma Chambers has argued, and an 'appeal to the eye' instead of the 'appeal to the intellect' of History Painting.³¹¹ Augustus John's cartoon for *Lyric Fantasy* (c.1912, private collection) shows just these characteristics.³¹² Thomas Monnington's *Allegory* (1924-1926, Tate Collection, **plate 73**), painted when Monnington, who married Winifred Knights, was studying at the British School at Rome, also subordinates narrative to rhythm and surface pattern. But the story of the Flood in Genesis dramatises important points about destruction and redemption, for the elect (and for Christians anticipates the promise of the Resurrection). The contemporary viewer, then, might expect to see a painting that combined Decorative Painting with some of the tropes of History Painting: a serious, thought-provoking depiction of individuals in extremis, for instance.

There are many historical examples of such treatments of the theme, including Poussin's *Winter - The Deluge* (1660-1664, the Louvre, **plate 40**) which includes an object lesson in unselfishness as a father helps his child to safety. Of the entrants to the Rome Prize of 1920 only Arthur Outlaw and Winifred Knights make any real attempt to combine Decorative with History Painting, by suggesting the threat of cataclysmic rains, fear and misguided belief in a future (for the majority of humanity). Both artists make clear connections to the early twentieth century: Knights with her concrete buildings; Outlaw with his dominating, sinister Ark, more submarine than boat. In Outlaw's version (**plate 33**) a wide band of rain is already coming down, to the left of the image, while in the mid foreground cows graze and fields are tended – normality preserved. Towards the right foreground, though, a woman kneels, desperately praying. But, undermining the clarity of his narrative, Outlaw has placed another woman walking away from the Ark, a bundle on her head. She faces the viewer and is strangely calm and composed, given the circumstances. It is not clear what the meanings of this figure are. In contrast, James Wilkie depicted the interior of the Ark, with men tending to animals while women look on. Noah, naked, reclines to the left, perhaps an anticipation of his later drunkenness, as recounted in Genesis. James Wilkie has demonstrated his proficiency in depicting the nude, perhaps to please the Rome Prize judges. Yet the painting is essentially a genre scene: a cow and goat dominate the foreground, and Wilkie has paid great attention to the Ark's complex wooden structure, with some solid beams and, in

³¹¹ Emma Chambers, 'Redefining History Painting in the Academy: The Summer Composition Prize and the Slade School of Fine Art, 1898-1922', *Visual Culture in Britain* 6, no. 1 (2005), 92-95.

³¹² The cartoon for *Lyric Fantasy* is illustrated in John Christian (ed.), *The Last Romantics* (London: Lund Humphries and the Barbican, 1989), 72.

the foreground, flimsy pine beginning to break away. In Leon Underwood's *The Deluge* the viewer's eye is drawn to the semi-nudes that dominate the foreground. Underwood's feeling for decorative design is clear, for the central nudes raise their hands to heaven in unison and the woman to the viewer's right poses in a fine contrapposto. But, it is not clear from the composition whether the men and women are preparing to enter the Ark behind them, or, alternatively, whether the painting is set after the Flood with arms raised to give thanks for survival. That the painting lacks a clear narrative (important to History Painting) is suggested by a review of the finalists' work for the Rome Prize. J.B. wrote, in the *Manchester Guardian* on 11th February 1921: 'Mr Underwood's design of people preparing to swim the floods, with little show of water, looked vague and piecemeal beside it [that is Winifred Knights' *Deluge*].' Of all the finalists' efforts, Knights' *The Deluge* was the sole example to combine Decorative Painting and aspects of History Painting convincingly. Of course, a predominantly decorative treatment of such a disaster might have seemed inappropriate in the immediate post-war years. For the Rome Prize judges it was enough of a decoration to win the Prize, yet its narrative is not subordinated to the demands of decoration, the image signalling unexpended tension, repressed trauma and partial understanding.³¹³

Through providing the opportunity for artists to work in Italy and study early Italian painting the BSR demonstrated confidence that the models for large-scale public art were early Italian artists such as Piero, Massacio and Giotto, with their successful integration of fresco with architecture. In Britain use of an early Italian model was well established, having been popularised in the mid nineteenth century by decoration of the Palace of Westminster, where various forms of fresco were attempted, and at the same period by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. The Society of Painters in Tempera, formed in 1901 and renamed the Society of Mural Decorators and Painters in Tempera in 1912, with its 'three volumes of published proceedings, extending to 1935', reflects the same interest in the early twentieth century.³¹⁴ In an essay of 1913 that advocated mural painting Laurence Binyon made explicit links between such public art and the painting of Sandro Botticelli, with rhythm and a non-narrative content drawn, as Botticelli's, from 'the fibre of his imaginative vision'.³¹⁵ Demonstrating a similar interest in Italian art, the BSR set a choice of

³¹³ Clare Willson suggests that it was later in the 1920's and into the 1930s that 'censorship' obliged decorative painters to eschew 'the horrors of war' in their paintings. In Clare Willson, *Mural Painting in England, 1840-1940* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), 389.

³¹⁴ Alan Powers, 'Public Places and Private Faces- Narrative and Romanticism in English Mural Painting 1900-1935', in John Christian (ed.), *The Last Romantics*, 64.

³¹⁵ Laurence Binyon, 'The Art of Botticelli, An Essay in Pictorial Criticism' [1913], quoted in David Fraser Jenkins, 'Slade School Symbolism', in Christian (ed.), *Last Romantics*, 75.

medium for the 1920 prize: oil or tempera.³¹⁶ While Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood painters admired early Italian art, their interests did not extend to Piero. In contrast, he was a key figure for artists associated with the School. Although outside the Florentine mainstream of Italian fifteenth-century art, Piero's work was known in Britain from at least the 1870s, when three of his paintings were acquired by the National Gallery, but it was in the twentieth century that his art generated wide popularity in Britain.³¹⁷ This interest was perhaps stimulated by Roger Fry's two 'superb' Cambridge University Extension class lectures on the artist, given in 1901.³¹⁸ In the lectures Fry made parallels between Piero and Puvis de Chavannes, regarding Puvis as 'the greatest decorative painter of our times'.³¹⁹ He admired Piero's approach to the particular conditions of wall painting, enabling the viewer to construct space in his imagination while conscious of the flatness of the wall, although at this date he was 'bothered by the artist's impassivity and lack of narrative feeling' (a view he later modified).³²⁰

By the 1920s, when Fry, now more focused on matters of form, published *Vision and Design*, Piero's popularity was an established fact and no longer dependent on the critic's promotion. A number of entries for the Rome Prize are clearly directly indebted to Piero (as well as to Puvis), the figure style and 'impassivity' noted by Fry obvious, for instance, in Ian Grant's entry *Figures by a Lake* (**plate 38**), which came second in the Prize competition of 1929. Knights would have known Piero's frescoes, from illustration, while working on *The Deluge* and there is influence from him, alongside contemporaneous modernism, in the ordered geometry of buildings in her painting. But, at this stage, when she had not yet encountered Piero's work at first-hand, other Italian artists seem to have been equally important. As already noted, she used some of the general features of early Renaissance art, including extreme detail in foreground and background and deep chiselling of robes with shade.³²¹ Vittore Carpaccio's *St Jerome and the Lion* (1509), a

³¹⁶ *Catalogue to the British School at Rome Exhibition of Works submitted in Open Examinations for the Rome Scholarships in Architecture, Sculpture, Decorative Painting and Engraving and for the Henry Jarvis Scholarship in Architecture Together with the Works Submitted for the Final Competitions for the Rome Scholarships Awarded in 1920, Royal Academy Galleries Burlington House, Feb 1921, Galley 6, nos. 50-53.*

³¹⁷ Caroline Elam says it is often 'assumed' that Piero was "rediscovered" in the twentieth century, but in fact he was already 'highly regarded in the mid-nineteenth century'. In Caroline Elam, 'Roger Fry and Early Italian Painting', in Christopher Green (ed.), *Art made Modern: Roger Fry's Vision of Art* (London: Merrell Holberton, 1999), 102.

³¹⁸ Caroline Elam, *Roger Fry's Journey: From the Primitives to the Post-Impressionists: The Watson Gordon Lecture 2006*, (Edinburgh: National Gallery of Scotland, 2006), 16.

³¹⁹ Roger Fry, in an unpublished lecture, 1901, quoted in Elam, *Roger Fry's Journey*, 16.

³²⁰ Elam, *Roger Fry's Journey*, 18-19.

³²¹ Knights' figures are all bare-footed, another feature of early Renaissance painting. See Piero's *The Baptism* (1450s, National Gallery) and Masaccio's *The Tribute Money* (1425-1426, Brancacci Chapel, Florence).

fresco in the Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni, Venice, was almost certainly a direct influence. The monks form diagonals as they run from the lion, a similarity to men and women running from the waters in *The Deluge*.³²² She had not visited Italy at the time, so, when looking at illustrations, would perhaps have considered how to scale up the poses to create full impact in her large *Deluge*. Sandro Botticelli's *Three Miracles of Saint Zenobius* (1445-1510, National Gallery, **plate 111**) also displays a similar energy and rush of movement to Knights' *The Deluge*. In Chapter Four I suggest that Knights knew this painting and that it may have influenced her representation of a resurrected child. However, it was only acquired by the National Gallery in 1924, as part of the Mond Bequest, and it is unlikely she knew the original in 1920. It is much less famous than the Carpaccio, and it is therefore unlikely she knew it from illustrations. But there is energy and urgency, also, with hurrying, leaning figures wearing voluminous robes in Botticelli's famous *Mystic Nativity* of 1500. The painting was acquired by the National Gallery in 1878, so Knights probably knew the work. It is only 108.6 x 74.9 cm, compared with *The Deluge*'s 152.4 x 183 cm, so, if she was influenced by the painting she needed to consider how such figures would look at a much larger scale. But with its devils emerging from rocks, angels suspended in a gold sky over the stable, and more angels hurriedly embracing the faithful, it easily draws viewers' attention.

Winifred Knights' painting was shown at the Royal Academy in early 1921, with other finalists' work for the Rome Prize.³²³ The *Liverpool Courier* described the image as 'highly decorative and unnaturalistic [sic], but very vigorous and essential'.³²⁴ The *Manchester Guardian* addressed the practical use of decorative art: 'There is no doubt that a generation equipped for public art work...will soon be asking the nation to provide them with opportunities to serve the State with their art'.³²⁵ Winifred Knights' position in regard to public art was, in the longer run, very different – the motifs that interested her came from her experiences as a girl and a woman and it appears she did not press for public art commissions. However, the *Manchester Guardian* reviewer was not, in this instance, conscious of the artistic priorities of women artists and the particular circumstances in which they worked. Other reviewers commented on the modernity of Knights'

³²² Sacha Llewellyn, 'The Deluge, 1920' in Alan Powers (ed.), *British Murals and Decorative Painting 1920-1960: Rediscoveries and New Interpretations* (London: Sansom and Company, 2013), 130.

³²³ The exhibition was titled *The British School at Rome Exhibition of Works submitted in Open Examinations for the Rome Scholarships in Architecture, Sculpture, Decorative Painting and Engraving and for the Henry Jarvis Scholarship in Architecture Together with the Words Submitted for the Final Competitions for the Rome Scholarships Awarded in 1920*.

³²⁴ *Liverpool Courier* (9th February 1921).

³²⁵ *Manchester Guardian* (11th February 1921).

work. *The Daily Sketch* considered the painting an example of 'Futurist art',³²⁶ the *Morning Post* described it as 'an extraordinarily clever adaptation of cubistic principles for realistic expression',³²⁷ and the *Jewish Guardian's* reviewer noted the 'jerky cubist composition'.³²⁸ But both *The Observer* and the *Daily News* used reviews to bring tradition and modernism together. *The Observer* reviewer stated that it was 'based on the study of the Primitives [that is early Italian art], flat in treatment, angular in design, strongly expressive of rushing movement, it has nothing in common whatever with the customary R.A. gold medal pictures.'³²⁹ *The Daily News* reviewer said that: 'it is a work influenced by many advanced artists, and at the same time shows individuality and fine craftsmanship'.³³⁰

Due to her fine craftsmanship, the clear influences in her work from early Italian painters such as Botticelli, and her biblical subject-matter, it is useful to regard Winifred Knights' work as an example of inter-war moderate modernism. Inter-war moderate modernism was a type of art that drew very clearly on the past while retaining some features of pre-war avant-garde style. It included aspects of Vorticism. *The Deluge* is a good example for the inclusion of Vorticist elements, where water looks like tubular, corrugated waves, a stylization that references the modern, machine world, as well as early Italian art. I previously linked this motif to the mud in Wyndham Lewis' *A Battery Shelled* (1919), which Winifred Knights would have seen at the Nation's War Paintings Exhibition of 1919-1920. She would have noted the machine-like men who bend to their work in Wyndham Lewis' painting, and their repetitive postures perhaps informed her work. Influenced by Futurism, pre-war Vorticism critiqued established British society, and Vorticist style combined dynamic and jagged forms, for instance in William Roberts' drawing *Two Step* (1915, Tate Collection) with its multiple viewpoints and dancer made up of cuboid forms. Wyndham Lewis' ferociously energetic dancers in his pre-war *Kermesse* watercolours are another example, seen for instance in *Kermesse*, 1910 (**plate 36**), or his grotesque, slightly sinister dancers in *Design for a Programme Cover - Kermesse*, 1912 (illustrated on page 3 of *Blast 2*, the War Number, dated 1915). They are as likely an influence on Knights' people hurrying away from the Flood as the same artist's *A Battery Shelled*, presuming that Knights knew them. After WWI Vorticism's style and social critique softened (except, perhaps, in Wyndham Lewis' writing). Paintings such as Roberts' *The Cinema* (1920, Tate Collection)

³²⁶ *Daily Sketch* (8th February 1921).

³²⁷ *Morning Post* (February 1921).

³²⁸ *Jewish Guardian* (18th February 1921).

³²⁹ *The Observer* (13th February 1921).

³³⁰ *The Daily News* (22nd February 1921).

combine elongated, tubular forms with enough naturalism for the viewer to read the images with ease. In this particular work pre-war avant-garde energy is confined to the cowboy gunfight, shown in monochrome on the cinema screen, making Roberts' use of modern style much less daring than Knights' in *The Deluge*, which was painted during the same year.³³¹

Turning to the wider context of post-WWI British art, in his survey of British art from 1900-1939 Charles Harrison says that in the 1920s British artists retreated from radical modernism.³³²

'Revisionist modernist' is a useful description when addressing changes from pre-war avant-garde interests, in modern life as well as stylistically, to artistic practice employing modern style to explore tradition and continuity.³³³ The conservative, moderate modernism of BSR painting is one version of this. In her book published in 2010 Grace Brockington talks about 'the plurality of modernisms'.³³⁴ Although Brockington's focus is the WWI period her analysis is pertinent when considering Knights' place in inter-war artistic practice, facilitating appreciation of *The Deluge*'s particular embodiment of modern style with serious contemporary concerns, and without regarding it as in any way secondary to the radical avant-garde. 'Plurality of modernisms' is a useful formulation when considering the body of work examined in this thesis, and the reviews from which I quoted above, because it gives equal weight to all forms of modern art.

My analysis now looks more closely at sources for *The Deluge* and at the context in which Winifred Knights produced the work. I then go on to offer some interpretations of the painting. The self-portrait functions within the narrative, yet is also witness and commentator, a point I made earlier. She is one who knows and understands the enormity of destruction, like the Chorus in a Greek tragedy, regardless of whether we see her as one of a group of the damned, as a lucky survivor, or even a witness set apart. The painting is itself charged with unreleased tension, the viewer uncertain how the narrative will end. Is there any chance, for instance, that the families depicted on the canvas may survive? The tension derives from the artist's experiences in WWI and her response to those experiences in war's aftermath, represented through the self-portrait, who draws the viewer to consider her predicament, to engage with the narrative and with the consequences of cataclysm. Knights recorded her reactions to the Armistice of 11th November 1918:

³³¹ The extensive literature on Vorticism and inter-war art includes: David Peters Corbett, *The Modernity of English Art* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997); Paul Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis* (New Haven and London: Yale, 2000); Charles Harrison, *English Art and Modernism 1900-1939* (London: Allen Lane, 1981).

³³² Harrison, *ibid*, 145-166, 168.

³³³ Corbett, *The modernity of English Art*, 57-58, 66-82.

³³⁴ Grace Brockington, *Above the Battlefield* (New Haven and London: Yale, 2010), 222.

last Monday...It was a glorious day. One that will be with me always, It was so wonderful to feel one with a great multitude which had in a few minutes blown away care and grief and become so joyous.

We all ran down to Trafalgar Square and stood in the crowd just bathing ourselves in the great waves of cheering and the lovely sound of St Martin's Bells, All [punctuation sic] this sounds very high-flown doesn't it. But I just wished I could do a great drawing of that day and show you how it was. I have never seen such thousands of happy eyes. I must do a futurist picture of little pairs of smiling eyes mixed up with [an] omnibus sprouting bunches of little people a man dancing the horn-pipe on a taxi-roof, showers of paper, a whisky bottle and tin-pot lids clashing. These are my impressions [punctuation throughout sic].³³⁵

Despite its dynamic modernist diagonals, *The Deluge*, completed less than two years later, has a very different mood from the picture Knights imagined in 1918, although both feature the experience of a community. Some of this difference is attributable to the context of the Rome Prize, with 'the deluge' as set subject. However, within this set subject there were a number of available choices, so that Knights' focus on trauma is important.

I have discussed stylistic influences for *The Deluge*, particularly from early Italian artists such as Botticelli. There is also a long history of representations of the story of Noah and the Flood and I will consider some possible influences here. There are a number of precedents for representing a fearful community of the 'damned' with the Ark out of reach in the distance. Knights would have known Turner's *The Deluge* (1805) which became part of the national collection in 1856 (**plate 39**). Turner placed a woman's figure to the viewer's right, close to the picture plane. Shown from the side, both beautiful and hunched over in fear, she embodies the distress shown deeper in the picture space and guides reactions to the scene through her vulnerable sexuality. Knights' frontal self-portrait is contrastingly self-confident, but the presence of the woman in Turner's painting as witness, and so close to the viewer, is likely to have influenced Knights' composition. She would have known Poussin's *Winter - The Deluge* (1660-64, the Louvre, **plate 40**) through illustrations. The father trying to save a child is a precedent for a similar group in her painting as well as Turner's. Poussin's version shows rising seas instead of a tempestuous storm, as does Knights'. Rising seas were mentioned in the biblical account (a violent storm was not mentioned in the Bible), but ignored in most later versions (such as Turner, 1805, Gericault, 1818-1820, Francis

³³⁵ Letter to Aunt Millicent, 18th November 1918. Knights' Letters, UCL Special Collections. All further references in this chapter to letters are to the same collection, unless otherwise stated.

Danby, 1840).³³⁶ Water flowing down the broken dam in Knights' painting is almost certainly derived from Poussin's waterfall and in both images the damned are framed by higher ground to left and right (to the left she has replaced Poussin's dominating vertical rock with an equally tall building). Her painting was, as well, very likely influenced by contemporary paintings that included water. Nevinson's *The Harvest of Battle* (1919) shows soldiers helping their wounded comrades through muddy ground that surrounds a network of flooded shell holes stretching monotonously to the horizon. Other soldiers' bodies litter the ground. This grim work with its watery environment was planned for a Hall of Remembrance (which was not built), but was on show at the Nation's War Paintings Exhibition of 1919-1920, and Knights very likely saw it there. At 182.8 x 317.5 cm it is an impressive size and would have shown her how war trauma could be pictured at a large scale. She would have seen David Young Cameron's *The Battlefield of Ypres* (1919, IWM, **plate 76**) and Paul Nash's *The Menin Road* (also 1919, IWM) in the same room at the exhibition, Gallery III.³³⁷ They are virtually the same size as *The Harvest of Battle* and were also part of the Hall of Remembrance project. Both images show the aftermath of a battle and large craters full of water, but also point to some hope for a future. In Cameron's painting reflected light has turned shell craters into deep blue ponds (Cameron was Scottish and perhaps was thinking of the small lochs that punctuate boggy ground, seen on a sunny day), a positive colour that might be a sign that war has effected redemption through suffering. Water is less obviously a symbol of hope in Nash's *The Menin Road*, but there is a subliminal association between wilting plants painted so close to water and the chance of revival and redemption. Richard Cork writes of the work: 'this incessantly ravaged dumping-ground is not quite as irredeemable as the landscapes Nash had painted a year earlier. Soldiers can now clearly be seen, moving across the scarred surface of an earth once seemingly unable to sustain any more life, human or otherwise.'³³⁸ There is also, of course, a great amount of water in *The Deluge*. Knights surely associated water with baptism, redemption and new life in later paintings such as *Santissima Trinta* (1924-1930, private collection). The redemption of cataclysmic flood is integral to the account of the Flood in Genesis, after the waters recede and God sends a rainbow as a sign. Knights was, perhaps, following Cameron and Nash in making a link between water and redemption in *The Deluge*. However, because her painting is not focused on Noah and his family, the link depends on regarding the

³³⁶ Richard Verdi, 'Poussin's 'Deluge': The Aftermath', *The Burlington Magazine* 123, no. 940 (July 1981), 391. Article Stable URL:<http://www.jstor.org/stable/880394>.

³³⁷ Catalogue, *Imperial War Museum, The Nation's War Paintings and Other Records, Exhibition at the Galleries of the Royal Academy* (12th December 1919 - 7th February 1920).

³³⁸ Richard Cork, *The Bitter Truth: Avant-garde Art and the Great War* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press in Association with the Barbican Art Gallery, 1994), 223.

people climbing the hill as survivors, a point I will return to. Instead, the ways water can take over a landscape and the associated hopelessness are very clear in Nevinson's *The Harvest of Battle*, so that Nevinson's image was, arguably, more important for her.

When initially considering motifs for her painting *Knights* was, probably, influenced by depictions of the story of Noah that showed preparations for entering the Ark, such as Jan Brueghel the Elder's *The Entry of the Animals into Noah's Ark* (1613, the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles), and which thereby concentrated on the saved. *Knights*' early preparatory sketch (1920, UCL Art Collection, **plate 41**) adopted this idea, ignoring the damned and featuring a storybook idealization of bright orange and brown Ark. The door is wide open, and Noah in royal blue, and his young wife in turquoise, calmly queue with family and animals.³³⁹ Yet later sketches, the cartoon, a requirement of finalists for the Rome Prize, and the completed painting focus on individuals and family groups as part of an emotionally fractured community, as indicated earlier.³⁴⁰ Why did *Knights* make these changes? Firstly, evidence from the period shows that association of the biblical story with sin, war and catastrophe was taken for granted. The evidence includes a speech given by Lloyd George in 1914, from which I quoted earlier, and a speech in which Winston Churchill linked WWI to the Irish 'problem', in 1922.³⁴¹ The impetus to make changes to the composition (making an association emotionally significant to artist and viewer) was therefore present in both the culture of the period and the life of the artist. Also, the immediate post-war years were uncertain, with the influenza epidemic (1918-1919), piecemeal demobilisation of servicemen, civil war in Russia and only the beginnings of a memorial culture for WWI. During the same years Siegfried Sassoon's 'Aftermath' (1919) suggests that the war might be too easily forgotten, 'the haunted gap in your mind has filled with thoughts that

³³⁹ Although *Knights* has included some of the damned in the sketch. In the background beyond the Ark she has pencilled a small group on an 'island' of land, drawn together by decreasing space and arms stretched up in appeals to heaven.

³⁴⁰ For the cartoon as a requirement see 'Subject: 'The Deluge' – in oil or tempera, together with a cartoon. Time allowed for execution of cartoon and painting eight weeks.' In *Catalogue to the British School at Rome Exhibition of Works submitted in Open Examinations for the Rome Scholarships in Architecture, Sculpture, Decorative Painting and Engraving and for the Henry Jarvis Scholarship in Architecture Together with the Works Submitted for the Final Competitions for the Rome Scholarships Awarded in 1920, Royal Academy Galleries BH, Feb 1921*, Gallery 6, nos. 50-53.

³⁴¹ Lloyd George, 19th September 1914, in *The Great War*, 14, quoted in Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge*, [1965], (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan Press Ltd. 1991), 89. Winston Churchill said, speaking in the House of Commons in 1922 (with reference to Ireland), 'great Empires have been overturned. The whole map of Europe has been changed...But as the deluge subsides and the waters fall short we see the dreary steeples of Fermanagh and Tyrone emerging once again'. Quoted in Max Beloff, 'Fault Lines and Steeples, the divided loyalties of Europe', *The National Interest* 23 (Spring 1991), 76. Article Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42894733>.

flow/...and you're a man reprieved...'³⁴² But veterans' experience indicates that war trauma could cause a profound rupture between actual war service and its memory. WWI padre Harold Spooner, for instance, spent sixteen years in "a Rip van Winkle existence, a mental blackout", a reaction delayed for ten years after the initial trauma.³⁴³ It is surprising, though, that war trauma could touch a young non-combatant woman artist.

There is evidence that Knights was traumatised by the war, as her sister recounted: '1917 July [Winifred] Left Slade because of Air Raids. Un-nerved [sic] by the Silvertown explosions, which she saw from the top of a tram-car.'³⁴⁴ Bombing raids impacted the civilian population, without doubt, total deaths from bombing numbering 1,500.³⁴⁵ Explosions on 19th January 1917 in a TNT production factory in London's East End brought war's effects to the civilian population, particularly as many women worked in the factory. The massive explosions, audible 100 miles from east London, killed sixty-five people and rendered 2,000 others homeless.³⁴⁶ Women, men and children were killed. Some died trying to escape the area, hit by 'flying missiles hurled in all directions by the explosion'.³⁴⁷ Bombing raids and these explosions, as well as paid employment, exposed women to new experiences, collapsing some of the distance between men's lives lived on the War Front and women's at home. Knights' life was impacted in this way and she left the Slade as a consequence. The resulting dislocation is expressed in a letter, written in December 1917 when the artist was staying with relatives at Lineholt Farmhouse, Worcestershire:

I am rather pining for Slade but on the whole I am very happy down here...sorting apples, coaxing the hens to lay...keeping warm...I seem to have forgotten everybody in London

³⁴² Siegfried Sassoon, 'Aftermath' [1919], in Brian Gardner (ed.), *Up the Line to Death: The War Poets 1914-18* (London: Methuen, 1964) 154.

³⁴³ Michael Monyihan, quoting Pat Spooner, in Michael Monyihan, *God on Our Side: The British Padre in World War I* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1983), 42-43. Turkish forces captured British troops, with Harold Spooner, after a five-month siege at Kut-al-Amara, Iraq, (1915-1916). Spooner was subsequently a prisoner of the Turks. Monyihan, *ibid*, 19-37.

³⁴⁴ Eileen Palmer, account of Winifred Knights' life, in Basildon Bond Lion Brand Notebook (University College London Art Museum: unpublished work, probably 1980s).

³⁴⁵ For numbers see Peter Craddick-Adams, 'The Home Front in World War One', *History Trails: Wars and Conflicts*, (bbc.co.uk/history, 14.03.2005), at

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/trail/wars_conflict/home_front/the_home_front_08.shtml, accessed 1st December 2014. WWI Zeppelin raids killed 557 British people. See William F Halstead III, 'A Zeppelin 'Jonah' Goes to War' *Aviation History* 19, no. 2 (November 2008), 17, at Academic Search Complete EBSCO host, accessed 21st December 2014.

³⁴⁶ Sheila Marriner, 'Sir Alfred Mond's Octopus: A Nationalised House-Building Business', *Business History* 21, no. 1 (January 1979), 28. DOI: 10.1080/00076797900000002.

³⁴⁷ Quoted from an un-named factory worker, 'Notes on the Silvertown Explosions 19th January 1917', in *The Newham Story: Silvertown Explosions* (11th May 2010), at <http://newhamstory.com/node/2167>, accessed 2nd December 2014.

entirely. I might never have lived there. I cant remember heaps of things. I have even forgotten lots of Slade girls names...Perhaps I am another person now...I have learnt to drive...I can't think of any more to tell you. Please forgive me. I feel like quite a dishcloth today [punctuation and spelling sic].³⁴⁸

Knights returned to the Slade in autumn 1918 and after this letter there is a gap of over two years before 'the deluge' was set for the Rome Prize. In the interim she attended the Armistice celebrations in Trafalgar Square and went on with her artwork, painting the decorative but un-dramatic *Village Street: Mill-Hands Conversing* in 1919. Other work included *Ludlow Fair and Cattle Market* and *Leaving the Munitions Works* (both 1919).³⁴⁹ In both watercolours repetitive shapes of buildings emphasise geometry. The narratives draw the viewer to observe insiders and outsiders and the watercolours' gentle social critiques. In *Leaving the Munitions Works* (plate 32) groups of cheerful women hurry out of the narrow gateway of a factory. Two raffish looking men to the right ogle one group. In the foreground a woman holds up her baby daughter to observe women's patriotic endeavours, while her bored son turns away. The watercolour was presumably painted in memory of women's war work. Perhaps it was also part of an unconscious strategy to keep trauma at bay. The factory building and open gate to the left were almost certainly adapted for the tall mill building and water flowing over a broken dam in the painting, but *The Deluge's* mood and meaning is different from the watercolour's inviting genre detail.³⁵⁰ How and why, then, did she return to wartime trauma for *The Deluge*, personalising it through her own self-portrait?

Perhaps it was an experience that she had put aside rather than got over, during the year in the country. We cannot be certain from the letter: pride in new skills ('I have learnt to drive') is evidence for both interpretations. However, the following discussion suggests that the first interpretation is the most likely, particularly when supported by internal evidence from the painting. In Chapter Four I suggest that Sigmund Freud's differentiation between fright and anxiety, outlined in 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', is relevant to Knights' *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours*, completed in 1933. First published in 1920, and then only in German, Freud's essay would not have made a significant public impact in Britain during the time Knights was painting *The Deluge*. However, W.H.R. Rivers, well known for treating traumatised soldiers at

³⁴⁸ Letter from Knights to her school friend Audrey Clarke dated 22nd December 1917.

³⁴⁹ *Leaving the Munitions Works* was displayed in The Great War as Recorded through the Fine and Popular Arts, at Morley College, 5th September to 2nd October 2014. This was the first time the work had been shown in public.

³⁵⁰ The mill buildings to the viewer's left in *Village Street: Mill-Hands Conversing* are another source for the tall building in *The Deluge*.

Craiglockhart Hospital, near Edinburgh, published *Instinct and the Unconscious* in English in 1920. The book presented, with other material, ideas outlined in an earlier lecture given to the Royal Society of Medicine in December 1917. The lecture, 'The Repression of War Experience', was published in *The Lancet* in early 1918 and in the journal *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine* during the same year. Rivers was interested in the repression of war trauma in a practical fashion because of his brief to treat soldiers so that they could return to the front line: he considered that trauma should be dealt with in order to ensure military fitness. He describes experiences leading to repression, for instance an officer who found a friend with 'his body blown into pieces with head and limbs lying separated from the trunk.' In his lecture Rivers described the officer's nightmares following the incident and how he was advised to repress the experience 'by keeping all thoughts of war from his mind.' Rivers' approach was the opposite, encouraging the officer to talk about the experience, focusing on an aspect that 'would allow the patient to dwell upon it ... [and] relieve its horrible and terrifying character.'³⁵¹ Another officer tried to repress his equally horrifying experience 'by every means in his power...His only period of relief had occurred when he had gone into the country, far from all that could remind him of the war.' Rivers was less successful in treating this case.³⁵²

Knights' strategy following the trauma of wartime bombing and the Silvertown explosions was surely the same as this officer's, trusting in removal to the countryside as a cure she took a sabbatical from the Slade for the academic year autumn 1917 to summer 1918. I have already suggested that the removal was dislocating, along with the original trauma. Taking Rivers' analysis as blueprint, Knights' repressed trauma surfaced at some stage after she returned to the Slade, due to not having previously worked through the trauma, resulting in her particular interpretation of the set subject for the Rome Prize. There is no documentary evidence for the trajectory I have outlined. But, in my view, it is likely that, having lived with the shadow of trauma from 1917, the artist chose to work on a composition that was metaphorically close to her own wartime experience. While working with this experience she looked back to her trauma, sensing that 'calamity results from the refusal to contemplate the past at all.'³⁵³ To sum up, Knights would

³⁵¹ W.H.R. Rivers, 'The Repression of War Experience', *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine* 11 (Section of Psychiatry, 1-20: 1918), 5-6. NCBI Resources, at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2066211/>, accessed 12th November 2014. In discussion following the lecture a Dr Eder suggested that Rivers ignored earlier childhood traumas underlying adult experience and perhaps exacerbating war trauma. Rivers, *ibid*, 19.

³⁵² Rivers, *Repression*, 7. Rivers recounts how during treatment at Craiglockhart this officer 'was loth to acknowledge that his improvement was connected with ...ability to face thoughts of war' and he was discharged from active service.

³⁵³ Carol Ephrati, 'Carol Ephrati on Housman's Use of Biblical Language', in Harold Bloom (ed.), *A.E. Housman* (Broomall PA: Chelsea House Publishers, 2003), 110. Ephrati links Lot's wife to A.E. Housman's

have heard of Rivers' theories, and the widespread currency of his ideas was in my opinion a significant factor when she worked with sketches for *The Deluge*. As a consequence of memories of her traumatic wartime experiences she changed the initial idea, with its focus on the saved, Noah and his family, to a dramatic, metaphoric representation of trauma focused through an image of the damned.

Undoubtedly the set subject was ideal for an exploration of twentieth-century trauma through metaphor, but much of the evidence for Knights' exploration is in the painting and its community, moving together, emotionally fractured into small groups and individual self-interest. The return to traumatic feelings, as explored by Rivers and detailed above, is powerfully expressed in the painting and channelled through the biographical marker of the key self-portrait in centre foreground. The small girl in red looking at the viewer, also acting to draw him/her into the scene, is actually in the dead centre of the image, while the self-portrait is placed just past the wall's central dividing line. If (contrary to the biblical account) there is a chance of survival she will be one with those saved. She is shown looking back towards imminent destruction by the waters and this look parallels the backward glance of Lot's wife towards the destruction at Sodom and Gomorrah, the cities of the plain, detailed in Genesis Chapter 20: 'then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire.../And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain.../But [Lot's wife] looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt'.³⁵⁴ The backward glance of Lot's wife is represented, for instance, in a stained glass panel of *Lot Escaping from Sodom* in Canterbury Cathedral (c.1180) and in George Frampton's sculpture *Lot's Wife*, dated 1878, which is in the Victoria and Albert Museum. All but one of the Knights' sketches that I have found include a backward glance, as does the final cartoon (**plate 42 and plate 43**).³⁵⁵ Additionally, they are all self-portraits. Except for Knights' initial sketch showing Mrs Noah, these replace blonde hair with Knights' darker hue, notably pinned up instead of long and flowing. Pinning hair up was one of the Slade's entry requirements, a sign of modesty carried over from the nineteenth to the twentieth century (that is, prohibiting loose hair).³⁵⁶ As a signifier

poem beginning 'The laws of God, the laws of man' [*Last Poems*, 1922], in A.E. Housman, *The Collected Poems of A.E. Housman* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1939), Poem XII, 111.

³⁵⁴ Genesis, Chapter 19.

³⁵⁵ Images referred to here are in: UCL Art Museum; private collection, Catherine Monnington. Liss Fine Art had one rudimentary sketch, in 2012, at <http://www.lissfineart.com/artist.php?ID=3640&artist=Winifred+Knights&sale=0>, accessed 10th June 2012. There is a sketch book of studies in another private collection. For this information see *Winifred Knights* (London: The Fine Art Society and Paul Liss, 1997), 50. Knights' cartoon for *The Deluge*, dated 1920, is in the Mitchell Wolfson Junior Museum of Decorative and Propaganda Art, Miami, Florida.

³⁵⁶ Letter from Winifred Knights to Audrey Clarke dated 1915 (probably October 1915).

of adulthood the style also implies mature understanding, important for this figure as she draws viewers to consider the narrative and its meaning(s).

The backward glance in the self-portrait comes from the first *Deluge* sketch of Mrs Noah, looking back to check that her family are following. Both are, probably, taken directly from an earlier watercolour in a private collection showing a long-haired girl turning around as goblins, or dwarves, pull her dress (**plate 12**). Another, more detailed, image in the same collection shows a similar scene of girl and goblins (**plate 13**), but only this one includes a hesitation, indicating that the girl is both fascinated and repelled by the alternate reality offered by dangerous little men. Although untitled, both are undoubtedly based on Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market', the more detailed illustrating Laura, the sister 'seduced' by goblins as she sucks their 'fruit globes fair or red'.³⁵⁷ Pertinently for *The Deluge*, the watercolour source for Knights' painting features the other sister, Lizzie. On meeting the goblins Lizzie's responsibility to her ailing and bewitched sister over-rides fascination, for "one waits/At home alone for me". Although the spiteful goblins 'Tore her gown and spoiled her stocking' she will not eat their fruit, showing that desire for experience can be tempered with caution, and thereby avoiding the overwhelming sensuality that almost kills Laura.³⁵⁸

Knights' watercolours of 'Goblin Market' are partly symptomatic of youthful fascination with a fantasy world, discussed in Chapter One, but the link between looking and experience shown in the image of Lizzie as she turns from harm is very relevant to *The Deluge*. It is particularly noteworthy when set against certain other sources that were surely also influential. These sources include a similar pose to that of Lizzie, with the same idea of female curiosity leading to disastrous consequences: Eve's quest for knowledge resulting in regret for the innocence of paradise, represented in Michelangelo's fresco by her backward glance; Lot's wife, a new refugee, looking back to Sodom. Tennyson's poem 'The Lady of Shalott' features similar ocular enthusiasm, resulting in death, as the Lady breaks the edict forbidding her from looking directly at the world. In this instance, though, only Elizabeth Siddal's little-known drawing includes the backward glance I have described (**plate 44**).³⁵⁹ Beyond compositional prototypes how can the examples I have detailed link to *The Deluge*? As I explained in Chapter One, Knights certainly had a good knowledge of the Bible. In Luke, Chapter 17, Lot is associated with the saved from the story of Noah and Lot's wife grouped with the damned:

³⁵⁷ Christina Rossetti, 'Goblin Market' [1859], in Christopher Ricks (ed.), *The New Oxford Book of Victorian Verse* (Oxford: OUP, 1987), 286.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 293, 292.

³⁵⁹ Elizabeth Siddal: *The Lady of Shalott*, 1853, private collection.

as it was in the days of Noe...They did eat, they did drink, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all./Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot...But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone out of heaven, and destroyed them all./even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed/...he that is in the field, let him likewise not turn back./Remember Lot's wife.

All the examples I have mentioned, as well as *The Deluge*, connect looking with knowledge and physical or psychic destruction. But among these the Knights' self-portrait is unusual, with Rossetti's Lizzie, in allowing for the possibility of survival, in body or mind.

One present-day interpretation of the response of Lot's wife to the 'terrible loss of her entire world' in Sodom and Gomorrah's destruction is 'catatonic reaction' to the 'severe psychological trauma.'³⁶⁰ The interpretation sees catatonic reaction represented by a pillar of salt. It also fits the Canterbury stained glass mentioned earlier, Durer's painting with Lot's wife as a brown salt pillar fixed staring back and the same scene painted by Corot in 1857 (**plate 45, plate 46 and plate 47**).³⁶¹ Instead of a 'catatonic reaction', therefore unable to process the truth, Knights' physically dynamic self-portrait indicates knowledge (although, as I have argued, knowledge of war's meaning in post-war circumstances is less certain). The self-portrait is a re-interpretation of the female archetype's punishment for looking, tasting and taking initiative because it re-casts traditional images of Lot's wife such as the Canterbury glass. While the self-portrait does register some fear as she turns to the waters, knowledge is not disabling. Her angular face is strong rather than beautiful (notably so in contrast with some other of Knights' self-portraits). This facial type, with lean, slightly sunken and heavily shaded cheeks, exaggerates the artist's own high cheekbones and narrow face and was certainly informed by the cubist-inspired planes of Vorticist work. The artist employed a similarly modernist approach in a painting of a mixed-race woman, *Portrait of a Young Woman* (50.8 x 40.7 cm, UCL Art Museum, **plate 48**), painted in 1920, the same year as *The Deluge*. The cheeks are also sunken, the piled hair repeating their sharp, decisive angle.

³⁶⁰ Steven Luger, 'Flood, Salt and Sacrifice: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in Genesis', *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 38, no. 2 (2010), 125, at <http://jbq.jewishbible.org/assets/Uploads/382/ptsd.pdf>, accessed 28th August 2015.

³⁶¹ Albrecht Durer: *Lot Fleeing with his daughters from Sodom*, c. 1498, National Gallery of Art Washington. Camille Corot: *The Burning of Sodom*, 1857, Metropolitan Museum, New York.

The Deluge's Vorticist-inspired self-portrait serves the narrative, showing, with her tensed, strong legs, that she understands the power of destruction, but is only momentarily afraid. Drawing on her knowledge of the Bible and Christianity, Knights would have known Psalm 23 and John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.³⁶² Both Psalm 23 and *Pilgrim's Progress* feature the Valley of the Shadow of Death, described by Bunyan as 'a deep ditch...into which the blind have led the blind in all ages.'³⁶³ In *The Deluge* fleeing men, women and children are blind to the truth of destruction, change, the war. In contrast those who look round glimpse destruction and can begin to grasp what it means, particularly so the self-portrait, who as artist has fashioned the scene. Nevertheless, although the response is not 'catatonic', the backward glance and hesitation do indicate difficulties in processing such knowledge in the immediate post-war years, in thinking and knowing how to respond.

Up to this point my argument has been premised on a reading of *The Deluge* that assumes men, women and children cannot escape from the waters. But, while *The Deluge* as excerpt from the story of Noah suggests no possibility of survival for those depicted, Psalm 23 offers comfort in the Valley of the Shadow of Death: 'though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and staff they comfort me.' The Psalm's comfort makes an ironic contrast with Knights' narrative of the damned. But, drawing on Psalm 23 in another way, it is possible to read the image as a different kind of metaphor, representing the experience of war through the lens of memory and, as well, the world left in war's aftermath. The figures climbing the hill could therefore be understood as survivors. I shall relate this interpretation to the concept of salvation below. Contrary readings of the image (survivors, damned) fit the difficult, unsettled post-war conditions. Yet, whatever interpretation we put on the fractured community depicted in *The Deluge*, the self-portrait is central to meaning as it witnesses a world changed beyond recognition.

The next section focuses on the years immediately after WWI and goes on to argue that the circumstances of the period were significant in shaping the self-portrait's particular look. In 1920, when Knights completed *The Deluge*, the War had been over for less than two years (also, the Versailles Peace Treaty was only signed in June 1919), therefore a commemorative culture was not yet fixed. The War was still too recent for a consensus on how to acknowledge death,

³⁶² John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* [Part One, 1678; Part Two, 1684], (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1965), 96-97. Paul Fussell says of *Pilgrim's Progress*: 'Everybody [during this period] had been raised on it'. Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 137.

³⁶³ Ibid.

sacrifice and the associated suffering of bereaved and veterans. There was euphoria at signing of the Armistice, for instance in Trafalgar Square on November 11th 1918. But even then reactions were varied, and Vera Brittain wrote: 'already this was a different world from the one during four life-long years...All those with whom I had really been intimate were gone'.³⁶⁴ A Peace Day, on July 19th 1919, celebrated the end of war and the Versailles Peace Treaty.³⁶⁵ Accounts of the Peace Day reflect confused responses to the War. In Coventry a Godiva Pageant organised by the local authority emphasised local history and was led by senior councillors, not ex-servicemen. Luton's procession was similarly led by civic dignitaries. In both cases a side-lining of veterans resulted in Peace Day riots, with Luton Town Hall burned to the ground.³⁶⁶ In contrast, London's Peace Day celebrations included a Victory March of 15,000 troops through Whitehall and past a temporary Cenotaph of wood and plaster designed by Lutyens (**plate 49**).

The first two minutes' silence, on November 11th 1919, began the national practice of annual commemoration. But the major commemorative structures in London date from late 1920, after Winifred Knights had completed *The Deluge*. For example, on November 11th 1920 the Unknown Warrior was taken in procession from Dover for re-burial in Westminster Abbey, passing the new, permanent, Portland Stone Cenotaph as it was unveiled.³⁶⁷ During the period of this analysis, up to late August 1920,³⁶⁸ some local memorials were in place and separation between battlefield burial on mainland Europe and memorial at home was already set by the Imperial War Graves Commission (the IWGC).³⁶⁹ The IWGC's decision 'not to allow the repatriation of bodies to the UK' (and to require a uniformity in headstones that did not distinguish between social classes or military rank and avoided the cruciform style) was distressing for widows, fiancés and other bereaved relatives,³⁷⁰ as Charlotte Mew suggests in 'Cenotaph', dated 1919:

There is a grave whose earth must hold too long, too deep a stain,
Though for ever over it we may speak as proudly as we may tread.

³⁶⁴ Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth* [1933], (London: Virago Limited, 1978), 462.

³⁶⁵ A pre-planned Peace Day to celebrate the end of war was brought forward by Lord Curzon (Foreign Secretary) in response to the Treaty of 28th June 1919.

³⁶⁶ Brad Beaven, 'Challenges to civic government in post-war England: the Peace Day disturbances of 1919', *Urban History* 33, no. 3 (2006), 383. DOI: 10.1017/S0963926806004032.

³⁶⁷ The sale of poppies to raise money for ex-servicemen and their families began even later, in 1921.

³⁶⁸ Eight weeks were allowed for the painting. Knights began work on 5th July and, according to her sister Eileen's account, was allowed no extra time despite having 'a bad attack of tonsillitis'. See Eileen Palmer, an account of Winifred Knights' life, photocopied sheets, UCL Art Museum. Knights heard that she had won the Rome Prize on 21st September 1920. See annotation to a letter from Winifred Knights to her aunt Millicent dated 29th September 1920.

³⁶⁹ Principles set down by Sir Fabian Ware (Vice-Chairman of the IWGC) and in a report by Frederick Kenyon, director of the British Museum. In Barrett, 'recovered history: Subalterns at War', 472.

³⁷⁰ Many of those who could afford to repatriate the bodies of loved ones wanted to do so. *Ibid*, 453.

But here, where the watchers by lonely hearths from the thrust of an inward sword have
more slowly bled,
We shall build the Cenotaph.....
And over the stairway, at the foot- oh! Here, leave desolate, passionate hands to spread
Violets, roses and laurel...³⁷¹

The immediate post-war years were hard due to demobilisation, inflation, veteran re-adjustment to civilian life, and the influenza epidemic of 1918-1919. But strikes (1918-1920) did not lead to revolution, although the Red Flag was raised in Glasgow in January 1919 during the Clydeside Dockers' Strike. Also, general economic prosperity followed the War, boom only turning to a slump in mid-1920. Yet, uncertainty about what kind of world survivors had inherited, alongside some disillusionment with pre-war modernity, operated alongside the initial boom, so that 'the changes which the war had brought seemed therefore to hold promise as well as threat'.³⁷² During this time sacrifice for recent 'just war' was generally judged worthwhile, although there were dissenting voices.³⁷³ For instance, John Maynard Keynes wrote that through terms set in the Peace Treaty 'the spokesmen of the French and British peoples have run the risk of completing the ruin which Germany began.'³⁷⁴ Use of literature as vehicle for vituperative criticism of the War was less common than for patriotic consolation. Rupert Brooke's sonnet sequence '1914', in which he wrote 'honour has come back, as a king to earth', came out in its twenty-fifth impression in October 1918 (the first printing was dated 1915).³⁷⁵ In contrast, Wilfred Owen's poetry, in which suffering and wasted young lives were vividly and bitterly described, was not widely known in these years.³⁷⁶ Press comments on *The Deluge* when it was shown at the Royal Academy in

³⁷¹ Charlotte Mew, 'The Cenotaph' [1919], in *Collected Poems and Prose* (London: Virago Press, 1982), 36.

³⁷² Corbett, *Modernity of English Art*, 60.

³⁷³ WWI was widely considered a 'just war'. See for example: Alan Wilkinson [1978], *The Church of England and the First World War* (London: Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, 1996), 122; Albert Marrin, *The Last Crusade: The Church of England in the First World War* (Durham North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1974), 138.

³⁷⁴ John Maynard Keynes (1919), *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*. Project Gutenberg e-book, at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/15776/15776-h/15776-h.htm>, accessed 21st December 2014.

³⁷⁵ The quotation is taken from 'III, The Dead', in sonnet sequence '1914', in Rupert Brooke, (1918) *1914 and Other Poems* [1918], (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 25th Impression, 1918), 13.

³⁷⁶ Jay Winter says that 'in 1918...few of [Owen's] poems had been published...in 1920, the first very limited edition of his work...was not widely distributed...There were only 730 copies in the original impression, and a second impression of 700 copies had yet to be fully bound by 1929.' In Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 162. The novels that dealt critically with the war, including those relating it to the post-war context, were published in the late 1920s. Richard Aldington's *Death of a Hero*, and Robert Graves' *Goodbye to All That*, are examples. Both were published in 1929.

February 1921 did not mention the conflict in relation to the painting, perhaps due to difficulties at this time in understanding an image for wartime suffering that, like Owen's poetry, offered no consolation whatsoever.³⁷⁷ Pertinently, though, the subject set for the 1920 Rome Prize in Sculpture was 'Sacrifice', suggesting that the prize organisers may have had such a connection in mind when setting 'the deluge' for the Prize in Decorative Painting.³⁷⁸ The Nation's War Paintings Exhibition, on show during winter 1919-1920, and opening of the Imperial War Museum on 9th June 1920, did provide direct opportunities for reflecting back on the War through images of battlefield devastation, assistance to the wounded or heroic sacrifice combined with suffering. Examples include Stanley Spencer's *Travoy's Arriving with Wounded at a Dressing-Station at Smol, Macedonia, September 1916* (1919, Imperial War Museum) and John Singer Sargent's *Gassed* (also 1919, IWM). Focused on the war alone, though, these images could not provide opportunities for assessing war's meaning in the early post-war years.

If there was no consensus in these years that the war had been a colossal mistake, how can we make sense of Winifred Knights' self-portrait in *The Deluge*, a figure that (in her metaphor for war) senses what is coming? To consider this, I will return to Lot's wife as prototype for looking and go on to a more detailed examination of the particular type of looking that Knights articulates, exploring a range of parallel examples. For Eve in the Garden of Eden (as well as Laura in 'Goblin Market') taste marks the dangerous and transformative moment. Eve's backward glance shown in Michelangelo's fresco is a consequence of that moment. Lot's wife, then, is more important for my argument as her look is literally transforming, from real woman to pillar of salt. Her position as the one who sees and knows, in contrast to her husband and daughters who avoid looking, is thus negated by petrification as she is quickly turned into an object. In her analysis of medieval representations of the subject Madeline Cavinnes, writing as a feminist art historian specialising in medieval art, illustrates a range of images, including the Canterbury twelfth-century stained glass *Lot Escaping from Sodom*.³⁷⁹ She associates the look and consequent petrification with attitudes in the Middle Ages which regarded a woman's direct look as inappropriate use of the 'patriarchal stare' reserved for men.³⁸⁰ Cavinnes argues that Lot's wife

³⁷⁷ However, evidence from around this time, outlined earlier, suggests that association between biblical deluge and a catastrophe was commonplace, so reviewers may have taken this for granted.

³⁷⁸ See *Catalogue to the British School at Rome Exhibition of Works submitted in Open Examinations for the Rome Scholarships in Architecture, Sculpture, Decorative Painting and Engraving and for the Henry Jarvis Scholarship in Architecture Together with the Works Submitted for the Final Competitions for the Rome Scholarships Awarded in 1920, Royal Academy Galleries BH, Feb 1921.*

³⁷⁹ Madeline H. Cavinnes, *Visualizing Women in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 33, 44-46, 57-79.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 58.

was rendered harmless, losing any potential female agency and appropriately set as 'a signifier of the working of divine power in the world'.³⁸¹ With Lot's wife in the centre and Lot hurrying up a steep hill, the Canterbury image is remarkably close to Knights' composition in *The Deluge*, and it seems likely she had viewed the stained glass, or a reproduction of it. Lot's wife sees destruction, and similarly Knights' figure sees the deluge, and both recognize that familiar worlds are gone: another thematic link.³⁸²

Knights certainly drew on images of Lot's wife when considering the self-portrait, but not in every respect. In all examples illustrated by Cavinnes the woman's head is fully turned to Sodom and Gomorrah, a stare rather than a glance. A similar look can be observed in later images, such as prints after Raphael in which the wife's head is turned completely around. It is implied in images by Durer and Corot (**plate 46 and plate 47**) where the pillar of salt is abandoned as 'it' stares at the burning cities. However, Knights' figure glances instead of staring: the head is only partially turned as she just pauses in flight from the waters. To investigate the meaning of the glance, and begin to link it to WWI, I will turn back to images of 'the deluge'. In her painting *Noah's Ark* dated 1912 (Tate Collection, **plate 50**) Margaret Gere shows a dishevelled mother seated against a rock, her children on her lap, looking up as Noah welcomes glamorous saved women, his sons' wives, into the Ark. Gere contrasts the damned with the saved, sympathy for the plight of the former shaped by absence of a male protector, by the woman's steady look to those saved (as well as by the lone nude figure of a child, seen from the back). Her woman is, like Lot's wife in medieval representations, fixed in her looking, contrasting with the glance shown in Hamo Thorneycroft's sculpture *Lot's Wife*, with *The Deluge* and with preparatory and source images for the painting discussed earlier.

A glance is different from a gaze or sustained look: it suggests fear, an instant of time, two states of mind. It is evident in the graceful and dynamic pose of Cloris in Botticelli's *Primavera* (1482, Uffizi Gallery) as she turns towards Zephyrus. It is, intriguingly, evident in a tin glazed earthenware plate (c.1546-1550), showing Ovid's Cinyras chasing the 'sinner' Myrrha (also with the same hand gestures as Knights' self-portrait, **plate 51**). The plate was acquired by the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1910, so it is possible Knights had seen it. More pertinent examples for my purposes have already been discussed: the Lady of Shalot, Eve, and Lizzie. There is another way of thinking about the pose. Going alongside regret for the past (Eve, *The*

³⁸¹ Ibid, 62.

³⁸² The broken building to the left of Knights' image is a possible link to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in the story of Lot, as well as to destruction in WWI.

Deluge) it can indicate indecision about moving back or continuing onwards, the process of making a choice. This process is in Knights' image of Lizzie moving away from the goblins as she chooses to reject their delights. In contrast, we can see a more decided look in the frontal pose of Angelica Kauffman's *Self-Portrait Hesitating Between the Arts of Music and Painting* dated 1791 (Nostell Priory, Yorkshire, **plate 52**), despite its title. In Poussin's representation of Hercules with Virtue and Vice, *The Choice of Hercules* (1636-1637, Stourhead, the National Trust), which was surely a prototype for Kauffman's painting, it is even more certain which path Hercules will take. Virtue and vice lurk as a sub-text to any image of 'the deluge', but if there is a choice in Knights' *Deluge* it connects to the past and present and to the War – in the biblical story to knowing that destruction is inevitable and in the metaphor for modern life, choosing to face the conflict and its long-term traumatic consequences. Choice, if there is one, is significantly set against the other figures in the narrative, predominantly absorbed in flight. Glance and knowledge are linked in Knights' painting and through the glance contrasted with this blind self-preservation. The glance is a powerful means to represent the opportunities of female agency and understanding of war's impact in the aftermath of WWI. In medieval images of Lot's wife, on the other hand, the petrified look negates both choice and knowledge, as outlined above.

The self-portrait's glance connects to two others in *The Deluge*. When describing the painting I mentioned the little girl in red, central in the image and between the mother cradling her baby and the Knights' self-portrait. Her pose, turning to the viewer, probably derives from Tobias in the seventeenth-century *Tobias and the Archangel Raphael*, which is attributed to Adam Elsheimer and was bequeathed to the National Gallery in 1894.³⁸³ But her face may be based on memories of Knights' sister Joyce as a small child. Joyce was born two years after the artist. A family photograph that shows Joyce as an adult suggests some facial similarities and there are also similarities between the small girl and Gertrude Knights, the mother (**plate 53**). In the mid-ground of *The Deluge* another girl, also in red, looks back. The group photograph (**plate 53**) indicates that she is based on Eileen, the younger of Winifred Knights' sisters, who is the teenage girl standing in the photograph.³⁸⁴ The blood-red blouse of the self-portrait is echoed by the little girl's dress as the girl looks towards the viewer, drawing him/her into the present of the narrative, and by the teenage girl in red who looks back at the threatening waters. In contrast, the woman with

³⁸³ Tobias is depicted in red and is looking at the viewer in *Tobias and the Archangel Raphael*. They are both moving from right to left. But in another likely source, *Tobias and the Angel*, a print made by Hendrik Goudt after a lost original (1613, British Museum), the figures move from left to right across the landscape, as in Knights' painting.

³⁸⁴ For images of the sisters see photograph in *Winifred Knights* (London: The Fine Art Society and Paul Liss, 1995), 7.

the baby moves resolutely forwards towards possible survival. Blood-red clothes and glances, back and to the viewer, are set against the overall colour and forward movement of the image, but this is not simply a visual pattern. Indeed, these poses contradict blind self-preservation, earlier described as a feature of the painting. The wider significance of the backward look and its psychological imperative (looking, choosing and knowing) has already been discussed in relation to Lot's wife. It is summed up here by Hopeful, a character in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*: "this woman [Lot's wife] but for looking behind her (for we read not that she stepped one foot out of the way), after was turned into a Pillar of Salt."³⁸⁵ Lot's wife only made one mistake, but it was enough to negate her further participation in society as woman, wife and mother. Winifred Knights was not part of the suffragette generation and 'its feminist agitation and achievement', yet her self-portrait is a feminist statement, if not consciously so.³⁸⁶ She would have known that securing the franchise in 1918 was an achievement that many women had worked for (but although just twenty-one when painting *The Deluge* she was not able to vote, as the franchise was only for women of thirty and over).³⁸⁷ She *perhaps* knew of the 1919 Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act, intended to prevent discrimination against women in public office and professions such as teaching and medicine.³⁸⁸ But the large numbers of women workers who were obliged to relinquish their jobs following veteran de-mobilisation were surely apparent (and perhaps a motive for painting *Leaving the Munitions Works* in 1919), a return to separate spheres that qualified feminism's successes. Despite these points we know that Knights had the same educational opportunities as her male contemporaries and that during the years at the Slade she was confident in her work and certain of her talent, a confidence she brought to her self-portrait in *The Deluge*.³⁸⁹ Through the self-portrait as witness, pivot of the image and a part of the narrative

³⁸⁵ Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*, 147.

³⁸⁶ The suffragettes' 'feminist agitation...' is quoted from Anne Wagner, with reference to Barbara Hepworth, in Anne Wagner, *Mother Stone* (New Haven and London: Yale, 2005), 171. Hepworth was born three and a half years after Winifred Knights.

³⁸⁷ In addition, the suffrage was restricted to women who were householders or married to householders. See Susan Kingsley Kent, *Making Peace: The Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 91.

³⁸⁸ The Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act (1919) stated that a 'person shall not be disqualified by sex or marriage from the exercise of any public function, or from being appointed to or holding any civil or judicial office or post, or from entering or assuming or carrying on any civil profession or vocation, or for admission to any incorporated society (whether incorporated by Royal Charter or otherwise), and a person shall not be exempted by sex or marriage from the liability to serve as a juror'. In W.B. Creighton, 'Whatever Happened to the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act?' *Industrial Law Journal* 4, no. 3 (1975), 155-157. DOI: 10.1093/ilj/4.1.155.

³⁸⁹ Katy Deepwell points out that 'Women were...taught in separate, often overcrowded life classes from men at the Slade until 1946'. Nevertheless, there is no evidence in Knights' letters of any other special privilege accorded to male students, privilege Deepwell associates with conceptions of men as

(and involving her sisters), we can see how Knights re-interpreted the traditional misogynist image of Lot's wife. In particular, for this young woman knowledge is powerful and serious, but neither destructive nor the consequence of a mistake. This is in opposition not only to Lot's wife, but to other examples of looking, eating and knowledge discussed in the present section of my chapter.³⁹⁰

I have argued that Knights utilises the self-portrait and portraits to show the viewer destruction, choice, and knowledge. But another reading is possible, negating choice and showing a different form of destruction, while also following my earlier proposition that the two girls represent Winifred Knights' sisters. Reading the self-portrait as directly representing Lot's wife, rather than referring to her, the artist's two sisters become Lot's daughters. Escaping from Sodom, Lot avoided knowledge by not looking and took his daughters with him. Even so his daughters cannot avoid, or resist, knowledge. Genesis tells us that Lot's daughters used alcohol to entice their father into incestuous sexual union, so fathering their children, a scene illustrated in Lucas van Leyden's engraving of 1530, among many others (Auckland Art Museum, **plate 54**).³⁹¹ The series of events took the prototype of Eve's sin to pin responsibility for action on the daughters. Reading the story in another, woman-centred way, we can see that as a consequence of being turned to salt Lot's wife deprived her daughters of protection. Without her motherly example they were prey to the temptations of alcohol and incest. Yet in *The Deluge* Knights retains her agency and, as the oldest of three sisters, her potential to guide and protect.

The story of Lot and his vulnerable daughters is both a sub-text and avenue to a greater understanding of *The Deluge*. Representations of men within the painting also deepen understanding. Next to the self-portrait is a man (his face is not shown) concentrating on escape. He may be a representation of Lot. Yet connecting him to other images of men is equally important to demonstrate how male selfishness and focused determination on survival are worked as features of the narrative. They include the man intent on being first up the hill and another, in the mid-ground, looking up at the woman he has abandoned. These men contrast with groups in Michelangelo and Philip de Loutherbourg's paintings. De Loutherbourg, for instance, shows a man in despair, but who, nevertheless, allows his expiring wife and child to take refuge on his knee. Knights probably knew the image, in the Victoria and Albert Museum Collection. But

the 'serious' artists. Katy Deepwell, *Women Artists between the Wars* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 50.

³⁹⁰ Lizzie in 'Goblin Market' is an exception to this generality.

³⁹¹ For this part of Lot's life see Genesis, Chapter 19.

the only vignette in her *Deluge* of a man actively helping is drawn from the 'last family' in Poussin's *Winter - The Deluge*, suggesting that she may have been less convinced of the emotional truth of the helping male than in other parts of her exegesis. As I have indicated, male action is generally figured as striving for survival in this painting, a trope reinforced by the figure of the greyhound. In Gere's *Noah's Ark* (plate 50), by contrast, the foreground is used to show a correspondingly traditional view of a lone woman: she is able to comfort, but, lacking any other agency, can do nothing else except look at those who will be saved. In *The Deluge*, however, images of Knights and the two girls (who, as I have said, are very likely her sisters) enact a dynamic between agency, knowledge, choice and acceptance. They look, and draw the viewer to see, while showing a mere hesitation as they run. The self-portrait expresses this particularly well as she glances back with acute turn of head, arms raised in prayer and to fend off the future. Equally, with leg and neck muscles tensed and legs in arrested flight there is no sense that she is about to turn into a pillar of salt. I have described how the medieval Canterbury glass placed Lot's wife as a dead centre, symbol of woman's sin and the action of divine justice. Here, instead, gendered knowledge, choice, and understanding, make the self-portrait the active pivot of the whole painting (begging the question whether we should really be thinking of the image as figuring the literally damned).

Unlike Lot's wife Knights and the two girls have not been immobilised by looking, glancing, knowing. But what knowledge have they gained and how does it relate to WWI? What comment can be made on WWI from the contrast between male and female behaviour that has been explored? Certainly, in 1920 it was not yet clear in what ways the War had changed the world, as I indicated earlier. Knights was not strongly political, so any comment must be general and conjectural (although evidence from later in her life indicates that she knew the socialist writing of Edward Carpenter).³⁹² But she cared about family and was, additionally, very much part of the social community at the Slade. Despite some participation at home in uniformed groups such as the Women's Volunteer Reserve, and the parts played by other women who worked as nurses, doctors and ambulance drivers close to the Front, war was a men's affair.³⁹³ It was made by the

³⁹² For Knights and politics see her letters, which do not refer to politics, except for 'unrest and strikes' in Italy. Letter from Winifred Knights to her mother dated 4th February 1921. For Knights and Edward Carpenter see letter from Winifred Knights to her mother dated 5th December 1922.

³⁹³ For women's uniformed groups and women working near the Front see, for example: Susan R.Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 192-202; Krisztina Robert, speaking on Making Place for Women in the Army: Construction of Wartime Space and Women's Military Employment in First World War Britain, in Reappraising the First World War Seminar Series: The Impact of the First World War on Social Change in Britain (The Imperial War Museum, 8th December 2011). Artist Olive Mudie-Cooke drove ambulances for the Red Cross.

male politicians and military leaders who had exclusive control of such matters in the early twentieth century and who even hoped to shape the future with the Versailles Peace Treaty. Knights would, probably, have taken this situation for granted. Inevitably, despite gaining a limited franchise in 1918, women had no part in determining the international situation, which included civil war in Russia and in the 'colony' of Ireland a bloody conflict between the IRA and British troops from spring 1920. But her own experience of bombing raids and the Silvertown explosions must have told her, along with wartime news from the front, that man's shaping control was weak, events sometimes taking over and exposing the vulnerability of women and children. The painting does not suggest a solution to the problem of responsibility in the inter-war context, but in picturing such desperation and male selfishness shows neither control nor responsibility.

Yet, returning to the biblical story it is possible to see this differently, with God as the absent puppet-master and significantly gendered controller. God, the stern father, therefore punishes and controls by refusing to intervene, leaving women to make futile attempts to rescue the next generation. His efforts are reserved for those he has chosen, the Ark symbolising his selective intervention. In his poem 'Parable of The Old Men and the Young' Wilfred Owen re-tells the well-known biblical story of Abraham and Isaac. Owen ignores the divine intervention outlined in Genesis to link the Old Testament God and punishment with blinkered conduct of war policy, by generals and politicians alike:

So Abram rose, and clave the wood, and went,
And took the fire with him, and a knife.
And as they sojourned both of them together,
Isaac the first-born spake and said, My Father,
Behold the preparations, fire and iron,
But where the lamb for this burnt-offering?
Then Abram bound the youth with belts and straps,
And builded parapets and trenches there,
And stretch'd forth the knife to slay his son.
When lo! an Angel called him out of heaven,
Saying, Lay not thy hand upon the lad,
Neither do anything to him, thy son.
Behold! Caught in a thicket by its horns,
A Ram. Offer the Ram of Pride instead.
But the old man would not so, but slew his son,

And half the seed of Europe, one by one.³⁹⁴

Although any attempt to pin a critique of military or political strategy onto *The Deluge* is fraught with the danger of over-determination (it is certainly underlying rather than explicit) Knights drew on a similar understanding of biblical stories as metaphor and analogy, based on a general understanding of the Bible that was typical of her time. Wilfred Owen's poem posits knowledge of the fruits of destruction that generals, politicians and God ignore. The same critique can be sensed in *The Deluge*, significantly gendered and channelled through the image of Knights and her sisters. Without forcing the parallel, it is worth noting the similarity to Lot's story. The Old Testament God petrifies Lot's wife at the moment of knowing about destruction. Owen's Abraham knows, but still acts to destroy. It is unlikely Knights knew Owen's poem in 1920, but she would certainly have been familiar with the story of Lot's wife, destroyed by her foolish desire to know about destruction, a rebellion against her station as obedient wife.

In the very different circumstances of early twentieth-century Britain Winifred Knights was able to open up a space to consider women's experience and the trauma of war. At the time, however, there was a paucity of women artists who had depicted the conflict or its effects, to provide a model or precedent for her work. The fledgling Imperial War Museum formed a female-run Women's Work Sub-Committee directly after the War 'to collect material on women's war work' and the Sub-Committee commissioned work from women artists as well as some men. Nevertheless, at the Nation's War Paintings exhibition 'of the 925 works on show just fifteen paintings and a small number of sculptural models were by women.'³⁹⁵ A focus on women workers on the home front is evident in images commissioned for the Imperial War Museum by the Women's Work Sub-Committee, for instance Victoria Monkhouse's *A Woman Window-Cleaner* (1919, IWM). Norah Neilson-Gray's *The Scottish Women's Hospital in the Cloister of the Abbaye at Royaumont, Dr Frances Iven Inspecting a French patient* of 1920, also in the Imperial War Museum, was another commission. The cloisters are untouched by war and have become a tidy ward, with woman doctor and young nurses. But the painting represented actual conditions for women doctors as only male personnel were permitted at the front line clearing stations for casualties.³⁹⁶ Frances Olive Mudie-Cooke's watercolour a *Burnt-Out Tank* (1917-1919, IWM) is a rare symbol of modern warfare by one of these artists. Mudie-Cooke had driven ambulances in

³⁹⁴ Wilfred Owen, 'The Parable of the Old Man and the Young' [1918], in John Stallworthy ed. *Wilfred Owen: the complete poems and fragments: volume 1, the poems*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 2013), 174.

³⁹⁵ Kathleen Palmer, *Women War Artists* (London: Tate Publishing/Imperial War Museum, 2011), 4.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

France for the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry and the Red Cross and so had first-hand experience of the front line.³⁹⁷ However, in common with most images commissioned to men, she avoided depicting the dead or dying. Similarly, watercolours by Dorothy Coke (1897-1979), which were presented to the Imperial War Museum in 1919, represent convalescent soldiers in a park, *Wounded Men on Duppas Hill, Croyden*, 1919, and digging allotments, *War Allotments in a London Suburb: In the Background is the County Council School at Norbury, used as a Military Hospital*, also 1919. Both images show caring female companions, but the only injury requiring attention is a broken arm (**plate 55 and plate 56**).³⁹⁸ Painted a few years earlier, in a different context (the artist was a committed pacifist), Vanessa Bell represented an intimate group in *The Conversation* (1913-1914, the Courtauld Gallery), an image of the home front unclouded by intimations of war.

Knights would have known Bell's work, though perhaps not *The Conversation*. She would not, however, have been familiar with contemporaneous work by German women artists, who found their own ways to represent experience. Their images include adaptations of mourning rituals in pictures of pregnant mourning mothers, combining grief with hope for a new family.³⁹⁹ Kathe Kollwitz similarly reinforced family values in autobiographical sculptures of mourning parents planned and executed between 1918 and 1931, which were cited close to her son Peter's grave in Roggevelde German War Cemetery, Vladslo, Belgium. This brief survey of women's art associated with WWI suggests that Knights' painting, with its fractured community and the dominant and conflicted self-portrait, stands out as an unusual war work by a woman artist. For instance, Kollwitz's memorial expresses consolation, even though she wrote: 'There is in our lives a wound that will never heal. Nor should it.'⁴⁰⁰ The self-portrait is, like images of Lot's wife, centred on a gendered sense of loss, of place and home, with the dynamic pose showing that knowledge is only momentarily disabling. Writing as an academic specialising in feminist approaches to English Literature, Judith Wilt discusses Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's book *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979). Wilt writes of 'the anxiety of authorship' for nineteenth-

³⁹⁷ Palmer, *ibid*, 83.

³⁹⁸ Dorothy Coke's watercolours were presented to the Imperial War Museum by Muirhead Bone in 1919. See Imperial War Museum, at <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/5204>, accessed 7th November 2014 and <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/5203>, accessed 7th November 2014. In contrast, Knights' watercolour *Leaving the Munitions Works* (1919) has remained in a private collection.

³⁹⁹ Claudia Siebrecht, *The Aesthetics of Loss: German Women's Art of the First World War*, paper given in *Artistic Responses in France and Germany: Reappraising the First World War Seminar Series* (The Imperial War Museum, 13th March 2012).

⁴⁰⁰ Kathe Kollwitz, [1916], quoted in Winter, *Sites of Memory*, 109; also see note in Winter, 250.

century women writers who 'lacking fertile precursors' are 'isolated from behind' and, therefore, like Bunyan's Christiana in *Pilgrim's Progress*, 'bookless travellers'.⁴⁰¹ She quotes Gilbert and Gubar, who talk about "a radical fear that she [the woman writer] cannot create, that because she cannot become a 'precursor' the act of writing will isolate or destroy her."⁴⁰² Young women artists often lacked female artistic role models, exemplars for successful professional careers. Turning back to *The Deluge*, and with awareness of her lack of female artistic precursors mentioned earlier, we can see that this painting is brave, even presumptuous. The self-portrait orchestrates viewers' understanding of this woman's wartime experience and trauma on the home front, its focus on women and families providing a corrective to the more usual images of war that featured the battlefield. In her work she is tenuously connected to her sisters, yet the overwhelming impression is of isolation. Nevertheless, she is not Lot's wife and she is not destroyed. While she included self-portraits and other personal material in her later work, as I shall show, this is the most confident and forceful of Winifred Knights' attempts to overcome 'the anxiety of authorship'.⁴⁰³

In order to provide as full account of *The Deluge* as possible, the following section considers whether, in contrast to the overall argument of the chapter, the painting can be understood as representing Christian hopes for salvation and resurrection. The section starts with Christian ideas, focusing more closely on ways sacrifice and salvation were used as guide to behaviour during WWI and in the succeeding years, and relating these ideas to *The Deluge*. I have suggested that the artist drew on descriptions of the Valley of the Shadow of Death found in the Bible and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, the section from Psalm 23 becoming almost ironic when applied to *The Deluge*: 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil'. Subliminal reference to the journey from the City of Destruction through the valley of the same name in *The Pilgrim's Progress* equally ionizes journey as salvation because Christian reaches the City of Sion, as do his wife and children in the second part of the book, while *this* journey is hopeless. Here, expression and pose represent immediate danger and urgent struggle for survival. Also, unlike usual travellers or refugees, none of Knights' characters carry possessions (Christian at least has his burden), supporting the premise that any journey to safety or new life is reserved for those who have entered the Ark. Because the viewer's experience of the image is structured through the self-portrait his/her concern is much more with individuals in

⁴⁰¹ Judith Wilt, 'Brava! And Farewell to Greatheart', *Boundary 2* 8, no. 3 (Spring 1980), 289. Article Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/302989>.

⁴⁰² *Ibid*, 290.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid*, 289.

the foreground than with the distant Ark. Salvation therefore plays a much more subsidiary role in *The Deluge* than in other art and literature of the period that combined reference to war with Christian doctrine. Contemporary examples of the concept of salvation in art and literature include Sargent's *Gassed* (1918-1919, IWM), which, alongside suffering, suggests resurrection in the foreground (soldiers waking as in a Renaissance *Resurrection*) and forgiveness in the football match in the distance. Paul Nash's *The Menin Road* (1919) intimates renewal as well as destruction.⁴⁰⁴ Laurence Binyon's 'For the Fallen' (1914) combines Christian hope with recognition for sacrifice, and for Henry Newbolt in 'The War Films' (1917) sacrifice and salvation also go together:

Brother of men, when now I see
The lads go forth in line,
Thou knowest my heart is hungry in me
As for thy bread and wine:
Thou knowest my heart is bowed in me
To take their death for mine.⁴⁰⁵

The value of sacrifice was an important part of both national and Church of England support for war, illustrated by WWI padre David Railton's comment on the cultural symbol of the Union Jack:

what a wonderful cross of sacrifice that deep red is. I am very keen that men everywhere should learn that our National Flag is the symbol of Christ and not a mere series of crosses used for commercial and secular purposes.⁴⁰⁶

Church of England support for WWI followed the teaching of St Augustine that war is acceptable when the lesser of two evils, 'the last recourse in obtaining justice'.⁴⁰⁷ Violation of Belgium's neutrality in 1914 was given as reason for a Just War.⁴⁰⁸ For some clergy the belief in a Just War was reinforced from 1915, with Zeppelin raids on the home front and German use of poison gas

⁴⁰⁴ See: Brockington, *Above the Battlefield*, 101; Cork, *The Bitter Truth*, 223.

⁴⁰⁵ Henry Newbolt, 'The War Films' [1917], in Henry Newbolt, *Poems New and Old* (London: John Murray, 1919), 88. It is likely that the poem was based on *The Battle of the Somme*, according to Jay Winter the 'most popular war film of the war'. In Winter, *Sites of Memory*, 15. For another powerful war film see Abel Gance, *J'Accuse* (1919).

⁴⁰⁶ David Railton, in a letter, quoted in Michael Moynihan, *God on Our Side: the British Padre in World War I* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1983), 47.

⁴⁰⁷ Alan Wilkinson, *The Church of England and the First World War* [1978], (London: Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, 1996), 122.

⁴⁰⁸ Darin D. Lenz, "Visions on the Battlefields': Alexander A. Boddy, Early British Pentecostalism, and the First World War, 1914–1918', *Journal of Religious History* 32, no. 3 (September 2008), 288-289. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9809.2008.00715.x.

in the conflict zones.⁴⁰⁹ The idea of a Holy War was used to describe a conflict that, as the Bishop of Durham, H.C.G. Moule, said, was 'waged for the preservation of Europe and the World from an unprecedented peril...[of] a formidably non-Christian ideal of national life, expressing itself in the tyrannous domination of a single great State'.⁴¹⁰ Other church leaders voiced the same patriotism, combined with distrust for Germany. Albert Marrin, writing as an academic historian, says of the Bishop of London, 'wherever he went Winnington-Ingram [Bishop of London] preached on the same text; better to die than to see England a German province.'⁴¹¹ The Archbishop of Canterbury, Randall Davidson, held a similar view, and considered Germany 'committed irreconcilably to principles...fatal to what Christ has taught us.'⁴¹²

Although Davidson privately expressed disquiet at reparations set out in the Versailles Peace Treaty, Church of England attitudes toward Germany did not greatly soften during the period I am concerned with, up to completion of *The Deluge* in late summer 1920.⁴¹³ The rising waters in the painting may, then, possibly represent the threat from Germany, in the recent war and if Germany re-armed. However, such a directly political statement seems unlikely in view of the painting's overall concern for relationships between women, care for the young and male selfishness. Furthermore, with its emphasis on the damned and on civilians, sacrifice as promoted during wartime by the Church of England is not part of Winifred Knights' *Deluge*. Church of England attitudes to the War are significant, then, because *The Deluge's* subject is ostensibly religious. In showing hope as a delusion and denying salvation, Knights seems to critique both the Old Testament version of justice and early twentieth-century views that gave meaning to death. Her critique is not necessarily a conscious political or social statement and the extent of influence from either church or political circumstances cannot be ascertained. However, her depiction of suffering, using the biblical story to explore the deluded hope of escape, is remarkable when compared with the WWI images and poetry, such as Newbolt's 'War Pictures', detailed above. Channelled through the self-portrait, her narrative draws the viewer to experience fear and suffering and its effects on both individuals and emotionally fractured community.

I have considered the painting with reference to the Church of England's ideas of salvation, and rejected any connection between views held by members of the Anglican Church and this work. Even so, and providing a counter-argument, the image may suggest some sort of salvation. To

⁴⁰⁹ Albert Marrin, *The Last Crusade: The Church of England in the First World War* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University, 1974), 138.

⁴¹⁰ Alexander A. Boddy, "The War," *Confidence* 8, no. 1 (January 1915), 5-6. In Lenz: *ibid*, 290.

⁴¹¹ Marrin, *Last Crusade*, 181.

⁴¹² *The Church Times* (30th June 1915), quoted in Marrin, *ibid*, 221.

⁴¹³ Wilkinson, *Church of England*, 264-265.

return to salvation and its possibility, it was stated earlier that the figures on the right side of *The Deluge* could be read as survivors, with the man leading the race representing, along with the greyhound, the survival of the fittest. Another reading, by *The Referee's* reviewer of 1921, picked out characters from the foreground as the saved:

Miss Winifred Knights' Rome prize 'Deluge' is delightful, and opens up quite a flood of antediluvian fancies. It is quite an Arabian Knights' entertainment. As all the females flying from the flood are in more or less modern costume [sub-heading, bold omitted, otherwise sic] and the men are ditto. One pictures Noah going into the Ark in a frock-coat and top-hat and sponge bags, Mrs Noah following in a tailor-made costume and an up-to-date toque, with her jewel case in one hand and a special number of the 'Animals' Friend' in the other.⁴¹⁴

It is difficult to justify this interpretation from close attention to the image because of the number of individuals in the foreground, far in excess of Noah and his family, and the Ark's distance from men, women and children. Yet while I have previously rejected connections between Church of England ideas of salvation and any possibility of salvation in *The Deluge*, using these ideas in a different way re-opens the possibility of an alternative reading, leading to the potential for redemption as sub-text, as before focused on the self-portrait and the position of women. The following interpretation is therefore consonant with my much earlier comment when, in linking ideas of survival to Psalm 23, I stated that contrary readings of the image (survivors/damned) fit the difficult, unsettled post-war circumstances.

While, as stated above, salvation was earlier rejected as a strong sub-text, the Ark in the background of *The Deluge* can be understood as representing a promise of survival (in this world or the next), viewers knowing it will later rest on Mount Ararat, where God will send a rainbow.⁴¹⁵ Although almost invisible in reproduction, Knights has painted a thin red line on the bow of her Ark. The line provides a connection between this deep space, the self-portrait's red blouse and the red dresses of the two girls (who, as I have argued, are probably Knights' sisters), a tiny narrative link to the faint possibility of redemption for those who look and understand. There are additional indications of salvation, as well. I have previously rejected any strong likelihood that the waters in *The Deluge* suggest redemption, regarding the connection only as a possible sub-text. But, perhaps, the Flood can be seen differently, providing a cleansing that pre-figures New Testament Baptism. Another possibility emerges from examining the father and mother helping

⁴¹⁴ *The Referee* (13th February 1921).

⁴¹⁵ Genesis, Chapter 8.

their child to safety over a wall. It was argued that this motif was taken directly from Poussin's *Winter - The Deluge*, but that the re-use did not represent any strong conviction on the artist's part. Arguing differently, the vignette can be understood to represent the positive features of community and family denied in other aspects of the painting. The reading supports a similar interpretation of the woman with baby, not co-incidentally a portrait of Knights' own mother, who through her 'good work' of care for the future generation ensures survival into the next world.⁴¹⁶ The self-portrait and her sister turning to the viewer reinforce this trope, inviting him/her to empathise with the family groups and to wish that their care for one another will be rewarded. Use of modern-day costume, rather than nudes or semi-nudes, also supports the idea, as nudes were often used to represent the damned in representations of *The Deluge*.⁴¹⁷ Looking beyond the point detailed above, that consideration for others might deserve reward, Church of England (and Roman Catholic) doctrine that favoured good works, considering that faith together with good works justified salvation, is a further way of considering connections between care for others and life after death.⁴¹⁸ Appreciating the significance of such doctrine, widely known in inter-war Britain, provides another avenue towards understanding how the artist worked with biblical material, her response to survivors/damned both vivid and emotional. Finally, focusing on survivors it becomes possible to integrate space as distance with time as distance in a journey away from the circumstances of the War, thus opening out the beginnings of understanding in the period two years after the cessation of hostilities.

I have argued that the years after 1918 were uncertain and that there was no settled commemorative culture. However, circumstances can be seen differently, with promises of salvation in the destruction of WWI and its aftermath, something Lloyd George suggested in his wartime speech, drawing on imagery of 'the deluge'.⁴¹⁹ To take another example, after the War, in a speech given in Manchester in December 1918 Woodrow Wilson said:

I believe that...men are beginning to see, not perhaps the golden age, but an age which at any rate is brightening from decade to decade, and will lead us some time to an elevation from which we can see the things for which the heart of mankind is longing.⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁶ For information on Knights' mother as model see Collins, in *Winifred Knights*, 50.

⁴¹⁷ See for example Michelangelo, Turner, Francis Danby, and James Tissot's desperate nudes (1895-1902) as well as *The Deluge* by Expressionist Jacob Steinhard (1912). James Wilkie showed nudes in his image of the 'saved', which suggests that he considered demonstrating mastery of the nude advantageous in a submission for the Rome Prize. However, a woman artist would have been cautious of demonstrating this skill in a large-scale painting.

⁴¹⁸ For justification by works see James, Chapter 2.

⁴¹⁹ Lloyd George, 'The Great War' (19th September 1914), 14, quoted in Marwick, *After the Deluge*, 89.

⁴²⁰ Woodrow Wilson (December 1918), quoted in Mowat, *Britain between the Wars*, 1.

The hopes of both Woodrow Wilson and Lloyd George were to be disappointed, but other aspects of post-war culture suggest how hope persisted, aided by Christianity's language. The temporary cenotaph, its empty tomb symbolising resurrection, was kept in place after the 1919 Peace Day celebrations because of popular demand.⁴²¹ The popularity of both Spiritualism and consolatory poetry in these immediate post-war years (Rupert Brooke, Laurence Binyon, Henry Newbolt) also suggest that the search for meaning in recent events was both strong and successful, particularly in contrast to the reaction indicated by anti-war novels of the late 1920s.⁴²²

The Deluge shows part of a journey to salvation or a flight to destruction. Despite the counter-readings that have been offered, my sense is that salvation is a secondary meaning, knowledge of destruction dominant. The painting provides no catharsis, as we might expect at the moment of resurrection or salvation. It does not give, either, the certain destruction of the damned that by implication guarantees survival of the saved in many earlier representations of 'the deluge'. But the self-portrait is not trapped in the experience of the deluge or in that of the Silvertown explosions and the artist's subsequent collapse. Instead, Knights uses her self-portrait to figure a confrontation with the War and even with the world inherited post-war. Set in the uncertain years that have been described, this confrontation is not resolved and knowledge is sensed rather than fully expressed, the self-portrait glancing, not staring. Confronting her wartime trauma in the post-war years, she returned to earlier experiences of wartime fear and its effects on the home front, so the experience of community as a unit that she recorded in her letter of November 1918 could not be duplicated in her art - this makes the self-portrait's isolation palpable. Through the self-portrait Knights, too, draws the spectator into the position of witness to the past and its ramifications on the present as avenue to grasp what life after catastrophe might mean.

Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* was published seven years after Winifred Knights won the Rome Prize. In the following quotation Woolf refers to the ten years between 1914 and 1924:

it seemed now as if...divine goodness...covers his treasures in a drench of hail, and so breaks them, so confuses them that it seems impossible that their calm should ever

⁴²¹ The cenotaph was also by its presence as 'the tomb of no one...the tomb of all who had died in the war'. In Winter, *Sites of Memory*, 104.

⁴²² Spiritualists considered they had proof of survival after death, an attractive idea in the post-war years because this did not depend on faith. They believed that the dead continued lives similar to those on earth, wearing clothes and living in communities. See Jenny Hazelgrove, *Spiritualism and British Society Between the Wars* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 14. Séances were integral to Spiritualist practice. The medium was usually female, and the control (a spirit 'mediator' between the physical and spirit worlds) was male. See Simon Featherstone, 'Spiritualism as Popular Performance in the 1930s: the Dark Theatre of Helen Duncan', *NTQ* 27 (2 May 2011), 142. DOI: 10.1017/S0266464X11000273.

return or that we should ever compose from their fragments a perfect whole or read in the littered pieces the clear words of truth.⁴²³

Other parts of the novel describe a small community of family and friends fractured by death and misunderstandings after the War. But when Mr Ramsay and his son James reach the distant lighthouse, near the end of the novel, Woolf provides some sort of catharsis, in language that mirrors the Christian story: “He has landed” [Lily Briscoe] said aloud. “It is finished.” And later Lily finishes her picture: ‘she drew a line there, in the centre...Yes, she thought. I have had my vision.’⁴²⁴ *The Deluge* is indebted to the same religious tradition. But, her painting completed seven years before Virginia Woolf’s novel, *Knights* was unable (or unwilling) to provide the ‘perfect whole’ of narrative resolution, so that in these contingent circumstances the artist pauses, glances, chooses to know, does not yet act.

The Deluge’s fragment of a flight or journey provides no catharsis and the image does not show whether the artist had overcome her trauma, as Rivers hoped for his patients. With a range of sources, including influences from the Christian tradition, still culturally significant in these years, the artist fashioned a powerful image of impending destruction that referenced WWI and its aftermath. Her representation is, as Woolf’s in *To the Lighthouse*, channelled through female experience. The self-portrait, with the two girls wearing red, draw the viewer into the image – highlighting differences between knowledge and the self-interest, desperation and scattered family solidarity played out in other areas of the canvas. Because of the unresolved narrative and its modern composition, outlined at the beginning of my account, *The Deluge* is both a powerful response to WWI in the two years that followed it and a successful treatment of an important biblical subject. For the work *Knights* was both termed a ‘genius’ and given the opportunity of study at Rome for three years, years that are the subject of my succeeding chapter.⁴²⁵

⁴²³ Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* [1927], (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1964), 146.

⁴²⁴ Woolf, *Lighthouse*, 236-237. Pericles Lewis’ analysis of religious language in the novel suggests only provisional resolution and tentative hopes for a new sense of community post-war. Pericles Lewis, *Religious Experience and the Modernist Novel*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 168-169.

⁴²⁵ ‘Critics declare the painter a genius’. In *The Daily Graphic* (8th February, 1921), 1.

Chapter Three. Winifred Knights and Italy in the 1920s: gender and conservatism

The first painting that Winifred Knights completed in Italy was *Italian Landscape*, which was finished in 1921 (**plate 57**). The painting is oil on wood and small at 30.5 x 32.04 cm. The artist's previous work was *The Deluge* (1920), and the new work's productive fields, winding river and a mother breast-feeding is almost a pendant to *The Deluge* (although at a much smaller scale), a contrastingly positive representation of maternity and modern life, situated in the Italian countryside that the artist loved. In October 1920, a month after winning the Rome Prize in Decorative Painting, she had left London for the British School at Rome (the BSR), located in the north of the city and close to the Borghese Gardens. Seen from her studio at the BSR this was 'lovely country with those umbrella shaped trees and white stone palaces',⁴²⁶ while Anticoli Corrado (a village where she spent the summer months) was 'a wonderful place...built on the side of a precipice' with 'no roads only steps in the town'.⁴²⁷ Knights lived nearly six years in Italy, in total. Early Italian art, the beautiful landscape, peasant life and the contrastingly claustrophobic BSR shaped the work she produced from 1921 and into the 1930s.⁴²⁸ But in Rome she worked slowly and, lacking regular guidance, for there was neither a resident tutor in Art nor a set schedule of work, was at first 'drifting here most horribly'.⁴²⁹ But study in Rome was intended as preparation for a career in large-scale mural painting, and when in late April 1921 she was finally provided with a programme of work it highlighted the 1852 Commissioners' aims in establishing the Rome Prize, for as she wrote, 'yr 2 big decoration 5x6' was the major student work required.⁴³⁰ This chapter argues that Winifred Knights' Italian work employs Christian subject-

⁴²⁶ Letter from Winifred Knights to her mother dated November 13th 1920. Knights' Letters, UCL Special Collections. All further references to letters in the present chapter are to this collection unless otherwise stated.

⁴²⁷ Letter from Winifred Knights to her father dated January 18th 1921.

⁴²⁸ At the conclusion of her scholarship in autumn 1923 Knights went back to London. She returned to Italy to marry Rome Scholar Thomas Monnington in April 1924. For this information see Eileen Palmer (Knights' sister), annotations to letter from Winifred Knights to her aunt Millicent dated Wednesday 23rd 1924. See also Eileen Palmer, account of Winifred Knights' life, in Basildon Bond Lion Brand Notebook (University College London Art Museum: unpublished work, probably 1980s), this account hereafter cited as 'Eileen Palmer, account of Winifred Knights' life'.

⁴²⁹ Letter from Winifred Knights to 'My dearest Auntie' dated 21st February 1921.

⁴³⁰ Letter from Winifred Knights to her mother dated Saturday 28th May 1921. The letter was based on correspondence from Evelyn Shaw (Secretary to the BSR, based in London) in which he wrote: 'I am engaged in writing a short memorandum on a course of study for Rome Scholars which has been approved by the Faculty of Painting, but I write to you now to tell you that the Faculty will not require a decoration, as I suggested to you, in your first year./The first year will be generally spent in learning as much as possible of the art, language and history of the country and making sketches and preparing for

matter, representations of the everyday and associated female agency, responding to prevailing social conservatism without challenging it in more than minor form. Her exploration of maternity and sorority is sensitive and perceptive, and she uses the decorative style with which she was familiar to present the 'lovely' Italian landscape as both timeless and a part of the modern world.⁴³¹ When she does challenge this conservatism she gently draws attention to women's frustrations and resentment in the face of patriarchal societies that required them to value marriage and motherhood above all else.

Italian Landscape (1921, Tate Collection) and inter-war conservatism

Italian Landscape (1921, oil on wood, 30.5 x 32.04 cm, **plate 57**) was bought by the National Gallery, Millbank, on October 24th 1922 for £15.⁴³² Knights wrote that 'I do wish I had a better thing for them [the gallery's Board]. But if they like it then I can do nothing else but approve'.⁴³³ Although modest in size the painting's aesthetically pleasing composition with its socially conservative focus on maternity perhaps account for the Board's selection. Social conservatism and an emphasis on the value of maternity are important features of inter-war British society, as I shall show. Winifred Knights did not name the precise location of the painting, but included the Sabine Hills and peaks of the Apennines in the distance and in the mid-ground the Tiber's serpentine curves, features of the Campagna north of Rome.

The following section examines *Italian Landscape's* composition, turning to its probable source in Matthew and some precedents for the subject. Framed at the top by the slate grey Sabine Hills and blue mountains beyond, the depicted space is filled closer to the picture plane by an image of

the decoration which will be expected from the student at the end of the second year./The student will have, however, to make a copy of a picture during the first year./In the second year the main work will be the decoration, to be not less than 30 square feet in size./In the third year the student will produce a picture not less than 15 feet in size. This picture may be a commission.' Letter from Evelyn Shaw to Winifred Knights dated 29th April 1921. Knights' Folder, 'Miss W.M. Knights Rome Scholar in Decorative Painting 1920 and Post-Scholarship Correspondence since 3rd April 1924'. BSR Archives.

⁴³¹ Letter from Winifred Knights to her mother dated 13th November 1920.

⁴³² J.B. Manson wrote, 'I enclose a cheque for £15 which I shall be obliged if you will forward to Miss Knights.' Letter from J.B. Manson (National Gallery, Millbank), to Evelyn Shaw dated October 24th 1922. Knights' Folder, BSR Archives.

⁴³³ Letter from Winifred Knights to Evelyn Shaw (Secretary to the British School at Rome, based in London) dated 'Thursday'. The letter concerns the painting's acquisition by the Gallery at Millbank, therefore it is datable to October 1922. Knights' Folder, BSR Archives. The BSR archives hold a series of letters that relate to the purchase. For instance, a letter from Charles Aitken (Director of the Gallery) to Evelyn Shaw suggests that Muirhead Bone was important to *Italian Landscape's* acquisition: 'Kindly allow the board to have a small painting by Miss Knights which Mr Muirhead Bone wishes to show the Board here.' Letter dated 14th October 1922. Knights' Folder, BSR Archives.

a mother breast-feeding while the father sleeps. Just behind are double pitched ochre roofs set in a rudimentary pattern against simpler rectangles of concrete farmstead and barn. Contrasts between 'S' bends of the Tiber, blocks of modern farm buildings and a mother nursing her baby show how the formal priorities of decorative style could combine with a partial engagement with the modern world to embody the beauties of landscape and maternity and also gesture to modernity.

Walled fields striped in green and brown reprise the countryside depicted in *The Deluge*, but without suggesting fields might flood: note the river's muddy low waterline. A peasant hoeing a field and the mother feeding her baby are part of the productive harmony of tilled land in the watershed of flowing river. On the far bank Knights has re-used the patterns of haystacks from *Village Street: Mill-Hands Conversing* and *The Deluge*, although with thicker paint, so the design is less distinct. Her care for pattern and structure, including buildings set against the curving river, and strange disparities in size (see the clump of trees to the viewer's right) shows the artist was interested as much in decoration and mood as naturalism or geographical accuracy. Further evidence for this intention is in a letter. She says, 'I have been doing a small painting of the Tiber Valley...I have been making it into a composition, it will give you some idea of the country.'⁴³⁴ Not overly concerned with verisimilitude, the artist has depicted aspects of the local folk costume of full skirt, long-sleeved blouse and bodice, but has not represented either peasant headdress or scarf.⁴³⁵ In the mid-ground a woman in peasant bodice is looking down at six men walking at the river's edge. Is the woman hoping to attract the attention of one of these black-robed priests?

There are no specific influences from Italian art, except for Giorgione's enigmatic *The Tempest* (c. 1506-1508, Accademia, Venice) where a partially-clothed woman breast-feeds against a river landscape. Knights did not describe her painting as a Rest on the Flight into Egypt, referring to it as 'the Tiber picture',⁴³⁶ but it is evidently informed by the subject. Claude Lorrain's *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* (1661, the Hermitage) was probably an influence. In Claude's painting of mother and child in the Tiber valley the figures are, like Knights', tiny, the landscape all important. Other reproductions of the subject were probably significant. In Lorenzo Lotto's version, *Rest on the Flight into Egypt with St Justine* (1529-1530, the Hermitage, **plate 64**), fig-leaves frame Mary's face, while behind Joseph and St Justine, with a dagger in her breast, a river curves gently into

⁴³⁴ Letter from Winifred Knights to 'Dearest' (probably her mother) dated Tuesday 19th July 1921.

⁴³⁵ Her cap or scarf is similar to the scarf in Augustus John's *The Smiling Woman: Dorelia*, 1909. Knights would have known John's painting.

⁴³⁶ Letter from Winifred Knights to Evelyn Shaw (Secretary to the British School at Rome, based in London) dated 'Thursday'. The letter concerns the painting's acquisition by the Tate Gallery, therefore datable to October 1922. Knights' Folder, BSR Archives.

the distance. The river is very likely an analogue for Mary and Joseph's long journey when, as described in Matthew Chapter Two, an angel tells Joseph to leave Bethlehem and he 'took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt.'⁴³⁷ Matthew does not mention a rest on the journey, but many artists took the opportunity to explore the theme of mother and child and even picture Joseph as a semi-detached father, slumbering rather than keeping watch. Thus two versions of Orazio Gentileschi's *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* show an exhausted, elderly Joseph sleeping on the family's bundles while Mary nurses the Christ Child (c.1628, the Louvre ; 1615-1620, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, **plate 65**). The father in *Italian Landscape* is younger and, overcome by heat, is sprawled in the sun.

The high viewpoint, sweeping landscape and delicate detailing of *Italian Landscape* are particularly reminiscent of northern Renaissance painting, seen for instance in Joachim Patinir's *Flight into Egypt* (1515-1524, Antwerp) and Pieter Brueghel the Elder's *Landscape with the Flight into Egypt* (1563, Courtauld Gallery). Knights may have known a *Landscape with the Rest on the Flight into Egypt*, painted in Patinir's workshop (c.1515-1524, the National Gallery, **plate 62**) with its nursing Virgin and river meeting a distant sea. Another northern *Flight into Egypt* in the National Gallery (workshop of the Master of 1518, c.1515) has a similarly sweeping view. The 'Miracle of the Corn', a legend associated with the Flight, with its ripe cornfield, peasants and soldiers is depicted in the mid-ground of all these and Winifred Knights' large cornfield possibly refers to the legend.⁴³⁸ *Italian Landscape* was produced early in the artist's time in Italy, so it seems likely that she combined compositional features from works she had seen in London, then relatively recently, with influences from Italian art that had become available to her.

This section moves back from the painting to provide an outline of the style and content advocated at the British School at Rome in the 1920s. It goes on to examine attitudes to maternity and feminism in inter-war Britain and Italy, emphasising the increased value placed on women's roles as mothers in the years following WWI. I aim to provide an overview that illuminates Knights' choices in painting *Italian Landscape* and at the same time provide material that will contribute to discussion of her Italian paintings as a body of work: all of these paintings deal with femininity, to varying extents. At the BSR modernism was moderate and conservative,

⁴³⁷ Matthew, Chapter 2.

⁴³⁸ As the Holy Family passed a field corn sprang up miraculously overnight. Labourers told Herod's soldiers the family had passed by before the corn ripened. See Reindert L. Falkenburg, *Joachim Patinir: Landscape as an Image of the Pilgrimage of Life*, [1985], (Michael Hoyle trans.), (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1988), 16. It is conceivable that the men at the water's edge in Knights' painting are soldiers associated with this legend. But they are wearing long black robes, so are most likely priests, as suggested in the body of my text.

the rhythm and colour of decorations influenced by Puvis de Chavannes, Augustus John and early Italian art. Students' choice of subject sometimes eschewed modern life, as in Thomas Monnington's *Allegory* (1924, Tate Collection, **plate 73**), but were as likely to respond to modernity with content that figured conventional gendered occupations and brought past and present together. Colin Gill's bucolic *Allegory* with its prominent nudes and attentive men (1920-1921, private collection, **plate 63**) illustrates the point, as does Knights' *Italian Landscape*. This conservatism in style and content appealed to the British establishment, and Monnington, Gill, Alfred Kingsley Lawrence and others later received commissions for public murals. Knights, too, received a commission for public art, a reredos for Canterbury Cathedral, although at 76.5 x 189.5 cm it was not nearly at the scale of a mural.⁴³⁹ It has been suggested that the position of British pre-war imperialist elites was maintained into post-war society, despite their reduced wealth.⁴⁴⁰ The BSR is a good example for this point, with a symbiotic relationship between the School staff and the British political and artistic establishment. In the School's cloistered environment the staff must have had persuasive power over students' choices.⁴⁴¹ Both Janet Wolf and the historian William D. Rubinstein argue that early twentieth-century avant-garde artists emerged from outside the establishment mainstream. Wolf offers Mark Gertler and Jacob Epstein as examples.⁴⁴² Drawing this argument together, it is unsurprising that at the BSR Knights, whose prosperous family and education at Sir James Allen's Girls' School positioned her as an establishment insider, gave up the energetic Vorticism employed in *The Deluge* for less rebellious forms. The content is different, too, with contrastingly passive women depicted in the artist's 'large decoration' *The Marriage at Cana* (**plate 58**), while *Italian Landscape* and *Santissima Trinita* (1924-1930, private collection, **plate 59 and plate 60**) show women's quiet confidence in customary gendered roles.⁴⁴³

In inter-war Britain both major political parties saw 'foster[ing] tranquillity and stability, softening class conflict' as a major political task, and 'rigid economic stability was maintained at the price of

⁴³⁹ Examples for Gill, Monnington and A.K. Lawrence include murals for St Stephen's Hall, Westminster, 1924-1927. Knights was commissioned to paint *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours* for St Martin's Chapel, Canterbury Cathedral. It was completed in 1933.

⁴⁴⁰ William D. Rubinstein, 'Britain's Elites in the Inter-War Period, 1918-1939: Decline or Continued Ascendancy?' *British Scholar Journal*, 3, no. 1 (September 2010), 20. DOI: 10.3366/bsr.2010.0302.

⁴⁴¹ BSR staff included, for instance, Director Thomas Ashby and visiting tutor in decorative painting and engraving D.Y. Cameron.

⁴⁴² Janet Wolf, *Anglo Modern* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), 123-125, 156-157. Rubenstein, 'Britain's Elites,' 13.

⁴⁴³ Women are similarly passive in Knights' much earlier *Village Street: Mill-Hands Conversing* (1919, UCL Art Museum), examined in Chapter One of this thesis. The women in *The Marriage at Cana* are not just passive - some are described later in this chapter as 'sullen'.

growth, [with] ...no taste for imperial ‘adventures’.⁴⁴⁴ The Italian situation was different as Italy did not secure hoped-for territorial gains following WWI, and resentment at this, coupled with conflict between political left and right, threatened national stability, continuing even after Mussolini secured power in 1922.⁴⁴⁵ Yet conservatism in both societies is pertinent background to Knights’ *Italian Landscape* (and to her other Italian paintings). In this environment, the 1920s were difficult years for feminists in Britain and Italy, as the history of women’s suffrage shows. In the former women secured a limited franchise on 6th February 1918, yet had to wait until 2nd July 1928 for parity with men. In Italy feminists’ expectations were disappointed after WWI, although Mussolini promised women the vote in 1923. In 1925 his promise was partially honoured by a law that gave ‘some women’ the vote ‘in administrative elections’. Despite this, in 1926 all elections were abolished.⁴⁴⁶ Focusing just on Britain, veterans took the place of women in many jobs after WWI,⁴⁴⁷ and in middle-class families it was commonly expected that husbands would provide the ‘family wage’ and women give up work after marriage.⁴⁴⁸ Women’s career opportunities were limited, particularly if they had married, for instance by a bar that prevented married women working as teachers.⁴⁴⁹

The negative picture of women’s job opportunities that I have given should be balanced by the removal of restrictions on professional employment that came from the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of 1919, so that by 1921, for instance, the numbers of women practicing as barristers and solicitors in England and Wales had risen from none to thirty-seven.⁴⁵⁰ There were

⁴⁴⁴ Julian Stallabrass, ‘Conservatism and Class Difference in Twentieth-Century British Art’, in Chris Stephens (ed.) *The History of British Art 1870-Now* (London and New Haven: Tate Britain and Yale Center for British Art, 2009), 131. See also Corbett, *Modernity of English Art*, 59-60.

⁴⁴⁵ Martin Clarke, *Modern Italy 1871-1995* [1984], (London and New York: Longman, 1996), 203-235. Lucy Hughes-Hallett, *The Pike: Gabriele D’Annunzio*, (London: Fourth Estate, 2013), 447-620.

⁴⁴⁶ Victoria de Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California Press, 1992), 27, 36-37.

⁴⁴⁷ The Restitution of Pre-War Practices Act (1919) legitimised this process, but large numbers of women workers had already been dismissed by this date. See Gerry R. Rubin, ‘Law as a Bargaining Weapon: British Labour and the Restitution of Pre-War Practices Act 1919’, *The Historical Journal* 32, no. 4 (1989), 933-934, Academic Room at <http://www.academicroom.com/article/law-bargaining-weapon-british-labour-and-restoration-pre-war-practices-act-1919>, accessed 21st December 2014.

⁴⁴⁸ Katherine Horwood, *Keeping up Appearances: Fashion and Class between the Wars* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 2005), 4.

⁴⁴⁹ Jane Garrity, *Step-Daughters of England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 45-48.

⁴⁵⁰ The Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act (1919) stated that a ‘person shall not be disqualified by sex or marriage from the exercise of any public function, or from being appointed to or holding any civil or judicial office or post, or from entering or assuming or carrying on any civil profession or vocation, or for admission to any incorporated society (whether incorporated by Royal Charter or otherwise), and a person shall not be exempted by sex or marriage from the liability to serve as a juror’. The Act eased some women’s path to employment, for instance in the civil service and the legal profession. But when tested in the Courts (see *Price v. Rhondda U.D.C.*) the Act could not protect the interests of married women teachers and the Local Authority’s right to dismiss women at marriage was upheld. W.B.

increased employment opportunities for professional women in journalism, librarianship and social work,⁴⁵¹ while founding of *The Woman Engineer* journal in 1921 is another indication of broadening aspirations, albeit on a small scale.⁴⁵² Still considering Britain, there were advances in women's *personal* life, including the ideal of equality expressed in 'companionate marriage',⁴⁵³ sports, including tennis, and for all classes the cinema.⁴⁵⁴ Dances such as the Charleston were popular among all classes, and, as academic historian James Nott says, they 'allowed women...a freedom of expression often denied them at work and home'.⁴⁵⁵ The gradually emerging aspirations and opportunities that I have described, and an associated increased confidence, are not part of *Italian Landscape*, but represented in a small way in Knights' later *Figures in a Boat, Lake Piediluco* (1924-1930, private collection).

The history of feminism in post-WWI Britain illustrates the emphasis on maternity that is a leitmotif of these years. After the aims of the pre-war feminist movement were partially realised in 1918 by the limited franchise,⁴⁵⁶ the movement gradually fractured into 'old' and 'new' feminism.⁴⁵⁷ 'Old feminists' such as Elisabeth Robins, a pre-war suffragette, Vera Brittain, Winifred Holtby and Margaret (Lady) Rhondda largely concentrated on equal rights, but 'new' feminism's focus on

Creighton, 'Whatever Happened to the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act?' *Industrial Law Journal* 4, no. 3 (1975), 155-157. DOI: 10.1093/ilj/4.1.155.

Pamela Horn notes that while there were thirty-seven women barristers and solicitors in 1921, by 1931 there were 'almost two hundred' women practising as barristers and solicitors. In Pamela Horn, *Women in the 1920s* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd. 1995), 127.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

⁴⁵² For this journal see Cathy Clay, Time and Tide: Feminist Periodical Networks and Cultures of the New, Modernist Magazine Research Seminar, Institute of English School of Advanced Studies, University of London, Senate House (4th November 2014). I am grateful to Cathy Clay's paper for the positive view of women's professional work that I have developed and incorporated here.

⁴⁵³ Hilary Hinds, 'Together and Apart: Twin Beds, Domestic Hygiene and Modern Marriage, 1890-1945', *Journal of Design History* 23, no. 3 (2010), 296-300. DOI: 10.1093/jdh/epq022.

⁴⁵⁴ For sports, including tennis see Horwood, *Keeping up Appearances*, 8. For the cinema see Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism Between the Wars*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 9-10; Jenelle Troxell, "Shock and 'Perfect Contemplation': Dorothy Richardson's Mystical Cinematic Consciousness", in *Modernism/Modernity* 1, no. 1, (January 2014), 52-56; Horn, *Women in the 1920s*, 183-185. Alison Light also mentions the invention of 'the disposable sanitary napkin'. Light, *ibid*, 9-10.

⁴⁵⁵ James Nott, 'Contesting Popular Dancing and Dance Music in Britain during the 1920s', *Cultural and Social History* 10, no. 3 (2103), 450-451. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2752/147800413X13661166397300>.

⁴⁵⁶ The pre-war feminist movement was diverted into patriotic work during the War. See Johanna Alberti, *Beyond Suffrage: Feminists in War and Peace 1914-28*, (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan Press Ltd. 1989), 38-70. Lisa Tickner writes of the post-war years: 'Women were enfranchised but they were not emancipated, nor was the vote the key to that emancipation'. Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women* [1987], (London: Chatto and Windus, 1989), 237.

⁴⁵⁷ Dierdre Beddoe, *Back to Home and Duty: Women between the Wars 1918-1939*, (London, Boston, Sydney and Wellington: Pandora, 1989), 139. Johanna Alberti puts the decisive break between the 'ideas that had been running parallel' in the two groups of feminists at March 1925, when Eleanor Rathbone (President of the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship) 'suggested that individuals and organisations might have to make a choice between them'. Alberti, *ibid*, 164.

women and their children resonated with broader societal concerns.⁴⁵⁸ The group, led by Eleanor Rathbone, President of the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship (the NUSEC), campaigned for 'endowments' (family allowances) to be given to mothers. The group believed endowments would better support working-class children than the 'family wage', that is men's wage levels calculated to include maintenance of families.⁴⁵⁹ However, the NUSEC's objective was only realised in 1945, with the Family Allowance Act.⁴⁶⁰ Perhaps due to a societal emphasis on women as carers (implied by the NUSEC's position), nursing and teaching accounted for ninety percent of professional women's employment in 1921 and eighty-seven percent in 1931, according to census returns.⁴⁶¹ Finally, Freud's work on repression and Havelock Ellis' *The Psychology of Sex* gave substance to an understanding that marriage fulfilled women's sexual needs, and thereby strengthened the 'low esteem in which unmarried women were held'.⁴⁶² Knights' Italian paintings do not focus on modern women's opportunities, perhaps because she worked in the comparatively traditional environment of Italy. She also ignored some troubling characteristics of contemporary Italian life, including severe economic difficulties and the rise of Fascism.⁴⁶³ She clearly made use of well-established precedents, for instance in Christian subject-matter and motifs from the peasant life of the Campagna (this primitive life was new to her, but followed similar explorations such as Paul Gauguin in Brittany and Stanhope Forbes in Newlyn, Cornwall). Her motifs and representations of women demonstrate conventional responses to inter-war 'tranquillity' noted above, a retreat from *The Deluge's* independent female

⁴⁵⁸ 'Old feminists' expressed their views through the Six Point Group and also wrote for *Time and Tide*, a journal founded in 1920. See Rosaline Mason, 'The Civil Service and Equal Halves', *Time and Tide* 1, 1920 (11th June 1920), 101-102, which argued for equality of opportunity, for instance in entrance examinations. In 1926 Cicely Hamilton wrote that 'to the temper which granted enfranchisement to women has succeeded a natural, an instinctive desire to hold fast to the remnant of masculine supremacy and even assert it, where possible. The workings of that instinct are made manifest...in a House of Lords reading its own convenient meaning into an Act intended to equalize the status of the sexes; as a body of men teachers opposing like pay for like work; and as an International Labour authority striving to 'protect' the woman worker out of profitable forms of wage-earning'. Cicely Hamilton, 'Line Up!' *Time and Tide* 25 (2nd July 1926), 593.

⁴⁵⁹ Sue Bruley, *Women in Britain Since 1900* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd. 1999), 79-80; Beddoe, *Back to Home*, 139.

⁴⁶⁰ *Eleanor Florence Rathbone (12 May 1872-2 Jan 1946)*, University of Liverpool Library, Special Collections and Archives, at <http://www.liv.ac.uk/library/sca/colldescs/rathbone/eleo.htm>, accessed 11th November 2014

⁴⁶¹ Horn, *Women in the 1920s*, 128.

⁴⁶² Horn, *ibid*, 54.

⁴⁶³ For economic difficulties and fascism see Clark, *Modern Italy* 180-229 and Jonathan Dunnage, *Twentieth-Century Italy: a Social History* (London and Harlow: Longman and Pearson Education, 2002), 38-110.

agency. What does this art mean, what did Winifred Knights 'get out of' this position?⁴⁶⁴ She obviously understood the values of maternity and sorority and her decorative style, gentle colours and repetitive forms met a need to idealise the ordinary by representing day-to-day experiences. A quietly confident female self, expressed in companionship and maternity, is therefore a significant feature of her Italian work, although *The Marriage at Cana* and *Figures in a Boat, Lake Piediluco* (1924-1930, private collection, also known as *Tranquil Lake*, **plate 61**) include tiny rebellions against male control.

Italian Landscape reflects an increased emphasis on the importance of motherhood after WWI, a point that applies equally to Britain and Italy.⁴⁶⁵ I have described British 'new' feminism's focus on maternity. In both countries there was considerable anxiety about declining birth-rates and a widespread assumption that woman's place was in the home.⁴⁶⁶ In Italy this assumption turned towards pressure in the years after Mussolini's rise to power, but such pressure is not relevant to 1921.⁴⁶⁷ Images of nursing mothers have a history as spiritual exemplars or to promote breast-feeding. Depictions of the Virgin nursing the Christ Child, *Maria Lactans*, were common in Italy from the fourteenth century onwards. In examples of the sub-genre, such as Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Madonna del Latte*, in Siena, the Virgin 'exposes one small round breast...unrealistically attached to the Virgin's body' and Mary's nourishing milk is implicitly connected to Jesus' blood as spiritual food.⁴⁶⁸

Knights would have been impressed by the rich visual culture that she found in Italian churches, including countless representations of the Virgin and Child. Although she undoubtedly knew many Renaissance paintings of the Virgin and Child, from books and from visits to galleries and museums such as the National Gallery, the profusion of paintings and sculptures in church settings contrasted with the situation at home. In England the Reformation had resulted in widespread iconoclasm, particularly during the reign of Edward VI (1547-1553). A revival of aspects of the Medieval English church began with the Oxford Movement in the 1830s and within the High Church branch of the Church of England there was an increasing use of ritual during the nineteenth century, with the re-introduction of statues of the saints and narrative altarpieces. By

⁴⁶⁴ Abby Littlethun in Linda Welters and Abby Littlethun (eds.), *The Fashion Reader* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2007), 230. The quotation is taken from a discussion of nineteenth-century corseting. Littlethun refers to dress historians Leigh Summers and Valerie Steele, who argue that women were not "dupes of patriarchy" and ask instead "what was at stake for the women? What do they get out of it?"

⁴⁶⁵ For motherhood in Britain see discussion below. For Italy see de Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women*, 41-55.

⁴⁶⁶ Horwood, *Keeping up Appearances*, 4.

⁴⁶⁷ Mussolini became Prime Minister in October 1922. For the gradual application of his policies on women see de Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women*, 41-76.

⁴⁶⁸ Marilyn Yalom, *A History of the Breast* [1997], (London: Pandora, 1998), 40-41, 44.

the time of Winifred Knights' childhood elaborately decorated vestments had become another part of High Church (by then called Anglo-Catholic) visual culture, another revival of medieval practice. There was a similar emphasis on ritual in English Roman Catholic churches. However, the vast majority of English places of worship, including Broad Church and Low Church elements of the Church of England, remained relatively plain. For instance, stained glass was used to represent the life of Christ, but narrative altarpieces and statues were not re-introduced into these churches. The Protestant emphasis on preaching the Word of God was apparent from the almost unadorned interiors of Methodist and Congregational churches, from Scottish kirks and the soberly plain Welsh chapels. There were Scripture lessons at James Allen's Girls' School, where Winifred Knights studied, but the school was non-denominational,⁴⁶⁹ so detailed reference to the visual iconography of the Virgin and the Saints would not have been covered in the lessons. There is no evidence that Knights had much knowledge of Anglo-Catholic visual culture. But the rich imagery in Italian churches, including frescoes, altarpieces and statues, could not be matched by even the revivalists' best efforts in England in the early twentieth century. In Italy, by contrast, she would certainly have seen many examples of the Virgin and Child and the sub-genre of the nursing virgin. She would also have noted images of Charity, who unselfishly feeds more than one child.

Moving to the context of motherhood in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, where middle-class women employed wet nurses (in the nineteenth century) the natural mother could be seen as a link from society back to nature, for example in Renoir's *Motherhood (Woman Breast Feeding Her Child)* (1886, private collection) and *The Young Mother*, by Charles West Cope (c.1845, V&A, **plate 66**). In contrast, in Knights' youth breast-feeding by the child's mother was popular among all classes in Britain, as the nineteenth-century decline was 'halted or even reversed in some areas' due to 'a new creed of healthy infant-feeding'. Data collected by Medical Officers of Health from 1907-1930 suggested that 'an average of about 85 per cent of babies were breast-fed [by their own mothers] in their first two months of life'.⁴⁷⁰ In *Italian Landscape* the figure of Mary symbolises this natural, healthy feeding, her full breast extends down her chest as her child sucks. The artist has eschewed the boyish, almost prepubescent female shape so

⁴⁶⁹ Conversation between Cynthia Pullin (Librarian and Archivist, James Allen's Girls' School) and the author, 6th July 2011.

⁴⁷⁰ P. J. Atkins, 'Mother's milk and infant death in Britain, circa 1900-1940', *Anthropology of Food* 2, (September 2003), 11,15. Stable URL: <http://aof.revues.org/310>, accessed 22nd December 2014. But Atkins does note a 'bias' in the data 'towards poorer families because health visitors concentrated their efforts on poor households and those with a history of infant death. It was not uncommon to consider middle class babies as being 'too good to visit', *ibid*, 15.

popular in the 1920s.⁴⁷¹ Instead she celebrates 'milk as nutrition, as the essence of motherhood'.⁴⁷²

Knights' emotional investment in the theme of mother and child is plain in *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours*, completed in 1933 after the still-birth of her first child. But maternity is a persistent feature in her work, commencing with *Ludlow Fair and Cattle Market* (1919) which contrasts gypsy with middle-class mothers. Natural feeding and a mother's concentration on her child fit with prevailing inter-war attitudes, women expected to find satisfaction in home and family.⁴⁷³ In the early twentieth century British fertility rates declined in all sections of society (although, ignoring this evidence, eugenicists believed the lower classes produced too many children).⁴⁷⁴ Birth control campaigners advocated contraception 'to improve the health of the mothers of the race'.⁴⁷⁵ Yet, following sharp declines during WWI and the Spanish flu epidemic of 1918-1919 this situation was briefly reversed by a sudden peak in births in 1920 when 'probably well over 1.1 million live babies [were] born in the UK as a whole, well above the post-WWII boom year of 1947'.⁴⁷⁶ After losing her own baby later in the 1920s Knights would have noticed a surge in maternity, re-visiting her loss, but it is difficult to gauge the import to a young woman studying art. Certainly her life plan included motherhood: 'It'll be my turn soon [to have a baby], but not just yet I hope, too much to do.'⁴⁷⁷ Her relationship with her own mother was good, a template for long-term plans, witnessed by letters from Rome which are frank, lively and affectionate (although they ceased for a while when she married against her parents' wishes). As an outsider she was perhaps unconscious of current Italian anxieties about declining birth-rates, particularly in urban areas, illustrated by Mussolini's statement in 1927 that "I need births, many births."⁴⁷⁸ But in this Catholic country there was no pressure from eugenicists to increase births in selected groups, a position held until 1936, when Italy invaded Ethiopia. Indeed, there was a 'belief that a biological

⁴⁷¹ Tamar Heller and Patricia Moran, 'Introduction', in Tamar Heller and Patricia Moran (eds.), *Scenes of the Apple* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2003), 11. For other discussions of this point and the connection to food see: Marilyn Yalom, *History of the Breast*, 175-176; Clarissa Dickson Wright, *A History of English Food* (London: Random House Books, 2011), 402-403; John Burnett, *England Eats Out, 1830-Present* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2004), 198.

⁴⁷² P.J. Atkins, 'Mother's milk', 1.

⁴⁷³ Bruley, *Women in Britain*, 72.

⁴⁷⁴ In her book *Radiant Motherhood* Marie Stopes commented that 'our race is weakened by an appallingly high percentage of unfit weaklings and diseased individuals.' Quoted in Bruley, *ibid*, 86.

⁴⁷⁵ Johanna Alberti, 'The turn of the tide: sexuality and politics, 1928-31' *Women's History Review* 3, no. 2 (June 1994), 174. DOI: 10.1080/09612029400200053.

⁴⁷⁶ This peak was followed by 'the start of a renewed collapse of the birth rate, perhaps its longest and fastest ever, only a year later.' Michael Blastland, 'Go Figure: When was the real baby boom?' *BBC News Magazine* (2nd February 2012), at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-16853368>, accessed 23rd June 2013.

⁴⁷⁷ Letter from Winifred Knights to her mother, July 1925 (this date added by Eileen Palmer).

⁴⁷⁸ De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women*, 41-42.

free-for-all might...invigorate the race... [and] renew the political elites.'⁴⁷⁹ Knights would have noticed the large rural families, which remained the norm outside northern Italy. The 1931 census shows an average of about 4.3 children born to each self-employed rural worker in central Italy, contrasting with only 2.1 to each urban clerical worker (in the south this differential was around 5 and 3.4).⁴⁸⁰

Inter-war attitudes to home and family, including associations between motherhood, tradition and the Italian countryside, are likely to have strengthened an established, gendered interest in the subject as she worked on *Italian Landscape*. In important ways the theme is also a response to both Italy as idyll and the specific Italian modernity of the early twentieth century. There were formidable precedents for *Italian Landscape* in images of the Campagna, including works by Claude Lorrain, Richard Wilson and Turner. Representations of the area sometimes included peasants as foreground motif with ruined or ancient buildings and the Campagna behind, eschewing current architecture to emphasise the romance of lost civilisation and primitive peasant survival. Corot's *The Bridge at Narni* (1827, the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, **plate 67**) is one well-known example. Knights probably knew this from illustrations. Corot depicted the ruined Augustan bridge on the river Nera, a tributary of the Tiber, with peasants resting in the left foreground. With her scene much closer to the city Lady Hannah Crichton Stuart's watercolour *San Giovanni in Laterano from the Villa Mattei* (1830s, Abbot and Holder, **plate 68**), depicts women in brightly coloured bodices and skirts, classical ruins and the Baroque statues that crown San Giovanni behind them.⁴⁸¹ In Knights' own time, as well, peasants (and gypsies) were fascinatingly primitive and exotic, the subject of books and scholarly articles.⁴⁸²

From the late fourteenth century the Campagna was increasingly depopulated. Fewer rural workers were needed as cattle replaced cereal crops and bandits threatened security.⁴⁸³ This empty country with its cattle and cowherds was vividly depicted by Adam Elsheimer in *Tobias and the Angel*, engraved in 1608 by Henrik Goudt (**plate 69**), and by Claude Lorrain in his drawing of

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid, 53-54. De Grazia argues that these attitudes changed when Italy conquered Ethiopia in 1936 and forged closer ties with Germany, becoming exercised about possible mixing of Italian with Ethiopian blood, *ibid*, 54.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 47.

⁴⁸¹ Abbot and Holder Ltd. 'Lady Patrick Crichton Stuart (c.1800-1872) (Née Hannah Tighe, married 1818)', at <http://www.abbottandholder-thelist.co.uk/stuart/>, accessed 17th November, 2014.

⁴⁸² See for instance: Anne Macdonell, *In the Abruzzi: with 12 illustrations after watercolour drawings by Amy Atkinson* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1908); Estella Canziani, *Through the Apennines and the Lands of the Abruzzi: Landscape and Peasant Life Described and Drawn by Estella Canziani* (Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons, Ltd. 1928).

⁴⁸³ Richard Cocke, 'St Jerome and the Egyptian Lion: A Note on Elsheimer, Rome and the Campagna', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 54, no.1 (1991), 114-115. *JSTOR Journals EBSCO host*, accessed 21st December 2014.

the same title, with Tivoli in the background, dated 1635-1682 (both in the British Museum).⁴⁸⁴ In 1806 the area was described by Smollett as ‘naked, withered down, desolate and dreary, almost without...house, hut, or habitation’.⁴⁸⁵ But during the winter sheep grazed parts of the Campagna, brought by shepherds, in ‘goatskin leggings, with all their household goods’,⁴⁸⁶ from their summer pastures in the mountains of the Abruzzi to the east of Rome. This seasonal migration continued into the 1920s.⁴⁸⁷ It included day-labourers on farms. Two structures in *Italian Landscape* are almost certainly two of the temporary straw huts in which these farm workers lived. They are visible in the right mid-ground of her painting, on either side of a wall.⁴⁸⁸ As well, an early twentieth-century movement to revive agricultural production in the Campagna resulted in substantial re-population, with associated new rural communities and efforts to eradicate malaria.⁴⁸⁹ An article published in 1929, ‘The Repopulation of the Campagna’ by Roberto Almagio of the University of Rome, illustrates a number of new homes and communities (**plate 70**).⁴⁹⁰ The clean lines of farmhouse and barn in the foreground of *Italian Landscape* are instances of these smart rural buildings essential to repopulation and show that Knights did not ignore modernity when depicting the Campagna.⁴⁹¹ Nevertheless, she softens signs of rapid change: the rudimentary pattern made by double pitched roofs naturalises the utilitarian shapes and materials of concrete farmhouse and barn,⁴⁹² figuring innovation as part of an evolutionary process of modernisation in the region.

Knights therefore incorporated part of the everyday into her painting, but she was not concerned for a faithful representation of Italian life. She was certainly as interested in landscape as in the day-to-day and in this follows the precedent set by Claude, among others,⁴⁹³ and continued by Corot. She was probably influenced by attitudes at the BSR, as well. The Director, Thomas

⁴⁸⁴ For Elshiemer’s *Tobias and the Angel* see Cocke, *ibid*, 109, 117.

⁴⁸⁵ Tobias Smollett, in Robert Anderson (ed.), *Miscellaneous Works vol 5* (Edinburgh, 1806), 474, quoted in Cecilia Powell, *Turner in the South: Rome, Naples, Florence* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987), 17.

⁴⁸⁶ Thomas Ashby, *The Roman Campagna in Classical Times* [1927], (London: Ernest Benn Ltd. 1970), 51.

⁴⁸⁷ Roberto Almagio, ‘The Repopulation of the Roman Campagna’, *Geographical Review* 19, no. 4 (October 1929), 537-538. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/209688>.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 539-541. For photographs of these hut dwellings see Almagio, *ibid*, 538, 540. Close comparison of Knights’ painting with these photographs shows that they are almost certainly huts, not large haystacks. She has not, however, represented the more rudimentary conical shepherds’ huts.

⁴⁸⁹ Almagio, ‘Repopulation’, 544-545; Ashby, *Roman Campagna*, 49-50.

⁴⁹⁰ Almagio, ‘Repopulation’, 541, 549- 550.

⁴⁹¹ Roberto Almagio’s settlement map shows new communities particularly to the south, south-west of Rome and to the east in the Tivoli area, slightly west of Anticoli Corrado. Winifred Knights knew Tivoli and houses in the area perhaps informed her depiction. *Italian Landscape* is therefore not necessarily a representation of one specific location. For settlement map see Almagio, *ibid*, 531.

⁴⁹² These shapes contrast with the starker geometry of houses in *The Deluge*, which look like military barracks.

⁴⁹³ See Turner’s *Lake Nemi*, (1818, private collection) for another example.

Ashby, combined scholarly and emotional interest in the Campagna and wrote of ‘the wonderful lights that play upon its innumerable ridges and valleys, the beautiful outlines of the mountains by which it is bounded...the broad, brown Tiber flowing swiftly in its winding course between high muddy banks’.⁴⁹⁴ *Italian Landscape* reveals a similar appreciation of the Tiber and distant framing hills. Returning to the everyday, in her earlier *Ludlow Fair and Cattle Market* (1919) she represented gypsy women looking for the opportunity to make money. In contrast, the little peasant family here are not employed herding sheep or cattle, or hoeing the fields. The artist ignores labour to represent Italy as predominantly idyllic landscape with motherhood as togetherness and fulfilment. *Italian Landscape* functions as a *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* and as an emotional pendant to *The Deluge*, for we know the Holy Family will reach safety, a positive version of women’s experience. The high birth-rate of 1921 is evidence to hope for a future, while ‘new’ feminism’s campaign for family endowment acknowledged maternity’s importance in the modern world. But *Italian Landscape* is more a vision of a good world than reality, realised by setting forth love of Italy in decorative style, painted for the audience back home in Britain. Its representation of a nursing mother in rural Italy celebrates maternity and, in the conservative and uncertain condition of Britain following WWI, reassures and reminds the viewer that to choose motherhood is to choose something of value.

***Bathsheba* (c.1922, private collection); *Figures in a Boat, Lake Piediluco* (1924-1930, private collection); and *Santissima Trinita* (1924-1930, private collection)**

Winifred Knights was enthusiastic about Anticoli Corrado, a village and artists’ retreat perched on a steep hill east of Rome and Tivoli where BSR students rented studios to escape the Roman heat. Anticoli seemed romantic, for, as she wrote, a fiesta has ‘houses all lit up’ so that with ‘the starry sky’ they were ‘like... [the] wood in Peter Pan’.⁴⁹⁵ She saw a shepherd boy with a ‘reed pipe and a flock of goats it is a classic place I can tell you [punctuation sic].’⁴⁹⁶ Anticoli Corrado was both artists’ colony and escape into an imagined primitive simplicity. This ‘ancient rural way of life

⁴⁹⁴ Thomas Ashby, *The Roman Campagna in Classical Times* [1927], (London: Ernest Benn Ltd. 1970), 21.

⁴⁹⁵ Letter from Winifred Knights dated 5th May 1921. The recipient is not given, but was probably Knights’ mother or father: it was signed ‘Winks’, a diminutive used in other letters to her parents.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

and traditional rituals' survived into the 1950s, when Peter Lanyon found that 'people still travelled by mule and, he said, slept in the barns with their animals'.⁴⁹⁷ Equally nostalgic for a simple lifestyle, in April 1921 Knights said: 'we are very far from civilization now' with 'only one post a day'.⁴⁹⁸ She was impressed by the peasant women who wore 'lovely colours',⁴⁹⁹ made all 'their own sheets and linen' and 'look so fine walking about with distaffs'.⁵⁰⁰ Mariano Barbasan Lagueruela and Job Nixon were among the many artists who worked in the village: Lagueruela painted *Madonna Del Giglio's Procession at Anticoli Corrado* in 1900 (**plate 81**). Nixon's drypoint *The Piazza, Anticoli* is dated 1921.⁵⁰¹

After her early enthusiasm perhaps Knights sensed that this primitive belonged to all artists with studios in the village and was not personal to her. Whatever the reason, none of her paintings are set in the village, but its traditions of women's work and Christian festivals undoubtedly informed her artwork. She chose Orvieto, a town she loved, as the setting for *Bathsheba* (c.1922, pencil and oil on panel, 39.8 x 27 cm, unfinished, private collection).⁵⁰² The story of Bathsheba occurs in the Second Book of Samuel. King David watches Bathsheba bathing. He later sleeps with her, ensures her husband's death, and finally marries her, although 'the thing that David had done displeased the Lord'. Knights' choice of subject is witness to her interest in women, biblical subjects and Italy. Her fine drawing of David's palace and its walls is closely based on observation of Orvieto's Porta Rocca and town walls, built on vertical hillsides with the plain far below. She completed in oils a beautiful landscape background showing the plain below the town. She sketched David looking down on Bathsheba from his castle walls: her broad-brimmed hat and narrow shoes, left on a lower wall, signal her vulnerability to David's gaze. Due to her overriding interest in women's lives she was investigating this vulnerability and its associated male gaze, but it is not known why she left the painting uncompleted.

⁴⁹⁷ Chris Stephens, *Peter Lanyon: at the Edge of Landscape* (London, 2000), 117, quoted in Chris Stephens, 'Summary: Peter Lanyon's *Anticoli Hills* (1953)', 2001, at www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/lanyon-anticoli-hills-t06458/text-summary, accessed 17th September 2013.

⁴⁹⁸ Letter from Winifred Knights to her mother dated Saturday April 23rd 1921.

⁴⁹⁹ Letter from Winifred Knights dated 5th May 1921. The recipient is not noted, but was probably Knights' mother or father.

⁵⁰⁰ Letter from Winifred Knights to her father dated 18th January 1921.

⁵⁰¹ Lagueruela's painting was sold by Bonhams, New York, in 2008. The present location is unknown. Nixon's print is in the British Museum. He was Rome Scholar in Engraving for 1920.

⁵⁰² See two postcards depicting Orvieto and associated text, for example: 'It is the loveliest place I have been to yet' (both postcards are in UCL Special Collections). Because *Bathsheba* is substantially unfinished it is not examined in detail here: the figures and buildings are drawn out, but only the distant landscape is completed in oils.

She chose a small lake north of Rome for her completed *Figures in a Boat, Lake Piediluco* (1924-1930, 66.5 x 66.5 cm, **plate 61**), which is in the private collection of Sacha Llewellyn. It is also known as *Tranquil Lake Landscape with Three Figures in a Boat*.⁵⁰³ The following analysis will show how the artist interpreted the lake landscape as horizontal bands of shape and colour. It will also examine her commentary on gender and personal experience. The commentary may appear gentle, but it reveals something of the tension and frustration of gender relations in the inter-war period, when marriage was the norm and couples might be trapped in domesticity.

Now surrounded by heavily wooded mountains, Lake Piediluco is approximately two miles east of the Cascata delle Marmore, or Falls of Terni, which Byron described in his *Childe Harold*.⁵⁰⁴ Turner drew the lake,⁵⁰⁵ and Camille Corot framed the opening to one of its many branches with mountains and reflections in *Lake Piediluco, Umbria* (1825-1828, Ashmolean Museum, **plate 71**), including a section of cone-shaped Monte Caperno (Echo Mountain) to the viewer's right. Knights must have been fond of this area, for she made a number of studies here.⁵⁰⁶ For instance, an oil sketch now in UCL Art Museum is titled *Landscape near Lago di Piediluco, Umbria, Italy*, and is dated c.1920-1923 (**plate 72**). None of her sketches show Monte Caperno's distinctive curve, but, perhaps influenced by Corot, she represented the opening to one of the lake branches in a pencil sketch: *Compositional Study, Figures in Boats with Hills in Background* (undated, UCL Art Museum). Such Romantic framing was alien to her oeuvre and she chose a regular shoreline for *Figures in a Boat, Lake Piediluco*.

She has filled two thirds of the square picture-space with blue sky and a wide strip of partially wooded yellow-brown mountains edged by a narrow plain. The lake water and one boat occupy the remaining space. The sky is a uniform light blue and the viewer's attention is therefore drawn

⁵⁰³ Bonhams Auctions (16th July 2007), which also states that the painting is 'signed with monogram and dated 1930 verso', at <https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/15052/lot/460/>, accessed 17th November 2014. Sacha Llewellyn says the title was 'I imagine, made up by the Auction House'. In Sacha Llewellyn, e-mail to the author, 20th November 2014. The painting was described in another way when owned by Stephen and Virginia Courtauld in the 1930s. The 1939 Eltham Palace Inventory states: 'W. Knights (Mrs Monnington). A painting. Edge of Abruzzi. Boat with 3 people on lake. Canvas, 26 1/2" x 26 1/2"'. Exhibited at the French Gallery. November 1931 (No 28).' In Lester Oram (Assistant Curator, Eltham Palace), e-mail to the author, 4th July 2014. Because the location seems important to this work my thesis gives the painting the same title as shown on the Liss Fine Art website, at http://www.lissfineart.com/927sub0_163.htm, accessed 22nd December 2014.

⁵⁰⁴ Lord Byron, 'Childe Harold', Canto IV, verses LXIX-LXXII [1812-1818], in *The Poetical Works of Lord Byron*, (Oxford, OUP, 1929), 229.

⁵⁰⁵ Nicola Moody, 'Joseph Mallord William Turner Lake Piediluco, near Terni and the Cascata delle Marmore, 1819', at www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-lake-piediluco-near-terni-and-the-cascata-delle-marmore-d14745, accessed 17th November 2014.

⁵⁰⁶ See two sketches on one sheet, one in pencil and the other pen (UCL Art Museum). A pen and ink sketch on tracing paper with mountains and waterside trees in the same collection is closer to the completed painting.

to the horizontal bands of partially wooded mountains and lake. Here a blonde woman sits nervously bolt upright at one end of the boat. A man in shirtsleeves and waistcoat sculls at the opposite end, and a smaller man sporting a thick reddish beard is slumped close by (a gently humorous scene that recalls the vignette of peasant woman looking down at little men in *Italian Landscape*). Knights must have been familiar with paintings of middle-class boating, for instance by Berthe Morisot and John Lavery. But her tiny figures dominated by mountains are distinctly her own. Indeed, the woman sitting upright and separately from the men strikes a curious note against the mountains' austere beauty.

During the same years, probably working alongside Knights, Thomas Monnington produced two pictures that featured this landscape: *Allegory* (1924, 125.7 x 276.8 cm, Tate, **plate 73**), his major 'decoration' to fulfil the requirements of the Rome Scholarship, and his rather stiff *Piediluco* (oil on panel, c.1923-1926, 42.5 x 60.5 cm, **plate 74**) accepted in 1938 by the Royal Academy as his Diploma Work.⁵⁰⁷ *Allegory* is a frieze of naked men and women. Monnington did not name them, but the figures very likely include Adam and Eve with Apollo and Daphne, who turned into a laurel tree to escape Apollo, or 'the Garden of Love...even the Fountain of Youth.'⁵⁰⁸ They probably also represent Knights and Monnington, who married in 1924, as the woman is a portrait of Knights, with her dark hair replaced by blonde. The woman in her *Landscape: Lake Piediluco* has the same fair hair and is very likely a self-portrait, with Monnington as oarsman, the man in charge. Knights has represented a man giving his girlfriend a day-out treat, but she responds with tense attention, not pleasure, while ignoring their superfluous slumped companion. Another reading suggests the oarsman as hired help, the blonde woman wet and her clothes disarranged after a swim, her small bearded partner studiously oblivious of such fun. Alternatively, are the men, set close together and in similar clothes, somehow colluding against her, so her day on the lake becomes lonely and unhappy? By representing a relationship in any of these ways Knights brings *Allegory's* Renaissance couples down to the here and now of ordinary (even failing) love affairs. Taking this further, the viewer can justifiably regard this vignette as a critique of too high expectations, a wry comment on romance, emphasised by its lovely setting. And, looking again at the painting, a further reading suggests the woman is attempting a haughty disregard of her partner, as she sits, trapped, in the boat. In the 1920s convention directed wives to emotional and financial dependence on their husbands. Knights, whose talent was so publicly recognised by

⁵⁰⁷ Monnington titled the first of these *Decoration*, the title *Allegory* 'being given to it by the Tate in the 1950s, after they had requested Monnington to explain its subject and his answers had proved elusive'. Sam Smiles, 'Thomas Monnington's *Allegory*', in Alan Powers (et al.), *British Murals and Decorative Painting, 1920-1970* (London: Sansom and Company, 2013), 165.

⁵⁰⁸ Smiles, 'Monnington's *Allegory*', 165.

winning the Rome Prize outright in 1920, had seen Thomas Monnington develop his skills from probationary Scholar in 1923.⁵⁰⁹ She was perhaps ambivalent about Monnington's success, fearing that his confidence would dominate and even marginalise her less focused artistic persona.⁵¹⁰ In the mid-decade she wrote a letter hinting at disappointment with romantic love (and the restrictions of conventional gendered roles). Although she has

a woman to cook and wash up...[she] can't think of meals very well, my brain goes round and round, thinking out a nice, meal. Do you ever feel like that? Perhaps uncle Louis isn't so fastidious as Tom. I expect he is though. All men seem pretty wretched that way. That was one good point of Arnold's [Arnold Mason, her former fiancé] he didn't mind what he ate [punctuation sic].⁵¹¹

The woman in *Figures in a Boat, Lake Piediluco* appears equally trapped. Considering Monnington's *Allegory*, we imagine Daphne transforming into a laurel tree to evade her unwanted lover. Without such easy escape, the relationships in *Figures in a Boat, Lake Piediluco* are a reminder of the frustration arising from societal expectations that women would value marriage and motherhood above all else. 'Old' feminist Winifred Holtby described just these expectations in her novel *The Land of Green Ginger*, published in 1927. Joanna, the novel's central character,

was bound captive by her heart, and by her instinct and her conscience. If she fled to the ends of the earth, she could not escape her husband's need of her. If she entered an enchanted city, and its doors closed fast behind her, she could not shut her children out of her mind.⁵¹²

Winifred Knights' critique was much gentler than Holtby's, but equally pertinent to its time.

Knights left men out of her more substantial and impressive *Santissima Trinita* (1924-1930, 103 x 113 cm, private collection, **plate 59 and plate 60**), which shows women resting during a

⁵⁰⁹ For Thomas Monnington's probationary year see Eileen Palmer, account of Winifred Knights' life. Monnington was more financially successful after completing his studies than was Knights, evidenced by the greater quantity of his commissions. According to John Monnington both artists had private incomes, but Thomas Monnington's was much the larger. See John Monnington, interviewed by the author, 19th July 2013.

⁵¹⁰ Tensions in this artistic partnership are palpable in a letter from Knights to an unnamed recipient, dated 3rd October 1928: 'Tom is away...This is not a schism...I meanwhile am profiting hugely by his absence' by moving into his studio 'and am making his money fly employing vast armies of models...'

⁵¹¹ Letter from Knights to her aunt Millicent from 32A Oxford Road Putney, undated, annotated by Eileen Palmer '1925-6?'

⁵¹² Winifred Holtby, *The Land of Green Ginger* [1927], (London: Virago Modern Classics, 2011), 215.

pilgrimage.⁵¹³ She was attracted to the Piediluco area and admired the simple life that she witnessed in Anticoli Corrado, but found a more surely remote and primitive region as inspiration for *Santissima Trinita*. This was the mountain country to the east of Anticoli, dominated by Monte Autore (1,853m) and Monte Tarino (1,959m). She witnessed a Miracle Festival in this region.⁵¹⁴ *Santissima Trinita* represents women on a pilgrimage to the Festival. They have stopped to rest, and, while some women are sleeping, others are absorbed in preparations for resuming their journey. The title *Santissima Trinita* references the Trinity and the work features a processional banner depicting the Trinity, stuck in the ground as if to protect the women sleepers. These women nestle by haystacks, presumably for warmth during the night hours. The curves of two sun umbrellas reinforce and offset the haystacks' regular pattern of almost maternal shapes.⁵¹⁵ The women wake to early morning, perhaps nine o'clock, but except for purple on banner and umbrellas Knights has avoided bright colours, showing how the view is already bleached by the sun. With the women's relaxed poses there is therefore a general softness, reinforced by olive green and grey trees and light brown mountains tinged with pink. Yet inside the nearer sun umbrella purple, orange, yellow and black are set against one another. With light filtering through this is the brightest part of the painting, also a cocooned area that shelters the artist deeply asleep (a close self-portrait), clutching a bundle like a child for comfort. From his/her vantage point the viewer looks down on the open foreground space and can easily observe the women as they sleep and wash. The still streams seem to mark a transition between well-tended meadows in the foreground and ill-piled heaps of hay and ruined house in the mid-ground, evidence of depopulation. But on closer examination this is not abandoned or completely isolated country. There is, for instance, a small plantation in the foothills and a hill-top village deep into the picture space. Also, the little blobs on mountain tops are pilgrims on the long walk to the climax of the pilgrimage, at Vallepietra (the point is reinforced by a drawing of the pilgrims, in a letter dated 1923, **plate 75**).⁵¹⁶

⁵¹³ The collector wishes to remain anonymous.

⁵¹⁴ Letter from Winifred Knights to her aunt Millicent dated 23rd May 1923.

⁵¹⁵ Knights also painted rows of haystacks in the backgrounds of *Village Street: Mill -Hands Conversing* (1919), *The Deluge* (1920) and *Italian Landscape* (1921). An oil sketch of haystacks (undated, UCL Art Museum) is further evidence for her interest in this motif (Knights drew numerous sketches for her paintings, but this is the only preparatory sketch in oils that I have found). There is no evidence for Knights' knowledge of particular Neo-Impressionist paintings, but Paul Signac's *Regatta in Concarneau* (1891, private collection) includes similar repetition, also without detail as in Knights' painting. See also the trees in Henri-Edmond Cross: *Nocturne with Cypresses* (1896, Association des Amis du Petit-Palais, Geneva).

⁵¹⁶ See labelled drawing of the pilgrimage in Knights' letter to her sister Eileen dated 1st June 1923. The river in *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours* (1933) forms a clearer boundary.

I have previously indicated that public, large-scale Decorative Painting did not suit Winifred Knights' needs and that she drew her material from her private life as girl, woman, wife and mother. But in Chapter Two I argued that she was able to use the forms and scale of Decorative Painting for *The Deluge*, to fashion a convincing depiction of women, children and families under the pressures of a great crisis. *Santissima Trinita* also suggests how the artist could use decorative style to her advantage. Here the medium scale (103 x 113 cm) was important and she was able to integrate landscape and figures into a convincing whole, something she found difficult at the size of her *Marriage at Cana*. For instance, the composition opens a space for the viewer to examine women, sun umbrellas and haystacks set into a rhythmic pattern. The artist used bleached colours to bind foreground, mid-ground and deeper space together so that her painting is not disturbed by differences between ordered plain and distant mountains.⁵¹⁷ Close examination of the haystacks, depicted without detail, and generalised, Japanese curves of tree trunks and branches in mid and backgrounds demonstrate concern for rhythm with a partial interest in naturalism. Knights would have understood David Young Cameron's approach in *The Battlefield of Ypres* (1919, Imperial War Museum, **plate 76**) in which neat lines of stunted trees and carefully placed ruined buildings link foreground with deep space. Decoration is an even more comfortable vehicle for an intrinsically harmonious subject and Knights used this sub-genre to represent continuity in Italian society, meaning in everyday life and the part played by traditional festivals in a women's community. Eschewing topographical accuracy she has therefore ignored the 'indiscriminate tree-felling' that Thomas Ashby said caused such 'sad havoc' and (in keeping with inter-war conservatism) instead used the generalised tree forms I have described to represent the dense beech woods which clothed these mountains prior to WWI.⁵¹⁸

The women are resting during their pilgrimage to a chapel and grotto set close to Vallepietra, a village sixty kilometres from Rome, on the western edge of the mountains of the Abruzzi.⁵¹⁹ Late nineteenth and early twentieth-century ethnographers and folklorists were interested in this area, which was regarded as 'primitive', although it was beginning to change. Gabriel D'Annunzio set some stories in the area, his home region. He described pilgrims in an Abruzzi church who "came writhing with their bellies on the ground...tongues on the dust of the tiles' drawing crosses with

⁵¹⁷ This structure contrasts with decorative paintings that leave background for secondary effects. Examples for the point include Augustus John's family in *The Mumpers* (1911-1913, Detroit Institute of Arts). In Knights' *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours* the background is also secondary.

⁵¹⁸ Ashby, *Some Italian Scenes*, 74.

⁵¹⁹ These mountains are part of the Apennines, east of Rome.

their own saliva'.⁵²⁰ A rumour that 'voluntary human sacrifice' took place in the Abruzzi was published in English. The rumour was subsequently strenuously refuted by Italian ethnologist Antonio de Nino, in *Folklore* of December 1897.⁵²¹ Writing in 1928, in her illustrated book on the region, Estella Canziani looked back to the autumn before WWI. Her book concludes at Iserna, where

the modern world was a far-away dream, and my thoughts dwelt on our present mediaeval surroundings, the amethyst hills, and the crimson sunset, and these simple peasants whose confidence we had gained and who were now our friends.⁵²²

Knights must have been pleased to discover the area, which although depicted by previous artists (T.J. Barker and Francesco Paolo Michetti, a native of the region, had exhibited such work in London) was not nearly so extensively represented as the Campagna.⁵²³ Additionally, it had personal associations because she first visited Vallepietra 'with a v. beautiful lover', Thomas Monnington.⁵²⁴ Neither Canziani nor Anne Macdonell, who wrote *In the Abruzzi: with 12 illustrations after watercolour drawings by Amy Atkinson*, mention Vallepietra. It was probably too near to Anticoli and Tivoli for such intrepid travellers and it is also technically outside the Abruzzi.⁵²⁵ But for Knights, a young artist, not an ethnographer, it was a 'wild and beautiful country inhabited by wolves & eagles'.⁵²⁶ She noted how 'peasants tramp for over a week, singing hymns' to a chapel built to commemorate oxen who fell over the mountain-side, but were miraculously restored, unharmed, to their peasant owner. She writes that peasants light bonfires

⁵²⁰ Hughes-Hallett, *The Pike*, 124.

⁵²¹ Antonio de Nino, 'Correspondence: Holy Week Observance in the Abruzzi', *Folklore* 8, no. 4 (December 1897), 374. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/stable/1253433>.

⁵²² Canziani, *Through the Apennines and...Abruzzi*, 332.

⁵²³ Representations of brigands in T.J. Barker's *The Studio of Salvator Rosa in the Mountains of the Abruzzi* drew public attention to this wild region (and its romance) when it was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1865, particularly as Barker gave Garibaldi's features to one of the brigands, therefore associating the region's independent spirit with Italy's struggle for sovereignty. In Bernard Barryte, 'History and Legend in T. J. Barker's *The Studio of Salvator Rosa in the Mountains of the Abruzzi*, 1865', *The Art Bulletin* 71, no. 4 (December 1989), 667. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3051274>. This 'little visited' country was depicted by Francesco Paolo Michetti in his representation of a sleeping child, *The Young Shepherdess of the Abruzzi*, which was exhibited in London in 1875. In 'The Young Shepherdess of the Abruzzi', *The Art Journal New Series* 1, 1885-1887 (1875), 240. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20568739>.

⁵²⁴ Letter from Winifred Knights to her aunt Millicent dated 23rd May 1923.

⁵²⁵ Macdonell, *In the Abruzzi* (dated 1908). The Abruzzi technically comprise the 'provinces of Aquila, Chieti, Pescara and Teramo'. In Thomas Ashby, *Some Italian Scenes and Festivals* (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd. 1929), 89. The Abruzzi are named as a group because they were once three parts of the Kingdom of Naples, between 'what were formerly the Papal States and the...Adriatic'. In 'The Young Shepherdess', *The Art Journal*, 240. Vallepietra is in the Lazio region.

⁵²⁶ Letter from Winifred Knights to her sister Eileen dated June 1st 1923.

on top of the mountains for the Festival that celebrates the miracle.⁵²⁷ Yet this Festival is better known for celebrating the Chapel's Trinity fresco. The fresco shows the Trinity as three identical figures, in common with early Byzantine depictions.⁵²⁸ Her letters do not tell us whether she knew the Festival had two focal points, but the Trinity fresco is represented by the processional banner in her painting.

The artist was not religious,⁵²⁹ but was sensitive to the emotions associated with traditional rural Catholicism, perhaps because of the paucity of religious iconography in contemporary English churches (Anglo-Catholic churches were an exception, as noted earlier in this chapter). The beautiful setting and the Trinity banner as guardian suggest that faith can bind community, communal pilgrimage act as expression of genuine piety. Knights painted a broad valley instead of the narrow mountain passes through which pilgrims travelled.⁵³⁰ She depicted just women, but men and women walked together, only separating for the climax of the Vallepiera festival, which began when up to forty girls 'dressed in white... [with] white veils with ivy leaves over them' walked up to the Chapel, carrying 'the instruments of the Passion' and an effigy of Christ. Then, 'five or six' girls sang the traditional Pianto, a 'melancholy dirge' or lament describing the Passion and the Virgin's grief.⁵³¹ In *Santissima Trinita* Vallepiera is not visible, nor is the chapel with grotto higher in the mountains.⁵³² Concerned with composition and emotional truth more than topographical accuracy, Winifred Knights seems to have drawn a number of sources together, as Paul Liss argues.⁵³³ Liss views Piediluco, north of Rome, as particularly significant to her composition, although the mountain landscape around the Lake is not similar to *Santissima Trinita's*. Orvieto may have been an impetus for her hill-top town. Her town is like postcards of

⁵²⁷ Ibid.

⁵²⁸ There is some online information on the legend. For instance, *Vagabondo – Italy, Italy Travelguide: Lazio- SS Trinita Sanctuary*, at <http://tracks.vagabondo.net/lazio/ss-trinita-vallepiera/>, accessed 17th November 2014.

⁵²⁹ See, for instance John Monnington, in a conversation with the author, on 26th October 2011. John Monnington Conversation.

⁵³⁰ Ibid, 73-86.

⁵³¹ Ibid, 80-81.

⁵³² She drew these in a letter to her sister Eileen dated 1st June 1923.

⁵³³ Liss says that the painting 'draws on various works from the artist's time as a Rome Scholar, especially the compositional ideas for 'Paradise' [untraced, perhaps uncompleted]. The setting for the painting is based on studies made near Piediluco, executed during 1924 whilst Monnington was working on his painting 'Allegory'. The figures asleep in the fields relate to an incident Knights witnessed near to Leonessa in 1924', when, following an earthquake, and fearing a second, peasants were sleeping in the fields. Paul Liss, *Winifred Knights* (London: The Fine Arts Society and Paul Liss in Association with the British School at Rome, 1995), 55. If the setting is Piediluco Knights was perhaps thinking of one of the canals constructed from the lake into its surrounding plain. For this see photograph in Ricardo Riccardi with the title: 'Il lago di Piediluco e suo Bacino', in *Memorie della Societa Geografica Italiana* 22 (Rome: Societa Geografica Italiana, 1955), 144.

Orvieto that she purchased and she particularly loved the town.⁵³⁴ Moreover, there are further indications that the artist was not overly concerned with verisimilitude. For instance, the Vallepiera pilgrimage takes place on Trinity Sunday, which occurs between mid-May and mid-June, but the tree foliage and haystacks point to mid or late summer. Also, the river takes an odd right angle, while a plank bridge crosses to an impossibly high bank. Material has been mixed and combined, and is difficult to pin down.

Each woman's pose is different, from placing of hands to angle of head. Some women are wrapped in blankets. All are barefoot, as in early Italian painting (as well, in the 1920s pilgrims sometimes walked barefoot to Vallepiera).⁵³⁵ In response to certain early Renaissance ideas of naturalism each figure works as an element placed on the landscape, not integrated with it, as Giovanni Bellini's *Agony in the Garden* (c.1465, National Gallery, **plate 77**) illustrates, where the sleeping disciples are also like cut-outs on the ground. Knights was probably influenced by Bellini's painting, but the effect was additionally due to her method, for she worked on the landscape first and then copied sketches of the women to the canvas. Reviewers noted the unfinished figures compared with the landscape, undoubtedly a result of this approach, for instance *The Manchester Guardian* of 13th April 1927, reviewing an exhibition at the Imperial Gallery.⁵³⁶ Early Italian paintings are not obvious sources for Knights' poses, however, because her women sleep on their sides, while in representations of both the *Agony in the Garden* and the Resurrection disciples and soldiers are represented sleeping on their backs or sitting up. But she would have known three paintings that feature one sleeper on his side: Mantegna's *Agony in the Garden*, c. 1460, National Gallery; Giotto's fresco *The Resurrection*, 1304, Padua, **plate 78**) and Botticelli's *Agony in the Garden*, dated 1500, Royal Chapel of Granada, this one from illustration. She probably chose the pose because it facilitates variety in arrangement of limbs,⁵³⁷ is not noticeably sexual as the breasts are not emphasised, and is historically unconnected to gross bodily activities of snoring or sexual intercourse (for associations between sleep and sexuality see Giorgione's *Sleeping Venus*, c.1510, Dresden).

⁵³⁴ See two postcards depicting Orvieto and associated text, for example: 'It is the loveliest place I have been to yet', in UCL Special Collections. Knights had used Orvieto as setting for her unfinished *Bathsheba* (c.1922), as noted earlier in this chapter.

⁵³⁵ Ashby, *Some Italian Scenes*, 75.

⁵³⁶ See also sketches of the women, in the British Museum, which provide further evidence for this point. In addition, in a letter to her mother dated September 1925 Knights says that she needs sketches of 'sleeping women', not landscape studies (she includes two images of the women).

⁵³⁷ Camille Pissarro's *Siesta* (1899, private collection) shows a woman sleeping on her back. This demonstrates the pose's relative inflexibility.

Sources from nineteenth-century art may include Jean-Francois Millet's secular *Noonday Rest* (1866, Boston Museum of Fine Arts, **plate 79**) where a peasant woman dozes on her side, her head in her arms, beside a stack of straw or hay while her partner lies on his back, presumably snoring. Puvis de Chavannes depicted haymakers in his large multi-figure *Sleep* (1867, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Lille) where a bare-footed woman is sleeping on her side, chastely wrapped in Romano-Greek drapery. Beside her on his back is a slumbering, partially-clothed man (**plate 80**). Gentle, subdued colours suffuse Millet and Puvis' images (although one is a night and the other a midday depiction): bleached yellow, pale blue, pink, brown. These colours, with the poses, were perhaps sources for Knights' morning representation. Van Gogh copied Millet's format in his brighter *Siesta* (1889-1890, Musée d'Orsay).⁵³⁸ In representing women sleeping on their sides Knights has adopted the conventionally 'feminine' poses that Millet, Puvis and Van Gogh used in representations of rural labour.

I have described the composition and its sources and examined the significance of decorative style. My analysis now turns to connections between women's experience, conservatism and meaning. *Santissima Trinita* is both depiction of pilgrims' habitual activities and image of the artist's ideal sorority as women rest and wash together. The artist's choice illustrates the social conservatism of her work in Italy, and her understanding of Christian festivals is also important. Both factors contribute to the painting's mood and are integral to my analysis. Due to conventions regarding woman's place in society, in contrast with History Painting's "heroic' male world of freedom of action',⁵³⁹ women are often painted at leisure or at home, occupied with everyday tasks customarily associated with gendered work. Although set away from home, *Santissima Trinita* combines decorative repetition with this day-to-day activity as women sleep, wash their faces, comb and dry their hair, for 'the characteristic mode of experiencing the everyday is that of habit.'⁵⁴⁰ In the early twentieth century Italian peasants often washed clothes in shallow pools edged by stone. A photograph taken by Thomas Ashby illustrates this point and Knights wrote

⁵³⁸ Knights surely also knew Albrecht Durer's woodcut *Small Passion, 29: The Resurrection* (1511, British Museum) in which a soldier sleeps with his legs bent and his head on a bundle. A woman waking up in *Santissima Trinita* is depicted in this pose, with the bundle.

⁵³⁹ Victoria Kelley, *Soap and Water: Cleanliness, Dirt and the Working Classes in Victorian and Edwardian Britain* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 95.

⁵⁴⁰ Rita Felski, 'The Invention of Everyday Life', *New Formations* 39 (Winter 1999-2000), 18. Scanned copy at University of Virginia, <http://people.virginia.edu/~rf6d/felski.the-invention-of-everyday-life.pdf>.

that clothes were washed 'on stones'.⁵⁴¹ Her interpretation of washing avoids a one-to-one representation of women's work, but shows an appreciation of traditional gendered activity and the contexts in which it took place. She therefore depicts women washing in peace and safety in an open stretch of river, or canal, and she has left out the stone edging used for washing clothes. She has not represented the Simbrivio River which real-life pilgrims encountered. Its aspect was less open, with 'banks...fringed with wood and with large-leaved water plants'.⁵⁴² The women are washing themselves, probably reflecting Italian women's concern for hygiene as well as grooming. The context back home is pertinent, too, particularly as straight fair hair and untameable Pre-Raphaelite locks look more British than central Italian. From the 1870s in Britain germ theory replaced 'miasmatic theories that blamed disease on putrid air and bad smells', making 'private practices of hygiene and cleanliness' crucial. The new emphasis on washing placed responsibility on women (or their servants) to ensure cleanliness.⁵⁴³ In keeping with this, the women are much occupied with cleaning and drying their faces, combing out washed hair, as crucial preparation for resuming a pilgrimage. But the cleansing probably represents washing away sins, as well, referencing baptism,⁵⁴⁴ and illustrating peasant piety. Its context of glassy-still streams is therefore perhaps associated with Psalm 23: 'the Lord...maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul' (a very different association between water and religion from the threatening, destructive waters of *The Deluge*).⁵⁴⁵ Cleansing, then, shows the artist's appreciation for both practical and symbolic aspects of a pilgrimage as it passes through the Italian countryside.

Winifred Knights was popular with men and seems to have enjoyed their attention. She also needed female companionship and valued such friends. She was happier in Rome after making a friend in 'Miss Gill' (Marjorie Gill, sister to Rome Scholar Colin Gill) in January 1921.⁵⁴⁶

Santissima Trinita, then, celebrates female solidarity and imagines a sorority unobtainable at the

⁵⁴¹ For instance, see a photograph taken by Thomas Ashby: 'Pratola Peligna (Aq.), Washerwomen, 1909', in Vienna Trodone (ed.), *Thomas Ashby: Travels in Abruzzo 1901/1923: Images and Memory* [Multilingual] (Rome: Silvana Editoriale, 2011), 87. Knights wrote that her new dress needed to 'be tough material' as it would be washed 'on stones'. Letter from Winifred Knights to her mother dated Saturday 28th May 1921.

⁵⁴² Ashby, *Some Italian Scenes*, 73.

⁵⁴³ Kelley, *Soap and Water*, 21-23.

⁵⁴⁴ See for instance Piero's *Baptism* (c.1448-1450, National Gallery).

⁵⁴⁵ For the association between Psalm 23 and 'the meaning of baptism' see Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 95.

⁵⁴⁶ Letter from Winifred Knights to her father dated 7th January 1921, and letter from Knights to her mother dated 12th January 1921.

BSR, where student numbers were small and the majority were male.⁵⁴⁷ Moreover, although it does not show the climax of a pilgrimage or procession, it celebrates the camaraderie of Vallepietra's Pianto procession and lament and of other festivals that brought women and girls together. The Virgin's birth was celebrated every September in Anticoli Corrado by a procession carrying a 'miraculous picture' to Anticoli's hill-top church. It included 'the girls of the village all in white, first the small children and then the two or three associations of older girls with their banners, including the 'Figlie di Maria', the daughters of Mary'.⁵⁴⁸ Knights would have known about this procession, even if she did not observe it, but her sense of it was different from Mariano Barbasan Lagueruela's: his *Madonna del Giglio's Procession at Anticoli Corrado* (**plate 81**) concentrates on the youngest girls, their chubby-faced prettiness and frilly white dresses with pink sashes. The pilgrimage in *Santissima Trinita* equally suggests group endeavour, but Knights' interpretation is much more sober.

In *Madonna del Giglio's Procession at Anticoli Corrado* excited little girls cluster together, but in *Santissima Trinita* the majority of women sleepers are spread out. They are nestling by haystacks, not by one another. Maybe this was because Knights had seen women sleeping outside in fear of an earthquake.⁵⁴⁹ More pertinently, there are at least six self-portraits here and she is shown enjoying comradeship, but slightly apart. She needed women friends, but really knowing one's own gender is a challenge to solidarity, illustrated here: 'Miss H [the BSR housekeeper]...is a silly ass. I could manage the house better she leaves it all to the servants and tries to flirt with the men.'⁵⁵⁰ With many self-portraits in *Santissima Trinita* understanding Knights' use of her image aids appreciation of the painting's mood and meaning. She was very attractive and photographs show that she was happy being depicted by others (**plate 1**). Her letters show that she enjoyed the self-representations that came with dressing up for balls.⁵⁵¹ She noticed 'good' looks, but was blunt in description of Mrs Lawrence's 'bad' looks with 'sticking out teeth, gold eye-teeth, pince-nez'.⁵⁵² Awareness of the premium on her beauty was perhaps increased at the BSR, where women were in the minority. But in her choice of peasant dress, worn at the School and in *Santissima Trinita*, she very likely associated herself with the beauty of country

⁵⁴⁷ See list of Rome Scholars for 1920-1923 In Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *The British School at Rome: One Hundred Years* (London: British School at Rome/RA, 2001), 210-211. Colin Gill and Jack Benson (Rome Scholars for 1913 and 1914) had also returned to the School as Scholars in the academic year 1920-1921.

⁵⁴⁸ Ashby, *Some Italian Scenes*, 66-67. There is a photograph of the procession in the plate facing 26.

⁵⁴⁹ Liss, *Winifred Knights*, 55.

⁵⁵⁰ Letter from Winifred Knights to her mother dated 13th November 1920.

⁵⁵¹ For instance, see letter to her sister Joyce in which she refers to her ball costume, dated 3rd March 1921. For photographs see UCL Special Collections.

⁵⁵² Letter from Winifred Knights, at the BSR, to her mother dated 14th December 1922.

girls.⁵⁵³ Ideas of Italian beauty disseminated into northern Europe by images of the Madonna and representations of peasants by Corot, and others, are likely to have fed into idealised conceptions of natural rural beauty.⁵⁵⁴ Perhaps Knights saw this beauty as fitted to the lovely setting, for she did not always see herself in this way. In *The Deluge* her role is an intelligent and aware version of Lot's wife. In *The Marriage at Cana* (c.1923) self-portraits range from motherly, to thoughtful, and to faintly sullen. And she wrote almost aggressively of a new self-portrait that it

will not be bad. Red jersey-coat. Goldy-grey background. Very simple and very ugly white face and red nose. I feel spiteful and I think it is safer to vent it on a self-portrait, than any-one else.⁵⁵⁵

Wearing her peasant dress she imagined herself as a local in *Santissima Trinita*, where versions of the self are not sullen, 'ugly', or overtly sexualised. They are feminine, with groomed hair and long slim hands nestling near faces, and notably discreet: faces are visible, but bodies are clothed and covered. The women seem unconscious of outside attention, yet the artist's open composition facilitates observation of their loveliness. Nevertheless, the viewer cannot act as threatening intruder. The public, open air setting, fully clothed women and discreet poses negate a voyeuristic gaze (which operates, for instance, in the intimate view of *Woman Bathing in a Shallow Tub* by Edgar Degas, 1885, Metropolitan Museum). Moreover, from the viewer's elevated viewpoint the landscape dominates, encouraging examination of the painting as a whole. An ideal women's community, without male intervention, this is Knights' contribution, whether intentional or not, to a feminist art at a time when conservative views of woman's place in society were dominant.

Knights saw groups of peasant women in processions and she observed them washing clothes in communal stone-edged pools, without doubt seeing contentment in traditional, gendered roles, although she was not personally fond of domestic obligations.⁵⁵⁶ She was a modern young woman, but inserted her self-portrait into this seemingly straightforward world. Shapes, colours, and detail express her feeling for the Italian landscape and respect for the beliefs underpinning Christian pilgrimage, making *Santissima Trinita* a coherent response to these influences and experiences, formally and emotionally.

⁵⁵³ In a letter she drew the 'peasant dress' Maria was making for her at Anticoli Corrado. Letter from Winifred Knights to her mother dated 30th May 1921. For photographs see UCL Special Collections.

⁵⁵⁴ For discussion of ways Italian beauty was understood in northern Europe and Italy see Stephen Gundle, *Bellissima: Feminine Beauty and the Idea of Italy* (New Haven and London: Yale, 2007), 1-32.

⁵⁵⁵ Letter from Winifred Knights to her mother dated 4th February 1921. This self-portrait is untraced and presumably unfinished.

⁵⁵⁶ See letter from Winifred Knights to her aunt Millicent, undated, annotated as '1925-6?'

The Marriage at Cana (c.1923, Te Papa Museum).

Winifred Knights' *The Marriage at Cana* (c.1923, **plate 58**) is in the collection of Te Papa Tongarewa Museum, Wellington, New Zealand.⁵⁵⁷ At 184 x 200 cm it fulfilled the BSR's requirement for a large 'decoration'.⁵⁵⁸ Students were free to choose their subject and she was probably influenced by Giotto's depiction of the theme, while the significance of wine in Italian culture was very likely another factor that attracted her to the Marriage at Cana.⁵⁵⁹ The amount of detail in this multi-figured composition is impressive and fascinating: tiny people in an inner room; slices of ripe watermelon, seeds ready to spill out and germinate; in the foreground women diners are delicate and charming, waiting for the miracle. Meanwhile impatient men lean on the table, aggressively chew melon or rise self-importantly to their feet, and in the left background other witnesses to Jesus' miracle peek cheekily over bushes. Knights has depicted the moments before miraculous change, recounted in St John's Gospel. Jesus, his disciples and mother attend a wedding. Mary informs him there is no wine and Jesus replies 'woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour [the hour of his death] is not yet come.' The painting embodies these words in Jesus' distance from his mother (wearing a coral necklace) and in his empty seat beside her. Knights has depicted the six water-pots mentioned in the Gospel, but focuses on Jesus instead of 'the governor of the feast' who 'tasted the water that was made wine'.

The following section examines the painting's composition.⁵⁶⁰ Looking at meaning I go on to discuss the image as exploration of experience in 1920s Britain and Italy. Inter-war conservatism is a subject of this chapter. In *The Marriage at Cana* this is figured through male-female relations,

⁵⁵⁷ It was given to Te Papa Museum by the British School at Rome in 1957. See, for example, 'ask for Mr Sturch or James' and 'give bearer for shipment to New Zealand 1 painting 'The Marriage at Cana' by Miss Winifred Knights approx 7'x7' '. In note to C.R. Fenton and Co. Ltd. dated 1957 (neither day nor month mentioned), Knights' File, BSR Archives.

⁵⁵⁸ Letter from Winifred Knights to her mother dated 28th May 1921.

⁵⁵⁹ See Giotto's fresco *Marriage at Cana* 1304-1306, in the Ermetani Chapel, Padua. The greater presence of wine in Italian culture, in comparison with Britain, is likely to have been significant. Hugh Johnson and Jancis Robinson write that in Italy 'hardly more than a generation ago...The great majority [of wine] was shipped to the cities for domestic consumption, drunk with no more ceremony than a thirst-quenching gulp of water'. In Hugh Johnson and Jancis Robinson, *The World Atlas of Wine* [1971], (London: Mitchell Beazley, 2001), 153. In contrast, in Britain wine was 'an elite drink' in the early twentieth century. John Burnett, *Liquid Pleasures: A Social History of Drinks in Modern Britain* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 141. The Colwyn Report of 1926 provides further evidence for low inter-war consumption of wine in Britain. For instance, in 1913-1914 individuals with incomes of £150-200 a year drank sixteen bottles a year on average, while in 1923-1924 this had declined to six. In Burnett, *ibid*, 153.

⁵⁶⁰ Knights made many preparatory drawings for *The Marriage at Cana*, in keeping with her approach to painting. These are in the Te Papa collection and in private collections. Differences between sketches and oil painting are less marked than in the artist's other paintings, save for a study for the composition in the Te Papa collection which does not include the table represented in the foreground of the final painting.

a fragile commonality and choices of clothing and food. I shall argue that passive self-portraits fit with insecurity in the 1920s, as well as experience at the BSR, but with competing undercurrents of sensuality and resentment against authority. Costume and food, however, demonstrate more positive engagement with interests traditionally ascribed to women. *The Marriage at Cana* also figures the hopes embodied in Jesus' first miracle, as subdued and delicate colours accompany patient anticipation.

The Marriage at Cana is executed in muted blues, pinks and browns, against which red stands out in slices of melon and the Virgin Mary's coral necklace.⁵⁶¹ In the foreground Mary is seated at the principal table which, set at right angles to the picture plane, stretches into the mid-ground, as in Tintoretto's *Marriage at Cana* (1561, Santa Maria della Salute, Venice). The intimate circle around Jesus and the water-pots contrasts with this white-clothed rectangle and silent diners, but a nursing mother at the mid-point of the golden section bridges the division, while behind her at another table parents are chatting to a toddler. Inside an inner room the viewer sees a table precipitately tipped up, a feature as likely derived from early Italian as Post-Impressionist art. The table leads to an over-size door, undoubtedly referencing Lutyens' giant scale British School at Rome, with its long corridors, imposing doorways, vast, high ceilinged entrance hall and neo-classical portico with double height columns.⁵⁶² Alongside a stream to the viewer's left men and women sleep, wash, sit drawing: modern leisure performed oblivious of miracle nearby. Numerous self-portraits, from the woman in fashionable turban to others with Knights' sleek dark hair, show how much the painting is a personal exploration, particularly as Mary is the only woman mentioned in the biblical account. Tree trunks to the left, foliage, water and edges of a wall frame the painting, while repetitive colours and poses (observe the diners alongside Mary) are equally integral to the artist's compositional scheme for a decorative painting.⁵⁶³ Yet there are disconcerting disparities, including foreground diners much larger than the group around Jesus. This subject usually shows the miracle, as in Gerard David's *The Marriage at Cana*, c.1500, and

⁵⁶¹ In pictures of the Virgin and Child Christ is often depicted wearing a coral necklace as protection against evil. Knights might have known the Netherlandish *Virgin and Child*, c. 1500, by a follower of the Master of Flemalle, which was purchased by the Victoria and Albert Museum collection in 1865. The Virgin wore a coral necklace until the painting was restored in the twenty-first century: x-ray examination has shown that the necklace was a later addition and it has been removed. See Exhibition/display: Research on Paintings: Technical Art History and Connoisseurship (V&A): Information Panel, June 2013 and V&A Collections at <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O131418/virgin-and-child-oil-painting-master-of-flemalle/>, accessed 22nd December 2014.

⁵⁶² The BSR building, designed by Edwin Lutyens as the British Pavilion for the 1911 International Exhibition and then adapted, was ready for occupation by the BSR in 1916. See Wallace-Hadrill, *British School at Rome*, 61.

⁵⁶³ A copse of straight trunks surely refers to Paul Nash's *We are Making a New World* (1918, Imperial War Museum) or *Menin Road* (1919, also IWM).

Paolo Veronese's painting of the same name, dated 1563, both in the Louvre. Instead we observe a point before transformation's drama, in keeping with Decorative Painting's commonly repressed narratives. The still water that forms a permeable boundary to the narrative is a visual analogy for the moment to come. Jesus' expression suggests benevolent authority as he looks down at a woman lowering her pot to the ground. His nearby followers, including long-haired Mary Magdalene, wait patiently. Such solemn calm recalls Piero della Francesca's frescoes in Arezzo. We therefore trust that the miracle will take place.⁵⁶⁴

The Marriage at Cana stands out as a modern version of early Italian art, even in comparison with the artist's other paintings. Piero is a clear source, particularly in the circle around Jesus, adapted from Piero's grouping in *The Queen is Received by King Solomon*, in *The Story of the True Cross* series (1452-1466, San Francesco, Arezzo).⁵⁶⁵ Ambrogio Lorenzetti's fresco *Allegory of Good Government* (1338-1339, Palazzo Pubblico, Siena) draws the viewer's attention as much to details of workmen renovating buildings as dancers closer to the picture plane.⁵⁶⁶ There is similar individualised detail in *The Marriage at Cana*, including a toddler's feet dangling under a table and the heads peeking over bushes, clearly demonstrating Knights' debt to early Italian art. Yet these genre touches slightly undercut decorative cohesion and sober anticipation (in contrast to *Italian Landscape*, where such details are secondary). The painting was unfinished when the artist completed her scholarship in September 1923 and, although she continued working on it, a fully coherent and completed composition was not achieved.⁵⁶⁷ That Knights was not fully able to realise her vision for *The Marriage at Cana* was probably due to her difficulties in working within the demands of her Scholarship for a large decorative painting, a form perceived by visiting tutors at the BSR as preparation for students' careers as public artists. *Santissima Trinita* is an easel painting, at a scale unlikely to overwhelm either artist or viewer. Viewing the painting is an intimate experience – the image absorbing, but not intimidating. But the scale of *The Marriage at Cana* is very different. The viewer and artist must stand back and move in close to take in both

⁵⁶⁴ It is possible Knights was thinking about Psalm 23 when depicting still water, as I suggested with reference to *Santissima Trinita*. Psalm 23 is a description of God's 'goodness and mercy'.

⁵⁶⁵ Knights adopted Piero's solemn, austere expressions and way of composing groups. She viewed Piero's frescoes when she visited San Francesco, Arezzo, in 1922. See letter from Knights to Evelyn Shaw, Secretary to the BSR (based in London) dated 22nd June 1922, BSR Archives.

⁵⁶⁶ See also heads of men and women peering between the battlements of a medieval Jerusalem in Andrea di Bonaiuto's *The Life of Christ* fresco cycle (1366-1367, Former Chapter House, Spanish Chapel, Florence). The fresco is illustrated in Joachim Poeschke, *Italian Frescoes from the Age of Giotto, 1280-1400* (New York and London: Abbeville Press Publishers, 2005), 370.

⁵⁶⁷ After concluding her scholarship Knights took the painting back to England in September 1923 (rolled up) to complete. In Eileen Palmer, account of Winifred Knights' life. When exhibited in 1929 *The Marriage at Cana* was described as unfinished by a reviewer, in *Our Art Critic, Morning Post* (5th April 1929).

detail and the painting as a whole (even more than when viewing *The Deluge*). Unlike *Santissima Trinita* the painting is not at a size appropriate for a home – this is, decidedly, public art. Indeed, in a photograph that shows *The Marriage at Cana* in the artist's studio at the BSR she seems almost intimidated by the scale of the work. The unfinished canvas dominates the background of the photograph, but Knights is not working on the image. Instead she is photographed seated, regarding a small painting on an easel close by.⁵⁶⁸ Nevertheless, and despite these difficulties, Winifred Knights was able to respond to her private concerns in *The Marriage at Cana*. She was successful, for instance, in representing some of the tensions of life at the British School at Rome in the 1920s, and in incorporating her interests in food and dress into the narrative of the painting, as my later discussion will show.

There is no commonality at this group meal. The togetherness of wartime comradeship captured in a photograph of an officers' picnic table points up the contrasting reserve (**plate 82**).⁵⁶⁹ Wedding breakfasts are essentially rule-bound occasions, so we would not expect to see one of the casual dining venues that proliferated in the early twentieth century and interconnected with women's freedom in the public realm. William Roberts' representation of couples snatching private moments within a crowded cafe in *Discussion in a Cafe* (1921, pencil, ink and watercolour, private collection) illustrates women's participation in such informality. Lyons teashops provided opportunities for inexpensive daytime meals,⁵⁷⁰ while expensive hotels such as the Savoy combined restaurants with dance halls.⁵⁷¹ In contrast, Knights' painting depicts the last course of a formal wedding breakfast.⁵⁷² Here women diners are markedly unassertive, sitting quietly, hands out of sight. The passive self-portrait to the viewer's left barely disguises her repressed aggression. Representations of self-restraint and unease arguably relate to the era's conservatism and uncertainty,⁵⁷³ (although for some women this was an era of social freedom,

⁵⁶⁸ For the photograph see *Winifred Knights*, 53.

⁵⁶⁹ Photograph of officers eating a meal outdoors taken by Padre Ernest Godfrey Jaquet. From photograph album titled *Worthing*, unpublished work, private collection (Marion Anderson).

⁵⁷⁰ Lyons opened 132 teashops between 1918 and 1939. John Burnett, *England Eats Out, 1830-Present*, (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2004), 217.

⁵⁷¹ Dickson Wright, *History of English Food*, 386-387, 396, 400.

⁵⁷² Knights commented that some glasses are empty because the wine has run out. Letter from Winifred Knights to her mother dated August 1922. In the 1920s attitudes to formal meals began to change, and Knights might have imagined a meal of eight courses instead of typical Edwardian country house meals of around sixteen courses. For this point see Dickson Wright, who says that the 'wedding breakfast of the Duke and Duchess of York in 1923...consisted of eight courses', and that this leaner dining was partly due to the fashionable 'slim, boy-like figure of the gay young thing'. Dickson Wright, *ibid*, 402-403. John Burnett makes the same point in *England Eats Out*, 198.

⁵⁷³ There is also unease, tension and aggression in John Everett Millais' painting of a group meal: *Lorenzo and Isabella* (1849, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool). Knights may have been influenced by this painting,

with night-clubs, parties, motoring and 'flapper' fashions).⁵⁷⁴ Inter-war caution derived from post-war reaction to WWI and a 'fear that civilization was under threat... [this an] enduring hallmark of the two decades that separated the first great war from the second'.⁵⁷⁵ Responding to this underlying insecurity, the 1920s was a period when stability seemed vital. During the 1922 General Election Prime Minister Andrew Bonar Law stated, 'These are times when it is good to sit still and go slowly',⁵⁷⁶ and the phrase 'peace in our time' was first used in 1927 (by Stanley Baldwin).⁵⁷⁷ The Labour Party's socialism was moderate during these years and the Communist Party's membership small.⁵⁷⁸ As well, the General Strike of 1926 was short-lived. Therefore, none of these political factors disrupted overall stability. However, the United States' position as the new super-power after WWI⁵⁷⁹ and its cultural exports did threaten British self-confidence. Responses in the 1927 Quota Act for films and the BBC's tight control of dance music genres played during its broadcasts, avoiding improvised jazz, show the British establishment's attempts to resist 'acquiescence in the face of American invasion'.⁵⁸⁰ Mussolini's Battle of the Wheat was an Italian initiative to counter foreign influence and bolster national pride. From 1926 Italian self-sufficiency was encouraged through taxes on wheat imports and public announcement of the success of every Italian grain harvest.⁵⁸¹ Knights had no specific political allegiance and very likely did not know the details I have described.⁵⁸² But, sensitive to atmosphere, she would have

although the narrative, which Millais took from John Keats' poem 'Isabella, or the pot of Basil' (1818), is very different.

⁵⁷⁴ See Horn, *Women in the 1920's*, 26-37.

⁵⁷⁵ Richard Overy, *The Twilight Years: the Paradox of Britain Between the Wars* [2009], (London: Penguin Books, 2010), 14, 16.

⁵⁷⁶ Rubenstein, 'Britain's Elites', 11.

⁵⁷⁷ Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin's speech in March 1925 rejected a plan to outlaw the political levy on trade union members (which contributed to Labour Party funds), 'stating that the Tories in power were not going to use their power for purely partisan ends.' Baldwin concluded the speech, echoing the Book of Common Prayer, with "Give peace in our time, O Lord." Quoted In Rubenstein, *ibid*, 11.

⁵⁷⁸ John Callaghan says that 'The small, electorally insignificant Communist Party...failed to get above 17000 members at any time in the inter-war period', and referring to Labour that 'socialist values and aspirations were only marginal in the culture of an organisation dominated by pragmatic trade unions and professional politicians.' John Callaghan, 'British Labour's Turn to Socialism in 1931', *Journal of Political Ideologies* 14, no. 2 (June 2009), 118-119. DOI: 10.1080/13569310902925691.

⁵⁷⁹ Rubenstein, 'Britain's Elites', 18.

⁵⁸⁰ H. Mark Glancy: 'Hollywood and Britain - MGM and the British "quota" legislation', in Jeffrey Richards (ed.), *The Unknown 1930s: An Alternative History of the British Cinema, 1929- 1939* [1998], (London: I.B. Tauris and Co. Ltd. 2001), 6. See also James Nott, 'Contesting Popular Dancing and Dance Music in Britain during the 1920s', in *Cultural and Social History* 10, no. 3, (2103), 440, 445-446, 454. DOI: 10.2752/147800413X13661166397300. Between 1923 and 1926 the dance bands aired on radio were restricted to the London-based Savoy Orpheans and Savoy Havana. *Ibid*, 446.

⁵⁸¹ Gaetano Salvemini, 'Mussolini's Battle of Wheat', *Political Science Quarterly* 46, no. 1 (March 1931), 29-30. Article Stable URL:<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2143107>. Gundle, *Bellissima*, 93.

⁵⁸² John Monnington, Knights' son, has said 'she was a centre conservative...almost a socialist...I think she liked to think she had these Fabian socialist ideals but she was actually a conservative. She would

understood the insecurity underlying peace, described by Robert Graves in this way: 'a feeling of ill-luck clouded these years...I found myself resorting to the wartime technique of getting through things somehow, anyhow, in the hope that they would mend.'⁵⁸³ In 1929 *The Morning Post* characterised *The Marriage at Cana* as 'somewhat joyless', an epithet that somehow fits the picture and Graves' post-war experience.⁵⁸⁴

However, the bright watermelon gives a different quality to the painting's mood. It is closely associated with a young woman's interest in food in the inter-war context, as I will show. In early 1921 Knights drew a slice of cassata, represented from the front and side, labelling each section and describing it as 'shaped like a large slice of pudding'.⁵⁸⁵ Watermelon was similarly fascinating, without doubt: its shape and the shapes that can be cut out of it; how turning it gives different views; when it is cut the complementary colours vividly express the visual qualities that help to make food palatable.⁵⁸⁶ The ways its colour stands out against a sober palette and its cut shapes against the clean rectangles of dining tables were also important. Images of food served at contemporaneous wedding breakfasts are hard to find, so that the photographs and description of Charles and Jessie Dean's English wedding on 7th December 1929 are illuminating (**plate 83**). The meal, in a church hall, included

60 place settings...Each plate is laid out with what looks like a cold meat dish, bowls of vegetables and plenty of bread and butter. Stands of cakes and biscuits and bowls of fruits with dishes of blancmange.⁵⁸⁷

In contrast, Knights' plates of watermelon are more simple dessert than filling feast (the exception is one dish of meat on the far table). In representing watermelon she has chosen a dessert popular in everyday Italian dining, but it was likely also chosen for its colour and symbolism. Most paintings of the subject feature bread or meat and therefore make direct connection between the *Marriage at Cana* as miraculous meal and the greater transformation of the Last Supper and

have voted Conservative...She would have had great sympathy with for example the miners'. John Monnington, interviewed by the writer, 19th July 2013.

⁵⁸³ Robert Graves, *Goodbye to All That* [1929], (London: Penguin Classics, 2000), 257, 263.

⁵⁸⁴ Our Art Critic, 'Review of Imperial Art Exhibition, Remarkable Painting by a Woman', *Morning Post* (5th April, 1929).

⁵⁸⁵ Letter from Winifred Knights to her sister Eileen dated 22nd February 1921.

⁵⁸⁶ Food rationing ended only in 1921, so was arguably another reason for this interest in fruit. But rationing was limited and its impact is therefore not part of my overall argument. For rationing see Dickson Wright, *History of English Food*, 385, 396.

⁵⁸⁷ 'Posy Rosy', on her grandparents' (Charlie Dean and Jessie Greystock) wedding, 7th September 1929. Posy Rosy, 'A real 1920s wedding – Charlie and Jessie', 20th March 2012, at <http://www.posyrosey.com/real-1920s-wedding-charlie-jessie>, accessed 16th November 2014.

Mass.⁵⁸⁸ While the choice of watermelon is therefore unusual in connection with the subject (research for the thesis has not found any other examples), Knights makes the same connection because watermelon's colour connects to wine and blood.⁵⁸⁹ She may also have considered the account in John of water and blood issuing from Jesus' side when pierced by a soldier's lance during the Crucifixion.⁵⁹⁰ Furthermore, watermelon growth 'is phenomenal...grow[ing] not only visibly but audibly, creating noise as the vines creep over the ground', an almost miraculous transformation.⁵⁹¹

Yellow melon were popular in England from the seventeenth century.⁵⁹² They were painted by Sir Nathaniel Bacon in his *Cookmaid with Still Life of Vegetables and Fruit* (c.1620-1625, Tate Britain), and are mentioned in Andrew Marvell's 'The Garden' (c.1650-1652).⁵⁹³ Knights would have seen illustrations of the fruit, including Bartolome Esteban Murillo's well-known *Beggar Boys Eating Grapes and Melons* (c. 1645-1655, Munich). Her watermelon is less dominant than Murillo's yellow, but it equally represents 'the pleasures of the flesh'.⁵⁹⁴ In a letter to her mother she mentioned 'pink', not watermelon.⁵⁹⁵ In Italian watermelon is called *anguria* and *cocomero*, while yellow or white melon is *melone*, but Knights was apparently thinking of the close English linguistic associations between these quite different cucurbits.⁵⁹⁶ She had probably not come across watermelon before leaving for Italy because the English climate is not warm enough to

⁵⁸⁸ Connections between the Marriage at Cana and the Last Supper and Mass include 'the hour' as a reference to Jesus' death. Esther Kobel, *Dining with John* (London and Boston: Brill, 2011), 205-206. Kobel cites Jeffery Horace Hodges' *Food as Synecdoche in John's Gospel and Gnostic Texts*, PhD thesis, unpublished work (University of California, Berkeley, 1996), 98. The small dish of meat on the far table is a subsidiary element to much more evident watermelon.

⁵⁸⁹ In the 1920s watermelon was also, as Tony Mackle suggests, 'sold regularly in the markets during the summer months - often from old wine barrels filled with water and ice.' Mackle, 'Religious Visions' in Ted Gott, Laurie Benson and Sophie Matthieson (eds.), *Modern Britain 1900-1960: Masterworks from Australia and New Zealand Collections* (Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 2007), 177.

⁵⁹⁰ For water and blood issuing from Jesus' side see Annabel Jane Wharton, 'Ritual and Reconstructed Meaning: the Neonian Baptistery in Ravenna', *Art Bulletin* 69, no. 3 (1987), 366. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3051060>. In addition, the wine, water and blood links that I have suggested provide further explanation for the water that frames the painting on two sides.

⁵⁹¹ Ralph Norrman and Jon Haarberg, *Nature and Language: a Semiotic Study of Cucurbits in Literature* (London, Boston and Henley-on-Thames: Routledge and Regan Paul Ltd. 1980), 19.

⁵⁹² Dorothy Hartley, *Food in England* [1954], (London: Little Brown and Company, 1996), 424.

⁵⁹³ Andrew Marvell, 'The Garden' [c.1650-1652], in *The Poems of Andrew Marvell* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1956), 52.

⁵⁹⁴ Silvia Malaguzzi, *Food and Feasting in Art* (Brian Phillips trans.), (Los Angeles: the J. Paul Getty Museum, 2008), 235.

⁵⁹⁵ Letter from Knights to her mother dated August 1922.

⁵⁹⁶ I am grateful to Linda Shepherd (formerly Linda Appolloni) for information on Italian terms for melon as well as its use. Conversation with the author dated 16th March 2014. Cucurbits include pumpkin, gourd, and cucumber as well as melon and watermelon. All cucurbits grow rapidly and require warm soil, so are ideally suited to warm climates. For this see Norrman and Haarberg, *Semiotic Study of Cucurbits*, 14-19.

grow this fruit,⁵⁹⁷ but in the hot Italian summers she is likely to have appreciated its thirst-quenching properties. Indeed, in Britain fruit was not widely available compared with today. It had only in the 1870s moved from ‘a rather rare and expensive luxury’, with arable land turned to fruit production, increased jam production and imports of canned and fresh fruit (including oranges and bananas).⁵⁹⁸ In the 1910s the discovery that vitamins could prevent rickets and scurvy raised the standing of citrus fruit, as well as milk and ‘leafy vegetables’.⁵⁹⁹ But the amount of fruit in Italy was delightful:

grapes have come in and we are having masses of them, all yellow & very sweet & firm we have eaten peaches & apricots till we are blue in the face [in the same letter stating that] I have drawn 11 plates of melon [punctuation sic].⁶⁰⁰

She was surprised, too, by Italian meals and her letters describe these, for lunch at the BSR ‘most peculiar vegetables some like celery cooked, & some like small cauliflower heads but quite different in taste’,⁶⁰¹ also that ‘we have macaroni every day for lunch, the flat kind is the easiest to eat but they are all pretty difficult to manage [punctuation sic].’⁶⁰²

In the 1920s Italians had positions throughout the British catering trade,⁶⁰³ yet of Italian restaurants in London’s West End “a large proportion” served “a mixture of English, Italian and French dishes” (the Gennaro Restaurant, which offered macaroni, prosciutto, minestrone and risotto was unusual).⁶⁰⁴ French haute cuisine was the norm in restaurants outside central London.⁶⁰⁵ Recipe books published in the 1920s include macaroni in lists of ingredients, but other connections to Italian foods are hazy. In the *Radiation Cookery Book*, for instance, ‘Macaroni Cheese’ and ‘Macaroni and Cheese Cutlets’ are listed among the recipes.⁶⁰⁶ Recipes in *Manual of Modern Cookery* by Jessie Lindsay and V.F. Mottram feature so-called Italian dishes adapted

⁵⁹⁷ The literature consulted for this chapter makes no references to the use of watermelon in food preparation in Britain in the early twentieth century, or to its importation, while referring to other fruits in some detail.

⁵⁹⁸ Angeliki Torode, ‘Trends in Fruit Consumption’, in T.C. Barker, J.C. McKenzie and John Yudkin (eds.), *Our Changing Fare* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1966), 115-116, 119-120, 124. Torode takes statistics from *Parliamentary Papers* of 1926 to show shifts in consumption during Knights’ youth, including: of bananas ‘Britons consumed 6.7m bunches per annum in 1909-13, rising to 11.3M bunches in 1924’. *Parliamentary Papers* 12 (1926), 243, quoted in Torode, *ibid*, 127.

⁵⁹⁹ Susanne Freidberg, *Fresh* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2009), 167; Dickson Wright, *History of English Food*, 394.

⁶⁰⁰ Letter from Winifred Knights to her mother dated August 1922.

⁶⁰¹ Letter from Winifred Knights to her mother, dated 13th November (the year is 1920).

⁶⁰² Letter from Winifred Knights to her mother dated Tuesday (the year is 1920).

⁶⁰³ Panikos Panayi, *Spicing up Britain* (London, Reaktion Books: 2008), 76-77.

⁶⁰⁴ *Caterer* (15th November 1921), cited in Panayi, *Spicing up Britain*, 88.

⁶⁰⁵ Panayi, *Spicing up Britain*, 90.

⁶⁰⁶ *Radiation Cookery Book* [1927], (Birmingham: Radiation Ltd. Fourteenth Edition, 1931), 127-128.

to bland English taste: 'Roman Pie' includes 'half a cooked rabbit or fowl', cheese, macaroni, cream, with only a 'small piece of cooked onion' and no garlic. In the recipe parsley (the solitary herb) was just for garnish, though the pie was served with three quarters of a pint of tomato sauce!⁶⁰⁷ British cookery was generally unadventurous, relying on well-tested ingredients, for instance a menu of 'Braised Loin of Mutton, Baked Potatoes, Rice Pudding, stewed Prunes'.⁶⁰⁸ A lavish, impressive affair might extend to 'oysters and clear soup and sole with mushroom sauce and grouse and ice pudding and cheese straws and...salted almonds'.⁶⁰⁹ In sum, it is thus unlikely Knights was familiar with anything of real Italian origin. The new cuisine was at first 'very difficult to get used to it fills you up very uncomfortably & doesn't satisfy for long', and in another letter, 'my inside works as well as can be expected in Italy, every one [sic] has the same trouble 2 days constipated 1 hectic day of diorroeha (how do you spell it?) and so on ad infinitum'.⁶¹⁰ Italian cookery was regionally based and the peasants Knights admired probably 'subsisted on regionally determined staples, such as rice, corn, and wheat,' as a 'varied diet of vegetables and fruit, and especially meat, eggs, and fresh dairy, remained available exclusively to the affluent'.⁶¹¹ Her view of indigenous food was almost certainly shaped by the foodstuffs provided to expatriates at the BSR and at meals in restaurants, although she presumably ate local food at Anticoli Corrado.⁶¹² With this proviso in mind, Italian food made a real impression on her tastes and she developed a lifelong enthusiasm for Italian cuisine.⁶¹³ Italian food, then, together with wine's wide availability, was a motivation to select the Marriage at Cana for her decoration, with watermelon a particular fit.⁶¹⁴ In the conservative 1920s food was bound up with women's lives and the expectations laid on them. Sold at the wayside in and around Rome watermelon chimes with Knights' admiration for Italian peasants, their costumes and their pilgrimages, as described earlier in this chapter.

⁶⁰⁷ Jessie Lindsay and V.F. Mottram, *Manual of Modern Cookery* [1927], (London: University of London Press Ltd. 1930), 242-243.

⁶⁰⁸ *Radiation Cookery Book*, 178.

⁶⁰⁹ Winifred Holtby, *The Land of Green Ginger* [1927], (London: Virago Modern Classics, 2011), 46-47.

⁶¹⁰ The first quotation comes from a letter from Winifred Knights to her father dated 18th January 1921. The second quotation is from a letter from Winifred Knights to her mother dated 17th April 1921.

⁶¹¹ Elizabeth Zaroni, "Per Voi, Signore": Gendered Representations of Fashion, Food, and Fascism in *Il Progresso Italo-Americano* during the 1930s', *Journal of American Ethnic History* 31, no. 3 (Spring 2012), 49. Article Stable URL:<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/jamerethnhist.31.3.0033.49>.

⁶¹² The 'peasants' are 'ever so kind...a woman [Gill's maid of the previous year, prepared] 'a magnificent and enormous lunch.' Letter from Knights to her father dated 18th January 1921.

⁶¹³ Referring to the WWII period, when he was between five and eleven years old, Knights' son John Monnington says that 'she certainly loved...good Italian food...[we had] an enormous parmesan cheese – we used to cut it up with a sort of saw type thing. My job was to put it through a grater.' John Monnington interview, 19th July 2013.

⁶¹⁴ Letter from Winifred Knights to her mother dated 17th April 1921.

Knights' watermelon is deliciously ripe, the seeds almost spilling out. Having grown rapidly watermelon ripens fast, for

ripening marks the last, most frenetic phase of a fruit's life, one that often continues after harvest. It's a time when enzymes break down starches into sugars, chlorophyll into colors, and hard pectin into soft, cells hyperventilate, sucking up oxygen and spewing out carbon dioxide at an accelerated rate. Fragrant and hormone-fueled, ripening fruit asks to be devoured before it decays...⁶¹⁵

As they ripen quickly melons are ideal fruit for the Dutch *vanitas* theme which in seventeenth-century Holland included paintings of cut and over-ripe melons, for instance in Abraham van Beijeren's *Still Life* (Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp).⁶¹⁶ In Gauguin's *Two Tahitian Women* (1909, Metropolitan Museum) and in the comfortable sensuality of Boris Kustodiev's *The Merchant's Wife at Tea* (1918, Russia Museum, St Petersburg, **plate 84**) the cut flesh of watermelon signifies delight in taste and sight, and connects this to transitory beauty and the pleasures of human flesh close by. The watermelon in *The Marriage at Cana* is also ripe, the seeds almost spilling out, but, as if too temptingly sweet, many slices are untouched. Responding to new sights, touch and taste, Knights recorded ways of eating watermelon. One man has cut his slice into neat geometric sections, while another has taken a more sensuous approach to the delicious fruit, chewing it "harmonica-fashion" as he looks at the viewer.⁶¹⁷ I connected fruit to sexuality in the first chapter of my thesis, with particular reference to Knights' circular 'Goblin Market' illustration (c.1915, UCL Art Museum). A fair-haired girl and naked goblins fill the picture space. One goblin lasciviously bends hands and back, exposing his bottom as he passes a fruit to the girl, confident that, like Eve, she will eat and his (metaphoric) rape succeed. He is looking at the viewer, as if implicating him/her for looking without intervening. Sensuality is not explicitly connected to sexual threat in *The Marriage at Cana*, but fruit and male desire are similarly linked to contact with the viewer, melon symbolising a 'pleasure of the flesh'.⁶¹⁸

This eye contact, with watermelon chewed "harmonica-fashion", draws the viewer to observe male passion from a woman's point of view. In the BSR's small community infatuation could lead to unwelcome attention, as Knights described: 'Nixon behaves himself splendidly always, now,

⁶¹⁵ Freidberg, *Fresh*, 125.

⁶¹⁶ Malaguzzi, *Food and Feasting*, 366.

⁶¹⁷ Norrman and Haarberg note that 'there is ...something undignified about the natural way of eating a slice of watermelon (what in modern Greek is known as...'harmonica-fashion'-the polite way of eating a watermelon is to use knife and fork)'. Norrman and Haarberg, *Semiotic Study of Cucurbits*, 68.

⁶¹⁸ Malaguzzi, *Food and Feasting*, 235.

since I gave him a good talking to'.⁶¹⁹ She was also aware that in a patriarchal society desire is not necessarily associated with respect, writing that Benson 'was very rude to me today I suppose he doesn't like a woman getting the scholarship... [he] doesn't respect women' and flirts with 'the model and Miss Howard [the BSR housekeeper]'.⁶²⁰ Referring again to the painting, men might hope to waken female sexuality, with heightened expectations from water turning to wine, but the diner facing us looks frustrated. His stern expression draws the viewer not to empathy with his predicament, but to observe unbridgeable repressed tension between male and female diners. Winifred Knights depicted a masterful Jesus, women pacified, untouched watermelon hinting at missed opportunity, frustrated sexuality. Grasping the fruits of opportunity (sexually, life) is difficult. Avoiding them makes for passivity, staleness, as *The Marriage at Cana* shows. That Knights could grasp such opportunity, away from the School, is evidenced by some of her letters, but does not emerge in *The Marriage at Cana*, formed so close to the BSR.⁶²¹

Sometime in the mid-1920s Mark Lancelot Symons represented Jesus' miraculous appearance in the midst of Oxford Street shoppers. The painting is titled *My Lord I Meet in every London Lane and Street* (n.d., private collection, **plate 85**). It includes women in cloche hats and short skirts and men with the latest motorbikes.⁶²² In contrast to such modish styles, Knights chose unostentatious versions of 1920s men's fashion for her *Marriage at Cana*. For women she chose a mix of Italian peasant costume with Pre-Raphaelite and 'artistic' dress. Pre-Raphaelite and 'artistic' dress can be seen, for instance, in the shepherdess' full orange dress with white blouse in William Holman Hunt's *The Hireling Shepherd* (1851, Manchester Art Gallery).⁶²³ Knights' women wear long, comfortable jackets and full dresses gathered at the natural waistline that reveal the body's shape, without the era's 'bandeau bras that flattened the breasts',⁶²⁴ (although this shape was perhaps achieved through boneless corseting or 'elastic or rubber' undergarments).⁶²⁵ She would have known Augustus John's *The Smiling Woman (Dorelia)* (1909,

⁶¹⁹ Letter from Winifred Knights to her mother dated 3rd April 1921.

⁶²⁰ Letter from Winifred Knights to her mother dated 24th November 1920. J.M.B (Jack) Benson's studies were interrupted by military service in WWI and he returned to the BSR in 1920. See J.M.B. Benson Folder of Correspondence, BSR Archives.

⁶²¹ For grasping opportunities see, for instance, letter from Winifred Knights to her aunt Millicent dated 23rd May 1923.

⁶²² The collector of the painting wishes to remain anonymous.

⁶²³ Knights knew this painting, probably from reproduction: see letter from Knights to her aunt Millicent dated 29th September 1927. Dresses gathered at the natural waistline were common in Pre-Raphaelite paintings and worn in Victorian Britain as 'artistic' dress (often without corseting) from the 1850s onwards. See Patricia A. Cunningham, *Reforming Women's Fashion, 1850-1920* (Kent and London: Kent State University Press, Ohio, 2003), 105-116.

⁶²⁴ Yalom, *History of the Breast*, 176.

⁶²⁵ Valerie Steele, *Fashion and Eroticism: Ideals of Feminine Beauty from the Victorian Era to the Jazz Age* (New York: OUP, 1985), 239, 241.

Tate Collection) and her gathered dresses and apparently thick material were probably influenced by John's gypsy style.⁶²⁶ Her choices avoided the incongruous juxtaposition of biblical with present time that greets the viewer on first encountering Symons' *My Lord I Meet in every London Lane and Street* and which arguably derives from the paucity of evidence for Jesus' appearance in London.⁶²⁷

Such juxtaposition of ultra-fashionable with biblical costume was unproblematic in early Renaissance images with subjects from the Bible, for instance Masaccio's *Tribute Money* fresco (c.1426-1427, Brancacci Chapel, Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence). The introduction of modern clothing is convincing, too, in Stanley Spencer's *Christ's Entry into Jerusalem* (1920, Leeds Museums and Galleries), which features some contemporary costume with a population excited into terror by Christ's appearance on a donkey. By contrast, his *The Centurion's Servant* (1914, Tate Collection), with its modern nightclothes and bedding, places the miracle of returning health squarely in the twentieth century, and foregrounds faith because Jesus is not part of the image. Knights admired Spencer, writing that 'I think he is the most wonderful painter in England now, not even excepting John [Augustus John]',⁶²⁸ but she has not adopted either the modern costume he represented in these images or the clearly distinct combinations used by early Renaissance painters.

Acutely aware of fashion, as I argue below, she may have wished to avoid an overt emphasis on consumption, illustrated by a wedding photograph of Prince Albert, Duke of York, and Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon on April 26th 1923. It shows up-to-date fashions of head-hugging bride's veil, unobtrusive breasts, tubular dresses and short hair (**plate 86**).⁶²⁹ The 'flapper' style dominated British fashion during the years Knights worked on *The Marriage at Cana*. It included dresses with loose construction, short skirts, starting with visible ankles and rising during these years, obvious cosmetics and hair bobbed, shingled or Eton-cropped. The fashion only began to soften in 1927 when styles started moving back to a more conventionally feminine look.⁶³⁰ A slim figure with

⁶²⁶ 'Artistic' dress fashion (introduced in Victorian Britain) appears in images after the Victorian period, influenced by gypsy style, as shown in John's painting.

⁶²⁷ The crowded, emotionally charged canvas of James Ensor's *Christ's Entry into Brussels* (1888-1889, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles) shows a much more successful insertion of Jesus into a representation of modern Europe.

⁶²⁸ Letter from Winifred Knights to Aunt Millicent (undated, probably 1926).

⁶²⁹ See photograph taken by Eliot and Fry Ltd., reproduced in Beagles Postcards series, 200B. In Jane Johnson Lewis, 'About History: Women's History, Royal Weddings', at <http://womenshistory.about.com/od/britishhistory/ig/Royal-Weddings/1923---Queen-Elizabeth-Wedding-Dress.htm#step-heading.com>, accessed 17th November 2014.

⁶³⁰ For discussion of the flapper style and short hair see: Laura Doan, 'Passing Fashions: Reading Female Masculinities in the 1920s', *Feminist Studies* 24, no 3, (Fall 1998), 693. Article Stable

small breasts best suited the style, so that its wearers were contemporaneously described as 'boy-girl, boyette, hard-boiled flapper, Modern Woman, or Modern Girl',⁶³¹ and perhaps more accurately as 'not so much 'boyish' as *youthful*.'⁶³²

Short skirts, looser clothing, cropped hair and widespread abandonment of corseting reduced some restrictions on women's lives in the 1920s, particularly in leisure pursuits such as tennis, dancing and yachting.⁶³³ But contemporary fashion tied women to new obligations and routines, from the need to control weight to fit dress styles to more frequent washing, setting and cutting of fashionable hair, so that the new fashions of the 1920s illustrate the very limited feminist advances referred to throughout this chapter.⁶³⁴ They are arguably as much about style as substance, a point as relevant to British as to the French women who adopted images as 'intrepid, powerful, active and athletic – ...a visual analogue of the freedom that many women had supposedly enjoyed during the war'.⁶³⁵ Yet the boy-girl style was sometimes regarded more seriously. French natalists and Catholics saw a threat in the fashion of "non-nursing...the fashion of non-motherhood".⁶³⁶ And in a *Punch* cartoon a 'woman with ultrashort hair stands before her son, cigarette in hand: "you're not nearly as obedient as you used to be. I wonder why that is"...The mother's acquiescence to the 'look' results in the loss of maternal authority'.⁶³⁷ In Italy, where Knights worked on her *Marriage at Cana*, fashions were less extreme, with flappers and 'garçonnes (or *maschiettes*) [tomboys]...few and far between', one possible reason for her depiction of more traditional clothing.⁶³⁸ She may not have known how much the Italian 'ragazza *Novecento* [twentieth-century girl]' challenged Catholic expectations of women's behaviour, or how erstwhile peasants 'in city shoes, silk stockings and fashionable outfits' undermined Fascist

URL:<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3178585>; Mary Louise Roberts, 'Samson and Delilah Revisited: the Politics of Women's Fashion in 1920s France', *The American Historical Review* 98, no. 3 (June 1993), 667. Article Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2167545>; Kendra van Cleave, 'Fashioning the College Woman: Dress, Gender, and Sexuality at Smith College in the 1920s', *The Journal of American Culture* 32, no. 1 (March 2009), 5. DOI:10.1111/j.1542-734X.2009.00689.x. Drawing on Phyllis Tudora and Keith Eubank's analysis, Doan says that the bob was a short cut; the shingle a very short cut with the back tapered; the Eton-crop was particularly closely cut and "dressed like that of a man." In Tudora and Eubank, *A Survey of Historic Costume*, (New York: Fairchild Publications, 1989), 299, quoted in Doan, 'Passing Fashions', 670.

⁶³¹ Doan, 'Passing Fashions', 670.

⁶³² Steele, *Fashion and Eroticism*, 239.

⁶³³ For tennis see van Cleave, 'Fashioning the College Woman', 7 and Horwood, *Keeping up Appearances*, 83. For yachting see Doan, 'Passing Fashions', 665.

⁶³⁴ Van Cleave, 'Fashioning the College Woman', 7 and Roberts, 'Samson and Delilah Revisited', 679.

⁶³⁵ Roberts, *ibid*, 681-682.

⁶³⁶ Francois Fouveau de Courmelles (a natalist doctor), 'Modes feminines et depopulation', *La Revue Mondiale* (1st November 1919), quoted in Roberts, *ibid*, 671.

⁶³⁷ *Punch* cartoon dated 26th January 1927, in Doan, 'Passing Fashions', 673.

⁶³⁸ Gundle, *Bellissima*, 81.

as well as Catholic preconceptions.⁶³⁹ But she would have seen Italian versions of contemporaneous style in Rome. The costumes in her painting are a notable contrast to these and to British style of the 1920s.

Knights had a keen eye for fashion. While at the Slade she drew her fellow students in the latest hairstyles.⁶⁴⁰ In her *Ludlow Fair and Cattle Market* (1919) she depicted women's fashionable straw boaters and snugly-fitting cloche hats. Gwen John was 'knowledgeable about fashion' and when living in Paris keen to create an "artistique" look by combining 'a careful mix of fashionable shop-bought clothes with garments' she 'designed or made' herself.⁶⁴¹ Similar points apply to Knights. Her creativity and personal style were expressed in choice of material and inventiveness in dressmaking, as her letters indicate: 'I had to design it [a new 'walking dress'] myself. Don't be surprised if you see a queer freak visiting you on a Sunday afternoon.'⁶⁴² For a dance at the BSR she chose 'unbleached calico', designing and stencilling flowers to complete the look.⁶⁴³ Her individual choice of costume was remarkable compared to contemporaries' in Rome, as photographs show. In 1921 Knights' striking long-line jacket, white blouse and long skirt stands out against the dowdy dresses of her companions (**plate 1**). A few years later at the BSR, when hemlines had risen, she wore a long, fitted peasant dress (Barbara Hepworth is wearing a fashionable tubular, low-waisted frock, **plate 87**). And in a photograph labelled 'Xmas Day' the artist's neat bun contrasts with other young women's *de-rigueur* 'flapper' short hair.⁶⁴⁴ In her *Marriage at Cana* she also uses dress in resistance to the 1920s norm, avoiding styles associated with freedom and boyish sexual ambiguity. Nevertheless, although rejecting the cultural mainstream, her peasant and 'artistic' dress follows a pattern set earlier by Augustus John, Dorelia McNeill, Gwen John and others: it was only mildly radical in the 1920s. Indeed, peasant costume asserts the value of tradition in an uncertain age. Combined with Renaissance fashion in the group around Jesus it brings the distant world of miracles together with the

⁶³⁹ Gundle, *ibid*, 81.

⁶⁴⁰ See illustration of the Slade Sketch Club critique in letter from Winifred Knights to Audrey Clarke, undated, annotated as 'most likely late 1915'.

⁶⁴¹ Alicia Foster, 'Dressing for art's sake: Gwen John, the Bon Marche and the spectacle of the woman artist in Paris', in Amy de la Haye and Elizabeth Wilson (eds.), *Defining Dress* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), 119.

⁶⁴² Letter from Winifred Knights to Audrey Clarke dated Wednesday 26th January (therefore 1916).

⁶⁴³ Letter from Winifred Knights to unnamed recipient, probably Gertrude Knights, Winifred Knights' mother, dated December 9th (1924, from context).

⁶⁴⁴ For photographs see: Colin Gill, Nixon, Knights, two other unnamed males and two unnamed females (probably BSR students), labelled 'BSR 1921' (plate 1); photograph of John Skeaping, Barbara Hepworth, Thomas Monnington and Winifred Knights labelled 'British School at Rome? 1925' in Gertrude Knights' handwriting (plate 87); group photograph of BSR students and staff, labelled with names and 'Xmas Day', the date no earlier than 1922 because R.S. Austin and N.C. Joliffe began their studies in 1922. All photographs UCL Special Collections.

possibility of transformation in the modern world,⁶⁴⁵ a reassuring message for the present without Symonds' insistent references to modernity. But the blurring of edges between past and present also forecloses on representing Jesus as a radical change maker, a possibility available in the paintings by both Spencer and Symonds discussed above.

The Marriage at Cana is informed as much by Knights' social experience as interest in food and costume and the following section addresses this. Her letters from the BSR indicate acceptance and frustration at women's roles in modern life. She was not always happy at the BSR, for as she wrote, Alfred Kingsley Lawrence (1923 Rome Scholar in Painting) is

insufferable...I am the senior student and don't you forget it. He [Lawrence] wants putting down a few pegs...[while Knights and Lilian Whitehead, 1921 Rome Scholar in Engraving] cling together like 2 lost souls...[for there are no other artists] only intellectuals.⁶⁴⁶

She needed female friends, and in *Santissima Trinita* imagined a sorority, but could be resentful of other women, as she wrote of Mrs Eugene Strong, Deputy Director at the BSR: 'Mrs Strong is much nicer to me now she knows I have a will of my own'.⁶⁴⁷ She also begrudged the British School at Rome rule stipulating that any absence from the School be approved by the Director, as she wrote to Evelyn Shaw (Secretary to the BSR, based in London):

will you be so kind as to explain to the committee that I am very sorry to have gone away, contrary to the rules of the School. I did not know at all that I must not leave Rome without the Directors [sic] permission. I have not seen rules to this effect, and if there are any they have not been sufficiently explained...I wanted to see these frescoes [in Arezzo] before starting to paint my design for a Decoration...⁶⁴⁸

The Borghese Gardens are close to the School with its claustrophobic, Public School atmosphere. Knights left the School environment out of her work, save for a watercolour featuring the tennis court which includes neither students nor staff.⁶⁴⁹ But her anger, resentment and vulnerability spilled over into *The Marriage at Cana*, sullyng the setting's serenity. Some of the

⁶⁴⁵ Tony Mackle suggests that modern and Renaissance dress together 'underline the interlocking of past and present' in *The Marriage at Cana*. Tony Mackle, 'Religious Visions' in Ted Gott, Laurie Benson and Sophie Matthieson, *Modern Britain 1900-1960: Masterworks from Australia and New Zealand Collections*, (Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 2007), 177.

⁶⁴⁶ Letter from Winifred Knights to her mother dated 14th December 1922.

⁶⁴⁷ Letter from Winifred Knights to her mother dated April 1921.

⁶⁴⁸ Letter from Winifred Knights to Evelyn Shaw, Secretary to the BSR, dated 22nd June 1922. BSR Archives.

⁶⁴⁹ See Collins, *Winifred Knights*, 25.

diners described as waiting patiently can therefore appear at closer scrutiny more sullen than self-controlled representations of the artist and her emotions. This is clear in her self-portraits to the left and in the man staring at the viewer as he chews watermelon.

The same combination of anger and vulnerability probably informed Knights' depiction of Jesus Christ. She did not picture him as a radical come to secure followers for a new religion, unlike Mark Lancelot Symonds and Stanley Spencer in the images discussed above. She probably wanted a more reassuring image, but seems to have been unable to settle on one clear view. The unfinished surface of Jesus' face is difficult to read, but suggests, on close inspection, uncertainty about rendering him as benevolent or domineering.⁶⁵⁰ There were many precedents for selecting an authoritarian version of Christ. In Veronese's *The Wedding at Cana* (1562, the Louvre) he faces the spectator as an incongruous Pantokrator in a scene of everyday life. In Gerard David's *The Marriage at Cana* (c.1500, The Louvre) an equally unsmiling Jesus blesses water turning to wine. Yet Giotto's representation is gentler, and looking at Knights' painting again we see how its surface reveals the artist's developing interpretation: the chin is heavily worked, but not completed, the cheek waiting for marks of individuality. She perhaps considered Arnold Mason, her first fiancé, for this role, for Mason spent some time in Italy with her in summer 1921.⁶⁵¹ If so, Jesus' face might reflect the sexual tensions of young love. Thinking of Jesus as father figure we could see the face as inspired by the character of Evelyn Shaw. Shaw's letters to Knights provided important encouragement and his visit to Rome in December 1920 was similarly supportive:

Mr Shaw has been a perfect brick...yesterday he took the whole lot of us for the day to Tivoli and gave us a splendid lunch at the Hotel Sybill...⁶⁵²

Intimations of a wispy beard in the disturbed paint surface additionally connect to Thomas Ashby's image. Ashby was a noted scholar and as Director the man in charge at the School. Taking these models, Jesus is worthy of admiration and his expression readable as charismatic instead of angry. Was Knights, then, simply showing her respect, indicated by the way Mary

⁶⁵⁰ The painting remains unfinished in areas such as Jesus' face. After completing her scholarship Knights took the painting back to England in September 1923, rolled up, to finish. See Eileen Palmer, account of Winifred Knights' life. When exhibited in 1929 the painting was described as unfinished by a reviewer. Our Art Critic, *Morning Post* (5th April 1929).

⁶⁵¹ For example, see letter from Winifred Knights to her mother dated July 1921.

⁶⁵² Letter from Winifred Knights to her father dated 14th December 1920. See also letter from Knights' mother to Evelyn Shaw dated 11th February 1921 in which Gertrude Knights mentions receiving a photograph in which 'you were the 'centre of interest.' Her account of the day was perfect enjoyment from beginning to end'. Knights' File, BSR Archives. For letters supporting Knights see, for instance, letter from Evelyn Shaw to Knights dated March 30th 1921. Knights' File, *ibid*.

directs her glance towards him, accepting woman's lower status? Or was she relieving her feelings, masochistically depicting Jesus fully in control, diners resentful and pacified? It is not clear. The uncertainty I have described works against narrative clarity, even after examining the artist's biography.

Looking beyond biographical detail, Chapter Four has argued that the 1920s were difficult years for feminism in Britain and Italy. In Britain there were increased opportunities for single professional women. But, when considering married women of all classes, new opportunities were predominantly confined to leisure pursuits. Both societies encouraged women to focus on home and the family. In keeping with this conservatism Knights' men are assertive and women's choices clear: to sit quietly; to be occupied as mothers and carers, shown by the mother breast-feeding and another with the toddler (the father's greater interest arguably a comment on mothers' *obligation* to care). Gender and food historians associate 'buying, preparing, and cooking food' with 'distinctly womanly task[s]'.⁶⁵³ But it was only in the twentieth century that it became commonplace for British middle-class women to prepare food, as the numbers of women taking up domestic service decreased,⁶⁵⁴ another aspect of relationships between women and the home. Dorothy Richardson's *Revolving Lights*, published in 1923, describes middle-class cookery: "Dora... cooking... she is an absolutely perfect cook. An artist. She invents and experiments."⁶⁵⁵ Such creativity and confident agency cannot be depicted in a *Marriage at Cana*. It is out of bounds at a formal, semi-public wedding breakfast. As well, this particular feast very likely refers to the compulsory group meals at the BSR where food was provided. Nevertheless, the lone artist to the viewer's left drawing with her back to a tree suggests another creative choice and an alternative to motherhood and other gendered tasks. The image is informed by Knights' own experience, too. In the School's claustrophobic environment she was beset with insecurity about her work and struggled to complete anything.⁶⁵⁶ Here, aiming for total concentration, she has turned her back to the crowd and to Jesus' oppressive authority.

⁶⁵³ Zanon, "Per Voi, Signore", 49-50.

⁶⁵⁴ For the decline in numbers of servants see, for instance, Adrian Forty, *Objects of Desire* [1986], (London: Thames and Hudson, 2005), 213.

⁶⁵⁵ Dorothy Richardson, *Revolving Lights* (London: Duckworth and Co. 1923), 218-219. Richardson set her novel series in the years 1893-1912, but this particular description fits the 1920s very well.

⁶⁵⁶ See for instance letter from Winifred Knights to 'my dearest Auntie....I am drifting here most horribly' (21st February 1921). In a later letter, from Knights to her aunt Millicent, she refers to *The Marriage at Cana*: 'I never had such trouble with a thing and it will be a beast in the end for all my pains' (23rd May 1923). See also letter from Evelyn Shaw to Winifred Knights dated 27th September 1923. Shaw writes with reference to *The Marriage at Cana*: 'You are unduly depressed about your work. It is absurd that you should feel ashamed of it. Others I know will feel quite differently...' Knights' File, BSR Archives.

Of her Italian work *The Marriage at Cana* is the most clearly influenced by early Italian narrative art. While the primary meaning of her large decoration is the imminence of miraculous change, the painting's many details lead the viewer towards additional significations. Women's interest in food and clothes was taken for granted in the conservative 1920s. The artist's individual choice of food reflects such gendered interests, also fitting the transformation of Jesus' first miracle. The artist's choice of costume was counter to contemporary trends, but thereby avoided a jarring juxtaposition between biblical past and the modern day present. Its originality derives from her wide artistic concerns, fashion in her case naturally regarded as worthy of serious attention. Winifred Knights was dedicated to her work, but easily lost confidence. Responding to this, *The Marriage at Cana* is redolent with gendered conservatism. Looking closely, the viewer sees how with Jesus as authority figure Knights' work fulfils the wishes generated by insecurity, repressed desire and lost motivation, while untouched watermelon hints at unfulfilled sexual desire. The man eating watermelon "harmonica-style" looks frustrated, too, his resentment a potential threat. Any resistance to dominant patriarchy is muted, shown by passive-aggressive diners and the artist absenting herself from the crowd. Set close to the hot-house environment of the BSR *The Marriage at Cana* figures the tensions of a group meal almost as clearly as imminent transformation. Moreover, the viewer struggles to understand Christ's expression. The difficulty is pertinent when linked to the range of models for Jesus' face that I have described, but undermines narrative clarity in the painting itself. I have stated that *The Marriage of Cana* was incomplete when Knights finished her scholarship, indicative of the difficult task undertaken, the painstaking care and amount of detail witness to 'an impossible, untenable practice', in the long run.⁶⁵⁷ Although not an outstanding work of art, *The Marriage at Cana* is an interesting, sincere representation of Christ's first miracle. It is also a timely reminder of the condition of women in inter-war Europe, at a time, too, when British 'new' feminism's focus on maternity challenged difference-blind 'old' feminism of the suffragettes and their followers.

This chapter has shown how Winifred Knights incorporated her Italian experience into paintings that showed delight at the landscape and Italy's peasants, and frustration with the claustrophobic conditions of the BSR. In the expatriate environment, controlled by the imperialist elite whose intentions for public decorative art had survived WWI, she did not develop the avant-garde

⁶⁵⁷ Nadia Hebson, speaking in A Public Conversation between Titania Seidl, Nadia Hebson and Holly Antrum, dated 25th May 2013. Accessed as a recording at the exhibition *Moda WK*, Vane Art Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne, 20th June 2013. Despite saying the painting was witness to 'an impossible...practice', Hebson called *The Marriage at Cana* Knights a 'masterpiece'. The exhibition *Moda WK* consisted of work by Holly Antrum, Nadia Hebson and Titania Seidl, all taking Knights' work as inspiration.

practice she had begun so auspiciously with *The Deluge*. Taken as a whole, her Italian paintings figure 1920s social conservatism, muted female agency and some rebellion against this condition. Nevertheless, the work Knights made used the decorative style with which she was familiar to interrogate Italian landscape and twentieth-century women's experience sensitively and perceptively, as has been shown. She did not finish *The Marriage at Cana*. Perhaps the pressure to finish her big decoration was too much. Finishing it was important, too, if she craved a career as a mural painter, but not for her woman-centred concerns. Yet her representation of a women's community in *Santissima Trinita* stands out as a convincing figuration of woman's independent agency. Utilising the context of pilgrimage and the shapes of mountains, rivers and plain it is also a tribute to countryside the artist loved, far removed from the School at Rome.

Chapter Four. Iconography and meaning in *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours, Canterbury Cathedral*

This chapter focuses on Winifred Knights' last completed work, *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours* (1933, **plate 88**). The painting is oil on canvas and measures 76.5 x 189.5 cm. It is a site-specific work, designed as a reredos to be attached to the wall behind the altar in St Martin's Chapel, Canterbury Cathedral. The work shows two well-known scenes from St Martin's life, with a lesser-known miracle of St Martin in the centre. The painting follows early Renaissance practice in showing different scenes together, each of which has its own space: an inner room, dark brown earth in the centre, and to the viewer's left a raised terracotta roadway.⁶⁵⁸ On the road the viewer sees the most famous episode from the life of St Martin, which demonstrates charity. The young Martin, seated on his horse in military helmet and with a halo, is cutting his cloak to give a portion to a barefoot beggar who nervously holds out his hands. The horse's front leg is raised, indicating that Martin, a Roman soldier, will soon leave the beggar with his gift. The second part of the story, to the viewer's right, is also a well-known episode from Martin's life. Martin, in white nightshirt and with halo, is woken by a bearded Christ wearing the red cloth of his cloak to acknowledge the import of his gift to the beggar. Christ is accompanied by two blonde angels in ultramarine robes. The clean white sheet and yellow cover are rumpled as Martin starts from his sleep to see Christ wearing a portion of his cloak, while one of the angels draws the curtain to reveal the pale blue sky of early morning. In the central section Martin is now an old man. He kneels, and, witnessed by five onlookers, restores a woman's baby to life. The mother, also kneeling, is holding the loose ends of her baby's shroud, no longer needed, in recognition of the moment of resurrection. Martin's halo links all three representations of the saint. He is dressed as a monk, but, with face, and white hair, similar to the beggar's, he is a picture of humility, an indication that his power to resurrect derives from God. Beyond his bundle and stick a wooden plank connects Martin's gift to the beggar (to the left) with the new gift of life on the lower level of brown earth at the centre of the work.

⁶⁵⁸ For examples of different scenes in one visual field see Piero's fresco *Discovery and Proof of the True Cross* (1466, San Francesco, Arezzo) and Sandro Botticelli's *Three Miracles of St Zenobius* (c. 1500, tempera on panel, National Gallery, plate 111).

The painting was originally larger. It was a diptych with a small side panel to the left, designed to fit around a column in the chapel. In the side panel, now missing,⁶⁵⁹ the landscape background continued and an angel in blue just beyond the road held a portion of the cloak, a link to Martin's dream (**plate 94**).⁶⁶⁰ The right scene is set in an inner room, an early Renaissance device Knights had used in her *Marriage at Cana* (c.1923). The tonal range is wide, but there are not many bright colours. Where bright colours are used they are repeated in a simple rhythm with red to the left and right, and a strong blue in the missing panel, the blue repeated in the inner room and echoed by the pale blue of the mother's dress. The viewer's attention is drawn to pattern and shape nearly as much as to narrative, a feature of the artist's earlier work. For example: facial types and expressions repeated across observers; strong rectangles of wooden boarding; the central narrative formally composed, like a stage set, or recalling paintings such as Hans Memling's solemn *Donne Triptych* (c.1478, National Gallery). But the Italian Renaissance character, suggested by garments as well as inner room, is jarringly undercut by the modern hairstyles of both St Martin in bed and the observer second from right in the central narrative. The treatment is stylistically modern in its self-conscious early Renaissance treatment, with small but significant references to contemporary life, a cautious modernism characteristic of artwork from the British School at Rome.

Knights clearly looked back to Italy when designing the background. The hilltop town with arid slopes beyond echoes Tuscan hills in early Italian works such as Gentile da Fabriano's *Adoration of the Magi* (1423, Uffizi, Florence), Benozzo Gozzoli's *Journey of the Magi* (1459-1461, Palazzo Medici-Ricardi, Florence) and the bare mountains in Masaccio's *Tribute Money* (c.1425, Brancacci Chapel, Florence). Piero's *The Baptism of Christ* (1448-1450) is another likely source. The painting was acquired by the National Gallery in 1861, and she almost certainly knew it. In

⁶⁵⁹ Sketches in UCL Art Museum show that Knights initially worked on a modified diptych: a narrow panel to the left shows the cloak in some sketches and an angel in others. This panel was designed to fit with the medieval buttressing of St Martin's Chapel. The completed picture included the panel, the inner room to the right completing the appearance of a triptych. See also black and white photograph, showing the angel in left panel. Folder of correspondence, catalogues, etc., labelled Winifred Knights, UCL Art Museum. Also see illustration in George (G.K.A.) Bell, 'The Church and the Artist', *The Studio* 124, no. 594 (September 1942), 86. The author has seen a photograph in a private collection that shows the painting in situ in St Martin's Chapel. I reproduce the photograph in this thesis (plate 94). Winifred Knights' own frame-maker accompanied her to Canterbury to adapt her frame to the space: 'She is bringing a frame-maker down as the frame has to be partly taken to pieces to fit the wedge shape which the window and reveal make in the circle.' See letter from Herbert Baker to Dean Johnson dated 31st October 1933. Hewlett Johnson Archive, University of Kent Special Collections. This archive hereafter referred to as Hewlett Johnson Archive. Photographic evidence suggests the current frame is the original, adapted again to allow for loss of the left panel.

⁶⁶⁰ Knights had possibly seen designs by Edward Burne-Jones for tapestry or stained glass prior to painting this angel. See for instance stained-glass angels in the east window in Jesus Church, Troutbeck, Cumbria, dated 1873. There is a particularly fine drawing of the angel in a private collection (plate 99).

depicting a resurrection in nature, away from urban civilisation, she was probably influenced by the account of Jesus' resurrection, which according to the Bible occurred (like the Crucifixion) outside the city.⁶⁶¹ Artistic precedents for the depiction of resurrection locate the event further into the countryside. In Piero's *Resurrection* (1460s, Museo Civico, Borgo san Sepulchro, **plate 95**) mountains and trees are background to Christ's victorious rebirth, while Giotto's *The Raising of Lazarus* (1320s, Scrovegni (Arena) Chapel, Padua, **plate 105**) takes place in the mountains. Returning to *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours*, two strips of standing corn behind the beggar mark a jump from foreground to the empty hills of the background. Except for planks, and a bare tree to the centre left, there is little in the mid-ground to distract the viewer from the men, women, horse and baby in the foreground, a striking contrast with the artist's earlier *Marriage at Cana*. The viewer's attention is therefore easily directed back to the scenes of St Martin. In eliding the mid-ground Knights was, probably, influenced by Piero's *The Nativity of Christ* (1470-1475, which was acquired by the National Gallery in 1874, **plate 96**), its 'background disjunct from its foreground'.⁶⁶² Piero's water boundary, grouping of figures and the Virgin's pose are further similarities to her painting. She minimised representations of movement and drama. She worked with the conventions of Decorative Painting during most of her career (her early work up to 1918 is the exception), and this painting clearly demonstrates these conventions. Thus to the viewer's left St Martin and his horse are seen from the back, only the tip of his sword visible to show he is cutting the cloak. Also, only the horse's raised front foot shows Martin will ride on. In contrast, in Simone Martini's *St Martin Dividing his Cloak* (c.1312, St Martin's Chapel, Lower Church of San Francesco, Assisi, **plate 93**) Martin is riding past the beggar. Deciding at the last minute to act the Good Samaritan, he dramatically leans back to cut the cloak. Although Knights' Martin has started from his sleep (or sits up as he dreams of Christ), in the scene to the right, Christ himself is calm and still. There is more visual drama in the diagonal action of the angel pulling back the curtain.⁶⁶³ In view of Knights' undramatic representation of Martin's horse, Jesus, and also of the baby's resurrection, a knowledge of the stories of St Martin is essential in order to understand the

⁶⁶¹ See John, Chapter 19.

⁶⁶² J.V. Field, *Piero della Francesca: A Mathematician's Art* (New Haven and London: Yale, 2005), 248.

⁶⁶³ Knights recalled Piero's fresco *The Dream of Constantine* (1452-1456) as she planned this section of the reredos, clear from the clean white sheet and rumpled blanket. It is part of the cycle depicting the story of the True Wood in San Francesco, Arezzo which Knights saw in 1922. For this date see letter from Knights to Evelyn Shaw, Secretary to the BSR (based in London) dated 22nd June 1922. BSR Archives. It is likely that Knights visited the church of San Domenico in Perugia while she was living in Italy. The early fourteenth-century monument to Pope Benedict XI in San Domenico (attributed to Arnolfo di Cambio, among others) represents the dead pope, his head resting on pillows. At both ends of the body angels hold back curtains, as if granting the viewer one last sight of the Pope. The angels' poses in the monument are very similar to the diagonal action of the angel pulling back the curtain in *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours*.

narratives depicted in *Scenes from the Life of St Martin*. Even with such information the scenes take time to read. But the narratives merit such attention. For instance, in the central section the baby is already turned to St Martin as he comes back to life. The mother does not touch her child, perhaps fearing he is still cold. Although there is real excitement in Simone Martini's *Miracle of the Resurrected Child* (the child has sat up, his mother holds her hands out in amazed delight, women pray and look to heaven, **plate 97**), in Knights' version of the miracle love and tender care for fragile new life is poignantly, believably represented.⁶⁶⁴

Winifred Knights was given the commission for this painting in 1928 (**plate 88, plate 89, plate 90, plate 91 and plate 94**). The subject-matter was part of a complex process of negotiation between the Milner Memorial Committee, Dean George Bell as head of Canterbury Cathedral Chapter and the artist, with the installation of the reredos the culmination to renovations of the chapel in memory of Alfred Lord Milner (1854-1925). The commission is a good instance of a fruitful combination of moderate modernist style, inter-war conservatism and the influence of an establishment elite. This confluence was important to my argument about the artist's Italian paintings and is continued here.⁶⁶⁵ With letters in Canterbury Cathedral Archives, UCL and the University of Kent Special Collections there is an almost complete record for the commission,⁶⁶⁶ making it a fascinating case-study of a site-specific work and, importantly for my study, an instance of an artist's life-story discreetly incorporated into a public work. While an obvious way of appreciating the picture is through either its biographical import or its religious significance and Christian setting, the painting is also connected to ideals of service embodied in the life-stories of both St Martin of Tours and Alfred Lord Milner. The chapter therefore includes detailed analysis of crucial parts played by commissioners and church authorities, because understanding Knights' work and its contexts, including ways her life-story is incorporated into the painting, is impossible without full examination of the commission.

Winifred Knights was commissioned to paint episodes from St Martin's life, and the iconography in *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours* is clear. On either side of the work the viewer sees two major scenes from the life of Martin, as indicated above: sharing the cloak and Martin's

⁶⁶⁴ Understanding the image as more than care for a young child depends on knowing the story, but I argue throughout this thesis that stories from the Bible and the saints were well known in the inter-war period. Paintings by artists who had studied at the British School at Rome are generally undramatic. Indeed, 'the painting awards were for murals ('decorative painting')'. In T.P. Wiseman, *A Short History of the British School at Rome* (London: British School at Rome, 1990), 27. Decorative painting drew on precedents such as Puvis de Chavannes (for instance, *The Sacred Grove*, 1884-1889, Art Institute of Chicago) and early Italian artists such as Piero.

⁶⁶⁵ See Chapter Three of this thesis.

⁶⁶⁶ But archives at Canterbury Cathedral and the University of Kent do not record when the left panel was lost.

dream. Martin was an early Christian saint who was born in c.316 and died in c.367. According to Sulpicius Severus, a convert who knew him, and Gregory of Tours,⁶⁶⁷ Martin was born in Eastern Europe and brought up in Italy.⁶⁶⁸ He was already a catechumen (that is preparing for baptism) when persuaded to join the Roman army by his parents. Both accounts describe Martin's charitable act as a soldier in Amiens, sharing his cloak with a beggar. They also detail his vision of Jesus wearing the half-cloak. His later life included two periods as a hermit, attempts to crush the Arian sect in Italy, a journey to France where he lived in a monastery with his followers, his consecration as Bishop of Tours, and his miracles. As the most famous episode from the Saint's life, sharing the cloak connects to service to the community, making Martin the titular saint for many churches. The scene is depicted, for instance, in: Van Dyck's *Saint Martin Dividing his Cloak* (c.1618, Royal Collection, Windsor Castle); El Greco's *St Martin and the Beggar* (1597-1599, National Gallery of Art, Washington); Jean Fouquet's *The Charity of St Martin* (1452-1460, the Hours of Etienne Chavalier, the Louvre), as well as in Simone Martini's frescoes in Assisi (**plate 93**). Knights certainly knew Simone Martini's depiction, a point I shall return to later in the chapter.⁶⁶⁹ She might also have known Gerard David's *Canon Bernardijn Salviati and Three Saints* (after 1501), which was bequeathed to the National Gallery in 1878. David links St Martin, wearing bishop's robes, to the beggar in the background without representing the cloak, an indication that by this date the legend was very well known and therefore did not necessarily need spelling out. Although St Martin's dream is not depicted so frequently it was an obvious choice because it clearly links to sharing of the cloak and therefore acknowledges Christian approval for acts of charity. Yet the central narrative of the Resurrection of the Dead Child, with an older Martin dressed as itinerant monk, with bundle and stick beside him, alongside a mother and baby, is rarely depicted, and the choice is therefore intriguing. Biographical context will be needed to make sense of it.

⁶⁶⁷ Martin's life was described in Sulpicius Severus' *Vita Martini* and by Gregory of Tours in the sixth century. For this see: Clare Stancliffe, *St Martin and his Hagiographer: History and Miracle in Sulpicius Severus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 22, 112-119; *Lives of the Saints: The Legend of St Martin* (Oxford: Mowbray and Co. 1891), 1-7; Regine Schindler, *Martin shares his Cloak* (Middlegreen, Slough: St Paul Publications, 1990), 24-25. Churches dedicated to Martin are associated with service and the ancient church of St Martin, Canterbury (visited by St Augustine) indicates this importance in Kent. Placed in St Martin's chapel Knights' painting links to service through iconography, and to Alfred Lord Milner through inscriptions on the chapel walls. Milner had a house at Sturry, near Canterbury, between 1906 and his death in 1926 and the connection with service is implicitly linked to this local man. Correspondence includes discussion about explicitly highlighting the connection, with Milner's position 'safeguarding Kent', within the memorial, but this idea was not adopted. See letter from Herbert Baker to Dean George Bell, dated 17th September 1926. Milner Memorial File, Canterbury Cathedral Archives. The file is hereafter referred to as Milner Memorial File.

⁶⁶⁸ He was born in the region that is now Hungary.

⁶⁶⁹ See letter from Winifred Knights to Dean George Bell of Canterbury, dated April 28th 1929. Milner Memorial File.

Furthermore, with men and women dressed in Renaissance style and set within a memorial chapel commemorating the politician first responsible for concentration camps, in South Africa, yet dedicated to the patron saint of service, the painting's place in its twentieth-century context seems obscure. The image in this location was the product of a number of interest groups: artist, two Deans and their Chapters,⁶⁷⁰ chapel patrons, architect. Indeed, however clear its iconography, the painting signified differently across the various interest groups involved. These meanings included a commemoration to Alfred Lord Milner, an opportunity to bring contemporary religious art into a Christian context, and for the artist a chance to see her work in an important public location. The use made of the iconography by all interest groups is central to an account of the image's making, the place of public religious art in the 1920s and 1930s and the painting's reception by Hewlett Johnson, the Dean responsible for the Cathedral from 1931.

A painted reredos to accompany renovations to St Martin's chapel was planned from 1926, to commemorate Alfred Lord Milner who had died the previous year. As a member of the Conservative and Unionist Party (although never an MP) Alfred Milner held key government appointments, including in Lloyd George's five-strong War Cabinet.⁶⁷¹ He was best known as a champion of Imperialism. He believed that the Empire fostered links between widely-separated nations with a common heritage and could enhance British power and prosperity in twentieth-century conditions.⁶⁷² Milner promoted Imperialism through speeches and books and his views influenced his practice in government posts: Director General for Accounts in Egypt (1889-1892); Governor General in South Africa (1897-1905); Colonial Secretary (1919-1921).⁶⁷³ Milner was not simply an Imperialist. Although favouring his own race he was not a narrow nationalist, either, perhaps due to a mixed heritage, his father half German. Indeed, he travelled widely, not only in the Empire. He had a strong sense of public service. His friends included Canon Samuel Barnett, who established the Toynbee Hall Settlement in the East End of London, which provided adult

⁶⁷⁰ There are few references to the Chapter in the Milner Memorial File, which covers the years 1926-1929, suggesting that the members were in agreement with Bell's views. Also, minutes of Chapter meetings in the *Chapter Act Books* (Canterbury Cathedral Archives) do not record disagreements. Letters at the University of Kent dated from 1933 onwards show the Chapter's general agreement with Dean Hewlett Johnson. Hewlett Johnson Archive.

⁶⁷¹ John Evelyn Wrench, *Alfred Lord Milner* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1958), 316.

⁶⁷² Milner's 'Key to my Position' published in *The Times* after his death as 'Credo', on 27th July 1925, includes: 'I am a Nationalist and not a cosmopolitan...My patriotism knows no geographical but only racial limits. I am an Imperialist and not a Little Englander because I am a British race patriot...[due to] the speech, the traditions, the spiritual heritage, the principles, the aspirations, of the British race'. Quoted in John Marlowe, *Milner, Apostle of Empire* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1976), 364.

⁶⁷³ For Milner in Egypt see Wrench, *Alfred Lord Milner*, 96, 135; for Inland Revenue see Wrench, *ibid*, 35, 159; for South Africa, see Wrench, *ibid*, 165, 216; for Colonial Secretary see Marlowe, *Milner, Apostle of Empire*, 324-25.

education and free legal advice to local people. As a young man Milner volunteered in boys' clubs in London's East End (established by public schools and universities to provide recreational and educational opportunities for poor boys).⁶⁷⁴ But during his career Milner's most prominent admirers were right-wing members of the Conservative and Unionist Party (the Diehards), and his Kindergarten in South Africa, which consisted of administrators of his Boer War policies who remained committed to his ideals after he left South Africa in 1905. Geoffrey Dawson, a former member of the Kindergarten, promoted Milner's views as editor of *The Times*, and members founded the Round Table in Britain, to promote Imperial federation.

Yet Milner was not universally admired. As Governor General he is known today (with Kitchener) for forcing Boer families into concentration camps, during the Boer War of 1899-1902. But at the time moral outrage was focused on his overall responsibility for ill-treatment of Chinese labour brought into South Africa to man the mines, following the Boer War.⁶⁷⁵ As Colonial Secretary after WWI Milner's popularity and influence waned as his customary energy and decisiveness declined. In the following years his right-wing supporters lost influence in Stanley Baldwin's moderate Conservative government.⁶⁷⁶ His ideas for Imperial federation, developed during WWI and intended to bring about 'a pooling of defence resources, preferential trade agreements and perhaps even an Imperial parliament' were not realised.⁶⁷⁷ They were resisted by the Dominions, particularly Canada, South Africa and Ireland, who instead wanted more autonomy within the

⁶⁷⁴ For boys' clubs see London Federation of Boys' Clubs, Metropolitan Archives, City of London, at <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/rd/16dba657-4a70-44ea-a83a-d688f213fcea>, accessed 13th August 2015. On Milner's friendship with Canon Barnett, see Wrench, *Alfred Lord Milner*, 277. On links to eugenics see Marlowe, 'Milner's enthusiasm for social reform became an integral part of his imperialist creed. In accordance with his racial views, it was all-important that the blood-stock which was at the root of it all should remain strong and healthy'. In Marlowe, *Milner, Apostle of Empire*, 365. For another reference to Milner and eugenics see Schula Marks and Stanley Trapido, 'Lord Milner and the South African State', *History Workshop* 8 (Autumn 1979), 66. Article Stable URL:<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4288258>.

⁶⁷⁵ For Milner and concentration camps see: Marlowe, *Milner, Apostle of Empire*, 111; Wrench, *Alfred Lord Milner*, 231-232. For treatment of Chinese workers in the mines see: Marlowe, *Milner, Apostle of Empire*, 166; Marks and Trapido, 'Lord Milner', 65-66. Treatment of Chinese labour (which included corporal punishment) became a political and General Election issue from late 1905 and into 1906, when the Liberals under Campbell-Bannerman re-gained power. See Marlowe, *Milner, Apostle of Empire*, 166.

⁶⁷⁶ For the radical right see John Hope, 'Essay in Labour History: British fascism and the state 1917-1927: a re-examination of the documentary evidence', *Labour History Review* 57, no. 3 (Winter 1992), 77, at *Business Source Complete*, EBSCO host, accessed 30th December 2014. For Diehards see G. C. Webber, 'Intolerance and Discretion: Conservatives and British Fascism 1918-1926', in Tony Kushner and Kenneth Lunn (eds.), *Traditions of Intolerance: Historical Perspectives on fascism and race tolerance in Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 156. For Imperial federation see Denis Judd and Peter Slinn, *The Evolution of the Modern Commonwealth 1902-80* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1982), 20-21.

⁶⁷⁷ Anthony Best, Jussi M. Hanhimäki, Joseph A. Maiolo, and Kirsten E. Schulze, *International History of the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 2003), 89.

Empire and to be treated as 'equals by the metropolitan government'.⁶⁷⁸ But Imperialism was still part of national self-definition in the 1920s, reinforced and promoted at Wembley's British Empire Exhibitions in 1924 and 1925. Many still believed 'that the British Empire would last as long as the Roman Empire.'⁶⁷⁹ Imperialism's continued potency, along with nostalgia, accounts for the series of memorial services following Milner's death on 13th May 1925: 16th May in Canterbury Cathedral, the service conducted by Archbishop Randall Davidson; 18th May in New College chapel, Oxford, and at Westminster Abbey attended by the Prime Minister, Baldwin, with full Cabinet.

In these circumstances it is unsurprising that Milner was honoured more permanently, with a plaque in Westminster Abbey and the substantial memorial at Canterbury. This memorial was planned as a site-specific complex from mid-1926, with overall design by Herbert Baker, an establishment architect who had already put his Imperialist principles into practice.⁶⁸⁰ It featured candlesticks and cross, altar 'based on the primitive Italian altars...the simplest I know', painted reredos, inscriptions.⁶⁸¹ Carved in large capitals into the cathedral's stone the inscriptions include: to the apse's right in memory of Milner 'who devoted his life to...his country at home and overseas' (**plate 92**) and to the left to St Martin, 'a shrine sacred to the Christian saint of Service'. Under the inscription to Milner, low down on the wall, a carved stone shield represents the four Dominions of Canada, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa.⁶⁸² But *Scenes from the Life of St Martin* was not brought to Canterbury until 1933, and by this date the overall meaning of chapel, altar and reredos was less clear. Indeed, for Hewlett Johnson, Dean at the Cathedral in 1933, the picture's meaning was simple. It was an aesthetic object, 'one of the most lovely paintings of modern times'.⁶⁸³ An understanding of the complex meanings associated with *Scenes from the Life of St Martin*, and why one meaning might be privileged over another, is possible through

⁶⁷⁸ Best (et al.), *International History*, 89.

⁶⁷⁹ Judd and Slinn, *The Evolution of the Modern Commonwealth*, 41.

⁶⁸⁰ Ideas for a memorial to Milner were discussed in letters between Dean George Bell and members of the Milner Memorial Committee from February 1926. Herbert Baker was appointed as architect by the Milner Memorial Committee in late June 1926. See letter from Hugh Thornton to Dean Bell dated 28th June 1926. Milner Memorial File. Herbert Baker wrote to Dean Bell on 21st July 1926 outlining ideas for an altar and inscriptions, the first record of particular plans for a site-specific complex. Milner Memorial File.

⁶⁸¹ Quotation taken from a letter from Baker to Dean Bell dated 20th December 1926, Milner Memorial File. A measured plan for the altar is dated 24th December 1926. Accession CATH 138B, Canterbury Cathedral Archives. Baker was concerned that the cross and candlesticks 'should be an example of modern artistry'. See letter from Baker to Dean Bell, 17th October 1927. Milner Memorial File.

⁶⁸² Baker's four Dominion Columns in Government Court, Delhi, planned from 1914 but unveiled in 1931, are surely a prototype for this relatively modest scheme. For details of columns see Robert Grant Irving, *Indian Summer* (New Haven and London: Yale 1981), 291-294.

⁶⁸³ Letter from Dean Bell to Hugh Thornton dated 10th July 1935. Hewlett Johnson Archive.

detailed examination of the commission and its aftermath in the 1930s. For George Bell, in post as Dean when the painting was commissioned, it had a more complex signification than for Hewlett Johnson. Bell believed the arts were an important vehicle for expressing Christian faith. He revived religious drama, at Canterbury instigating an annual festival of new plays, centred on the Christian story.⁶⁸⁴ Bell's aesthetic preference at this stage was for a moderate modernism (that is, art that drew very clearly on the past while retaining some features of pre-war avant-garde style), associated with Decorative Painting and the British School at Rome. His cautious approach to modernism can be seen more widely in Bell's tastes for the drama and music he deemed suitable to church settings, an approach that may have drawn him to artists associated with the BSR, including Winifred Knights. Although letters in the archive suggest that Bell was not confident in his visual taste in the 1920s,⁶⁸⁵ in retrospect, writing in September 1942 for *The Studio* he articulated a clear connection between beauty and modern religious art in the cathedral setting:

three things stand out from those years [the period of Dean of Canterbury] from the point of view of the association of religion and art. There was first a revival from the past...mural paintings...second the scheme devised by Sir Herbert Baker for the refitting of St Martin's Chapel in memory of Viscount Milner, including a painting by Mrs Monnington of an altar piece comprising St Martin's life...it is one of the most lovely, delicate and deeply felt modern religious paintings that I know. Last, there was *The Coming of Christ*, a nativity play specially written by John Masefield and performed in the nave of the Cathedral.⁶⁸⁶

The Milner memorial was therefore an excellent opportunity for Bell to get religious art into the Cathedral. Bell was also keen to acknowledge Alfred Lord Milner's work for the nation and beyond, as he explained early in the project. Referring to his preferred choice of memorial chapel over tablet, he talks about the 'wider idea' of service that could be expressed in a chapel: 'this would bring in Toynbee Hall and all that side of Lord Milner's life together with his industrial sympathies. It would also bring in the idea of Service to England, the Dominions, and the Empire,

⁶⁸⁴ For Masefield's play, part of this festival, see Rowan Williams, Bishop George Bell Lecture, University of Chichester, 4th October 2008, transcript at: <http://rowanwilliams.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/1348/university-of-chichester-bishop-george-bell-lecture>, accessed 18th June 2014. Andrew Chandler describes Bell's tastes as 'arguably conservative'. Andrew Chandler, 'The Church, the Writer and the Artist in the Face of Dictatorship: Bishop Bell and his Allies in Britain during the Middle Twentieth Century', *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* 20, no. 2 (2007), 309. DOI: 10.13109/kize.2007.20.2.298.

⁶⁸⁵ See further discussion and references to Bell's taste in this chapter.

⁶⁸⁶ Bell, 'The Church and the Artist', 81.

and, further of world Service connected with the League of Nations.⁶⁸⁷ For Bell, clearly, Milner's Imperialism was consonant with Internationalism, his concern for his country and fellow-men consequential, so that *Scenes from the Life of St Martin* signified and showed gratitude for Milner's service.⁶⁸⁸ Bell's response to Milner is an unexplored feature of the life of Dean Bell, who, as well as arts' patronage at Canterbury and as Bishop of Chichester from 1929, was known as a friend of Gandhi and in the 1930s for speaking out against Jewish suffering in Germany.⁶⁸⁹ Yet even in the 1920s he was developing an internationalist perspective, and this is reflected in respect for Milner.⁶⁹⁰ So for Bell, Winifred Knights' painting, and the chapel complex as a whole, represented the merits of service to society, at home and internationally. These merits were put forth in the iconography (particularly sharing of the cloak), by implication linking the public space of the cathedral with the space of society. They are reflected in his letter referring to 'the wider idea' of service and expressed again later the same year with reference to plans for the chapel apse: 'I should like to think of Lord Milner's arms as representing his social as well as his imperial service'.⁶⁹¹

Although every aspect of the plans had to be approved by the Dean and Chapter because of potential alterations to the building's historic fabric, all the finance for chapel renovations and reredos came from a Committee of Milner's friends.⁶⁹² Naturally the Committee's prime concern

⁶⁸⁷ Letter from Bell to Geoffrey Dawson, undated, probably 15th or 16th February 1926 (a copy of the original is enclosed with a letter to Hugh Thornton dated 17th February 1926). Milner Memorial File.

⁶⁸⁸ In addition, like Milner, Bell had worked as a young man in boys' clubs, at the time a common form of social service for educated young men. While working as a curate in Leeds 'he had developed an interest in social concerns' and the 'betterment of the working classes'. In Mary Tanner, 'Bishop George Bell 1883-1958', *One in Christ* 43, no. 1 (2009), 62, at *Academic Search Complete EBSCO host*, accessed 31st December 2014.

Hewlett Johnson, the Dean in post when Knights' painting was completed and installed, also had no problems with a memorial to Milner, referring to him as a 'great man'. This positive appraisal of Milner seems out of key with Johnson's politics (he was outspoken in opposition to Franco and a life-time supporter of the Soviet Union) and another indication of Milner's continuing reputation. See letter from Hewlett Johnson to Hugh Thornton dated 10th July 1935. Hewlett Johnson Archive.

⁶⁸⁹ For Bell as a friend of Gandhi see Joseph Muthuraj, 'An Indian Looks at Bishop George Bell', *The Ecumenical Review* 61, no. 2 (July 2009), 2. DOI: 10.1111/j.1758-6623.2009.00019.x. Bell also spoke out against killings of German civilians during WWII allied bombing raids. In Williams, Bishop George Bell Lecture, transcript.

⁶⁹⁰ Bell's international perspective combined with interest in ecumenical Christianity, for example working for the union of Christian churches in southern India from 1920. Muthuraj, 'An Indian Looks at Bell', 10.

⁶⁹¹ For 'the wider idea of service' see my earlier discussion for further details from this letter, from Bell to Geoffrey Dawson (undated, probably 15th or 16th February 1926). For 'I should like to think of Lord Milner's arms as representing his social as well as his imperial service' see letter from Bell to Herbert Baker dated 17th September 1926. Milner Memorial File.

⁶⁹² The committee of Milner's friends and admirers who put money towards the memorial met regularly to discuss the project. The Cathedral's Dean and Chapter also discussed and approved every stage of the commission and the Dean corresponded with the sponsors on their behalf. This approval was necessary

was that both chapel and painting should signify Milner's service to the Empire, and indeed records at both Canterbury Cathedral and the University of Kent archives show how important clear representation of this service was to Milner's friends.⁶⁹³ But examination of the part played by David Young Cameron (also known as D.Y. Cameron), Committee member and artist,⁶⁹⁴ shows that, in common with Bell, Cameron was interested in the project's aesthetic properties alongside the representation of service.⁶⁹⁵ As architect to the chapel renovations Herbert Baker's position was crucial, though, and parallel examination of the parts played by Cameron and Baker in the project is illuminating. Baker had designed the Union Buildings, Pretoria, in South Africa, at the start of his career, and, like his associate Lutyens, he adapted classicism to celebrate Imperialism.⁶⁹⁶ He was also architect for remodelling (virtually re-building) John Soane's Bank of England, from 1922, a project at the 'heart of the Empire'.⁶⁹⁷ Baker's views on Empire were similar to Milner's. He admired Milner and associated himself with the Kindergarten, and he was keen to take charge of the overall designs for the Chapel.⁶⁹⁸ Indeed, he quoted Milner in a letter

because of the building's historic nature and any structural alterations that might be made during the renovations. See letter from Bell to Hugh Thornton, dated 28th June 1926: 'Any design...at any stage' needs to be submitted to the Chapter 'because of the rather special historical marks which [the chapel] contains in the walls'. Milner Memorial File.

⁶⁹³ See for example: letter from Dean Bell to Mr Caroe dated 15th December 1926, Milner Memorial File; letter from Hugh Thornton to Dean Hewlett Johnson dated 22nd September 1937, Hewlett Johnson Archive. Members of this Committee included Lady Milner, Lord Milner's widow, Sir Arthur Steel Maitland, Hugh Thornton, Sir Henry Birchenough and Leopold Amery. Neville Chamberlain (whose father had been one of Milner's political colleagues), was involved, and Rudyard Kipling. See Milner Memorial File. Committee members were chiefly political sympathisers of Milner's, for example Unionist MP Steel-Maitland was an Imperialist, while Amery was associated with Milner's pro-Empire Kindergarten in South Africa.

⁶⁹⁴ Cameron was a Scottish painter and etcher, becoming King's Limner for Scotland in 1933. He was part of the art establishment. Cameron supervised the mural scheme for Baker's Bank of England, painted by artists associated with the British School at Rome. As visiting tutor in Painting and Engraving at the BSR (Baker was tutor in Architecture) Cameron had plentiful opportunities to know and admire this type of painting even before the Bank commission, and it is significant that the School prepared students for careers as decorative painters of imperial-scale buildings. Artists who had studied at the School at Rome were obvious choices for the commission due to their sympathy for early Italian religious art, something Cameron noted: 'Mrs Monnington...has that noble primitive outlook so consistent with work for a Christian shrine.' Letter from D.Y. Cameron to Herbert Baker dated 16th July 1928. Milner Memorial File.

⁶⁹⁵ The range of letters to Dean Bell and others about the design of altar, inscription, candlesticks and painting show Baker as the lynchpin for the project. Nevertheless, the letters also show D.Y. Cameron's significant role in negotiations over the choice of painter for the *Scenes from the Life of St Martin*.

⁶⁹⁶ Baker was *the* architect of Empire, designing the Union Buildings, Pretoria, 1910-1913, the Secretariats, Delhi (where he worked alongside Lutyens), completed in 1929, India House (London), 1925, South Africa House (London), 1930.

⁶⁹⁷ Quoted from 'The public and modern buildings', *Country Life* (29th July 1922), in Ian S. Black, 'Rebuilding 'the Heart of the Empire': Bank headquarters in the City of London, 1919-1939', *Art History* 22, no. 4 (November 1999), 612. DOI: 10.1111/1467-8365.00177.

⁶⁹⁸ Daniel M. Abramson notes the association between Baker and Milner's Kindergarten, saying that Baker shared his home in Johannesburg 'for a while with several of Milner's young, Oxford-educated colonial administrators'. In Daniel M. Abramson, 'Baker, Sir Herbert (1862-1946)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [2004], (Oxford: OUP, online edition, May 2009), available at

to Dean Bell about the project, in July 1926: ‘could we not bring in somehow what he said in his speech in Canada, ‘when I think of the British Empire I want to go into a corner and pray’’.⁶⁹⁹

Baker and Cameron favoured a moderate modernism (like Dean Bell), and they had a clear idea where to find it, looking to winners of the Rome Prize (the award was three years at the British School at Rome with the chance for immersion in the early Italian art of Piero della Francesca, Simone Martini, Giotto, and Masaccio). Letters in the archives show how instrumental both Cameron and Baker were in the commission to former student Winifred Knights, and an earlier choice of Glyn Jones, the 1926 Rome Scholar. Correspondence in the archives at Canterbury also shows the value placed on aesthetics linked to art’s social function, evidenced from Cameron’s comments to Baker that

I know no one so likely to give what you desire...You know how few artists live at our time capable of the big call we are making on them. Most seem vulgar, few, if any, have spirituality, and without that there is no great art. It is not mere technique and arrangement – the idols of today – it is heart and fire and imagining, and the power to convey visions and ideals which we are in search of...I feel we could induce Mrs Monnington (of such rare gifts) to do this admirably.⁷⁰⁰

A letter written the next day to Bell illustrates Baker’s involvement:

I wrote to Cameron after our meeting...By the ‘Bank’ team he means the group of painters who are working at the Bank of England, three of whom are youngish men from the School at Rome, and he is agreeing to a suggestion of mine that their hands are pretty full. Some think that Mrs Monnington, the wife of one of these painters, is the best of them all. I am glad to find that Cameron has a high opinion of her.⁷⁰¹

Correspondence shows that in the early stages of the project Baker encouraged Bell to include a painting to go behind the altar, attached to the wall, so facilitating the commission to Knights. Such gentle persuasion is interesting given that Bell later became a significant patron of church art. For instance, in a letter dated 24th August 1926 the Dean suggested either a ‘reproduction’ of

<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30547>, accessed 18 June 2014. Despite these associations, Baker was an architect of Empire, not a philosopher or bureaucrat of Empire.

Baker almost certainly charged no fee for the renovations, due to his associations with Milner. See letter from Hugh Thornton to Dean Bell dated 21st June 1926. Milner Memorial File.

⁶⁹⁹ Herbert Baker, letter to Dean Bell, 21st July 1926. Milner Memorial File.

⁷⁰⁰ Letter from D.Y. Cameron to Herbert Baker dated 16th July 1928. Milner Memorial File.

⁷⁰¹ Letter from Herbert Baker to Dean Bell dated 17th July 1928. Milner Memorial File. The file of letters includes correspondence about the altar designed by Baker, for example whether to put Milner’s arms in an inscription.

a painting of St Martin sharing his coat or 'a beautiful piece of coloured stuff' for the reredos. Baker replied on 7th September that a picture of St Martin 'might risk repeating the idea in the window above'. The Dean came back to Baker suggesting a scene from St Martin 'worked' in tapestry.⁷⁰² Baker then took the initiative, tactfully saying that a tapestry might be as beautiful as a painting, but 'perhaps in so small a space it might not be so good a medium to tell a story.'⁷⁰³ As architect for the chapel's renovations and designer of the altar Baker's artistic interests patently shaped the commission. These interests are neatly encapsulated in an appreciation of his architecture: he had 'flexibility and idealism...his belief that what forms said was as important as the composition. Buildings should state a creed, and they were of little worth unless they conveyed social or national identity or even some moral message.'⁷⁰⁴

It is clear from the associated correspondence that the painting functioned differently for the artist than it did for Dean Bell, Herbert Baker, the Milner Memorial Committee and Dean Hewlett Johnson.⁷⁰⁵ If commemoration, service (to nation, Empire, community) and aesthetics link Dean Bell, Baker and the Memorial Committee (with Hewlett Johnson's motivations a little simpler) Winifred Knights had other agendas. Firstly, she obviously wanted to use her skills and to see her finished work in place. She wrote in November 1933, 'it has been a great experience for me to see my picture in that lovely cathedral'.⁷⁰⁶ Her sketches, which are examined later in this chapter, show that she took great care to develop a composition that demonstrated her artistic interests and abilities, as well as to satisfy Dean Bell and the Committee. Having lost a baby only a few months before being offered the commission (the loss a topic examined later in the chapter), she was naturally keen for distraction and to take on a new challenge. The subject of the commission, too, very likely appealed to her on a personal level, and well before she decided to place *The Resurrection of the Dead Child* in the centre of the work. I have argued throughout the thesis that Knights was marginalised by the ambition for public art projects of male artists associated with the British School at Rome such as Thomas Monnington and Alfred Kingsley Lawrence. These artists worked on the mural projects for St Stephen's Hall in the Palace of Westminster (1925-1927) and the Bank of England (1928-1938) which, as I have suggested previously, foregrounded the male-dominated national and institutional endeavours of treaties, war and banking. The

⁷⁰² Letter from Dean Bell to Herbert Baker dated 17th September 1926. Milner Memorial File.

⁷⁰³ Letter from Herbert Baker to Dean Bell dated 20th September 1926. Milner Memorial File.

⁷⁰⁴ Robert Grant Irving, *Imperial Summer: Lutyens, Baker and Imperial Delhi* (New Haven and London: Yale, 1981), 339.

⁷⁰⁵ For the correspondence see: Knights' Letters, UCL Special Collections; Milner Memorial File; Hewlett Johnson Archive. Unless otherwise stated all further quotations from Winifred Knights' correspondence in this chapter are taken from Knights' Letters, UCL Special Collections.

⁷⁰⁶ Letter from Winifred Knights to Dean Johnson dated 3rd November 1933. Hewlett Johnson Archive.

commission for St Martin's Chapel was very different because St Martin's life is emblematic of generosity and sensitive concern for others, a care embodied in the action of sharing his cloak with the beggar. It was the opportunity the commission offered to explore Martin's care for others that appealed to Knights as a subject for her art.

I now focus on *The Resurrection of the Dead Child*, Knights' choice of a miracle of St Martin (made around 1928) for the central position of her work. To explicate the choice, I consider contemporaneous attitudes to maternity and survey Knights' previous interests in maternity as a subject for her art. I then turn to the artistic and emotional processes that led to her selection of the miracle for her painting. With increased birth control, the numbers of births per woman dropped dramatically in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and planned birth and infancy was consequently more treasured.⁷⁰⁷ The *British Medical Journal* noted: 'statistics showed ...that both birth rate and infant mortality rate were lower in the more thoughtful and educated classes, and that it was among these classes that methods of birth control were chiefly used.'⁷⁰⁸ Knights, an educated upper middle-class young woman, would have chosen maternity, when she was ready for it, so that choice of mother and child for this painting makes sense.⁷⁰⁹ From her watercolour *Ludlow Fair and Cattle Market* and tempera *Village Street: Mill-Hands Conversing* (both 1919) onwards Knights' artwork shows her interest in maternity. The focus of *Italian Landscape* (1921) is a mother breast-feeding. In *The Marriage at Cana* (c.1923) a nursing mother bridges the psychological gap between Jesus and diners waiting for water to turn to wine. In the foreground of *The Deluge* (1920) a mother cradles her baby as she runs from advancing waters, trying to save the new generation. Knights certainly knew examples of the countless paintings of the Virgin and Child in Italian churches and museums. She is likely to have known

⁷⁰⁷ Contraceptive methods included: for men withdrawal, the sheath, 'a dose of x rays'; for women quinine pessaries, douching, or the cap. In 'Report of address by Doctor Martindale', 'Birth Control', first Meeting of Medical Women's Federation, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital', Tuesday 18th October', Reports of Societies, *British Medical Journal* 2, no. 3174 (October 29th 1921), 708. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.2.3174.706>

Marie Stopes promoted contraception, founding the Society for Constructive Birth Control and Racial Progress and establishing birth control clinics. Stopes' associated publications included *A Letter to Working Mothers: on How to Have Healthy Children and Avoid Weakening Pregnancies*, published in 1919.

⁷⁰⁷ The fertility rate for England (the average number of births per woman) dropped from 5.55 in 1800 to 2.84 in 1910. Thomas Lacqueur and Lisa Cody, 'Birth: Under the Sign of Thomas Malthus', in Michael Sappol and Stephen D. Rice (eds.), *A Cultural History of the Human Body in the Age of Empire* (London and New York: Berg, 2010), 39-40. The United Kingdom's fertility rate was 2 in 2008, a statistic that further illustrates the significance of the 'decline' that had occurred by 1910. See *The World Bank Data*, at, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN>, accessed 2nd April 2011.

⁷⁰⁸ Martindale, 'Birth Control', 708.

⁷⁰⁹ The more obvious choice of Virgin and Child was arguably inappropriate for a Cathedral (as opposed to Anglo-Catholic) context.

some inter-war representations of maternity as there were many depictions of the theme in European art during the post-war 'call to order' period when, as Elizabeth Cowling and Jennifer Mundy note, artists both emulated 'the great masters of the past' and were influenced by 'propaganda campaigns...urging couples to procreate to replace the generation lost in the battlefields'.⁷¹⁰ Italian Ashille Funi's *Maternity* (1921, Antonio and Marina Forchino, Turin) is, for instance, a painting that bears comparison with Knights' stylistically and socially conservative art.⁷¹¹

While more women looked for roles outside the home,⁷¹² 'new feminists' were among those highlighting motherhood's importance.⁷¹³ New Zealander Dr Truby King stressed the mother's key role in establishing structure in her child's life and his breast-feeding regime of four-hourly feeds was followed by a generation of mothers.⁷¹⁴ His *The Expectant Mother and Baby's First Months* was first published in England in 1921. The nation-wide network of synchronised keep-fit exercise classes organised by Mollie Stack's Women's League of Health and Beauty, founded in 1930,

⁷¹⁰ Elizabeth Cowling and Jennifer Mundy, *On Classic Ground: Picasso, Leger, de Chirico and the New Classicism 1910-1930* (London: Tate Gallery, 1990), 214. Michelle Vangen makes a similar point with reference to Weimar Germany, where right wing political parties 'championed the image of the mother as preserver of morality and the family' and in *Midday Rest* (1922, Dusseldorf) Communist Georg Schrimpf used 'the trope of the mother to symbolise the bliss of an agrarian utopia.' Vangen contrasts these with Otto Dix's images of 'haggard and sickly' working class mothers who had no access to contraception. Michelle Vangen, 'Left and Right: Politics and Images of Motherhood in Weimar Germany', *Woman's Art Journal* 30, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2009), 25-27. Article Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40605296>.

⁷¹¹ See illustration in Cowling and Mundy, *On Classic Ground*, 107.

⁷¹² Writing in 1933, Irene Clephane said that: 'many parents, who before the war would have expected their daughters to remain at home...allowed, and even encouraged, them to train for some calling...The majority of these new business women still regarded their business life as a way of filling in time between school and marriage; but others - particularly those who took up careers such as medicine or the law which involved a long and expensive training - regarded their work as an essential part of their lives, to which marriage might or might not be added'. Irene Clephane, *Ourselves: 1900-1930* (London: John Lane the Bodley Head Limited, 1933), 171. The Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act (1919) eased some women's path to professional employment, particularly in the civil service and legal professions, and enabled women to become jurors. See W.B. Creighton, 'Whatever Happened to the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act?' *Industrial Law Journal* 4, no. 3 (1975), 155-157. DOI: 10.1093/ilj/4.1.155.

⁷¹³ New Feminist Eleanor Rathbone, President of the NUSEC (National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship) campaigned for family endowments (allowances) for mothers, to break their dependence on the male 'family wage', but, as Susan Kingsley Kent notes, 'in reifying the notion of women's sphere [this]...had the potential to inscribe motherhood as the only possible identity for women'. Susan Kingsley Kent, *Making Peace: The Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 118-120. In Italy, where Knights had spent so much time, the propaganda was less subtle. See: Victoria de Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California Press, 1992), 41-55; Cicely Hamilton, *Modern Italy: as Seen by an Englishwoman* (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd. 1932), 86-91.

⁷¹⁴ King's regime included 'an eight hour rest at night'. In Truby King, *The Expectant Mother and Baby's First Months* [1916], (London, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras and Melbourne: Macmillan and Co. 1930), 32-37.

was attended by working women as well as mothers. But the League's 'stated aim' was 'racial health' with "racial' [as] a synonym for 'maternal'".⁷¹⁵ Group exercise was therefore to prepare the body for pregnancy and childbirth by strengthening physique. The ideology of motherhood is important in the context of increased family planning - some women undoubtedly succumbed to moral pressure to conform to a traditional role, but *If I Have Children*, published in 1933, points to a very real choice at this time.⁷¹⁶

However, representation of a resurrected baby is still curious, and cannot be entirely explained through general attitudes to maternity. Sulpicius Severus' *Vita Martini* records the resurrection of a dead child. Knights probably knew this story from the life of St Martin and others considered as a template for *The Miracle of the Resurrected Child*: the raising of a widow's only son by Jesus, told in Luke and its pre-figuration in the Old Testament, when Elijah similarly raised a widow woman's only son.⁷¹⁷ But she had many other choices, and it would not be unusual to depart from the titular saint's life for the central scene of an altarpiece. Indeed, placement of a baby at the centre was not Knights' first idea, as reference to the archives will indicate. Moreover, I shall show that the ways the image signified to the artist emerge when biographical details, compositional decisions and further exploration of attitudes to childbirth and infancy are brought together.

Winifred Knights had a number of ideas, explored in studies and in letters to Dean Bell. Taken together sketches and letters show that the artist came to the final composition through a protracted process of experimentation. Knights always worked very slowly. The slow tempo brought late changes to the painting's composition as the artist's life resonated with earlier trauma, bringing personal material into the public arena.⁷¹⁸ Knights seems to have been given a free hand with choice of scene, standing out against the Dean's advice, as indicated by a letter to Dean Bell dated October 12th 1928 in which she politely rejects his idea of a central crucifix for the altarpiece.⁷¹⁹ The free hand no doubt resulted from trust following careful choice of artist, itself

⁷¹⁵ Jill Julius Matthews, 'They Had Such a Lot of Fun: The Women's League of Health and Beauty between the Wars', *History Workshop* 30 (Autumn 1990), 25. DOI: 10.1093/hwj/30.1.22.

⁷¹⁶ Francis G Smith, *If I Have Children* (London: Humphrey Milford, OUP, 1933), reviewed in 'Reviews and Notices of Books', *The Lancet* 225, vol. 2 for 1933 (July-December 1933, 19th August 1933), 423.

⁷¹⁷ For the raising of a widow's only son by Jesus see Luke, Chapter 7. For pre-figuration of Martin's miracle in the Old Testament see C. Clayton Dove, *The Miracles of St Martin* (London: The Pioneer Press for the Secular Society, 1934), 48-49. Both raisings take place outside cities. This setting therefore arguably informed Knights' composition.

⁷¹⁸ For Knights' slow tempo see, for example, a letter to her Aunt Millicent (undated, annotated as 1926). Knights comments that she 'can't get work done 'with Tom about...I must do some more work than I shall be more content...'

⁷¹⁹ Details of the letter are given below. Milner Memorial File.

the product of a false start with Glyn Jones, nearly two years before. Jones was selected and worked on studies of St Martin's life, after the Committee 'hesitated' to appoint Miss F. Brickdale, who had painted at least one 'altarpiece'.⁷²⁰ The ability to paint religious public art in no more than a moderate modern style must have been important for this commission, given its location, insertion into a historic context,⁷²¹ and connection to a conservative politician.⁷²² After disappointment with Jones' efforts to produce the required design there was plenty in Knights to give Committee and Dean greater confidence: her relative maturity and artistic experience compared with Jones, her known completed paintings (including *The Deluge*) and reputation by association with Tom Monnington.⁷²³

⁷²⁰ This artist is now better known as Eleanor Fortescue-Brickdale. Letters from August to December 1926 show both Committee and Dean hesitating over choice of artist. On 24th August, for example, Bell writes to Herbert Baker suggesting a copy of a painting by an old master to fill the space, with St Martin sharing the coat in the centre and either side 'figures, angels or something of the kind'. Milner Memorial File. On 1st December 1926 Herbert Baker writes to the Dean that 'the Committee have hesitated to appoint Miss Brickdale to paint our picture as they thought that another painter might be found who would paint in a manner more suited to the Chapel'. Baker says that the Committee 'have amongst other suggestions taken advice of Professor Tonks' and approached Glyn Jones, winner of the 1926 Rome Prize, to produce a preliminary sketch before going to Italy, developing his design 'in Italy and especially at Assisi'. Milner Memorial File. In October 1926 letters recommend Miss F. Brickdale, for example Herbert Baker to Dean Bell, on 19th October: she 'has painted pictures of the quality we want...Giotto in his studio, Leonardo... an altarpiece'. Milner Memorial File.

⁷²¹ For anxieties about the historic context see for instance letter from Neville Chamberlain to Dean Bell, dated 3rd August 1926: 'I personally feel a strong objection to carving a modern inscription upon the old stones of the Cathedral', feelings those 'of an amateur, impressed with the history of the Cathedral'. Milner Memorial File.

⁷²² At Canterbury Bell was cautiously modern, reviving religious drama and commissioning John Masefield's play *The Coming of Christ* for the cathedral in 1928, with music by Holst and designs by Charles Ricketts. Rowan Williams' comments on the play are illuminating, providing an analysis of Bell's aesthetic tastes contemporaneous to the Milner commission: '...if we recall the coolness or even hostility towards the entire project from some in the Cathedral establishment...it is clear that Bell's distinctive but undramatic moral courage was already in evidence. For most modern readers, Masefield is an unadventurous poet... [but] we should make due allowance for the advantages of hindsight. Bell's personal taste was largely (not exclusively) conservative, but in comparison with most of his ecclesiastical contemporaries he was notably adventurous, and, above all, he was determined to allow artists *themselves* to set the standards of excellence and acceptability'. In Rowan Williams, *A Church of the nation or a Church for the nation? Bishop George Bell and the Church of England*, lecture. At Chichester Bell commissioned Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) for performance in Canterbury, and after WWII started a scheme of arts' patronage for Chichester Cathedral (completed by Canon Walter Hussey).

⁷²³ Letters reveal difficulties with the choice of such a young artist. For instance, D.Y. Cameron writes to Herbert Baker, on 16th July 1928: 'what you write...does not surprise me from what I saw at Rome. I doubt greatly if he [Glyn Jones] has the power (at present) of doing anything worthy at Canterbury'. An earlier letter, on 30th June, from Baker to Dean Bell, is similarly concerned. On 22nd June 1928 Baker writes to Bell complaining that Glyn Jones' picture 'has not got the qualities of design and colour which in my opinion are required as a wall-decoration in that Chapel among those strongly coloured windows'. A letter dated 10th July 1928 illustrates the complications in making changes when a committee is involved: Arthur Steel Maitland suggests asking Jones to produce 'something based on his original design...which was unanimously liked'. Milner Memorial File. Tom Monnington was known for murals at St Stephen's Hall, the Bank of England and Bolton Abbey.

While the commission was for *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours* there were a number of options, as I noted above. On October 12th 1928 Knights wrote to Dean Bell in reply to the letter where he made suggestions for the reredos.⁷²⁴ Knights thanks the Dean for his suggestions, but does not take up his idea of a central crucifixion. She writes:

before your letter came I had been doing a design of Christ appearing to St Martin wearing the beggar's half of the cloak, and wished Christ to be the centre of the picture. [np] ...the following night, during his half sleep, Martin beheld Christ [with] half of the [cloak]...with which he had covered the beggar. He was bidden to look closely at the Lord and to mark the garment he had given. Then to the multitude of attendant angels he heard Jesus say in a clear, commanding voice: 'Martin, yet a catechumen has covered me with this cloak'. [np] I thought that Christ would be in the centre with 4 angels and on the right St Martin asleep having his vision and outside a dark wintry landscape with a frosty sky. I was going to find Martin covering the beggar this to be the left of the picture then in the little narrow panel I would put the cloak being cut in two by the sword on a dark flowery ground. [np] So you would have the cloak coming in four times (the fourth being the half cloak which Martin reserved for himself and which would be lying on a stool by his bed with his armour) and I think it would join the incidents together and make the story of the picture more simple. I feel at present that the Crucifix would have to be so very small to get into the picture and then the figures would have to be small in relation and my feeling was that they should not be too small in relation to the figures in the glass above. But I hope to come down very soon to Canterbury to make up my mind again [punctuation sic].

Although she does not mention the Church of England another section of the letter expresses uncertainty that her narratives will suit this particular Christian setting: 'if this idea of mine is not suitable I will work out another one willingly. My husband thought that you might not like angels to be in the picture but I would only put a very few and they are such beautiful things, and after all it was only a vision and that is perhaps better from [sic] painting a miracle'.⁷²⁵

⁷²⁴ The Dean suggests a 'crucifix' as the centre of the altarpiece 'with St Martin approaching it on one side, and leading behind him, at decent intervals, the beggar and the horse. Behind the horse might come some other person who came into St Martin's life; and on the other side of the Crucifix could there not be other persons connected with St Martin? The point of my idea, for what it is worth, would be that you have Christ on the cross as the focus and centre to which St Martin with his various works, interests and acts of mercy are brought, as it were, in gratitude and adoration. It would not be at all a crowded picture, but the main feature would be the Crucifixion; and there is something to be said for that as the centre of a picture over the Altar'. Milner Memorial File.

⁷²⁵ Letter from Winifred Knights to Dean Bell dated 12th October 1928. Milner Memorial File.

I have not found any sketches showing that Knights tried Dean Bell's idea, and none representing precisely the scheme outlined in her letter. But sketches in UCL Art Museum show the artist working around ideas for *Scenes from the Life of St Martin*. The compositional variations are striking. In a pencil sketch on cream paper, for example, St Martin's vision takes up more than half of the main picture space. St Martin lies on a bed with his head raised, in a box-like inner room, with three standing figures and a fourth leaning into the room. To the viewer's left a figure is sitting on the ground while another stands leaning towards the division marking the inner room. Behind these Knights has depicted a hill and a tree in leaf (most sketches show the tree, and in leaf, while the final image shows the tree bare). This section is less worked up than the right, while the small side panel contains roughly sketched drapery. The sketches are undated, but another example, pencil on cream paper, may be later as the design is closer to the final composition. Here the inner room is much smaller, about a quarter of the main picture space, but with Martin sitting up. Although roughly sketched in, presumably to establish figural positions, a group of eight figures is clear. Two of the figures are shown kneeling, with low down a baby's head.⁷²⁶ Another sketch, pencil and watercolour on cream tracing paper, allows a similar space for the inner room and depicts two people standing in the centre of the picture space, but no baby. This image establishes the colours and demonstrates the artist's understanding of a need for bright hues in St Martin's Chapel, with its vivid stained glass. The pigments are, therefore, clear and bright, particularly the white horse seen from the back and the red cloak, shown three times, in the left side panel, by the horse, and a deeper red on Jesus standing in the inner room.⁷²⁷ In a colour sketch in the Fitzwilliam Museum Martin is in a box bed to the right and in the centre the baby is just visible, cradled in the crook of his right arm. In the sketch it is obvious that Jesus is the figure leaning into the inner room. He therefore links central and right-hand narratives, a dynamic device not included in the completed painting.⁷²⁸ And in another colour

⁷²⁶ Another figure is leaning against the inner room, almost breaking into it, a similar pose to the sketch described previously. In the colour sketch in the Fitzwilliam Museum Collection this individual is clearly Jesus.

⁷²⁷ All of these sketches are in UCL Art Museum.

⁷²⁸ There are many more sketches for the painting. They include drawings of the horse, showing his head, clearly informed by the horse in Piero's *The Queen of Sheba Recognises the Wood from The Story of the True Cross* (1452-1466, San Francesco, Arezzo). See private collections: Catherine Monnington and a second collector who wishes to remain anonymous. Beautiful, precise drawings of drapery, preparatory for the kneeling mother, and drawings of hands (private collection, the collector wishes to remain anonymous), were surely influenced by Durer's sensitive attention to detail, for instance in *A Woman in Netherlandish Dress seen from Behind* (1521) and *Praying Hands* (1508). See Andrew Robison and Klaus Albrecht Schroder, *Albrecht Durer: Master Drawings, Watercolors and Prints from the Albertina* (Munich, London and New York: Prestel, in Association with Washington, National Gallery of Art, 2013), 176-177, 259, 261.

sketch, in a private collection, Jesus also leans into the inner room. Here Martin lays his cloak on the ground for the beggar, who is cold and vulnerable in a sleeveless shift (**plate 98**).⁷²⁹

Knights produced a number of studies for individual figures and associated details and I describe a few here. A drawing of hands holding drapery in a private collection is clearly a preparatory work for the mother. It is labelled *Study for St Martin 1933*. Another beautiful drawing in the same collection depicts the angel from the missing left-hand panel (**plate 99**). Her hands are wide apart as she holds up a portion of Martin's cloak. Her face and hair are the same as the angels in the image of Martin dreaming to the right of the painting. The similarity reminds the viewer of the (formerly) complete reredos, where hands holding cloth made a pertinent link between Martin's service, his dream and his miracle because the mother holds up a portion of her child's coverings. There are detailed drawings of women kneeling, shown from both left and right, in the same collection, while another (Catherine Monnington Collection) shows a kneeling woman wearing a large sunhat, a feature obviously inappropriate to the painting. A detailed drawing of Monnington's head and shoulders, a study for the semi-circle of onlookers, is signed W.M. Knights 1933 (**plate 100**).⁷³⁰ Incongruously, a study of hands in the same collection is titled 'St Martin's W.M. Monnington 1933', an indication that Knights was using both maiden and married name in the early 1930s. In the same collection a study of the face of the older woman (at the back of the group in the painting) has the serious, self-controlled concentration visible in all onlookers in the completed painting. Two sketches in the Catherine Monnington Collection focus on St Martin in his helmet, uncannily similar to a WWI helmet, perhaps due to dark outlining and shading (**plate 101**). In a squared up sketch in the same private collection Knights shows more of the horse's head, and his eye, than in the painting itself. A drawing in another private collection reveals even more of the horse's face, the head turned towards the viewer's right (**plate 102**).⁷³¹ Another sketch, with the horse's left front leg lifted, shows the horse's head turned slightly to the left, obscuring his features.⁷³² Knights was clearly trying out ideas for orientating the head: by reducing the viewer's sight of the horse she perhaps wanted to avoid distracting, charming details, an unemotional effect achieved in the reredos by just a slight turn to the right. Finally, in the Fitzwilliam Museum there is a beautiful drawing of the beggar. With one hand held up he seems to reject Martin's charity. The hands are the same in the painting, but in context, with St Martin on his horse, it is clear the beggar is waiting to receive a portion of the cloak.

⁷²⁹ Private collection (Catherine Monnington). In this sketch the left-hand panel is filled by a portion of Martin's cloak, while in the completed composition an angel holds the cloak.

⁷³⁰ Private collection. This collector wishes to remain anonymous.

⁷³¹ The collector wishes to remain anonymous.

⁷³² Catherine Monnington Collection.

It is interesting to observe a meticulous artist working with her ideas. Yet a resurrected young baby is patently the most notable feature of these ideas and a motif missing from the letters to and from the Dean discussed above. Knights may have known Piero's domestic predella *St Anthony Brings a Baby Back to Life* (*Sant' Antonio Altarpiece*, c.1467-1468, Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria, Perugia, **plate 103**) in which kneeling St Anthony prays over a baby's cradle. The child is neatly tucked up, witness to the mother's hope. Domenico Ghirlandaio's fresco *Resurrection of the Boy* (1483-1485, Santa Trinità, Florence, **plate 104**), its child sitting bolt upright, is another work she might have seen. However, the resurrected child is absent from virtually all Italian depictions of St Martin's life.⁷³³ Simone Martini's frescoes (c.1312) in San Francesco, Assisi, are the notable exception. The frescoes, in the Lower Church chapel of San Martino, include the usual division of the cloak and Martin's vision, with additionally less common scenes: *The Knighthood of St Martin*; *St Martin Renounces his Weapons*; *The Meditation of St Martin*; *The Miraculous Mass*; *The Miracle of Fire*; *The Death of St Martin*; the *Burial of St Martin* and *The Miracle of the Resurrected Child*, in which the child is a toddler (**plate 97**). Knights had seen the fresco cycle, presumably when studying at the BSR or when she returned to Rome to marry Tom Monnington in 1924, as she noted in a letter to Dean Bell. She also had postcards of the cycle sent by the Dean from Assisi.⁷³⁴ Undated sketches cannot establish when she turned to *The Resurrected Child* for the centre of the reredos, or sketches explain why the option appealed to her among the available eight. But biographical evidence put alongside sketches in the British Museum (datable from family records) does suggest why she chose this miracle, why the toddler was changed to a baby, and how much it was a personal choice inserted into a public context.⁷³⁵

⁷³³ Representations of St Martin's life include: Pordenone's *St Martin* (1528-1529, San Rocco, Venice); Timoteo Viti's *Thomas and SS Thomas Becket and Martin Worshipped by Bishop Arrivabene and Duke Guidobaldo da Montefeltro* (c. 1504, Palazzo Ducale, Urbino); Filippo Lippi's *Madonna with St Catherine of Alexandria and St Martin of Tours* (c. 1490-1493, Santo Spirito, Florence). The windows above Baker's altar contain scenes from St Martin's life, but neither Knights nor Dean Bell refer to them. The window colouring is probably unchanged since the 1920s (it is still very bright), but the glass is not all precisely as in the 1920s. For this see minutes of Chapter meetings for 1947-1953 indicating 'completion' of 'a panel' was still planned. *Chapter Acts Books 1947-1953*, unpublished work (15th October 1949), 571, (3rd December 1949), 592, (17th December 1949), 601. Canterbury Cathedral Archives. The author has seen a photograph in a private collection that shows the painting in situ in St Martin's Chapel (plate 94). The bottom of the stained glass design is obscured in the photograph and perhaps this is the section referred to.

⁷³⁴ Letter to Dean Bell, dated 28th April 1929, thanking him for postcards of the frescoes. Milner Memorial File. Winifred Knights and Tom Monnington married at the British Consulate in Rome on 23rd April 1924. See Eileen Palmer, account of Winifred Knights' life in Basildon Bond Lion Brand Notebook (University College London Art Museum: unpublished work, probably 1980s). This account hereafter cited as Eileen Palmer, account of Winifred Knights' life.

⁷³⁵ See typed sheets with Knights' Letters for some relevant dates (the sheets were almost certainly typed by Eileen Palmer). Winifred Knights was approached by Herbert Baker about the possibility of the commission shortly before 1st August 1928, when he wrote to Dean Bell about it. Milner Memorial File.

In September 1927 Knights was pregnant with her first child and looking forward to the birth, for she said that 'I feel ready for a litter of children'.⁷³⁶ From early in her marriage she had planned and expected to have children, writing that, 'It'll be my turn soon, but not just yet I hope, too much to do'.⁷³⁷ She was devastated when her first child was stillborn on January 3rd 1928.⁷³⁸ She wrote of the experience two months later: 'I wish I had seen it [sic] is almost unbelievable that I could have produced anything resembling a human being, and it would have been a comfort in case there is another time'.⁷³⁹ She does not mention the added traumas of post-delivery lactation and hormonal changes, which must have been agonising, but comments on the treatment she received:

there is such a lot of meddling and tinkering and sentiment that goes on. I do wish one could go under a bush on these occasions and have it all quietly by oneself but I suppose the chances are that one would die, but I am sure the babe would not have died he was a lovely one nurse said he was perfect, like Tom [punctuation sic].⁷⁴⁰

In the twenty-first century medical staff exercise great care in contacts with bereaved parents.⁷⁴¹ Nevertheless, no sympathy (however well judged) can soften the impact of the loss, and the accompanying emptiness of reversed expectations. It is, as academic lawyer Carol Sanger describes, a 'confounding event'.⁷⁴² Winifred Knights gave birth in her parents' home,⁷⁴³ but she would have understood this mother's feelings:

⁷³⁶ Letter from Winifred Knights to her aunt Millicent dated 29th September 1927. In the letter she also writes that this 'baby business' is very exciting.

⁷³⁷ Knights wrote this to her mother from the School at Rome in July 1925 (date added later), with reference to Mrs Williams, 'one of [the] architects' wives', who had recently given birth.

⁷³⁸ See Eileen Palmer's typed noted placed in front of undated letter: 'After Win's still-born son born...Jan 3rd 1928'.

⁷³⁹ Letter from Winifred Knights to her aunt Millicent, dated 8th March 1928.

⁷⁴⁰ Winifred Knights to her aunt Millicent, *ibid*.

⁷⁴¹ See for example discussion about the psychological impacts of encouraging parents to hold a stillborn baby in: William Badenhorst and Patricia Hughes, 'Psychological aspects of perinatal loss', *Best Practice and Research Clinical Obstetrics and Gynaecology* 21, no. 2 (2007).

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.bpobgyn.2006.11.004>; Ingela Radestad, Pamela Surkan, Gunnar Steineck, Sven Cnattingius, Erik Onelov and Paul W. Dickman, 'Long-term outcomes for mothers who have or have not held their stillborn baby', *Midwifery* 25 (2009) 25.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.midw.2007.03.005>; Kirstin Erlandsson, Jane Warland, Joanne Cacciatore and Angela Ragestad, 'Seeing and holding a stillborn baby: Mothers' feelings in relation to how their babies were presented to them after birth – findings from an online questionnaire', *Midwifery* 29 (2013). DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.midw.2012.01.007>.

⁷⁴² Carol Sanger, 'The Birth of Death': Stillborn Birth Certificates and the Problem for Law', *California Law Review* 100, no. 1 (February 2012), 269. Free Open Access by California Law Review, Berkeley Law Scholarship Repository, at: <http://scholarship.law.berkeley.edu/californialawreview>, accessed 1st January 2015.

⁷⁴³ See Eileen Palmer's typed noted placed in front of undated letter, which establishes that Knights' had a home birth: 'After Win's still-born son born in our old home Jan 3rd 1928'.

one of the hardest things was walking out of the hospital empty handed. Someone had brought me a little potted flower basket and I carried that out and I was so glad I had just that. It's just that feeling of walking out empty handed. Of course, what I really wanted was a baby to walk out with.⁷⁴⁴

Knights and her husband had planned to move to a new home with their baby, downstairs from Henry Tonks, Knights' tutor at the Slade, at 1 The Vale, Chelsea. At the Vale there was enough room for a studio each for Knights and Tom Monnington, and Henry Tonks,⁷⁴⁵ excited that there would be a baby in the house, had earlier installed bay windows in preparation for the family.⁷⁴⁶ This new home became Knights' focus, by default, as she wrote sometime early in 1928: 'I shall try and have a baby very often because you are all so nice to me...the new home is all I have got to think about just now and I will have it nice and comfortable in spite of money'.⁷⁴⁷ Now, in these unexpectedly empty days, Knights was making a tea cosy and serviettes for when Tonks 'comes to breakfast'.⁷⁴⁸ Prior to the move she was working on *Santissima Trinita*, for which she had been promised £250 from a Mr Addinsell, a contact secured by her aunt Grace,⁷⁴⁹ but in August 1928 was not 'full of work at present' (as Herbert Baker commented).⁷⁵⁰ She was still painting *Santissima Trinita* after she was offered the commission for St Martin's Chapel, Canterbury Cathedral, in August 1928.⁷⁵¹ But such a major project must have provided a welcome new start, for as she wrote: 'I feel it a great honour to be given the opportunity of doing a painting for a Cathedral'.⁷⁵²

While installation of the reredos was planned as culmination to renovations in memory of Alfred Lord Milner, on a more personal level the painting became a memorial to Knights' stillborn son.

⁷⁴⁴ Quoted in Maureen C. Kelley and Susan B. Trinidad, 'Silent Loss and the Clinical Encounter: parents' and physicians' experiences of stillbirth-a qualitative analysis', *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth* 12, no. 137 (2012), no pagination. Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License. DOI:10.1186/1471-2393-12-137.

⁷⁴⁵ Henry Tonks' biographer Joseph Hone notes 'the presence in the lower flat of his house of two young artists, Mr. and Mrs. W.T. Monnington, perfect both as tenants and neighbours'. Joseph Hone, *The Life of Henry Tonks* (London and Toronto: William Heinemann Ltd. 1939), 229.

⁷⁴⁶ Letter from Winifred Knights to 'Dearest' (probably Auntie G) dated December 1927.

⁷⁴⁷ Letter from Winifred Knights to 'Dearest', not dated.

⁷⁴⁸ Winifred Knights to 'Dearest', *ibid.*

⁷⁴⁹ See three letters from Winifred Knights to her aunt Grace. Two are undated, certainly 1927. The third is dated December 1927.

⁷⁵⁰ Letter from Herbert Baker to Dean George Bell dated 1st August 1928. Milner Memorial File.

⁷⁵¹ Knights wrote that Mr A's picture was 'still not finished', that she 'soon will be able to think about St Martin's.' See letter from Winifred Knights to her aunt Millicent, not dated. For date of Milner Memorial commission see letter from Herbert Baker (both architect for renovation of St Martin's chapel and member of the Milner Memorial Committee): Baker reports approaching 'Mrs Monnington [Winifred Knights] about the picture and her husband says that she is overjoyed at the prospect of doing it'. Letter from Herbert Baker to Dean Bell dated 1st August 1928. Milner Memorial File.

⁷⁵² Letter from Winifred Knights to Dean Bell dated 3rd August 1928. Milner Memorial File.

Her choice of the *Miracle of the Resurrected Child* as central narrative for *Scenes of the Life of St Martin of Tours* may seem obvious in view of her relatively recent bereavement. In fact, she had written in January 1928; 'I suppose by all this failure to produce a family painting is indicated [punctuation sic]!!'⁷⁵³ But in the intervening time some marital tension appears to have surfaced as a new problem. The tension is an undercurrent to two letters in the UCL collection.⁷⁵⁴ Knights' second son, John Monnington, was not born until June 2nd 1934, after the reredos was completed.⁷⁵⁵ In 1931, however, while she was working on the painting, her younger sister Eileen Palmer gave birth to a son, Richard Palmer. Knights wrote: 'a blessed relief that Eileen has deposited her little egg and a fine lusty one at that'.⁷⁵⁶ Detailed, delicate drawings in the British Museum Prints and Drawings collection seem to connect the artist's delight in this new nephew to preparations for *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours*. The head of a baby seen from the side is labelled 'Dick' (with feeding times noted).⁷⁵⁷ Other drawings labelled 'Dick' include a closely-observed profile with the right eye shut, an eyelash and end of the nose.⁷⁵⁸ The babies in the drawings are relaxed, asleep. In the completed painting such relaxation is adapted to represent the very moment when the miracle takes place, reversing the usual metaphor of sleep as death. Another sketch in the British Museum shows Eileen Palmer's second son, born in May 1933. The drawing is labelled 'Martin a few hours old May 1st 1933 [punctuation sic]'.⁷⁵⁹

The images labelled Dick were very likely used as drawings for the painting, the 'Martin' drawing almost certainly too late to function in this way.⁷⁶⁰ Yet as a family drawing, associated with the

⁷⁵³ Letter from Winifred Knights to her aunt Millicent dated 8th March 1928.

⁷⁵⁴ See letter from Winifred Knights to her aunt Millicent dated 8th March 1928 and from Winifred Knights to unnamed recipient dated 3rd October 1928.

⁷⁵⁵ For the date of John Monnington's birth see sheet typed by Eileen Palmer (with letter from Winifred Knights to 'auntie G', undated, annotated as 'most likely' written in 'December 1934'). Winifred Knights was probably in the early stages of pregnancy when the altarpiece was finished. For this see John Monnington's date of birth and letter from Herbert Baker to Dean Hewlett Johnson dated 31st October 1933 (the day before the picture was taken to Canterbury): 'he [Tom Monnington] may explain that his wife is not very well at present'. Hewlett Johnson Archive. Because she worked very slowly it is unlikely Knights could have made any significant change to the picture once she knew she was pregnant.

⁷⁵⁶ Letter to 'Auntie G', dated Thursday. Eileen Palmer gave the year as 1931.

⁷⁵⁷ The drawing labelled 'Dick' is pencil on cream paper torn from a sketchbook. British Museum: Prints and Drawings Collection.

⁷⁵⁸ Head of baby, labelled 'Dick', a profile with right ear. Another of two baby heads shows 1) outline of profile with a shut eye and eyelash 2) outline of side of the face showing baby's right eye and nose. A further drawing labelled Dick shows 1) the right side of the face of a young child/baby with a head covering or wrapping 2) the right side of a baby's face with the eye closed. Other unnamed drawings show a baby's head and upper body seen from above, experiments with depicting the curve of hair on a baby's head seen from above, and a sleeve or cuff brought close to a baby's mouth. All drawings are pencil on cream paper torn from sketchbook(s). British Museum, *ibid*.

⁷⁵⁹ British Museum, *ibid*.

⁷⁶⁰ Knights finished the painting only shortly before it was taken to Canterbury on 1st November, 1933. See latter from Herbert Baker to Dean Hewlett Johnson dated 31st October 1933 in which he states that

painting by the baby's name, it links artist, sister and motherhood. As preparatory works the Dick drawings underline the importance of motherhood to the reredos and to Knights' relationship with her sister – the painting perhaps the artist's creation to set against the younger sister's successful maternity. Minimal movement in *Scenes from the Life of St Martin*, particularly in contrast with *The Deluge*, makes every gesture significant. Here the mother is holding the baby's covers: they represent both shroud and swaddling bands. Meanwhile St Martin and the other observers look on calmly, as if this resurrection is natural and expected, not even a miracle.⁷⁶¹ It is difficult to know how much choice of the narrative (in replacement for ideas she had discussed with Dean Bell) was a response to Knights' own loss, the birth of her nephew, or her own hopes for another pregnancy.⁷⁶² But it is significant that the artist chose a miracle whilst her early letter to the Dean suggested that a vision would be more appropriate than a miracle.⁷⁶³ That it is poised only just on the life side of the miracle is reinforced, in my view, by the plants in the foreground and bare tree behind the central onlookers. Early spring snowdrops in front of St Martin symbolise re-awakening, underlining his role as life-giver. Weeds are growing in stony cracks. These plants and Knights' associated sketches, *Weeds for St Martin* and her wilting *Weeds. Study for St Martin*, both in a private collection,⁷⁶⁴ perhaps reference seeds', and life's, fragility.⁷⁶⁵ In the Parable of the Sower Jesus tells how

some seed fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth;/ but when the sun was up it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.⁷⁶⁶

Yet in *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours* both the groups in the foreground and the hilltop town behind are drawn together by a boundary of water. The water boundary forms a girdle that,

the paint was not 'hardened'. Hewlett Johnson Archive. However, due to the meticulous planning for the reredos, including numerous sketches, it would be surprising if Knights made significant changes to the baby's face as late as May 1933.

⁷⁶¹ This reaction contrasts with the agitated figures in Simone Martini's fresco *The Resurrected Child* (San Francesco, Assisi).

⁷⁶² Dean Bell left Canterbury to become Bishop of Chichester in 1929. The last letter from Knights to Bell in the Milner Memorial File is dated 28th April 1929. There is only one later letter in the file.

⁷⁶³ Letter from Winifred Knights to Dean Bell dated 12th October 1928. Milner Memorial File.

⁷⁶⁴ The sketches are both dated 1933, labelled in Knights' handwriting. Private collection: this collector wishes to remain anonymous.

⁷⁶⁵ For another association between wilting plants and infant death see Alexander Munro: *Julian Harcourt* (c.1862, All Saints Old Church, Nuneham Courtenay, Oxon). In the marble memorial two year old Julian Harcourt holds wilting bluebells, although the child 'looks like ...[Munro's] other living babes'. See Katherine Macdonald, 'Alexander Munro: Pre-Raphaelite Associate', in Benedict Read and Joanna Barnes (eds.), *Pre-Raphaelite Sculpture* (London: The Henry Moore Foundation in Association with Lund Humphries, 1991), 61, 62.

⁷⁶⁶ Mark, Chapter Four.

like amniotic fluid, securely encloses fragile new life with its early spring flowers, inhospitable, unpeopled, barren nature beyond. Such use of water as a fixed boundary contrasts with Knights' earlier use of water in *The Marriage at Cana* (c.1923) and *Santissima Trinita* (1924-1930), where long straight streams are *permeable* boundaries, with, for instance, men and women at leisure on both shores. In addition, this boundary very possibly references Baptism and its promise of resurrection at the Last Judgement.⁷⁶⁷ Having lived in Italy, Knights almost certainly knew the story of the True Wood. The planks bridging water in the space between the mother and St Martin in bed perhaps reference this story. In Agnolo Gaddi's *Legend of the True Cross* (c.1385-1387, the Chancel Chapel of Santa Croce, Florence), the Queen of Sheba is depicted kneeling beside a thick plank over a stream, which she recognises as a piece of the Cross.⁷⁶⁸ In Piero's cycle of the same name (1452-1466, San Francesco, Arezzo) the Queen is similarly depicted.⁷⁶⁹ Her prayers link faith to hope and the promise of the Resurrection, embodied in the Cross.

Four undated sketches for *Santissima Trinita* (in the Fitzwilliam Museum) had included a bare tree, although it is unclear how a bare tree would have fitted with women washing and sleeping in the open air. Perhaps Knights intended to clothe the tree with leaves at a later stage.⁷⁷⁰ In *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours* she re-visited the motif with new intensity: 'I am doing some sketches of trees before they burst their buds. It is a race against spring for all the trees are rapidly changing but happily I have chosen a walnut tree which is slower than the rest.'⁷⁷¹ There are no signs of buds in the completed reredos. Knights would have known Piero's *The Resurrection*,⁷⁷² in which, as J.V. Field says, 'the scene [of trees] is wintry on the left but coming to life again on the right, the direction towards which Christ's triumphant flag is blowing.'⁷⁷³ Well acquainted with the Bible, she was undoubtedly familiar with the tree of Jesse, Jesus' ancestry developed from Isaiah and depicted by healthy many-branched trees.⁷⁷⁴ In an English fifteenth-century alabaster the Tree stem curves out of Jesse's chest as he sleeps. David perches above holding his harp, and above the infant Jesus sits on Mary's knee. Jesus' other ancestors occupy

⁷⁶⁷ If the boundary references Baptism and its promise of resurrection there is a particular hope here that Knights may not have considered, as Baptism is denied a stillborn child.

⁷⁶⁸ Illustrated in Joachim Poeschke, *Italian Frescoes from the Age of Giotto, 1280-1400* (New York and London: Abbeville Press Publishers, 2005), 382-383, 386-391.

⁷⁶⁹ The True Wood is more obviously a plank in the Raising of the Timber, another episode from Piero's depiction of the story in San Francesco, Arezzo. Knights would have seen this when she visited Arezzo.

⁷⁷⁰ Three of these undated sketches are on one sheet. Fitzwilliam Museum Collection: Cambridge.

⁷⁷¹ Letter from Winifred Knights to Dean Bell dated 28th April 1929. Milner Memorial File.

⁷⁷² She probably saw *The Resurrection* in Borgo san Sepulchro, which is close to Arezzo. She would certainly have known the painting from illustration.

⁷⁷³ Field, *Piero della Francesca*, 227.

⁷⁷⁴ 'And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.' Isaiah, Chapter Eleven.

leafy side branches. The alabaster was incorporated into the Victoria and Albert Museum collection only in 1954. But Knights must have seen illustrations of the twelfth-century *Tree of Jesse* window in Chartres Cathedral in which Jesse similarly reclines at the lowest tier as the tree stem grows out of his body, or the fourteenth-century Jesse window (with later restorations) in the Lady Chapel of Ludlow's St Laurence. She had perhaps read May Sinclair's *The Tree of Heaven*, first published in 1917, where a tree symbolises security and implies continuity. The novel begins in tranquil peacetime and Frances Harrison sitting in her Hampstead garden under a tree 'that the people down in her part of the country called a tree of Heaven./It was warm under the tree, and Frances might have gone to sleep there'.⁷⁷⁵ Later, Frances' sons volunteer in WWI and she becomes increasingly patriotic, saying to her husband that, 'I suppose if we had thirteen sons instead of three, we ought to send them all'.⁷⁷⁶ The *Tree of Heaven* drops out of the novel as Frances' sons die childless and her daughter's fiancée is killed in action. Stillbirth similarly makes a mockery of the future, the 'birth of death' making the addition to a family tree into an academic exercise.⁷⁷⁷

In the happy reversal of Knights' painting the baby's shroud becomes a simple cover. I have already mentioned Giotto's *The Raising of Lazarus* (**plate 105**). A disciple, his mouth masked against the stench of putrefaction, is starting to un-wrap Lazarus' grave clothes, an unusual and, for Knights' purposes, a pertinent addition to the biblical narrative. Knights certainly saw this, although perhaps did not consciously recall it, but it would be interesting to know if she saw Arthur Hughes' example of wrapping in *The Nativity* (1857-1858, Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, **plate 106**). She was living in Italy when *The Nativity* was shown at the National Gallery of British Art in 1923, but as a girl perhaps saw it when exhibited in the same gallery in 1911-1912.⁷⁷⁸ Mary and the Christ Child are surrounded by angels, one holding the baby as his mother carefully wraps him in swaddling bands, prefiguring the entombment.⁷⁷⁹ Returning to *Resurrection of the Dead Child*, snowdrops, weeds, bare tree, uncovering a shroud, together demonstrate that the central narrative of *Scenes from the Life of St Martin* is not the annual Spring-time of new life,

⁷⁷⁵ May Sinclair, *The Tree of Heaven* (London: New York, Toronto and Melbourne, Cassell and Company Ltd. 1917), 3.

⁷⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 282.

⁷⁷⁷ For 'the birth of death' see Seamus Heaney, 'Elegy for an Unborn Child', *Workshop Poems* 1963-1966, The Belfast Group, at http://beck.library.emory.edu/BelfastGroup/browse.php?id=heaney1_10163, accessed 7th June 2014. Carol Sanger takes the title of her article ('The Birth of Death': Stillborn Birth Certificates and the Problem for Law') from Heaney's poem.

⁷⁷⁸ 'The Nativity by Arthur Hughes', *Pre-Raphaelite Online Resource*, Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, at <http://www.preraphaelites.org/the-collection/1892p2/the-nativity/#detail>, accessed 21st June 2014.

⁷⁷⁹ 'The Nativity by Arthur Hughes,' *Pre-Raphaelite Online Resource*.

but a transformation against the odds. Knights' last letter to Dean Bell, in April 1929, before he left Canterbury to become Bishop of Chichester, thanked him for postcards of the Simone Martini frescoes (also mentioning the walnut tree, as described above).⁷⁸⁰ It is therefore conceivable she was thinking of representing St Martin's miracle of the Resurrection of the Dead Child from mid-1929, the birth of her sister's baby in 1931 cementing a wish to re-imagine her own experience.⁷⁸¹

The 1920s saw a growing acknowledgement of the significance of the birth process and its impact on the infant, further evidence for Knights' choice of iconography. Otto Rank explored the birth experience in *The Trauma of Birth*, first published in English in 1929, as an anonymous reviewer explains: 'from the analytical point of view the book is important inasmuch as it deposes the Oedipus motif from its central position and makes it secondary to the birth experience'.⁷⁸² Rank talks about 'intrauterine primal pleasure [emphasis omitted]' which is broken by birth, the resulting trauma taking a whole childhood to 'overcome'.⁷⁸³ Rank's concern was with loss of intrauterine bliss, not the baby's distress during delivery. But, as popularized at the time, his ideas affected attitudes to childbirth itself, psychiatrist Marion Kenworthy warning of "profound nervous and emotional shock [to the baby]... a concomitant of every hard birth experience",⁷⁸⁴ and suggesting that obstetricians put mothers on diets to avoid the difficult births she believed were associated with large babies.⁷⁸⁵ If she knew this popular interpretation of Rank's work Knights may have felt that her (large) baby had suffered for nothing, adding guilt to grief and an emotional charge to her iconography.

She would certainly have known about Freud's writing as his work was available in English much earlier than Rank's. She was already familiar with the effects of trauma, having taken a year out from study at the Slade, shocked by witnessing the Silvertown explosions during World War

⁷⁸⁰ Knights wrote: 'Thank you very much for the postcards of the Simone Martini frescoes. It is interesting to see them and they will be a great help to me. I had seen a reproduction of the Vision of St Martin before I submitted the first design to Sir Herbert Baker and I was very much influenced by it. I am glad that you have sent me them all for I think they are beautiful. I have seen them but cannot remember them clearly'. Winifred Knights, letter to Dean Bell dated 28th April 1929. Milner Memorial File.

⁷⁸¹ The likely long gestation of this idea fits with Knights' slow working practice.

⁷⁸² 'Reviews and Notices of Books: The Trauma of Birth by Otto Rank, published London: Kegan and Paul, Trench, Traubner and Co. Ltd. 1929', in *The Lancet* 217, vol. 2 for 1929 (July-December 1929, 2nd November 1929), 930. Otto Rank makes this point in Otto Rank, *The Trauma of Birth* [1924] first published in English in 1929 (New York: Dover Publications, re-publication of first English edition, 1993), 22.

⁷⁸³ Rank, *ibid*, 17, 11.

⁷⁸⁴ Marion Kenworthy, *The Unconscious: A Symposium* [1928], (Freeport New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1966), 178. Quoted in James E. Lieberman, 'Introduction' to Otto Rank, *The Trauma of Birth*, x.

⁷⁸⁵ Lieberman, 'Introduction' to Otto Rank, x.

One.⁷⁸⁶ In 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', published in 1920, Freud explored reactions to trauma, distinguishing between anxiety and fright and giving context for Knights' response to the stillbirth. According to Freud fright is the cause of 'traumatic neurosis' because the individual 'has run into danger without being prepared for it'.⁷⁸⁷ The stillbirth was undoubtedly a fright equal to the Sivertown explosions, but its full impact perhaps laid dormant, repressed due to a self-protective defence mechanism, its return precipitated by the death of Knights' mother in 1930.⁷⁸⁸ In *Studies in Hysteria* Freud discusses the impact of sick-nursing and death on 'the prehistory of cases of hysteria,' concluding that when the 'period of mourning sets in' the carer finds that 'impressions that have not yet been dealt with come into the picture as well'.⁷⁸⁹

Widespread currency of the ideas of Freud and Rank by this date was thus arguably significant to Knights' choice from the range of possible images, expression of traumatic repetition facilitated by public acceptance of psychoanalytic theories, her articulation of grief combined with embodiment of her greatest wish. Growing confidence in childbirth was an additional factor, increasing trauma if it did not go well. Truby King's no-nonsense advice to expectant mothers expresses this confidence, a live healthy baby inevitable if a woman eats sensibly, sleeps soundly and takes plenty of exercise.⁷⁹⁰ Following the advice, 'coupled with freedom from worries and excitement, the mother may feel sure that all will go well'.⁷⁹¹ No doubt fuelling women's expectations, King's advice is likely to have raised the spectre of guilt if the child died. Winifred Knights certainly knew King's work as his four-hourly regime is pencilled onto a drawing of Richard Palmer, her sister's baby, mentioned earlier.⁷⁹² She was also trying to keep healthy in preparation for the birth, as I have already noted. During the same period stillbirth was recognised officially by the Birth and

⁷⁸⁶ See Eileen Palmer, account of Winifred Knights' life.

⁷⁸⁷ Sigmund Freud, 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' [1920], in *The Essentials of Psycho-Analysis* (introduced and selected by Anna Freud), James Strachey (trans. 1955), (London: Random House/Vintage, 1986), 223.

⁷⁸⁸ For the 'defence mechanism' see Sigmund Freud and Joseph Breuer, *Studies on Hysteria* [1895], James Strachey and Alix Strachey (trans. 1955), (London: Penguin Books, 1974), 352-353. *Studies on Hysteria* was first published in English translation in 1909.

For the death of Knights' mother see letter from Winifred Knights to Auntie Flo. In the following letter, to the same recipient and dated 26th January 1931, Knights writes that 'everything seemed a little feverish and muddled at the time'.

⁷⁸⁹ Sigmund Freud, in Freud and Breuer, *Studies in Hysteria*, 232. The discussion from which I have quoted concerns Elizabeth von R, a case of sexual frustration masking grief. However, Joseph Breuer makes the same point in *Studies in Hysteria* without a sexual referent. He suggests that a 'psychical reflex' will recur with more force if the original reflex was suppressed than if it is 'fully achieved on the original occasion'. In Freud and Breuer, *Studies in Hysteria*, 282.

⁷⁹⁰ King, *Expectant Mother and Baby's First Months*, 13. King also comments that 'a good waterproof and good shoe-leather remove all excuse for [the expectant mother] remaining indoors'. King, *ibid*, 13.

⁷⁹¹ King, *ibid*, 18.

⁷⁹² The regime is labelled as 6am, 10am, 2pm, 6pm, 10pm. British Museum.

Death Registration Act of July 1st 1926 (which applied to England and Wales).⁷⁹³ The legislation required notification of stillbirths for the first time and therefore points to an emerging understanding of *mort-ne* (born dead) as real death.⁷⁹⁴ This Act linked stillbirth to infant death and separated it from miscarriage and abortion, infant life given a 'formal beginning' at twenty-eight weeks' gestation.⁷⁹⁵ Officially, at least, stillbirth could no longer be dismissed as 'neither a birth nor a death'.⁷⁹⁶ While there is no reason to presume Knights knew about the legislation, categorising these early deaths was associated with a shift in attitudes, itself partly stimulated by declining birth rates.⁷⁹⁷ Changing attitudes are evidenced from the medical press, which shows obstetricians were treating stillbirth seriously, instead of just concentrating on maternal survival. Writing in *The Lancet* in December 1924 Gilbert I. Strachan, Assistant Gynaecologist to the Cardiff Royal Infirmary, noted that only '1 per cent of still-birth is unavoidable' and gave causes of stillbirth as disproportion between the baby's head and the mother's pelvis and 'foetal malpresentation [sic]' (particularly breech birth).⁷⁹⁸ An earlier article focuses on developing good ante-natal care as a means to prevent stillbirth. The article anticipates Strachan's analysis in citing disproportion between the 'foetus and pelvic canal' as a prime cause of stillbirth and suggests that problems are particularly likely to occur to a baby who is 'quite healthy' before birth if the child is 'particularly well nourished', and therefore 'large and well developed'.⁷⁹⁹

⁷⁹³ See *The Lancet* 213, vol. 2 for 1927 (July-December 1927, August 13th 1927), 355. Notification was compulsory under the Act from July 1927. See Gayle Davis, 'Stillbirth registration and perceptions of infant death', 1900-1960: the Scottish case in national context', *Economic History Review* 62, no. 3 (2009), 638. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-0289.2009.00478.x pp629-654. Stillbirth was registered in Scotland from 1939.

⁷⁹⁴ Carol Sanger notes that 'in other languages this juxtaposition of life and death is met head-on: the child is not stillborn but 'born dead': *nacido muerto, totgeboren, or mort-ne.*' Sanger, 'The Birth of Death', 271.

⁷⁹⁵ David Armstrong, 'The invention of infant mortality', *Sociology of Health and Illness* 8, no. 3 (September 1986), 215. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9566.1986.tb00298.x.

⁷⁹⁶ Graham Mooney, 'Stillbirths and the Measurement of Urban Infant Mortality Rates, c.1890-1930' (Academia. edu), 44, at http://www.academia.edu/617699/Stillbirths_and_the_measurement_of_urban_infant_mortality_rates_c._1890-1930, accessed 20th June 2014.

⁷⁹⁷ Davis, 'Stillbirth registration', 635.

⁷⁹⁸ Gilbert I. Strachan, 'The Prevention of Stillbirth', *The Lancet* 207, vol. 2 for 1924 (July-December 1924, 13th December 1924), 1227-1229.

⁷⁹⁹ Report of speech by F.J. Browne (Dr.), 'Stillbirth: its prevention', *The Lancet* 201, vol. 2 for 1921 (July-December 1921, 12th November 1921), 1018. Considering good preparation for birth, Knights visited Cornwall in September 1927 and felt 'twice as strong'. Letter from Winifred Knights to Aunt Millicent, 29th September 1927. In this context, too, she would have expected a live outcome. Instead of this, her baby followed the profile outlined by Strachan and was, according to her nurse, 'five pounds too large'. Letter from Winifred Knights to Aunt Millicent, 8th March 1928. Photographs show Knights was very slim, so perhaps 'disproportion' was a factor.

Yet this new emphasis should not be exaggerated. For instance, there appears to have been little or no recognition that bereaved parents might need support. While stillbirths were registered from 1927 the register was closed to public scrutiny, being designed as ‘a contribution to statistics and an element in the machinery for the protection of infant life’.⁸⁰⁰ The public was therefore prevented from asserting “their usual right” to obtain certified copies.⁸⁰¹ In contrast, a dead baby who had taken a breath was automatically recognised by Birth and Death certificates. Moreover, the first medical paper published that related to ‘parental distress after perinatal loss’ appeared only in the 1950s.⁸⁰² The apparently scant attention given to parental feelings was, surely, particularly hard to bear in context of inter-war emphasis on the family as the proper sphere for women’s activity. References to stillbirth from the period and WWII imply it was unusual for parents to see their child. In *Brideshead Revisited*, written during World War Two but set in the 1930s, Evelyn Waugh describes the chance meeting of old friends Charles Ryder and Julia Flight. The unsettling circumstances of a transatlantic storm trigger Julia’s repressed memory, and she describes her daughter’s birth: ‘I couldn’t even give her life. I never saw her; I was too ill to know what was going on, and afterwards, for a long time, until now, I didn’t want to speak about her’.⁸⁰³ Hospital attitudes to stillbirth in Denmark have recently been described, where changes in hospital procedures have been effected only ‘over the past 30 or 40 years... Formerly, stillborn children were removed from the mother by hospital staff upon birth and there was no

⁸⁰⁰ Davis, ‘Stillbirth registration’, 641, note 89.

⁸⁰¹ S. Vivian, Somerset House, to J. Kyd, 10th November 1937, quoted in Davis, ‘Stillbirth registration’, 641, note 89.

⁸⁰² Badenhorst and Hughes, ‘Psychological aspects of perinatal loss’, 250. The large volume of twenty-first-century articles on the topic point up the earlier scant attention paid to stillbirth. For instance, the articles include, from 2011 onwards: Janel Kragt Bakker and Jenel Paris, ‘Bereavement and Religion Online: Stillbirth, Neonatal Loss, and Parental Religiosity’, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 52, no. 4 (2013), 657-674. DOI: 10.1111/jssr.12066; Joanne Cacciatore, J. Frederik Froen and Michael Killian, ‘Condemning Self, Condemning Other; Blame and Mental Health in Women Suffering Stillbirth’, *Journal of Mental Health Counseling* 35, no. 4 (October 2013), 342-359, at <http://essential.metapress.com/content/15427G822442H11Mp342-359>, accessed 1st January 2015; Dorte M. Christiansen, Ask Elklit and Miranda Olff, ‘Parents bereaved by infant death: PTSD symptoms up to 18 years after the loss’, *General Hospital Psychiatry*, 35 (2013), 605-611.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.genhosppsy.2013.06.006>; Gary L. Darmstadt, ‘Stillbirths: missing from the family and from family health’, *The Lancet* 377, no. 9777 (7th May 2011), 1550-1551.

DOI: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(11\)60099-8](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(11)60099-8); Erlandsson, Warland, Cacciatore and Ragestad, ‘Seeing and holding a stillborn baby’, 2013; J. Frederick Froen (et al.) for *The Lancet’s* Stillbirths Series steering committee, ‘Stillbirths: why they matter’, *The Lancet* 377, no. 9774 (16th April 2011), 1353-1366. DOI: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(10\)62232-5](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(10)62232-5); Todd Hochberg, ‘The Art of Medicine: Moments held – photographing perinatal loss’, *The Lancet* 377, no. 9774 (16th April 2011), 1310-1311.

DOI: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(11\)60528-X](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(11)60528-X); Kelley and Trinidad, ‘Silent Loss and the Clinical Encounter’, 137; Zoe Mullan and Richard Horton, ‘Bringing stillbirth out of the shadows’, *The Lancet*, 377, no. 9774, (16th April 2011), 1291-1292. DOI: 10.1016/S0140-6736(11)60098-6; Janet Scott, ‘Stillbirths: breaking the silence of a hidden grief’, *The Lancet* 377, (23rd April, 2011), 1386-1388.

DOI: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(11\)60107-4](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(11)60107-4).

⁸⁰³ Evelyn Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited* (London: Chapman and Hall Ltd. 1945), 227.

interaction with the dead child afterwards'. As with Knights' son, the child 'was not touched, held or seen by the parents, nor was it named or formally commemorated.'⁸⁰⁴ Such attitudes to death are pertinent to understanding why Knights re-imagined her experience in *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours*. Yet, nearly a hundred years before, when Alfred Lord Tennyson wrote about his son, born on Easter Sunday 1851, attitudes were different:

dead as he was, I felt proud of him. To-day when I write this down, the remembrance of it rather overcomes me; but I am glad that I have seen him, dear little nameless one that hast lived tho' thou hast never breathed, I, thy father, love thee and weep over thee, tho' thou hast no place in the Universe. Who knows? It may be that thou hast... God's Will be done.⁸⁰⁵

In the nineteenth century it was usual to keep a dead person's body in the home for some days before the funeral. For instance, Matthew Arnold sat with his young son Basil's body after he died at home in January 1867 and 'the other Arnold children visited the dead as well as dying Basil and took part in decorating his coffin and bringing it into the downstairs hall before the funeral, to which they also went.'⁸⁰⁶ A post-mortem photograph was taken of Basil, a memento of the passage from life to death.⁸⁰⁷ Records show that such photographs were taken by professional studio photographers who visited the deceased's home. Research has not established the extent of post-mortem photographic practice.⁸⁰⁸ But it goes with nineteenth-century acknowledgement of the significance of death, evidenced by the elaborate solemnity of funerals and memorials.⁸⁰⁹ In contrast, in the early twentieth century and the inter-war years, death was less discussed, bodies were less often laid out at home (people more frequently died in hospital), and as 'mourning...became more private... death was no longer a topic of polite conversation' with even a 'moral duty'⁸¹⁰ to appear happy "even if in the depths of despair."⁸¹¹ This new attitude was

⁸⁰⁴ Tim Flohr Sorensen, 'Sweet dreams: Biographical blanks and the commemoration of children', *Mortality* 16, no. 2 (May 2011), 167. DOI: 10.1080/13576275.2011.572424.

⁸⁰⁵ Alfred Lord Tennyson, *Memoir*, a fragment (c. April 1851), quoted in D.B. Ruderman, 'The Breathing Space of Ballad: Tennyson's Stillborn Poetics', *Victorian Poetry* 47, no. 1 (Spring 2009), 167. DOI: 10.1353/vp.0.0053.

⁸⁰⁶ Liz Stanley and Sue Wise, 'The Domestication of Death: The Sequestration Thesis and Domestic Figuration', *Sociology* 1-16 (2011), 11-12. DOI: 10.1177/0038038511416153.

⁸⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 12.

⁸⁰⁸ Audrey Linkman, 'Taken from Life: Post-Mortem Portraiture in Britain, 1860-1910', *History of Photography* 30, no. 4 (2012), 311. Scanned Article supplied by the University of Sydney Library, at http://vicusyd.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/linkman_taken-from-life.pdf, accessed 1st January 2015.

⁸⁰⁹ See for instance the description of Samuel Smiles' funeral in Stuart Rawnsley and Jack Reynolds, 'Undercliffe Cemetery, Bradford', *History Workshop Journal* 4, no. 1 (Autumn 1977), 215. DOI: 10.1093/hwj/4.1.215.

⁸¹⁰ Sanger, 'The Birth of Death', 276-277.

perhaps fostered by the enormity of WWI losses and the Imperial War Graves Committee decision to bury all war dead on the battlefields, with permanent and uniform memorials showing no distinction between 'military or civil rank'.⁸¹² Inter-war civilian graves tend to echo the WWI graves' under-stated, unemotional style. The lavish shapes of Victorian memorials gave way to simpler stones, observed in the popularity of Celtic crosses and headstones with restrained marble scrolls (**plate 107 and plate 108**), although allowance must be made for emerging Modernist style.⁸¹³ It is understandable, then, that 'the dominant attitude throughout most of the twentieth century was that stillbirth was an event that had best go unspoken', while, additionally, it 'came to represent a particular failure for women, and this too contributed to reticence to discuss or mark its occurrence.'⁸¹⁴ Knights' experience relates to this situation, although she was not reluctant to write about it: 'we have a lovely studio now and should get on like two houses on fire but it is beastly somehow not having a baby. I never thought I should feel like this.'⁸¹⁵

Prior to the twentieth century early childhood death was represented in visual culture. I have described Victorian after-death photographs. English medieval and Renaissance church memorial brasses sometimes include 'infants who died in their first month...shown in swaddling clothes and...known as chrysons. Sometimes they have their own memorials but occasionally, when the mother also died, the chryson is shown as part of the memorial to the mother, usually held in her arms.'⁸¹⁶ In a seventeenth-century portrait, Johannes Mijtens' *Family Portrait of Willem van den Kerckhoven* (1652, Historisch Museum, the Hague) five dead infants have become chubby angels and are flying above their living family (**plate 109**). It has been suggested that

⁸¹¹ Quoted from Philippe Aries, 'parental indifference theory', *Centuries of Childhood* 37 (1973), in Sanger, *ibid*, 276-277.

⁸¹² Fabian Ware, *The Immortal Heritage: An Account of the Work and Policy of the Imperial War Graves Commission during Twenty Years, 1917-1937* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937), quoted in: Barrett, 'recovered history: Subalterns at War', 472.

⁸¹³ For these points see two graveyards examined by the author. There are 1920s and 1930s Celtic cross headstones (also termed gravestones) at St John's Churchyard, Loughton, and many Celtic cross gravestones of the same period in East Finchley Cemetery. The large graveyard at East Finchley includes some inter-war gravestones with marble scrolls, but, except for two Art Deco memorials, the headstones from this period are relatively simple. The same understated character was found in five Oregon cemeteries where 'lavish ornate form was abstracted into geometric shape...Height of stones began to decrease...and averaged only about twenty-four inches (sixty cm) high by the 1920s'. In Richard V. Francaviglia, 'The Cemetery as an Evolving Cultural Landscape', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 61, no. 3 (September 1971), 508. Article Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2569228>. For the influence of 'the simple geometric forms' of Modernist architecture on memorial design see Francaviglia, *ibid*, 508.

⁸¹⁴ Sanger, 'The Birth of Death', 276-277. This reticence is also easily achieved because a baby that has not breathed is not recognised by either baptism or a Birth Certificate.

⁸¹⁵ Letter from Winifred Knights to her Aunt Millicent dated 8th March 1928.

⁸¹⁶ Leigh Chapman, *Church Memorial Brasses and Brass Rubbing* (Princes Risborough, Aylesbury: Shire Publications Ltd. 1987), 25.

before the twentieth century parents 'might be less attached to young infants, whose survival was not assured' than to older children.⁸¹⁷ But Carol Sanger says that 'acknowledging the long-standing debate in the history of childhood over whether in periods of high infant mortality parents grieved such deaths, the historical record seems clear that [throughout history] at least some parents mourned a stillbirth.' Sanger writes that, from the seventeenth century, 'dead and stillborn infants were memorialized in portraits and in poems,' as well as in letters and diaries.⁸¹⁸ For instance, a large multi-figure neo-classical monument to Princess Charlotte (only child of the Prince Regent) and her stillborn baby,⁸¹⁹ designed by M.C. Wyatt (St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle), was completed in 1824.⁸²⁰ Princess Charlotte, who died on the same day as her baby in 1817, rises up to heaven, an angel beside her carrying her son, veiled mourners below (**plate 110**).

In the twenty-first century, when it is taken for granted that grieving parents will see their child, photography has been revived as a valuable means of recording and remembering stillborn babies and those who die shortly after birth. Todd Hochberg, who specialises in photographing these children, notes that: 'parents have strong emotional ties to their baby through many months of pregnancy and even through long-held hopes and dreams, but have few tangible momentos that would signify this child's existence and significance after the death.'⁸²¹ As an artist during the period 1928-1933, when seeing or photographing a stillborn child was regarded in a different way, Knights held a privileged position, able to use her artwork to create an image of her child. It is therefore particularly significant that she chose to represent a baby while Simone Martini's *Resurrection of the Dead Child* shows a toddler. In the twenty-first century, too, parents are encouraged to hold stillborn infants. In Waugh's novel *Julia* only touches her dead baby in a bitter fantasy, personifying her 'sin' of adultery as the baby, now alive: "poor Julia", they say, 'she can't go out. She's got to take care of her little sin. A pity it ever lived.' they say, 'but it's so strong. Children like that always are. Julia's so good to her little, mad sin.'⁸²² In Knights' reredos the mother does not handle her baby as he begins to revive (perhaps the sensation was beyond imagining), but as substitute solemnly holds the baby's grave clothes, now loosened, a miraculous token for everyday dressing and undressing a live child.

⁸¹⁷ Badenhorst and Hughes, 'Psychological aspects of perinatal loss', 250.

⁸¹⁸ Sanger, 'The Birth of Death', 275.

⁸¹⁹ Sanger, *ibid*, 275, note 13.

⁸²⁰ Windsor Castle: College of St George, Chapel Archives and Chapel Library, at <http://www.stgeorges-windsor.org/archives/blog/?tag=princess-charlotte>, accessed 13th June 2014.

⁸²¹ Hochberg, 'The Art of Medicine: Moments held', 1311.

⁸²² Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited*, 251.

Returning to painting, Knights may have known Sandro Botticelli's *Three Miracles of St Zenobius* (c.1500), part of the Mond Bequest donated to the National Gallery in 1924 (**plate 111**). There are three episodes in the panel, with an inner room and steps (like Knights' path) dividing flanking miracles from the central drama of St Zenobius blessing a mother and child.⁸²³ The child lies circled by the mother's bright orange cloak in the street outside a firmly shut door, a motif that perhaps prompted Knights' bare tree. The mother in her painting so delicately, tenderly, holds her baby's garments, but Botticelli's mother screams as her son opens his mouth, returning to life, while equally startled witnesses are an agitated semi-circle around the resurrection. In Knights' reredos the death-to-life narrative is similarly placed, claiming the viewer's attention, and the spectators in a semi-circle, although the centre of her group opens out so the viewer can compare barren hills with St Martin's miracle. In her painting, too, spectators are still, as in a *sacra conversazione*.⁸²⁴ This solemn group are witnesses to guarantee the miracle has taken place. They are, additionally, supporters of mother and child, with public context underlining the moment's gravitas (we might imagine the group meeting again, at the baby's Christening). There is a similar semi-circle in Knights' decorative painting *Village Street: Mill-Hands Conversing* (1919), where a woman is talking, perhaps preaching, while the female mill workers barely listen.⁸²⁵ But in *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours*, by contrast, public attention gives maternity a recognition that, as I have noted in this chapter, was not given to a mother whose child was stillborn in the inter-war years. Set between the better-known scenes from St Martin's life on either side, the miracle is part of the idea of service embodied in the painting as a whole, so that for the viewer St Martin sharing his cloak and St Martin's dream reinforce maternity as service to society.

Considering Knights' life once more, the way resurrection works in *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours* becomes clearer. The bare tree contrasts with early snowdrops, linking to the baby's pale mother as emblem for the artist and her own dead mother, given new life.⁸²⁶ The man in modern dress behind mother and baby is almost certainly a portrait of Tom Monnington, for he has Monnington's floppy hair (**plate 100**). The face of St Martin dreaming is an interpretation of

⁸²³ Botticelli's *Miracles of St Zenobius* is 64.8 x 139.7 cm. The painting was originally a Spalliera panel, set into wall panelling in a private house.

⁸²⁴ See, for example, Piero della Francesca: *The Virgin and Child Enthroned with Saints and Angels (The Montefeltro Altarpiece)*, (c.1480s, the Brera, Milan).

⁸²⁵ See discussion in Chapter One of the thesis.

⁸²⁶ Only an emblem, as the mother bears no physical resemblance to either Knights or her own mother. Paul Liss says that the old lady watching the miracle was modelled on Knights' mother. See Paul Liss, *Winifred Knights* (London: the Fine Art Society and Paul Liss in Association with the British School at Rome, 1995), 57.

his profile, similar to a drawing Knights made of Monnington, although the hair is different (undated drawing, Liss Fine Art). Appearing twice, as watcher and dreamer, Knights shows that her child's father wished with her.⁸²⁷ Or, as Sigmund Freud describes, 'the dead child behaved in the dream like a living one...For the sake of the fulfilment of this wish the father prolonged his sleep by one moment'.⁸²⁸ The meaning and the hope it embodied was equally personal for Winifred Knights.

To conclude my analysis I move from artist and iconography to contemporaneous viewers' responses to the reredos. Using the limited evidence available I seek to establish something of Knights' success in communicating her artistic vision.⁸²⁹ The chapter ends with a brief discussion of Knights' late work. *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours* was taken to Canterbury on 1st November 1933.⁸³⁰ The artist wrote to Dean Hewlett Johnson shortly afterwards:

we have a very happy day to look back on and even if the picture does not meet with approval and the little brocaded curtain has to hang once more on its hooks, it has been a great experience for me to see my picture in that lovely cathedral and though unhappy I should be the last one to complain if it has to come down again [punctuation sic].⁸³¹

The tentative, wistful tone of this letter was probably in response to Dean Johnson's reactions to the reredos. Later records show that he considered St Martin's Chapel quite the wrong location for Knights' painting, though he was perhaps less forthright in expressing his opinion in the company of the artist.⁸³² In context of inter-war attitudes to stillbirth the painting's genesis in the artist's 'birth of death',⁸³³ and her sister's baby son, probably remained private, or was little spoken of publicly. Ways in which it was seen to communicate beauty, to fit appropriately within a permanent installation dedicated to Lord Milner, demonstrating service, and to enhance Christian devotion are therefore important. Earlier in the chapter I quoted George Bell's view of *Scenes*

⁸²⁷ Freud writes that dreams are 'the blessed fulfillers of wishes'. Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* [1900], in James Strachey (trans.), (New York: Avon Books, 1965), 166. The first English translation was dated 1913.

⁸²⁸ Freud, *ibid*, 548.

⁸²⁹ This chapter does not attempt to look at present-day responses to the reredos in its current location, St Martin's Chapel, for which there is no evidence.

⁸³⁰ See letter from Herbert Baker to Dean Hewlett Johnson dated 31st October 1933 and letters from Winifred Knights to Dean Johnson dated 31st October 1933 and 3rd November 1933. Hewlett Johnson Archive. George Bell was succeeded as Dean of Canterbury by H.R.L. (Dick) Sheppard in 1929. Sheppard resigned due to ill health in early 1931 and Hewlett Johnson was appointed Dean the same year.

⁸³¹ Letter from Knights to Dean Johnson dated 3rd November 1933. For the date of installation of Knights' reredos see the same letter. Hewlett Johnson Archive. The Chapel was dedicated on Saturday November 3rd 1928. See Order of Service. Milner Memorial File.

⁸³² See, for example, minutes of Meetings of the Dean and Chapter dated 24th June 1935 and 24th July 1936. In *Chapter Act Books 1932-1938*. Canterbury Cathedral Archives.

⁸³³ Seamus Heaney, 'Elegy for a Still-born Child'.

from the *Life of St Martin of Tours* as 'one of the most lovely, delicate and deeply felt modern religious paintings that I know.'⁸³⁴ The painting's central narrative would certainly have been better understood in the 1920s than today, by clergy and laity alike. The stories of St Martin were well known and Knights' Martin in monk's robes with bundle and stick probably reminded many viewers of Martin who, travelling with his monks, sees a woman outside a Carnotian village with the body of her only son and 're-animates' it.⁸³⁵ Connections to Jesus' miracles, the raising of Lazarus and of the widow's son outside the city of Nain described in Luke, as well as Elijah outside the gates of Zarepath, were then easily made. Maternity was particularly important in the inter-war years, as I have argued, so the image of mother and child and associated new life very likely struck a chord with many viewers. In view of inter-war reticence to discuss stillbirth, however, viewers, arguably, linked the narrative to the poignancy of early (post-partum) infant death. In contrast to these points, the modern day spectator at first struggles to understand the kneeling monk and woman, the latter seemingly a Virgin, her drapery folded on the ground in the tradition of Hugo van der Goes or of Piero's *Nativity*.⁸³⁶ In the 1930s, by contrast, knowing the Bible and St Martin's life, with the links to resurrection, surely informed a sense that this was a 'deeply felt...religious painting'.⁸³⁷

As a site-specific artwork Knights' work stands or falls on its position in St Martin's Chapel: its ability to communicate beauty with sincere religious feeling in the location for which it was planned; the clarity of links between the reredos and Alfred Lord Milner is vital to this success, viewers able to connect service represented by the images of St Martin with the inscriptions on the Chapel walls. Doubts about the picture's suitability for this location first surfaced in 1933. Herbert Baker wrote to Sir Arthur Steel Maitland (a member of the Milner Memorial Committee) after seeing Knights' preliminary sketch, saying that 'I am sure it will be a beautiful and valuable picture...I tried to impress on her that it is not a picture to be seen close, but always on the other side of the altar and with a flaming window.' Baker notes that Knights intends enlarging the figures and continues, 'I think Cameron agreed with me that in the composition the figures should predominate over the landscape or the landscape over the figures, but for a reredos it should certainly be the former'.⁸³⁸ Baker's uncertainties had not dissipated four years later when he wrote to Dean Hewlett Johnson, a few days before the painting was taken to Canterbury: 'you will feel, I believe, that the picture is of the greatest beauty and delicacy, but it is doubtful how far

⁸³⁴ Bell, 'The Church and the Artist', 81.

⁸³⁵ Dove, *Miracles of St Martin*, 48-49.

⁸³⁶ See for instance Hugo van der Goes, *The Portinari Altarpiece* (c.1475-1476, Uffizi, Florence).

⁸³⁷ Bell, 'The Church and the Artist', 81.

⁸³⁸ Letter from Herbert Baker to Sir Arthur Steel Maitland dated 6th May 1929. Milner Memorial File.

these qualities will be fully seen from the distance of the front of the altar and in the light through those strong windows.⁸³⁹ Concerned, perhaps, that his comments might cause Johnson to pre-judge the painting Baker wrote again five days later:

I have been to see the painting which Mrs Monnington is taking down tomorrow. She has strengthened it since I last saw it so that the figures will be seen at a little distance, but the beautiful delicacy of the faces and background and other details will not, I think, be seen. One does not know what the effect of the hot light and brown walls may be on it.⁸⁴⁰

As architect for renovating St Martin's Chapel, Baker was well positioned to evaluate the relationship between *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours* and its setting. He probably influenced Hewlett Johnson in developing his view about the painting in its chapel location, particularly as Johnson, the 'Red Dean', was pre-occupied with politics. Johnson, who had a 'deep respect for other peoples and other cultures, even other religions',⁸⁴¹ was a controversial figure, particularly notorious after WWII for his visits to and support for the Soviet Union. Earlier, in 1932, the five months he spent away from Canterbury visiting China were approved by his Archbishop, Cosmo Lang.⁸⁴² But in 1937 the Bishop of Dover, Alfred Doon, was horrified that Johnson described an 'expedition' to the Spanish Civil War as a 'Church Delegation'.⁸⁴³ Given his other absorbing interests, it is remarkable that he energetically assumed the role of curator for *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours*, in opposition to Lady Milner and the Milner Memorial Committee. He was, perhaps, buoyed up by his recent adventures in China.⁸⁴⁴ In the early and mid-1930s he probably felt, too, a need to concentrate on Canterbury where, due to the previous incumbent (Dean Dick Sheppard, 1929-1931) falling seriously ill, 'the affairs of the Cathedral...had lacked effective leadership for too long'.⁸⁴⁵

⁸³⁹ Letter from Herbert Baker to Dean Hewlett Johnson dated 26th October 1933. Hewlett Johnson Archive.

⁸⁴⁰ Letter from Herbert Baker to Dean Johnson dated 31st October 1933. Hewlett Johnson Archive.

⁸⁴¹ Lionel Gossman, 'The Red Dean of Canterbury: The public and Private Faces of Hewlett Johnson by John Butler (review)', *Common Knowledge* 19, no. 3 (Fall 2013), 581. DOI: 10.1215/0961754X-2282116.

⁸⁴² Robert Hughes, *The Red Dean: the Life and Riddle of Dr Hewlett Johnson, 1874-1966, Dean of Canterbury 1931-1963* (Worthing: Churchman Publishing, 1987), 68-69.

⁸⁴³ In a letter from Alfred Doon (Bishop of Dover) to Dean Johnson, in which Doon criticises Johnson for using this description. Doon further says, 'I really think this hardly fair to the Church, which did not send it and whose members are protesting in no small numbers, as I happen to know, against the conclusions which the expedition appears to have made.' Hewlett Johnson Archive.

⁸⁴⁴ See, for instance, John Butler, *The Red Dean* (London: Scala Publishers Ltd. 2011), 50-54.

⁸⁴⁵ Hughes, *The Red Dean: Life and Riddle*, 73.

Dean Bell is known for his artistic judgement. Johnson also had an artistic sensibility.⁸⁴⁶ He was brought up in late nineteenth-century Manchester, where his father was a prosperous industrialist.⁸⁴⁷ As a boy he was introduced to music and the visual arts by B.J. Massiah, the Johnsons' doctor and family friend, including Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites.⁸⁴⁸ He attracted 'big names' for the June 1933 Festival of Music and Drama at Canterbury Cathedral: 'Dr Adrian Boult brought the BBC orchestra and chorus...John Masefield, the Poet Laureate, gave a lecture on Chaucer and *The Canterbury Tales*...and the 'royal window' in the Martyrdom was unveiled following its restoration'.⁸⁴⁹ Johnson was also in post when T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* was performed at Canterbury in 1935.⁸⁵⁰ He was described (by Canon Joseph Poole) as having 'a sense of theatre...He believed that a cathedral is a stage...with his springy walk and white hair, Hewlett [Johnson] was a very noble figure.'⁸⁵¹

There is no evidence that Johnson was any expert, but enthusiasm for the arts and their relationship to the public explains his involvement in choosing a location to display Knights' *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours*. Although the painting was almost certainly on show in its original location in June 1934, when it was mentioned in *The Times*,⁸⁵² it had been moved at Johnson's instructions the following year, for he noted to Hugh Thornton that 'my Chapter' are unanimous that the 'most suitable place' for the picture is the Lady Chapel, 'in a great wall space, well lit and easily seen.' Johnson goes on:

visitors can sit quite close to the painting and it looks superb there. [np] As I told you in our conversation, we felt that the painting was quite inappropriate in the Chapel of St Martin. It could not be seen, and it clashed most violently with the window, giving the appearance of a German oleograph to one of the most lovely paintings of modern times. I was careful to get the opinion of many men of taste, among them, for instance, Professor Tristram, Mr Austin, the artist, Mr Walter Tapper, Sir Charles Peers, and others...the solution of having the painting...[in the Lady Chapel] would be fair to the artist, and fair to

⁸⁴⁶ John Butler says that 'what George Bell began Hewlett Johnson continued and extended.' Butler, *The Red Dean*, 59.

⁸⁴⁷ Hughes, *The Red Dean: Life and Riddle*, 5.

⁸⁴⁸ Ibid, 11.

⁸⁴⁹ Butler, *The Red Dean*, 60-61.

⁸⁵⁰ Hughes, *The Red Dean: Life and Riddle*, 63.

⁸⁵¹ Canon Joseph Poole, interviewed by Robert Hughes (date not cited), in Hughes, *The Red Dean: Life and Riddle*, 62.

⁸⁵² 'Those who make the pilgrimage to Canterbury Cathedral will have the opportunity of seeing the decorations recently carried out in St Martin's Chapel as a memorial to Lord Milner. The reredos shown above is the work of Mrs W.T. Monnington.' In *The Times* (22nd June 1934). The announcement from which I have quoted is taken from the *Scrapbook* of newspaper reviews compiled by Gertrude Knights. It was, presumably, added by Winifred Knights as her mother had died in 1930.

the public, and I believe that the great man to whose memory it was painted would approve of what we have done...I may add that we tried it with hidden lights underneath it [in St Martin's Chapel], but the improvement was negligible.⁸⁵³

The letter demonstrates Dean Johnson's overriding concern for the viewer's experience. His willingness to court opposition to obtain this is clear in a suggestion from Hugh Thornton, the following month: 'perhaps if you see her [Lady Milner] you would be good enough to explain that the picture was moved to its present site by you for experimental purposes and that the move had not been finally sanctioned by the Committee.'⁸⁵⁴ The Dean later wrote to Thornton that Lady Milner 'is not very favourably disposed to the plan [to move the reredos permanently]', but 'we certainly cannot allow the painting to be in the chapel for which it was made.'⁸⁵⁵ Continuing the correspondence the next year, Thornton wrote to Dean Johnson that both he and the Hon., Treasurer of the Milner Memorial Fund were

very disappointed...[that the painting was not to hang] in the Chapel for which it was intended, more particularly so, if I may say so, because we understand that your predecessor, Dr Bell, was quite prepared to allow it to hang there. We recognise, however, that your decision must necessarily be final.⁸⁵⁶

Asserting primacy of the viewer's experience once again (and retaliating against the intimation of Bell's greater artistic discernment), Johnson wrote in November 1937:

I should like to point out that Dr Bell never saw the picture after it was painted and put in the place for which it was designed, but everyone who saw it there agreed that it clashed

⁸⁵³ Letter from Dean Johnson to Hugh Thornton dated 10th July 1935. Hewlett Johnson Archive. See also minutes of Chapter meeting held in the previous month. The minutes record that Mr Gardiner, the Treasurer (and Chairman of the Estates Committee) 'did not concur' with the Chapter's decision that the painting 'could be placed with great advantage in the south wall of the Lady Chapel'. 'Canterbury Cathedral Chapter Minutes', *Chapter Act Books 1932-1938*, dated 24th June 1925. Canterbury Cathedral Archives.

⁸⁵⁴ Letter from Hugh Thornton to Dean Johnson dated 25th July 1935. Hewlett Johnson Archive.

⁸⁵⁵ Letter from Dean Johnson to Hugh Thornton dated 19th June 1936. Hewlett Johnson Archive. The Chapter minutes are blunt on this matter: 'Lady Milner opposes the suggestion [of moving the picture]. The Chapter decided that Lady Milner be informed that they cannot withdraw from their position.' 'Chapter Minutes' dated 24th July 1936. *Chapter Act Books 1932-1938*. Canterbury Cathedral Archives.

⁸⁵⁶ Letter from Hugh Thornton to Dean Johnson dated 22nd September 1937. Letters in the same archive record discussions about the wording for a notice to be placed with the painting, to record that it was part of the Milner Memorial. Hewlett Johnson Archive. The wording was agreed by the Chapter on 30th October 1937. See 'Canterbury Cathedral Chapter Minutes' dated 30th October 1937. University of Kent Special Collections.

violently with the window above it, and unless one went right up to the altar the figures could not be seen to any advantage.⁸⁵⁷

The separation of the artist's painting from its site-specific context was possible due to Johnson's position as Dean and his greater interest in aesthetic experience over the inter-connections between artworks envisaged by Herbert Baker and others involved with the original scheme. Knights was possibly too focused on her personal vision to take the intended location of her work into account. Perhaps she did not fully consider the implications of making an image to hang behind an altar, as, indeed, Baker suggested in his letters to the Dean in 1933. Yet this chapter has shown that Dean George Bell and the Milner Memorial Committee brought plans for a memorial complex together with an artist who had 'the power to convey visions and ideals'.⁸⁵⁸ Winifred Knights, in fact, did more. In *The Resurrection of the Dead Child* she was able to put private grief out into the public context and to connect with those who have lost (or who imagine losing) a young child, not only in the 1930s, but into the present day.⁸⁵⁹

Knights' second son John Monnington was born in summer 1934. Her next project after *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours* was a *Flight into Egypt*, probably commissioned by David Balniel.⁸⁶⁰ She did not complete the painting, although the subject, showing Jesus and his parents fleeing from Herod, whose soldiers kill all those 'children that were in Bethlehem...from two years old and under',⁸⁶¹ is witness to her continuing interest in the theme of mother and child. Working in her studio at Leyswood (the large house near Groomsbridge, Sussex, she, her husband and young son occupied from 1936), Knights had started at the bottom of the 'huge canvas, about 6 x 8 foot'.⁸⁶² She appears, however, to have gone no further than drawing plants on the canvas (studies for these are in private collections).⁸⁶³ There is no evidence to suggest

⁸⁵⁷ Letter from Dean Johnson to Hugh Thornton dated 5th November 1937. Hewlett Johnson Archive.

⁸⁵⁸ Letter from D.Y. Cameron to Herbert Baker dated 16th July 1928. Milner Memorial File.

⁸⁵⁹ This phrase was developed from responses to my paper 'I wish I had seen him'. Stillbirth and the Miracle of the Resurrected Child', given at the Writing Women's Lives Conference, Bath Spa University, 26th April 2015.

⁸⁶⁰ See letter from Winifred Knights to her aunt Millicent dated September 27th 1927. She says: 'my beautiful David, Lord Balniel, wants anything I like to do'. Paul Liss says that 'according to Eileen Palmer, the 'Flight into Egypt' was commissioned by the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres [Lord Balniel's father] as a mural for Balcarres Castle.' Paul Liss in *Winifred Knights*, 58.

⁸⁶¹ Matthew, Chapter Two.

⁸⁶² For Leyswood, Knights' home, see: Paul Liss in *Winifred Knights*, 58; John Monnington, interviewed by the author, 19th July 2013. For the size of the canvas for *Flight into Egypt* see John Monnington, conversation with the author, 26th October 2011.

⁸⁶³ John Monnington recalls that 'she was taking things out of her sketchbook...harebells...It was going to have a stream, a bridge and a donkey...there was a full tracing...and [the] canvas was squared up...[she was] transferring these beautiful waterside rushes like fourteenth-century background paintings...little asides...' John Monnington interview, *ibid.* Sacha Llewellyn has told the author that John Monnington

why she failed to complete the painting. The size of the canvas was perhaps intimidating, for, as my thesis has shown, Knights was most comfortable exploring her private, woman-centred concerns at a more intimate scale (her difficulties completing *The Marriage at Cana* are evidence to this point). Yet the birth of her son was perhaps the more important reason, taking the emotional charge from depicting Jesus' flight to safety and probably sapping her concentration, as Henry Tonks hinted, for

the Monningtons who live below me have produced a lovely boy of such promise that I suggest they add Gargantua to his list of names. I suppose you know the life of Gargantua. Women particularly cannot serve two masters, the baby and their soul or the spirit or, if you like it, I can call it their ART.⁸⁶⁴

In the succeeding years up to her early death Knights produced some beautiful drawings,⁸⁶⁵ but she completed no paintings after *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours*.⁸⁶⁶ In the reredos she had brought together her dedication to art, her experience of maternity, and aspects of her training as a decorative painter. It seems that the intensity of feeling and associated concentration could not be repeated in the different circumstances in which she was able to fulfil herself as a mother.

cut the canvas up (this was presumably when he was fairly young). Sacha Llewellyn, in conversation with the author, 11th November 2014.

Studies for the plants are in two private collections. Both collectors wish to remain anonymous.

⁸⁶⁴ Letter from Henry Tonks to Mrs Stubbs (a former Slade student) dated 30th December 1934, quoted in Hone, *Henry Tonks*, 298. But although the *Flight into Egypt* was not completed Knights did not abandon her artistic practice.

⁸⁶⁵ For Knights' late drawings see the British Museum and two private collections. The collectors wish to remain anonymous. There are drawings of Scottish landscape in the British Museum and in a private collection dated 1946 (the year before she died). The collector wishes to remain anonymous.

⁸⁶⁶ Winifred Knights and her husband Thomas Monnington were friends of Stephen and Virginia Courtauld, who renovated Eltham Palace from 1933 and commissioned its new wing with art deco interiors. Knights was involved in some way with the renovations, probably with advice. Her initials are on a wooden shield at the Dais end of the Great Hall, but there are no records of her involvement. See email from Lester Oram (Assistant Curator of Eltham Palace) to the author, dated 4th July 2014. For Knights' friendship with Stephen and Virginia Courtauld see John Monnington, interviewed by the author, 19th July 2013.

Conclusion

This thesis has offered close readings of Winifred Knights' paintings and considered the personal, artistic and historical circumstances that brought subject, style and interpretation into being. The thesis has examined the ways Knights explored her experiences as girl, woman, worker, wife and mother, using a moderately modern style to convey her vision with sensitivity and originality. I have argued that Knights' choices were not for public art work. *The Marriage at Cana* (c.1923) is an interesting, and in many ways beautiful, large-scale decorative painting. But aspects of the work, such as the many often distracting narrative details, suggest that Knights was not comfortable in the role of public artist. There is greater narrative clarity in her *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours* because the artist was able to bring her private experience into the context of a public commission.

My thesis has suggested that Knights' interests in maternity and the family reflected social concerns in the inter-war period, in both Britain and Italy, but that her approach was not informed by any strong political persuasion. Indeed, the difficult conditions of modern Italy were not taken as subject matter by any artists training at the British School at Rome and their idealised representations suggest that they remained at a distance from the contemporary context.⁸⁶⁷ In his *The Artist in the Campagna* (1931, private collection, **plate 112**), for instance, Alan Sorrell (1928 Rome Scholar in Mural Painting) represents himself at the easel, paint box beside him, dressed for the autumn day in tweed jacket and soft hat. These items of clothing are his characteristically British concessions to the present day, for the broken statues in the painting take the viewer to Italy's past, following the tradition of Corot's peasants with nearby ruins in *Bridge at Narni* (1827, Ottawa, **plate 67**). In contrast, Knights did engage with modernity (although, like her male contemporaries, she did not depict rural or urban hardship). In fact, her engagement with modernity is unusual, considering the majority of other students' work. Only Knights fused tradition with elements of the modern world she knew, clearly shown in sullen diners and watermelon (a favourite Italian fruit) in her *Marriage at Cana*. The clean lines of buildings in *Italian Landscape* are an acknowledgement of modernity absent in the other artists' work, while her

⁸⁶⁷ Painting and sculpture by Novecento artists was popularised by Margarita Sarfatti (a journalist, art critic and Mussolini's mistress), who organised exhibitions in Milan to show the work. The first exhibition was in 1922, with more substantial shows including *Sette Pittori del Novecento* (1923) and *Mostra del Novecento Italiano* (1926). For the Novecento group see: Elizabeth Cowling and Jennifer Mundy, *On Classic Ground: Picasso, Leger, de Chirico and the New Classicism 1910-1930* (London: Tate Gallery, 1990); Rossana Bossaglia and Howard Rodger MacLean, 'The iconography of the Italian Novecento in the European Context', *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* 3 (Italian Theme Issue: Winter 1987), 52. Article Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1503947>.

response to the emphasis on maternity so present in Italian inter-war society is also plain, as my thesis has demonstrated. Yet Knights' reaction to Italy, its people, landscape and customs, is not simply to represent what she has seen. Thus, while real-life saints' day processions of little girls dressed in white highlighted innocence (a photograph of the 'Figlie di Maria' at Anticoli Corrado shows just this),⁸⁶⁸ Knights' rest during a pilgrimage in *Santissima Trinita* avoids such sentiment and her interpretation instead asserts the self-sufficiency of a group of women. Indeed, drawing on religious subject matter and the landscape she loved, her *Santissima Trinita* balances the everyday with an ideal of togetherness, a vision of harmony suited to the uncertain inter-war years.

A similar sentiment lies behind Margaret Tarrant's *All Things Wise and Wonderful*, 1925, a print designed for children. Three children, in contemporary clothes, accompanied by rabbits, lambs and squirrels, form a semi-circle in front of a blond-haired Christ Child dressed more traditionally in a white robe, who holds out his hands in blessing. The watercolour became so popular that 'it is said...during the Depression some art shops were able to keep going on sales of the reproduction'.⁸⁶⁹ The print was still popular in the 1950s, alongside post-war austerity and the emerging Cold War. A useful way to develop further research from Knights' career would be an investigation of themes of community, tradition, maternity and religion in women artists' work in the inter-war years. Fruitful avenues in this research might include the intersections between private experience, gender, the market place and public expectations of an artwork. My research into *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours* has shown that private motivation, political considerations (the memorial to Alfred Lord Milner) and church interests (St Martin and ideals of service) could coalesce successfully.

The thesis has argued that in the conservative 1920s it was possible for a woman to be young and independent, artist, and later a wife and mother. But I have also shown that occupying these roles was not at all straightforward, and I have demonstrated how Winifred Knights' circumstances fed into her paintings. Gender was not the only factor determining her life and the shape of her paintings. I have shown how she was influenced by other artists' work, and took motifs from the Bible, evidence of a knowledge of Christianity that was typical of her time. I have also demonstrated that her education and style were congruent with the experience of the BSR student body as a whole: Colin Gill's *Allegory* (1920-1921) and Thomas Monnington's painting of

⁸⁶⁸ See photograph depicting the 'Figlie di Maria' at Anticoli Corrado and a description of the procession, in Thomas Ashby, *Some Italian Scenes and Festivals* (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd. 1929), plate facing 26.

⁸⁶⁹ John Christian, 'Catalogue', in John Christian, (ed.) *The Last Romantics* (London: Lund Humphries and the Barbican, 1989), 203-204.

the same name (c.1924, Tate Collection) are, like Knights' work, rhythmic and decorative. Yet this congruence between Knights and her male peers is in contrast to the ways difference, gender, impacted on her career as both disadvantage and opportunity. For instance, her concentration on painting fluctuated after she left Italy in 1926, as my thesis has explained. She had private means, so there was no financial pressure to work - in the inter-war years there was no social pressure on middle-class women to take up paid employment.⁸⁷⁰ Later, she became focused on maternity, particularly after losing her first baby. Indeed, her subtle interpretations of the biblical and art historical material she knew so well were often guided by her sensations as a young woman, shaped, at least in part, by gendered attitudes prevailing in those years. *The Deluge*, for instance, combined a biblical source with reference to the recent war. The Ark is out of reach, but the painting shows maternal care for the next generation and, in contrast, a male focus on personal survival. Knights' self-portrait is based on images of Lot's wife looking back at the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, but, a twentieth-century woman, she is not disabled by what she sees and her strong legs are tensed for flight. In England the trauma of her son's stillbirth was the catalyst for her successful combination of emotional truth and decorative painting in *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours*, an indication of how she could use difference to her advantage.

Knights displayed many of the attributes associated with the conventional feminine behaviour of her time: a love of dress; an enjoyment of male company; a sense of personal beauty, expressed in self-portraits; a desire for marriage and children. But, asserting her right to equality, she resented those who questioned her entitlement to the Rome Prize. She was, generally, dedicated to her art and obviously considered her talent equal to a man's. Her life illustrates many of the contradictions experienced by women who combined career, marriage and family in the inter-war years. The approach that I have used in my thesis, which both looks towards equality *and* accepts difference, has been usefully described with reference to British designers of the same period: 'it is...necessary to understand the work of the women described here in a way that brings together discussion of equal opportunities with a celebration of the feminine, whilst not allowing them to destroy or cancel each other out.'⁸⁷¹

⁸⁷⁰ But Old Feminists, including members of the Six Point Group such as Margaret (Lady) Rhondda, were critical of 'middle-class women who depended on their family for support.' In Pamela Horn, *Women in the 1920s* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd. 1995), 60.

⁸⁷¹ Suzette Worden and Jill Seddon, 'Women Designers in Britain in the 1920s and 1930s: Defining the Professional and Redefining Design', *Journal of Design History* 8, no. 3, (1995), 179. DOI:10.1093/jdh/8.3.177.

The same approach might be taken to the few other female Rome scholars who went on to fashion careers in the British art world. Research into the work and careers of these scholars might fruitfully extend, deepen and qualify interpretations of gender, British art, moderate modernism and the role of the BSR that have been offered in this thesis. An investigation of the files at the BSR for Lilian Whitehead, 1921 Rome Scholar in Engraving, and Marjorie Brooks, 1930 Scholar in Mural Painting, would be a useful starting point.⁸⁷² Evelyn Gibbs (1905-1991), Rome Scholar in Engraving for 1929, is the only one of these women artists whose career has been investigated in any detail.⁸⁷³ Gibbs' life indicates a very different integration of personal and artistic life from Knights'. Gibbs had no family money to fall back on and she worked tirelessly as teacher, engraver and painter. She published *The Teaching of Art in Schools* in 1934 and was a leading figure in establishing the Midland Group of artists in 1943. She made drawings and paintings for the War Artists' Advisory Committee during WWII and these are now in the Imperial War Museum. Gibbs married after the War and after what her biographer, Pauline Lucas, describes as a 'failed pregnancy in her forties' had no surviving children,⁸⁷⁴ perhaps one reason she was able to produce so much artwork. Gibbs' history and a comparison with Knights supports the argument that personal, emotional circumstances energised women artists during Winifred Knights' lifetime, and beyond, and that seeing personal history as simply context or restriction is a limitation to understanding both life and art.

Through its consideration of work and life as a totality my thesis has therefore contributed to Art History's project. Studies focused on one woman artist have sometimes viewed the individual as heroine or genius, outside the context of their contemporaries, as Brian Foss notes, describing the drawbacks of the monograph as an approach to writing Art History: '[the] approach favours

⁸⁷² While she was studying at the BSR Winifred Knights was friendly with Lilian Whitehead, 1921 Rome Scholar in Engraving. Whitehead exhibited in the 1920s and 1930s. See for instance, 'The New English Art Club, Messrs Colnaghi's and the Leicester Galleries', *The Spectator* (20th November 1926), 14, at <http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/20th-november-1926/14/art-exhibitionspublication>, accessed 8th December 2014. Her etching *Ruth* (c.1920-1940) is in the British Museum, evidence to some contemporaneous artistic reputation, but to date no study has been made of her work. Marjorie Brooks (1904-1980), Rome Scholar in Mural Painting for 1930, exhibited at the Royal Academy and at Colnaghi's. Like Knights she married a Rome scholar (architecture student William Holford). See Sara Gray, 'Marjorie Brooks', in *The Dictionary of Women Artists* (London: The Lutterworth Press, 2009) 51.

⁸⁷³ See: Pauline Lucas, *Evelyn Gibbs: Artist and Traveller* (Nottingham: Five Leaves Publishers, 2001); Evelyn Gibbs, File at <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/1050001274>, accessed 22nd February 2015. There were other women painting scholars in the 1930s: Constance Dorothy Mary Rowe (1932) and Hermione Frances E. Hammond (1938). In addition, there were female scholars in Sculpture: Charlotte Ellen Gibson, Marjorie Megg, Frances Margaret Bruce and Karin Margaret Lowenadler were Rome Scholars in Sculpture for the years 1931, 1932, 1933 and 1939 respectively. See Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *The British School at Rome: One Hundred Years*, (London: British School at Rome/RA, 2001), 210-223.

⁸⁷⁴ Lucas, *Gibbs*, 76.

women who can be interpreted as exceptional, often through their rejection of qualities and attributes associated with feminine typecasting'.⁸⁷⁵ Foss gives no examples, but might be thinking of Barbara Hepworth.⁸⁷⁶ My thesis has implicitly challenged this understanding of the single artist study because I have shown how much Winifred Knights lived, and accepted, the life of an early twentieth-century woman. Her body of artwork deserves investigation *for itself*, her life as a case study for the careers of early twentieth-century women artists. I have, therefore, found the view of Mary Evans useful when assessing aspects of my research. Evans writes as a feminist sociologist, but a similar argument could be applied to the history of women artists: 'personal histories...illustrate the general with the particular and in doing so can make more vivid the workings of social structures and particularly of ideas and motives.'⁸⁷⁷ Life Writing and biography have been valuable tools when researching Knights' paintings and explaining the qualities of her work, for myself and for the reader.

Women artists born in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century have not received the amount of scholarly attention given to those born in the 1870s and 1880s. The younger women came to maturity after WWI and, not part of the suffragette generation, worked both against and with the grain of society's expectations that, as *Good Housekeeping* suggested in 1929, 'the happiest women in the world are those who cheerfully fulfil their natural destiny and get husbands and homes of their own, with children in them.'⁸⁷⁸ While the 1920s are not widely understood as a period of feminist endeavour (attention has focused on the struggle for equality before WWI and on second wave feminism of the 1960s and 1970s), groups of feminists were active in promoting equal rights and the rights of mothers throughout the 1920s, as the thesis has shown. Knights produced a body of work that asserts women's agency, explores emerging sexuality and values maternity. This project was facilitated by Winifred Knights' talents as an artist, her sensitivity to her material and her confidence in her work (even though her confidence sometimes faltered). The limited emancipation provided for women by legislation and social change, as well as more

⁸⁷⁵ Brian Foss, 'Sladey Ladies and Femmes Modernes (review)', *Art History* 37, no. 1 (February 2014), 184. DOI:10.1111/1467-8365.12069. The review examines Katy Deepwell's *Women Artists between the Wars: 'A Fair Field and No Favour'* (2010) and Paula J. Birnbaum, *Women Artists in Interwar France: Framing Femininities* (2011).

⁸⁷⁶ For instance, Margaret Gardiner, a close friend of Hepworth, wrote that following the births of her triplets Hepworth 'knew she had to work for financial reasons and also because of her own inner need....the nearby Wellgarth Nurses Training College...agreed to take care of the babies for their first years'. Margaret Gardiner, *Barbara Hepworth: a Memoir* (Edinburgh: the Salamander Press, 1982), 41.

⁸⁷⁷ Mary Evans, 'Reading lives: how the personal might be social', *Sociology: Journal of the British Sociological Association* 27, no. 1 (February 1993), 7; quoted in Worden and Seddon, 'Women Designers in Britain', 179.

⁸⁷⁸ 'The Best Job for a Girl', *Good Housekeeping* (January 1929), 37, 102; quoted in Horn, *Women in the 1920s*, 61.

traditional attitudes to femininity, were important to Knights' choices of motif and to her career. Thirty years and more after her death women artists were able to examine gender and motherhood more directly and explicitly than the inter-war period allowed to Knights. For instance, Mary Kelly worked on *Post-Partum Document* (1973-1979, various locations), a multi-part work that explored Kelly's life with her young son. The work includes his nappies, drawings and Kelly's responses to the experience of mothering. Some years later Tracey Emin used the 'feminine' craft of appliqué to attach names to a tent that she called *Everyone I have Ever Slept With 1963-1995* (1995, destroyed), while Mona Hatoum's uncomfortable *Daybed* (2008, private collection) undermines the security of home by representing the bed as a giant stainless steel cheese-grater. The careers of these successful artists, and others, show how equality has facilitated success into contemporary society. Difference (a woman's life) that provided subject-matter for Winifred Knights' sensitive explorations of women's lives has, as well, continued to motivate women artists well beyond the period 1915-1933 that is my focus in this thesis.

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Illustrations



Plate 1: Winifred Knights (to the right) next to Colin Gill, British School at Rome, 1921. University College London, Special Collections.



Plate 2: Winifred Knights with her son John Monnington, undated photograph. Private collection.

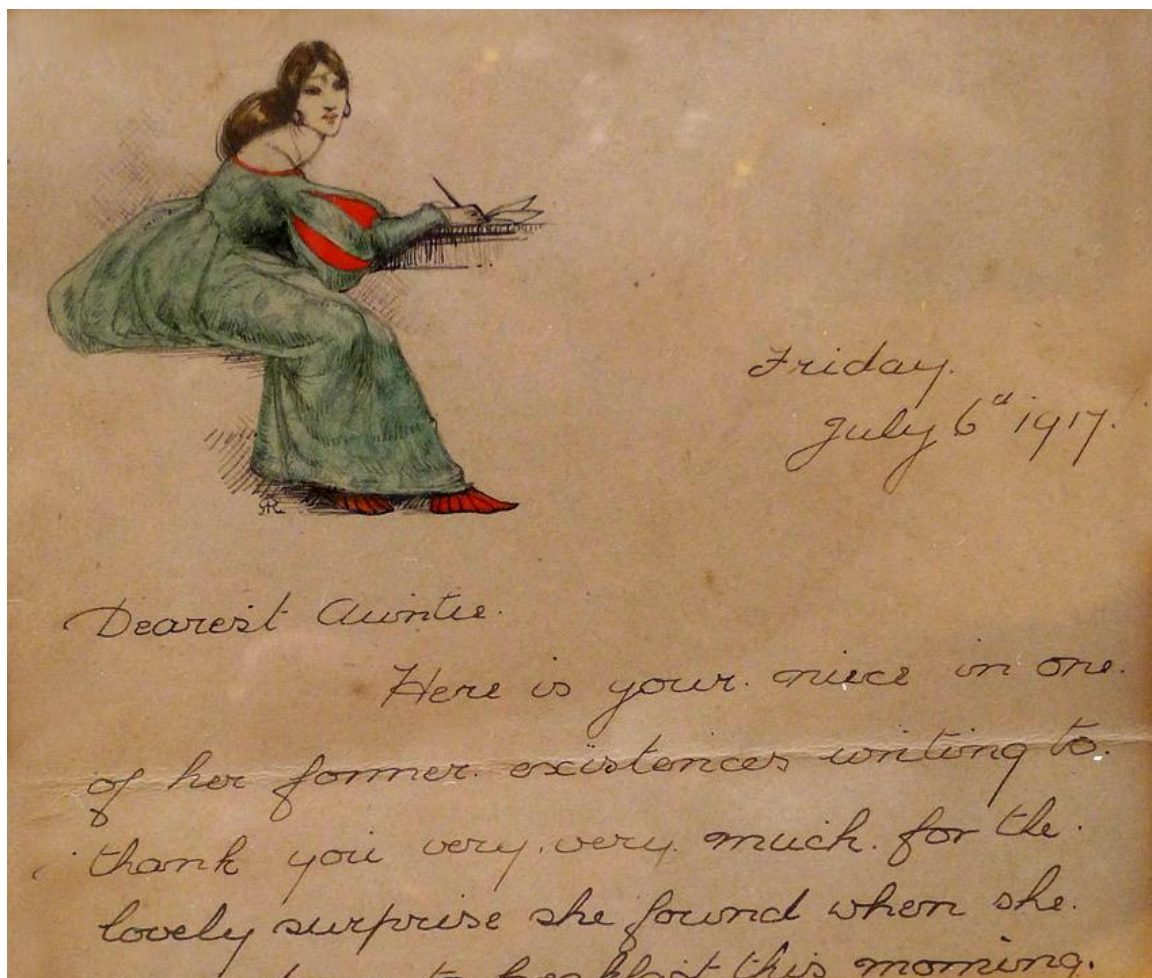


Plate 3: Letter from Winifred Knights to her aunt, 6th June 1917, illustrated with self-portrait in pen and watercolour. Private collection (Catherine Monnington).



Left: Plate 4: Winifred Knights: woman in heavily patterned dress, c.1914-1915, pen and ink on paper. Private collection (Catherine Monnington).

Right: Plate 5: Edward Burne-Jones: *Clara von Bork 1560*, 1850, watercolour and gouache on paper, 34.2 x 17.9 cm. Tate Collection.



Plate 6: Winifred Knights: woman in an oriental setting, c.1914-1915, watercolour and pen on paper. Private collection (Catherine Monnington).



Plate 7: Winifred Knights: drawing of a fairy, c.1914-1915, pencil and pen and ink on paper. Private collection (Catherine Monnington).



Plate 8: Winifred Knights: illustration to 'Goblin Market' by Christina Rossetti, c.1915, pen and ink on paper, 17.4 x 17.4 cm, tondo. University College London Art Museum.



Plate 9: Winifred Knights: *Rapunzel*, c.1915, pen, ink and pencil on paper. Private collection (Catherine Monnington).



Plate 10: Winifred Knights: *The Wise and Foolish Virgins*, 1915, watercolour on paper, 30 x 12.05 cm. James Allen's Girls' School.



Plate 11: Winifred Knights: Illustration to Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market', c.1913-1914, watercolour on paper. University College London Art Museum.



Plate 12: Winifred Knights: illustration to Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market', showing a girl turning back towards the goblins, c.1913-1915, watercolour on paper. Private collection (Catherine Monnington).



Plate 13: Winifred Knights: illustration to Christina Rosset's 'Goblin Market', showing a procession of goblins in landscape format, c.1913-1915, watercolour on paper. Private collection (Catherine Monnington).



Plate 14: Winifred Knights: *Illustration for the Goblin Market by Christina Rossetti*, 1913, watercolour on paper, 44.0 x 58.0 cm. UCL Art Museum.

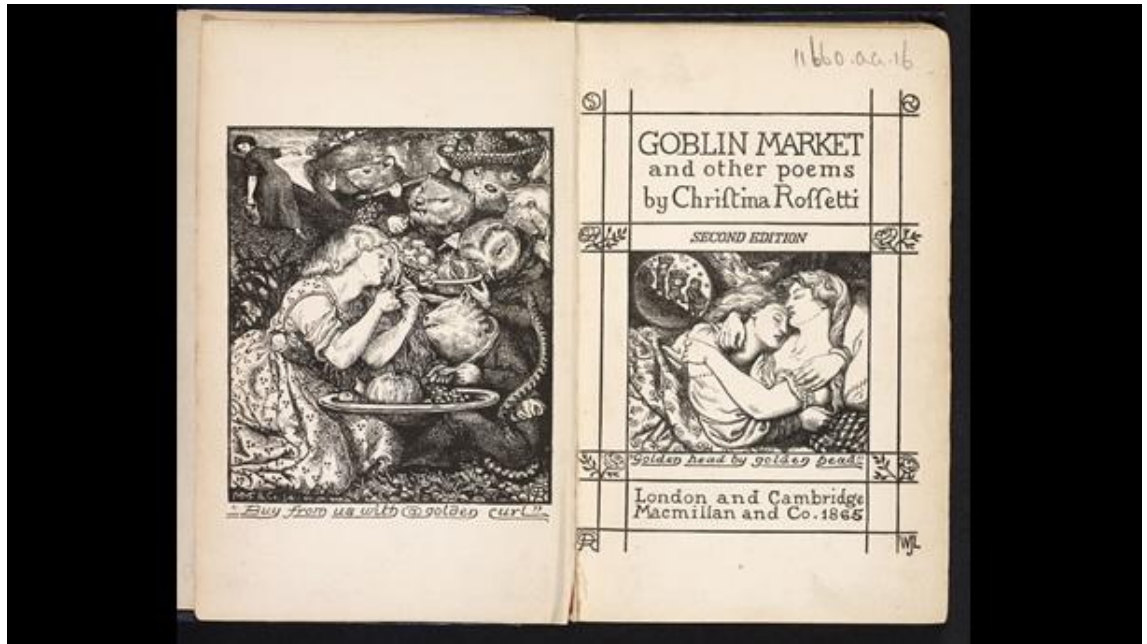


Plate 15: Dante Gabriel Rossetti: frontispiece and title page to Christina Rossetti, *Goblin Market and Other Poems*. London and Cambridge: Macmillan and Co. 1862.



Plate 16: Laurence Housman, illustration to Christina Rossetti: 'Goblin Market'. London: Macmillan and Co. 1893, illustration facing p 2.



Plate 17: Margaret Agnes Rope: *Goblin Market*, 1905, stained glass panel. Private collection.



Plate 18: Derwent Lees: *Self-portrait*, c.1917, etching on paper. National Portrait Gallery.



Plate 19: Gabriel Scorodumoff, *Susanna and the Elders*, 1779, coloured print after Guido Reni: *Susanna and the Elders*, 1620-1625, 25.3 x 19.0 cm. British Museum.



Plate 20: Sandro Botticelli: *Madonna of the Magnificat*, c.1485, tempera on panel, 118 x 118 cm, tondo. Uffizi, Florence.



Plate 21: Anna Lea Merritt: *Love Locked Out*, 1890, oil on canvas, 115.6 x 64.1 cm. Tate Collection.

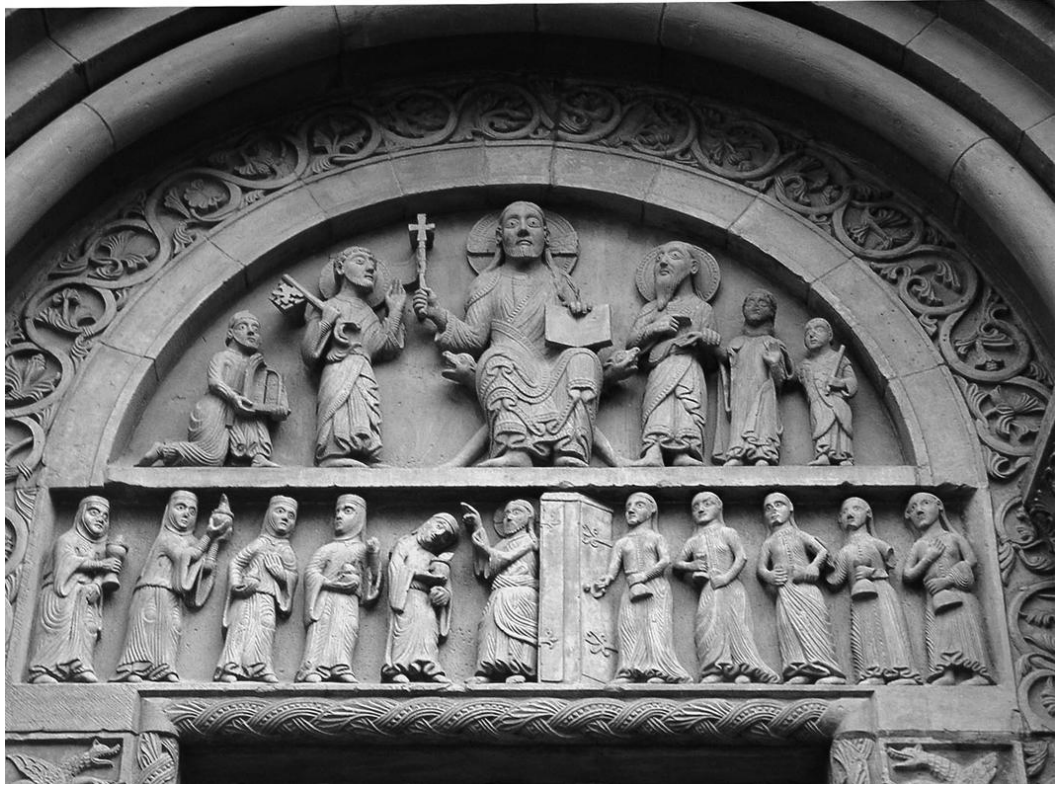


Plate 22: Die Gallusfonte portal, 1180. Münster, Basle, north side.



Plate 23: John Everett Millais: illustration to 'The Parables of Our Lord', 1864, wood engraving by the Dalziel Brothers, 14.0 x 10.8 cm. Tate Collection.



Plate 24: William Orpen: *Ready to Start*, 1917, oil on canvas, 60 x 50.8 cm. Imperial War Museum.



Plate 25: Winifred Knights: *a woman with blonde hair*, 1918-1919, watercolour on paper, tondo. Private collection (Catherine Monnington).



Plate 26: Winifred Knights: a woman working beside farm buildings, 1918, watercolour on paper. Private collection (Catherine Monnington).



Plate 27: Winifred Knights: *Ludlow Fair and Cattle Market*, 1919, watercolour and pencil on paper, 29.5 x 32.2 cm. University College London Art Museum.



Plate 28: Augustus John: *A Family Group* (also known as *Decorative Group*), 1908-1909, oil on canvas, 201.9 x 173.4 cm. Dublin, the Hugh Lane.



Plate 29: Winifred Knights: *Village Street: Mill-Hands Conversing*, 1919, tempera on canvas, 91.5 x 122 cm. University College London Art Museum.



Plate 30: James Wilkie: *Reconstruction: A Horse and Cart with figures in a Sandpit*, 1919, oil on canvas, 91.5 x 122 cm. UCL Art Museum.



Plate 31: Winifred Knights: *The Deluge*, 1920, oil on canvas, 152.4 x 183 cm. Tate Collection.



Plate 32: Winifred Knights: *Leaving the Munitions Works*, 1919, watercolour on paper, 27 x 32 cm. Private collection.



Plate 33: Arthur Outlaw: *The Deluge*, 1920, oil on canvas, 152.4 x 177.8 cm. Private collection.

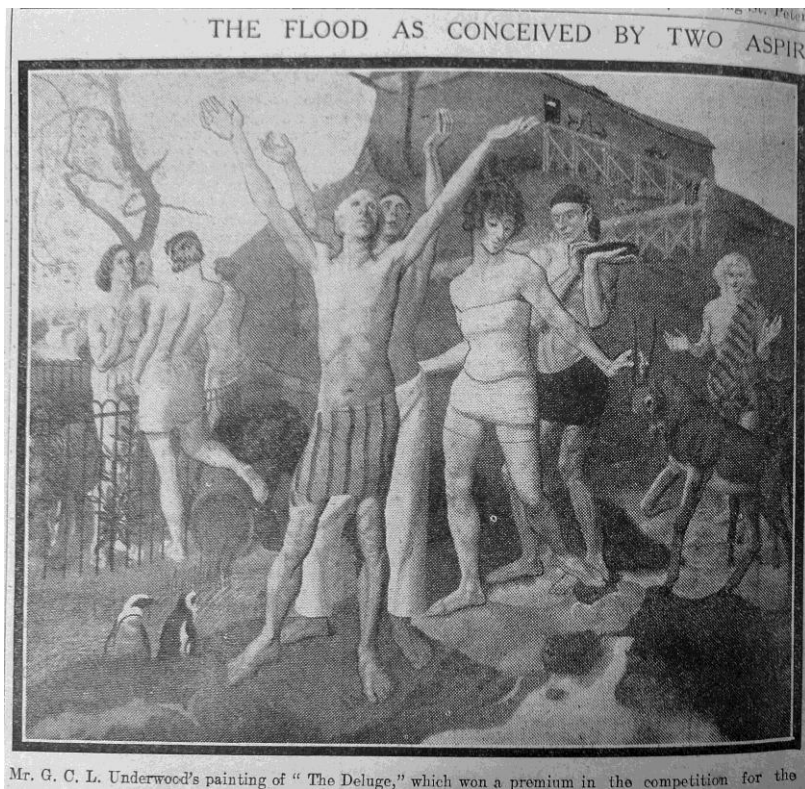


Plate 34: Leon Underwood: *The Deluge*, 1920, oil on canvas, 152.4 x 177.8 cm, illustrated in *The Daily Graphic*, 8th February 1921. Location unknown.



Plate 35: James Wilkie: *The Deluge*, 1921, oil on canvas, 152.4 x 177.8 cm, illustrated in *The Daily Graphic*, 8th February 1921. Location unknown.



Plate 36: Percy Wyndham Lewis: *Kermesse*, 1910, watercolour, gouache, pen, pencil on paper, 30.2 x 30.5 cm. Yale Center for British Art.

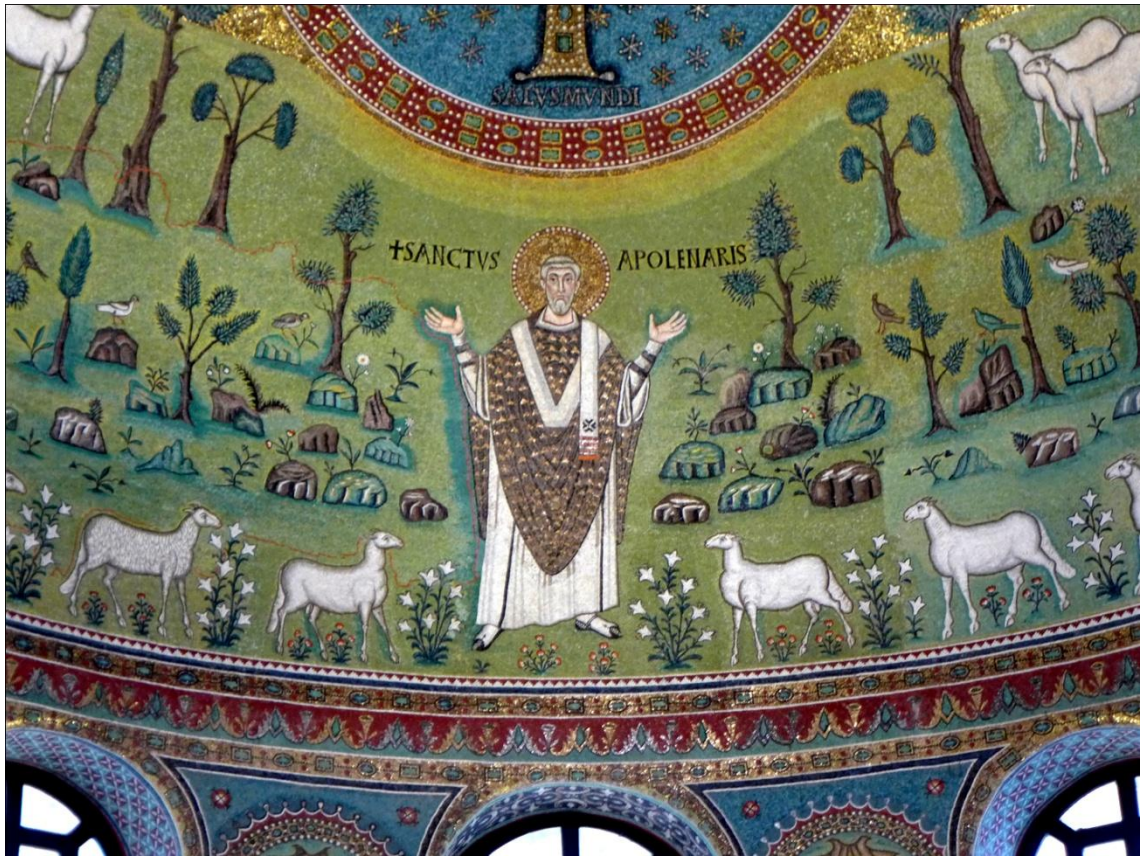


Plate 37: Mosaic depicting St Apollinare and showing the orans posture, 6th century. St Apollinare-in-Classe, Classe, Ravenna.



Plate 38: Ian Grant: *Figures by a Lake*, c.1928, oil on canvas, 119.4 x 211 cm. Private collection.



Plate 39: J.M.W. Turner: *The Deluge*, 1805, oil on canvas, 142.9 x 235.6 cm. Tate Collection.



Plate 40: Nicholas Poussin: *Winter-The Deluge*, 1660-1664, oil on canvas, 118 x 160 cm. The Louvre.



Plate 41: Winifred Knights: early preparatory sketch for *The Deluge*, 1920, detail, watercolour on paper. UCL Art Museum.



Plate 42: Winifred Knights: sketch for *The Deluge*, detail, showing backward glance, 1920, pencil and watercolour, dimensions of complete picture 23.2 x 29.1 cm. UCL Art Museum.



Plate 43: Winifred Knights: Cartoon for *The Deluge*, showing backward glance, 1920, pencil on tracing paper, 152.4 x 183 cm. Mitchell Wolfson Junior Museum of Decorative and Propaganda Art, Miami, Florida.

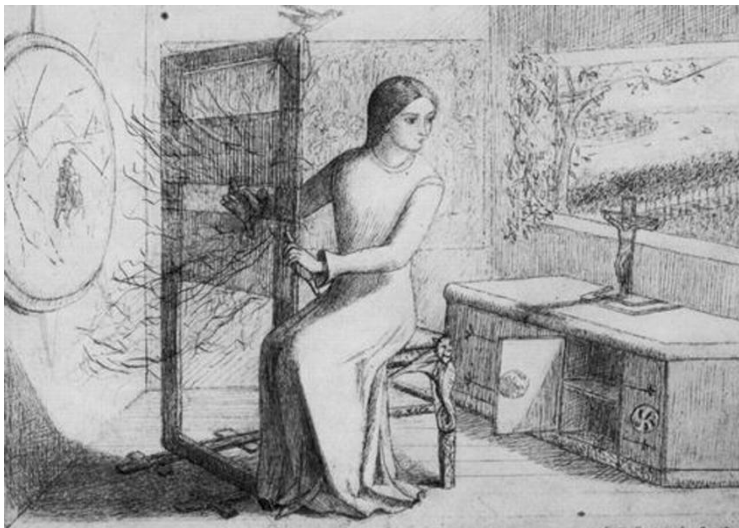


Plate 44: Elizabeth Siddal: *The Lady of Shalott*, 1853, pen and ink on paper, 16.5 x 22.3 cm. Private collection.



Plate 45: *Lot's Wife*: 12c, stained glass panel. Canterbury Cathedral.



Plate 46: Albrecht Dürer: *Lot Fleeing with his daughters from Sodom*, c.1498, oil on canvas, 52 x 41 cm. National Gallery of Art, Washington.



Plate 47: Camille Corot: *The Burning of Sodom*, 1857, oil on canvas, 92.4 x 181.3 cm. Metropolitan Museum, New York.



Plate 48: Winifred Knights: *Portrait of a Young Woman*, 1920, oil on canvas, 50.8 x 40.7 cm. UCL Art Museum.

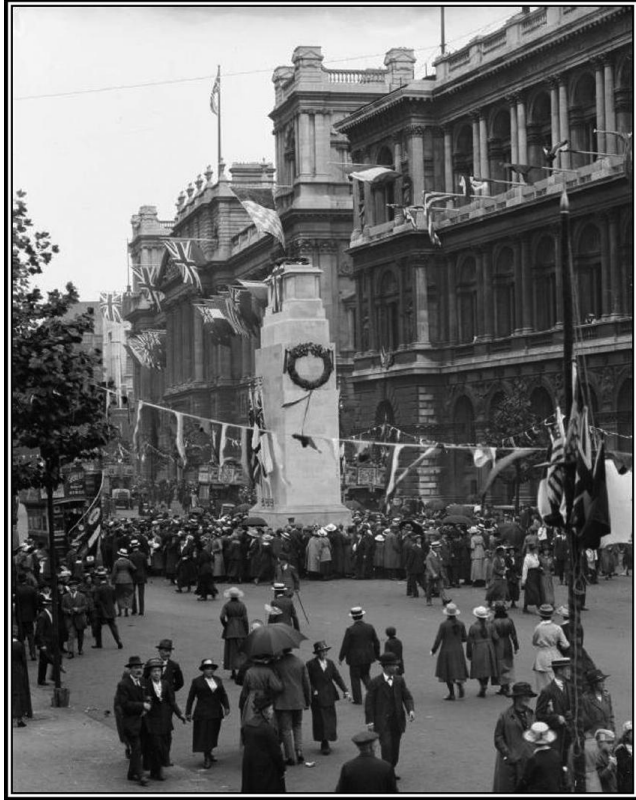


Plate 49: Edwin Lutyens: temporary cenotaph, wood, photographed on Peace Day, 19th July 1919. Imperial War Museum.



Plate 50: Margaret Gere: *Noah's Ark*, 1912, tempera on silk mounted on board, 26.4 x 26.4 cm. Tate Collection.



Plate 51: *Cinyras and Myrrha (from Ovid)*, c.1546-1550, tin glazed earthenware plate. Victoria and Albert Museum.



Plate 52: Angelica Kauffman: *Self-Portrait Hesitating Between the Arts of Music and Painting*, 1794, oil on canvas, 147.0 x 215.0 cm. Nostell Priory, Yorkshire.



Plate 53: Photograph of the Knights family: Winifred Knights' sister Joyce is sitting next to the girls' father Walter Henry Knights. Eileen Knights is standing and the girls' mother Gertrude is seated next to Winifred Knights. In *Winifred Knights*. London: The Fine Art Society and Paul Liss in Association with the British School at Rome, 1995, 7.

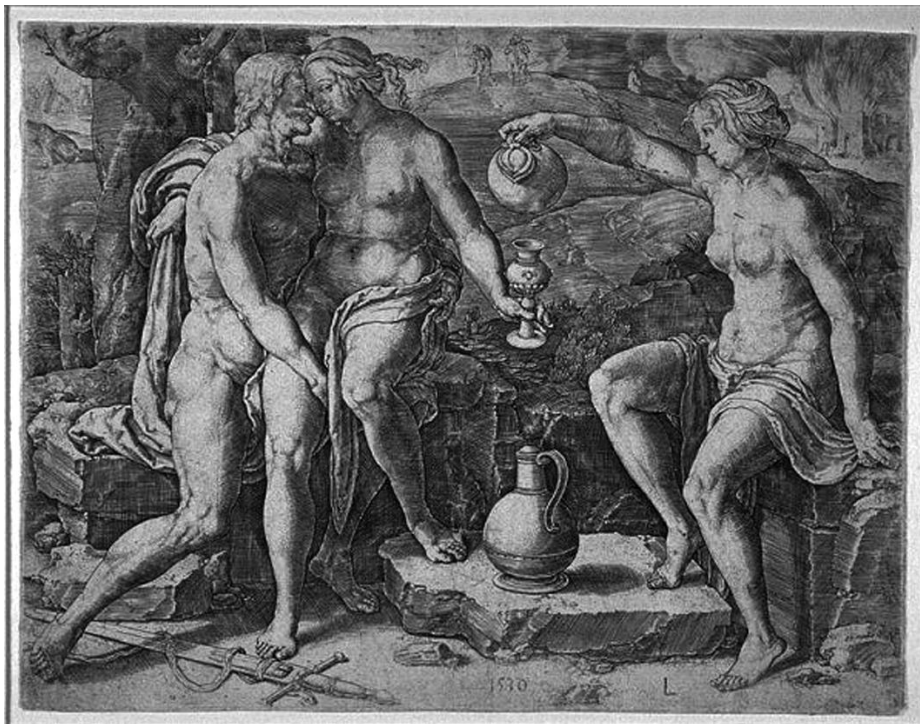


Plate 54: Lucas van Leyden: *Lot and his Daughters*, 1530, engraving on paper, 19.0 x 24.7 cm. Auckland Art Gallery, New Zealand.



Plate 55: Dorothy Coke: *Wounded Men on Duppas Hill, Croydon*, 1919, watercolour on paper, 36.1 x 50.8 cm. Imperial War Museum.



Plate 56: Dorothy Coke: *War Allotments in a London Suburb: In the Background is the County Council School at Norbury, used as a Military Hospital*, 1919, watercolour on paper, 35.5 x 50.8 cm. Imperial War Museum.



Plate 57: Winifred Knights: *Italian Landscape*, 1921, oil on wood, 30.5 x 32.4 cm. Tate Collection.



Plate 58: Winifred Knights: *The Marriage at Cana*, c. 1923, oil on canvas, 184 x 200 cm. Te Papa Tongarewa Museum collection, Wellington, New Zealand.



Plate 59: Winifred Knights: *Santissima Trinita*, 1924-1930, oil on canvas, 103 x 113 cm. Private collection.



Plate 60: Winifred Knights: *Santissima Trinita*, detail, 1924-1930, oil on canvas, 103 x 113 cm. Private collection.

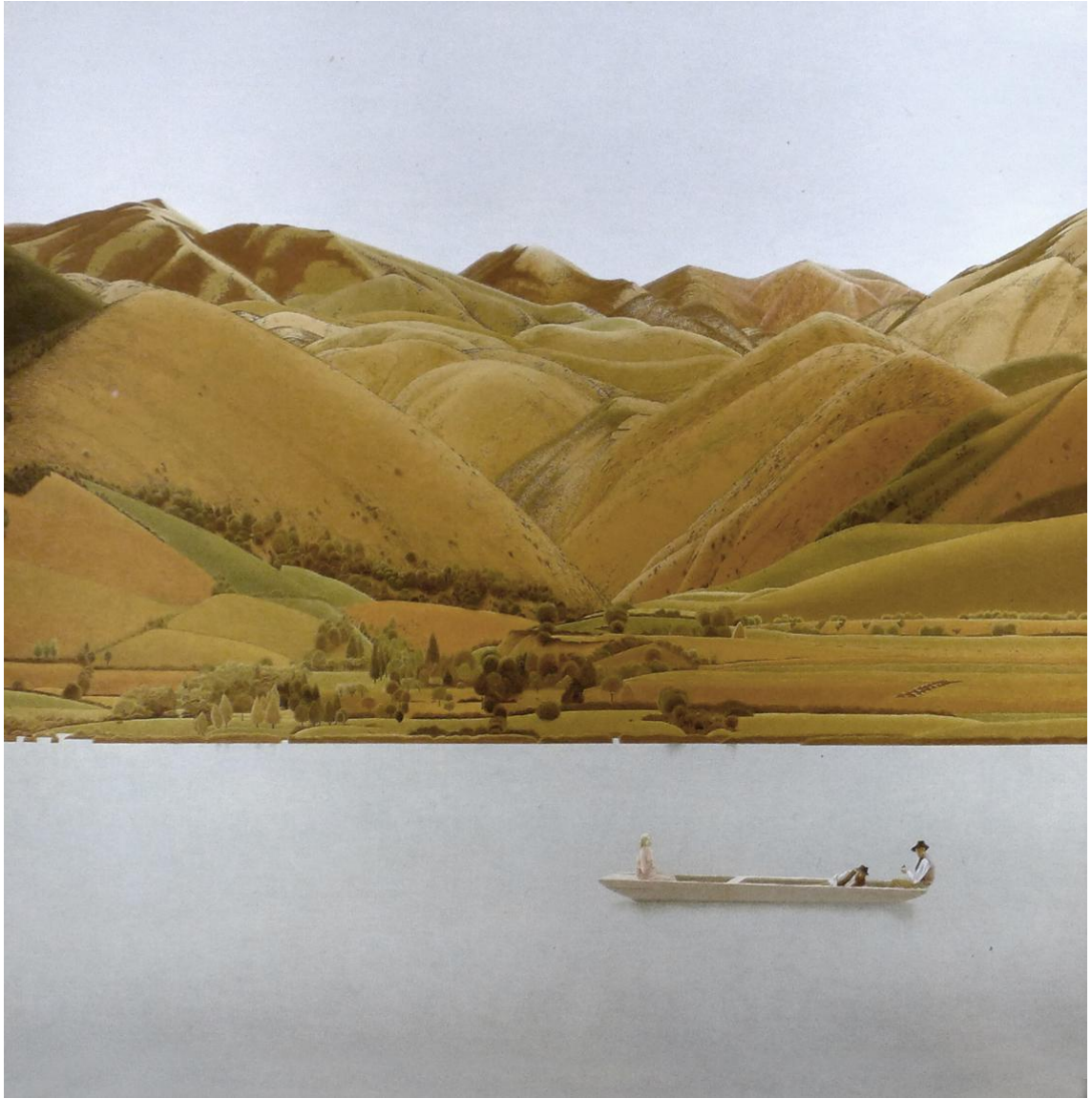


Plate 61: Winifred Knights: *Figures in a Boat, Lake Piediluco* (also known as *Tranquil Lake*) 1924-1930, oil on canvas, 66.5 x 66.5 cm. Private collection (Sacha Llewellyn).



Plate 62: Joachim Patinir, workshop of: *Landscape with the Rest on the Flight into Egypt*, c.1515-1524, oil on oak, 33 x 54.6 cm. National Gallery.



Plate 63: Colin Gill: *Allegory*, 1920-21, oil on canvas, 117 x 228.5 cm. Private collection.



Plate 64: Lorenzo Lotto: *Rest on the Flight into Egypt with St Justine*, 1529-1530, oil on canvas, 82 x 132.5 cm. The State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg.



Plate 65: Orazio Gentileschi: *Rest on the Flight into Egypt*, 1615-1620, oil on canvas, 175.6 x 218.0 cm. Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery.



Plate 66: Charles West Cope: *The Young Mother*, c.1845, oil on panel. Victoria and Albert Museum.



Plate 67: Camille Corot: *The Bridge at Narni*, 1827, oil on canvas, 68 x 94.6 cm. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.



Plate 68: Hannah Crichton Stuart: *San Giovanni in Laterano from the Villa Mattei*, 1830s, watercolour on paper. Abbot and Holder.



Plate 69: Adam Elsheimer: *Tobias and the Angel*, engraving by Hendrik Goudt, 1608, engraving on paper, first state prior to lettering, 13.2 x 18.9 cm. British Museum.

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Plate 70: Roberto Almagio: 'The Repopulation of the Roman Campagna'. *Geographical Review* 19, no. 4, October 1929, photograph on page 541.



Plate 71: Camille Corot: *Lake Piediluco, Umbria*, 1825-1828, oil on canvas, 22 x 41cm. Ashmolean Museum.

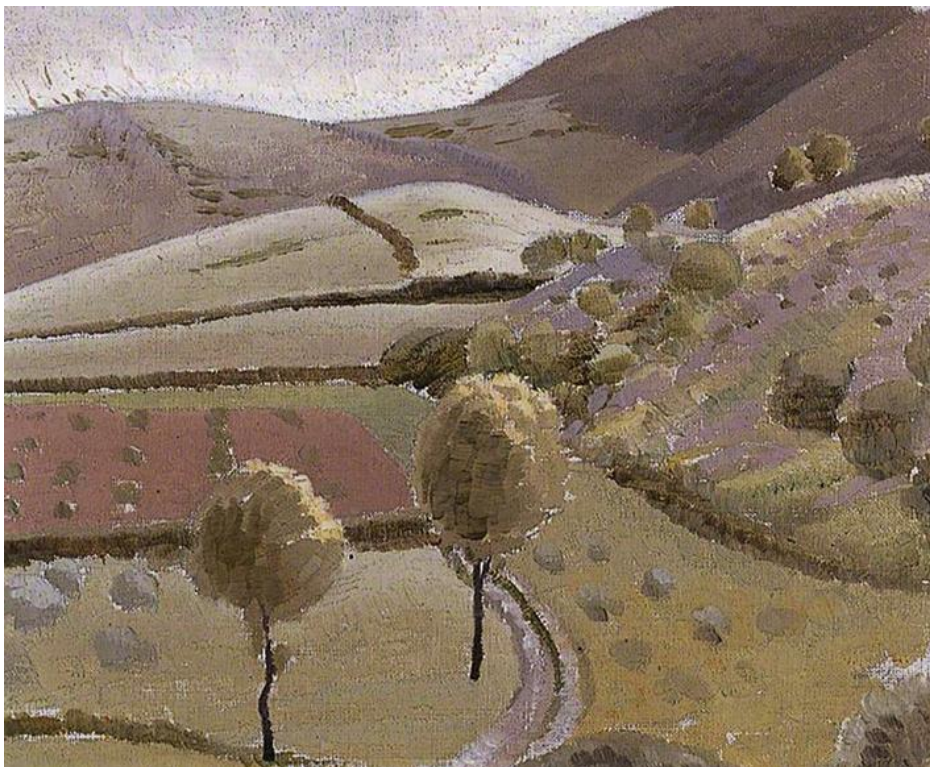


Plate 72: Winifred Knights: *Landscape near Lago di Piediluco, Umbria, Italy*, c.1920-1923, oil sketch on canvas, 18.4 x 21.6 cm. UCL Art Museum.



Plate 73: Thomas Monnington: *Allegory*, c.1924, tempera on canvas, 125.7 x 276.8 cm. Tate Collection.



Plate 74: Thomas Monnington: *Piediluco*, c.1923-1926, oil on panel, 42.5 x 60.5 cm. Royal Academy.

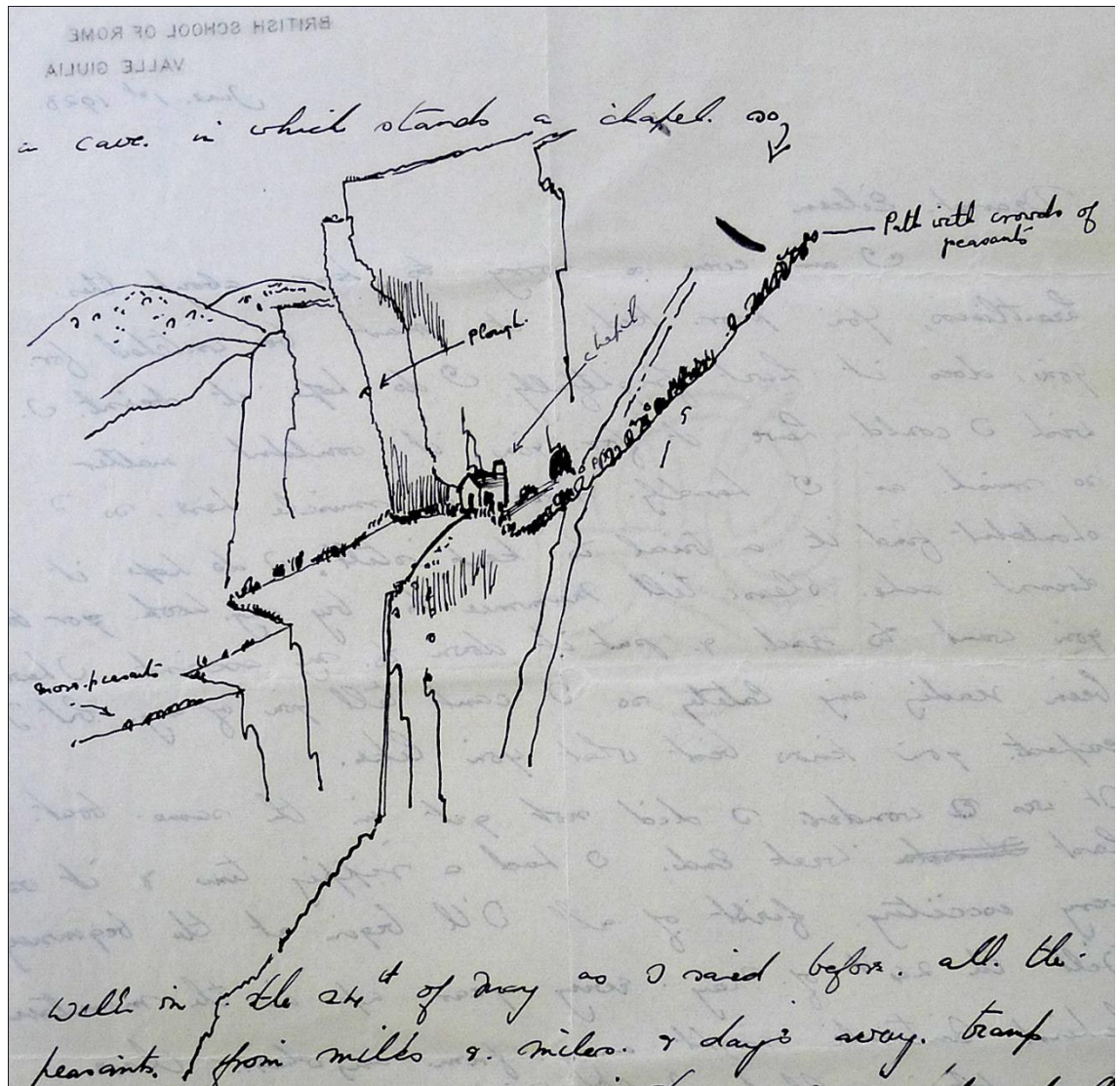


Plate 75: Letter from Winifred Knights to her sister Eileen, illustration showing pilgrims on the mountain tops walking to Vallepietra, 1st June 1923, pen on paper. UCL Special Collections.



Plate 76: David Young (D.Y.) Cameron: *The Battlefield of Ypres*, 1919, oil on canvas, 182.8 x 317.5 cm. Imperial War Museum.



Plate 77: Giovanni Bellini: *Agony in the Garden*, c.1465, egg tempera on wood, 81.3 x 127 cm. National Gallery.



Plate 78: Giotto: *The Resurrection (Noli me tangere)*, 1304, fresco, 200 x 185 cm. Scrovegni (Arena) Chapel, Padua.

Plate 79: Jean-Francois Millet: *Noonday Rest*, 1866, pastel and black conté crayon on paper, 29.2 x 41.9 cm. Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Image not available.



Plate 80 : Puvis de Chavannes: *Sleep*, 1867, oil on canvas, 381 x 600 cm. Palais des Beaux-Arts, Lille.



Plate 81: Mariano Barbasán Lagueruela: *Madonna del Giglio's Procession at Anticoli Corrado* (titled *The First Communion* by Bonhams, New York), 1900, oil on panel, 17.8 x 28.5 cm. Location unknown.



Plate 82: Ernest Godfrey Jaquet (padre): photograph of officers eating a meal outdoors, WWI period. From photograph album titled *Worthing*, unpublished work. Private collection (Marion Anderson).



Plate 83: Unknown photographer: the wedding of Charles and Jessie Dean, 7th December 1929.



Plate 84: Boris Kustodiev: *The Merchant's Wife at Tea*, 1918, oil on canvas, 120 x 120 cm. Russia Museum, St Petersburg.

Plate 85: Mark Lancelot Symons: *My Lord I Meet in every London Lane and Street*, (n.d.), oil on canvas, 144.8 x 205.7 cm. Private collection. Image not available.



Plate 86: Eliot and Fry Ltd: Prince Albert, Duke of York, and Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, wedding photograph, 26th April 1923.



Plate 87: John Skeaping, Barbara Hepworth, Thomas Monnington and Winifred Knights, 'British School at Rome ?1925'. UCL Special Collections.



Plate 88: Winifred Knights: *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours*, 1933, oil on canvas, 76.5 x 189.5 cm. St Martin's Chapel, Canterbury Cathedral.



Plate 89: Winifred Knights: *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours*, 1933, detail, oil on canvas, dimensions of complete extant painting 76.5 x 189.5 cm. St Martin's Chapel, Canterbury Cathedral.



Plate 90: Winifred Knights: *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours*, 1933, oil on canvas, 76.5 x 189.5 cm, installation shot, 2011. St Martin's Chapel, Canterbury Cathedral.



Plate 91: Winifred Knights: *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours*, 1933, oil on canvas, 76.5 x 189.5 cm, installation shot, 2011. St Martin's Chapel, Canterbury Cathedral.

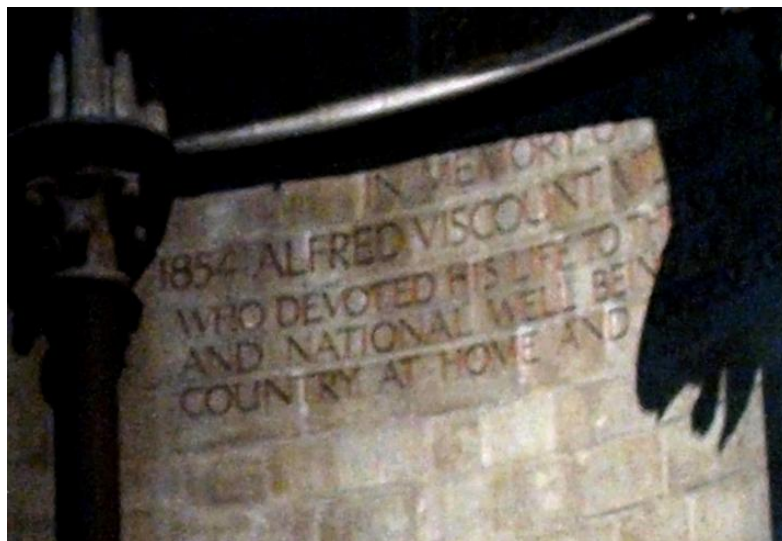


Plate 92: Inscription in memory of Alfred Lord Milner. St Martin's Chapel, Canterbury Cathedral.



Plate 93: Simone Martini: Saint Martin dividing his Cloak, c.1312, fresco, 265 x 230 cm. St Martin's Chapel, Lower Church of San Francesco, Assisi.



Plate 94: Winifred Knights: *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours*, 1933, including original left panel. Installation shot, c.1934. St Martin's Chapel, Canterbury Cathedral. Photograph private collection.

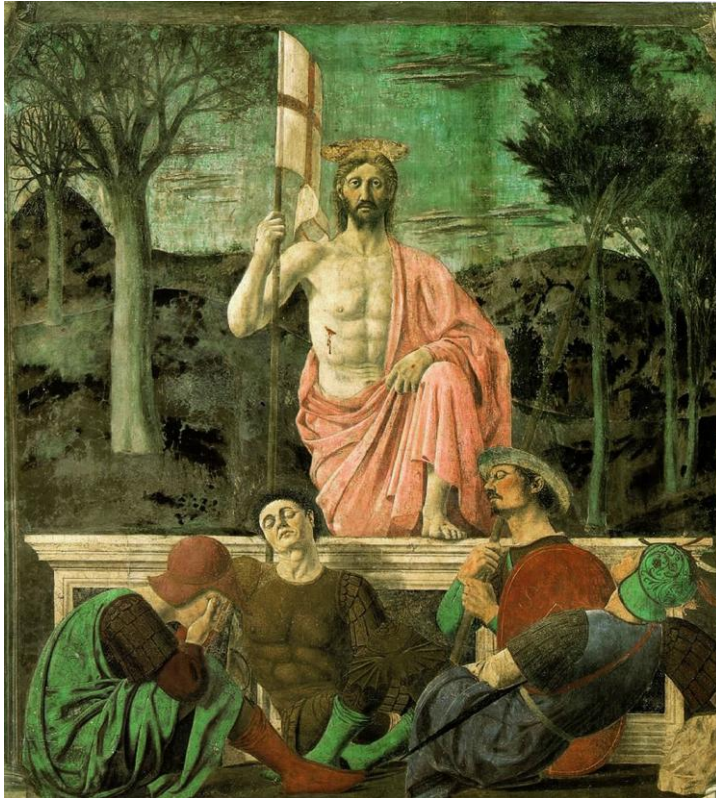


Plate 95: Piero della Francesca: *Resurrection*, 1460s, fresco, 225 x 200 cm. Museo Civico, Borgo san Sepolcro.



Plate 96: Piero della Francesca: *The Nativity of Christ*, 1470-1475, oil on poplar, 124.4 x 122.6 cm. National Gallery.



Plate 97: Simone Martini: *Miracle of the Resurrected Child*, 1320-1325, fresco, 296 x 230 cm. St Martin's Chapel, Lower Church of San Francesco, Assisi.



Plate 98: Winifred Knights: *Jesus leaning into the inner room, St Martin laying his cloak on the ground for the beggar*, study for *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours*, c. 1931-1932, watercolour and gouache on paper. Private collection (Catherine Monnington).

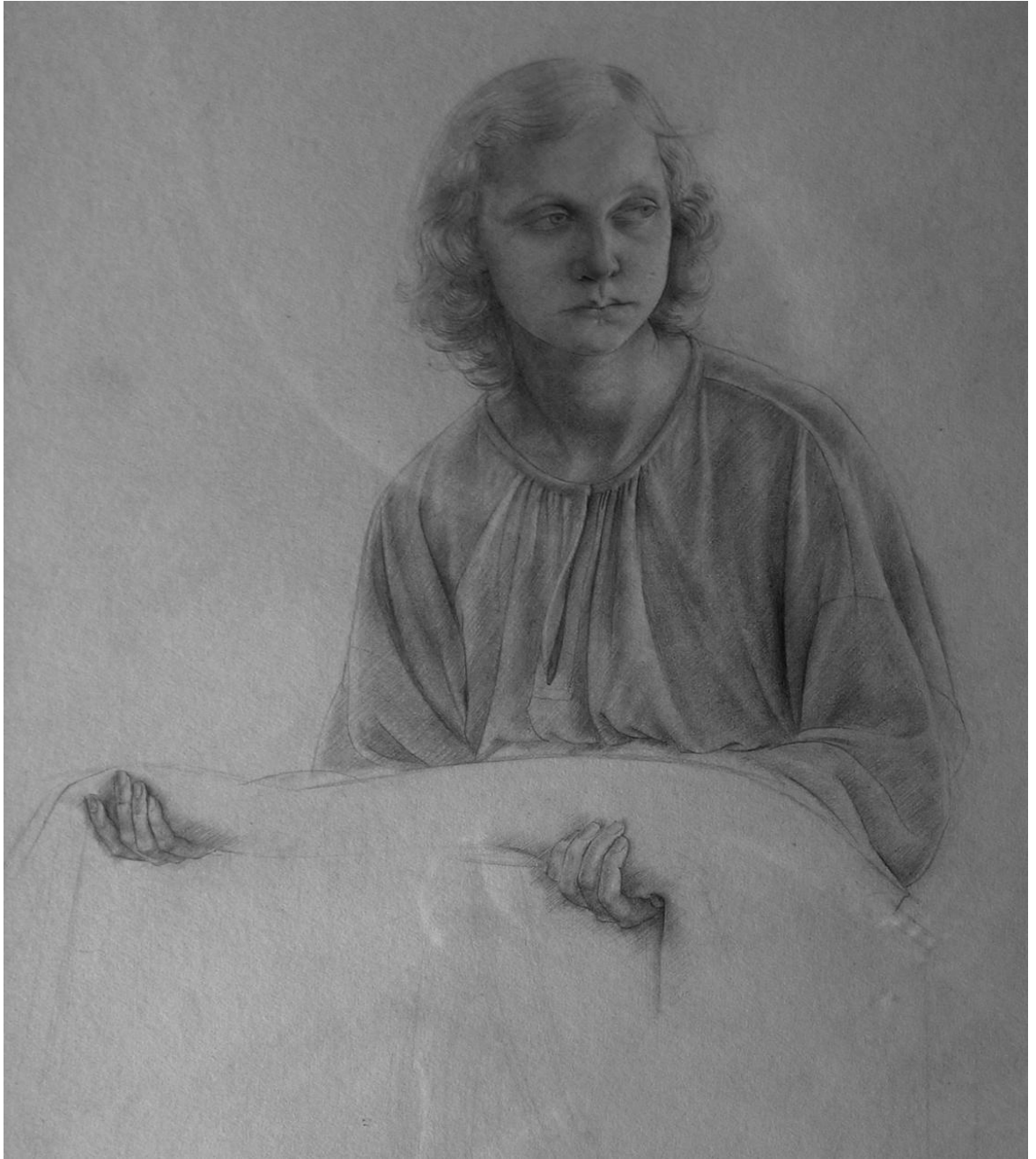


Plate 99: Winifred Knights: angel holding portion of Martin's cloak, study for left panel of *Scenes from the life of St Martin of Tours*, c.1933, pencil on paper. Private collection



Plate 100: Winifred Knights: Thomas Monnington, head and shoulders, study for *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours*, signed W.M. Knights, 1933, pencil on paper, 26 x 23 cm. Private collection.



Plate 101: Winifred Knights: St Martin in his helmet, head and shoulders, study for *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours*, c.1933, pencil on paper. Private collection (Catherine Monnington).



Plate 102: Winifred Knights: a horse, head study for *Scenes from the Life of St Martin of Tours*, c.1933, pencil on paper, 20 x 15 cm. Private collection.



Plate 103: Piero della Francesca: *St Anthony Brings a Baby Back to Life*, predella from *Sant' Antonio Altarpiece*, c.1467-1468, tempera and oil on panel, 36.5 x 49 cm. Perugia, Galleria Nazionale dell' Umbria.



Plate 104: Domenico Ghirlandaio: *Resurrection of the Boy*, 1483-85, fresco. Santa Trinità, Florence.



Plate 105: Giotto: *The Raising of Lazarus*, 1304-1306, fresco, 200 x 185 cm. Scrovegni (Arena) Chapel, Padua.



Plate 106: Arthur Hughes: *The Nativity*, 1857-1858, oil and gold leaf on canvas, 35.8 x 61.2 cm. Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery.



Plate 107: Headstone in the form of a Celtic cross, 1925. East Finchley Cemetery, London, N2 ORZ.



Plate 108: Headstones with marble scrolls, 1925 (left) and 1924 (right). East Finchley Cemetery.



Plate 109: Johannes Mijtens: *Family Portrait of Willem van den Kerckhoven* (the dead infants depicted as chubby angels), 1652, oil on canvas, 134 x 182 cm. Historisch Museum, the Hague.

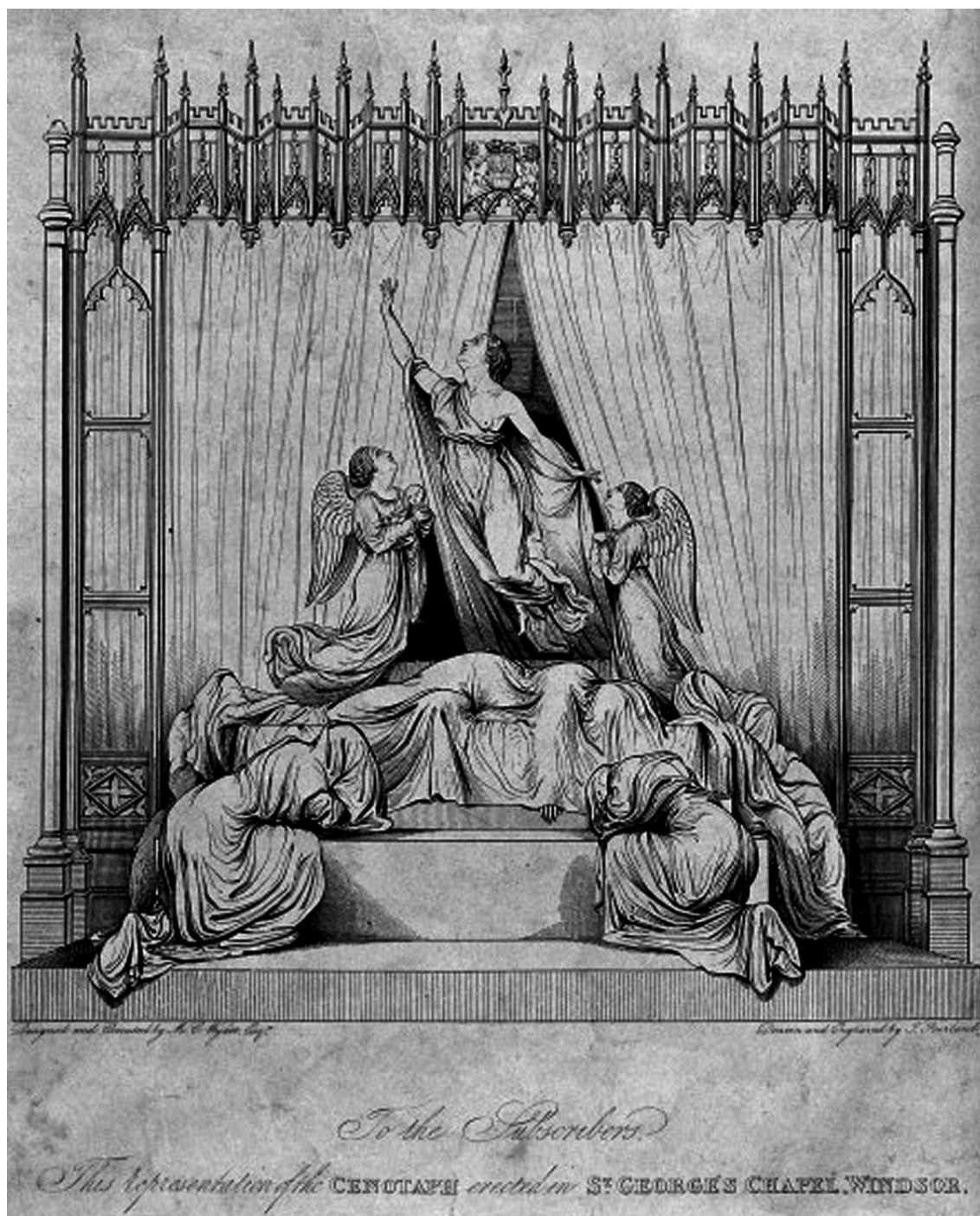


Plate 110: M. C. Wyatt: monument to Princess Charlotte (daughter of the Prince Regent, George IV) and her stillborn baby, marble, 1824. St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle. Lithograph T. Fairland, 1826.



Plate 111: Sandro Botticelli: *Three Miracles of St Zenobius*, c.1500, tempera on wood, 64.8 x 139.7 cm. National Gallery.



Plate 112: Alan Sorrell: *The Artist in the Campagna*, 1931, oil on canvas. Private collection.