The Furrowed Face:
the Depiction of the Elderly in Painting, England and the United States, 1870 - 1910

Mary Elizabeth Thompson

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ABSTRACT

Old age has always evoked diametrically opposed opinions. On the one hand, the elderly are respected, regarded as benevolent repositories of wisdom and comfort; on the other, they are considered as decrepit vestiges of life, who pointlessly linger on, wasting the world for the vibrant and useful.

These views were particularly topical in the last decades of the nineteenth/first decade of the twentieth centuries, when there was increasing concern in many countries about the aged and their vulnerability. In England and Wales this resulted in the 1908 provision by the government of an old age pension. In the United States, however, provision of support from the state was introduced significantly later, in the 1930s.

How, if at all, was this variation in view reflected in the painting of the elderly in the two countries? This study addresses this question by firstly considering how the elderly are portrayed in genre painting in each country. It then moves on to the world of portraits, looking in more detail at the work of individual artists, both American and English, including Thomas Eakins, John Singer Sargent and Hubert Herkomer.

In England it emerged that the elderly were often shown as happy if shabby, with a more submissive attitude to fate; there was also a significant segment of painting which recorded the poverty and difficulties which may face the old. In contrast, in the United States the elderly were shown as vibrant, assertive and materially better off, with few indications of the troubles they may undergo. In both countries, however, it became clear that the elderly were regarded in a positive way by artists, who delighted in the excellent practice of artistic skills provided by the time-ravaged faces and features of the old.

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Figure 6:5 George Frederic Watts, *Josephine Butler,*
1895, Oil on canvas, 30.12 x 25.25"/76.5 x 64.2cm,
National Portrait Gallery, London.

Figure 6:6 George Frederic Watts, *Cardinal Manning,*
1882, Oil on canvas, 35.5 x 27.5"/90.2 x 69.9cm,
National Portrait Gallery, London.

Figure 6:7 J. E. Millais, *Cardinal Newman,*
1881, Oil on canvas, 47.75 x 37.5"/121.3 x 95.3cm,
National Portrait Gallery, London.

Figure 6:8 William Blake Richmond, *Anne Jemima Clough* (1820–1892),
1882, Oil on canvas, 35.43 x 27.36"/90 x 69.5cm,
Newnham College, Cambridge.

Figure 6:9 James Jebusa Shannon, *Anne Jemima Clough,*
1890, Oil on canvas, 50 x 40.15"/127 x 102cm,
Newnham College, Cambridge.

Figure 6:10 Detail of Figure 6:9

Figure 6:11 Eveleen Myers, *Anne Jemima Clough,*
1890, British Library Platinum Print Add.MS72824.f.6.

Figure 6:12 *Miss A J Clough,*
Photo reproduced in '*The Woman's Signal,*'
Thursday December 9th 1897:370

Figure 6:13 Frank Holl, *William Ewart Gladstone,*
1887/8, Oil on canvas, 50 x 40.15"/127 x 102cm,
Private collection.

Figure 6:14 Mezzo tint by Frank Sternberg of
H. J. Thaddeus, *William Ewart Gladstone,*
1888, Oil on canvas, 54 x 33"/137.16 x 83.82cm,
Original in Reform Club, London.

INTRODUCTION

Old age has always had two perpetual faces. The positive one that is benign and useful, passing on the benefits of experience and knowledge to the grateful succeeding generation, and the negative face, raddled and rotting, uselessly and maliciously cluttering up space as it fumbles and fades. 'Who are the old?' queried A.K.H.B. in Fraser's Magazine in 1881, hoping to pin it down, before concluding that 'idiosyncrasy is everything. It all depends on the individual man, and is more to do with infirmity than old age. One shall be tottering on the brink of the grave, every sense having failed and that which he esteemed his mind quite feeble and overclouded.... whereas another is bright, active, serviceable as ever'.[1] It was a particularly relevant question at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, for these were pivotal years in the history of the old, when awareness of their needs and potential vulnerability was developing rapidly. In England these concerns culminated in the 1908 provision of a state old-age pension, whereas in the United States such provision was deferred until the nineteen thirties; a discrepancy such as this suggests significant differences in society's attitudes to the elderly in the two countries. This thesis therefore has two main purposes. First of all, the portrayal of the aged in paintings in both countries will be scrutinised to determine the prevalent attitude to the old - was it the positive view, which saw the elderly as providers of care, comfort, experience and wisdom or did the darker side prevail, with the emphasis on avarice, frailty and dependence? Secondly, were there significant differences in how the elderly were shown in paintings in the two countries, which would echo the divergence implied by the later provision of a national pension in the USA. At the start of the study it seemed likely that the negative view would predominate, given that the vulnerability of the aged was a cause for concern at that time.

When scrutinising paintings in the era under review it was very noticeable that the people painted were unmistakeably old, with no attempt made to diminish or disguise their elderly attributes – their hair is white/grey, their skin undoubtedly wrinkled, their noses and ears large and often bulbous. This provides a sharp contrast to present day portrayals, in the popular media at least, where even in advertisements aimed specifically at the aged, such as stair-lifts, wrinkle-hiding-creams and funeral plans, the old are shown as strangely smooth-skinned, agile and appearing to be little more than fifty. It was this marked difference between the seemingly more honest and unexpectedly positive portrayals of the old at the end of the nineteenth century with those of the present day which particularly intrigued the current writer, especially as she is on the threshold of old age herself, making the subject of topical interest as well as inviting of further study. The thesis is therefore written from the viewpoint of a twenty-first century pensioner reflecting on how life might have been just before the introduction of the state pension.

[1] A.K.H.B., 'Concerning the Cheerfulness of the Old,' *Fraser's Magazine* (February 1881): 250.

There were [and are] many similarities and also profound differences between England and the United States. Throughout the nineteenth century the proliferation of industrialisation and urbanisation had brought great changes to [Western] societies and people's habitual ways of life. There was considerable fluidity in social status, and a person could move from poverty to riches in a short space of time. England was a well-established society with a long history and considerably more set in its ways – or at least, with more ways to be set in – which brought with it, arguably, a greater reluctance to embrace change. In contrast, the United States was a vibrant 'new' society, a large proportion of its denizens having, for various reasons, moved away from their origins to start anew in a different, still developing, country. They would bring with them some knowledge of the customs and habits of their 'homeland' but would not necessarily be constrained by them, and would also have about them – in the lifestyles of other immigrants - many instructive examples of the modes and traditions of different cultures.

Attitudes to the elderly are also pressing and apposite subjects for the twenty-first century, which has its own profound concerns about an ageing demographic. With the proportion of the elderly in society set to exceed that of the young, the issues surrounding old age and people's attitudes to it maintain their urgency and relevance. Life for the elderly in the early twenty-first century appears much changed from the nineteenth/early twentieth, certainly in terms of medical treatments and financial support, but fundamental problems remain in terms of dependence, frailty and vulnerability; it is now the residential/nursing home which casts the shadow rather than the workhouse. To examine how the old were portrayed in an earlier time, with different yet also, in some ways, very similar anxieties, gives current attitudes a context. It also brings to the fore some skilled and versatile artists, popular in their day but now out of the limelight, who provide fertile ground for further study.

To understand the portrayal of old age in the late nineteenth century it is important to know how old age was regarded in those days, especially in the context of art. During the increasingly sophisticated and fast-changing times at the turn of the nineteenth century publications relating to the lives of people and their place in society increased rapidly; two random yet typical examples are G. Stanley Hall's consideration of the construct of adolescence and Jacob Riis's studies in the tenements of New York.[2] Works which related specifically to the lives of the elderly, however, were very slow to appear. There were two probable reasons for this; first of all, the aged made up a very small percentage of the world population, and secondly, they did not provide the magnet of potential controversy which would encourage writers as they 'were not considered dangerous to the social order'.[3]

[2] G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence* (London: Appleton, 1905). Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among The Tenements of New York* (New York: Dover Publications, 1891).

[3] Joseph T. Drake, *The Aged in American Society (*New York: Ronald Press, 1958), 3. Tamara K. Hareven, 'Changing Images of Aging and the Social Construction of the Life Course' in *Images of Aging; Cultural Representations of Later Life,* ed. Mike

In the late nineteen-seventies, however, two influential studies on the history of the elderly and their treatment - *Old Age in the New Land* and *Growing Old in America* - were published.[4] Each author worked on the premise that attitudes to the elderly had changed for the worse, from a perceived veneration and respect in earlier times to a marked moment of change to negativity and derision, eloquently expressed by Achenbaum when he wrote that 'more and more observers described them [the old] as ugly and disease ridden... [and] ...by the outbreak of World War One, if not before, most Americans were affirming the obsolescence of old age'.[5] They disagreed, however, on when this change had happened; Fischer favoured the years 1780-1820, Achenbaum the years after the end of the American Civil War. Ultimately, however, they both came to understand that old age had always evoked an 'ambivalence of attitudes and conditions in every period of American history' with 'No period(s) or decade(s) loom[ing] as *the* transitional stage(s)'.[6]

These two works remain relevant and useful, providing solid foundations for studies of the elderly, especially with their use of wide-ranging sources and careful analyses of old age attitudes in the past. Their value is still recognised in the canon of old age studies; a recent publication, Lawrence R Samuel's *Aging in America: A Cultural History,* refers to their 'able tracking' of attitudes to old age.[7] In a 2016 art history PhD dissertation both Achenbaum and Fischer were mentioned as retaining their significance, being referred to as 'key figures …[who have] …. contributed greatly to age studies', with Fischer's *Growing Old* publication being described as a 'foundational text'.[8]

By the late nineteen-seventies, studies on the subject of the elderly had started to appear in increasing numbers on a motley collection of topics, examples including the history and development of retirement, the treatment of the elderly in other cultures and the portrayal of old age in poetry and in humour.[9] Other works reported on the presentation of old age in popular sheet music and the changes in the terminology used to represent them.[10] Thomas R. Cole, a frequent writer on old age, used medical, philosophical and religious writings to produce a cultural history of ageing in 1992.[11] Throughout all these studies ran the consistent thread of the

Featherstone and Andrew Wernick *(*London and New York:Routledge, 1995), 123.

[4] Andrew Achenbaum, *Old Age in the New Land: the American Experience since 1790* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978). David Hackett Fischer, *Growing Old in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

[5] Achenbaum, *Old Age*, 39.

[6] Fischer, *Growing Old*, 230. Achenbaum, *Old Age*, 167.

[7] Lawrence R. Samuel, *Aging in America: A Cultural History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017),7

[8] Lauren Palmor, *'Shadows and Light: Seeing Senescence in British and American Genre Painting, c1850 – 1910'. (*PhD Dissertation: University of Washington, Seattle, 2016): 5, 305.

[9] William Graebner, *A History of Retirement; the meaning and function of an American institution 1885 – 1978 (*New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1980). Ellen Rhoads Holmes and Lowell D. Holmes, *Other Cultures, Elder Years (*California: Thousand Oaks, 1995). Mary Sohngen and Robert J. Smith, 'Images of Old Age in Poetry.' *The Gerontologist* 18:2, (1978): 181–186. Joseph Richman, 'The Foolishness and Wisdom of Age: Attitudes Toward the Elderly as Reflected in Jokes.' *The Gerontologist* 17:3, (1977): 210–219.

[10] Elias S. Cohen and Anna L. Kruschwitz, 'Old Age in America Represented in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Popular Sheet Music.' *The Gerontologist* 30:3, (1990): 345–354. Herbert C. Covey, 'Historical Terminology Used to Represent Older People.' *The Gerontologist* 28:3, (1988):291–297.

[11] Thomas R. Cole, *The Journey of Life; a Cultural History of Aging in America (*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

'marked ambiguity, ambivalence and conflict about feelings about growing old and being old', confirming that there was no one inflexible date when attitudes to old age suddenly performed a volte face, from positive to negative.[12] Opinions on old age have always been equivocal and, in the words of old age historian Carole Haber, (who has been a consistently valuable source of old age studies in America), 'the elderly population has always been as complex as other age groups'.[13]

Studying old age, its history and society's attitudes to it, has of course not been confined to the United States. In England over the last forty years many studies of old age and its history have been published, authors such as Peter Laslett and Pat Thane being especially productive. As in the USA, many disparate aspects of old age were studied, with works published from many different disciplines, including sociologists, social, cultural and gender historians, anthropologists, economists and statisticians. Historians have used an eclectic range of sources to build a picture of the life of the old in Britain, deducing the status of the elderly by the use of statistics from censuses, parish registers and similar records, and by the use of 'literature, correspondence, poor law and workhouse documents and diaries' able to compose a picture of how the elderly lived.[14]

One value of these many-faceted studies is how often they have disproved widely-held misconceptions about the old. One study examined demographic statistics and confirmed that households consisted mostly of only two generations, providing evidence that it was not the norm for older people to live with their families/married children, they often lived independently.[15] Studies of the aged in the ancient world indicated that the proportion of the population over sixty was 6–8%, a percentage which compares favourably with that of the nineteenth-century in England and the USA, when it was 5.5–7.5%.[16] It was clear from this multiplicity of studies that old age was not a new phenomenon, if people had survived the perilous years of childhood the chances were high that they could live to seventy and beyond.

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[12] Cohen & Kruschwitz, *'Old Age in Popular Sheet Music,'* 345.

[13] Carole Haber & Brian Gratton, *Old Age and the Search for Social Security (*Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 172. Other useful examples of Haber's work include:- Carole Haber. 'The Old Folks at Home: the Development of Institutionalized Care for the Aged in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia.' *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 101:2 (April 1977): 240–257. Carole Haber, *Beyond 65; the dilemma of old age in America's past* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983). Carole Haber, 'Old Age, Public Welfare and Race,' *Journal of Social History 2*1 (1987): 263–279.

[14] Edward Anthony Wrigley, *The Population History of England 1541 – 1871: a reconstruction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Susannah R. Ottaway, *The Decline of Life: Old Age in Eighteenth Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[15] Peter Laslett & Richard Wall, *Household and Family in Past Time; comparative studies in the size and structure of the domestic group over the last three centuries in England, France, Serbia, Japan and colonial North America, with further materials from Western Europe (*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

[16] Tim Parkin, *Old Age in the Roman World; a cultural and social history* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 50. Nineteenth century percentages compiled from a) *Historical Statistics of the United States,* Millennial Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1, Tables 1-51, 1-52 and b) Brian Mitchell and Phyllis Deane, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 12.

The topic of old age and what it was like to grow old have also become a subject for theses; two particularly valuable ones for this study have been Jacquelyn Fogerty's G*rowing Old in England 1878 – 1948*, and David Thomson's *Provision for the Elderly in England 1830 – 1908.*[17] By the early twenty-first century, in both England and the USA, a vast edifice of studies of old age and its history had been built on the still useful foundations laid by Achenbaum and Fischer, and greatly assisted comprehension of the changing attitudes to old age, whilst making clear that these were, and are, complex issues with no simple interpretation. It was acknowledged to be an intricate and many-faceted subject. In England historian Pat Thane noted that 'the greatly enriched histories of old age of recent years have alerted us to the complexity of attitudes toward and experiences of older age in all times, as well as to the range of sources and methods through which historians can seek to reconstruct them'.[18] An opinion echoed in the United States with Carole Haber's comment that 'At no time in the past.. were all assertions about old age consistent or unvaried. ... For some, grey hair could be a sign of great wisdom, for others, it was simply a mark of obsolescence...[and] ...the old have never constituted a single entity, uniformly loved or universally envied, all-powerful or all-impoverished'.[19]

Studies such as these have continued to the present day and it is encouraging to find that they continue, both across the disciplines and individually. Interest has been sufficient for a new on-line new journal – *Age Culture Humanities* - to be founded in 2014, with the intention of being specifically devoted to 'cross-disciplinary critical investigations of the experience of age, ageing and old age as seen through the lens of the humanities and arts'.[20] In addition, a recent thesis has suggested the benefits of being aware of the usefulness of studying 'aging in the history of art' and how much there 'is to be gained for Anglo-American art history from age studies and its related phenomena'.[21]

These wide-ranging studies of old age have been invaluable in the way they have provided an informed insight into the world of the elderly at the end of the nineteenth/early twentieth century. For the purposes of this thesis and its study of the portrayal of the elderly, and the attitudes evoked, it is now necessary to concentrate more closely on how the aged were shown in paintings. It is salutary to note how few books and exhibitions there have been which deal specifically with old age in paintings. In both England and the United States there have been thorough art historical studies on a wide variety of topics – examples include family life,

[17] Jacquelyn Ruth Fogerty, *Growing old in England 1878–1948;* a thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the Australian National University, Canberra (January 1992). David Thomson, *Provision for the Elderly in England (1830–1908)* PhD Thesis, University of Cambridge (1981).
[18] Pat Thane 'The History of Aging and Old Age in 'Western' Cultures' in Thomas R. Cole, Ruth E. Ray and Robert Kastenbaum, *A Guide to Humanistic Studies in Aging* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 52.
[19] Haber & Gratton, *Old Age and Social Security*, 143, 172.
[20] http://ageculturehumanities.org/WP/about/ accessed 11th October 2017.
[21] Lauren Palmor. '*Shadows and Light: Seeing Senescence in British and American Genre Painting, c1850 – 1910'.* PhD Dissertation: University of Washington, Seattle, 2016. https://art.washington.edu/research/graduate/shadows-and-light accessed 21st July 2017.

childhood, women, rural life, servants, ethnicity – but discussions on the portrayal of the elderly in painting have been exceptionally sparse.[22]

The few studies that do exist have a value in the sense that they provide examples of the old in paintings, but they give little detailed examination of the topic. The two first published works, *Images of Old Age in America, 1790 to the Present* and *La Vieillesse dans L'Art Occidental,* both consist of illustrations of the old in paintings, prints, etchings, from early history onwards, but with minimal explanatory text.[23] Another publication, *The Art of Aging: A Celebration of Old Age in Western Art,* is a collection of black and white reproductions of appropriate paintings, with brief commentaries but no obvious logic in the order of the paintings.[24] A more productive source has been the relatively recent *The Long History of Old Age,* edited by Pat Thane: a popular rather than formal academic study, the essays trace the history of old age over the centuries and its bibliography and copious colour illustrations provide particularly effective signposts to further works.[25]

Fortunately there have been two particularly apposite studies which specifically consider the portrayal of old people in paintings. These works are Herbert C. Covey's *Images of Older People in Western Art and Society* and Karen Chase's *The Victorians and Old Age.*[26] Covey's work is a detailed and contemplative look at the world of the aged from the Middle Ages to the end of the nineteenth century, and 'draws on art, literature and historical information from earlier times … to help us understand how older people were perceived in earlier periods of Western history'.[27] Now over twenty-five years old, it still furnishes a beneficial backdrop to studies of old age in art and the way artists may act as a mirror of their times. Karen Chase's more recent publication concentrates on literature rather than art, but has one particularly relevant chapter - *Artistic Investigations and the Elderly Subject* - which has especially pertinent comments on Hubert Herkomer and his works, notably his painting of the old - ninety plus - Stratford Canning.[28]

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[22] Examples include: Lee M. Edwards, *Domestic Bliss; Family Life in American Paintings 1840 – 1910* (New York: Hudson River Museum, 1986). Claire Perry, *Young America: Childhood in Nineteenth Century Art and Culture* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2006). Sara Holdsworth and Joan Crossley, *Innocence and Experience; images of children in British Art from 1600 – present* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Galleries, 1992). Susan P. Casteras, *Images of Victorian Womanhood in English Art* (London: Associated University Presses, 1987). Patricia Hills, *The Painters' America; rural and urban life* (New York: Praeger, 1974). Christiana Payne, *Rustic Simplicity* (Nottingham: Djanogly Art Gallery in association with Lund Humphries, 1998). Giles Waterfield & Anne French, *Below Stairs; 400 years of servants' portraits* (London:National Portrait Gallery, 2003). Elizabeth O'Leary, *At Beck and Call; the representation of domestic servants in Nineteenth Century American painting* (Washington:Smithsonian Institute Press, 1996). Guy McElroy, *Facing History; The Black Image in American Art, 1710 – 1940* (San Francisco:Chronicle Books, 1991). Jan Marsh, *Black Victorians: Black People in British Art 1800 – 1900* (Aldershot:Lund Humphries, 2005).

[23] W. Andrew Achenbaum & Peg Kusnerz, *Images of Old Age in America, 1790 – present* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1978). Christine Dayonnet & Jean Lasserre, *La Vieillesse dans l'art Occidental* (Toulouse, Université du Troisième Age, 1982).

[24] Patrick McKee & Heta Kauppinen, *The Art of Aging; A Celebration of Old Age in Western Art* (New York: Insight Books, 1987).

[25] Pat Thane, *The Long History of Old Age* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2005).

[26] Herbert C. Covey, *Images of Older People in Western Art and Society* (New York & London: Praeger, 1991). Karen Chase, *The Victorians and Old Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[27] Covey, *Images of Older People*, xi.

[28] Herkomer's work is discussed in more detail in Chapters Two and Six.

The studies considered above have provided an invaluable background for this thesis, with its required scrutiny of paintings of the elderly to discern how, and if, they reflect the mores of their day. The necessary next step was to create two databases of appropriate paintings and writings – reviews, articles, letters, diaries, autobiographies - from the time when the paintings were created. With their immediacy and resonance of the age in which they were created such primary sources are indispensable ingredients for inclusion, especially as this thesis is being written in the twenty-first century, when daily life and attitudes have changed so much that it can sometimes be challenging to comprehend the initial responses at the time the paintings were produced.

The immediate and obvious starting point for the finding of appropriate paintings was via the internet. This gave some help, but the use of a general search term such as 'paintings of the elderly' produced such unmanageable numbers of often irrelevant examples that a more concentrated focus was clearly necessary. A more successful strategy proved to be searching for painters and pictures within suitable published works, such as the illustrated studies of old age discussed earlier, as well as collections of painting on appropriate themes, discovered by browsing library shelves, bookshops, and bibliographies. They did not need to be of strong academic content, it was more important that they offered signposts to appropriate artists and paintings. Pat Thane's *The Long History of Old Age*, with its many reproductions of paintings of elderly subjects, proved a good starting point, as did those of more lightweight content on relevant themes, such as Christopher Wood's *Paradise Lost***,** and Graham Reynolds *Painters of the Victorian Scene.*[29] General histories, such as those by Charles Caffin or Edgar Richardson on American painting, were also useful starting points.[30] More academic studies, whether general, such as Hermann Williams Warner's *Mirror to the American Past,* or those which concentrated on one theme, for example works by Patricia Hills and Elizabeth Johns, were also of great value.[31]

A benefit of this method of searching was that the finding of one suitable painting frequently led to the discovery of additional appropriate works by the same artist. It was also important that potential sources for art works covered a wide range of dates, as artists are subject to the vagaries of fashion, names are re-discovered and once popular artists move to the background. Alfred Kappes (1850 – 1894) is a typical example, in that he was well-received in his lifetime, but then faded from view and received little mention until the early twenty-first century, when

[29] Christopher Wood, *Paradise Lost: Paintings of English Country Life and Landscape, 1850 – 1914* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1988). Graham Reynolds, *Painters of the Victorian Scene* (London: Batsford, 1953).
[30] Charles H. Caffin, *The Story of American Painting* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1908). Edgar Preston Richardson, *Painting in America: the story of 450 years* (London: Constable, 1956).
[31] Hermann Warner Williams, *Mirror to the American Past: a Survey of American Genre Painting: 1750 – 1900* (Connecticut: New York Graphic Society, 1973). Hills, *The Painters' America*. Elizabeth Johns, *American Genre Painting: the politics of everyday life.* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1991).

his *Tattered and Torn* (Fig 3:25) painting became one of the highlights of the *Taxing Visions* exhibition of 2010.[32]

Exhibition catalogues were also a productive resource for suitable paintings, as were the catalogues, both on-line and in book form, of art galleries and auctioneers' sales. This search was made more arduous in that the artists being looked for, and the styles and types of paintings they produced, are not often now amongst the most highly regarded works in galleries and art markets, so are not amongst the first mentioned or on display. They do, however, have a pronounced value in studies such as this, their style and subject matter supplying considerable evidence of their society's conventions.

The first database eventually consisted of about two hundred works, though the number was in perpetual flux, with examples being added as they were found, or removed if they were found to be unsuitable – for example, on closer scrutiny, a subject of a painting may not be as old as appeared at first glance. Eventually almost 160 paintings were selected for inclusion in the finished thesis.

For ease of access the information collected was tabulated, with works listed firstly in alphabetical order of the artist's last name, then first name, followed by title, subject and date, plus whether English or American. The decision then had to be made on the most appropriate art history methodology to adopt so as to best exploit the information in the databases. With the thesis being focused on the reception of paintings when first produced a methodology which analysed works-of-art within the context of their time - the social history of art – was the inevitable choice. Questions were devised to elicit answers that would clarify attitudes to the elderly, including:-

- were the elderly figures in the paintings isolated or a member of a mixed social grouping?
- if in a group, how many were there, were the ages of the subjects equally mixed, or were there more young than old (or vice versa)?
- was there a deliberate and pronounced contrast shown between age and youth?
- did the elderly subjects bear the lineaments of a known, real person (for example, Grace Kelynack and/or Grace Warren in Newlyn School paintings) or were they shown with the stereotypical characteristics of old age – grey hair, wrinkled skin, provision of comfort and advice – in order to provide a representation of old age rather than an identifiable individual?

[32] Leo G. Mazow & Kevin M. Murphy, *Taxing Visions; Financial Episodes in Late Nineteenth Century Art* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010).

- was the elderly person shown in a neutral way, or presented in a way which would evoke responses, such as derision, or sympathy? A question such as this is where scrutiny of the contemporary sources – reviews, comments and similar – is particularly important, as it is these sources which make very clear the reception, and opinion, of such works at the time of their production, rather than the inevitably subjective and different view of the present day.
- were there any clues to the painter's opinion of the old, did they show them in a sympathetic or a mocking light, were they seemingly neutral, just presenting a picturesque scene with no undercurrents?
- was the setting rural or urban?
- were the old people inactive or active, still working at a particular trade or profession?

The answers to these questions enabled deductions to be made on the artist's meaning and intent with regard to the old people being portrayed.

There were also some more prosaic factors to be considered, a vital one being whether an illustration of a potentially useful work was easily available. The painting of *The Charity Home* by Francis Miller, described in exhibition reviews, had the potential to be extremely useful – but no illustration of it has yet been found.[33] A work by artist James Muniney [sic] received a very complimentary review, being described as 'a remarkably and well-painted head of an old man, which is almost Rembrandt-like in the variety of its planes of light and shadow, which model so carefully the furrowed and heavy cheeks and the deeply-seamed features..... this picture may truly be regarded as the best head in the exhibition'.[34] With its allusion to Rembrandt and the comment on the aged attributes this would have been an ideal picture to include, but, like the Miller, it has proved elusive.

For the second database, with so many early newspapers and journals now on-line, a search made by typing an artist's name and appropriate spans of years into the the search engine brought forth many materials. Databases such as *Nineteenth Century Periodicals*, *British Library Newspapers*, *the Times* and *Guardian* digital archives provided useful results, as did the *New York Times* archive, Library of Congress's *Chronicling America,* and the many relevant writings to be found in *JSTOR*. Suitable comments, reviews and articles were collected and filed in alphabetical order under the name of the artist concerned, with cross-referencing to dates and cities. Thus, when an appropriate painting had been found, it was easy to follow through the references, discovering how the work had been received at the time it was painted. As with the paintings database, one comment in an article or review could lead to other relevant information;

[33] also referred to in Chapter Three
[34] 'The Academy Exhibition', *The Art Journal*, 5, (1879): 160. It is possible that the name was misprinted and the painter was John Mulvany, 1839 – 1906.

as an example, a review of Herkomer's *Missing* (Figs 2:11, 12) led to the pertinent discovery of Arthur Stocks's painting *At Last* (Figs 2:18, 19).[35]

Primary sources such as those collated in this second database are clearly essential, as they provide the authentic voice of the times in which they were written, and echo the mores of that age. Other publications which provided contemporaneous observations of people and life were works such as Lady Bell's record of her visits to families in the manufacturing town of Middlesbrough, or nurse Margaret Loane's descriptions of her home visits; writings such as these are excellent records of observations, providing both witting and unwitting testimony of contemporary life.[36] Most important of all are without doubt the writings of non-elite people who provide first-hand accounts of what an individual's life was like, such as Flora Thompson's invaluable if inevitable *Candleford* works and compilations such as John Burnett's *Destiny Obscure* and *Useful Toil.*[37] Artists' impressions and comments on visits to the United States, especially those of painters, such as Hubert Herkomer and Philip Burne-Jones (son of artist Edward Burne-Jones) have been especially pertinent.[38] These works also act as a guard against the treacherous imbalance to which historical records are susceptible, in that whilst the two extremes of the social scale – at one end the rich and the powerful, at the other the poor, weak and infirm (ie those who are the authority or those who come within authority's grip) - leave plenty of evidence behind them in official and other records, the many other people, the 'everyday folk' who were able to live their lives without bother or cause for concern, may leave little trace and thus be lost to history, their balanced voice unheard.

There are two schools of paintings – portrait and genre - which are especially apposite for an investigation such as this, with its focus on people. They supply contrasting approaches, as portraits concentrate on the individual and are often commissioned, whereas genre paintings frequently show a group of people, of all ages, in an everyday context and composed, though sometimes in a slightly contrived manner, to create a successful picture. The subjects chosen for the paintings might be identifiable individuals or could be based on one person, with their characteristics exaggerated so as to represent a stereotype rather than a real person.

To keep this study manageable and focused it was necessary to establish appropriate boundaries. First of all, it was important to clarify exactly what constituted an elderly person. It has never been straightforward to define and determine the moment of its onset; as noted in the first

[35] discussed in Chapter Two
[36] Florence E. E. O. Bell (Lady), *At the Works; a study of a manufacturing town; Middlesbrough* (London: Edward Arnold, 1907). Margaret Loane, *From Their Point of View* (London: Edward Arnold, 1908).
[37] Flora Thompson, *A Country Calendar and other writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979). Flora Thompson, *Lark Rise to Candleford* (this edition Middlesex: Penguin Modern Classics, 1973). John Burnett, ed., *Destiny Obscure; autobiographies of childhood, education and family from the 1820s – 1920s* (London: Allen Lane, 1982). John Burnett, ed., *Useful Toil; autobiographies of working people from 1820s – 1920s* (London: Allen Lane, 1974).
[38] J. Saxon Mills, *Life and Letters of Sir Hubert Herkomer* (London: Hutchinson and Co, 1923), 169. Philip Burne-Jones, *Dollars and Democracy* (New York: D. Appleton, 1904).

paragraph of this introduction, it depends very much on the individual, and frailty and dependence can be as important, if not more so, than chronological age alone. In the nineteenth century, people would of course have some awareness of where they were in their life's cycle, but they did not reach a particular age and immediately become 'old'; they would carry on providing for themselves and being a full member of their community until death took them to the grave. If they became unable to cope for themselves their family, or the local community, would take on the responsibility of looking after them (as they should, or would, any other member of their community who could not fend for themselves) in the same way they had done for hundreds of years. It was not age-in-years that mattered, but the ability to provide for themselves and live an independent life, an attribute not necessarily defined by age – 'one man at sixty may be very aged and enfeebled and infirm; another man may be quite as capable of getting his living at sixty as he has been for some years'.[39] To fix a particular and immutable age-in-years as the beginning of old age was clearly difficult, as it could vary so much, and was dependent so much on the abilities of an individual. In England and Wales only to justify a claim for Poor Law assistance did it become necessary for a person to be defined precisely as 'old'. This was something which was determined solely by appearance and 'behavioural infirmity and physical deterioration ….. sufficient to hamper independent function'.[40] 'Old' was thus 'a floating, flexible identity' and in England it was only with the arrival of the Old Age Pension in 1908 that a precise age-in-years became a defining measurement of presumed need.[41]

During the same years in the United States, however, there was no fixed age when a person could be categorically defined as old, and appearance remained the defining factor. Infirmity and dependency might also be possible indicators, but these were attributes which were not necessarily the sole preserve of aged. There was at the time under study, however, sufficient concern about support being needed by the elderly, or at least, the poor elderly, for various care schemes to be considered. As an example, one-hundred-and-fourteen old age pension bills were presented to the Massachusetts legislature between 1903 and 1929, but they were all rejected; instead they passed 'a law which made it a criminal offence for a child with means to fail to support an aged parent'.[42] The poor house, which carried the same melancholy stigma as in England and Wales, gradually became the last resort for only the elderly, as former inmates, such as orphans and the disabled (mental and physical) were removed into homes which would cater specifically for their particular needs. There was awareness of old people's plight, however, and on an increasing scale people, whether as philanthropists or as members of churches,

[39] *Report of the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor appointed to consider whether any alterations in the system of Poor Law Relief are desirable in the case of persons whose destitution is occasioned by incapacity for work resulting from old age, or whether assistance could otherwise be afforded in those cases.* London:1895, xii. Henceforward referred to as' Royal Commission'.
[40] ibid xii.
[41] Teresa Mangum, 'Growing Old: Age', in Herbert Tucker *A Companion to Victorian Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 98.
[42] Fischer, *Growing Old in America*, 159.

professions, trades, ethnic groups made provision for the vulnerable old; typical instances include 'The Old Ladies' Home Society', formed in Boston in 1885 (it still exists) and, in Philadelphia, the 'Presbyterian Home for Aged Couples and Aged Single Men', founded in 1885; a 'Home for Aged and Infirm Colored People' had been initiated as early as 1865.[43]

It also needs to be kept in mind, of course, that old age can be considered a cultural construct in itself. At the turn of the nineteenth/twentieth centuries, as societies developed and became more sophisticated, constructs of various age groups were increasingly being described and redefined. Typical examples are provided in two works by psychologist G. Stanley Hall, who followed his 1904 influential work on *Adolescence* with the publication of a study of the other end of life - *Senescence.*[44] In this latter work he divided everyone's life into five constructs - childhood, adolescence, middle-life ('the prime'), 'senescence, which begins in the early forties … and then senectitude, or old age proper'.[45] Age ranges for these constructs vary between different societies and at different times and the definitions have never been immutable. However, an age between sixty and seventy has been used to signify the onset of old age since 'at least medieval times', so it seemed reasonable for the purposes of this study to set the starting point for old age at sixty and above.[46] This provided a sufficient range of paintings to choose from, though occasional exceptions needed to be made in order to prove a particular point. With portraits, where the sitter can be identified, it is easy enough to know and to confirm the subject's age, but in genre there may be no verifiable information about the model. Wrinkled face, white hair or stooping posture, and perhaps less easily portrayed attributes, such as resignation, reassurance and contemplation, may be emphasised, either to reinforce the stereotype, or to make a clear contrast with a younger person, in 'the time-honoured style of a dramatic contrast between youth and age'.[47]

The time span under review was deliberately limited to the forty years between 1870 – 1910 as these were the years when concern for the old was growing rapidly. The United States resisted state provision for the elderly until the mid-1930s, though citizens were aware that being aged could be accompanied by difficulties, and, as noted earlier, made provision for them privately, through organisations such as churches, ethnic groupings and ladies' clubs.[48] In England and

[43] Kathy McCabe, "Rest Homes Still Fill A Void For the Aged", Boston: *Boston Globe,* August 8th 2010. Carole Haber, 'The Old Folks at Home: the Development of Institutionalised Care for the Aged in Nineteenth Century Philadelphia' *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 101:2 (April 1977): 240-257.
[44] G. Stanley Hall, *Senescence; the last stage of life (*London/New York 1922).
[45] Stanley Hall, *Senescence*, vii. This early-seeming start to old age is disconcerting but was confirmed by medical studies -'arteriosclerotic and other senile changes begin about the age of 45'. Malford W. Thewlis, *Geriatrics: a treatise on the prevention and treatment of disease of old age and the care of the aged* (St Louis: C.V.Mosby Company, 1924):11.
[46] Pat Thane, *Old Age in English History: Past Experiences, Present Issues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 24.
[47] Mike Hepworth, 'Framing Old Age: Sociological Perspectives on Ageing in Victorian Painting' in *The Sociology of Art; Ways of Seeing,* ed. David Inglis and John Hughson (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 116.
[48] It was not until 1935, under the aegis of Franklin D Roosevelt, that nationwide state social security payments were eventually introduced.

Wales, however, these concerns were addressed by parliament and an old age state pension was provided in 1908.[49]

Another limitation, again to keep the study to a sensible size, was to focus only on England and Wales rather than the whole of Great Britain. It is reasonably straightforward to separate out the figures for Scotland and Northern Ireland, but much more time-consuming to untangle England and Wales, so the figures remain together. In the United States the focus is for the most part on the eastern cities, where a preponderance of artists worked; it was also the first and longest settled immigrant area of the USA, as well as the landing-place for many of the immigrants from England and Europe.

It also needs to be made clear what will not be included. The purpose of this study is to provide a comprehensive and wide-ranging overview of the portrayal of the elderly in paintings in England and the United States, and therefore more specific and focused aspects of paintings of the aged and their lives will be left for other pens to dwell on. Such facets cannot be entirely avoided, of course, but by keeping the focus wide a strong base will have been created from which particular topics, such as gender, women, religion, work patterns, race, and, in the case of America at least, slavery – can be studied later.

Chapter One sets the scene for the study by outlining how the old were shown in paintings before 1870. It will consider the earlier works and styles artists may have seen, heard about, and been influenced by (consciously or not) in their own portrayal of the elderly. It is known, for example, that when Frank Holl visited Amsterdam in 1881 he was much impressed with the work of Rembrandt, an artist whose popularity developed during the nineteenth century, and who was (and is), particularly well known for his fine paintings of the old.[50]

Then follow two chapters which will focus on genre painting, and produce evidence which will indicate how the old were shown, whether in a positive or negative light, in England and the United States. Genre is the self-evident school of painting to be used in a study such as this as it is a form which shows everyday, workaday scenes, with all manner of people going about their habitual routines, sometimes on their own, sometimes within a group. The elderly were frequently just one part of this cast of people, being shown in their routine social interactions – shopping, at work, socialising in various meeting places – which provides clues to their position in society and their interaction with others. For the most part genre paintings gave an accurate reflection of the reality of older people's lives in the later decades of the nineteenth century, and

[49] As did many other countries, such as Denmark (1891), New Zealand (1898) and (most of) Australia (1901). Pat Thane 'The History of Aging and Old Age in 'Western' Cultures' in Thomas R. Cole, Ruth E. Ray, Robert Kastenbaum *'A Guide to Humanistic Studies in Aging* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2010), 48.
[50] Ada Reynolds, *The Life and Work of Frank Holl (*London: Methuen & Co., 1912), 197. 'More than half of his [Rembrandt's] known works are of older people' Covey, *Images of Older People,* 4.

confirmed that they were not considered a separate segment of society, but integral to the whole. The only indication these figures were elderly would be from external characteristics only, such as grey or white hair, lined features, worn hands and a stance which needs some sort of support, be it a stick or another person. To describe someone as 'old' need be no more than a physical description, and this also will be exactly how a viewer infers who is old when looking at paintings.[51]

There are, of course, always reservations to be kept in mind; such paintings were created in part at least for people to buy to adorn their walls, so the subject would need to be marketable, though perhaps with some slight artistic licence necessary to make a good, easily sold, picture. Nonetheless the scenes and people displayed would need to be recognisable to the potential buyers, who would be conversant with such scenes; the familiarity would soothe and thus add to their sales potential. Using paintings from the database, Chapter Two will consider English works, Chapter Three those of the United States.

After the populous world of genre it will be beneficial to move on to the solitary world of portraits. With their focus on the individual, their faces and foibles, they can provide significant answers to the requirement of the thesis - how the elderly were portrayed during the years when there was a developing concern for their welfare. At the end of the nineteenth century portraiture was a popular and prolific art, since having one's likeness painted not only indicated that a person had a 'presence' in society, but also gave a reassurance to sitters that they still had their place in the constantly mutating society which surrounded them. A portrait shows an individual in detail and of its nature requires a high degree of verisimilitude, though this may present an artist with particular challenges if age (or other condition) has taken a toll. There may be at least a temptation to falsely flatter, or perhaps an endeavour to minimise a subject's less appealing aspects. As will be seen in later chapters, artists such as Sargent and Herkomer aimed for accurate renditions of the sitter, but sometimes tact, diplomacy, kindness, or pressure from the family or commissioners of the work, tempted to a softening of the sitter's less attractive attributes, as revealed in the dilemmas of Sargent with Frederick Olmsted (see Chapter 5, Figure 5:15) and Herkomer when painting the aged Lord Canning (see Chapter 6, Figure 6:2).

The portrayal of the old in portraits will therefore be the subject of Chapters Four, Five and Six, with works by several artists scrutinised. This will feed into the discourse about the portrayal of the old, though this time they will be shown as individuals rather than part of a group. Chapter Four will consider the works of an American artist Thomas Eakins, (1844–1916), who, though not appreciated in his lifetime, is now regarded as 'the outstanding American painter of the

[51] Pat Thane, *Old Age in English History; Past Experiences, Present Issues* (Oxford:Oxford University Press, 2000), 19.

nineteenth century'.[52] One reason which makes him particularly appropriate for this chapter is that the candour of his portraits was such that his contemporaries found it difficult to cope with 'his honesty and depth of characterisation'.[53] Most of his career was spent in his home town of Philadelphia, though in his early training he spent some years in Europe, which strongly influenced his work.

Chapter Five studies the portrayal of the old in the portraits of John Singer Sargent (1856 – 1925), who supplies a fascinating contrast to Eakins, as he was popular, understood and appreciated in his lifetime, and regarded by many as the greatest 'society portraitist of his age'.[54] A cosmopolitan figure, born in Europe of American parents, he travelled widely, though chose to live most of his life in England. He therefore bestrides the Atlantic, absorbing and demonstrating the influences of England, Europe and the United States.

Studies of the portraits produced by Eakins and Sargent will be of considerable assistance in building up the image of how the elderly were recorded in paintings between 1870 – 1910. The theme will continue in Chapter Six, which will examine some English portraits by English artists, and concentrate on sitters who were old at the time of painting and who had been selected as subjects because they had made significant contributions – through means such as philanthropy, politics, education, religion, engineering - to English society; Thomas Hawksley (engineer), Josephine Butler (social reformer), and Anne Clough (education) provide characteristic examples (Figures 6:3, 5, 8, 9).[55] The artists of the portraits were required to provide a record of the sitter's current features whilst keeping in mind that this was a record for posterity. When G. F. Watts painted Josephine Butler, for example, the stresses and strains she had experienced are clearly apparent in her gaze and lineaments, but as contemporary reviews made clear, this did not detract from the portrait, but added strength to the portrayal. This also reinforces the importance of contemporaneous sources and their clarification of the attitudes prevalent at the time, which may be in pronounced contrast with those of the present day, when the appearance of seemingly untouched youth seems to be preferred, even encouraged.

It was noted in the earlier historiography how few studies there have been which consider the portrayal of the old in painting and each chapter in this study will provide data which should help to shrink this gap. Combined together the chapters should together have built up sufficient information to create a detailed view of how the elderly were shown in paintings, which will

[52] Ian Chilvers, *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Art & Artists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 192.
[53] ibid, 192.
[54] ibid, 533
[55] 'English' is used in a broad sense and means that an artist would spent much of his/her painting life in England and thus be subject to its influences, even though they might have been born elsewhere (eg Henry Jones Thaddeus, born in Ireland) or have parents who were not English (eg George Clausen), or be born elsewhere but ultimately settled in England, as in the case of Hubert Herkomer.

enable conclusions to be drawn about old age's image in such works, and also give evidence of differences in attitudes between the USA and England.

This study also has the potential for an awakening of interest in the works and lives of some artists of competence, skill and insight, popular in their time but now undeservedly neglected. Painters such as Mary Evelina Kindon, James Charles and Abbot Fuller Graves are too readily dismissed as minor painters of saccharine and trivial paintings, whereas studies of their lives and works could provide intriguing information and open up new viewpoints on the artistic world at the turn of the nineteenth/twentieth century.

CHAPTER ONE
The Elderly in Painting Before 1870

Art is related not only to the society in which it is created, but also to the influence from the artistic precedents of earlier artists, especially the 'Old Masters'; two words which in themselves indicate an appreciation and respect for age and experience. It will therefore be of benefit to consider how older people were shown in painting before 1870. In terms of quantity alone this has not been a difficult task, as the old have appeared routinely and regularly in all manner of paintings; this is significant in itself, as it implies the elderly were not held in disfavour, there was no reluctance to regard them as potential subjects for painting, or consider them in a different light from the rest of the population. It should, however, be borne in mind that although the works considered will be typical samples of a particular style, or by well-known artists, in the absence of recorded remarks from an artist it is difficult to be completely certain whether they had seen particular paintings and, consciously or not, been influenced by them. The likelihood is there, since by the nature of their profession artists could have an interest in the long history of art and artists, but not the certainty.

Fortunately there are on record a few very clear and definite comments about the artist they admired from the painters whose works are to be considered in later chapters. Thomas Eakins, (discussed in Chapter Four), extolled the work of Velásquez and Ribera - 'O what satisfaction it gave me to see the good Spanish work, so good, so strong, so reasonable, so free from every affectation' he wrote to his father.[1] Velásquez's *The Waterseller of Seville* (Figure 1:1), and Ribera's portrait of *An Old Man* (Figure 1:2), show their typical characteristics - the meticulous painting, the darkness of colour and tone, the veracity in style and line – which were used by Eakins in his work. For example the influence of Ribera's *Old Man* can clearly be seen in, for example, the later painting of *Benjamin Eakins* (Figure 4:4) and *Henry Ossawa Tanner* (Figure 4:18); the shadowed eyes, the pensive gaze, the focus on the face against the dark plain background so strongly reminiscent of Ribera's *Old Man*. In other examples, Frank Holl (Chapters Two and Six) and Eastman Johnson (Chapter Three) commented on their delight in the work of the Dutch painters, especially Rembrandt.[2]

The Dutch painter Rembrandt van Rijn (1606 – 1669) was especially renowned for his detailed and sensitive pictures of the elderly. A typical example is shown in the *Portrait of an Old Lady* (Figure 1:3), who is now known to be Aechje Claesdr, widow of a Rotterdam brewer.[3] It shows

[1] William Innes Homer, *The Paris Letters of Thomas Eakins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 284.

[2] 'Rembrandt ….. fulfilled for my father the function that great art must fulfil for all of us, of showing him the eternal issues beyond the fashions of a day'. Ada Reynolds, *The Life and Work of Frank Holl* (London: Methuen & Co., 1912), 198. 'I am deriving much advantage from studying the splendid works of Rembrandt..., Letter from Johnson to Andrew Warner, 25th November 1851, quoted in Teresa A. Carbone & Patricia Hills, *Eastman Johnson; Painting America* (New York: Brooklyn Museum of Art in Association with Rizzoli, 1999), 19.

[3] https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/rembrandt-portrait-of-aechje-claesdr accessed 11/01/2017.

the homely and undoubtedly old face of an eighty-three year old person who was painted by Rembrandt at the same time as he produced portraits of her son and daughter-in-law, possibly as a family/business commemoration. With the use of white paint and short, curved brush strokes, especially on the bulbous nose and the space between the eyebrows, the lines, wrinkles and ageing skin of Aechje Claesdr's face are faithfully recorded. When shown at an exhibition of the British Institution in 1835, five paintings by Rembrandt, which included this portrait, were considered as 'the most striking objects in the catalogue …... as choice pieces as we remember to have seen of this painter'.[4] In 1867 this work was bought for the National Gallery from Lady Eastlake, widow of Sir Charles Lock Eastlake (uncle of Charles Locke Eastlake) and presumably soon after would have been on display.[5]

In one of his gallery guides (see later in chapter) the younger Eastlake described the Dutch people shown in paintings as 'singularly plain', but was nonetheless very complimentary about this work, stating that 'a wonderful perception of character and dexterity of execution distinguish this portrait, which is handled with great vigour and endowed with remarkable vitality. The warm facial shadows fall on a complexion rich in that fusion of flesh tints which is characteristic of old age'.[6]

Nor was Rembrandt alone in his congenial portrayal of the elderly. A few years earlier, in 1620, the Flemish painter Van Dyck, had painted an ageing (he was then in his mid-sixties) merchant, *Cornelis van der Geest* (Figure 1:4). Even in reproduction the detailed and careful shading of the grey receding hair can be noted, along with the shadowing around the eyes. Eastlake was complimentary about the portrait, stating 'It would be difficult to conceive an ideal head in which the dignity of age could lend itself more directly to picturesque treatment, and the technical qualities of this work are in every respect worthy of the subject'.[7] It is a portrait which does not hide the marks of age, but rather makes an asset of them; van der Geest, was, and remains, not a grandiose remote figure but a very human one, someone with whom one would willingly do business. In her *Handbook to Public Galleries of Art*, writer and commentator Mrs Anna Brownell Jameson noted that the work was 'justly regarded as one of the finest portraits in the world', mostly because of the superb depiction of 'the painting of the flesh....the definite marking of each feature..... the swimming moisture of the eyes'.[8] The latter is an especially

[4] 'British Institution', *The Morning Chronicle,* (29th May 1835).
[5] Confusingly both these men, uncle (1793 – 1865) and nephew (1836 – 1906), were Directors of the National Gallery, from 1855 – 1865 and 1878 – 1898 respectively. The only difference in their names is that the uncle was Charles Lock Eastlake, the nephew Charles Locke Eastlake. The younger Eastlake produced Handbooks to various Art Galleries in England and Europe, which will be referred to frequently during this Chapter.
[6] Charles Locke Eastlake. *Pictures in the National Gallery, London, with descriptive and critical notes* (London: F. Hanfstaengl, 1899), 133, 135.
[7] ibid, 126.
[8] Anna Brownell Jameson, *A Handbook of the Public Galleries of Art in and near London, with catalogue of pictures* (London: John Murray, 1842), 52.

interesting comment in that it calls to mind Thomas Eakins' painting of Edith Mahon, (Figure 4:17) whose eyes, even though she is much younger, are clearly rheumy and moisture-laden.

Another striking recording of old age can be seen in a late fifteenth century painting by Italian painter Ghirlandaio; *Portrait of an Old Man and a Boy* (Figure 1:5) shows a balding old man, with scanty tendrils of receding hair on his forehead, plus at least one wart, and a large scarred bulbous nose (now thought to indicate rhinophyma). A young boy (often considered to be his grandson) gazes trustingly up at him, and each is totally absorbed in the other. Ghirlandaio has painted the light as falling on the face of the older man, so that all his features of age and disease are emphasised, but this does not detract from the painting. The younger Eastlake, for example, saw the charm of this painting, described it as 'interesting from its grotesque peculiarity'.[9] The clear look of trust and care between the old man and young boy is timeless, and echoed three centuries later in George Story's *A Chance Acquaintance*, (Figure 3: 36), though it seems improbable, though not impossible, that Story could have seen this painting, as it was in private hands until its arrival in the Louvre in 1880.

Portrayals of the aged in these earlier paintings are unhesitating and clear, with no hint of any disparagement, rather, by the deliberate selection of the subjects, the opposite. Unfortunately there are few definite and reliable records of artists' comments on paintings, and often no certainty of which paintings they would have known about, but opportunities for seeing the works of earlier artists were becoming more widespread over the nineteenth century as public collections, exhibitions and galleries were created. Nor were painters limited just to viewing from a distance, as galleries were beginning to give artists every opportunity of studying closely and copying the works on display.[10] Furthermore copies of paintings in prints and lithographs increasingly decorated the walls of people's rooms as the nineteenth century progressed.

A consequence of this opening up and expansion of art collections was the publication of guide/handbooks on the works exhibited in these collections. These provide invaluable information on the paintings to be viewed and also give contemporary opinions on the works; comments from these works have already been used in this chapter, for example from the works of Charles Locke Eastlake and Mrs Anna Brownell Jameson and Dr Gustav Waagen, Director of the Art Gallery in Berlin.[11]

[9] Charles Locke Eastlake, *Notes on the Principal Pictures in the Louvre Gallery in Paris* (London: Longmans,1883), 92.
[10] Thomas Smith, *Recollections of the British Institution for Promoting the Fine Arts in the UK* (London: Simpkin & Marshall & Edward Stanford, 1860), 40.
[11] Jameson, *Handbook.* Anna Brownell Jameson, *Companion to the most celebrated private galleries of art in London* (London: Saunders & Otley, 1844). Gustav Waagen, *Galleries and Cabinets of Art in Great Britain; being an account of more than forty collections of Paintings, Drawings, Sculptures, MSS, etc; visited in 1854 and 1856, and now for the first time described. Supplemental Volume to the Treasures of Art in Great Britain,* London: 1857. Gustav Waagen, *The Manchester Exhibition; what to observe. A walk through the Art Treasures Exhibition under the guidance of Dr Waagen. London: 1857.* In the preface of this latter work Waagen commented that 'the works of art of every kind contained in the public and private galleries of Great Britain ...are of almost incredible amounts'.

This was a time of increasing literacy as well as increasing circulation of newspapers, a salutary reminder of which is the career and ensuing wealth of newspaper magnate Joseph Pulitzer (Figure 5:8), whose portrait by Sargent will be discussed in Chapter Five. Newspapers and journals were invaluable in spreading the knowledge of works of art, with articles and reproductions of art works. These were clearly considered of interest to a wide community of readers and American and English newspapers reported regularly on various art displays and collections; typical examples of this are, in the United States, the excitement engendered by the arrival of an original Rembrandt and a report on the collection of American paintings created by Thomas B. Clarke.[12] In England acquisitions by the National Gallery of Van Eyck's *Portrait of a Gentleman* (see later) and Rembrandt's *A Jewish Rabbi* were considered to be of sufficient interest to readers to be reported in popular magazines such as the *Illustrated London News*.[13]

From the late eighteenth century onwards artistic works were becoming available to a much wider audience. In England, for example, art galleries and museums were being founded - the Royal Academy in 1768, the British Institution for Promoting the Fine Arts in the United Kingdom, (usually shortened to the British Institution), in 1805 and the National Gallery in 1824. In Manchester in 1857 the *Art Treasures of Great Britain Exhibition* was held with great success, being visited by over one million people in the six months from May – October 1857.[14] In Europe also art galleries were being created, often from collections once the property of the crumbling royalty and aristocracy, as well as the spoils of war. In Paris in 1796 the Louvre became the first gallery to be created for a wider public, with Berlin following in 1809, the Prado in Madrid in 1819.

In the United States developments were running almost in parallel. The versatile artistic figure of Charles Willson Peale, settling back in America after a European visit, started formulating an Academy for the Arts in 1791, and successfully set it up in 1805 as the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. In New York the National Academy of Fine Art was founded in 1802, morphing into the National Academy of Design in 1826. The Metropolitan Museum in New York opened in 1870, the idea having first been mooted in 1866 by Americans (in Paris) who 'agreed to create a 'national institute and gallery of art' to bring art and art education to the American Public'.[15]

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[12] 'Rembrandt's Gilder', *New York Times*, 19th February 1885. 'Pictures and Their Owners, II, The Thomas B. Clarke Collection,' *Art Union*, 2:3, (Sept 1885): 48-49.

[13] 'National Gallery, New Picture, Rembrandt's 'Rabbi'', *Illustrated London News*, (July 20th 1844): 40. Now categorised as a tronie and called 'A Bearded Man in a Cap'. https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/rembrandt-a-bearded-man-in-a-cap Accessed 7/1/2017.
Also 'Portrait of a Gentleman, by Van Eyck,' *Illustrated London News,* (January 10th 1852): 37.

[14] *Exhibition of Art Treasures of the UK; Report of the Executive Committee* (Manchester: Manchester & Co, 1859), 42.

[15] http://www.metmuseum.org/about-the-met/history accessed 23/12/2016.

One difficulty in deducing which works by which artists could have been seen by the painters under consideration is the frequent changes in attribution which have taken place over twentieth century; for example, as noted in Chapter Five, the Frans Hals' head of an old lady which John Singer Sargent recommended a student to study is frustratingly difficult to identify; the most likely reason for this being because of re-attribution. Technical developments, such as infra-red examination, x-ray and dendrochronology, have transformed the process of attribution, as has the increasing knowledge of art historians; and ever present is what Eastlake described as the 'caprice of private judgement'.[16] As an example, the painting now known as *Three Ages of Man* (Figure 1:7) is now considered to be by Giorgione but was earlier ascribed to Lorenzo Lotti and called *Lezione di Canto*.[17] This painting has a particular relevance within the context of this study as it is the oldest man in the work who is the most compelling, it is he who 'makes contact' with the viewer, having an awareness of the external world as he looks outwards, 'inviting' the observer into the painting; the younger men, in contrast, remain totally absorbed in the document in their hands. Another change of attribution is Bernardino Luini's painting of *Christ Among the Doctors* (Figure 1:8), which was formerly assigned to Leonardo da Vinci. This work will be discussed more fully later, but has clearly been a work which has drawn attention since its creation as it has been frequently copied in various forms – for example, an enamel of it by Henry Bone was included in the first exhibition of the British Institution (1806).[18] Enamel painting was another style among many - copies, prints, lithographs, engravings, mezzotints and photographs - of the increasing and prolific ways in which the viewing and appreciation of paintings was developing and disseminating, across the western world at least.

Travel, another means of spreading ideas, had for centuries been part of an artist's way of life - as an example, American artist Washington Allston (1779 – 1843) in his early years had studied in London, Rome and Paris, and commented years later on the enchantment he had found in the paintings of 'Titian, Tintoret[to] and Paul Veronese [with their] gorgeous concert of colors'.[19] An unusual exception to this trend was William Sidney Mount, one of the first of American painters to specialise in genre, who made the deliberate decision that he would not travel to Europe as he 'might be induced by the splendor of European art to tarry too long, and thus lose my nationality': an opinion which is an indication of the esteem in which European art was held.[20] During the nineteenth century artists travelled abroad more and more, especially in Europe, as a means of learning, studying and widening their experience; it is said that over the nineteenth

[16] Eastlake, *Munich,* iv.
[17] Mina Gregori *Uffizi e Pitti; i dipinti delle gallerie Florentine* (Magnus, Udine 1994), 249.
[18] Thomas Smith of Mary-le-bone, *Recollections of the British Institution for Promoting the Fine Arts in the UK* (London: Simpkin & Marshall & Edward Stanford, 1860), 22.
[19] Edgar Preston Richardson, *Painting in America: the story of 450 years.* (London: Constable. 1956), 144.
[20] *The Riches of Sight: William Sidney Mount and his World. An Exhibition at Long Island Museum of American Art July to September 2002.* http://www.tfaoi.com/aa/3aa/3aa338.htm accessed 17/01/17.

century about two thousand American artists went to Paris to study painting.[21] Rome and Munich were also popular destinations, as were Dusseldorf, Antwerp, Florence and Venice. In each place artists would copy, learn, discuss and develop their skills in varying ways, so that, for example, in Dusseldorf they found 'a sense of belonging to the continuing tradition of the old world [and] an escape from provincialism'.[22] In Holland the original works of the Dutch masters such as Rembrandt and Frans Hals could be studied at first-hand, [as Eastman Johnson, John Singer Sargent and Frank Holl had all discovered], something which at that time could not easily be done in the United States; as late as 1885, when Rembrandt's *Gilder* arrived in United States, it was acknowledged that there were only 'two or three other pictures by the great Netherlander on this side [of the water]'.[23]

There had naturally always been strong links between England, Europe and the United States as so many Americans were of European extraction (Allston, for instance, had English, French and Dutch ancestors).[24] Inevitably their antecedents would have brought with them European ideas, influences and art; the English/Dutch, Puritan/Calvinist tradition which rejoiced in the individual portrait was particularly strong. Wide-ranging collections of paintings were also more available in America than might be supposed; as early as 1685 one rich Dutch man of New York was noted to have a collection of 'sixty-one pictures including the full range of subjects known to Dutch art in the seventeenth century – landscape, still-life, genre, portraiture and religious'.[25] In Philadelphia in 1771 John Singleton Copley 'saw many pictures, copies after Correggio and others, at the house of Chief Justice William Allen ...[and in New Jersey].. several pictures attributed to Van Dyck'.[26]

Portraits, genre and historical painting are the three categories of painting which have people as their main subject. Portraits have a long and sustained history, whereas genre's popularity had waned through the eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries but grew in importance as the nineteenth century progressed, whilst history painting, which showed people involved in grandiose events, sacred or secular, had for many years been considered the highest form of art but was now fading rapidly from fashion. Whether biblical, mythological or allegorical, such paintings did not reflect the engaging routines of daily life in the way genre did, but showed all ages and types of people being caught up in larger events, often whilst going about their

[21] Henry Adam, ''Review of The American Pupils of Jean-Leon Gerôme,' by H. Barbara Weinberg' *The Burlington Magazine*, 128:1002, (Sept 1986): 68. See also Chapter Four.
[22] Donelson F. Hoopes, *The Dusseldorf Academy and the Americans; an exhibition of drawings and watercolours (*Atlanta: The Museum 1972), 33-34.
[23] 'Rembrandt's Gilder', *New York Times* (19th February 1885).
[24] Edgar Preston Richardson, *Washington Allston; a study of the Romantic Artist in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 101.
[25] Wayne Craven, *Colonial American Portraiture: the economic, religious, social, cultural, philosophical, scientific and aesthetic foundations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 90.
[26] William Dunlap, *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Design in the United States* (Boston: C. E. Goodspeed & Co., 1918), 1:118.

everyday lives, examples including the shepherds at the Nativity, or the crowds surrounding biblical figures.

Portraits have always been a popular commission for later life, as it is often the stage in their life when a person has acquired enough material wealth and social status to wish, and be able, to display and record it for posterity. Part of the genius of portraiture lies in the ability of an artist to combine an aura of authority with a powerful humanity; a convincing example of this is Giovanni Bellini's painting (Figure 1:9) of *Doge Leonardo Loredan* of Venice, who at the time of this portrait was in his early sixties. The left side of his face is in shadow and the [sun]light shines on the right side of his face – a sun which, by the position of its reflection in his eyes must be fairly low in the sky – the sunset of the day echoing the sunset of his life.[27] The lined, dry-skinned face of an oldish man is shown, with deep-set eyes, determined mouth and a flabby neck just visible beneath the richly damasked robe, yet there is also a profound indication of benevolence, shown by the light in his eyes and the slight upward turn of the mouth.

As noted earlier, when Van Eyck's *Portrait of a Man* (Figure 1:10) was added to the National Gallery collection in 1852 it was considered appropriate to report it in the papers of the day. This is not surprising, as it is an excellent painting from the fifteenth century which is of particular interest to this study because of the detailed rendition of its subject, its masterful technique, and a face which is of interest in its own right. Although the painting is dominated by the flowing red turban, the face beneath is clearly and carefully constructed, in particular the eyes, with their lines, wrinkles and 'the slightly suffused cornea of the eyes' noted by Eastlake.[28] It is an exquisitely rendered and dignified likeness of an old man, thought to be a self-portrait of the artist Jan Van Eyck, when he was about sixty years old.

Figures in paintings of classical and mythological scenes were frequently shown as aged, for example Zeus/Jupiter was often shown, like the Christian God, as white-haired yet powerful and strong; lower-ranking figures, such as Silenius (Figure 1:11), though still old, were often shown as jollier and more approachable. Figures such as prophets and sibyls were also frequently shown as aged, a typical example being the Cumeaen Sibyl, portrayed as an old woman not only by Michelangelo on the Sistine Chapel ceiling, but also by Elihu Vedder, (Figure 3:1a,b) who, as noted in Chapter Three, based his picture of her on an elderly person he had found on a street-stall.[29] The oft-occurring figure of Time is, as might be expected, usually portrayed as an older person. Though time was once as likely to be represented equally as an old woman or an old man, gradually Father Time came to be personified as an aged male, sometimes an enfeebled

[27] Erika Langmuir, *The National Gallery Companion Guide* (London: National Gallery Company Ltd, 2006), 21.
[28] Eastlake, *National Gallery*, 109.
[29] according to legend this Sibyl asked for eternal life but forgot to ask for eternal youth as well.

figure but at other times healthy-looking and strong. In Bronzino's *An Allegory with Venus and Cupid* (Figure 1:12) for example, he appears as a chubby-cheeked, muscular, strong old man, more robust and healthy looking than the pallid and effete figures in the foreground of the painting; in his facial expression and pose he seems to be in conflict with the left hand figure.[30]

Traditional subjects, such as powerful public figures, whether saints, rulers, or popes, would understandably be accurately delineated as the subject of a painting, so as to provide a record for posterity as well as contemporaries. Often these people would be old, not in itself surprising as to have acquired the experience, wisdom and status to achieve power, legitimately at least, usually takes many years. The Popes and other rulers, such as the Doge of Venice, were, by the nature of their role, often men of mature age. As noted in the previous paragraph, God himself was typically shown as a white-bearded old man of powerful build, a well-known example being the figure of God in Michelangelo's *Creation of Man* fresco in the Sistine Chapel in Rome (Figure 1:13)**.** Within portrayals of the Holy Family itself it is often Joseph who is shown as at the very least middle-aged, frequently much older, worn and grey. Mary is usually shown as very young, and other members of the Holy family, such as St Anne, Mary's mother, often have the lineaments of an old person, as can be seen in Rubens' painting of the *Holy Family* (Figure 1:14a,b).

Old age could also be used as a defining and easily identifiable characteristic of the subject of a painting, immediate recognition being very necessary in an age before widespread literacy – a typical example is St Jerome, illustrated here in a work by Guido Reni, (Figure 1:15) - who is usually identified by his grey, gaunt, aged depiction. Whatever the context, the distinctive attributes of the elderly, such as wrinkles, grey, thinning hair, stooped and bent stature, veined and roughened hands, are truthfully recorded, accentuated rather than disguised.

The meticulous and precise work which recording an elderly face entailed also gave artists a superb opportunity of demonstrating and proclaiming their skills to potential buyers. The old, with the passage of their lives' experiences etched on their lined and 'lived-in' faces, provided a richness, detail and depth not present when painting the blandness of youthful beauty, As Thomas Lawrence commented in a letter to a friend when painting the 77 year old Pope Pius VII 'the Pope, being an old man, his countenance has a great deal of detail in it'.[31] In the earlier mentioned Luini's *Christ Among the Doctors* (Figure 1:8) the smooth somewhat androgynous face of Christ contrasts significantly with the four older men in the picture, who are shown as stolid, big-nosed, strong-necked, large-eared and with deeply-set eyes. They have nonetheless a dignity appropriate for a religious subject, the painter demonstrating a union of 'skilful design

[30] thought to represent oblivion. Langmuir, *National Gallery*, 107.
[31] D. E. Williams, *Life and Correspondence of Thomas Lawrence* (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1831), 2: 159.

and technique with so great a devotional feeling'.[32] To seem older than the youthful Christ the 'doctors' needed only to be on the threshold of middle-age, but Luini deliberately chose to make them older than this, in particular the white-bearded man on the left and the red-hatted man on the right; the two other men are not so old, but are certainly well into middle-age. Since the 'doctors' were biblical figures only, with no descriptions of their appearance, it is possible, even probable, that Luini selected sitters of his own choice from amongst his contemporaries, and that the older faces were shown not only to indicate the wisdom and experience of age but also because of the challenge each man's idiosyncratic features provided for Luini's artistic skills.

In the Low Countries and northern Europe in particular artists produced paintings, sometimes of the old, sometimes of other ages, which were not in themselves portraits but provided a useful way of practising their skills in order to proclaim and publicise their abilities. These are the 'tronies' of Dutch painting, which were very popular in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and 'for an artist they also served as a storehouse of facial types and expressions for figures in history paintings'.[33] Many of Rembrandt's works can be looked at in this light, a typical example being the painting often alluded to as *Rembrandt's mother* (Figure 1:16), which shows the countenance of an old lady draped in a detailed head-dress/shawl. It was not only the face as a likeness which could demonstrate the painter's skill, there was also a careful use of lighting to focus attention not only on a lined face and sagging chin, but also the rich and detailed material of the hood and collar. These tronies attracted an audience partly because of the skill of the painter, but also because they showed ordinary familiar human attributes, with typical expressions, physiognomy, type and character, making them easy to identify with and thus have popular appeal.

One German painter, Balthasar Denner, (1685 – 1749), was especially famed for his paintings of old people, where 'every wrinkle is mapped out and modelled with extraordinary care'.[34] His pictures of the old (Figure 1:17), both men and women, were very popular and enabled him to make an extremely good living from this speciality, achieving international success and being able to charge 'high fees'.[35] His success and renown were such that it was considered profitable to produce forgeries of Denner's work; in 1837, for example, the Louvre bought *Head of an Old Woman with a Bonnet and Fur Collar* (Figure 1:18) under the impression it was by Denner, an understandable mistake when observing the detailed recording of the aged skin of her face.[36]

[32] Eastlake, *National Gallery,* 60.

[33] http://www.girl-with-a-pearl-earring.info/tronie.htm accessed 23/12/2016.

[34] Charles Eastlake, *Notes on the Principal Pictures in the Louvre Gallery at Paris* (London: Longmans & Co., 1883), 55.

[35] 'Denner's genre figures and character heads depicting wrinkled old women and men were particularly popular and were admired for their detailed execution and meticulous accuracy. They ensured the artist international success and attracted especially high fees: Emperor Charles VI of Austria is believed to have sent 600 ducats from Vienna in payment for a typical head of a woman, an extraordinary sum at that time.' Klára Garas entry for Balthasar Denner, www.oxfordartonline.com accessed 19/01/17.

[36] https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Portrait_paintings_of_old_women#/media/File:Johann_Joseph_Achermann_(manner_of_Balthasar_Denner)_-_old_woman_(INV_1209_Louvre).jpg accessed 25/12/16

The ubiquitous critic Charles Eastlake scathingly commented on Denner's 'intense, but utterly misapplied, industry .. as if the artist selected aged models for the sole purpose of displaying his skill in painting wrinkles'.[37] Artists certainly did gain practice, and probably enjoyment, from painting the lines of age, as indicated in the comment of Thomas Eakins - 'How beautiful an old woman's skin is … all those wrinkles'.[38] Denner was a popular painter in his time, and his work has a particular relevance to this study as not only were his paintings considered to be worthy of forgery, but also because at least one of the forgeries was of an old person. The selection of such a subject carries the clear implication that it would be something that was easy to sell, which in itself indicates that the painting of a time-worn face was an acceptable and popular subject, leading to the conclusion that old age itself was not regarded with disdain or dislike.

Over the centuries portraits of people in power, such as Presidents and Popes, provide useful examples of old people in portraits, partly in the way they show old people combining positions of authority with elderly attributes, and partly because, as figures in the public eye intent on confirming their status with a portrait, they are likely to be at least comparatively well known. Two typical examples are Raphael's portrait of *Pope Julius II* (then aged about 69) (Figure 1:19) and Thomas Lawrence's portrait of *Pope Pius VII* (then aged about 77) (Figure 1:20). Both these portraits are 'expressive of age, yet without its feebleness and infirmity'.[39] The attributes of the old – grey hair, wrinkled hands, stooped posture and seeming fragility – are faithfully shown, but their posture and expression also manage to show them as determined, strong and worthy of respect.

Raphael's reportedly very lifelike portrait of Julius II was the first seated papal portrait, a style which was followed for centuries; in the late nineteenth century Thomas Eakins used it for his clerical portraits such as that of Archbishop Elder, (Figure 4:14). Julius is shown as a very human looking old man deeply immersed in his concerns.[40] With his drooping cheeks, the light on his forehead highlighting the tautness and thinness of the skin over the skull, the lined hands emphasised with white impasto, the white ragged beard, this is clearly an aged man with many cares on his shoulders. The hands, however, retain a strong grip on the arm of the papal throne; the be-ringed fingers, emphasised by their contrast with the white handkerchief, unequivocally display the symbols of his state and authority, and the implacable line of the mouth and set of the jaw show him a man not to be trifled with.[41] The characteristics and incipient failings of age are there, but the strengths of experience and determination are also recorded; a perpetual challenge

[37] Eastlake, *Munich,* 49.
[38] Mary Hallock Greenwalt, quoted in Lloyd Goodrich,*Thomas Eakins (*Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982), 2:59. See also Chapter Four.
[39] Jameson, A *Handbook*, 272.
[40] 'This portrait was so true and lifelike that everyone who saw it trembled as if the Pope were standing there in person' Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Artists* translated by George Bull (This edition Middlesex: Penguin, 1965), 297.
[41] Jameson, A *Handbook*, 55.

for an artist, which, as discussed in Chapters Five and Six, both Sargent and Herkomer addressed, in similar fashion, in their portraits of Frederick Olmsted and Lord Canning.

Some three hundred years after Raphael's portrait, Thomas Lawrence painted Pope Pius VII. Lawrence considered the portrait likely to be 'one of the best I have ever painted' and that 'no picture that I have painted has been more popular with the friends of the subject, and the public'.[42] It therefore seems reasonable to assume, even if there is no record of it, that other artists would be interested in seeing it, and be prepared to make a particular effort to do so; Anne Jameson certainly considered it one of 'the finest portraits which Lawrence ever painted' and also one of the 'grandest portraits of modern times'.[43] Displaying a full-length seated figure in papal robes, Lawrence records both the exterior appearance and the inner vibrancy of the Pope, a contrast between the outward appearance of age and the inner fully functioning mind. The impression of age is given by showing one foot (potentially arthritic/gouty) benefiting from the support of a footstool, but Pope Pius's grip on power is displayed by the work paper he clutches; in the same hand, however, is also a 'worry' handkerchief, thus producing an elegant combination of work and worry, strength and frailty. The gaunt pale face, the thinning hair, the shining bony knuckles, indicate age; but the full red lips, the sideways glance and the slight smile show, in the words of the artist, the 'expression of unaffected benevolence and worth, which lights up his countenance with a freshness and spirit'.[44] They do not diminish his age but give a positive bias to his appearance, as does the slight twist in his position, the focus of his eyes outside the picture, indicating a restrained energy, a readiness to promptly leave the sitting and get back to work.

Presidents, holding temporal power rather than spiritual, were of course as worthy of portraiture as Popes, and in the United States a significant portrait (Figure 1:21) of the 64 year old George Washington in 1796, was painted by Gilbert Stuart, an American born artist who spent several years in Great Britain. In a not unusual intertwining of American and English cultures he was commissioned to paint this portrait by wealthy American merchant William Smith as a gift for a former British Prime Minister, William Petty, Lord Lansdowne – hence the work's popular title of *The Lansdowne Portrait*. Washington needed to be shown in an authoritative pose, conducive to his position, but also in relatively mundane clothes, making clear that he had no need to reinforce his status with the flamboyant robes of kings and popes – at the time of the painting it was the opposite which needed emphasis, as the United States was then breaking free from such rule and becoming a republic. Stuart emphasised Washington's status by portraying him in an upright stance, making a receptive and open gesture with one hand whilst the other rests on a

[42] D. E. Williams, *Life and Correspondence of Thomas Lawrence* (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1831), 2:159, 186.
[43] Jameson, A *Handbook*, 271.
[44] Williams, *Life and Correspondence of Thomas Lawrence*, 2:186.

sword of office. Nonetheless, Stuart also does not allow Washington to be set on too remote a pedestal; in the set line of the mouth and the pallor which surrounds it Stuart manages to convey that Washington is also a frail human being, who at the time of the portrait was in the mundane yet human condition of being in considerable discomfort from his ill-fitting dentures.[45]

Turning now to genre paintings, these have always shown a broad social scene, with people going about their everyday life, and old people being just a part of a whole grouping. Typical examples are shown in Figures 1:22, 23 and 24 of these 'homely and often trivial subjects', in an art form which was 'always attractive, because it is intelligible'.[46] The painting by the prolific David Teniers the Younger (1610 – 1690), *A Man Holding a Glass and an Old Woman Lighting a Pipe* (Figure 1:22), has a man as the larger, almost central figure, but the old woman, with an old man behind distracting her from the pipe, is still a significant enough part of the painting to be included in the title . None of these figures are particularly attractive or alluring, but undoubtedly familiar types to the viewers and this doubtless made them popular with the 'audience'. Gerard Dou's A *Poulterer's Shop* (Figure 1:23) shows a beautifully painted older woman with lined and sympathetic face which was one of the most admired works at the Manchester Exhibition.[47] It is the older woman who is given the most emphasis in this portrait, her clothing more colourful than the drab brown of the other characters, the lineaments of her face meticulously rendered. In her stance and expression she exudes the calm and authority associated with age, as the young girl leans towards her, enthusiastically expounding a not necessarily practical thought. It is likely that there are implicit messages within the painting, the experience and calmness of age balanced against the impetuosity and naivety of youth; a theme continued in other paintings under consideration, such as the calm comfort offered by the old in Walter Langley's *Never Morning Wore to Evening* (Figure 2:33) or the expert knowledge displayed in Fuller Graves' *Village Clock-mender* (Figure 3:10).

The painting by another Dutch painter, Jan Steen, (1625 – 1679) *Celebrating the Birth* (Figure 1:24), also shows a general social scene, this time celebrating the birth of a baby but also, as with so many Steen paintings, having hidden messages within the painting; the man holding the baby, the presumed father, appears uncomfortable in this roomful of women, and is implied, by the two fingers raised behind the baby's head by the only other adult male in the painting, to be a cuckold, and presumably not the baby's father; the bag of money in his hand hints at bribery, blackmail, or other of the nefarious uses of money. It is only the old lady at his side who seems to be offering concern and comfort, a kinder, gentler figure than most of the others in this scene.

[45] from the detailed 'interactive portrait' at http://georgewashington.si.edu/portrait/index.html biographic/head and face section. accessed 24/12/16.
[46] Eastlake, *National Gallery*, 137.
[47] Jonathan Conlin, *The Nation's Mantelpiece; a history of the National Gallery* (London: Pallas Athene, 2006), 316. This picture was at that time in the possession of Sir Robert Peel, who lent it to the exhibition.

To an extent this is countermanded by the older woman on the other side of the painting, who is shown bending over a younger woman – perhaps the mother of the child – in a pose which implies collusion of some sort, almost certainly not to the benefit to the 'father'. This indicates a less positive side to age, though it is clear from the expressions and positions of the other figures in the room that connivance and scheming are not limited to age.

These paintings date from the seventeenth century, when Dutch genre scenes were at their peak; after the Reformation, there had been a limited demand for religious pictures, and genre pictures filled the gap this left and became popular again in both England and the United States during the second half of the nineteenth century. Life was altering so much during these years, with the spread of education, literacy, changes in employment, and increasing means of of reproducing paintings, so prints could be bought relatively cheaply to decorate domestic walls. Genre paintings show daily life, often in a rural setting, and so could provide comforting images for a person to have about them, even if (or perhaps because) they were slightly idealised and nostalgic views of the countryside, which people were leaving more and more as they sought to earn a living in the expanding towns. In his painting of *The Village Choir* (Figure 1:25), Thomas Webster shows all ages singing together in an English village church. In the United States, Richard Caton Woodville's painting *Politics in an Oyster House* (Figure 1:26), shows a young man eagerly commenting on the contents of the newspaper in front of him, whilst the much older and more relaxed man on the viewer's left looks out with the wry smile of experience. Clearly a practical person, ready to solve potential problems, as shown by the large umbrella leaning nearby ready to protect him from the elements, he greets the news phlegmatically, years of living have taught him how little anything changes - 'plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose'.

In William Sidney Mount's *Bargaining for a Horse* (Figure 1:27) (originally called *Farmers Bargaining*) a gentle rural scene shows two men, one white-haired, discussing the sale of a horse, that essential to rural life until the arrival of the railroad and motor car.[48] Mount, one of the first artists in the United States to produce genre works, for the most part set them in the rural area around his home. In this painting both men, of different ages, appear to be casually concentrating on whittling at pieces of wood whilst negotiating for the horse, probably engaging in a kind of gamesmanship to agree the best price. The negotiation at this point seems relatively balanced, the experience of age against the enthusiasm of youth.

As with any other subject, old people could also be used symbolically, as an indicator of virtue, vice or other characteristic rather than just a record of existence. Often old people were used to

[48] https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-americas/us-art-19c/realism-us/a/mount-bargaining-for-a-horse accessed 20/01/17.

show positive virtues – they are figures of knowledge, nurture, comfort and reassurance, repositories of wisdom and calm experience – as has been noted in the paintings discussed above. Typical examples are demonstrated in, firstly, the painting by Nicholas Neufchatel of *Johann Neudorfer and his son* (Figure 1:28), where the father passes on knowledge of mathematical topics to his son, who, quill and notebook in his hand, quietly absorbs the instruction of the older man. The artist does not shirk recording the large-nosed old man's characteristics – wrinkled neck, receding/thinning hair (the frontal cut matched in the boy's hair) and age-spotted hand in contrast to the pale fresh skin of the boy. Secondly, there is Murillo's restless painting *La Toilette Domestique* (Figure 1:6), where an old lady meticulously delouses a child's hair; he squirms in her grasp, but she holds him firmly to carry out the unpleasant task– it may be tough love, but it is still love, even if on a much more prosaic level than the more elevating pictures of the saints. This recurrent theme of wisdom and learning being passed from old to young is echoed in both American and English paintings, such as Harry Roseland's *Budding Scholar* (Figure 3:30) and Hayllar's *As The Twig is Bent* (Figure 2:26), with the title often reinforcing the motif.

So far it seems that the positive aspects of old age were more in evidence than the negative, but there were undoubtedly paintings which showed the more negative aspects often, though not exclusively, associated with old age, such as avarice, cunning, and the foolishness of the old (often when trying to regain their lost youth). A typical example is Marinus van Reymerswaele's *Two Tax Gatherers* (Figure 1:29), where androgynous flamboyantly hatted old men almost literally claw in the money – note especially the almost central poised, clawing hand of the old person on the right. Old people can also act as a reminder of the transience of youth and certainty of old age and death, as emphasised in Giorgione's painting of an elderly woman, *La Vecchia* (Figure 1:30) in the Accademia in Venice. This is not a portrayal which flatters, the subject is undoubtedly old, with thin, lank hair above her wrinkled face and neck. There is, however, a strength and gravitas about her as,with almost the hint of a smile, she points to herself while looking out at viewers. In this stance she reaches out to the viewer, with her hand holding the paper with 'Col Tempo' [with time] written on it, thus providing a dignified and shared reminder to all who look at her of the inevitability of age and death.

As can clearly be seen from the examples shown throughout this chapter, European painting exercised a strong influence over both English and American artists. In England this was to be anticipated, given the proximity and interwoven history of European countries, but it is perhaps a little less expected in the United States, with Europe geographically so far away. It is less surprising, however, when remembering the high proportion of immigrants who had arrived, and continued to do so, in the United States from Europe and bordering countries. Another factor is

that for many years the United States did not have its own home-grown school of painting. Times were changing, however, and the increasing ease and availability of travel, the contemporary creation of galleries and museums, the proliferation in the distribution and printing of papers, journals, painting reproductions, all made it easier for an American artist to be aware of works which had gone before. The enthusiasm with which, for example, works by Rembrandt, Velásquez and other European artists were greeted and, if possible, acquired pointed to a demand for, and interest in, such works, as was noted earlier in the chapter in the enthusiastic report early in 1885 in the *New York Times* about the purchase and import of a Rembrandt painting.

A deliberate exception to this favouring of European art was the collection of solely American works built up by businessman Thomas B. Clarke between 1872 and 1899, which was an important step in the development of the emerging and fast growing domestic style of painting in America during the later years of the nineteenth century.[49] Thomas Eakins remarked on this development when, in the last years of his life, he considered how much the training of a painter had changed over his lifetime. At the start of his career, in the 1870s, 'the facilities for instruction in this country were meagre..... one had to seek instruction elsewhere, abroad' but this was, he considered, no longer necessary, and 'it would be far better for American art students and painters to study in their own country and portray its life and types'.[50]

This brief and – of necessity in the space available – selective survey has made it clear that over the centuries it was not at all unusual to find the old portrayed in paintings. Often, especially in portraits and historical paintings, they were shown as figures of authority, which would encourage veneration and respect; in the more mundane delineations of genre they were shown quietly going about their daily lives. Negative views certainly existed, but seem to be in the minority, and for the most part the portrayals were understanding and appreciative. These pictures of the old, produced over the centuries, provided sterling examples for artists to study and, consciously or not, be influenced by in style and subject. The elderly were shown in a positive light in both religious/historical paintings and portraits, where the figures shown in the roles considered to be worthy of veneration and respect were frequently old, as it can take many years to acquire the experience, wealth and status associated with positions of power. Another important reason was that old people provided such effective models for artists, as evidenced in particular in the tronies of Dutch and Flemish art; not only were the aged able to sit quietly for longer, the painting of their dry, crumpled, lined faces and worn, rough features enabled artists

[49] Linda Skalet, 'Thomas B. Clarke, American Collector,' *Archives of American Art Journal* 15:3 (1975):5.
[50] Thomas Eakins in an interview with a Philadelphia reporter, 1915. quoted in Lloyd Goodrich, *Thomas Eakins.* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982), 2:269.

to give full rein to their skills in a way not possible with the unlined, smooth-skinned, restless figures of youth.

This chapter has looked at about thirty paintings, dating from the fifteenth century until 1870, which were selected for the way they demonstrated the routine themes which constantly recur in art. Examples of the old in religious/historical paintings and portraits were easily found, as were examples from genre paintings of the old going about their everyday life. Aged figures often appear in allegorical paintings, a fine example being Giorgione's *La Vecchia* (Figure 1:30), where the subject's wrinkled neck, bulbous nose and eye bags are clearly painted with no attempt made to soften them.

A heartening finding was the discovery that a counterfeit painting of an old lady (Figure 1:18) had been made and sold to The Louvre in 1837, purporting to be the work of Balthasar Denner, an artist very successful in his day, famed for his meticulous paintings of the old. It was particularly rewarding to discover that the subject of the forgery was a benign-appearing old lady as it indicated an acceptance and appreciation of the old, thus making a significant contribution to the requirement of the thesis of studying portrayals of the elderly.

Relevant contemporary primary sources have also enriched the findings of this chapter; as an example, a valuable insight into the experience of working with elderly subjects was provided by the comments of Thomas Lawrence as he painted the 77 year old *Pope Pius VII* (Figure 1:20). Whilst the reporting in the popular *Illustrated London News* of the National Gallery's acquisition of *Portrait of a Man* (Figure 1:10) by Van Eyck indicates a widespread interest in art across the population as a whole.

As the chapter developed it became clear how few paintings there were which showed negative views of old age, with most paintings presenting a positive, or at least neutral, attitude to the elderly. Even in van Reymerswaele's *Tax Gatherers* (Figure 1:29), it is possible that their androgynous distorted images were as much to do with their unpopular trade as specifically relating to their age.

An instructive backdrop has thus been created which shows the elderly to have been routine subjects for paintings over many centuries, often shown in a positive way, with few attempts made to soften or disguise aged features. Nineteenth century artists were undoubtedly very aware of these preceding paintings, and, as will be seen, the traditional styles and subjects frequently informed their own repertoires.

CHAPTER TWO
The Old in English Genre Painting, 1870 - 1910

The artist William Powell Frith was prone to spy interesting faces in the street and invite them back to his studio for him to paint. One such old man was Ennis, and back in the studio, with Ennis wearing a red fez Frith kept among his studio props, Frith records how 'The old man took an admiring look at himself in my cheval glass. I fully shared his admiration, for the dull red of the cap, the furrowed face, and the silvery beard, made a study that Rembrandt would have relished, and to which none but that genius could do full justice …… the red cap, the little flush on the withered cheeks, the old lips and beard, a little quivering in the excitement of his story, made up a picture that I so longed to try my hand at'.[1]

A description which (apart from the beard!) might have been written for the face shown in *Study of a Man's Head* (Figure 2:1) – except that it was painted some years later by James Hayllar (see later); which would seem to show how the attraction of painting an older face remained an enticing subject for artists. Not that Frith was alone in this penchant for noticing potential subjects. On seeing an interesting face in a crowd the artist W. H. Y. Titcomb would ask the person to pose for him and then sketch them in his studio.[2] When Frank Holl painted *I Am the Resurrection and the Life* after witnessing a particular funeral procession, he made 'very complete studies of the old gamekeeper, which would serve him….. when the living model would not be there. The other figures he could easily replace, but the old man himself was unique, as a specimen of the type to which he belonged'.[3]

The continuing appearance of anecdotes such as these of how artists were attracted by, and perhaps sought out, an older model, carries the implication that artists greatly valued the opportunities and challenges provided by the painting of an old face.

Genre painting, so useful for this study in the way it shows people going about their everyday life, became more respected and popular as the nineteenth century progressed, whilst history painting, once considered the highest form of art, faded from fashion.[4] Genre was also a worthwhile choice for artists because their potential market expanded due to the requirements of the developing middle-classes, who now had both time and money to buy paintings for the walls of their homes. 'Art' also became available to a wider and wider audience, exemplified by a comment in *The Graphic* magazine about an open day at Bethnal Green Museum: 'here is to be seen a greater mixture of extreme classes, humble East-End denizens gazing side-by-side with

[1] William Powell Frith, *A Victorian Canvas: the memoirs of W. P. Frith* (London: Bles, 1957), 135, 138.
[2] D. C. W. Tovey, *W. H. Y. Titcomb, 1858–1930: Artist of Many Parts* (Tewkesbury: Wilson Books, 1985), 46.
[3] Ada M. Reynolds, *The Life and Work of Frank Holl* (London: Methuen & Co., 1912), 92. Ada Reynolds, née Holl, was one of Frank Holl's daughters.
[4] www.oxfordartonline.com Entry for genre. accessed 26/11/2017.

fashionable folks from the far west… treasures of art ..[being placed].. within the reach of persons who a few years ago would have been regarded as too mischievously disposed to be safely admitted'.[5] Having pictures on the walls of schools and homes was also recognised as an enrichment of life – especially in bleak industrial towns such as Manchester – and would make 'the homes of many work people more attractive'.[6] Discussing the use of paintings as advertisements, William Powell Frith commented on the uses of art generally, remarking that 'Nobody will deny that a fine engraving of a fine work will give pleasure, and perhaps improvement, to great numbers who may never have a chance of seeing the original from which the print was taken'.[7]

The paintings which were to hang on people's walls were often of rather bland families going about their daily life, the children clean and cloyingly perfect. Typical examples can be found in the work of Frederick D. Hardy, one of the Cranbrook Colony of artists, who from the 1850s almost until his death in 1911 produced a succession of charming, edging towards the sentimental, paintings of (mostly) village life, either inside or outside the house. *O*lder people are often included in these scenes, partly to give the pictures 'universal' appeal, partly to provide the frequent and always fashionable contrast between youth and age, and also as a reflection of life, indicating the useful roles the elderly still had within society. The wider populace enjoyed and bought these works, as their winsome charms would sit well on the walls of people's homes; after all, as a reviewer wrote, 'pictures are meant to adorn English living rooms'.[8]

Comparing three genre paintings on the 'well-known subject' of the Dame School, painted over a twenty-five year period, provides invaluable clues on how artists approached similar subjects as the years passed.[9] The works are by Frederick George Cotman (Figure 2:2), Frederick D. Hardy (Figure 2:3) and Ralph Hedley (Figure 2:4); in this latter painting the subject remains the same but the title, more accurately for its date, is *The Village School*. All these paintings show an almost exact role reversal to that in the workhouse (see later in the chapter), in that in these paintings it is an old person – the teacher – who is shown looking after a collection of children and making sure they are 'educationally' busy in some way; whereas in workhouse paintings, such as *Eventide* (Figure 2:15) and *Our Poor* (Figure 2:20) it is one **younger** person who looks after a number of old people, and ensures, like the children, they are kept usefully occupied.

The scenes shown in both Cotman's and Hardy's paintings - 1887 and 1899 respectively – were out-of-date, at least in terms of the title, for Dame Schools date back to much earlier in the

[5] 'Holiday Folk at the National Gallery,'*The Graphic* (10th August 1872): 115.
[6] Thomas Coglan Horsfall, *The Use of Pictures and Other Works of Art in Elementary Schools (*Manchester, 1887), 3.
[7] W. P. Frith, 'Artistic Advertising', *Magazine of Art* (October 1889), 421.
[8] 'The Royal Academy: Second Notice,' *The Times*, (May 8th 1876): 9. The reviewer was referring to Luke Fildes' portrait of 'The Widower'.
[9] 'Ipswich Fine Art Exhibition,' *Ipswich Journal* (Saturday January 22nd 1887): 3.

century. By the end of the nineteenth century education had become more widespread and freely available as the state sought to formalise and control education; the 1880 Education Act had made schooling compulsory for children under ten, and the 1891 Fee Grant Act ensured that education was effectively free of charge; in 1902 local Education Authorities were formed and took responsibility for the provision and development of schools in their areas. Improvements in hygiene and sanitation brought about by the Public Health Acts of 1848 and 1875 also contributed to the demise of the unsophisticated 'Dame School'. Though sometimes still very small, schools were becoming more professionally run, with young teachers who would have the chance to make a career out of education; in 1889, only two years after Cotman's *Dame School* painting, Elizabeth Forbes had painted a more accurate reflection of current schooling in *School is Out*, where it is a young woman teacher and her assistant who are in charge of the classroom.

Dame Schools – which had been a part of English life for many years and were 'the major providers of basic education throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century for vast numbers of poor children aged between three and seven' - therefore did not have the force they once had.[10] The question arises why an artist would paint a picture with such a title, with, in the cases of Hardy and Cotman, a grey-haired, old-looking lady 'teacher' sitting with the children busy around her.[11] Though sedentary, and at first glance appearing somewhat passive, closer inspection reveals that grey and stooped though she may be, the 'dame' is busy and focused on the children, keeping them occupied and exerting some authority. The Cotman painting was flatteringly reviewed as 'very much better handled than most well-known subjects are. The different expressions upon the faces of the old woman and her … pupils are admirably portrayed …… [it is] the gem of the exhibition'.[12] The teacher's dark dress and central placing make her the focus of the painting, whilst in the Hardy she is placed to one side, separated and almost confronting the children, though her aged features have a benign expression. Hardy's frieze-like figures, the painting's drab colouring and the fragility of the teacher - emphasised by the footstool - make it seem particularly old-fashioned for its date. Hardy was in his seventies when he painted it, and his success throughout his career had been with this style of painting, so perhaps this is a demonstration of old age's perceived attribute of failure to adapt. In both Cotman's and Hardy's paintings, the rooms in use as a school, with their spinning wheels, sewing, cats, and so on, appear very much the ordinary front room of someone's house. They are positive pictures; the old teachers seem, by their posture and attitude, to be doing their best for the children and have taken trouble to have relatively clean, reasonably-lit rooms, with pictures on the walls, echoing the recommendations of Thomas Coglan Horsfall in 1884 – 'I believe that the right use of art in elementary schools will effect an improvement in the taste of

[10] Adrian Bristow, *Dame Schools* (Chester: Imogen, 2000), 15.
[11] such schools, as the name implies, were usually run by women, though sometimes the teacher was male, as in Hedley's *Barring Out Day*.
[12] 'Ipswich Exhibition,' *Ipswich Journal* (January 22nd 1887): 3.

English work-people and employers…… it will reveal to many children …. the highest qualities of their own nature… it will make the homes of many work people more attractive… and will do much towards creating a fuller and happier family life.[13] Or, in the succinct words of Thomas J Barratt of Pears' Soap, 'A good picture is the best educator in the world'.[14]

In Ralph Hedley's *The Village School* the atmosphere has become more professional; there are fewer 'homely' furnishings, and it appears to be a room used entirely and specifically for the purpose of education. Again the pupils are all occupied, mostly with reading, one with a slate, and the teacher is still an old lady dressed predominantly in black, but, with her upright posture and raised stick, one who seems fitter and more firmly in command, an impression encouraged by the vertical format.[15] This, plus its brighter colours, makes it much more vibrant than the Cotman and Hardy paintings and, though apparently old in years, this teacher is presented as lively and alert, more so than her colleagues in the earlier paintings.

The most likely reason for the painting of anachronistic Dame Schools would seem to be the 'nostalgia market'; the people who could now afford, and want, to buy these paintings would have gone to similar schools themselves and, rightly or wrongly, have fond memories of them. The long shadow of the Industrial Revolution had brought prodigious changes to all societies, a major change being that over the nineteenth century in England and Wales, the rural/urban proportion of the population reversed exactly, from 70:30% at the beginning of the century to 30:70% at the end.[16] People had either experienced that change themselves, or, perhaps more likely (as distance lends enchantment) had parents/grandparents who had made that transition, and would view their childhoods and rural origins nostalgically and unrealistically. As Margaret Loane, a district nurse who wrote of her experiences in both town and country, trenchantly remarked 'The boundless belief in country innocence, country morality, country vigour of body and independence of mind, is simply inexplicable. One week's experience of an ordinary village would surely be enough to expose the fallacy'.[17]

The painter of the 1912 *Village School* picture, Ralph Hedley, was a prolific painter from Newcastle-upon-Tyne whose life story exemplifies this change from rural to urban living; his father had moved his family from Yorkshire to Newcastle because of the employment opportunities offered in that rapidly developing town, whose population had multiplied

[13] Horsfall, *The Use of Pictures*, 3.
[14] 'The Great Advertisers of the World: 1) Pears' Soap', *Pall Mall Gazette*, (June 14th 1884): 20.
[15] There are at least two other Hedley paintings of children at the same school; 1) *The Monitor*, 1898, which shows a boy sitting at the same desk with the same stick in his hand forlornly trying to keep the class in order; 2) *Barring Out Day*, 1896, where the children were allowed, for one day of the year, to bar their teacher from the classroom – in this instance, the teacher is an old man.
[16] C. M. Law, 'The Growth of the Urban Population in England & Wales 1801 – 1911,' *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* XL: (1 June 1967): 126.
[17] Margaret Loane, *From Their Point of View* (London: Edward Arnold, 1908), 258.

exponentially over the nineteenth century - 33,000 in 1811; 88,000 in 1851; 215,000 by 1911.[18] Hedley initially trained as a wood carver, but soon included painting in his repertoire; his 'inspiration was for the most part drawn from homely aspects of Northumbrian life as he saw it among farm hands and seafaring folk'.[19] An admirer of the Newlyn School of painting, in many ways his subject matter was similar – local people going about their daily life and tasks; he also had the advantage of being part of the local community, not an 'incomer' like so many of the Newlyn School.[20] Like many painters of this time, his range of paintings was wide, but he chose to concentrate mostly on the local working people of all ages. He felt strongly that 'there are plenty of good subjects to be found in the North, and … it is unnecessary to go further afield… [contending] that an artist should give special study to events of our own day in preference to those which took place say a couple of centuries ago'.[21]

Analysis of the subjects of his paintings makes clear that Hedley did not differentiate in his treatment of his young, old and middle-aged subjects, all are appropriately shown in their life's occupation. He could supply the fashionably mawkish paintings, with cats, other pets, sweet-faced curiously clean children and genial older people, but many of his paintings showed the unpretentious and hard working life of local artisans of all ages. As one of his obituaries stated 'Anything relative to the working-life of the artisan, cobbler, glass blower, boat builder, blacksmith, and kindred occupations he seized upon and made to live upon his canvas'.[22] Within these paintings, the old were as much a part of the workforce as any other age group; a typical example is the old lady in *Threshing the Gleanings* (Figure 2:5), bending low over her dusty work, and needing to repeat her back-breaking and monotonous work as the boy brings in more corn. Other of his works show old people, faithfully recorded with their poor eyesight and work-worn hands, as in *The Goffering Iron* (1908/9) and *The Blind Beggar*, (Figure 2:6), where a grey-bearded old man, walking stick in one worn hand, upturned hat in the other, begs for some financial help. Another painting, *Parish Registrar* (Figure 2:7) shows 'extreme contrasts between youth and age'.[23] In the painting a young woman registers the birth of her baby whilst an old man, stooped and forlorn, registers the death of his wife. This was so truthfully portrayed that one registrar wrote to Hedley requesting a copy, commenting that 'it went straight to [his] heart'.[24]

[18] Brian R. Mitchell & Phyllis Deane,*Abstract of British Historical Statistics (*Cambridge:Cambridge University Press, 1962), 26-28.
[19] 'Obituary; Mr Ralph Hedley, R.B.A.,' *The Times* (June 16th 1913):11.
[20] the Newlyn School will be discussed later in this chapter.
[21] Supplement to *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle (*23rd February 1889); *The Monthly Chronicle of North Country Lore and Legend* (1889): 197. Quoted in John Millard, *Ralph Hedley: Tyneside Painter* (Newcastle: Tyne & Wear Museums,1990), 40.
[22] 'Ralph Hedley Dead, Obituary' *North Mail*, (16th June 1913), Quoted in Millard, *Ralph Hedley*, 73 and 93, n3.
[23] *Newcastle Daily Journal* (6th May 1892) quoted in Millard, *Ralph Hedley,* 55.
[24] letter to Ralph Hedley dated 7th May 1892 from Mr Storie, Registrar's Office, Midlothian; from the collection of Julian Brown, Hedley's great-grandson; quoted in Millard, *Ralph Hedley,* 55.

Hedley's painting *Going Home*, (Figure 2:8), which shows two men, one young, one old, walking home from their work in the mine, was considered popular enough to be issued by the local paper as a chromo-lithographic print for Christmas 1889. It had to be reprinted, such was the thirst for the prints to adorn the walls of people's homes - 'no working man's home was considered complete without prints of one or two of his [ie Hedley's] pictures'.[25] What is especially interesting, within the context of this thesis, is that it was not the younger man in the painting who was selected for use in an advertisement, (Figure 2:9) but the older man (local collier John Hepple), who puffs happily on his pipe, filled with Robert Sinclair's Golden Twist tobacco, and carrying both the lamp and pickaxe from the original picture; clearly old men were considered to have as much, if not more, of a commercial use as the young.

As mass production and a greater variety of goods became more widely available, different forms of advertising developed; visual images were used more and more, to the extent that in 1879 articles were written about how 'the street art of the poster.....defaces the streets'.[26] In the 1870/80s a particular tendency was developing amongst the rapidly-rich businessmen to buy paintings and use them to advertise a particular product, something easy and legal to do in the absence of strong copyright laws. As an example, William Henry Lever, the millionaire soap manufacturer bought John Henry Bacon's *The Wedding Morning* directly from the private view at the Royal Academy in 1892. With the strategic insertion of Sunlight Soap within this engaging wedding scene it was a useful means of encouraging the sales of cleaning products.[27] Old people were part of these advertisements as much as young people, who would be shown learning from them as well as aiding/abetting them, as demonstrated in another of Lever's acquisitions and adaptations, Arthur John Elsley's *Besieged* (Figure 2:10). It is very noticeable in these 'picture adverts' that the elderly people are clearly and undoubtedly old, which is in strong contrast to the adverts of the present day, where the supposedly old are shown as agile and wrinkle-free, their older attributes softened.

One painter in particular in these years was associated with portrayals of old age; Hubert Herkomer, who, it was considered, found two subjects 'superlatively attractive – old age and poverty'.[28] His autobiography makes clear that Herkomer was close to his own parents and had hoped to 'sweeten' their old age'; after the death of his mother in 1879, he ensured his widowed father was well looked after.[29] His writings also confirm his compassion for the old; 'these poor

[25] *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, (30th March 1936), 6. quoted in John Millard, *Ralph Hedley,* 48.
[26] 'The Horrors of Street Advertisements', *The Saturday Review of Politics. Literature, Science and Art* 48:1253 (November 1st 1879): 532.
[27] particularly to the increasingly well-off (relatively speaking) middle and working classes, who were increasingly able to take advantage of the new mass-produced products such as soap.
[28] Wilfrid Meynell, 'Our Living Artists: Hubert Herkomer, A.R.A.,' *Magazine of Art* (1880): 260.
[29] Herkomer, *Autobiography,* 46.

old bodies formed a most touching picture' he wrote about his original engraving of the Westminster Union workhouse, (later adapted to become the painting *Eventide*).[30]

The work which had first earned Herkomer his reputation as a painter of old people, following which he become known for his 'dramatically pathetic' style was *The Last Muster: Sunday at the Royal Hospital Chelsea* (Figure 2: 14), a colourful and detailed depiction of red-coated Chelsea Pensioners at church service.[31] It was followed a few years later by a work intended to be its companion piece - *Eventide: a scene in the Westminster Union* (Figure 2:15).[32] This was a more sombrely coloured work and shows a gathering of old women in a workhouse, engaged in companionship, sewing and tea.[33] The painting was clearly based on an earlier engraving published in *The Graphic*, though some alterations have been made.[34] The old woman cutting cloth in the engraving has been replaced by two figures – one a younger woman cutting cloth, the other an additional old woman, who looks out at the viewer whilst sipping tea from her saucer, and who clearly has her origin in one of two old ladies towards the rear in the etching of *Low Lodging House, St Giles* (Figure 2:17).[35] Techniques as simple as adding a vase of flowers, raising the angle of a head and inserting a slight smile all make for a happier picture, as does having some of the ladies look out at the viewer. Herkomer offers no recorded explanation for these changes which may have been made as an artistic preference only.

There are several similarities between these two works; both had first been produced as wood engravings,*The Last Muster* in 1871, *Eventide* in 1877, for the journal *The Graphic*.[36] This was founded in 1869 to provide not only original illustrations but also a wider range of social realism than provided by bland and comfortable journals such as *Illustrated London News*.[37] Both engravings were reworked into paintings and displayed at the Royal Academy Annual Exhibitions, in May 1875 and May 1878 respectively. Each work is based on scenes and people Herkomer had witnessed for himself. *The Last Muster* had suggested itself as a subject after he had attended a service in the Chapel of the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, whilst *Eventide* he had 'witnessed while roaming London in search of a suitable subject'.[38] That he chose for his subject portrayals of the old is itself a positive reference to old age. Herkomer made further connections

[30] 'Old Age – a Study at the Westminster Union', *The Graphic*, (April 7th 1877):326.
[31] 'The United Arts Gallery', *The Times* , (2nd November 1881): 10.
[32] 'I am at work upon another large picture as companion to 'The Pensioners'' he wrote in a letter to his Uncle Hans on 25th September 1876; Saxon-Mills, *Life & Letters*, 97.
[33] Workhouses were part of the centralised system of care for the poor and destitute which had been introduced as a result of The Poor Law of 1834. These edifices had been designed to deliberately cast a harsh, unhappy and thus discouraging shadow over those who might need them, including the infirm old. People therefore made great efforts to look after the elderly within the care of the family and would be prepared to make considerable sacrifices to keep their older relative from going to that 'horrible place' [ie the workhouse, as described in Burnett, *Destiny Obscure*, 293], where they were dependent on public monies.
[34] 'Old Age – a Study at the Westminster Union', *The Graphic*, (April 7th 1877), 326, 384.
[35] 'Low Lodging House, St Giles's: A study from Life, *The Graphic (Supplement)*, (10th August 1872): 128, 141.
[36] 'Sunday at Chelsea Hospital' *The Graphic* 18th February 1871. 'Aged Women in a London Workhouse,' *The Graphic* 7th April 1877. The titles were altered for the later paintings.
[37] Julian Treuherz, *Hard Times; Social Realism in Victorian Art* (London: Lund Humphries in association with Manchester Art Gallery, 1987), 53-55.
[38] John Saxon–Mills, *Life and Letters of Sir Hubert Herkomer; a study in struggle and success (*London: Hutchinson & Co, 1923): 58. Julian Treuherz, *Hard Times,* 93.

between the two paintings by his choice of titles, with their echoes of mortality and ending; to him these people were very near if not within the vestibule of death.

The differing colours in each picture - the vibrancy of the scarlet gold-trimmed coats of the old soldiers in marked contrast to the sombre colouring of the Eventide ladies – doubtless had an influence on viewers' responses. With its collection of servicemen *The Last Muster* also emits that sentimental glamour which somehow always attaches itself to old soldiers. As Herkomer himself commented 'There is hardly another subject which so appeals to English hearts – men who have fought for their country and have come to their last home preparing for their last journey home'.[39] He described them as as 'venerable old warriors' though he also understood that they 'had been loose (most of their lives)'.[40]

Reviews in the press of the two works were complimentary about the technique and style of the works, but approached the subject matter of each painting very differently. All was positive about *The Last Muster* - 'For once, the popular verdict received the confirmation of the aesthetic world'.[41] It was variously described as 'a noble work' and 'a touching and solemn picture, a picture to distinguish the collection which contains it'.[42] It was described as a 'picture [that] has merit of a very high order' and 'showing a strong perception of character'.[43]

Part of the praise bestowed by the critics was in the portrayal of 'Heroic old age, conquered by time in spite of heroism, the veteran in whom the ashes of an old fire still smoulder…. Mr Herkomer's conception of his subject has been neither facile nor unreal, but nobly simple and true'.[44] Another important factor in its popularity was the marked individuality of each veteran, which evoked comments such as;

- 'these grand old heads, dignified by extreme age into a venerable beauty';
- 'this assemblage of various heads, all old and worn with hardship, but different in every other particular, is presented with a power of painting and a grasp of character as rare as they are admirable';
- there is no indiscriminate massing: each man asserts his own presence with unmistakable distinctness'.[45]

[39] Letter dated 2nd May 1875 from Herkomer to his uncle and aunt. Saxon-Mills, *Life & Letters*, 88.
[40] Saxon-Mills, *Life & Letters,* 87.
[41] 'The Last Muster by Hubert Herkomer,' *Magazine of Art* (November 1889): 16.
[42] 'The Royal Academy', *The Graphic*, (May 1st 1875): 415. 'The Exhibition at the Royal Academy: First Notice', *The Standard*, May 1st 1875: 6.
[43] 'The Royal Academy: Third Notice',*Morning Post*, May 14th 1875: 6. 'The Royal Academy', *Lloyds Weekly Newspaper* (May 2nd 1875).
[44] Meynell, 'Herkomer,' *Magazine of Art*, (1880), 263.
[45] 'Art: Royal Academy of Arts (sixth notice),'*The Examiner,* (June 12th 1875): 669. 'The Last Muster' *The Graphic,* 285 (May 15th 1875):462. 'The Royal Academy: Third Notice,' *Morning Post,* (May 14th 1875): 5.

Herkomer had written that his 'idea was to make every man tell some different story, to be told by his type of face and expression' and that 'they are all literal portraits [he had] picked out the most characteristic men and then painted them carefully, keeping their individuality'.[46]

The response to *Eventide* was considerably more ambivalent; one reviewer congratulated Herkomer on succeeding 'in so apparently an unlikely attempt as that of making a number of old pauper women… objects of the greatest interest'.[47] In his *Academy Notes* Henry Blackburn described it as a 'powerful work ….. depict[ing] happy and comfortable old age even in poverty; in short, to give the sunny side of life in the workhouse'.[48] *The Illustrated London News* described it in somewhat mixed terms as 'a most vigorous representation of a crowd of ancient female paupers supping their afternoon tea'.[49] *The Graphic*, was predictably (since the engravings had first been published there) more sympathetic, acknowledging that 'The scene is a sad one, yet not altogether without its alleviations'.[50] *The Times* acknowledged the perpetual ambivalence about old age, acknowledging the beauty there could be in old age whilst dismissing the painting as 'squalid, sordid, dreary in sentiment', wondering what 'matter for the painter is there in lives of blank and wearisome old age … old age may be, and often is, pathetic or even beautiful; but such old age as this has as little of pathos or beauty as comports with the decline of life. When he painted the old pensioners in the chapel of Chelsea Hospital he gave us the last of the veteran soldier whose best days were, at least, associated with a past of danger and hardship in the service of his country'.[51] *The Morning Post* was most negative, thinking the old ladies a most unsuitable subject – ''the inmates as here represented are miserable, toothless, crones … their general aspect … is abject and deplorable in the extreme. No touch of poetry elevates or refines this wretched theme, which is ghastly in its realism'.[52]

There are fewer heads in *Eventide* than in *The Last Muster*, but they are still very individual, as one reviewer noticed, writing that 'Mr Herkomer has not forgotten in this group the opportunity for giving various types of character in old age. One certainly is a rather handsome example in the woman with full face to the spectator'.[53] It is probable that the awkward composition and sombre colouring contributed to the mixed reviews, and only *The Athenaeum* made any reference to Herkomer's opinion of the less blatant heroism of these old ladies, who had been 'buffeted in the fight of life, and worsted in the conflict' and 'that every one of these old crones

[46] Herkomer, "Drawing & Engraving on Wood," 166. Saxon-Mills, *Life and Letters,* 87.
[47] 'Royal Academy Exhibition,' *Nottinghamshire Guardian (*May 10th 1878): 6.
[48] Henry Blackburn (ed.), *Academy Notes* (London: Chatto & Windus, May 1878), 67.
[49] 'Royal Academy: Second Series,' *Illustrated London News* (May 11th 1878): 434/5.
[50] 'Our Illustrations: Aged Women in a London Workhouse,' *The Graphic (*April 7th 1877): 326.
[51] 'The Royal Academy II', *The Times* May 11th 1878: 6. The italics in the quotation are mine.
[52] 'The Royal Academy', *Morning Post* (May 4th 1878): 5.
[53] 'The Royal Academy: First Notice', *The Athenaeum,* 2636, (May 4th 1878), 577.

had fought hard battles in their lives – harder battles by far than those old warriors I painted – for they had to fight single-handed and not in the battalions as the men did'.[54]

There are many harsh words and phrases used about the old ladies of *Eventide*, such as 'physical uncomeliness' and 'the dreary decline of these poor old crones of the workhouse wards thus presented… is simply squalid, sordid, dreary in sentiment'.[55] They are balanced, however, by more neutral comments, such as 'the uncertain gestures of age, and the expressions, saddened, happy, or embittered'.[56]

There are several more complimentary and understanding comments, examples including 'the faces of the old women who are extracting comfort from their tea are indeed rendered with singular penetration and exactitude' and 'a real work of art [made] out of the materials supplied by … the tea-hour in a workhouse'.[57] 'A certain dignity which the eye ...of the ...artist sees in all human things' and 'a group of poor old women…[who].. seem to be reconciled and content' are other comments which see a positive side of the painting.[58]

Herkomer included on the workhouse wall two 'pictures within a picture' which have the capacity to evoke thoughts on age. One is an engraving of two old male heads taken from his *Last Muster*, the other is a painting by his friend Luke Fildes of Betty, a pretty young milkmaid.[59] No comments have been made on the old male heads, but recent art historians have considered that the painting of the milkmaid was included 'to present a poetic juxtaposition of youth and old age', with Betty's 'beauty and girlish vigour contrast[ed] with the bent and wizened aspect of the workhouse inmates'.[60] There is, however, no evidence that this was a contemporary view. Herkomer himself made no apposite recorded comments and when seen in the original painting the face of 'Betty' is barely recognisable, no more than three swift brush strokes. The more likely reason for their inclusion is that since workhouses had pictures on their walls, Herkomer included some of his own choosing - perhaps for self-advertisement, or as a compliment to the work of a friend, or just light relief.[61] A contemporary review remarked how 'It is pleasant to note in the few trumpery pictures on the walls of the ward, and the humble

[54] ibid. J Comyns Carr, 'Hubert Herkomer, A.R.A.', in F. G. Dumas, *Modern Artists* (Paris: Beschet, 1882-84): 67-68 quoted in Julian Treuherz, *Hard Times* (London: Lund Humphries,1987): 94.
[55] 'The Royal Academy', *The Standard*, (June 7th 1878), 3. 'Royal Academy', *The Times,* (May 11th 1878), 6.
[56] 'The Royal Academy', *The Standard,* (June 7th 1878), 3.
[57] 'Picture Galleries. IV', *The Saturday Review of Politics. Literature, Science and Art,* 45:119, (June 1st 1878):692. 'The Royal Academy', *Leeds Mercury* (May 4th 1878): 12.
[58] Meynell, 'Herkomer,' *Magazine of Art* (1880): 263. Charles Dyall (compiler) *Walker Art Gallery: Descriptive Catalogue of the Permanent Collection of Pictures* (Liverpool 1893), 11.
[59] the model was Fildes' wife, Fanny. Christopher Forbes, *The Royal Academy revisited; Victorian paintings from the Forbes Magazine Collection* (New York: Forbes, 1975), 50.
[60] Jennifer McLerran 'Saved by the Hand that is not Stretched Out: The aged poor in Hubert von Herkomer's Eventide; A scene in the Westminster Union,' *The Gerontologist* 33:6 (1993): 769. Julian Treuherz, *Hard Times* (London: Lund Humphries, 1987), 94. No explanation has been given for the placing of Herkomer's etching of two old male heads on the wall, which cannot be construed as providing a contrast between age and youth.
[61] This was not a particularly unusual activity amongst artists. Ralph Hedley included his painting 'Going Home' within another of his paintings. Millard, *Ralph Hedley*, 47.

flowers upon the table, evidence that the occupants are not all forgotten by the outer world'.[62] Having pictures on the walls was known to be a kindness, as shown by the Southwark Diocesan Workhouse Association, who had as one of its aims 'to ameliorate … the lives of the inmates generally.. by supplying pictures for the walls, providing books, papers and flowers'.[63] Contemporary writings also make clear the delight people had in putting pictures on walls – Taine commented how most cottages he saw on his visit to England had 'small, framed prints' on the wall and Flora Thompson stated that – 'every house had a few pictures, mostly coloured ones given by grocers as almanacks and framed at home'.[64] Such prints can be seen on the walls of rooms in, for example, Mary Kindon's paintings (see later) and Frances Cobbe wrote movingly of the pleasure putting pictures on the walls of institutions could bring; 'We also brought pictures to hang on the walls.....Their effect upon the old women, especially pictures of children, was startling. One poor soul who had been lying opposite the same blank wall for twenty years ….. kissed the face of the little child in the picture, and burst into tears'.[65]

Another painting of Herkomer's with an old person in a pivotal role was the 1881 painting *Missing: a scene at Portsmouth Dockyard Gate* (Figures 2:11, 12), which he painted during the winter of 1880/81 in response to a commission from his friend Mansell Lewis.[66] In this large oil on canvas (96" x 66") the families, friends and colleagues of the crew are shown seeking news of a missing training ship which in 1880 had disappeared and eventually was presumed to be lost at sea, with the loss of all hands.[67] It is frustrating that Herkomer burned this painting in 1895, claiming to be distressed by the colours he had used.[68] Fortunately two copies of the painting were made from the original before its destruction - a water-colour copy (Figure 2:11), made in 1882 by Herkomer's nephew, and a wood engraving in 1887 (Figure 2:12). These give a distinct impression of its initial appearance, though they lack the grandeur of the original's size and colouring.

When the original was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1881 it met with mixed reviews, but the old lady in the centre of the painting was consistently well-received; 'the heads of the old widow and tall young sailor are very good'.[69] Described as a 'very powerful' figure, she was usually assumed to be the children's grandmother.[70] With 'the figures being nearly life-size' the

[62] 'The Royal Academy: First Notice', *The Athenaeum*, 2636, (May 4th 1878): 577.
[63] B. F. C. Costelloe, *The Reform of the Poor Law: a paper read at the Catholic Conference (*London: 1891), 15.
[64] Hippolyte Taine, *Taine's Notes on England'* first published 1860 – 1870, This edition translated with notes by Edward Hyams (London: Thames & Hudson, 1957), 129. Flora Thompson, *Lark Rise to Candleford* (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1973), 99.
[65] Frances Power Cobbe, *Life of Frances Power Cobbe as told by herself* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1904), 311.
[66] 'My picture 'Missing' was painted this winter (1880/81),' Hubert Herkomer, *Autobiography* (London: Printed for private circulation, 1890), 53.
[67] Lee Edwards, *Herkomer; a Victorian Artist* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 78. http://www.memorialsinportsmouth.co.uk/ship-index.htm Accessed 12 February 2017 Memorial is in St Ann's Church, Portsmouth.
[68] In his earlier years, under the influence of a fellow student at Southampton Art School, Herkomer gave everything a 'purple' tinge – or 'purplitis', as he called it – and in 'Missing' this offended him so much he destroyed it. John Saxon-Mills *Life and Letters of Sir Hubert Herkomer* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1923), 113.
[69] 'Royal Academy Exhibition: Second Notice', *Illustrated London News,* 2190, (Saturday May 7th 1881), 459
[70] ibid, 459.

implacable aged figure in black at the centre of the painting must have appeared both imposing and disconcerting.[71] Her eyes are downcast, but she draws the eye as the main figure, facing out to the viewer, and the diagonals made by her arms to the children on each side, plus the parallel movement of the bending bearded sailor above the small boy, make her the fulcrum of the other figures. A reviewer in *The Athenaeum* considered that - '*Missing* is a masterpiece in its way, and excels in showing 'fetching' points of design, such as … the girl who guides her half-blind grandmother away from the iron post'.[72] Others, however, did not like the composition, describing it as 'hurt by the oblique lines formed by a cannon that serves for post, and the little boy that stoops from the widow's hand for his fallen play-ball on one side, and an elder granddaughter on the other, who would draw her from the spot in an opposite direction'.[73] With such an emotive subject – the presumed but not yet confirmed loss of two hundred and eighty one lives – an old person could be considered a surprising choice as a central figure, especially from a twenty-first century viewpoint, when it seems likely the focus would be much more on the heartstring-tugging potential of the probably fatherless children. In this Herkomer reflects his times, when death was present at all ages – until the early twentieth century it was not at all unusual for a parent to lose all their children from various diseases, in particular tuberculosis and scarlet fever.[74]

It seems a tenable assumption that the black-clad old lady of *Missing* was based on an actual person, as it is known that Herkomer drew his individual subjects from life. Writing about *The Last Muster* (Figure 2:14) Herkomer states he had 'just enough [money] left to pay for the models'.[75] Sketches exist of local old women, such as a Mrs Inwood, which were later adapted for use in *Eventide*.[76] Herkomer, alone or with colleagues, was known to wander the streets of London looking for suitable subjects, writing in 1882 that he 'looked … at humanity as it was around me, to find endless opportunities for the display of artistic workmanship and of lofty interpretations of our troubled existence'.[77] He moved to Bushey, then a quiet country village near London in the 1870s, and noted how the local old people, in those pre-pension days, earned themselves some money by carrying around the water, charging one halfpenny a bucket; a typical example of how the elderly could and would maintain their usefulness and independence. In a similar style, described by Flora Thompson - 'The old and poor ... went to pick up sticks in

[71] 'Royal Academy: First Notice',*The Times*, (30th April 1881), 10.
[72] 'The Royal Academy Exhibition: Fourth Notice,'*The Athenaeum* (May 28th 1881), 724.
[73] 'Royal Academy Exhibition: Second Notice,' *Illustrated London News,* 2190, (Saturday May 7th 1881), 459.
[74] Herkomer himself was widowed twice, and other examples amongst artists are John Calcott Horsley, who lost three sons and his first wife, whilst Louise Jopling was widowed twice and lost most of her children. Nor was in unusual for the old to be isolated – 'owing to early marriages and the havoc played by death, emigration, and migration, men and women of sixty-five, sixty, or even less, are often as much alone in the world as if they had never married.' Loane, *From Their Point of View,* 47.
[75] Herkomer, *Autobiography,* 33.
[76] Edward Morris, *Victorian and Edwardian paintings in the Walker and Sudley House Galleries* (London: HMSO, 1996), 213.
[77] Hubert Herkomer, 'Drawing and Engraving on Wood,' *The Art Journal* (June 1882): 166.

the copses'.[78] Margaret Loane describes how an 'old couple [both about 80 years old] still worked for a considerable part of their subsistence'.[79]

When Herkomer set up his art school in Bushey, he was able to provide the elderly with another source of income, well suited to their abilities - the 'old people who could do no work obtained sittings [with the students] for which they were well-paid'.[80] Several students' sketches remain of these elderly models, especially in the pages of the Bushey Art School magazine, *The Palette;* a typical example is Joseph Sydall's sketch *Old Man* (Figure 2:13). As already mentioned, W. P. Frith also enjoyed painting an old face and artist Louise Jopling (1843–1933) recommended the use of aged models, particularly to inexperienced artists, because they 'sit quieter' and 'there is more of what we call drawing in a face where Age, the destroyer, has been at work upon the tissues, and has left more plainly visible the form of the muscles and the shape of the bones of the skull'.[81] Whilst her use of the word 'destroyer' is not a positive word, it is softened by being followed by the opinion that it is exactly this wear and tear which reveals the true beauty of muscle and bone. Whether this would be of comfort to the aged themselves is uncertain, but it does make clear why they were of value to artists. Life's challenges and vicissitudes would have certainly left their mark on the physiognomy, thereby providing a record and proof that life had been lived and a life story acquired, able to give a worthwhile example to future generations.

Another picture of an elderly woman, displayed at the same exhibition as *Missing,* received very complimentary comment; 'in care, finish and solidity it surpasses *Missing*; its chief face may compare favourably in technical respects with any of Mr Herkomer's, nor would the comparison be unfavourable to it in regard to the pathos and expression which are happily given in the visage of the old woman' stated a reviewer.[82] This painting by Arthur Stocks was originally called *At Last* (Figure 2:18) and shows an old lady sitting lost in reverie, 'thinking but of him, with that constant but undemonstrative resigned affection that is so pathetic in age'.[83] On her knee are the letters her soldier son had sent her, and behind her that same son is coming through the doorway. Clearly much taken with this picture, the critic went on to write that 'Both in painting and drawing her face is a great success; but, above all, Mr Stocks is to be congratulated upon having avoided that rock of mock resignation and theatrical pathos which spoils most pictures of this kind. The mother's face expresses only that unalterable patience of the old which outlasts all else'.[84] Stocks has indeed not romanticised the old lady, with her pinched look, down-turned

[78] Flora Thompson, *Still Glides the Stream* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1948), 153.
[79] Loane, *From Their Point of View,* 204.
[80] Hubert von Herkomer, *My School and My Gospel* (London 1908), 62. The art school at Bushey ran from 1883 to 1904.
[81] Louise Jopling, *Hints to Students and Amateurs* (London: George Rowney, 1911), 20.
[82] 'The Royal Academy Exhibition, Fourth Notice,' *The Athenaeum*, 2796,(May 28th 1881): 724.
[83] 'Royal Academy Exhibition, Third Notice,' *Illustrated London News*, (May 14th 1881): 482.
[84] 'The Royal Academy: First Notice', *The Times* (Saturday, April 30th 1881): 10. This can be a confusing comment until it is realised that the reviewer is using a metaphor of shipwreck.

mouth, deep-socketed eyes, work-worn hands and patient expression; after reading her son's letters she seems to have reverted to contemplation of her son and the past.

It is a painting which seems to have touched a strong and popular chord with viewers, as it was reproduced several times across the world, adapted and even re-titled to suit particular circumstances; for example, the son's uniform and moustachios were changed to the less flamboyant and more practical ones of the Boer War, and the title changed to *Home from the War* (Figure 2:19). What it does emphasise, however, especially with the unadorned painting of the patient old lady, is the universal and continual importance of the enduring bonds of family across the generations, especially that of mother and son.

Three years earlier than *Missing* and *At Last*, in the same 1878 exhibition as Herkomer's *Eventide*, another painting of workhouse inmates was displayed, this time by the artist James Charles, under the title of *Our Poor; a Bible Reading in Chelsea Workhouse* (Figure 2:20). Since Charles lived in Chelsea at the time, and was known to paint from life, it is likely to be an accurate record of what he had seen. The full title included the very pertinent text from the Psalms (71 v9) - 'Cast me not off in the time of old age: forsake me not when my strength faileth.'[85] It shows a group of neatly clad clean old ladies grouped round a table sipping tea, sewing and listening to one of their number reading from the bible. A white-capped young lady is watching over them, whilst a small girl in a pink dress offers her flowers. The two windows and plants on the sills add to a feeling of light and space, much more so than in Herkomer's *Eventide*, with its black clad women and long perspective. There is a slight air of constraint, and more of a formal structure, about the painting, evident in the way the women sit, or are posed, formally occupied round the table, and in receipt of clothing, food and care.

Whilst paintings of workhouse inmates were not unknown at this time – art reviews mention similar pictures from European painters (such as *Old People's Home at Katwyk, Holland* by A. Arts, displayed at the United Arts Gallery in 1881) - the critics certainly chose to bewail these workhouse pictures.[86] *The Morning Post* reviewer described the 'old women' as 'afflicted beings ……we never saw anything like it. Why should our poor be thus insulted?' - though it is difficult now to deduce just what this insult was.[87] At least the critic in the *Illustrated London News* acknowledged that 'the effect of the evening light is clever', but went on to describe the picture as 'an assemblage of superannuated crones', complaining that 'no definite purpose would seem to be served by the production of this work'; the idea that it might 'incite the viewer to

[85] a text from such a long-established source indicates both the length of time the potential difficulties of old age had been recognised, and also how strong the influence of the Bible and the Church still were. Many people would be aware of the Ten Commandments, particularly in this instance the fifth 'Honour thy father and they mother', as well as the instruction in the Catechism 'to love, honour and succour my father and mother'.

[86] 'The United Arts Gallery,' *The Times*, (November 2nd 1881).

[87] 'The Royal Academy,' *The Morning Post*, (May 4th 1878): 5.

charity' was dismissed as the 'forlorn creatures' shown are maintained out of the poor-rates…. [which are] compulsory'.[88] One reviewer wondered 'What matter for the painter is there in lives of blank and wearisome old age, such as Mr Herkomer and Mr Charles have painted…' but then moved on to compliment Herkomer's painting of 'the old pensioners in the chapel', thus making it clear it was not old age itself being bemoaned, more the poverty of the old ladies, making them a possible expense on the community.[89] Nor did the ladies have the sentimental attraction of the old soldiers who have been 'associated with a past of danger and hardship in the service of [their] country'.[90] Another reviewer assigned the painting to 'the pauper school of painting [which might be] popular and profitable' as 'it is much easier to paint a score of weazened, wrinkled old women in linsey woolsey gowns and holland aprons than to copy the 'School of Athens' or the Cartoon of Pisa'.[91] An odd remark, as copying does not need the imagination, choice of subject, colour and position required when creating one's own subject; the comment says less about the quality of Charles' painting and more about the critic's outdated views, still clinging to the former supremacy of historical painting in the canon of art, and presumably disagreeing with Ralph Hedley's conviction, noted earlier in this chapter, that an artist should concentrate on the present day rather than the past.[92]

Charles, Herkomer and Holl had been described as 'Professors of Dismal Art', but although they all produced some dispiriting scenes, their repertoires were wide, including landscapes and portraits as well as genre.[93] Many of Charles' pictures found an immediate market with the businessman and art lover John Maddocks, which would seem to indicate both acceptance and popularity.[94] Charles was, and is, considered to be an underestimated artist of his time; T. Martin-Wood, a contemporary art critic, wrote that Charles' art was 'nothing like so well-known as it should be, considering that it is regarded by many as among the finest of our time.[95] His sympathetic and spirited painting of his elderly neighbour, Charlotte Wallder, in *Will It Rain?* (Figure 2:21) provides an apposite example of his work as well as evidence of his habitual practice of painting from life; she is shown as a proud, intrepid individual, upright and defiantly poised with her umbrella. Charles has not given her any pretence to conventional beauty; with her wrinkles, grey hair, bulbous nose, hard-worked hands and motley collection of clothes she is an authentic and life-like elderly figure. Displayed at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1888, the picture was described as 'sincere and consistent' but does not seem to have attracted much

[88] 'The Royal Academy Exhibition: Fifth Notice,' *Illustrated London News,* (June 1st 1878): 507.
[89] 'Royal Academy II', *The Times* (May 11th 1878): 6.
[90] ibid.
[91] 'Royal Academy: Fifth Notice,' *ILN,* (June 1st 1878): 507.
[92] Quoted in Millard, *Ralph Hedley,* 40.
[93] 'Royal Academy: Fifth Notice,' *ILN,* (June 1st 1878): 507.
[94] Butler Wood, 'The Maddocks Collection at Bradford' *Magazine of Art* (July/August 1891): 298-306, 337-344.
[95] T. Martin Wood, 'The Paintings of James Charles,'*The Studio; an illustrated magazine of Fine and Applied Art* 40 (1907):43-49.

contemporary comment.[96] Which is revealing in itself, as it implies that it was part of a routine subject spectrum.

Painters usually had a range of subjects, from genre to landscape, but would often return to a particular theme; two artists who seemed particularly content to paint the aged were Mary Evelina Kindon and James Hayllar. Mary Kindon favoured somewhat shabby old ladies as subjects for her paintings; they are either cheerfully immersed in their work, as in *Polishing the Pots* (Figure 2:22), or enjoying each other's company, as in *A Cosy Party* and *Have You Heard?* (Figures 2:23,24).[97] Reviewers often praise this artist, complimenting her on producing 'a very satisfactory piece of work' and noting how she 'evidences a not inferior perception of character, and there is admirable drawing and modelling in the faces, and plenty of invention in attitude and gesture'.[98] Another review remarks 'the most praiseworthy [picture] comes from the brush of Miss M E Kindon, whose work is always well-defined and thoroughly artistic'.[99] Favourable reviews continue for other of her paintings of the old - 'A clever sample of genre occurs in Miss M E Kindon's *Hush, Granny's Asleep'*, and her small picture *Old Cronies* was thought to be 'exceedingly clever'.[100] *Polishing the Pots* was also well thought of - 'Miss M E Kindon's industrious old woman brightening potts [sic] and kettles' was described as 'an amusingly characteristic study of an old woman scrubbing a brass pot with all her might and main. Her vigorous action and intense determination are worthy of all praise'.[101] Though somewhat patronising of the worn, wrinkled old lady's hard work, it also indicates an admiration and recognition of the verisimilitude of the portrayal. In the examples shown here, the artist has not glossed over the negative attributes of age, such as hardness of hearing, grey hair, stiffness of movement, wrinkled face and hands, but the people – including the industrious pot polisher – are shown as lively, smiling and thus positively perceived. In demeanour and occupation they are reminiscent of the old ladies in *Eventide,* indicating not only that such postures/activities were not unusual but also, since Mary Kindon lived in Bushey when Herkomer's Art School was operating, the strong probability that she would have been, at the very least, aware of his work, and sympathetic to his influence.

James Hayllar, whose *Study of a Man's Head* began this chapter, also often portrayed the old. He produced many charming if somewhat saccharine genre scenes, which show both young and old,

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[96] 'Additions to Public Galleries,' *Art Journal* May (1908): 145.
[97] See also the work of Louis Moeller in Chapter Three. Both artists chose to paint similar subjects, ie the lively chatter of the old.
[98] 'The Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colours,' *The Times* (March 18th 1889):4. 'Royal Society of Artists; The Water Colours,' *Birmingham Daily Post* (Tuesday October 24th 1893):4.
[99] 'London Correspondence,' *Birmingham Daily Post* (Friday April 22nd 1892): 4.
[100] 'The Picture Galleries,' *Lloyds Weekly Newspaper* (Feb 2nd 1896): 9. 'The Royal Academy: Fourth and Concluding Notice,' *The Times* (May 21st 1883): 4. Mary Kindon's pictures can be difficult to trace – her name is not always written accurately, for example Mr N E Kindon, and the titles sometimes change, but it seems likely that this picture would have had a strong resemblance to *Have You Heard?* or *A Cosy Party*.
[101] 'Royal Society of British Artists,' *Daily News* (Monday, April 2nd 1894):2. 'The Royal Society of British Artists,' *The Morning Post (*Saturday April 7th 1894): 3.

often together, amicably linked across the generations, each learning from the other. In *Never Too Late To Learn* (Figure 2:25) the young girl helps a red-hatted old man with his writing whilst an old lady, wrinkled and benign, sits watching. The old man is wearing a smock, perhaps oddly as by the date of the painting smocks were rarely worn but, just as the aged-etched faces of the old gave practice and added interest for the painter, smocks with their intricate stitching also offered painters not only a means of emphasising the age of an older sitter, but also beguiling opportunities to display their skills.[102] In *As The Twig is Bent* (Figure 2:26) Hayllar again details the smock as well as the chiselled wrinkled face of the praying old man, who is providing the child with a good example, fulfilling the need for a moral lesson in painting which, though at its height in the mid- nineteenth century, still lingered over English painting at this date.[103]

In another genial scene – *The Centre of Attraction* (Figure 2: 27) - three wrinkled old women admire a rather bland small child seated on her mother's knee.[104] The mother was modelled by one of Hayllar's daughters, and local women from Wallingford (where Hayllar lived) posed as the old ladies.[105] The subjects of his paintings were as popular with critics as viewers; when reviewing his 1888 painting *The Orphans - Charity begins at home* the critic remarked that 'Mr Hayllar always disposes one to join Mr Hardcastle in a declaration of love for old faces. There is no domestic picture of this year so tender as this interior of a scrupulously neat cottage, where the worthy old couple are caressing their little orphan grandchildren'.[106] At the same exhibition, his *Forty Winks* (Figure 2:28) was described as 'a natural study of a dozing veteran'.[107] It appears to be a reduced and slightly adapted version of a painting of 1887, *Keeping It Alight For Grandfather*, (Figure 2:29) where a young boy puffs on the old man's pipe and the glass is half full.[108] In *Forty Winks* the glass is empty, placed on the old man's plate, and it is the young boy who has been removed- a testament to the interest and sales potential of the old man. Hayllar emphasised the age of the man by showing him wearing a smock, with the fine smocking at least creating an excellent opportunity for Hayllar to display his abilities. Hayllar's pictures often had almost interchangeable titles; for example, *The Thorn* or *The Wounded Finger* of 1885 (Figure 2:30) could have been a minor variation on the favourably reviewed 1878 painting, displayed at the Royal Academy, where 'we should not pass over *As Careful As A Mother*, a benevolent old rustic tending a little child'.[109] It is clear that Hayllar recognised and responded to popular

[102] Elizabeth Gaskell *North & South* 1855 This edition (Oxford 1982), 58; Flora Thompson *Lark Rise,* 48.
[103] The full quotation is 'Just As the Twig is Bent, the Tree's inclin'd' from Alexander Pope's *'Epistles to Several Persons Epistle 1 To Lord Cobham* (1734): 1.11.
[104] the meticulous painting of the wrinkles is very clear when viewing the original work.
[105] Edward Morris, *Victorian and Edwardian Paintings in the Lady Lever Art Gallery* (London:HMSO, 1994), 49.
[106] 'Fine Arts Academy (Fourth Notice),' *Bristol Mercury and Daily Post* (April 16th 1888): 3. The original picture has not yet been traced. The allusion to Mr Hardcastle is in Act One, Scene One of *She Stoops to Conquer*, Oliver Goldsmith, 1773 'I love everything that's old; old friends, old times, old manners, old books, old wine'.
[107] 'Fine Arts Academy (Fourth Notice),' *Bristol Mercury and Daily Post* (April 16th 1888): 3. The original picture has not yet been traced.
[108] A photocopy reproduction of this painting can be found in the Witt Library, London.
[109] 'Royal Academy Exhibition, III,' *The Times* (May 31st 1878): 4.

themes that would sell well and provide him with a very adequate living. That he used the elderly as much as the young in his paintings indicates that both old men and old women were accepted, and respected, in society as much as other ages, and considered satisfactory subjects to hang on home walls.

In any scrutiny of the old and their inclusion in paintings from 1870–1910, the work of the Newlyn School inevitably has to be considered, as many detailed paintings of aged villagers are found within their works. Artists' colonies flourished in the last decades of the nineteenth century, and in England the Newlyn School, near Penzance in Cornwall, became particularly well known. Railways and portable artistic equipment had enabled painting to become a more peripatetic occupation, and Newlyn also had the attraction of a mild climate with the shimmering and clear light of the sea, and what Walter Langley winsomely described as 'the picturesque occupation of the fisherfolk'.[110]

Typical examples of the work of the Newlyn artists which showed the old are Edwin Harris's *A Pinch of Snuff* (Figure 2:31) and Walter Langley's *A Moment's Rest* (Figure 2:32). Old people were posed in one of their many roles - going about their work, in contemplation and providing comfort, especially to the young, as in Walter Langley's *Never Morning Wore to Evening but Some Heart did Break* (Figure 2:33). Here the positioning of the figures is deliberately contrived to focus on the contrast; the old lady sits quietly with her work-worn hands, wrinkled face and white hair, gently resting one gnarled hand on the young woman's bowed body. By lining up the sorrowful stoop and comforting hand of the two women with the natural light falling on the sea, Langley has given an emphasis to their different attributes, especially the comfort to be offered by an older person. Consolation and support are also evident in other works, as in Langley's *The Orphan* (Figure 2:34), where a young boy (the orphan) is being cared for by two women. The three generations form two triangular groups, one horizontally with the child at the peak and the two women at the base, the other vertically, with the younger woman at the peak and the old woman and child on a level, thus emphasising the interlinking of generations. A similar closeness is shown in Stanhope Forbes *The Health of the Bride* (Figure 2:35), where in the foreground a young child is being supported affectionately by an old man, probably the grandfather. Like so many of their contemporaries – and artists over the centuries – the Newlyn artists used local people as models, and it is clear that the same models (Grace Kelynack/Warren) sat for several of the painters – probably through an artistic liking for her 'furrowed face' as well as her availability and willingness to sit for them.

[110] quoted in Caroline Fox and Francis Greenacre, *Painting in Newlyn 1880 – 1930* (London: Barbican Art Gallery, 1985). 16. Langley's comments on Newlyn first appeared in 1905/6 in an article in the local guide books 'Daily Doings in Picturesque Penzance'. It was probably not so picturesque an occupation to the fisher-folk themselves, particularly when the men were at sea in stormy weather and the wives and dependants waited worriedly at home.

The Newlyn painters, not unreasonably, often used poses for the old people which are profoundly reminiscent of those used over the centuries – compare for example the firm hands of the old ladies on the heads of the young boys in *Dame Trimmer* (Figure 2:36) by Leghe Suthers and Murillo's *La Toilette Domestique* (Figure 1:6), or the pensive old lady in Langley's *When One Is Old* (Figure 2:37) with the similarly contemplative *Pope Julius II* produced by Raphael (Figure 1:19). Here is clear evidence not only of the timelessness and popular appeal of certain themes, but also the influence, conscious or unconscious, of the works of earlier artists, and the precedents they provided, as Chapter One has shown.

So far in this chapter older people have been portrayed as an integral and accepted members of a community, still able to contribute in some way to the society in which they live. They provide the opportunity for tropes such as the contrast between age and youth, the comfort the old can provide the young and the strong relationship between generations. As noted in the Introduction, concerns about the old during the years under review had been profound enough to cause state intervention and it was somewhat unexpected to discover how much the artists appeared to have had time, respect and sympathy for the aged, who with their lined and life-stamped faces, their perhaps idiosyncratic or quaint choice of clothes, as well as their availability and ability to sit still, had much to offer an artist. With so much more detail to be found in their faces, posture and general presence they provided excellent practice for an artist's skills; they might need, or want, to work at whatever local small jobs they could find – notably, in the case of women, care of the home – but they also had the time, as well as a willingness, to sit for an artist, especially if they would be paid for this.[111] There seems to have been a very successful symbiotic relationship between artist and aged sitter.

It has proved surprisingly difficult to find paintings that show the old in a negative, unsympathetic light, with the emphasis on what may be perceived as the less desirable characteristics of age, such as miserliness, greed, dependency, cunning, decrepitude and futility. It would not, of course, be reasonable to find many paintings that were unattractive and repellent, since they were produced to satisfy both artist and potential buyers, but nonetheless even if the subject has the potential to be difficult or cause unease, such as Herkomer's *Missing* and Perugini's *Faithful*, with its graveside location, the paintings still show a sympathy and respect.

One of the problems of finding such paintings is the probability that many works have disappeared through the depredations of the years, such as war, fire and flood, but contemporary reviews and listings give little hint of negative or cruel paintings of the elderly. There is dignity

[111] Charles Booth, *The Aged Poor in England and Wales* (London: MacMillan, 1894), 321.

even in pictures which show the old in an apparently sad situation, such as those referred to above. In another example, La Thangue's *The Last Furrow* (see Figure 2:38), with his crumpled pose, clean face and implicit willingness to work the pictures do not show the subject in a pessimistic, uncaring light, but with compassion and respect; this opinion is reinforced in contemporary writings, where it is clear that people preferred to maintain their independence for as long as they could. It is the potential companions of old age, infirmity and dependency, that concerned people more, for in those years it often meant the workhouse, seen as 'the last home of the poorest and most unfortunate. Many have gone there to end their days, to die out of sight of all that is kind and charitable'.[112] In his diary Reverend Kilvert writes of William Jones, who, on becoming 'helpless and infirm', chose to kill himself rather than lose his independence.[113]

It seems possible, even probable, that in paintings there was a preference for the aged 'furrowed face', with its etched experience, comfort, resignation and humanity, as indicated by a contemporary comment on two of Charles Edward Perugini's paintings in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. One, *Faithful* (Figure 2:39), shows a drably dressed old lady lost in reverie after apparently bringing a tribute of simple flowers to a grave – probably that of her husband.[114] The other painting, called *Peonies* (Figure 2:40), shows a placid smooth-faced young girl holding a large bowl of peonies. One might expect this latter, with its youth and prettiness, to be the more popular picture, yet an 1888 comment is that '... Mr C. E. Perugini's *Faithful*, where a poor widow is bringing a tribute of simple flowers to her husband's grave…. is a *much more popular picture* than the same artist's *Peonies*, delightful as that is in its idealization of the beauty of girlhood and flowers'.[115] An interesting comment, that the unidealised older woman should be preferred to the young girl; an acknowledgement that painting was not just about youthful beauty and bland, pleasant scenes; there was a preference for the coarseness of reality – 'mutton and potatoes', to paraphrase a Gilderoy comment on another Perugini painting.[116] The natural inference to be taken from such comments is that the elderly, with their life's experience carved on their face and form, had powerful and positive attractions for painters and viewers alike.

This chapter has built up a broad view of the elderly in English genre paintings between 1870 and 1910, as required by the thesis. About forty paintings of the old in various everyday

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[112] Alfred Williams, *In a Wiltshire Village: Scenes from Rural Victorian Life (*Stroud: Alan Sutton. 1981), 43. First published 1912.
[113] Francis Kilvert, *Kilvert's Diary 1870 - 1879; a selection edited and introduced by William Plomer* (London: Jonathan Cape. 1964), 96. Entry for 18th December 1870.
[114] It was also an unusual subject for Perugini, who was much better known as 'The painter of grace and sweet womanhood in her most charmingly decorative aspect…. in which life's shadows are never deep, wherein the foul or sad or painful never enters.' *Magazine of Art* (July 1898): 457-463.
[115] Rimbault Dibden, 'The Walker Art Gallery II,' *Magazine of Art (*December 1888): 50–56. My italics in quotation.
[116] Discussing Perugini's painting *'The Hop Picker'*, Gilderoy commented that she was 'sweetly pretty, in truth a charming girl, but scarcely one that could eat mutton and potatoes, rather we should say a consumer of the sawdust natural to wax-dolls ' Roland Gilderoy, *The Pictures of the Year: notes on the Academy, the Grosvenor, the other exhibitions and on some pictures not publicly shown (*London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1887), 11. (nb Roland Gilderoy was the pseudonym of Charles Rowley, Victorian social reformer and member of the Ancoats brotherhood].

situations were selected from the database for the information they could provide about attitudes to the old. There was no difficulty in finding such paintings, with the elderly being shown in a variety of situations. Often they were involved in the community, whether still working (Figure 2:5 *Threshing the Gleanings*), education (Figures 2:2,3,4) also in the quieter and beneficial activity of providing comfort (Figure 2:33 *Never Morning Wore to Evening*). It was especially rewarding within the context of the thesis to discover that the most significant figure in an advertisement was often an older person, as can be seen in Hedley's *Going Home* (Figures 2:8,9) or Elsley's *Besieged* (Figure 2:10). The clear implication to be drawn from this is that the old were respected figures whose appearance in an advertisement would encourage sales.

It also became apparent from the paintings that the appearance of the old was faithfully recorded, with no attempt to hide or lessen elderly features such as grey hairs and wrinkles, as would probably happen in the present day. This point is made clear in the modified painting *Forty Winks* (Figure 2:28), where it is the young boy who has been removed from the picture rather than the old man, suggesting an older person is the more popular subject.

Other paintings were chosen because they extended the variety of the ways of life of the elderly being shown. They can be seen as sturdily independent figures, as seen in *Will It Rain?* (Figure 2:21) and Mary Kindon's pot polisher (Figure 2:22); or in more dependent positions, being looked after, such as in *Our Poor* (Figure 2:20) and *The Last Muster* (Figure 2:14). Even here, however, they are not idle or feeble but are still occupied in more sedentary occupations of reading, sewing and drinking tea. Other works, for example Langley's *When One is Old* (Figure 2:37) and Perugini's *Faithful* (Figure 2:39) show the quieter attributes of old age, such as resignation and reflection, which were obviously considered to be worth recording in a painting.

The inclusion of contemporary reviews has strengthened the chapter by clarifying the attitudes in vogue at the time the works were created, which reinforced the perception gained from the paintings that the elderly were acceptable subjects. Although there were some negative comments in reviews, as has been seen in those about *Eventide*, they seem more to do with the potential poverty and dependency of the subjects than old age in itself.

At the start of the study it had seemed probable, given the concerns being expressed at the time about old people's vulnerability and poverty, that they would be shown as feeble and needy, but it has in fact proved difficult to find many paintings which showed the elderly in a negative light. A significant start has therefore been made to building up the comprehensive view of the life of the elderly required by the thesis.

CHAPTER THREE
The Old in United States Genre Painting, 1870 - 1910

The previous chapter ended with the encouraging thought that, in England at least, the portrayal of older people in paintings might be preferred to the smooth-skinned young. The chapter also began in a positive way, with the description of William Powell Frith spotting potential sitters, often older people, in the streets around him. This seems to be a widespread predilection of artists generally, not just in England. American artist Elihu Vedder, for example, found inspiration in Jane Jackson, a street-vendor who he 'used to pass frequently [on] a near corner [selling peanuts]. Her meekly bowed head and a look of patience endurance or resignation touched my heart…. I finally persuaded her to sit to me and make a drawing of her head and have her photograph taken'.[1] He kept and pondered on these records of her features and painted her tired old face several times for posterity as the Cumaean Sibyl (Figure 3:1a/b).

Another painter who responded to the artistic fascination of an old face was Robert Henri, influential artist and founder of the early twentieth century Ashcan School; he expressed the view that 'Age need not destroy beauty. There are people who grow more beautiful as they grow older. If age means to them an expansion and development of character this new mental and physical state will have its effect on the physical. A face which in the early days was only pretty or even dull will be transformed. The eyes will attain mysterious depths, there will be a gesture in the whole face of greater sensibility and all will appear co-ordinate'.[2]

Such merits doubtless provided additional encouragement to artists painting genre scenes, in which the old would inevitably be included as they were a habitual part of any social grouping, frequently shown as calmly and competently accomplishing their everyday activities; typical examples include the old people who chat and shop in Thomas Waterman Wood's *Village Post Office* (Figure 3:2) and Abbott Fuller Graves' *Country Grocery in Kennebunkport Maine* (Figure 3:3).[3] In these paintings all generations are shown, some active – the shopkeepers, the people about their daily duties - and others in more passive roles, for example the men, mostly older, who sit at tables and chat/read newspapers. The women are shown to be more fully occupied with their daily domestic routines, such as care of children, shopping and buying materials for sewing. Nor need the subjects be conventionally pretty; with her upright stance and firm grasp on the paper in her hand the old lady in the centre of Fuller Graves' *Country Grocery* looks a strong, almost authoritarian, figure; her central placing is reminiscent of the elderly lady in Herkomer's *Missing*. Clearly on both sides of the Atlantic it was not inappropriate to show the old, of either gender, as the main focus of a painting; it also reinforces the idea of 'sturdy

[1] Elihu Vedder, *The Digressions of V* (London: Constable. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), 236.
[2] Robert Henri, *The Art Spirit* compiled by Margery Ryerson (Philadelphia and London: J.P.Lippincott, 1923), 120.
[3] It was this Post Office painting which caused the reviewer to remark on Thomas Waterman Wood's 'happy faculty in delineating character.' 'American Painter. Thomas W. Wood, N.A.,' *The Art Journal* New Series 2 (1876): 115.

independence [being] the dominant trait of [national] character' recalled by American journalist William James Stillman when writing about his childhood.[4]

Another group of old people, all men, appeared together in a painting produced fairly late in his career by well-known American painter Eastman Johnson. Called *The Nantucket School of Philosophy*, (Figure 3:4), it shows on one side of the painting a group of elderly men sitting reminiscing and discussing the issues of the day, whilst on the other side another old man works soling shoes. The title recalled, tongue-in-cheek, the Concord School of Philosophy, a group of ageing philosophers (including Branson Alcott and Ralph Waldo Emerson) who convened each summer between 1879 and 1888 to discuss various recondite subjects. With his choice of title Johnson intentionally linked the Philosophy School to the picture, but was in fact championing the practical philosophy and strength of every day life which can exist in old age. Rather than discuss esoteric philosophical subjects Johnson's subjects sit, converse and keep their fingers on the pulse of life, whilst more practical and necessary work is continued by the old man repairing shoes, the routine work of New England winters. The verisimilitude of his portrayal of the 'old whalers' is confirmed by local writer Sarah Orne Jewett, who, in her novel about the imaginary North-East coastal town of Deephaven, wrote of 'the ancient mariners who may be found every pleasant morning sunning themselves like turtles on one of the wharves' – and presumably, on unpleasant mornings, under cover.[5] When the work was displayed at the National Academy of Design in November 1887 the reviews were complimentary, stating that 'such a painting not only does credit to the reputation of the artist but to American art'. Referring to the old whalers in a phrase of dubious compliment as 'relics of the past importance of the island' it also acknowledged that 'each old man is a superb character study'; a phrase which has echoes of the reviews of Herkomer's *Last Muster* and *Eventide* (see Chapter Two).[6] The meticulous painting of each character points to the pleasure the artist could take in creating a face, particularly an old one, where the wrinkled face would require extra drawing. Johnson had drawn the faces so well, and given them such individuality, that two years later he was still able to identify the subjects.[7] His choice of elderly subject and use of contrasting light makes clear why he was referred to as 'the American Rembrandt', whose works he had seen, and been much impressed by, on a visit to the Netherlands at the start of his career.[8]

The elderly were not only an integral part of scenes of everyday life, they were also often portrayed as individual tradesmen, such as clock-menders and blacksmiths, carrying out their trades, and shown as effective, skilled and indisputably old, as artist Thomas Hovenden

[4] William James Stillman, *The Autobiography of a Journalist* (London: Grant Richards, 1910), 62.
[5] Sarah Orne Jewett, *Deephaven* (London: Osgood, Mcilvaine & Co, 1893).
[6] National Academy of Design, *National Academy Notes including the Complete Catalogue of the Spring Exhibition* (1887), 7:24.
[7] http://art.thewalters.org/detail/1441/the-nantucket-school-of-philosophy/ accessed 21st February 2017.
[8] Teresa A. Carbone & Patricia Hills, *Eastman Johnson; Painting America* (New York: Brooklyn Museum of Art in Association with Rizzoli, 1999), 19.

demonstrated. His *Traveling Clock-Maker* (Figure 3:5) is still able, despite his white beard, wrinkled face and skin, to both perform useful and intricate skills as well as, at the same time, educating and entertaining the young. In his *Village Blacksmith* (Figure 3:6) Hovenden shows a man who, in terms of his long white beard and white hair, is obviously aged, but is also someone who, with his upright, defiant, hand-on-hip posture, appears strong and vigorous. Hovenden used a blacksmith from his home town as a model, and deliberately cropped the top and bottom from the picture to emphasise the blacksmith's erect figure.[9] Another blacksmith, painted by Jefferson David Chalfant (Figure 3:7) twenty years later, is hard at work, staunchly wielding his hammer amidst the still-useful tools of his trade, his shining bald head and flowing white beard undoubtedly emphasising his age.

Chalfant planned his pictures in great detail, making preliminary photographs and then 'pouncing' the outlines in a similar way to fresco painting.[10] He was an artist who was precise and painstaking in his work, probably because of his initial training as a cabinetmaker.[11] He was likened to the then fashionable Meissonier, 'that meticulous painter of intricate detail'.[12] As with many painters, Chalfant's repertoire was wide and included landscapes, still-life, trompe l'oeil paintings, but it his paintings of tradesmen which have especial relevance to this study, because of the evidence that he made particular efforts to show the workmen as aged.

This can be seen in his *Blacksmith* and also his *Clock Maker* (Figure 3:8); both of these paintings were popular enough for at least two more versions to be produced to order; such requests indicate the popularity of the subjects of tradesmen, and also, by implication, the requirement for the paintings to be similar, though Chalfant made subtle differences in each of them.[13] In *The Blacksmith* he shifted 'the viewpoint and perspective to create a more intimate setting, and substituted an elderly smith for the young worker in the photograph'.[14] In planning photographs for the *The Clock Maker* (Figures 3:9a/b) the poses were provided by younger men, (possibly Chalfant himself, then in his early forties), one with just a moustache, one with a trimmed beard; but beard or clean-shaven, sitting or standing, the workman was always old in the final work, grey-haired, bespectacled, with wrinkled hands and the lines of life imprinted on his face.[15]

Some modern commentators consider the style of beard shown indicates that the tradesmen were old-fashioned; however, in the preparatory works considered here, it can be seen that Chalfant

[9] Anne Gregory Terhune, *Thomas Hovenden: His Life and Work* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 87.
[10] Emily Dana Shapiro, 'J. D. Chalfant's Clock Maker: The Image of the Artisan in a Mechanized Age,' *American Art* 19:3 (Fall 2005): 54.
[11] 'His work reflects a good cabinetmaker's attention to detail and craftsmanship. It is precise, consistent and controlled'. Hermann Warner Williams, Jr, *Mirror to the American Past: A survey of American Genre Painting 1750 – 1900* (Greenwich, Connecticut: New York Graphic Society, 1973), 203.
[12] Shapiro, 'Chalfant's Clock Maker,' 59 n34.
[13] ibid, 54.
[14] http://collection.terraamericanart.org/view/objects/asitem/search$0040/0 follow links to Chalfant. Accessed 29/09/2016.
[15] Shapiro, 'Chalfant's Clock Maker,' 56.

painted a variety of facial hair styles, and it is the younger rather than the older man who has a beard.[16] It is evident that painters enjoyed the interest and challenge of painting a beard; when Frith's model Ennis (see Chapter Two) offered to remove his beard, Frith declined vigorously, remarking 'it's your beard I want beyond anything'.[17] American artist Robert Henri made a similar comment- 'The hair helps to make the face, the face helps to make the hair ……..there is a wonderful fancifulness in [an] old man's long gray hair'.[18] Beards were, and are, grown for complex reasons - fashion, religious beliefs, hygiene (or lack of it), proof of masculinity and, in the late nineteenth century at least, the provision of 'a special immunity against bronchial infections'.[19] Furthermore, until the invention of the safety razor (patented 1880) and Gillette's disposable blade (1895, widely manufactured from 1901), shaving must have been time-consuming, tedious and risky.[20] Other paintings of clock-makers/menders show them with varieties of facial hair, from full beard to clean-shaven (Figures 3:5,10), and were probably no more than a reflection of the individual preferences of the sitters.

Many of the secondary sources which discuss American genre painting in these years consider the portrayal of the elderly, especially tradesmen such as the clockmaker and the blacksmith, as specifically designed to evoke nostalgia in the viewer/purchaser. As early as 1974 Patricia Hills commented how old people were used to reinforce nostalgic themes.[21] Other writers reiterate this opinion: as an example, Elizabeth Johns considered that 'the appearance of blacksmiths and scissors grinders, typically older men …… were pleasant …. substitutions for members of the assertive late-century working classes'.[22] In a recent interpretation of Chalfant's *Blacksmith* on the Terra Foundation for Art Collection website, Chalfant's late nineteenth century paintings are considered to concentrate on nostalgic themes that celebrate 'a rapidly vanishing way of life', and his 'typical blacksmiths, cobblers, clockmakers and chess players are white-haired, implying that their well-honed skills, along with their dignified character, may well die with them'.[23] Emily Dana Shapiro continues the linking of elderly subjects with nostalgia when, in her study of Chalfant's *Clockmaker,* she considers that Philip B. Hahs' *Old Timers* (Figure 3:11) makes 'explicit the association of aged persons with an antiquated and ineffectual way of life. Like the watch that has ceased ticking, the elderly figure … has outlived his use [and] value in society'.[24] In this painting Hahs (whose works in his short lifetime gained 'favorable mention', and

[16] ibid, 55. see also Sarah Burns, *Pastoral Inventions: Rural Life in Nineteenth Century American Art and Culture.* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 190,196,199.
[17] William Powell Frith, *A Victorian Canvas: the memoirs of W. P. Frith* edited by Neville Wallis (London: Bles, 1957), 135.
[18] Henri, *The Art Spirit,* 258.
[19] Mrs C. E. Humphrey, *Etiquette for Every Day* (London: Grant Richards, 1904), 279.
[20] Allan Peterkin, *One Thousand Beards*; *a cultural history of facial hair* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp, London: Turnaround, 2001), 67. Before inventing the disposable razor-blade, King Camp Gillette (1855 – 1932) worked for a time as a travelling salesman and thus understood the risks and difficulties of having to shave on a moving, rattling train with the conventional razor. www.mit.edu follow link to lemelson.mit.edu/resources/king-gillette. Accessed 29/09/2016.
[21] 'The painters of nostalgia also turned to old men and old women for subjects for their art.' Patricia Hills, *The Painters' America; rural and urban life, 1810–1910* (New York: Praeger, 1974), 80.
[22] Elizabeth Johns, *American Genre Painting; the politics of everyday life* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1991), 201.
[23] http://collection.terraamericanart.org/view/objects/asitem/search$0040/0 follow links to Chalfant. accessed 29/09/2106.
[24] Shapiro, *Chalfant's Clock Maker*, 55.

attracted attention with their 'whimsical subject and bright contrast') does not spare the elderly features of the old man, with his bald head, flowing grey beard and bulbous aged nose.[25] The advanced age of the subject is further emphasised by the inclusion of 'old' in the title, but the link with superfluity and ineffectiveness is not so visually or immediately apparent; there is no clear evidence that the watch has stopped, it seems more a matter for the viewer's subjective interpretation. In the same year as *Old Timers* Hahs produced at least two other paintings of this grey-bearded old man; in one painting *Old Recollections,* (Figure 3:12) he plays his violin, lost, the title implies, in memories; in *Study of an Old Man (*Figure 3:13) a newspaper rests on his knee as he cleans his spectacles ready for use. In these two pictures, where the age of the sitter is emphasised with the inclusion of the word 'old' in the title, the elderly subject is shown as seated and alert, practising his skills, taking an interest in the wider world, worthy of respect and with no hint of obsolescence. With his unadorned backgrounds, Hahs also makes his subjects the complete focus of the painting, there is no distraction provided by the clutter of material possessions, as can often be seen in the paintings of other artists, in particular Louis Moeller (see later).

Seeing nostalgia in a painting more than a century after it was painted is understandable, but there was less evidence of this attitude in contemporaneous reviews and writings. Remembering the words of W. P. Frith about the joy of painting Ennis, as well as Louise Jopling's writings on the attractions of painting the old, it seems probable that in painting these works Hahs found practice, pleasure and purpose rather than a mere wish to induce nostalgia. In her conclusion to *Painters' America* Patricia Hills commented that many nineteenth century paintings 'of everyday life …. were painted with a large measure of optimism and affection' and the sympathetic works produced by Hahs and other painters confirm this opinion.[26] Lee M. Edwards understood that despite the tendency to 'interpret the lyrical positivism of nineteenth century American genre paintings negatively, it is possible that the blissful scenes of domestic harmony typically painted by these artists may have been closer to the truth than we have allowed ourselves to believe'.[27]

In the United States there are few paintings of 'the Dismal School' style of painting to be found in England, with its portrayal of the poor, sad and suffering and who might, or equally might not, be old. The reviewer of one painting at an Art Exhibition in New York remarked on 'The old women in their blue uniform …. ranged around the room, sewing and sociably gossiping over a cup of tea'.[28] This could be a description of sombre English works, such as James Charles' *Our*

[25] 'Clubs: The Philadelphia Sketch Club,' *American Art Review* 1:4 (Feb 1880):176. Edward Strahan, 'The Philadelphia Society of Artists: Third Annual Exhibition,' *Art Amateur* 6:2 (Jan 1882): 26. Titles include - 'Resting', 'Refreshing after a Performance', 'Nest', 'The Drum Major' and 'Twilight', which indicate the variety of his subject matter.
[26] Hills, *Painters' America*, 137.
[27] http://www.tfaoi.org/aa/8aa/8aa132.htm Lee M. Edwards, *Domestic Bliss: Family Life in American Painting* 1840 – 1910 (New York: Hudson River Museum, 1986), last paragraph.
[28] Mary Gay Humphrey, 'The Fifty-Ninth Exhibition of the National Academy of Design,' *The Decorator and Furnisher* 14:2 (May 1884): 55

Poor or Herkomer's *Eventide*, which were discussed in Chapter Two. Instead these were the words of Mary Gay Humphreys in her review of *The Charity Home,* a painting from the brush of Ohio-born American painter Francis H. Miller (1855 – 1930); in 1884 the work was on display at the Fifty-Ninth Exhibition of the National Academy of Design in New York. It is known that the elusive Miller studied in both Paris and Holland, and therefore would have absorbed some European influence on subject matter.[29] Since Herkomer's work was known in the States, from reproductions and his American visits, it is also very likely that Miller was aware of Herkomer's paintings and sought to try them in the American market.

It is tantalising that no location or illustration of this painting is still extant as the work provoked 'a large proportion of the interest excited by individual works at that show'.[30] As with the English paintings on a similar subject, reviews were ambivalent, considering the work to be 'handicapped by an unpleasant subject', although Miller was praised for his 'keen eye for character and a ready and sympathetic invention'.[31] *The New York Times* described the work as a 'fine, well-brushed, sober-toned interior, showing the inmates of an old woman's institute', but then complained that 'the painting here is very pleasant but the painter has abjured incident. It is any institute, any room, any set of old women – doing nothing'.[32] Many other reviews were no more than descriptive 'An interior of a Home for aged women;- the inmates engaged in sewing and other light tasks' and 'a number of old women engaged at light tasks in one of the city's institutions'.[33] There was, however, an acknowledgement of the possible pathos of the subjects 'Whatever sympathy there is in the picture inheres in the subject.'[34]

This painting, however, as far as can be ascertained, stands more isolated in its subject matter in the United States than was the case in England (and Europe), where paintings such as those by Charles and Herkomer, whilst not common, were certainly not unknown.[35] There is little evidence of comparable topics in America. Illustrations in magazines, such as the wood engraving of *The Graham Institution for Aged Females, Brooklyn* (Figure 3:14) exist, indicating some public interest in the theme, but as a topic for an art work, at least from the evidence left from reviews, reproductions and newspaper reports, it seems an unaccustomed subject. For the most part American artists seem to have portrayed old people as lively, spirited and prepared to fight their own battles, further evidence of that national characteristic of strong independence mentioned at the beginning of the chapter.

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[29] 'A Dream of Music by Francis Miller,' *The Art Union* 2:3, (Sept 1885): 45.
[30] ibid.
[31] ibid.
[32] 'Pictures at the Academy,' *The New York Times* (13th April 1884).
[33] Charles M. Kurtz, *National Academy Notes including the Complete Catalogue of the Spring Exhibition, National Academy of Design, The South Gallery* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 4, 1884), 164. 'The National Academy Exhibition,' *The Art Union* 1:4 (April 1884):81.
[34] Mary G. Humphrey, 'Fifty-Ninth Exhibition' *The Decorator and Furnisher* 14:2 (May 1884): 55.
[35] for example *Old People's Home at Katwyk, Holland* by A. Artz, displayed at The United Arts Gallery,*The Times* (November 2nd 1881):10.

At this point it is useful to recall a particular and influential difference between the two countries. In England and Wales in the years under review several elderly figures maintained their presence in the public eye, notably Queen Victoria, who aged with the century and was advised by several Prime Ministers in their sixties, seventies and eighties. When she died she was succeeded in 1901 by her already ageing fifty-nine year old son, Edward.[36] In contrast, in the United States there were no notable public, long-serving and ageing figures to provide examples of growing old; instead it was a rapidly developing republic, with its comparatively young leaders changing at least every four years.[37] Thus in England ageing was a perpetual feature before the public's eyes, whilst in the United States there were no such images.

It would, of course, be unwise to believe uncritically in the cosy world presented by genre painters, but that does not mean there were not considerable elements of truth in such works. The United States was a vibrant and vigorous country during these years; the comments of English artist Philip Burne-Jones (son of artist Edward Burne-Jones) on a visit to the United States early in the twentieth century are typical and illustrate the differences between the two countries at this time. He noted 'the absence of all signs of poverty in the streets….. I cannot recall a single example of such objects of misery and destitution as one daily meets with in the streets of London', as well as a more assertive spirit, 'an atmosphere of frightful hurry and restless bustle' and the 'doctrine of equality – everyone has a fair and equal chance'.[38] It is telling that the three things he missed most on his return to England were a bath, a telephone and proper electric lighting, making it clear how much more vibrant and sophisticated a place the United States was in comparison to the Old Country of England.[39]

It was also a very young country in terms of the age of the population. To a very large extent this was due to the high rate of immigration, with people fleeing oppression in their home country, or seeking the better life which could be provided with the job opportunities and potential wealth on offer in the United States – usually in the rapidly growing towns. The majority – at least 68% - of the immigrants to the United States were male, aged between fifteen and forty-five, most of whom arrived through the port of New York.[40] Other large cities were also developing rapidly, especially in the north-east, but the United States nonetheless remained a predominantly rural society until many years later than in England and Wales, with the urban population still being under 50% in 1910. Many old people remained in the countryside -

[36] see Appendix One. Examples include Palmerston x 2 (aged 71-74, 75-81); Disraeli x 2 (aged 64, 70 – 76) and Gladstone x 4 (aged 59 – 65, 71-76, 77 and 83-85) www.number10.gov.uk/history-and-tour/prime-ministers-in-history Accessed 8th March 2017.
[37] Of the ten American presidents who served between 1869 – 1913, all were in their forties and fifties when elected, only two reaching sixty before the end of their tenure See Appendix One.
[38] Philip Burne-Jones, *Dollars and Democracy* (New York: D. Appleton, 1904), 61, 20, 70.
[39] ibid, 55. Rather than that 'bastard product of science and commercial enterprise known by the same name in London [which] bears little resemblance to its transatlantic namesake' ibid, 55.
[40] compiled from Peter Morton Coan, *Ellis Island Interviews: in their own words* (New York: Facts on File, 1997) and *Historical Statistics*, I588. Note the slight change in the classification of immigrant' ages.

according to one study, 'about 63% of old people in 1900 lived in rural areas'.[41] As in England, the older people were considered as not so adept as younger people at learning the new skills required of them in an increasingly mechanised, non-agricultural, society; whether or not this was true, there were so many young people available for work employers had no need to test the competence of older people.

Add to the above ingredients the extraordinary wealth being generated by new processes; steel production, for example, grew from 77,000 tons in 1870 to 11.2million tons in 1900.[42] Improvements in communications and infrastructure, particularly the railroad 'made national independence secure and … brought faster and more reliable transportation, new and improved goods for consumers, and rising incomes for most families', it is thus clear that the United States had over the nineteenth century developed into an energetic and wealthy country.[43]

One artist who illustrated well this vibrancy and vigour, especially in the old, was Louis Moeller, (Figures 3:15-20) whose work was extremely popular in the 1880s and 1890s, though it faded from fashion in the early twentieth century. He was prolific in his work (over one hundred works are recorded in the Smithsonian Archive) and he often painted scenes of groups of old people. A typical example is his *Gossips* (Figure 3:15), where white-haired wrinkled old ladies sit sewing, chatting and drinking tea, appearing animated, capable and interested in life. In terms of facial appearance, occupation and posture they are strongly reminiscent of the women in Herkomer's *Eventide*, but ensconced within their brighter, cluttered, colourful background they appear less wretched than in Herkomer's portrayal of darkly clothed old ladies within the drab surroundings of the workhouse. The 'Dismal School' realism noted in Chapter Two, such as that shown in *Eventide* or La Thangue's *Last Furrow,* is not easily found in paintings of this period in the United States , much more usual is the depiction of people - old, young, or any stage in between – actively enjoying each other's company – such as in Story's *A Chance Acquaintance* (Figure 3:36), or Fuller Graves' *Village Clockmender* (Figure 3:10). It is also appropriate to note that many of Moeller's paintings, in style and subject, are strongly reminiscent of Mary Kindon's English works (see Chapter Two); both painters show old people sitting and chatting, though Moeller's people are shown in smart and more costly garments, whereas Mary Kindon's subjects are more shabbily clothed. There is no convincing evidence that the two painters saw each other's work, and the probable reason for the similarity is the universal nature of the subject.

Little record has been left of Moeller's opinions and reasons for specialising in this narrow range of elderly subjects, though its undoubted success, both with reviewers and purchasers, is probably sufficient reason. There are difficulties when considering his work, though they are

[41] Michael Dahlin, "Perspectives on the Family Life of the Elderly in 1900" *The Gerontologist* 20:1 (Feb 1980):103.
[42] Charles W. Calhoun, *The Gilded Age: Perspectives on the Origin of America (*Lanham, Maryland: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 2,13.
[43] ibid, 13.

problems which apply to many other painters of this era.[44] First of all, works are so similar in style and subject that reviews and titles are all but interchangeable; secondly, though the internet now advertises the provision of copies of many paintings on demand, the original's location, or even continued existence, is unknown; and finally, undated pictures make the sequence of painting difficult to determine. In Moeller's case, the main clue is whether his signature is followed by A.N.A. (1884) or N.A. (1895) and whether the painting is of a single figure or a group.[45] It seems reasonable to assume that his move from painting single figures to groups followed a remark in an 1885 exhibition review that he only seemed able to paint single figures.[46]

Moeller's work was not limited to one topic, but his success and expertise undoubtedly lay in picturing old people at work and leisure, usually in vivacious and lively pose, almost to the point of caricature. His paintings are notable for their attention to detail, both of the people portrayed and their surroundings, the conspicuous consumption of the nouveaux riches of America being faithfully recorded. A particular speciality was the production of small, cabinet-sized paintings which portrayed old men from the professional middle classes – such as art dealers, auctioneers, bankers, booksellers, collectors, and lawyers – in small spirited groups; conventionally and sombrely dressed in dark suits and white shirts, they were also engaged in lively argument and discussion.[47] No attempt was made to hide their age, it was emphasised by the careful painting of their white hair and beards, wrinkled faces, necks and hands, and hunched figures.

The people Moeller painted were almost entirely of the middle classes, the segment of American society whose numbers had grown most dramatically in the last half of the nineteenth century, causing one English visitor to comment 'That which in England we call the middle classes is in America virtually the nation'.[48] Between 1870 and 1910 the numbers of people in 'professional' occupations nearly quintupled, increasing from 356,985 in 1870 to 1,699,267 in 1910; a growth which pales into insignificance beside the spectacular increase in clerical workers, 129,141 in 1870, growing to nearly two million (1,944,359) by 1910.[49]

Such growth was due to the great changes in the American way of life mentioned earlier, which can be summed up in the self-explanatory words - Reconstruction, Expansion and Industrialisation.[50] Factories were being built, towns were expanding, and improvements in

[44] William H. Gerdts, *Louis Charles Moeller N.A.: a Victorian Man's World* (New York: Grand Central Art Galleries, 1984), 3.
[45] ibid, 10, 14. A.N.A. =Associate Member of the National Academy of Design; awarded 1884. N.A.= full Academician, National Academy of Design, awarded 1895.
[46] 'He does not find it safe to undertake a picture containing more than a single figure.' *The Art Amateur* 12:6 (May 1885): 129.
[47] they were thus a suitable size to hang on a wall no matter what size the room. 'Every house can make room for two or three portraits of cabinet size' wrote a Times contributor on May 12th 1894, *The Times*, 10. English artist John Collier remarked in his article on 'The Slump in Modern Art,' *The Nineteenth Century and After* 66, (August 1909): 329 that 'the public would buy more modern pictures.... above all, if they were smaller'.
[48] Matthew Arnold, *Civilisation in the United States* (Boston: Cupples & Hurd, 1888), 85.
[49] Susan B. Carter, *Historical Statistics of the U.S.; Millennial Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
[50] Greg Ward, *Rough Guide to the History of the USA* (London: Rough Guides 2003), 184.

transportation, particularly the railroads, were literally opening up new horizons. Only four years after the end of the destructive Civil War a particularly visible and symbolic expression of the growth and development of the United States appeared when, in May 1869, the Central Pacific and Union Pacific Railroads united, making the first Transcontinental Railroad.[51] By the last decades of the nineteenth century 'corporate culture' was firmly established, along with the concomitant organisation and administration this new culture required; which explains the astounding growth in both the 'professional' classes and the 'middle-class' clerical workers necessary to administer these systems. People were also becoming 'consumers', with a wide range of new products available to them through the new types of shops developing, notably department stores. There were vast extremes of wealth, at the top end such multi-millionaires as the Rockefellers and Vanderbilts, but also many more modest increases in income amongst once-poor people, who could now afford their own houses and the furnishings therein – which would include small, cabinet-sized pictures/prints. Pictures were 'no longer a luxury of the rich, but a necessity of the less wealthy classes, like comfortable furniture and sanitary houses'.[52]

The detailed recording of the appurtenances of this emerging wealthy urban middle-class was admirably suited to Moeller's talents and training – of German descent, he had first been apprenticed to his interior decorator father before moving to New York for more training in the early 1870s (including a stint at the Antique School at the National Academy of Design, which helps explain his meticulous recording of antique clutter in his paintings). His visit to Europe for further training, de rigueur for so many American artists in the post Civil War years, was to Munich, whose speciality at that time was for 'realistic, small-scale genre painting of figures in interiors', an apt description for the works Moeller produced.[53] He returned to New York in the early 1880s where, having a living to earn, he needed to produce paintings that would sell. Many of Moeller's paintings were bought by Thomas B. Clarke (1851 – 1931), a successful businessman who, at a time when his colleagues were employing dealers to fill their ostentatious new houses with European art, chose instead to build up a collection of American art. Clarke was a society figure and also an inveterate joiner of the clubs then proliferating in New York, which offers an explanation of why the men Moeller painted are of the same social class and profession as Clarke (though older in age).[54] The activities and type of people shown would also be familiar to the audience, and thus be reassuring to contemplate and purchase.

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[51] Philip Jenkins, *History of the United States* (Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003).
[52] 'A Pessimist View of Painting,' *New York Times* (April 1st 1894).
[53] 'Half our young American artists go to Paris, to be educated in the ateliers of Bonnat, Gérôme, or Carolus Duran; the other half go to Munich, to receive the instructions of Piloty and Lindenschmidt. Our picture exhibitions have of late years been tilting matches for these contestants.' *Art Amateur* 1:2 (July 1879): 27. Gerdts, *Moeller*, 3. Munich Style was described more fully as 'A manner of painting that was realistic and atmospheric in vision, dark and warm in tonality, and dashing in its bravura displays of brushstroke, of broad lights brushed fluently into a dark, red-brown shadowy ground'. E. P. Richardson, *Painting in America* (London: Constable, 1956), 174.
[54] Linda Skalet, 'Thomas B. Clarke, American Collector,' *Archives of American Art Journal* (1975): 2.

Whatever the reasons for this specialisation, there is little in the contemporary responses to Moeller's works to indicate they were anything other than a totally acceptable topic, thereby making it clear that the use of old people as subjects of paintings was not thought unexpected, unusual, unreasonable or demeaning. Moeller is regularly complimented on his attention to detail and the construction of his pictures; an early painting, *Puzzled* (Figure 3:18), which won Moeller the Hallgarten prize is typical.[55] It is described as an 'admirably painted little canvas [showing] a rather comical-looking old gentleman in his library', and lifelike enough for one to feel 'half a comical sympathy for this embarrassment'.[56] The use of the word 'comical' sets a lighter note of a gentle rather than mocking humour, and is outweighed by the reviewers' complimentary comments, such as the 'rendition of expression in the figure and of *quality* [sic] throughout the work is exceptionally excellent'.[57] At this time Moeller's paintings (like Chalfant's) were often likened to the work of the French artist Meissonier. *Puzzled* was considered 'Meissonier-like in its combined firmness and delicacy of touch'.[58] This would have been a particularly gratifying accolade as Meissonier's paintings were then at a peak of their popularity and selling for considerable sums of money.[59]

Stubborn (Figure 3:19), an unusually large painting for Moeller, shows three old men in heated, perhaps excessive, discussion and caused a reviewer to wonder, after admiring Moeller's technique, 'what earthly consequence to any of us is this momentary squabbling of three foolish old men'.[60] For the most part, however, it was well received and described as 'the best in the exhibition,' and 'one of the best things he has yet done, and one of the best pictures in the Academy ….. the difficult action of the three figures and the characteristics of their eloquent heads are excellently rendered'.[61] Another reason for Moeller's success may have been his ability to define precisely the typical American of that time, as in his delineation of 'a handsome and roundly painted portrait of an American whose face expresses well the national qualities of energy and self-trust'.[62] In an 1884 painting *Morning News* (no copy available) of an old man reading a newspaper the comment is that 'the head of the white-haired old gentleman is a strong piece of painting'; it is 'one of the clever pieces of the exhibition. The details, the bric-a-brac, and the reflections of the rich appointments contribute to such a luxurious ensemble … are yet subordinated to the figure of the gentleman with his newspaper, so evidently an American and

[55] Presented 'for the best pictures painted in the United States of America by American citizens under 35 years of age and shown in the Annual Academy Exhibition' *Art Union* 1:4, (April 1884): 83.
[56] Robert Jarvis, 'The National Academy Exhibition' *Art Amateur* 10:6 (May 1884): 128. Mary Gay Humphreys, 'Fifty-Ninth Exhibition of National Academy of Design' *Decorator and Furnisher* 4:2 (May 1884): 85.
[57] Charles M. Kurtz, *National Academy Notes including the Complete Catalogue of the Spring Exhibition: National Academy of Design* 4 (1884): 12.
[58] Robert Jarvis, 'The National Academy Exhibition,' *Art Amateur* 10:6 (May 1884): 128.
[59] Marcia M. Matthews, *Henry Ossawa Tanner 1859–1937* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1969), 48.
[60] quoted from *The Art Review* in Gerdts, *Moeller*, 11.
[61] 'Sixty-Second Exhibition of the National Academy of Design, *Decorator and Furnisher* 10:2 (1887): 41. 'The National Academy Exhibition', *Art Amateur* 16:6 (May 1887): 125.
[62] 'Closing Day at the Academy,' *New York Times* (28th November 1884). This painting, called 'The Interrupted Game', is considered to be by Moeller, though he is not named in the review. No illustration has been found.

one whose ease and comfort is worth the painter's skill'.[63] There was clearly nothing untoward in considering an old gentleman as a personification of America itself, an impression confirmed by the figure used to personify the United States, Uncle Sam (Figure 3:21 provides a typical example), who was always shown at this time as a relatively elderly gentleman with a white goatee beard.

Throughout the 1880s and 1890s Moeller regularly produced these paintings of the old, usually of cheerful and lively aspect, though at the end of the 1890s one of his works, *Signing the Will,* (Figure 3:22) showed the somewhat gloomy scene of an old man, ill in bed, making his will.[64] There was no comment on the subject, and reviews were mostly complimentary; 'the figures are well and strongly drawn, and the grouping is excellent …...Moeller's excellent genre, *The Will*, which was deservedly awarded one of the Hallgarten prizes …..[is] ….among the most important works on display' and 'one of the best figure works this clever painter has ever yet shown, a good study of character'.[65]

It does, however, provoke a wry comparison with the almost contemporary English painting *Piloting Her Home*, by the English painter W.H.Y.Titcomb (Figure 3:23), of a scene he witnessed in which an old lady lies on her presumed death bed, surrounded by Christian fellowship, and with the emphasis clearly on spiritual matters, the heavenly reward towards which she was being 'piloted'.[66] In the Moeller painting, however, the emphasis seems more about ensuring the safe division of the material spoils, the earthly rewards the old man was allocating to his heirs, and it is possible to read a certain malevolence in the figures who congregate round the deathbed, in contrast to the gentler if fervent religious concerns portrayed in the Titcomb painting. It could be considered to provide proof of Philip Burne-Jones comment on the 'significant characteristic' of the United States, where 'the continual cry is always - dollars, dollars, dollars … money does truly here, as politics, in England, seem to be an end in itself, instead of a means to an end'; implying a more self-absorbed society, the monetary lining of a person's pocket being more important than what can be achieved with it.[67]

For more than twenty years Moeller's paintings of materially wealthy old people were popular and sold well; in the words of one reviewer his 'pictures please'.[68] By the early years of the twentieth century, however, Moeller's once complimented meticulous and clear style of painting was falling from favour; in his 1902 *Tea and Conversation/A Chat About Old Times* (Figure

[63] *New York Herald*, (September 30th 1883): Clarke Scrapbook, B-8, 151, *Archives of American Art* quoted in Gerdts, *Moeller,* 7. Mary Gay Humphreys, 'Loan Collection of Mr Thomas B. Clarke,' *Decorator and Furnisher* 3:5 (Feb 1884): 177.
[64] This picture is sometimes called 'Signing the Will', other times just 'The Will'; given the shared date and topic it seems likely to be the same painting. It thus provides a good example of the difficulties in identifying precisely each Moeller painting.
[65] 'The Spring Academy: Pictures in the East Gallery and the Corridor,' *New York Times* (24th April 1897). James B Townsend 'Untitled' *New York Times* (4th April 1897):10.
[66] to everyone's surprise, including her own, the lady did not die on this occasion. David Tovey, *W.H.Y. Titcomb 1858 – 1930: Artist of Many Parts (T*ewkesbury: Wilson Books. 1985), 22,23.
[67] Burne Jones, *Dollars*, 74.
[68] 'Seventy-Second Annual Exhibition of the National Academy of Design,' *Art News* 1:3 (May 1897): 5.

3:20), it was felt that 'the eye is carried away too much … by the various objects with which the room is filled …. but …..the old lady in a white cap and the gray-haired man near her are quite marvellously painted'.[69] It was not the choice of the old for painting which fell from favour, it was that the painstakingly detailed portrayals had been replaced by the less precise outlines of Impressionism, exemplified by George Luks powerful if blurred impression of *Widow McGee* (Figure 3:24).

Often sharing exhibition space and complimentary reviews with Moeller was another artist Alfred Kappes, (also the son of a German immigrant and carpenter), described as 'a good draughtsman [who] has much humour and good sense of the quaint and curious…one of the best modern genre painters'.[70] He painted 'the homely every-day subjects at our own doors'; and, most tellingly for this study's purpose, 'he depicts real life with the unflinching hand of the realist'.[71] He painted a different aspect of contemporary life from Moeller, concentrating on much humbler and materially poorer people, his subjects and models usually being taken from the life in the tenements around his studio.[72] His subjects were considered 'not agreeable and certainly not ... elevating'; though 'Kappes … promises to be of the first force' as a painter, he was also thought to be taking viewers into a 'very common kind of society'.[73] Implied in these comments is the idea that at this time paintings should be both pretty and improving; Kappes, however, had a 'favourite homily concerning the desirableness of looking with sympathy at persons and things ordinarily called ugly……He seems to belong to that small sect of philosophers who hold that *beauty-mania* has been the ruin of art, especially Anglo-Saxon art. No pretty faces, no frills or furbelows for him'.[74]

All of which reasons amply justify the inclusion of Kappes in this study, with its concern for the reality and possible ugliness of old age; Kappes paintings also carry the same difficulties as with Moeller - inconsistent titles, repeated themes, untraced/destroyed pictures and lack of precision on dates. A notably fine and apposite example of Kappes' work is the old lady who dominates his 1886 painting *Tattered and Torn* (Figure 3:25) who, if not beautiful in the conventional sense, is shown as having a vibrancy and realism which give her a certain charm. With the hint of greying hair beneath her turban, wrinkled hands and neck, bags beneath her eyes, pouting lip and extruding veins, she is undoubtedly an aged figure, but not a feeble one, and she brings to mind words such as defiant and determined. Though clearly with African blood, commentators

[69] 'Sale of American Pictures,' *New York Times* (7th January 1902). Though it refers to a 1902 painting *'A Chat About Old Times''* it is likely that *'Tea and Conversation*' (Figure 3:19) is the same picture but with a different title. If not, the subject matter and date are so similar that the review could refer to either.
[70] 'The Week in Art,' *New York Times* (31st March 1900).
[71] S. G. W. Benjamin 'National Academy of Design, Fifty-Fifth Exhibition' *American Art Review* 1:7 (May 1880):310. 'Alfred Kappes, Painter and Illustrator,' *Art Union* 2:4 (October 1885):75.
[72] The entry for Alfred Kappes in www.nationalacademy.org/collections/artists/detail accessed 30/09/2016
[73] 'The Sixty-Second Exhibition of the National Academy of Design,' *Decorator and Furnisher* 10:2 (May 1887):41. W. H. Bishop, 'American Water Color Society New York, 13th Annual Exhibition,' *American Art Review* 1:5 (Mar 1880): 209.
[74] 'The Water Colors,' *New York Times* (January 27th 1883).

made little remark on this; reviews describe her as an 'old gipsy-like woman…. clad in variegated and well-rent garments and there is a true oriental picturesqueness about the whole figure', the critic going on to comment on 'how admirably are the wrist and fingers painted in the hand that holds the match, and what a lip is this under one, projected far out, and what muscles and blood vessels are these about the throat'.[75] The painting was pleasing to the reviewer, and there was no surprise on the choice of subject, which might have been expected if it was thought inappropriate or odd.

The same figure is shown in Kappes' work called *Rent Day* (Figures 3:26, 27) where she sits on a window sill with a dark-skinned male companion, carefully considering the cash they had available.[76] This was a popular picture, partly because the subject was a 'familiar one to southern people' and also because of the veracity of the old couple's depiction, described as 'being very true to nature'.[77] The man is garbed in worn and ragged clothes, the lady has the same jutting head as in *Tattered and Torn*; her hands rest more calmly on her lap and her clothing, though similar in both paintings, is neater here, without rips and tears and less dishevelled. This makes it clear that in *Tattered and Torn* Kappes must have deliberately chosen to emphasise, even exaggerate, the raggedness, most likely to increase the poignant power of the painting; certainly one reviewer commented on the 'well-rent' garments.[78]

By choosing such subjects Kappes was clearly sticking to the 'favourite homily' referred to earlier. It was the realistic portrayal and the artist's ability which the reviewers remarked on, the choice of subject received very little comment at all. Nowadays *Tattered and Torn* is often used as a symbol of and comment on the poverty which was then prevalent in the United States, but this aspect seems to have evoked little remark by the critics at the time, whether through lack of interest, ignorance or indifference, or (most likely) a combination of all three, is now difficult to determine with any certainty.[79]

Like so many of his contemporaries, Kappes was a painter with a wide ranging repertoire (his book illustrations were particularly notable); showing the old, especially the poor old, was a recurrent theme. His 1880 work *Old, Old* was described as 'an aged couple tottering home from church ….a vigorous piece of character painting'; the use of the word 'tottering´ implied a senile feebleness about the couple.[80] *The Closing Hymn* (Figure 3:28) shows a black-dressed old lady standing hymn-singing at the front of a church, alone, old and upright and seemingly content.

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[75] 'Medals to American Artists,' *New York Times* (May 19th 1886).
[76] Though popular at the time, it is now only known from engravings and etchings.
[77] 'The Louisville Exhibition,' *The Art Union* 2:3 (Sept 1885): 59.
[78] 'Medals to American Artists,' *New York Times* (May 19th 1886).
[79] for example, Leo G Mazow and Kevin M Murphy, *Taxing Visions; Financial Episodes in Late 19th century American Art* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 28,29 and www.NPR.org/2011/03/08/134335542/portraits-of-the-poor-dignity-in-times-of-despair accessed 28/09/2016
[80] S. G. W. Benjamin, 'American Water Color Society: Thirteenth Annual Exhibition,' *The Art Journal* New Series 6 (1880): 92.

On other occasions he had a lighter touch, such as in 1885 with his painting *Ancient Gossips*, which was reported as 'given with [the] high spirits ….. that Mr Kappes has taught us to expect'.[81] Another early work, *New York Vegetable Vendors*, (Figure 3:29) shows two older women conducting a transaction, both beautifully realised, as are the vegetables on the stall; such detailed rendering allowed Kappes to fully rehearse his artistic skills.

One deliberately dismal painting by Kappes was *Is This Life Worth Living?* (Figure 3:30) where an old lady sits truculently on the ground, seemingly poised to defend herself with the implement in her hand. She is supported by a wall at her back, her basket of fruit plus sack (of possessions and/or saleable goods) at her side; reviewers described her as 'a wretched scavenger' and perceived her face as 'hard, brutal, repulsive; full of discontent, yet without ambition; - with a feeling of vindictiveness against anything higher and better'.[82] It is clear that Kappes had deliberately chosen to show the model in this unhappy position as the reviewers were later surprised (and relieved?) to find 'the same old woman sitting up in the American Art Gallery over the way, as contented with her lot as could be desired, eating a hearty meal of bread and cheese'.[83] The reviewers also detached themselves from the question in the title, remarking that it was 'never asked by hearty, strong, labouring folk of this kind…. [who] … never waste their time or their breath in attempting to justify the ways of God to man'.[84] It was not that the figure was old, but that she was poor, defiant and potentially financially dependent, that made them, even if unconsciously, uncomfortable, in the same way as mentioned in Chapter Two with Herkomer's *Eventide* and Charles' *Our Poor*.

Kappes' *Tattered and Torn* and *Rent Day* heroine is one of a significant number of paintings of Afro-Americans which were produced in the later decades of the nineteenth century, when the country was reconstructing itself after the tragedy of Civil War; former slaves now had opportunities to spread freely and widely across the United States, and several painters, including Alfred Kappes, Thomas Hovenden, Harry Roseland and Richard Norris Brooke, included them in their repertoire.

It is difficult in the early twenty-first century to read impartially the language used at the end of the nineteenth century by reviewers, critics, social commentators and artists when referring to Afro-Americans; to modern ears the words sound offensive and condescending, and tempt to a more negative interpretation than would have been intended and understood at the time the words were written. It is therefore important to make an effort to study these contemporary responses within the context of their time rather than from the viewpoint of the twenty-first century. The use of the words 'darky' and 'negro', plus dialect phrases such as 'Dem Was

[81] Mary Gay Humphreys, 'Exhibition of the Water Colour Society,' *Decorator and Furnisher* 5:6 (Mar 1885): 215.
[82] Charles M. Kurtz, *Illustrated Art Notes upon the Annual Exhibition of the National Academy of Design* New York: 2 (1882):96.
[83] 'The National Academy Exhibition,' *The Art Amateur* 6:6 (May 1882):116.
[84] ibid.

Good Ole Times', are nowadays understandably interpreted as condescending, insensitive and arrogant, but at the time they were words in common parlance without any overtones; therefore, rightly or wrongly, they should not be viewed in today's pejorative light. Keeping this in mind, the attitudes of the artists seem to have been reasonable and without acknowledged prejudice; they seem to have chosen the subjects in the same way they chose any other subject – they were of interest, provided excellent practice for their skills, and the pictures produced were readily saleable. Kappes had deliberately chosen to site his studio in the New York tenements inhabited by Afro-Americans. Harry Roseland, born in Brooklyn to German-born parents, never visited the South but nonetheless was well-known for his paintings of coloured people engaged in their daily activities, to the extent that one writer remarked that Roseland 'could probably paint an old colored woman so natural that the very paint would smell of hoe cake and cotton bolls'.[85]

A typical example of a Harry Roseland painting is *Budding Scholar* (Figure 3:31), where a young girl is helped with her homework by two older people – a grey haired old man and an old lady, whose right arm Roseland has drawn with great skill, clearly delineating the pronounced veins on the hand so common in the old. The room is shabby, with peeling walls, but there can be little doubt, as the older people lean forward immersed in concentration, of their commitment to the child and to learning itself – they are perhaps sharing their skills, or maybe educating themselves as well. Portrayals like these could provide reassurance in the rapidly mutating United States, since the impression they gave was that changes need not be seen as a threat to the social order, but rather of people who were anxious to conform and improve themselves.

The theme of mutual interdependence, the old assisting and guiding the young, who in turn enhance the life of the elderly, is universal, stretching beyond racial boundaries and also the United States itself; an English example being Hayllar's *Never Too Late To Learn* (Figure 2:25). Another painting, *Trying the Pipe* (Figure 3:32) by Fuller Graves (unfortunately undated, as with many of his paintings), shows a young boy trying out the older man's pipe, indicating the mutual benefit there could be between young and old. This painting is reminiscent in many ways of Hayllar's *Forty Winks* (Figure 2: 28; see Chapter Two) but with the more modern and practical work-clothes, and the newspaper in the sleeping man's hand, there are indications of an interest in the outside world, so the sleeping pipe-smoker seems livelier and more aware than the smock-clad Hayllar figure.

Although most of these painters were white, one Afro-American painter in particular gained international acclaim at the end of the nineteenth century - Henry Ossawa Tanner, who trained in

[85] His perceived knowledge of Afro-American life seems to have been highly regarded, sufficient for him to be invited to arrange the plantation scenes and songs at 'a midwinter fête ……. to be for the benefit of the Church Charity Foundation, with its homes for the aged, orphans and blind' 'Charity's Winter Fete,' *New York Times* (January 19th 1902). 'Salon of the Dilettanti II: The Farce of Art Juries,' *Brush and Pencil* 17:1 (Jan 1906): 40.

Philadelphia under the tutelage of Thomas Eakins. His repertoire was wide, a frequent theme being biblical subjects, but he also produced everyday pictures of his ethnic compatriots. One such work is *The Thankful Poor* (Figure 3:33), where in a bare and clean room of muted colours two people sit at a sparsely laid table; one is a boy, who with his pouting lip and free-falling hand is more questionably thankful than the dignified elderly man who sits opposite, head bowed towards his aged hands in gratitude. Again, this is an older person shown as providing care and shelter for the child and himself and suitably appreciative, and thus not to be seen as a potential threat to the social order.

The rapid changes in American society after the Civil War, in particular the move to the crowded yet anonymous cities from either the countryside or another country, had brought with them inevitable fears of change, loss of wealth and loss of identity among the longer-established population. Although in the southern states, such as Alabama and Mississippi, Afro-Americans consistently made up a significant proportion of the population, in the north-eastern states, such as New York and Philadelphia, despite the perpetual increase in population the proportion of coloured people was always at about the same percentage (see Table 3:1). To have on the wall of your house a painting showing several generations of these noticeably different people, who had been a significant factor in the Civil War from which the country was now recovering would be both exotic and reassuring, especially if they were shown as hard-working, calm and content within their own family, and certainly not a menace to the comfortable way-of-life of the white middle-classes.

Table 3:1 Ethnic population of US as shown in the census,1860-1910[86]

States have been selected to show typical samples of north and south

State	Category	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910
New York	White	3,831,590	4,330,218	5,016,022	5,923,955	7,156,881	8,966,845
	Negro	49,005	52,081	65,104	70,092	99,232	134,191
	All Other	140	468	1,745	9,127	12,781	12,578
Pennsylvania	White	2,849,259	3,456,609	4,197,016	5,148,258	6,141,664	7,467,713
	Negro	56,949	65,294	85,535	107,596	156,845	193,919
	All Other	7	48	340	2,259	3,606	3,479
Massachusetts	White	1,221,432	1,443,156	1,763,782	2,215,373	2,769,764	3,324,926
	Negro	9,602	13,947	18,697	22,144	31,974	38,055
	All Other	32	248	606	1,430	3,608	3,435
Virginia	White	1,047,299	712,089	880,858	1,020,122	1,192,855	1,389,809
	Negro	548,907	512,841	631,616	635,438	660,722	671,096
	All Other	112	233	91	420	607	707
Alabama	White	526,271	521,384	662,185	833,718	1,001,152	1,228,832
	Negro	437,770	475,510	600,103	678,489	827,307	908,282
	All Other	160	98	217	1,194	238	979
Mississippi	White	353,899	382,896	479,398	544,851	641,200	786,111
	Negro	437,404	444,201	650,291	742,559	907,630	1,009,487
	All Other	2	825	1,908	2,190	2,440	1,516

[86] Department of Commerce & Labour, *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 1921 (44th number) (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1921).

Another artist who often included Afro-Americans in his work was Richard Norris Brooke, who was able to draw on his own experience, as he came from the town of Warrenton in Virginia, a state which for many years had a high percentage of Afro-Americans (see Table 3:1). On his return from visits to artistic colonies in France during the 1870s, he deliberately painted the 'fine range of subject offered by Negro domestic life' with the intention of elevating his subject 'to that plane of sober and truthful treatment which, in French Art, has dignified the Peasant subjects of Jules Breton'.[87] Although recent art historians contend that the painting of Afro-Americans at the end of the nineteenth century showed 'the condescending perspective of the white majority', and describe *A Pastoral Visit* (Figure 3:34) as no more than 'a stylized tableau of black personalities', this was not the contemporary opinion.[88] When it was purchased for the Corcoran Gallery in Washington it was acknowledged that 'there has been no picture placed in the Gallery for a long time more generally popular with visitors than this'.[89]

It was neither unusual nor inappropriate to pose paintings carefully, since it was a necessary part of an artist's task in order to produce a successful picture. *A Pastoral Visit* may be considered a carefully and artistically contrived indoor scene, but it was, as has been mentioned, a popular painting. It shows a white-haired pastor visiting a family within his care; its companion painting, *A Dog Swap*, (Figure 3:35) is pastoral in the sense of rural. What is particularly relevant to this study is the painting in both works of the old man (local Warrenton resident George Washington, aged 62), and his affirmative comparison with the other figures, in particular the younger man (another local resident, Daniel Brown).[90] In *Pastoral Visit* he is shown as an alert, scholarly and caring aged pastor, with lined face, spectacles, wrinkled hands and sober suit; upright, alert and ready to support his ideas if necessary. In the second picture, *A Dog Swap*, no longer wearing spectacles the older man sits in forward-leaning pose, his rifle clasped in his large and strong left-hand, appearing vigorous, lively and ready, in this setting, for physical rather than cerebral action. The younger man's deportment is more casual and relaxed, especially in the second picture, where with his tilted pose, flamboyant waistcoat, unevenly balanced chair, leaning head and pipe clasped between his teeth he appears indolent, bordering on the insolent.

So far the image of the elderly in the United States has seemed to be very positive, showing old citizens as active and coping well with their life; even when doing no more than sitting chatting they are still shown as lively and compos-mentis. A typical expression of this is shown in the

[87] Letter of April 18th 1881 to the Board of the Corcoran Gallery offering them the purchase of 'A Pastoral Visit'. http://www.military-art.com/mall/artist.php?Artist=574. Accessed 30/09/2016.
[88] Guy McElroy. *Facing History: The Black Image in American Art 1710 – 1940* (San Francisco, California: Bedford Arts/ Washington DC Corcoran Gallery, 1990), xviii, 93.
[89] 'Art Notes', *Washington Evening Star* (May 14th 1881):5.
[90] Brookes used local people from his home town of Warrenton, Virginia for models http://www..americanart.si.edu/collections Accessed 30/09/2016.

earlier mentioned *A Chance Acquaintance* (Figure 3:36) by George Henry Story, where an old tradesman is companionably resting from his labours under the beguiled eye of a child, who is painted in an almost mirror image, with an apple replacing the pipe. The light focussed on the old man's bald head, wrinkled forehead and work-worn hands emphasises the contrast with the smooth-faced child, his protective hat and clean, neat clothing – but the look exchanged between them is benign and positive.

An artist of course painted pictures in the hope of being able to sell them and make a living, and too vivid images of misery and incapacity would understandably not sell well, as pithily acknowledged by artist John G. Brown in reference to his paintings of children.[91] As noted earlier, when referring to Francis H. Miller's painting *The Charity Home*, the heartstring tugging paintings produced in England by the 'Dismal School' artists seem much thinner on the ground in the United States. Although there are depictions of poverty, the subjects are not shown as downtrodden or needy as they are in England; in Tanner's *The Thankful Poor* the subjects appear, in posture and in the title, to be grateful, whilst in Kappes' *Is Life Worth Living?* and *Tattered and Torn*, the subjects are defiant, ready to assert themselves for their own protection, but with no actions, or hints of actions, that might upset the status quo, or cause concern or unease amongst the viewers. Typical American depictions of the old are paintings reminiscent of the Newlyn School style, exemplified by Powell Ryder's *Patience* (Figure 3:37) and *Fireside Companion* (Figure 3:38), where the old people, though stooped and contemplative, seem at ease and solitary rather than lonely. There are, of course, sadder, portrayals such as Lamson Henry's *The Widower* (Figure 3:39) and Roseland's *Tender Memories* (Figure 3:40), which show the isolation old age may bring, along with memories and reflection. The bowed and sad old man in the Henry painting faces the empty chair and the stern gaze of his late wife, whilst in Roseland's painting the old lady seems to be broken by gazing at the child's shoes – whether those of a dead child or estranged family is not certain, but here are displayed the sadder consequences of a long life, which have no respect for wealth, race, class or nation. This is the insight of the artist, as well as a recognition of what will sell, rather than a derogation of the elderly.

As noted in earlier chapters, in England at this time concern about the plight of the aged was increasing and culminated in 1908 with the state provision of an Old Age Pension. In the United States there was not the obvious poverty of the aged that Charles Booth had found in England, as was acknowledged in the first serious United States report on the economic condition of the aged - 'Old age dependency is very much more marked in England than it is in this country. In

[91] 'The Name Makes the Picture,' *New York Times* (10th April 1886). Painter John G. Brown was a witness at a trial about a picture theft. 'Didn't you paint that admirable little work 'The Passing Show' with the bootblacks in very dirty clothes and very clean faces? asked Judge Godney. 'Yes, Sir' said Mr Brown, adding, apologetically 'If you paint them with dirty faces you cannot sell the picture'

Massachusetts the paupers sixty-five years old and over are only 31.7 per thousand of the population of the same age; in the UK, the number is 172 per 1000'.[92] The realisation that there was a possible problem surrounding old age was dawning, however, and articles about old age and the need for pensions, or some sort of support, were appearing more frequently. The state remained reluctant to provide assistance, however, and as late as 1922 G. Stanley Hall wryly remarked how 'nearly every civilised country today makes some provision for the aged poor' but 'the United States is the only nation that has no retiring system or provision for old age'.[93] Even the President, Theodore Roosevelt, commented in 1908 that 'It is a reproach to us as a nation that in both Federal and State legislation we have afforded less protection to public and private employees than any other industrial country in the world'.[94] It was, after all, a younger (in terms of both age and culture) and materially richer society, expanding and developing, with a mindset which valued independence and initiative, and was very reluctant to adopt anything which might be considered as state interference – 'We are not a paternal Government. We do not want to be.'[95] There was awareness of old people's plight, however, and on an increasing scale people, whether as philanthropists or as members of churches, professions, trades, ethnic groups made provision for the vulnerable old; typical instances include 'The Old Ladies' Home Society', formed in Boston in 1885' and, in Philadelphia, the 'Presbyterian Home for Aged Couples and Aged Single Men', founded in 1885; a 'Home for Aged and Infirm Colored People' had been initiated as early as 1865.[96]

The style of painting was also changing, and by the turn of the century Impressionism had taken hold, and the meticulous and accurate detail favoured by artists such as Moeller, was being replaced with less precise but nonetheless forceful paintings by other artists. George Luks, for example, was, along with Robert Henri, one of the artists of 'The Eight' or 'The Ashcan School', which favoured portraying the realism of street life in the vibrant developing cities. His paintings were described as 'sterling in character, intense and vigorous', as can be seen in his 1902 painting of *Widow McGee* (Figure 3:24), a 'character' he saw on the streets near his home.[97] She is shown as a vivid, vigorous if edentulous old woman, who with her wrinkled hand resting on her hip and defiant full-frontal face seems poised to assert herself; she makes a fitting feisty companion for Kappes's *Tattered and Torn* heroine, both shown as strong old women who would not go down without a struggle. The styles of painting may have changed, but the attitude

[92] L. W. Squier, *Old Age Dependency,* 14.
[93] Stanley Hall, *Senescence,* 174, 180.
[94] U.S. Congress Record, 60th Congress, 1st Session, XLII (1908) 3853, quoted in Hace Sorel Tishler, *Self-Reliance and Social Security 1870–1917, (*New York: Kennikat Press, 1971), 98.
[95] 'Matters We Ought to Know About: How the Other Half Lives. Studies from Among the Tenements of New York', *New York Times* (January 4th 1891).
[96] Kathy McCabe, "Rest Homes Still Fill A Void For the Aged" (Boston: *Boston Globe,* August 8th 2010). Carole Haber, 'The Old Folks at Home: the development of Institutionalised Care for the Aged in Nineteenth Century Philadelphia' *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 101:2 (April 1977):240-257.
[97] 'Weekly Calendar,' *The Collector and Art Critic* 4:5 (March 1906): 2.

to the old remained the same, with no evidence of anything other than respect, perception and an eye for what made a good picture.

This chapter has added the required American dimension to the view/appearance of the elderly in genre painting and combined with Chapter Two builds the full vista showing the elderly required by the remit of the thesis. Since Chapters Two and Three inform each other, similar themes and criteria for the selection of paintings were used in both chapters. About thirty-five paintings were chosen from the database for this chapter with the purpose of showing the old in various scenes from everyday life, such as Fuller Graves' *Country Store* (Figure 3:3). Other paintings were selected as they showed the subjects as clearly old, with their white hair and wrinkles; sometimes they were still at work, in others at leisure, in quiet contemplative pose (Figure 3:13), or in lively animated social scenes (Figure 3:16).

Two particularly significant findings from this chapter were that, first of all, elderly Americans often appeared in paintings as lively and materially well off (as shown by the quality of their clothing and the artefacts which surround them), as can be seen in the works of Louis Moeller (Figures 3: 15, 20). Secondly, although poorer people were the subjects of paintings, they shown as displaying a spirit of strength and defiance - *Tattered and Torn (*Figure 3:25), at variance with the quieter, more gentle, attitude often to be perceived in English paintings.

Since race and slavery were such fundamental factors in the history of the United States it was important to examine some genre works of elderly coloured people (Figure 3:31,33). Contemporary sources again proved their worth by setting the paintings in their context; it was, for example, of value to find that in its day Richard Norris Brookes' *Pastoral Visit* (Figure 3: 34) was one of the most popular pictures in the [Corcoran] gallery rather than the contrived tableau it is sometimes considered today.

A comprehensive and thus convincing image of the portrayal of the elderly in paintings has now been created, and evidence has been compiled which makes clear the different attitudes of the two countries. Important contributions to the argument of the thesis have been made, but before the final conclusions are made it is useful to look at the portrayal of the elderly from a slightly different angle, that of the aged in portraits.

CHAPTER FOUR
Thomas Eakins and painting the elderly

The previous two chapters have considered the aged as they were shown in genre paintings in England and the United States. Genre paintings provide useful insights into the life of a society, and have a value because the paintings need to have at least a semblance of real life as the familiarity of the scenes is a significant part of genre's attraction. It also needs to be borne in mind, however, that artists were not on oath when they painted these people, they were creating pictures which could be bought to adorn the walls of the burgeoning middle classes, so should not be too discomforting or give too distorted a reality.

From studying these works it appears that artists enjoyed painting the old as there was more challenge in painting their 'lived-in' faces than the bland faces of youth. At the end of Chapter Two it was noted how people had preferred Perugini's *Faithful* (Figure 2:39), with the strong old lady meditating at the graveside, to the smoothness of the young woman in his *Peonies* (Figure 2:40). There also seems to have been more awareness, and thus sympathy, in England for the old, as well as the poor and struggling, and several paintings, notably those of 'the dismal school', showed the less fortunate classes who were not, for several reasons, able to manage their own lives. In the United States, however, most of the subjects of the paintings were lively, seemingly healthy, surrounded by material riches, and able to please themselves, in the sense that they could work, or sit at leisure, as they chose. If poorer people were shown, such as the old lady in Kappes' *Is this life worth living*? (Figure 3:30), they were not shown as succumbing to their troubles, but remaining defiant and spirited, with none of the submission seen in English paintings.

A beneficial balance to the general approach of genre works is provided by portraits. They focus on the individual and, because they are a record a person's likeness for posterity, seek to record it with a reasonable degree of verisimilitude, though doubtless with a temptation to flatter. Portraits, especially in the late nineteenth century, (which has understandably, given the proliferation of portraits, and the galleries built to contain them, been described as ‘an age of portraiture’) provided a relatively secure living for an artist.[1] They were commissioned for a variety of reasons - as a commemoration of a significant occasion such as retirement or birthday; providing a likeness of a person of achievement, who was considered to have made a contribution to society; and recording someone's social success and wealth. Each of the next three chapters will therefore focus on portraits by both English and American painters. First to be considered is the work of an American, Thomas Eakins; this will be followed by a chapter on the paintings of cosmopolitan artist John Singer Sargent who, though of American descent, was

[1] Elizabeth Johns, *Thomas Eakins; The Heroism of Modern Life (*Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 153.

born in Europe and chose to live much of his life in England. The third of these chapters will consider the work of several artists, including George Frederick Watts, Hubert Herkomer and Frank Holl, who produced portraits in England during the relevant years. Sitters for these portraits were those who were considered, by artists, friends, colleagues, and others who commissioned portraits, to be appropriate subjects, and so will tend to be of higher rank and status than those recorded in genre, thereby providing such works with an interesting counterpoint. Age, after all, affects everyone, of all classes and status.

To begin with Thomas Eakins: a glance at his dignified painting of an old lady, *Mrs Mary Arthur* (Figure 4:1), mother of his friend Robert Arthur, makes clear why he is such a suitable artist for this study. He makes no pretence of hiding Mrs Arthur's age (c76) and all her elderly attributes - thick spectacles, dry and wrinkled face and hands – are clearly shown, with meticulous details such as the fine gold wedding ring, the widow's cap and the complex detail of the black dress with its jet decorations. Here is a lady who, though clearly old, is still worthy of being recorded for posterity, as well as giving Eakins the pleasure of painting the lines of age - 'How beautiful an old woman's skin is … all those wrinkles' he is reported to have said.[2] Mrs Arthur appears tranquil and usefully occupied, her pale head and hands standing out against the dark background and dress, and supplies a reminder that both mentally and practically an old person had something to contribute and was still regarded as a valuable member of society. Eakins created the painting of his own volition and gave it to Mrs Arthur's son, Robert, inscribing the message 'to his dear/friend/ Robert Arthur/Thomas Eakins. 1900' on the back of the painting.[3] The picture remained in the Arthur family until it was eventually given to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 1965, which leads to the assumption that it had pleased the family.

This was not always the case as Thomas Eakins' paintings, especially his portraits, produced very mixed reactions. Some sitters were pleased and flattered by his portrayals; painter J. Carroll Beckwith, for example, acknowledged to Eakins that his portrait 'had been greatly admired by many of his [Beckwith's] friends and should add to [Eakins'] laurels'.[4] Fellow artist William H. Lippincott told Eakins he 'very much appreciate[d] the compliment you paid me in wishing to paint my portrait and now your still greater compliment in presenting the portrait to me makes me happy'.[5] In 1917 Ashcan School artist Robert Henri encouraged his students, and 'every lover of fine art' to visit the Eakins's memorial exhibition, as 'Eakins was a deep student of human life and with a great love studied humanity frankly. He was not afraid of what this

[2] Mary Hallock Greenwalt, quoted in Lloyd Goodrich, *Thomas Eakins (*Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982), 2:59.
[3] http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/10820 accessed 16/10/2016.
[4] Beckwith to Eakins, 9th September 1907, quoted in Darrel Sewell,*Thomas Eakins* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art and Yale University Press, 2001), 259.
[5] Lippincott to Eakins 20th April 1895, quoted in Sewell, *Thomas Eakins*, 259.

study revealed to him.' Henri went on to state that he considered Eakins to be 'the greatest portrait painter America has produced'.[6]

Others, however, were not so keen, and several sitters, such as President Rutherford Hayes, Dr da Costa (Figures 4:10,11), Asbury Lee (Figure 4:2) and Robert Ogden, made their displeasure clear – they complained about their portraits, paid reluctantly if at all, did not trouble to collect the completed work and sometimes went so far as to destroy the canvas. The problem in most cases seemed to be that Eakins had not flattered his sitters enough, and had presented them with a reality they did not wish to recognise; as critic Riter Fitzgerald remarked, Eakins 'paints his subjects as he finds them, imperfections, blemishes and all... [but] ...the people demand idealization, and if they don't get it at one shop they will bend their footsteps to another'.[7] Asbury Lee (1841 – 1927) commissioned his own portrait in 1905, when he was 64. He was a prominent resident in the town of Clearfield, Pennsylvania, organising and running several companies and services, and generally 'a public-spirited citizen'; sitting in three-quarter, seated pose, he is shown as a forceful, stern-faced figure, his strong working hands poised for action; however, although his daughter 'in a general way, … liked it,' Lee did not, and returned it, with payment, to Eakins.[8] He does look severe, resolute and slightly unnerving, but nonetheless clearly a man of determination and ability and why he decried the portrait is not clear. Viewers often found Eakins' pictures too challenging, too real and, as T.S. Eliot so accurately wrote some years later, 'human kind cannot bear very much reality'; in the context of this study, however, it is exactly this recording of reality that makes him so very valuable.[9]

Although described in his obituary as 'one of the foremost American artists of the last half century', in his home country Thomas Eakins was not understood or appreciated until the last years of his life.[10] Born in Philadelphia, he lived most of his life there except for four vital early years – 1866–1870 - in Europe, where he trained in the studios of Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904) and Léon Bonnat (1833-1922). This initial training, with its emphasis on the importance of method, discipline, colour, anatomical precision and the sombre plain backgrounds of Bonnat's portraits, underwrote Eakins' work throughout his entire career. One of Gérôme's opinions was that 'it is austere and profound studies that make great painters and great sculptors' and the words 'austere and profound' perfectly describe Eakins' thoughtful and reflective portraits'.[11] As noted in Chapter One, another strong influence, again acquired during his

[6] 'Art at Home and Abroad: Letter from Robert Henri about Thomas Eakins,' *New York Times (*11th November 1917).
[7] Riter Fitzgerald, 'Review', *Philadelphia Evening Item*, (May 17th 1896). quoted in Goodrich, *Eakins*, 2:164.
[8] Goodrich, *Eakins*, 2:232.
[9] T. S. Eliot, *Burnt Norton/Four Quartets,* written 1935. This quotation taken from *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations (*Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1879), 202.
[10] 'Thomas Eakins, Artist and Sculptor, is Dead,' *Harrisburg Telegraph (*June 27th 1916): 2.
[11] Fanny Field Hering, *Gérôme: the life and work of Jean Leon Gérôme (*New York: Cassell, 1892), vi.

European visit, were the works of Velásquez and Ribera, with their love of character rather than beauty and outward show.[12]

Eakins returned to Philadelphia in 1870 and remained there for the rest of his life. His portfolio was mixed and included sculpture and reliefs, but painting was his main focus; many of his early paintings were of sporting activities including sailing, shooting and rowing, a well-known example being his 1871 painting *Max Schmitt in a Single Scull.* In 1872 came his first full-length portrait, of his fiancée, Kathrin Crowell, and then in 1875 came the innovative *Gross Clinic* (Figure 4:8), which startled the critics with its size, realism and unusual presentation of subject. Throughout his career he continued to create the art work of his choice, at odds with the art establishment but remaining true to his own artistic tenets; 'You must do your own thinking' he wrote to a colleague.[13] Fellow-artist Cecilia Beaux considered that ' No-one who studied under him ever forgot his precepts, or could be interested in any principles of Art that did not include his. They were rock-bottom, fundamental, but somehow reached regions, by research, that others could not gain by flight'.[14] From the mid-1890s onwards he focused on portraits in particular, sometimes through commissions, but often he selected his own subjects, usually cultured, thoughtful people from amongst his colleagues, acquaintances and friends.[15] He was especially renowned for the disconcerting reality of his portraits and his appreciation that age has beauties of its own, recording and exposing 'the essential character that youth conceals but age reveals'.[16]

An artist does not exist in isolation, and Eakins' family was very much part of who he was, and he was close to most of them throughout his life. The family background was complex and tragic, though perhaps no more so than any other family in those times; there were several premature deaths and illnesses but also some relatives who lived into a ripe old age. His mother suffered from mental illness for several years, dying at the age of 52 from what was referred to as 'exhaustion from mania'.[17] One year later her sister Clementine, who also lived in the Eakins family home, died.[18] Eakins's fiancée, Kathrin Crowell, died from meningitis aged 27 and typhoid killed two of Eakins' three sisters; Maggie at age 29, Caroline aged 34; his baby brother had died when only a few months old. He became estranged from his surviving sister, Fanny, in 1897, after the suicide of her daughter, Eakins' niece.

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[12] Goodrich, *Thomas Eakins,* 1:59.
[13] letter dated July 3rd 1906; quoted in Sewell, *Thomas Eakins*, 382.
[14] Cecilia Beaux, *Background with Figures* (Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1930), 96; quoted in Theodore Siegl, *The Thomas Eakins Collection in Philadelphia Museum of Art* (Philadelphia: Museum of Art, 1978), 21.
[15] either by choice or persuasion – for example, he wrote to his friend Frank W. Stokes on 11th March 1904 'If in your social visits you hear of portraits to be painted bespeak some for me'; quoted in Phyllis D. Rosenzweig, *The Thomas Eakins' Collection of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (*Washington DC: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, 1977), 200.
[16] Goodrich, *Thomas Eakins*, 2: 53.
[17] Sewell, *Thomas Eakins,* xxiii.
[18] Siegl, *Eakins Collection*, 23.

On the other hand, his aunt (sister of his mother) and his father lived *en famille* to advanced ages – Aunt Eliza Cowperthwaite died in January 1899 at the age of ninety-three. Eakins, like Herkomer (see Chapter Two), was well aware at first hand of the responsibilities and frailties ageing could bring, acknowledging to a friend that 'Aunt Eliza should not be left alone, neither should my father in his old days'.[19] Eakins' father, Benjamin, remained an active and sturdy figure in Eakins' life until he died peacefully at the age of eighty-two in December 1899. Benjamin had been a strong support for his son, sustaining and encouraging him financially and emotionally throughout the trials and tribulations of Eakins' life; on more than one occasion the family was challenged by various accusations made against Thomas by the Pennsylvania Academy Committee and two of his sisters and their husbands, but throughout these troubles Benjamin Eakins supported his son.

Eakins painted his father in several paintings, no doubt in part because he was a readily available subject (as did Herkomer, see Chapter 6, Figure 6:4). In an 1882 painting *The Writing Master* (Figure 4:3) Eakins' sixty-four year old father is shown as still at work (he was a writing master), completely concentrated on his penmanship; his right hand is working the pen, the left, beautifully painted with white shading emphasising the veins and knobbly knuckles, carefully controlling the paper. This is a man mentally alert and physically able, engrossed in his work in the same way Thomas Eakins was immersed in his. As evidenced by the title, and as in many other of Eakins' works, the working environment is almost as important as the subject, since it is a significant part of what defines a person, and an aspect of especial interest to Eakins. One of his recurring themes was of people (of any age, but usually older) being absorbed in their work, *The Gross Clinic* and *The Agnew Clinic* being two notable examples. This interest also helps explain the proportions of males to females in his portraits, which Goodrich calculated it as 'about two-thirds as many women as men, 100:150'.[20] At this time, not just in Philadelphia but also across society as a whole, there were few professional opportunities for women, which precluded them being shown in such roles.

More than a decade later Eakins produced another portrait of his father *Benjamin Eakins* (Figure 4:4) who by then was well into his seventies. Here there is a total focus on the subject, with no distractions in background or clothing; this was typical of Eakins' portrait style at this time, it was the inner life of the person which was all important. Benjamin Eakins is shown in a three-quarters head and shoulders pose, with pronounced veins on his bald forehead, and the one large elderly ear visible punctiliously recorded. Without his glasses the depth and brilliance of the eyes are particularly noticeable, with heavy dark brows above and shadowed bags beneath them

[19] Letter to Fanny Crowell, June 4th 1886; quoted in Kathleen A Foster & Cheryl Liebold, *Writing About Eakins; The Manuscripts in Charles Bregler's Thomas Eakins' Collection (*Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art, 1989), 227.
[20] Montague Marks 'My Note Book' *The Art Amateur; A Monthly Journal Devoted to Art in the Household* 29:2 (July 1893):30.

which, together with the stern compressed set of the mouth, hints at the stoicism he had needed for the family tragedies. He is clearly old, no longer at work, but in posture and expression still has a firmness and strength about him. This portrait clearly demonstrates, in the dark background and focus on the individual face in the painting, the influence an artist such as Ribera (Figure 1:2) had on Eakins.

At the start of his career Eakins' work was acknowledged and quietly appreciated. Journal articles such as those by William Brownell mention Eakins in a complimentary way. An article about Philadelphia, written in 1882, mentions him 'doing admirable work'.[21] A colleague, Leslie W. Miller, later to be the subject of one of Eakins' most highly praised portraits, also gave Eakins a good report, describing him as 'a man who has made so many friends by the seriousness of his purpose and singular faithfulness to his own ideals'.[22] He brought to his work an 'exact, uncompromising, hard, analytical style…… one thinks of a scientific mind that has made the mistake of taking up art'.[23] The last decades of the nineteenth century were years noteworthy for a lack of grit in American art, both in painting and reviews: 'blasé, sweet caramel artists' and a level of 'respectable mediocrity' were the order of the day.[24] Eakins brought a bracing contrast to this; he, and his work, were described as 'refreshing, like a whiff of the sea…. a rugged, powerful personality...[his] work may be, here and there, too severe to be called beautiful, but it is manly throughout - it has muscles – and is nearer to great art than almost anything we can see in America'.[25]

Writing about Eakins in 1881 the patrician and perceptive art critic Mariana Van Rennesaeler noted two sides to his work. Fresh from a visit to society artist W. M. Chase in his glitzy studio (of which Eakins had remarked 'his is an atelier: mine is a workshop') she was bemused by Eakins' lack of pretension - 'He seemed to me much more like an inventor working out curious and interesting problems for himself than like an average artist' she wrote.[26] She also recognised, however, that he was 'the most devoted to the actual life about him, the most given to recording it without gloss or alteration – ugliness does not daunt Mr Eakins – his artistic skill is such that he can bring good results from the most unpromising materials..... his insight into character [is] so deep and his rendering of it so clear – he makes delightful pictures out of whatsoever he will'.[27]

[21] George Parsons Lathrop, 'Philadelphia: a town built by Quakers,' *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 64 (Feb 1882): 323–338.
[22] Leslie W. Miller, 'Water-Color Exhibition at Philadelphia,' *American Architect & Building News* XI:330 *(* 22 April 1882): 185.
[23] E.S.,'The Pennsylvania Academy Exhibition' *Art Amateur* 4:6 (May 1881):115. E.S. = Edward Shinn/Strahan.
[24] Sadakichi Hartmann, *A History of American Art* (Boston: L. C. Page & Co.,1902), 200. William J. Clark, Jnr., 'The Fine Arts: Eakins' Portrait of Dr Gross,' *Philadelphia Daily Evening Telegraph (*April 28th 1876):4*,* quoted in Kathleen A. Foster & Mark S. Tucker, *An Eakins Masterpiece Restored:Seeing the Gross Clinic Anew* (Philadelphia/New Haven & London: Philadelphia Museum of Art in Association with Yale University Press, 2012): 139.
[25] *Art News*, 1:2, (April 1897): 4.
[26] Goodrich, *Eakins,* 2:8. ibid 1:198.
[27] Mariana G. Van Rensselaer, 'The New York Art Scene', *Atlantic Monthly* 148 (August 1886): 198/199.

Following the controversial appearance of *The Gross Clinic* and quarrels with the Philadelphia 'art establishment', the 1880s and early 1890s were wilderness years for Eakins, his robust work and uncompromising maintenance of his own exacting standards not being understood or accepted by many of the art establishment, though there is a sense of intransigence on both sides. He was also embroiled in 'scandals', such as his insistence on nudity and perhaps inappropriate sexual activity with various women. Some writers have concentrated on these aspects of his life, making plausible conjectures, but the allegations are best described as 'not proven', a position exacerbated as so many of his papers were destroyed after his death. Attitudes were changing, however, and by the turn of the century he began to be accepted and appreciated in the artistic world; his 1903 portrait of Archbishop Elder received the Temple Prize when displayed at the Pennsylvania Academy annual exhibition; he became a member of exhibition selection juries, well-respected because his opinions were expressed without fear or favour. Artist John Sloan remarked in 1909 that 'Thomas Eakins' opinion is the only one on the jury that's worthwhile'.[28]

Eakins always had a stalwart supporter in his wife, Susan, and her determination to support his memory and work continued after his death; a particular fillip to his reputation came in the early 1930s when she and family friend Addie Williams donated several of Eakins' paintings to the Pennsylvania Museum of Art. Interest in Eakins awakened and was further fuelled by the 1933 publication of Lloyd Goodrich's study of Eakins and his works, which was republished in 1982 after considerable revision and expansion. It remains the most valuable, robust and sensible study of Eakins and has the important if double-edged merit of having input from those who knew Eakins - double-edged because although there is an inestimable value in the fact that they knew Eakins, and knew him within the context of his times, there is also the risk that their opinions of him could be very subjective, strongly biased for either good and bad.

After Mrs Eakins' death in 1938 many papers and writings were rescued from destruction by Charles Bregler, supporter and pupil of Eakins, and these eventually reached the public domain in the 1980s, after the death of Bregler's second wife, who had retained his collection. The papers are now in the care of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, who have published catalogues and essays about the collection, compiled by curator Kathleen A. Foster.[29]

This sequence of events and revelations developed interest in Eakins' works and life and meant that studies of his work proliferated. In May 1979 the *Arts Magazine* devoted a complete issue to his work, with articles including a study on his use of photography, William H. Gerdts on the portrait of Archbishop Elder, and Eakins' collaboration with friend and colleague Samuel

[28] Goodrich, *Eakins*, 2:201.
[29] Foster & Liebold, *Writing About Eakins.* Kathleen A. Foster, *Thomas Eakins Rediscovered: Charles Bregler's Thomas Eakins Collection at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art: New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1997).

Murray on the Witherspoon statues.[30] The psychological aspects of Eakins' work were considered in papers by Michael Fried and David Lubin.[31] Other studies scrutinised particular works or specialities, for example Gordon Hendricks' essay on the portrait of Rutherford Hayes, Eakins' work as an illustrator, and Sarah Burns' essay on his self-portraits.[32]

Exhibitions of Eakins' work have taken place, accompanied by informative catalogues and studies, typical examples being the compilations of Darren Sewell and John Wilmerding.[33] There have been studies of Eakins' works at various galleries, such as the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington.[34] Thomas Eakins remains a newsworthy subject to the present day; witness the recent successful campaign to keep *The Gross Clinic* in its home town of Philadelphia, plus the media reports of the 2016 sale of five of Eakins's paintings which had been owned by the St Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia.[35]

Unlike Herkomer, Frith, or Louise Jopling, who wrote down their opinions (see earlier chapters), Eakins was not a man given to much expression of his thoughts on painting. He provided some careful scientific studies, for example his *Drawing Manual* and a methodical study of horse muscles in action.[36] Some of his letters from his studies in France and Spain survive, but there is little more available than this; which is a comment in itself. When asked to provide a biography he gave this terse statement - 'I was a pupil of Gérôme (also of Bonnat and Dumont, sculptor). I have taught in life classes, and lectured on anatomy continually since 1873. I have painted many pictures and a little sculpture. For the public I believe my life is all in my work'.[37] He was also well aware of his lack of contemporary appreciation - 'My honors are misunderstanding, persecution and neglect, enhanced because unsought' he wrote to a colleague in April 1894.[38]

Remarks from two of Eakins' contemporaries reflect on the dichotomy his art produced, and also their value for this study. Fellow artist Edwin Austen Abbey, when asked why he refused to sit for Eakins, expressed the disadvantages of Eakins' 'warts and all' approach with his comment

[30] Robert McCracken Peck, 'Thomas Eakins and Photography:The Means to An End,' *Arts Magazine* 53:9 (May 1979):113–117. William H. Gerdts, 'Thomas Eakins and the Episcopal Portrait: Archbishop William H. Elder,' *Arts Magazine* 53:9 (May 1979):154–157. Mariah Chamberlin-Helman, 'Samuel Murray, Thomas Eakins and the Witherspoon Prophets,'*Arts Magazine* 53:9 (May 1979):134-139.
[31] Michael Fried, 'Realism, Writing, and Disfiguration in Thomas Eakins's Gross Clinic, with a Postscript on Stephen Crane's Upturned Faces' *Representations* 9 (Winter 1985): 33–104. David M. Lubin, *Act of Portrayal; Eakins, Sargent, James* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1985).
[32] Gordon Hendricks. 'The Eakins' Portrait of Rutherford B. Hayes,' *American Art Journal* 1:1 (Spring 1969):104–114. William H. Gerdts, 'Thomas Eakins and the Episcopal Portrait: Archbishop William H. Elder,' *Arts Magazine* 53:9 (May 1979):154–157. Sarah Burns, 'Ordering the Artist's Body: Thomas Eakins Acts of Self-Portrayal,' *American Art* University of Chicago on behalf of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, 19:1 (Spring 2005): 82–107.
[33] Sewell, *Thomas Eakins,* 2001. John Wilmerding, *Thomas Eakins and the Heart of American Life* (London, National Portrait Gallery, 1993).
[34] Phyllis D. Rosenzweig,*The Thomas Eakins Collection of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (*Washington, DC. Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, 1977).
[35] http://catholicphilly.com/2014/03/news/local-news/thomas-eakins-leaves-the-seminary/; accessed 3/10/2016.
[36] Thomas Eakins, *A Drawing Manual (*Philadelphia Museum of Art; Yale University Press, 2005). Thomas Eakins, 'The Differential Action of Certain Muscles Passing More Than One Joint,' *Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia* 46 (1894): 172–180.
[37] Goodrich, *Eakins*, 2:5.
[38] Letter to Harrison Morris, 23rd April 1894; quoted in Goodrich, *Thomas Eakins*, 2:160.

that ‘He would bring out all those traits of my character I have been trying to conceal from the public for years'.[39]

This insight was confirmed in a much more positive way by Walt Whitman (1819-1892), the poet and a man who, according to his biographer Horace Traubel, favoured ‘the unceremonious, the unflattered’ in portraits.[40] After Eakins had painted his portrait in 1888 (Figure 4:5) Whitman was reported as remarking that he ‘never knew of but one artist, and that’s Tom Eakins, who could resist the temptation to see what they **think** ought to be rather than what **is**' and that ‘The Eakins’ portrait gets there – fulfils its purpose: sets me down in correct style, without feathers – without any fuss of any sort’.[41] Whitman was a fashionable subject for painters at this time; ‘I am always subjected to painters – they come here and paint, paint, paint, everlastingly paint' he remarked; a factor which makes his comments particularly valuable as he was not considering Eakins’ work in isolation.[42] English painter Herbert Gilchrist produced a portrait (Figure 4:6) which Whitman described as ‘the parlor Whitman’, considering that ‘it missed the most of me, went all astray' and ‘Gilchrist is determined to make me the conventional, proper old man; his picture is very benevolent …. but the Walt Whitman of that picture lacks guts’.[43]

A year or two after Eakins' portrayal another painter also produced a portrait of Whitman (Figure 4:7); this work was by the then fashionable American painter John White Alexander. Whitman did not like it very much - ‘I thought Alexander would do better, considering his reputation. Tom Eakins could give Alexander a lot of extra room and yet beat him at the game', and continued with the oft-quoted remark that 'Eakins is not a painter, he is a force’.[44]

Both Gilchrist and Alexander showed Whitman in conventional portrait style, ’enthroned’ in a chair; in Alexander’s work Whitman appears to have ‘scrubbed up’ especially for the occasion, dressed in his best suit, his white beard fading into an insubstantial mist. In contrast, Eakins’ portrait shows only the face and chest of Whitman, and, in a break from his usual serious portrayals, shows Whitman as a beneficent old man, a ‘jolly joker' filling the canvas and seeming to hide a smile beneath his prolific whiskers.[45] In Eakins' portrait he is not so smartly dressed or obviously posed, and to Whitman this was the best portrait - ‘of all the portraits made of me by artists I like Eakins best; it is not perfect but it comes nearest being me'.[46] It was also

[39] ibid, 2:77.
[40] Horace Traubel, *With Walt Whitman in Camden; March 28th – July 14th 1888* (Boston: Small, Maynard & Co., 1906): 131. Traubel visited Whitman daily for several years, and recorded first hand Whitman's words.
[41] ibid, 41,131. My emphasis
[42] ibid, 131.
[43] ibid 39, 131, 153.
[44] ibid, 284.
[45] ‘There was a woman from the South here the other day: she called it the picture of a jolly joker’ quoted in Goodrich, *Eakins,* 2:34.
[46] Traubel, *Whitman*, 131.

approved by other viewers, one exclaiming 'Here is the real Whitman..... a canvas that breathed life'.[47]

The problem was, of course, that, as Whitman comprehended 'The world insists on having its own way: it don't want a man so much the way he looks as the way it is accustomed to having me look'.[48] Painters were inclined to 'fool with nature – reform it, revise it, to make it fit their preconceived notion of what it should be', and the problem viewers had with Eakins' pictures was that they were too real, too full of what Whitman described (see above) as 'guts'. It is exactly this reality, of course, which makes them so valuable for this study.

Whitman was an ageing man and was shown as such. In other Eakins' paintings, however, where the sitter was not so old, it is often considered that Eakins made them look older than they were. Goodrich gives several significant anecdotes to illustrate Eakins' preferences for this activity; a typical one being that Eakins, when painting fifty year old Walter Copeland Bryant, chose to make him appear as if he were seventy years old because he thought him too youthful looking.[49] On another occasion, Eakins asked the banker William B. Kurtz to go unshaven for twenty four hours, and Leslie W. Miller he asked to wear an old jacket.[50] Even if only anecdotes, they are consistent enough to have at least an element of truth and carry the implication that Eakins did not intend to show outward glamour or provide false flattery, but did value age.

Writers conjecture on the reasons behind this apparent ageing; Wilmerding ponders fleetingly that it might be a reflection of Eakins' own life of apparent disappointment and rejection, as well as fin-de-siècle disillusion.[51] Elizabeth Johns, in a particularly pertinent essay *Thomas Eakins: A Case for Reassessment,* which she enlarged upon further in her book *The Heroism of Modern Life*, perceptively considers that Eakins aged his sitters (examples include Edith Mahon, Asbury Lee, Susanne Santje) to produce 'an image with emotional significance'.[52] By making his sitters look older he was hammering home the unpopular notion that all people, of whatever class or social status, were subject to the depredations of time – a pertinent if unpopular reminder that 'the paths of glory lead but to the grave'.[53] Human beings not having a liking of being reminded of their mortality, Eakins' works rarely acquired the vapid appreciation of the crowd.[54]

[47] Annie Nathan Meyer 'Two Portraits of Walt Whitman,' *Putnam's Magazine* 4 (April–September 1908): 707.
[48] Traubel, *Whitman,* 153.
[49] Goodrich, *Eakins*, 2:59.
[50] ibid.
[51] John Wilmerding, 'Thomas Eakins Late Portraits,' *Arts Magazine* 53:9 (May 1979):112.
[52] Elizabeth Johns, 'Thomas Eakins: A Case For Reassessment.' *Arts Magazine* 53:9 (May 1979):130–133. Elizabeth Johns, *Thomas Eakins: The Heroism of Modern Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press,1983).
[53] Thomas Gray, *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard.* This quotation taken from *The New Oxford Book of English Verse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972): 442.
[54] Former student Charles Henry Fromuth visited the ailing Eakins in 1910 and found him 'dispirited', having 'abandoned all hope of recognition'. This saddened Fromuth, who understood the lack of appreciation of art which aims higher than the capacity of American comprehension' *Fromuth papers,* Library of Congress, (Feb 25th 1910).

As art critic Samuel Isham remarked 'Thomas Eakins fails of popular appreciation because of his neglect of the beauties and graces of painting …. their [ie his sitters] interest lies in their personality, and that is excellently given – every line and face of raiment has character and the artist seems to say ' Here is the man, what more do you want'?[55]

Two works of Eakins, *The Gross Clinic* (Figure 4:8) and *The Agnew Clinic* (Figure 4:9), provide very positive images of septuagenarian men. Both paintings are very large, created as tributes to celebrated medical men and show each surgeon in Olympian stance, dominating their respective paintings, but, with their grey hair and features, clearly old. What is more surprising, at least to eyes which have dwelt on the old people shown in, for example, Herkomer's paintings, is that both surgeons, painted in their seventieth year, appear as vigorous men, working hard and in full command of themselves in their professional roles.

Eakins himself had chosen the subject of Dr Gross for the Centennial Exhibition to be held in Philadelphia in 1876, not only as a means of demonstrating his talents but as a testimonial to the doctor himself, but also to Philadelphia, the town where Gross worked, and which had developed into a significant centre of scientific and medical innovation.[56]

Some reviewers understood and appreciated Eakins' talents - 'Mr Eakins is a... painter who knows how to paint. Whatever objection a sensitive fastidiousness may find to the subject of his picture ….. none could be made to the skill with which the scene was rendered' but many of the reviews focus particularly on the realistic and thus unsettling themes.[57] Some of the criticism was doubtless due to personal prejudice against Eakins, a man who favoured realism above tact, plus professional jealousy at Eakins' vibrant new talent, but most of all it was because of the unexpected subject matter and style, the reviewers considering it to be too robust and lifelike, with its blood and gore, for viewers to cope with.[58] Typical responses include the following: 'although his method of painting is not disgusting in colors … the story told is in itself so dreadful that the public may be well excused if it turn away in horror' and 'the surgery and red dabbling were not offset, in the judgment of most visitors to the exhibition, by the great skill shown in the beautiful modelling of the hands…. to sensitive and instinctively artistic natures such a treatment as this one, of such a subject, must be felt as a degradation of Art'.[59] Another review wrote of 'Mr Eakins's ghastly symphonies in gore bitumen. Delicate or sensitive women or children suddenly confronted by the portrayal of these clinical horrors might receive a shock

[55] Samuel Isham, *The History of American Painting* (New York: MacMillan, 1936), 524-5.
[56] Johns, *Heroism of Modern Life,* 58-63.
[57] William Brownell, "The Younger Painters in America: First Papers" *Scribner's Monthly* XX/1 (May 1880): 4.
[58] As one [favourable] contemporary reviewer observed, "It is rumoured that the blood on Dr Gross's fingers made some of the members of the committee sick, but judging from the quality of the works exhibited by them we fear that it was not the blood alone that made them sick. Artists have before now been known to sicken at the sight of pictures by younger men which they in their souls were compelled to acknowledge were beyond their emulation" William Clark, Art Critic of the Philadelphia Daily Evening Telegraph June 16th 1876 Quoted in Lloyd Goodrich. *Thomas Eakins. (*Cambridge, Massachusetts 1982): 1:131.
[59] 'The American Artists: Varnishing Day of the Second Exhibition', *New York Times*, (March 8th 1879). S. N. Carter, 'Exhibition of the Society of American Artists' *The Art Journal* 5 (1879):156.

from which they would never recover'.[60] This apparent concern for the supposedly delicate sensibilities of viewers nowadays seems exaggerated, even absurd; nor was the topic particularly new – Rembrandt's *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Nicolaes Tulp* (1632) and Michiel van Mierevelt's *Anatomy Lesson of Professor Willem van der Meer* (1617) provide clear precedents, although in these works corpses and skeletons were being dealt with rather than live bodies, and there were no scalpels or hands stained with fresh blood. What is more noteworthy now is that at no point was there any surprise or comment about the age of the septuagenarian subjects, who certainly do not look decrepit or frail but able-bodied, professional, and thriving in their work.

Critical opinions were very complimentary about the depiction of Dr Gross himself; comments included 'a most admirable portrait of the distinguished surgeon'; 'especially admirable is the figure of Dr Gross, who stands with the easy dignity of a man entirely the master of himself and his surroundings'; 'a most admirable likeness of the strong face and tall figure of the surgeon'.[61]

It is notable that only one review refers to the age of Dr Gross, describing him as 'the aged and quiet professor'; an unexpected, even inexplicable, viewpoint in that Dr Gross, with his upright stance, central positioning and the light shining on his bald head seems anything but 'quiet' or even 'aged', much more a controlling force, almost as if a god descended from the heavens. What perplexed and upset many of the critics of *The Gross Clinic* was not the age of the main subject, but the large size, the unexpected theme and the overwhelming reality of it all – the viewer was all but participating in the operation, part of the audience in the operating theatre; all of which was a far remove from the often whimsical and bland paintings so in favour at that time. There were, however, some contemporaries who recognised Eakins' abilities in this painting - ''His aim …. is to represent, as near as is possible with the pigments at command, the absolute facts of nature, and a misrepresentation of facts for the purpose of pleasing the eyes of those who do not know what nature looks like is something that his method does not contemplate' wrote one reviewer.[62] There was also an acknowledgement of his inability to compromise –'In no case did Eakins deviate from a **truthful rendering** of his model as he saw it for the purpose of gaining popular favour' wrote his friend William Sartain soon after Eakins' death'.[63]

If the work did not impress the critics it was certainly appreciated by others, demonstrated in the action of medical students fourteen years later in commissioning from Eakins a portrait of their

[60] Montague Marks 'My Note Book' *The Art Amateur; A Monthly Journal Devoted to Art in the Household* 29:2 (July 1893):30.
[61] William J. Clark, Jnr, 'The Fine Arts: Eakins' Portrait of Dr Gross,' *Philadelphia Daily Evening Telegraph (*28th April 1876):4 quoted in Foster & Tucker, *An Eakins Masterpiece Restored*, 138. 'Some Recent Art,' clipping from an unidentified newspaper, cApril 1876, in Charles Bregler's *Thomas Eakins Collection* Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, quoted in Foster & Tucker, *An Eakins Masterpiece Restored*, 139, W. H. Workman, 'Letter from Philadelphia,' *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* 95:5 (1876): 152/3; quoted in Foster & Tucker, *An Eakins Masterpiece Restored*, 143.
[62] William J. Clark, Jnr., 'The Fine Arts: Eakins' Portrait of Dr Gross,' *Philadelphia Daily Evening Telegraph (*April 28th 1876): 4 quoted in Foster & Tucker, *An Eakins Masterpiece Restored,* 138.
[63] William Sartain, 'Thomas Eakins,' *The Art World* 3:4 (Jan 1918). My emphasis.

teacher Dr D. Hayes Agnew to commemorate his forthcoming retirement.[64] Rather than produce a single-sitter portrait of Agnew, Eakins chose to follow the precedent set by his *Gross Clinic* and showed the physician at work, and fulfilled the students' trust admirably. By positioning each of the two men at the apex of a triangle – vertical in Dr Gross's case, horizontal with Dr Agnew - Eakins emphasised how in command, of both themselves and their colleagues, the two men were. This is not in itself surprising as both men had had distinguished careers; it is the continuation of this competence, with no sign of diminution, that is of interest.

The students, and Dr Agnew, were pleased with the picture, but once again the the artistic establishment spurned Eakins' work, and it was not until 1893 that it was first displayed, at an art exhibition in Chicago; when it was eventually displayed at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts Annual Show in February 1914 it created a sensation, Eakins being acknowledged as 'the dean of American painting'.[65]

Within the context of this study it is interesting to make comparisons between *The Gross Clinic* by Eakins and Herkomer's *Last Muster* (discussed in Chapter Two). Both works were created by artists of roughly the same age, at the same early stage in their careers and painted in the same year. Both artists included carefully portrayed and identifiable individuals in the background – the chapel congregation in Herkomer's work, the 'audience' in the operating-theatre.[66] Both artists had been looking for suitable subjects to present to their potential audience, something from real life (rather than an imaginary world) that would make a 'good picture', and it is intriguing that they both chose old people as their main subject. In Herkomer's work, as the title and the recently dead man in the pew indicate, the emphasis was on men at the end of their lives, fading quietly away, whereas in *The Gross Clinic* a man of comparative age to the Pensioners is shown who is still undoubtedly vigorous, in full command, and certainly not a person diminishing with age. It indicates, even if unwittingly, a significant difference between attitudes to age in the two countries – the energy of the United States, the quieter attitude of the English.

Eakins desire for the 'truthful rendering' mentioned in an earlier paragraph, as well as his divergence from conventional portrayals, is clearly seen in one of two 1893 portraits of revered Philadelphian doctor *Dr Jacob da Costa* (Figures 4:10, 11). Commissioned to mark da Costa's retirement at the age of 60 – as with Gross and Agnew, da Costa could, because of his wealth

[64] Retirement at this time was not mandatory, or routine, it was more a matter of choice amongst those who had wealth and status enough to make the choice. It was not an anticipated part of most people's lives, they needed to carry on with their habitual routines until death, disability or dependence engulfed them. Achenbaum, *Old Age*, 21-23; Fischer, *Growing Old,* 142.
[65] 'Discreet Pictures Seen at Academy,' *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (February 18th 1914): 14 quoted in Sewell, Thomas Eakins, 430, n18.
[66] Saxon-Mills, *Life and Letters,* 87. Kathleen A Foster, Mark S Tucker. *An Eakins Masterpiece Restored* (Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2012), 40. Gordon Hendricks *The Life and Works of Thomas Eakins (*New York: Grossman Publishers, 1974), 184.

and status, choose when, and if, he retired - one painting is by Thomas Eakins, the other by another painter from Philadelphia, Robert Vonnoh.[67] Both portraits are clearly of the same man, but Eakins paints da Costa in relaxed, casual pose, with an emphasis on his sagging face and hands, whereas Vonnoh's portrayal is bland and inoffensive, and therefore liable to be uncritically received, with nothing about it to challenge or provide anything other than an insipid pleasure. Vonnoh shows da Costa in frontal three-quarter length view, sitting upright in a dark suit, enthroned in a large armchair which supports him and gives him an air of routine portrait hauteur. His face is smooth-skinned, the age-revealing neck hidden by his collar. The only ear visible is smooth and not emphasised, and he looks out slightly to the side, a smile hovering on his face which makes him appear at ease, bordering on smug. His hands, another individual and age-revealing body-part – as Eakins said, 'a man's hand no more looks like another man's hand than his head looks like another's' – are shown as smooth and unworn, one resting calmly on the chair arm, the other on a book, that useful device to indicate an educated person.[68]

In Eakins' portrait, however, da Costa is shown in more casual and less conventional pose. In three-quarter view, he looks sideways in an informal pose. His head is bald, he has crinkles and bags under the eyes, creased neck, sagging chin, petulant mouth, and the one ear visible is crusty and wrinkled, the ear of an old man. His suit is dark and slightly rumpled; the terracotta background sets off his figure well, and there are no accessories, such as books or pictures, to distract the eye. Da Costa is certainly not 'enthroned', as in the Vonnoh portrait, he sits sideways on the chair, which is almost unseen behind his body, an unexpected style for Eakins considering his recommendation of drawing the chair first.[69] This posture helps him appear more real and relaxed than the innocuous and routine Vonnoh portrait. In particular, his hands, which rest lightly on his thighs, clearly show the wrinkled, prominent veins of a man who has worked hard with his hands as well as his brain.

Perhaps there was not enough grandeur in this portrait, but how much more realistic and genuine was the da Costa Eakins painted, showing him as someone who had a story to his life, who emits the frailty of humanity which besets everyone, and someone who could be talked to, with whom the joys and heartaches of life could be shared; an ordinary human being who is as subject to the depredations of time as anyone else. By emphasising rather than hiding da Costa's ageing face and body Eakins records his humanity as well as the vulnerability of being human.

[67] 1858-1933 American impressionist, best known for his landscapes and portraits. He produced another portrait of da Costa in 1893, in which da Costa is standing but still smooth-faced and bland.
[68] Hendricks, '*Rutherford Hayes,'* 106.
[69] 'Draw the chair first and put the figure on the chair. It will be a guide to draw the figure.' Quoted in Charles Bregler 'Thomas Eakins as a Teacher' *The Arts* XVII:6 (March 1931):383.

In contrast the Vonnah portrait seems adequate but lacklustre and unremittingly similar to any number of the professional men recorded in the production line of late nineteenth century portraits, so that when entering the Victorian section of any portrait gallery one is surrounded to a point beyond ennui by indistinguishable bland be-whiskered soberly dressed men. It was also an age when, as art writer Fanny Hering remarked in her work on Gérôme, if 'a work is insipid and badly executed, badly drawn, badly painted, and stupid beyond expression, it stands a good chance of being a success, since it is on a level with those who admire it'.[70] Popularity has never been a conclusive sign of successful and lasting work.

Some years later, in the early years of the twentieth century, Eakins produced fourteen portraits of clerical figures.[71] He had taken to visiting the seminary of St Charles Borremeo in Philadelphia with his friend Samuel Murray; although he had no religious faith himself, as an educated, questioning man approaching sixty it is not surprising that he would enjoy the company of scholarly, intelligent, people with whom he could doubtless have deep and thoughtful conversations. Of the fourteen portraits, almost half of them full-length, and show clerics of all ages and ranks; typical examples include Cardinal Sebastiano Martinelli (1848 – 1910) in 1902, aged 54; Mary Patricia Waldron (1835 – 1916) in 1903, aged 67, Mother Superior of the Philadelphia convent of the Sisters of Mercy; and also in 1903 layman James A. Flaherty (1853 - 1937).[72] Although Flaherty was only fifty at the time of the painting (Figure 4:12), Eakins painted him as looking older, and it is a significant tribute to Eakins' perspicacity that as the years passed the comment was made that the portrait was 'getting to look more and more like the sitter every year'.[73] As with so many of Eakins' portraits, some were received with gratitude and grace, others were not appreciated. All that remains of the portrait of Sister Mary Patricia Waldron is a sketch Eakins' produced (Figure 4:13). The finished portrait was given to Sister Waldron, who wrote a note of thanks to Eakins, with a small payment, but after her death in 1916 her portrait was removed by other nuns and replaced by one they considered 'more pleasing'.[74] The surviving sketch, though indistinct, shows that Eakins intended to paint her sitting, in three-quarter view, with her face lined and dignified even if clearly aged.

A much more successful portrait for both sitter and painter was that of 84 year-old *Archbishop William Elder* (Figure 4:14), painted late in 1903 at the request of Elder's colleague Bishop Henry Moeller.[75] Eakins travelled to Cincinnati to paint this portrait and finished it in the, for

[70] Hering, *Gérôme,* 259.
[71] Goodrich, *Eakins*, 2:187.
[72] Cardinal Martinelli's portrait is in the Armand Hammer Collection, California. Sister Waldron's portrait is lost, most probably destroyed by her convent colleagues. James Flaherty's portrait remained in the Charles Borremo Seminary until it was sold, with some of the other portraits, in May 2016.
[73] Goodrich, *Thomas Eakins*, 2:78.
[74] Goodrich, *Thomas Eakins*, 2:19. It was almost certainly destroyed.
[75] This episode provides a classic example of the hazards inherent in any study of Thomas Eakins' works. In 1982 Goodrich had stated that 'All of Eakins portraits of the clergy were evidently done at his request, not commissioned', (Goodrich, *Thomas Eakins,* 2:188) but the appearance of the Bregler papers in 1985 revealed this not to be so. Elder's portrait was 'a good-will commission'

him, phenomenal speed of one week. He was pleased with the portrait, writing to friend and colleague Frank Stokes that 'I have just finished in Cincinnati a full-length, life-sized portrait of the venerable Archbishop Elder which I did in one week……. I think it is one of my best'.[76] For once an exhibition hanging committee agreed with him and it was not only included in the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art exhibition in the autumn of 1904 but also won Eakins the Temple Prize – despite this, it is little mentioned in reviews; even when an article started with a large reproduction of this work, nothing was written.[77] Bishop Moeller was well pleased with it, however, remarking that 'The work is good and of a high order. Some who have seen the picture did not like the Archbishop's expression, but … you gave the Archbishop the expression he had while you were doing the work'.[78] This was a typical Eakins trait, as Mrs Eakins remarked to student Laurie Wallace, her husband 'simply painted what he saw'.[79] Described more recently by Elizabeth Johns as 'a stunning painting, though not because it flatters the archbishop', it is an innocuous study of an old man, sitting in conventional clerical/papal portrait style.[80] Shrouded in his clerical robes, with only his flaccid face and worn hands in view, he seems human and unassuming. He has the bulging earlobes of an old man, a large nose, bags under his eyes, and a dome-like bald head, reminiscent of that of Professor Gross. As so often with Eakins, the Archbishop's hands are beautifully painted, displayed as aged, knobbly and arthritic, the white paint again deployed to give shape and emphasis.

Eakins developed a particular expertise in the painting of heads, hands, feet and anatomy generally; he dissected bodies and limbs, drew them in cross section, and sculpted them (Figure 4:15). Within the Bregler collection of Eakins's papers are a significant number of careful dissection studies of human joints – knees, shoulders, elbows and hands. He had studied anatomy from his school days and placed a strong emphasis on its value in his days teaching at the Philadelphia Academy. This was not understood by the trustees of the Academy, but to him it was vital that an artist understood the human body and all its workings.

This expertise in heads and hands is of particular value for this study as these are two areas of the body, along with necks, which especially show the signs of ageing. As Goodrich accurately remarked 'some of Eakins's most masterly painting can be found in his modelling of hands, with every variation of colour, light, shadow and reflected light'.[81] Archbishop Elder has the arthritic

requested in a letter dated 17th November 1903 by Archbishop Henry Moeller to Eakins, who had twice painted Moeller's colleague James P. Taylor, who had clearly recommended Eakins. 'I would like to get a good portrait of the Archbishop [Elder], and as you so highly recommend Mr Eakins I will be pleased if you request him to paint one for me.' (Sewell, *Thomas Eakins*, 322. Foster & Liebold, *Writing about Eakins,* 181). Since so many of Eakins' papers and paintings were destroyed and lost after his and his wife's death, one cannot help but wonder how many other mistaken conjectures have been made.

[76] Letter from Eakins to Frank W. Stokes 15th December 1903. Quoted in Rosenzweig, *The Thomas Eakins Collection,* 198.

[77] Arthur Z. Bateman, "Fine Arts Exhibition at Philadelphia." *Brush and Pencil* 13:5 (Feb 1904):397. The author merely includes Eakins in a listing of seventeen 'portraitists whose work deserves mention - and in many instances enthusiastic commendation.'

[78] Goodrich, *Eakins*, 2:192.

[79] http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/container/viewer/Letters-Miscellaneous--199033 Letter from Susan Eakins to Laurie Wallace, dated December 14th 1934. Accessed 22/10/16.

[80] Johns, *Heroism of modern life,* 148.

[81] Goodrich, *Eakins,* 2:61.

and solid hands of an old man, and in a near contemporaneous work Eakins demonstrated his skill by beautifully delineating a young woman's light and fragile hands, which hover over the arms of the chair in which she lounges. This is portrait of thirty year old *Suzanne Santje* (1873 – 1947) (Figure 4:16), actress daughter of well-known Philadelphian Charles Shearer Keyser, and it is included here as, young though the sitter is, it provides a typical example of how Eakins could make his sitters appear old, or at least older, than they were. Unfortunately there are no contemporary reviews of the painting, as it was never exhibited and only seems to have left Eakins' studio as part of Susan Eakins' gift to the Pennsylvania Academy in the 1930s.

Suzanne is shown not so much as older per se but more as though, immersed in profound thoughts, she is worn out by the whole weight of the world which she carries on her shoulders. Her long luxuriant dark hair droops freely over her shoulders, the collar of the dress and her arms follow the same line and give the impression of her being dragged down. She is much less solidly fixed in the chair than Elder, almost floating with her sprawl and drapes; her face also makes her seem older, with the puffy cheeks, lined and pursed mouth and sideways glancing eyes; it is this that characterises Eakins' paintings of people; not so much old age itself as the feeling he is revealing the full weight, paradoxes and worries of human existence.

To say that Eakins 'aged' his sitters is a convenient shorthand but it slightly misleads; it is not so much ageing that Eakins showed, more a recording, a revelation, of the stresses and strains, the world weariness, which lies below the surface of many people. His was an art that would 'read the mind's construction in the face'.[82] His subjects are people who are pensive, not considering whether their glass is half-empty or half-full, but more how the glass came to be there in the first place. What perturbed many people was that Eakins was able to identify and 'see the skull beneath the skin', and it was this which perturbed so many of his subjects, as it left them undefended, with no social façade.[83] What unsettled them was Eakins' ability to expose their foibles, weaknesses and innermost thoughts, and show the immutable evidence of their mortality, a mortality which affects all ranks and classes. The portraits acted as memento mori, removing the person's veneer and reminding subjects and viewers of the transience of life which was – is - the common lot of humanity.

This propensity is admirably shown in two of Eakins early twentieth century portraits. The first is his study of *Edith Mahon*, (Figure 4:17) an Englishwoman, a talented pianist, divorced, and spending time in Philadelphia. She had met the Eakins through their mutual interest in music and she agreed, at his request, to sit for Eakins in his house/studio. She was only forty at the time

[82] William Shakespeare, *Macbeth,* Act 1, iv, 7.
[83] T.S.Eliot, *Whispers of Immortality* , written 1918/1919. This quotation taken from *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations (*Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 205.

of the painting, but Eakins makes her look older; he does this by making her the total focus of the portrait, with no extraneous details, such as furniture or trinkets, to distract from her. Her face and shoulders all but fill the canvas; her face is partly in shadow, with the light falling on her slightly puffy neck and chest, and this pallor is in marked contrast to her face and helps the apparent ageing. Her rheumy eyes glisten under her heavy eyebrows, her lips are set, almost in contradiction to each other, as the lower lip could be the base of a smile, the upper part of a scowl.[84] Most of all, her firm outward glance connotes a strength of character, one that has come to terms with the vagaries of life and now has the equanimity of self-acceptance which may come at any age, but often accompanies old age; a portrait of strength, inspiration and encouragement. A reflection borne out by a recent remark on the portrait, where a former student commented how the portrait had helped her, as it 'tells me that one can lean back and survive tragedies in life while retaining the beauty of having lived and the strength to carry on'.[85]

The second portrait is of his friend and pupil *Henry Ossawa Tanner,* (Figure 4:18) who was a mere thirty-seven when painted by Eakins, yet he looks older, partly because of the sombre colours and the downward draining brush-strokes on the background wall, but also because of his shadowed face, receding hair-line, wrinkles on brow and most of all his pensive expression. The work shows Tanner half-length, facing to his right, sitting with just a hint of his chair in the bottom right hand corner; he is the entire focus of the canvas, nothing distracts from him. Both the background and Tanner's suit are of sombre tint and, as with Herkomer's *'Eventide'*, drain brightness from the picture.

In the context of this study, implicit in Eakins' selection and portrayal of his subjects are two important concepts. Firstly, that he had no prejudice or negative thoughts against the old, and, since the age of his sitters, and the fact they are still working, and seemingly in full command of their faculties, evoked no comments, neither did his critics/audience. The old were not uncommon subjects for painting and were often greeted favourably. In the same review as the Gross Clinic, 'a hoary portrait of an old, wrinkled man's head' receives complimentary remarks on the technique and competence of the artist.[86]

Secondly, it was not so much fear or lack of respect for old age that the subjects and their friends took issue with, it was the display of what was behind the social veneer, with their innermost thoughts and insecurities being exposed for all to see. Critics and contemporaries were ever ready to find fault with Eakins's works, but they do not express surprise or denigrate his choice

[84] The rheumy eyes in particular act as a reminder of the European influences on Eakins' work, notably the work of Ribera (Figure 1:2) and Van Dyck (Figure 1:4)

[85] 'Art Stories' by Catharine Johnston Westlake, https://www.smith.edu/news/museum-welcomes-president-mccartney-with-art-stories/ accessed 9th November 2016.

[86] S. N Carter, 'Exhibition of the Society of American Artists,' *The Art Journal* New Series, 5 (1879): 156. The painting was called 'Winter' by Richard Gross.

of subject if the person he painted was elderly. His sitters included a range of ages and occupations – examples include sportsmen, scientists, musicians, artists, actresses, poets, bankers, publishers – and the portrait was also a celebration of the subject's work or function as much as recording the likeness of the individual. At the 1891 Pennsylvania Academy Exhibition Walt Whitman's portrait was displayed as *Portrait of a Poet* and the picture now described as of Letitia Wilson Jordan was then merely entitled *Portrait of a Lady.*[87]

Eakins last full-length portrait was of the 74-year-old *Dr William Thomson* (1833 – 1907) (Figure 4:19), colleague of Samuel Gross and also specialist (and instrument inventor) in ophthalmology. He treated Eakins for his eye problems, and they also shared common interests, such as visual perception and photography. Eakins made particular efforts to include the instruments of Thomson's speciality in the portrait, with an ophthalmoscope in his right hand and an eye test chart in the top left background. The portrait therefore not only records the lineaments of an aged and still competent man, it emphasises the contributions he made to his speciality.

There is no indication in any of Eakins's works that he, or his audience, had any lack of respect for the elderly – rather the opposite. He chose his subjects, or was commissioned to paint them, because the sitters were considered worthy of being recorded in a portrait, not because of their status, gender, or age. Often, though, his subjects were old, a typical example being provided by the portrait of *Mrs Elizabeth Duane Gillespie* (1820 – 1901) (Figure 4:20), who was well into her seventies when Eakins painted her. She was a formidable figure in Philadelphian society, who had headed the Women's Centennial Executive Committee for the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition (where Eakins had initially shown *The Gross Clinic)* and was one of the founders of Philadelphia's School of Industrial Art. She was probably persuaded to sit for Eakins by the School's Principal and friend of Eakins, Leslie W. Miller, though she declined to finish the sittings with Eakins because of a perceived slight.[88] In 1901 Eakins offered the portrait to the Philadelphia Museum, stating that 'some years ago I painted a portrait of Mrs Gillespie' which he felt was 'a valuable likeness'.[89] Recommending the acceptance of the portrait Miller described Eakins as 'one of the strongest painters we have' and the portrait 'as a faithful likeness'.[90] With her large brawny hands folded in front of her, pursed lips, wrinkled parchment-like skin, thinning hair, and large ears, Eakins has not compromised in his delineation of an aged woman; she is clearly old, and also undoubtedly still a force to be reckoned with.

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[87] Hendricks,*Thomas Eakins,* 198.
[88] Goodrich, *Eakins*, 2:75.
[89] Letter from Thomas Eakins to Leslie W. Miller, 27th Feb 1901, quoted in Theodor Siegl, *The Thomas Eakins Collection* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1978), 142.
[90] Letter from Leslie W. Miller to T. C. Search, (March 1st 1901), quoted in Siegl, *Thomas Eakins*, 142.

Eakins's work therefore does not in any way support opinions that a loss of respect for old age was developing in the late nineteenth century, rather the opposite. Many of Eakins's works, especially in his later years, show older people still continuing to work in a very competent fashion, with no hint that they are past their prime. His two portraits of Rear-Admiral George Melville, painted within a year of each other in 1904/1905, confirm Eakins' ability. Melville (1841 – 1912) was a larger than life figure, both physically – he was over six feet tall, well built, with flowing grey locks – and in occupation – Arctic explorer, naval engineer and writer; just the sort of figure of both physical and mental achievement who would appeal to Eakins. When Mr George C. Stout of Philadelphia wrote, probably at Eakins' request, to a naval acquaintance asking for a letter of recommendation to Melville, he described Eakins not only as the artist who had 'painted two of our most famous paintings of surgical clinics in Philadelphia' but also 'the best portrait painter in America'.[91]

The first portrait (Figure 4:21) of Melville, then 63, shows him in upright three-quarter length pose, looking sideways, aged hand resting on his gilded belt. It is an ostentatious portrayal, with dress sword, medals, dangling epaulettes, and a lot of gold braid, his sagging paunch emphasised because of the sideways stance. This is a portrait which is as much about external display as in painting the inner man, and this may be the reason, or one of them, Eakins painted him again one year later (Figure 4:22). This time Melville is in forceful pose, emphasized by the direct, defiant, frontal gaze, and with fewer distractions from his face and hands – though still with brass and gilt accessories, the uniform is much plainer than the earlier portrait. The force emanates almost entirely from the personality of the sitter, with the focus on the bald head, greying hair, bushy beard, a stare bordering on the contemptuous and especially the beautifully painted work-worn, scarred aged hands clasped unwaveringly front of him.

Eakins produced careful, accurate portrayals of people, which recorded the profound 'impalpable expressions of thought and feeling' which lay beneath the outer façade'.[92] It was a positive view of people, often old, who, though clearly not immune from the rigours of life, were also still able to provide spiritual nourishment for others and remained ready and able to make a contribution to society. Eakins understood and valued the elderly, who provided excellent practice for his exacting skills, with the record of life and its challenges recorded in their outward appearance. His difficulty was that he did not drip-feed the masses, and this did not aid appreciation of his art in his lifetime. It is, however, of considerable value now, as his portrayals make very clear what it meant to be old in the United States at that time.

[91] Quoted in Goodrich, *Thomas Eakins,* 2:208.
[92] Foster, *Eakins Rediscovered*, 198.

This chapter has enlarged the overall view of the portrayal of the elderly in a very positive way. The paintings examined in this chapter were chosen from Eakins' repertoire because of the way they revealed so many different aspects of old age. There is the gentle industry of the unapologetically elderly *Mary Arthur* (Figure 4:1), the continuing force so unmistakable in the stern features of *Elizabeth Duane Gillespie* (Figure 4:20) and, perhaps most significant of all, the aged figures (in terms of their chronological age) who are shown still deeply involved in their work- for example, Dr Gross, Dr Agnew and General Melville – all are clearly in full command and there is no hint of any diminution of their abilities (Figures 4:8,9,21,22).

This chapter has also given an emphasis to some relevant characteristics of Eakins' work which impact strongly on the subject of this thesis. It has been noted that Eakins himself had commented on the wrinkled beauty of an aged person, and he was also very aware of how a person's hands (Figure 4:15) could be very revealing and expressive of both personality and age. The hands in several of his works, such as the portrayals of *Archbishop Elder* (Figure 4: 14) and *The Writing Master* (Figure 4:3), can be seen to convey importance and expression, and have been carefully painted by Eakins. The preliminary sketch for *Mother Patricia Waldron* (Figure 4:13) also suggests that her hands, lying on her lap, would have added to the definition of her character. This emphasis on hands and wrinkles can be linked to the importance Eakins assigned to a thorough knowledge of anatomy, a subject which he considered essential to an artist and which he himself studied, and taught, in detail. This understanding was reinforced by his studies and sketches of dissections of human joints. His papers which contain these works only came to light with the discovery and acquisition of the works to be found in the Bregler collection; this once again emphasises the beneficial revelations which can be found in contemporary – and previously lost - documents.

Within this chapter some similarities between works by the American Eakins and the English Herkomer (Chapter Two) have been made clear, in particular in *The Gross Clinic* and *The Last Muster*. It became clear that each artist, although entirely free to choose their own subject, had both opted to paint elderly people within a group setting, and each character within that group was carefully painted, sufficient for each individual to be readily identified. This points to a both a positive view of age, as well as an appreciation of their value as artistic subjects.

It was also apparent how Eakins had absorbed the influence of earlier painters, including their paintings of the elderly, such as Ribera's *An Old Man* (Figure 1:2); this helps to explain why a significant proportion of Eakins' portraits show the head and shoulders of the subjects in close up, with no extraneous distractions. His favoured pose for portraits was half or three-quarter length, with little in the way of distraction in the garments and surroundings. It was also more

common for the faces of Eakins' subjects to be painted in three-quarter profile rather than looking out directly at the viewer. Eakins painted to expose the sitter's essential character within these faces; he allowed no hiding place, their innermost character traits as well as the record of life's experiences were revealed for all to view.

He rarely painted his sitters with smiles, or even hints of smiles, on their faces, they usually appear lost in profound thought, reflective and austere. It is this focus on the reality behind the facade, however, which makes his work so valuable for this study, and he has added some very positive images of the elderly to the overall scenario. Eakins showed people as they were, demonstrating the heroism of everyday life and the beauty of having lived, and there is no hint of anything derogatory of age within his portraits of the elderly.

CHAPTER FIVE
John Singer Sargent and painting the elderly

John Singer Sargent (1856 – 1925) provides a valuable foil to Thomas Eakins. Both artists painted people with such verisimilitude that the sitters seem ready to step out of the canvas, but there are also differences. Sargent's work shows no hints of the deliberate 'ageing' Eakins sometimes used and, unlike Eakins, he never had to struggle for commissions. These usually came from the wealthier members of society and Sargent's challenge was not the finding of them but managing to fit them all into his work schedule; eventually, worn out by the demands of portraiture, he all but ceased producing them in the early twentieth century.[1] With his urbanity, shrewd business sense and undoubted artistic gifts, the fashionable thronged to sit for him; as art critic Royal Cortissoz wrote 'Fortunate is the generation that is privileged to be painted by him'.[2] His social cachet was such that a wry comment stated that 'to die before being painted by Sargent is to go to heaven prematurely'.[3] With unerring insight Sargent knew exactly how to manoeuvre sitters into revealing their innermost and defining characteristics, which he would then capture in paint, when, as a friend commented, 'he nearly always got them'.[4] Sargent himself told how, when painting financier and art collector Asher Wertheimer (Figure 5:1), he had 'deliberately asked him a question about an interesting investment – then I GOT him'.[5] With *Octavia Hill* (Figure 5:2) 'he engaged her in conversation, and had the happy instinct to differ with her categorically on a point where she felt strongly …. her face lit up with all her characteristic force and fire'.[6]

His veracity is valuable, and for this study his cosmopolitan approach is also of great benefit, as it bestrode the Atlantic, bridging the world of portraits in America and England. His peripatetic background also ensured his work was not confined by the social mores and customs of one country, and so is able to provide a broad view of the world of his day. His work is also a marked contrast to genre paintings, which rarely show the world of the wealthy, whereas Sargent painted those who, due to their material wealth, did not have the constraints which poverty inevitably brings.

Born in 1856 in Florence of expatriate American parents, Sargent's childhood was spent travelling round Europe with his parents and two surviving sisters (three other siblings died in childhood, which was not unusual at that time). His artistic talent was evident from his early

1 John Singer Sargent it is rumored in London is heartily tired of portrait painting, and intends to devote himself to other work.' *American Art News* 5:30 (May 11th 1907): 3.
2 American Art Historian and Critic 1869 – 1948, writing in *Scribner's Magazine* XXXIV:5 (November 1903): 532.
3 An aphorism coined by novelist Saki (H. H. Munro) in 'Reginald on the Academy' 1904.
https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Reginald/Reginald_on_the_Academy accessed on 14 December 2016.
4 Edwin H. Blashfield, 'John Singer Sargent – Recollections' *The North American Review* 221:827 (June–August 1925): 643.
5 ibid. The capitals are in the original.
6 A comment by Hill's friend Mary Booth, quoted in Sandy Nairne & Tamya Cooper (ed) *National Portrait Gallery: a Portrait of Britain* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2014), 175.

years and in 1874 he began his artistic training in the Parisian studio of Carolus Duran. It was here he learned the practice of 'au premier coup', that is 'painting directly onto the canvas with a loaded, broad brush'.[7] Like many other artists, including Eakins, visits to Spain and the Netherlands ignited a passion for Velásquez and Hals, both of whom painted simple, unadorned but vibrant portraits of individuals of all classes. He continued travelling throughout his life, making frequent visits to America, Europe and the near east, but he chose to settle in England, though he retained his American citizenship. His repertoire was wide and he produced landscapes and cityscapes, and occasional genre paintings, mostly of street life in Europe, but for over twenty years painting portraits dominated his work. In his work there is no equivalent of the humble characters portrayed in the works of Mary Evelina Kindon or James Hayllar (Figures 2:22-30), nor did he engage in the social realism/conscience school found in England and Europe during the middle/later years of the nineteenth century. His portraits were mostly of a sophisticated elite, either nouveaux-riches or established aristocracy, as well as the social leaders, and people of competence in their field, such as scientists and doctors (Professor Ingram Bywater: Elizabeth Garrett Anderson (Figure 5:3); philanthropists (George Peabody, Octavia Hill) and art dealers and financiers such as Asher Wertheimer and his family.[8] He recorded, precisely and purposefully, the sitter's attributes, whatever they might be; if they were those of age – time-ravaged necks, elderly ears, large noses, shrunken cheeks, greying hair and 'dry and wrinkled skin' - all were carefully shown.[9] After all, old age lies in wait for all who live long enough and wealth does not remove a person from its grasp; in the words of G. Stanley Hall 'Old Age is .. a risk to which all are liable'.[10]

In his day Sargent was a prolific and popular painter; there are many reviews and articles written during his life which point to contemporary attitudes to Sargent's work, and which are of immeasurable benefit for this study as they set these opinions within the context of their times. The eight volume catalogue raisoné of Sargent's complete works, meticulously compiled by Elaine Kilmurray and Richard Ormond, also provides a sound base, especially the first three volumes, which focus on the portraits. Several biographies of Sargent have been produced over the years, notably those by Downes, Mount and Ratcliff.[11] That by Evan Charteris has been particularly useful, in part because Charteris knew Sargent, but also because it contains a chapter on Sargent's methods of painting, which includes information from two of his former students –

7 Trevor Fairbrother, *John Singer Sargent: the Sensualist* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press 2000), 46

8 Portraits of Mr & Mrs Wertheimer were commissioned from Sargent in 1898 to mark their silver wedding. Wertheimer commissioned several further portraits of the members of his family.

9 'Sargent had a fancy for ears that stick out ...and a fancy for red ears.' Lady Gregory, *Sir Hugh Lane: his life and legacy* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1973), 72,73. Jean-Martin Charcot, *Clinical Lectures on Senile and Chronic Diseases* (London:The New Sydenham Society, 1881), 28.

10 G. Stanley Hall, *Senescence: the Last Half of Life* (New York: D.Appleton & Co, 1922), 181.

11 William Howe Downes, *John Singer Sargent: his Life and Work, with an Exhaustive Catalogue of his Works (*London:Thornton Butterworth Ltd, 1926). Charles Merrill Mount, *John Singer Sargent: a biography* (London: Cressett Press, 1957). Carter Ratcliff. *John Singer Sargent (*Oxford: Phaidon, 1983).

Henry Haley and American art student Julie Helen Heynemann.[12] This defuses to an extent the frustration felt in researching Sargent's opinions on painting as he left so few writings of his own, even less than Thomas Eakins. Comments he made are often recorded in people's memoirs, for example those by Alice Comyns Carr; even if such reports are only hearsay, it is consistent and recurrent hearsay.[13] Exhibitions have taken place, accompanied by catalogues and essays, examples include Trevor Fairbrother's *Sargent; the Sensualist* in Seattle in 2000; *Portraits of Artists and Friends* at the National Portrait Gallery, London, in 2015; Sarah Cash's *Sargent and the Sea*, which focuses on his early paintings of coast and ocean, whilst Barbara Gallati's *Great Expectations* concentrates on the young.[14] As yet, however, there have been no studies specifically on Sargent and his portrayal of old age.

Sargent was a very pragmatic painter who found a niche market which provided him with a steady living, and he never sought to over-emphasise his ability or depth. Typical statements of his attitude to painting portraits include the following: 'I make no attempt to represent anything but what the outward appearance of a man or woman indicates' and 'I chronicle, I do not judge'.[15] As he firmly stated to Joseph Pulitzer 'I paint what I see … I don't dig beneath the surface for things that don't appear before my eyes'.[16] This appears to be a profound contrast with Eakins' depth of insight noted in the previous chapter, and it is not always supported by reviewers when considering Sargent's portraits. 'Nothing escapes him that is written in the face' wrote art critic T. Martin Wood, which eerily echoes Austin Abbey's reason for not sitting for Eakins as it would be too revealing of his inner self (see Chapter Four).[17] Viewers were aware of Sargent's 'power of dragging the truth out of man's superficial personality'; an ability which could be, not unreasonably, intimidating to his sitters – as one potential sitter stated 'It is positively dangerous to sit for Sargent. It's taking your face in your hands'.[18]

Sargent's success in portraiture was due not just to artistic competence, but also because his style was such an unerring reflection of the age, remarkably in keeping with the brashness and ostentation of the times in which he lived and worked. Unlike Thomas Eakins, in Sargent's

12 Evan Charteris, *John Sargent (*London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1927). Henry James Haley was an English painter, 1874 – 1964. Julie Heynemann was born in San Francisco in 1868, became Sargent's pupil in 1892 and remained a lifelong friend. She died in 1942.
13 Alice Comyns Carr, *Mrs J Comyns Carr's Reminiscences* edited by Eve Adam (London: Hutchinson, 1926).
14 Trevor Fairbrother, *John Singer Sargent: The Sensualist* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2000). Richard Ormond and Elaine Kilmurray, *Portraits of Artists and Friends* (London:National Portrait Gallery, 2015). Sarah Cash, *Sargent and the Sea (*New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2009). Barbara Dayer Gallati. *Great Expectations: John Singer Sargent Painting Children (*New York: Brooklyn Museum/Bulfinch Press, 2004).
15 .Norman Thwaites, *Velvet and Vinegar (*London: Grayson and Grayson, 1932), 55. Thwaites was Pulitzer's secretary. ' "Memories of Sargent" by a friend,' *The Living Age* (May 30 1925) quoted in Carter Ratcliff, *John Singer Sargent (*Oxford: Phaidon, 1983), 234.
16 Quoted in Dennis Brian, *Pulitzer: a life* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2001), 302.
17 T. Martin Wood, *Sargent* (London: T.C. & E.C. Jack, New York: Frederick C. Stokes & Co.,1909), 11.
18 'The R.A. Exhibition II by the editor,' *Magazine of Art (*June 1895): 282. W. G. Robertson, *Time Was: the reminiscences of W. Graham Robertson* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1931), 233.

portraits 'contemplation and reflection are by no means the rule'.[19] Sitters usually appear as lively and active, appearing to be stopping by for a portrait on their way to some more lively social scene; as one critic remarked, the reality of his portraits is such that 'we almost hear the rattle of teacups in the next room'.[20] Yet in Sargent's portraits, in the sitters' stance and expression, the vibrancy has a brittleness about it, a glamorous façade, an armour against the nervous tension concomitant with the surrounding massive social turbulence and change, which inevitably brought with it challenges and confusions to the settled way of life which had developed over the centuries. Railways, machinery, new inventions, manufacturing, the demands of opening up new territories were creating opportunities and great wealth for some, and major changes in life for most. In particular, with the movement of population following new employment, new cities and hence urbanisation developed dramatically in both England and the United States.

As with Thomas Eakins, Sargent rarely sacrificed truth for flattery. He was very exacting on himself, and there are many accounts of how he would instantly destroy his work if he, or his sitter, was not satisfied.[21] It was also unusual for him to accede to that common experience of portrait painters, being asked to 'alter some feature in a face'.[22] A curious exception to his habitual accurate delineation of his portrait subjects is particularly apposite to this study; when portraying Francis Jenkinson (1853-1925) (Figure 5:4), 62 year-old librarian at Cambridge University, he not only failed to record Jenkinson's wrinkles, but deliberately smoothed them out.[23] Jenkinson was described by friends and colleagues as having 'a face from which all colour was absent. It was like parchment, lined and wrinkled.'[24] In Sargent's portrait, however, Jenkinson looks directly out at the viewer, glasses in hand, his face painted with broad brushstrokes of greyish/white paint which make it appear smooth and pallid, but with an abrupt change to a darker colour in the neck. Sargent was thus accurate in the colour of the skin, but the lines and wrinkles are completely missing; Jenkinson is shown with luxuriant greying hair, one smooth small-lobed ear, and two minor lines between the nose and lip. When looking at the portrait it is difficult to avoid the bizarre thought that Jenkinson was treating himself to a face mask, something particularly inappropriate for a quiet, modest, studious man such as Jenkinson, a man not subject to vain delusions. As his biographer and colleague H. F. Stewart wrote of the portrait 'It is a worthy memorial. Yet it is not the whole man. The sweetness and grace are

19 Christian Brinton, 'Sargent and his Art' *Munsey's Magazine* 36:3 (December 1906): 269.
20 T. Martin Wood, *Sargent*, 11.
21Charteris, *John Sargent,* 184. Mrs Thomas Bailey Aldrich, *Crowding Memories* (London: Constable & Co, 1920), 265.
22 Aldrich, *Crowding Memories,* 157.
23 The portrait was painted in 1915, and is thus slightly out of the time line of this study; it is, however, such an anomaly in Sargent's oeuvre that it repays study here.
24 H. F. Stewart, *Francis Jenkinson: Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, and University Librarian; A Memoir (*Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1926), 131.

there, but not ..... the lines and wrinkles which age had drawn upon the beautiful face'; when Sargent's attention was directed to their absence he refused to add them and 'make a railway system of him'.[25]

The very fact that Sargent was asked about the lack of wrinkles implies not only that verisimilitude was anticipated, but also an understandable desire to comprehend this move away from his usual truthful portrayal; Sargent's reply to the question makes clear it was his own decision. Such a strange distortion is rarely apparent in other Sargent paintings, and it is difficult to understand, or find a reason, why he strayed so unexpectedly from his habitual methods. It may be just a reflection of Sargent's feeling of tedium with portraiture, which he had all but abandoned at the turn of the century; or perhaps, since the two men were close in age, Sargent may have felt uncomfortable at recording such obvious signs of senescence.[26] This seems very unlikely, as Sargent did not omit wrinkles in any other pictures, though it does imply that he did not share Thomas Eakins' delight in the beauty of an old skin with 'all those wrinkles'.[27]

One similarity Sargent shared with Eakins was that sitters were not necessarily pleased with the result - 'Je me trouve comme je serai dans dix ans, si Dieu e prêt vie' wrote Madame Buloz of her portrait (Figure 5:5) in 1879, when she was aged sixty-four.[28] Her grand-daughter, however, liked the portrait and described it as 'a beautiful and living characterisation.... with some of of the force of a Rembrandt.'[29] Sitters' discontents, however, were not limited to looking old; one subject felt Sargent had made her 'look like a murderess', and Lady Ondes Beresford felt he had given her two sets of eyebrows' – which, as a jest, he had.[30]

It might be expected, especially in his commissioned portraits, that Sargent would disguise a sitter's ageing characteristics, or any attribute which was considered unflattering. Yet as far as can be told, without seeing the living embodiments of his original sitters, for the most part he did not, though it is not certain, as many of his papers, including any which might have recorded such changes, were 'destroyed in the clearing out of his studio, subsequent to his death'.[31] Sargent

25 ibid, 80.
26 This tedium had been developing over several years; one typical example amongst many is in the letter of 2nd November 1901which he wrote from Palermo to a friend 'I have come to this tuberculous place to avoid portraits'; Sargent to August Saint-Gaudens, Dartmouth College Library, U.S.; quoted in Stanley Olson, *John Singer Sargent: his portrait* (London: Macmillan 1986), 225.
27 Mary Hallock Greenwalt, quoted in Lloyd Goodrich,*Thomas Eakins (*Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982), 2:59.
28 'he has shown me as I will be in ten years, if God spares me' quoted in Richard Ormond & Elaine Kilmurray, *John Singer Sargent Complete Paintings*; *1:The Early Portraits* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1998), 36.
29 ibid, 1:36 quoted from Marie-Louise Pailleron 'Le Paradis Perdu souvenirs d'enfance' (Paris: A. Michel, 1947), 159.
30 Vernon Lee [English writer Violet Paget] wrote to her mother in July 1886 'a Mrs Mason, of whom John painted a portrait.... says he has made her look like a murderess. This she certainly does' Vernon Lee *Letters (*Privately printed, 1937), 222. Ormond & Kilmurray, *3:The Later Portraits,* 172. This was, it seems, a deliberate action of Sargent's part, as Lady Beresford was renowned for her excessive make-up, and often managed, intentionally or not, to give herself two sets of eyebrows.
31 Mount, *Sargent*, ix.

made few comments on the delights, or otherwise, of painting the old, though his predilection for red sticking-out ears has been noted earlier in this chapter. But this lack of comment is itself indicative of an attitude, a positive attitude of tolerance, acceptance and respect, which felt no need to differentiate between people; his respect was for his sitters generally, he had no need to segment them into the labelled groups which were becoming more prevalent as society became more sophisticated.

Perusal of lists of his complete paintings (Appendix Two) indicates that although over his career just over half his clientele were middle-aged, (30 – 60), the old (61 and over) made up nearly a quarter of his works; of that aged quarter over half were painted from the turn of the century onwards, when Sargent himself was moving into his fifties; it therefore appears that as Sargent himself grew older, so did his sitters. There is no evidence to show this was a deliberate and focused selection policy, it seems more likely that friends, colleagues and contacts were ageing with him. In addition, portraits were often commissioned to commemorate later-in-life events such as retirement, anniversaries or significant later birthdays - sixty or seventy rather than twenty or thirty. Having a portrait painted also usually took place when a person was older and wealth and success had been achieved rather than being worked towards – Frederick Olmsted, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson and Coventry Patmore provide typical examples.

Since this study is looking at the painting of the old in England and America, and Sargent painted in both countries, consideration should be given to whether any differences can be detected in Sargent's paintings, such as whether it is possible to deduce the sitter's nationality from their portrait. Alice Meynell, in her introduction to the 1903 collection of Sargent's works, thought she could identify differences; she remarked of Sargent's portrait of President Theodore Roosevelt (1858 – 1919) (Figure 5:6) that 'the eye has the look of America, the national habit is in the figure and head'.[32] A somewhat imprecise phrase which probably refers to Roosevelt's defiant look and upright, pugnacious stance, with one hand aggressively on the hip (very resonant of the stance of Coventry Patmore – see later), and the other firmly and confidently grasping the newel post. The forty-five year-old Roosevelt was president of a country developing and expanding rapidly in wealth and population and a comparison of his portrait with that of English politician Joseph Chamberlain, (1836 – 1914) (Figure 5:7), sixty years old when painted by Sargent, does indicate some differences, though these may be due to the age difference rather than the nationality. Chamberlain has less bluster about him; he appears more 'English'- quietly upright, in studious and unruffled stance, patrician looking, one hand resting at

32 *The Works of John S. Sargent, R.A.* with an introduction by Alice Meynell (London 1903). unpaginated. Although Roosevelt is too young to be included in this study, the quote and his stance are very relevant to the topic and are therefore included.

his side, the other on government papers, indicating abilities other than brute force, and thereby presenting a marked contrast to the rumbustious Roosevelt.

Englishwomen, Meynell considered, were painted by Sargent with 'all the accents, all the negatives, all the slight things that are partly elegant and partly dowdy ...the characteristics that remove her, further than any other woman, from the peasant'.[33] This is difficult to recognise, however; Octavia Hill is perhaps slightly more dowdy than Mrs Marquand, but this is debatable, and may be more to do with budget and personal choice of hair style and clothes; differences are slight and subtle, and reflect as much on physical attributes and social status as nationality alone. The nationality of Sargent's sitters is in fact difficult to define, as there were so many permutations of race and origin, particularly during the fluid years of the late nineteenth century, with its vast changes in wealth and status. As an example, Sargent painted several pictures of the Wertheimer family, who could be considered 'English', as it was earlier generations who had first come to England from central Europe. Nevertheless their more exotic antecedents had not yet been completely assimilated and still wielded an influence over their lives, visible in portraits in their dress, stance and appearance, as can be seen in the well-received ['quite extraordinary'; 'amazing'; 'a capital likeness and full of character'] portrait of Asher Wertheimer, (Figure 5:1), commissioned to celebrate his silver wedding.[34] Others of Sargent's sitters had long-established English backgrounds, but propped up their estates with the wealth of a rich American bride, who in turn would gain a title and an ancestry not available in the United States -'One by one the management of the noble houses of Great Britain is passing into the hands of our fair cousins from across the Atlantic'.[35]

America itself is very complex in terms of nationality; it had been a magnet to immigrants from the seventeenth century and earlier, and experienced massive waves of immigration during the nineteenth century. By the turn of the century those who had come in the 1840s/50s were getting old, moving into their sixties and beyond. Although to an extent they would have assimilated and distilled the developing American values, they would also not have had the beneficial experience of 'generational continuity' and established mores which are present in older-established communities. It is, however, clear that their backgrounds still influenced their attitudes, as can be deduced by their provision of care for the older members of their communities, examples including the Norwegian Old People's Home in Chicago (built 1896), the Methodist Home of Philadelphia and, also in Philadelphia, the Home for Aged and Infirm Coloured People.[36]

33 ibid, fourth of the un-numbered pages
34 'The Royal Academy: First Notice,' *The Times*, 30th April 1898: 14. 'The Royal Academy: Second Notice' *The Guardian*, 11th May 1898:2. 'Many Visit the Portrait Show,' *New York Tribune*, 8th January 1899. The accompanying portrait of his wife was not liked by the family, for unrecorded reasons, and Sargent painted a replacement in 1904.
35 Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes:The Noble Bachelor* first published in *Strand Magazine* (April 1892) (London: John Murray this complete edition published 1928), 227.
36 Carole Haber. 'The Old Folks at Home: the Development of Institutionalized Care for the Aged in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia.' *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 101:2 (April 1977): 241.

It can therefore be very difficult to be precise on who was completely American or completely English, especially with European permutations added to the mix. Joseph Pulitzer is a typical example of this confusion of nationality; born in Hungary in 1848, he emigrated to the United States in the 1860s. After some years of struggle and hardship he eventually became an exceedingly rich and hard-working newspaper tycoon, then suffered a breakdown which left him almost blind, depressed and hypersensitive to noise; Sargent eventually painted him in 1905 in his London studio (Figure 5:8).[37]

The portrait of Pulitzer by Sargent is included here as it demonstrates so clearly his ability to perceive and record character, as within one portrait he is able to show two very different sides to Pulitzer's personality. He sits facing outward, his hand raised lightly to his cheek (apparently a favourite attitude), a riding crop in his hand. On being warned that 'Sargent's speciality lay in divining the innermost weaknesses and powers of his sitters and putting them on canvas', Pulitzer responded that this was exactly what he wanted ' I just want to be remembered as I am, with all my strain and suffering there' he said.[38]

The painting certainly reveals an extraordinary split in Pulitzer's personality; one side of his face shows a benevolent middle-aged, gentleman, the other a darker, hollow-cheeked face, with downturned mouth and deep set eye - 'malevolent, sinister and cruel'.[39] It seems that for three sittings Pulitzer was calm and pleasant, but at the fourth sitting he was intensely irritated by a persistent visitor; Sargent observed this volte-face and recorded it in the portrait, thereby giving a full rendition of Pulitzer's character, both positive and negative, and making clear that he could and would show the inner character as well as the façade a person presented.

Much more soothing was the work which brought Sargent his first major success, and lit his pathway to the fertile field of portraits. It was of a sixty-one year-old American lady, Mrs Henry Marquand (née Elizabeth Allen, 1826 – 1895) (Figure 5:9), whose husband, railroad financier and art collector Mr Henry Marquand, had invited Sargent to the States for the express purpose of painting his wife's likeness. The result was a work Henry James described as 'a noble portrait of an old lady', predicting, accurately, that the portrait would do Sargent 'great good with the public – they will want to be painted like that – respectfully, honourably, dignement'.[40] Contemporary reviews, both English (it was displayed at the Royal Academy in 1888) and American, were very positive, as can be seen in the table below.

37 He declined to sit for Sargent in Philadelphia in 1903 as 'he could not get a quiet hotel room' Quoted from Dr James White's Journal of 1903 in the University of Pennsylvania Archives in Kilmurray and Ormond, 3, *Late Portraits.* 3:156. Though slightly below the 60 age limit for this study, this portrait is included as the creation of this portrait is very typical of Sargent's method of working.

38 Dan C. Seitz, *Joseph Pulitzer: his life and letters* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1924), 11.

39 Thwaites, *Velvet and Vinegar,* 56.

40 Letter from Henry James to Miss Reubell, 1st April 1888, quoted in Richard Ormond & Elaine Kilmurray, *1: Early Portraits*, 199

English		American	
1)	'It would be impossible to paint character more completely than it is painted here; the likeness, one feels sure, is perfect, the very vital essence of the person painted lives on the canvas'	4)	'beautifully painted throughout'; a later comment notes the 'warmth and life in the handling.....[to be found]...in Sargent's work'
2)	'the colour and the workmanship ….. have been inspired by a really sympathetic perception of the character of the sitter'	5)	[shows] 'the dignity, grace and entire loveliness of an American lady'
3)	'the painter shows an unmistakable respect for the task which he has imposed upon himself. He has evidently felt, and he interprets with singular felicity, all the reverence which a refined type of womanhood in old age should arouse'[41]	6)	'the best portrait of a woman [I have] seen'[42]

It is noticeable that the American reviewers acknowledged the sitter as beautiful but did not bracket it with her age, whereas an English reviewer did, and used words such as 'respect', 'reverence' and 'refinement'; which carries the implication that in England old age was to be venerated, or at least, the old age of a woman of a particular class and taste, whereas in the United States age did not provoke comment.

With his charming portrayal of a kindly (from the light in the eyes and the hovering smile) and matronly figure seated quietly on an elegant chair placed on a stylish carpet Sargent had unerringly hit the pulse of the age, the portrait combining as it does wealth, benevolence, glamour and gravitas. It is an unthreatening portrait, an important factor in the bustling 'new world' of the late nineteenth-century, where certainties were few and values questioned; doubtless such quietude was reassuring. It is also noticeable that Mrs Marquand is presented exactly as she appears; her thick dark hair is streaked with grey, her eyebrows heavy and undoubted shadows beneath her eyes (Figure 5:10); there is no reason, or evidence, to suppose she has taken cosmetic measures to hide her age, though such measures were available. Mrs Marquand's pose, black garments, large white collar, and ring on finger, have strong echoes of the right hand figure in Hals' painting of *The Regentesses of Haarlem* (Figure 5:11); a work which had much impressed Sargent on his 1880 visit to Haarlem - he had seen and copied it, and

41 'The Royal Academy. Second Notice,' *The Times* (16th May 1888): 4. 'The Picture Galleries: Final Notice,' *Saturday Review* 65:1700 *(*May 26th 1888): 626. Claude Phillips, *Academy* (26th May 1888). Claude Phillips, 1846–1924, was a well-respected art English critic and first keeper of the Wallace Collection.

42 'The Society of Artists,' *The New York Times* (12th May 1889). 'Portraits of Women', *The New York Times* (5th November 1894). 'Brimmer called Sargent's portrait of Mrs Henry Marquand the best portrait of a woman he had seen' Dennis R. Barrie, 'Regional Office Reports: Detroit', *Archives of American Art Journal* 19:2 (1979):28. Martin Brimmer (1829 – 1896) was an art historian and Director of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

cared for it sufficiently to display it on the walls of his studio.[43] Mrs Marquand, however, is much more relaxed and, implicit in the delicate curve to her arm as against the rigidity of the Regentess, more gentle. This clear similarity with the earlier portrait undoubtedly adds gravitas to the sitter, making clear she is more than a social butterfly, she is a respectable older lady of position, benevolence and responsibility.

Another of Sargent's portrayals of an older woman is Mrs Adrian Iselin (née Eleanor O'Donnell from Baltimore, 1821-1897) (Figure 5:12), who was married to New York financier Adrian Iselin.[44] Annoyed and reluctant to have her portrait painted, she brought to her first sitting a selection of her best dresses and asked Sargent which one he would like her to wear - he replied in his usual way that 'he wanted to paint her just as she was'.[45] This he seems to have achieved, as the portrait fits so well a description of her as 'a tall and handsome woman, exceedingly dignified in manner, and .. in appearance and bearing a typical grand dame'.[46]

It is a memorable portrait of a 67-year-old woman who clearly displays her irritated defiance at the vagaries of a world that would wish to record her likeness. Despite her age and aloofness, the reviews were generally favourable, the portrait being described as 'profoundly personal, full of character, vital in the extreme'.[47] Her black dress is very severe, only slightly softened by the white lace at the wrists, and with her austere expression, upright pose, and the detailed delineation of her large and aged right ear, she typifies a disciplined old age – a fount of knowledge, experience, self-controlled, principled, and to be regarded with intimidated respect, with just a hint of frailty evident in her need to grip the table with her left hand.

This portrait, along with that of Mrs Marquand, was included in the November 1894 exhibition at the New York National Academy of Design on *Art in the Portraits of Women: Value of Expression in the Modern Ideas of Types of Beauty*. It was favourably linked with the neighbouring Sargent portrait of a much younger woman – '[the portraits] of Mrs Adrian Eselin [sic] and of Mrs Wilton Phipps, so expressive of action that it is the fact that they are immovable which seems extraordinary'.[48] Since women of all ages were included in the exhibition, the clear implication in the title is that beauty was not then (in America at least) limited to a particular age,but could be present at any time; a possibility which seems confirmed, as has already been noted, by the lack of comment on Mrs Marquand's age in American reviews.

43 Ormond & Kilmurray, *1*, 18.
44 Iselin provides another example of the complex backgrounds of so many United States citizens during these years. His parents were Swiss, his father was sent to the United States as the representative of French silk company, and Iselin was born during a visit his parents made to Scotland. 'Adrian Iselin Dead at his City Home,' *New York Times* (29th March 1905).
45 from a letter to William Campbell from Mrs Iselin's grandson, 22nd Feb 1965. Quoted in Ormond & Kilmurray*, 1*:216.
46 Obituary of Mrs Iselin *New York Times* (28th November 1897).
47 described as 'contemporary criticism' and quoted in Charles Merrill Mount, 'The Works of John Singer Sargent in Washington,' *Records of the Columbia Historical Society* 49 (1973/74): 467.
48 'Art in the Portraits of Women: value of expression in the modern ideal of types of beauty.' *New York Times* (November 2nd 1894): 8. The portraits were numbered 259 and 260, with Mrs Marquand nearby at 256. Ormond & Kilmurray *1*:266

Some years later, in England, Sargent painted a portrait of English poet and philosopher Coventry Patmore, (1823 – 1896) (Figure 5:13). With his upright stance, shiny bald forehead surrounded by white hair and air of command it is no surprise a reviewer should remark that Patmore is shown 'as decisive as a great surgeon who has a patient under chloroform, and whose knife will in one moment do faultless and tremendous execution'.[49] This phrase carries with it intriguing echoes of Thomas Eakins' *Gross Clinic* and the later *Agnew Clinic*.[50] Sargent had visited Philadelphia on several occasions and met Eakins, so he must surely have seen these two works; awareness of them seems to have been widespread, to reviewers as well as Sargent, but no record seems to have survived of his opinions on these works.

Unlike Gross and Agnew, Patmore is not at work, but fills the canvas alone, in three-quarter pose. Though the physical characteristics of age – wrinkled neck, high shiny bald brow, white hair, weathered nose, baggy eyes, aged ear lobes and Patmore's pouting lower lip - are clearly shown, Patmore is upright, alert, smartly dressed with hand on hip, poised for action. Sargent has produced an authentic rendition of an aged, active yet reflective man, still with energy, gravitas and panache, and with no hint that old age should cause one to slow down, wither, and fade; a man, indeed, who withstands comparison with the much younger American, Theodore Roosevelt, who was only in his mid-forties when painted by Sargent.

A comparison of both Patmore's portrait and a near contemporary (1891) photograph of him (Figure 5:14) confirms Sargent's positive approach. The two illustrations clearly show the pronounced veins in the wrinkled neck, but in the photograph Patmore looks subdued, drooping and careworn, with slumped shoulders and baggy suit, whereas Sargent shows him as poised and patrician. As William Coffin wrote, Sargent 'possesses intuitive perceptions which enable him to grasp his sitter's mental phases' and in this portrait it is clear that Sargent detected and painted Patmore's complex personality, with its active and reflective sides.[51] He was sufficiently aware of the intricacies of Patmore's personality to wish to paint another portrait 'as it is impossible to give the whole character in one'.[52]

Edmund Gosse, a mutual acquaintance of Patmore and Sargent, had negotiated the sitting, to the delight of Patmore who felt the invitation to sit for Sargent 'one of the most signal honours I have ever received'.[53] Gosse described Patmore's distinguishing facial idiosyncrasies – 'vast

49 'The Royal Academy, (First Notice)', *The Standard* (Saturday May 4th 1895): 4. It is worth continuing the extract 'Mr Patmore is sharply observant... eager-eyed.....as alert as a lieutenant of Cavalry ….. He is old - quite old - but he glides securely through the years'.
50 see Chapter Four
51 William A. Coffin, 'Sargent and his painting,' *Century Magazine* 52 (June 1896): 169
52 Derek Patmore [great-grandson], *The Life and Times of Coventry Patmore (*London; Constable, 1949), 209.
53 Letter from Patmore to Gosse, 9th May 1894, quoted in Ormond and Kilmurray, 2:84.

convex brows, arched with vision; bright, shrewd, bluish grey eyes … and ... wilful sensuous mouth.....' and how they were echoed in his character - 'a man of dreams, a canny man of business, a man of vehement physical determination'.[54] Given Gosse's knowledge and understanding of Patmore, his response to the portrait is of particular interest. Clearly impressed, he described it as 'a miraculous portent of gnarled mandible and shaken plumage'; a 'marvellous portrait [which] will pass down to posterity [as a] 'hand of consummate power has fixed for ever upon the canvas the apocalyptic old age of Coventry Patmore'.[55]

The use of such a dynamic word as 'apocalyptic' points to the implicit vigour of this 'very retiring poet', and explains Basil Champneys' (architect, friend and biographer) initial reaction to the portrait, when he imagined Patmore with a whip in his right hand (just out of the picture space), poised to act as a 'sort of Southern planter on the point of thrashing his slaves'.[56] He was initially surprised that Sargent had shown Patmore as a 'somewhat truculent character, alert and active rather than reflective, thus missing the aspect of 'seer', which, in later years, had alone seemed … characteristic of him', but acknowledged that reflection and action were 'unquestionably components of Patmore's many-sided nature' and had been clearly 'manifest to the painter's eye' as he brought them 'into startling prominence'.[57] Patmore himself was especially pleased that Sargent had shown him vigorous as he valued 'any tribute to his grasp of active life'.[58] He was enthralled not only to be painted by 'the greatest..... of all English portrait painters', but also with the finished result - 'the painting is now finished to the satisfaction, and far more than the satisfaction, of everyone -including the painter - who has seen it'.[59]

Contemporary reviews were favourable, typical comments included '...the most electrifying portrait in the Academy... the brilliant rendering of the mouth'; and 'what can be more vividly present than the picture of Coventry Patmore'.[60] It was thought to demonstrate '[great] felicity in the expression of physical character'.[61] Other remarks included 'those acquainted with the very retiring poet will admit its vigorous truthfulness'; and '... salient characteristics he [JSS] has recorded with a bold, dexterous touch, as simple in kind as it is effective in result'.[62] One review went so far as to describe it as ' perfect'.[63]

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54 Edmund Gosse, *Coventry Patmore (*London; Hodder & Stoughton 1905), 202.
55 ibid, 200, 202.
56 'The Royal Academy. Second Notice' *The Leeds Mercury* (May 13th 1895):8. Basil Champneys, *Coventry Kersey Dighton Patmore: Memoirs and Correspondence* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1900), 1:389. An intriguing intertwining of American and English influences which indicates the association between the two countries
57 ibid, 1:389.
58 ibid, 1:389.
59 ibid, 2:260 Letter from Patmore to Gosse May 9th 1894 and letter from Patmore to Gosse September 7th 1894.
60 M. H. Speilman, *Magazine of Art (*1895):281 quoted in Downes, *Sargent,* 173. Frank Fowler 'The Work of John Singer Sargent' *Bookman* 18:5 (January 1904): 538.
61 Claude Phillips, *Academy (*May 1895): 407.
62 'The Royal Academy, Second Article,' *The Leeds Mercury* (May 13th 1895): 8. 'The Royal Academy,' *The Morning Post* (May 29th 1895): 3.
63 'Pictures at the Royal Academy,' *Western Mail* (May 27th 1895): 4.

This was thus an accurate and well-received portrait of an undeniably old man. Sargent saw, and recorded, not only the outer attributes of the man, but also his inner motivations, contradictory (as with Pulitzer) though they might be; in so doing, he produced a portrait which pays significant tribute to the positive side of age - 'Old Age Superbly Rising', to quote Walt Whitman's phrase.[64]

The painting of Patmore's portrait seems to have been a mutually agreeable time for both artist and sitter, but it was not always such an easy experience. Within a year, two portraits of ageing men brought Sargent particular challenges, in that when the portraits were commissioned the frailty and impairment of ill health was starting to take them within its embrace. The two men were landscape designer Frederick Law Olmsted (1822 – 1903) (Figure 5:15) and architect Richard Morris Hunt (1827 – 1895) (Figure 5:16), who between them epitomised late nineteenth-century America in that they not only developed and formalised new professions – landscape design and architecture respectively – but also deployed their skills to enable the wealthy to utilise their riches in the building of flamboyant new homes and gardens. Hunt had trained in France and worked frequently with Mrs Marquand's husband Henry, designing both his summer residence at Linden Gate and also his New York residence (built 1881).[65] Olmsted was 'the father' of landscape architecture, and not only designed country parks for the wealthy but also advocated and ensured that green spaces were always included in the overpowering urbanisation which was taking place during these years; his most typical and enduring example was Central Park in New York, providing green in a city whose population had grown almost beyond imagination, from 806,000 in 1860 to 3,437,000 in 1900.[66]

The two men were given the task of creating Biltmore, a resplendent new mansion set in commodious grounds in Ashville, North Carolina, for millionaire George Washington Vanderbilt.[67] Hunt and Olmsted were both at the end of significant and successful careers when Vanderbilt commissioned Sargent to produce portraits of these men to 'hang as memorials in time to come'.[68] Hunt had been in declining physical health for some time, and died three months after the portrait was completed; Olmsted was beginning to show the symptoms of the dementia which would darken the last years of his life. To record for posterity these two talented men in the failing health (rather than just old age) which was overtaking them would be neither considerate nor wise (in terms of business), nor would it be an accurate reflection of the many years of inspired work they had undertaken. Sargent also had to cope with pressure from the

64 Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself* 1855, final revision 1881. https://www.poemhunter.com/best-poems/walt-whitman/song-of-myself-xlv/ accessed 25/03/2017
65 Paul R. Baker, *Richard Morris Hunt* (Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1980), 246.
66 Philip Jenkins, *A History of the United States* (Basingstoke/New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003). 177.
67 His wealth came from his grandfather, Cornelius Vanderbilt, who, in an example typical of the vast fortunes to be made in the nineteenth century, had built up from nothing vast shipping and railroad empires.
68 Coffin, *'Sargent and his painting,'* 173.

subjects' families, who did not wish him to record the encroaching feebleness, physical or mental, of these once fearsomely competent men.[69] It should be emphasised, however, that it was not age itself which was the problem, it was that unwelcome but not infrequent companion of old age, ill-health, with its concomitant diminution of capabilities.

Sargent chose to paint the men in their work surroundings, even though the site was, as Sargent wrote to a friend 'at present red earth stuck with specimen vegetables and scaffolding'.[70] Olmsted was painted in the garden, standing amongst native plants and shown with a shiny high-domed bald head, the dome lighter than the weather-beaten face, the hat in his hand explaining this.[71] The walking stick misleads, it had accompanied him for years because of an old riding injury, and was nothing to do with his current state of age or health. Hindsight may enable the viewer to infer a slight vacancy of expression, but it is difficult to be certain without having known the living Olmsted – a photograph of 1893 (Figure 5:17) shows a similar wry expression. Critics were favourably impressed by the portrait - 'Mr Olmsted's poetic face is so faithfully and sympathetically interpreted that his most intimate friends have nothing but praise for the work' wrote one.[72] Olmsted's family were also pleased with it, and impressed by the way Sargent had seen beyond 'the old man's affliction: he saw and suggested his wise and humane spirit'.[73] 'It is a good likeness and a good portrait' commented Olmsted's son in a letter to his mother'; he considered both paintings to be 'quite successful', though Hunt's much less so 'as a picture'.[74]

Richard Morris Hunt is shown as a dapper little man, dwarfed by his ostentatious setting and the somewhat incongruous large draped overcoat – perhaps included to emphasise the palatial surroundings - which Sargent has shown, swagger portrait fashion, over his shoulder. There were good reviews - 'Mr Hunt's striking figure is fittingly portrayed in the courtyard of the house he built' - but family and friends were less pleased with the result.[75] Though Mrs Hunt acknowledged Sargent's 'extraordinary inner perception or sub-consciousness ….. he seems to have divined …. how much more ill Richard was than we realised' she nevertheless considered that 'though the portrait has a certain likeness, the fire, the vigor and the personality are all wanting'.[76] A friend of Hunt's seeing the portrait some years later, described it as 'a ghastly thing,

69 'My campaign here announces itself ominously.....both wives prove to me that I must imagine thus that their husbands look at all like what they look at present – totally different really' wrote Sargent to his Boston friend Mrs J Montogmery Sears in May 1895 and quoted in Stanley Olson, *John Singer Sargent: his portrait* (London: MacMillan, 1986), 192. Written in the convoluted language of the time the letters lack lucidity but do make clear there were difficulties.

70 ibid, 192.

71 In his portrait of Lord Dalhousie, painted in 1900, Sargent again shows a pale head above a sun-tanned face; it provoked some criticism, a critic likening it to a partially cleaned painting (Fairbrother, *Sargent*, 93), but it also adds to the interpretation of character. In Dalhousie's case, it emphasised the sitter's arrogance, with Olmsted it reinforced his practical experience and hands-on approach.

72 Coffin, *'Sargent and his painting',* 173.

73 Laura Wood Roper, *F.L.O.: A Biography of Frederick Law Olmsted (*Baltimore & London:Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 467.

74 letter dated 30th June 1895, quoted in Ormond & Kilmurray, *2*:104.

75 Coffin, *Sargent and his painting,* 173.

76 from diary of Catherine Clinton Howland, 1st August 1895, quoted in Ormond & Kilmurray, 2*:*101.

exhibiting in a most glaring way the dreadful disease of which he was dying'.[77] His death was reported as 'the result of a complication of diseases …. frequent attacks of gout, overwork and chills from getting wet had all weakened him'.[78] Looking at the work over a century later Hunt appears as a neat, bright little man, younger looking than the tribute photo (Figure 5:18) produced after his death; in Sargent's portrait there is little hint of failing health, though hindsight once again may detect a pallor/jaundice of his skin and incipient gauntness which could point to possible illness.

From Sargent's portrayal of their physical appearance, Olmsted and Hunt, though clearly no longer young, or even middle-aged, still appear able to have designed and built the edifices and gardens of Biltmore. It is a tribute to Sargent's perspicacity and artistic competence that he could see and indicate the strength and vigour which had once been, and was not yet too faded, an integral part of the two men. Portrait painting, whether in England or the United States, is always a balancing act between presenting a likeness for posterity and deciding how to paint a person without recording unpleasant aspects. Herkomer had the same difficulties with Stratford Canning (see Chapter Six) and that both artists managed to resolve the difficulty without distorting the likeness too much indicates integrity, a respect, a courtesy towards people, in this instance the elderly, and a willingness to support and esteem them during their later years. This is another reason why the blanking out of Francis Jenkinson's wrinkles, discussed earlier, is so out of character for Sargent.

This chapter has concentrated on the work of John Sargent in both the United States and England, and several portraits of older people have been examined. Nowhere, however, have any derogatory remarks on the elderly as subjects been found, and this very lack of comment indicates an acceptance and appreciation of the elderly sitters. Sargent conscientiously applied himself to the work which came his way – often by commissions, but sometimes because of his own interest in a subject.[79] Painting was his livelihood, and the style he had chosen to use – the long-stroked bravura painting, the sometimes conventional, sometimes outré, poses, which were often three-quarter length and therefore enabled hints of sumptuous garments and elegant furniture to appear - as well as the slight nervous tautness detectable in many of his sitters, suited the tumultuous times of the late nineteenth/early twentieth centuries, when in both England and America great wealth could be made in a short time, causing turmoil in the mutating ranks of society. He not only painted those who had recently acquired great wealth, he also painted those who had achieved fame and competence in a particular sphere, such as musician Manuel Garcia,

77 Edward Martin,*The Life of Joseph Hodges Choate, as gathered chiefly from his letters* (London: Constable & Co., 1920), 206.
78 Baker, *Richard Morris Hunt,* 536, n5.
79 W. Graham Robertson describes how Sargent invited Robertson to sit for him through a mutual friend. W. Graham Robertson, *Time Was* (London: Hamilton, 1931), 235. The resulting portrait was displayed at the same exhibition as that of Coventry Patmore and both portraits were described as being of 'people of the present period absolutely.'*The Standard* (May 4th 1895)

Doctor Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, and philanthropist Octavia Hill. They were also sitters who, because of their competence in science and the arts, it seems likely that Thomas Eakins would have wished to include in his pantheon of portraits, or George Frederick Watts in his 'Hall of Fame'.[80]

There is no doubt part of Sargent's success was his prosaic attitude to his work; he had declined fellow-artist John Collier's request for input into his book on portrait painting as he found it so difficult to 'serve it up in the abstract'.[81] Painting was to him a task to be accomplished by following certain tenets, as Carolus Duran had taught him - 'a science which it was necessary to acquire in order to make of it an art'.[82] The few records where he expresses his painting philosophy are written in very mundane, easy-to-understand terms; for example, telling a student that painting the head was all important, 'the features …. are only like spots on an apple' and that once the head was in place the eyes could be added, each one being placed 'like a poached egg dropped on a plate'.[83] He told the same student, American Julie Helen Heynemann, that 'every stroke of pencil or brush should have significance' and to reinforce this lesson recommended she 'copy one of the heads by Frans Hals at the National Gallery', and, tellingly within the context of this study, to 'work at the fine head of the **old** woman rather than the superficial one of the man'.[84]

Sargent produced portraits throughout his career, though he painted considerably fewer from the turn of the century onwards. Consideration of three portraits of older people, produced at various stages of his career, should indicate how and if his attitude to painting the elderly changed as his career progressed and as he himself grew older. In 1882, at the age of twenty-seven, he had painted a picture of an older couple, (Figure 5:19) John White Field (1815 – 1887) and his wife Eliza (1820 – 1897), a rich merchant and his wife with respected Philadelphian antecedents; they seem the perfect example of a devoted elderly couple, as they peer benignly from the dark background, and it is something of a shock (to twenty-first century eyes at least) to realise that they were only in their mid-sixties when Sargent painted their portrait in France during one of their frequent European tours. The composition is unusual for Sargent as he rarely painted couples, and their sideways stance, not looking out at the viewer/artist, is also unexpected. With their white hair, stooped posture, Mrs White clinging to her husband's arm, and their old fashioned style – the long white beard of Mr White, the greying centrally parted locks of Mrs White, they look a quaint but devoted couple. One review was negative, considering 'the

80 see Chapters 4 and 6.
81 Charteris, *Sargent,* 181. The book was John Collier's *The Art of Portrait Painting* (London: Cassell & Co.,1905).
82 ibid, 182.
83 ibid, 139, 183.
84 ibid, 139. My emphasis. The assumption made is the man's head is younger, the old lady is 'fine' because there is more work in it. Unfortunately it is difficult to elucidate which painting he was referring to, as none of the Hals now in the National Gallery fit the description; the most likely reason is that it has since been re-attributed.

man's head is as good as the woman's is bad'.[85] Others were, however, more positive and perceptive – 'such a perfectly frank presentation of personalities, that the spectator feels a certain embarrassment in looking at it' wrote one reviewer.[86]

Though Sargent had not yet found his successful style, his gentle portrait of two aged people, stooped and devoted, lingers in the memory, a benign presentation of old age from a young man early in his career.

Eleven years later, while staying with friends in England, Sargent painted, as a gift to the sitter, a portrait of Mrs Frederick Mead, [born Mary Elizabeth Scribner, 1822 – 1897) (Figure 5:20) mother-in-law of Sargent's artist friend, Edwin Austin Abbey (the man who had declined to be painted by Eakins – see Chapter Four) who now had a studio in England, where Mrs Mead – and Sargent - often stayed.[87] The clothes and background are created with broad swift brushstrokes, but the old lady's grey hair, slightly hooded eyes, lined face, especially around the mouth, are all carefully outlined. Her bright-eyed glance is alert and friendly; this is undoubtedly old age, but a gentle one, linked with a ready alertness, and it is not surprising to learn that Mrs Mead was described as 'endowed with the gift of eternal youth' who 'did much to enhance the contented spirit at Fairford'.[88] Since it was a gift for a friend it is not surprising it is a sympathetic portrayal, which shows old age as a benediction.

Some years later Sargent was asked to paint a portrait of musician Manuel Garcia (1805 – 1906) (Figure 5:21) to celebrate his one hundredth birthday. Garcia had been professor of singing at the Royal Academy of Music in London for many years; he had also invented the laryngoscope and written a famous treatise on the human voice – the inescapable thought is that here is another subject Thomas Eakins would have wanted to paint. In the almost full-length portrait Sargent shows Garcia in sideways view, alert, poised, neatly dressed. His domed bald head is ringed with white hair, the skin clear and shining; the neck has sagging lines, particularly around the throat (and thus the larynx, emphasising Garcia's speciality). Once again the tussle between reality and posterity's requirements should be kept in mind, but since Garcia attended his one hundredth birthday party in person and gave a speech [even if he had to sit down halfway through] he was obviously still an able figure, as the portrait indicates.[89] One reviewer, considering 'Mr Sargent's use of persons as vehicles for expressing abstract ideas' referred to it as 'the shuddering presage of dissolution', though it is not clear whether this was seen within the

85 'Society of American Artists,' *New York Times (*13th May 1886).
86 'The Eighth Exhibition of the Society of American Artists,' *Art Interchange* XVI (8th May 1886):145.
87 'To 'Mrs Abbey' from her friend JSS 1893' is inscribed across the top of the painting.
88 E. V. Lucas, *The Life and Works of Edwin Austin Abbey, R.A.* (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1921), 1:246. Charteris, *Sargent*, 166.
89 M. Sterling MacKinley *Garcia the Centenarian and his Times; Being a Memoir of Manuel Garcia's Life and Labours for the Advancement of Music and Science (*Edinburgh & London: W. M. Blackwood & Sons, 1908), 316.

painting of Garcia, or assumed because Garcia was one hundred.[90] Apart from this, reactions were very positive – 'Mr Sargent's memorable portrait …. what a masterly summing up it is of a virile and wonderful personality!' or ' Mr Sargent's masterly realisation'.[91] At the unveiling of the portrait Garcia himself had complimented Sargent, remarking on 'this great master of the brush, who with his creative touches in a moment brought life from void'.[92] Another comment remarks how 'dignified, interesting, characteristic' the portrait is, adding 'and if … it does not look like a man of one hundred years old, … no more does the original'.[93] This implies surprise that a person of such an advanced age could still be active and fully functioning; a surprise that would still be expressed today, when living to one hundred is less exceptional.

Studying these three portraits, painted over more than two decades of Sargent's career, there is no hint of anything other than a sympathetic and professional ability to record human likenesses. 'Men differ in character as well as in individual expression of the face. Sargent grasps both of these truths, and presents his analysis of features and character in one comprehensive grouping. This constitutes a portrait by Sargent' wrote one perspicacious commentator.[94] In the above three portraits, Sargent makes no pretence that his sitters are other than old – all display the lineaments of age, but there is no hint of anything derogatory about them. The portraits were produced for different purposes – the first as a practice opportunity at the start of his career, the second as a gift for a friend, the third to celebrate the achievements of one undoubtedly aged man – and all are realistic yet sympathetic, and show little evidence of a change of attitude over the years.

Sargent was undoubtedly aware of the failings that old age can bring, as has been shown in the discussion of his work with Olmsted and Hunt. In his paintings he shows old age with veracity, recording 'the calm authority and wisdom of riper years'.[95] It helped that he dealt mostly with one strata of society, a cosmopolitan and conspicuous one, whose ready access to money would to an extent inure them from the potential vicissitudes of old age which were often linked to poverty and infirmity rather than old age itself. In both England and the United States, it was not age in itself but poverty and potential dependency which was the problem. *S*ociety was changing rapidly; people moved from rural to urban areas, from old country to new territory, where the land was unfamiliar and untrodden, the habitual signposts lost. 'A thousand perplexities and anxieties loom up before the contemporary man and woman and... every man and woman bears something of the uneasy presage on his or her own face …this clearly Mr

90 A. C. R. Carter, 'The Royal Academy' *Art Journal* (June 1905): 166.
91 'Passing Events' *Art Journal (*Oct 1906): 312. 'Passing Events' *Art Journal (*April 1908): 124.
92 M. Sterling MacKinley, *Garcia,* 316.
93 'The Royal Academy. First Article,' *The Times (*29th April 1905):4.
94 'Sargent's Portrait of Secretary Hay,' *Washington Times (*April 19 1903): 7.
95 Mary Newbold Patterson Hale (Sargent's cousin) 'The Sargent I Knew' *The World Today* (November 1927).quoted in Carter Ratcliff, *John Singer Sargent* (Oxford: Phaidon 1983), 238

Sargent has realised'...' wrote one commentator.[96] Wealth of course did not stop the procedure of ageing, and this process he did record. In his portraits the accoutrements (useful in underlining the sitter's wealth) may distract from the face and head, but if the viewer blocks out these extraneous artefacts - gowns, jewellery and furniture - and focuses entirely on the sitter's head, face and hands, a true record of the sitter, with all its strengths and frailties, can be seen. When portraying old age Sargent did not stray from his usual verisimilitude, and 'transcribe[d] each with the same incredible assurance'.[97]

This chapter on John Singer Sargent has provided a beneficial contrast to the work of Eakins looked at in the previous chapter as it provides portraits from a wider and wealthier social milieux, broadening the scope of the panorama of the elderly being constructed to meet the needs of the thesis. Similarities with Eakins' work were detected, in that both artists painted older people of ability and talent which include, in Sargent's case, *Octavia Hill*, *Elizabeth Garrett Anderson* and *Joseph Pulitzer* (Figures 5: 2, 3 and 8). Sargent also, however, had frequent commissions to paint portraits of people who were the complete antithesis of Eakins' thoughtful sitters in that they were successful socialites, as demonstrated by financier *Asher Wertheimer* (Figure 5:1). Although, like Eakins, Sargent sometimes chose his own sitters, such as *Mrs Mead* (Figure 5:20) and *Mr & Mrs Field* (Figure 5:19), he was famous and appreciated enough to be approached to paint portraits of the wealthy social elite in both England and the United States. It was significant for this thesis, with its study of attitudes to the old, to note that it was not the painting of someone smooth-skinned and young that started Sargent on his successful portrait career, but instead a picture of an older American woman – *Mrs Marquand* (Figure 5:9) - which was received with great enthusiasm by critics and the public as well as the sitters.

It has also been shown that whilst Sargent often had more background in his portraits (the focus on garments and fashionable furniture would help to emphasise the social standing of the sitter), he still meticulously recorded each sitter's face and features. His elderly sitters in fact present a positive view of age, as is shown in the emphatic portrayal of *Coventry Patmore* (Figure 5:13), which withstands comparison with some of Eakins forceful elderly characters such as Dr Gross and Dr Agnew. Other portraits record characteristics such as the gentleness and reflection of age to be seen in *Mrs Mead* (Figure 5:20) and the continuing ability and discipline in the upright figure of the 100 year-old *Manuel Garcia* (Figure 5:21).

A particularly relevant finding was the curious exception to Sargent's usual verisimilitude in his portrayal of *Francis Jenkinson* (Figure 5:2), who Sargent painted with a curiously wrinkle-free

96 Marion Hepworth Dixon, 'Mr John S. Sargent as a Portrait-Painter,' *Magazine of Art (*Jan 1899):119.
97 Christian Brinton, 'Sargent and his Art,' 270.

face. This was commented on by contemporaries, and although Sargent defended and justified his action, it was noted to be very out of character. This gives an emphasis to the high degree of accuracy anticipated from his portraits by his contemporaries, and this is of value to this study.

Another pertinent finding in this chapter was Sargent's ability to deal with the putative companions of old age, frailty and failing health. In the portraits of both *Frederick Olmsted* (Figure 5:15) and *Richard Hunt* (Figure 5:16), it was noted in the contemporary responses (as well as this present study) how Sargent had managed to combine the creation of a dignified appearance in spite of the imminent fading glory of the subjects. This accentuates how important it was for a painter to produce a true likeness – including the lineaments of age - without losing the vital essence of a sitter.

Sargent was commissioned to paint portraits on both sides of the Atlantic, and had both English and American sitters. There therefore could be an expectation that it would be straightforward to pinpoint clear differences between English and American sitters, but instead it has been revealed to be a complex issue to ascribe one specific nationality to a person, whether sitter or artist, as was seen in the case of Joseph Pulitzer and, indeed, of Sargent himself. As an example, the portrait of *Asher Wertheimer* (Figure 5:1) is that of an English person in terms of citizenship and time lived in England, but in his portrait he still retains a slightly exotic appearance, a lingering reflection of his ancestors' central European origins. This makes clear the difficulties of ascribing one clear and precise nationality to sitters and painters alike.

It was also of value to discover that although some writers, such as Alice Meynell (see earlier in chapter), had considered there to be distinctive differences between English and American sitters, these were in fact very difficult to identify in the pictures studied in these chapters on portraits. Any differences between, for example, *Elizabeth Garrett Anderson* (Figure 5:3) and *Mrs Adrian Iselin* (Figure 5:12) were as much to do with posture, perceived class and clothing as within the sitters themselves. This is information which informs the remit of the thesis in its requirement of identifying any significant differences in portrayal in each country.

This chapter, especially in when considered in conjunction with the previous chapter on the work of the American painter, Thomas Eakins, has focused on the work of two very different artists who, with their use of individual sitters from different segments of society from those considered in the earlier chapters on genre, have expanded the vista of elderly people being created to answer the questions set by the thesis.

CHAPTER SIX
Portraits of the Elderly in England 1870 – 1910

When this study began, it seemed likely to confirm that, to paraphrase the negative phrase of Andrew Achenbaum noted in the Introduction, the elderly were despised and disregarded, people who had outlived any usefulness they might once have had; with their wrinkles, withered faces and proximity to death they would not be considered worthwhile or appropriate subjects for artists. It transpires, however, that this is not true, and the elderly were frequently shown in paintings; they were very much in favour as artists' subjects, their greatest asset being the wonderful scope their worn faces provided for the practice of painting skills. As noted in earlier chapters, artists articulated very positive comments on elderly sitters. Louise Jopling recommended the use of aged models as their lined faces gave more scope for drawing. Artist William Powell Frith had seen the artistic potential of an old face in the old man he found on the street, and Thomas Eakins commented favourably on the beauty of old women's wrinkled skin. Nor was it artists alone who recognised the worth of the lined faces of the elderly: one writer, commenting on the many portraits of English politician W. E. Gladstone, understood that, though 'not an easy subject.. [he was] .. one in whom painters may well delight. His strongly-marked features, the deep lines and furrows which time and thought have ploughed upon his face..... provide the artist with tempting materials for the display of his powers'.[1]

It is also becoming evident that there are distinct differences between American and English paintings of the elderly, particularly in genre works. In the United States the elderly are usually shown as active and able citizens – for example, Moeller's chattering [middle]-classes (Figures 3:15 -20); Kappes' defiant individual in *Is This Life Worth Living?* (Figure 3:30) individual; and workmen such as Hovenden's *Travelling Clockmaker*, (Figure 3:5), still plying his delicate trade despite his white hair and time-worn hands. In England the range of classes is broader and more mixed, such as Mary Kindon's shabby chattering ladies (Figures 2:22 - 24); James Hayllar's benevolently smiling people (Figures 2:25–30); the Newlyn School's gently supportive ladies (Figure 2:33); and *The Last Furrow* (Figure 2:38). This latter shows an especially English feel, it is too poignant a painting to have been produced in the United States.

When considering English genre painting in Chapter Two, it became evident that for the most part those portrayed were the poorer working and middle classes rather than the higher ranks of society. This chapter will be able to provide a valuable counterbalance to this as it will have English portraits as its main theme, particularly of 'notables' of the time, those who were considered to have contributed something useful to their society. Portraits were increasingly

[1] Thomas Wemyss Reid, 'Mr Gladstone and his Portraits' *Magazine of Art* (January 1889): 82. Intentionally or not, the remark can be interpreted as the challenge of displaying either the powers of Gladstone or those of the artist – or both. Reid, 1842 – 1905, was an English newspaper editor, novelist and biographer.

being commissioned by the wealthier middle classes, a class which expanded rapidly throughout the nineteenth century in both England and America. As has been noted in previous chapters, the nineteenth century was a time of exceptional growth and change, due to a combination of forces which coalesced in its last decades - 'values and conditions of life were changing everywhere. Even to simple country people the change was apparent…. wrote Flora Thompson.[2] In these turbulent times, with people rising precipitously in the social strata, having a portrait painted would provide a clear statement of a person's success and gave emphasis to a sitter's wealth, achievements and social status, important in these times, where fortunes could be made in many different and unanticipated fields – examples include soap-manufacture, ship-building, the railways, increased opportunities in local government and education. Since it often takes some time to become financially and socially successful, the subjects of portraits were often in their later years, their lines and ageing features making fascinating work for painters. A portrait will of course have to be acceptable to those who commission it, so it may err on the side of flattery and thus provide a slightly distorted record, and it is worth letting this proviso loiter in the back of the mind when considering any portrait. In the main, however, they can supply interesting insights into attitudes, in this instance those relating to the old in England in the late nineteenth century. Having a portrait painted meant an aged person occupied a place as a respected citizen, retaining their authority, having achieved much and also be considered a worthwhile exemplar of how a life could/should be lived. This especially English attitude, that a painting should have an improving moral purpose, so prevalent in the middle years of the nineteenth century, still lingered on, especially in the world of portraits.

The relationship between sitters and portrait-painters was profoundly symbiotic; the sitters/subjects provided artists with the opportunity of earning a good living - 'successful artists in London make money like bankers and spend it like princes' noted one contemporary provincial paper.[3] Artists often had broad repertoires, and sometimes resented the constraints portrait painting placed on their imaginations and techniques - 'None can imagine the intense weariness of my existence as a portrait painter' commented George Frederick Watts.[4] This was a remark which could have been echoed by, amongst others, John Everett Millais, John Collier and John Singer Sargent – but the opportunities of guaranteed income, honing of skills and a visible presence in the portrait market could not sensibly be scorned.

In both England and the United States commissioning a portrait had become a routine activity in marking life's occasions, which in itself indicates an attitude of respect and recognition, a veneration of hard work, an understanding and appreciation of how people over their lifetimes

[2] Flora Thompson, *Lark Rise to Candleford,* (first published 1939–45; this edition Middlesex: Penguin Modern Classics, 1973). 68/69.

[3] 'Feminine Fashions & Fancies', *Newcastle Courant* (March 11th 1881): 3.

[4] Mary Seton Watts, *George Frederick Watts: Annals of an Artist's Life* (London, MacMillan 1912), 1:255.

had made some contribution to life and society. Typical examples of portrait commissions in both countries include the employees of shipbuilder Sir James Laing commissioning a portrait of him for his seventieth birthday (Figure 6:1); Thomas Eakins being invited (by Agnew's students) to paint a portrait of Dr Agnew (surgeon) to mark his retirement from medicine (Figure 4:9); and John Singer Sargent being commissioned to paint a portrait of Octavia Hill to mark her sixtieth birthday (Figure 5:2).

Since many portraits were related to work and often commissioned by professional bodies and civic authorities, the majority of subjects were male. Women during these years had fewer opportunities for a professional life, and were usually painted as an adjunct of a relatively high-ranking male – typical examples being Sargent's portraits of Mrs Marquand, Mrs Iselin, Mrs Frederick Mead (Figures 5:9, 12, 20). Society was rapidly developing and attitudes and opportunities changing, however, and there was an increasing number of portraits of women in their own right; examples include Elizabeth Garrett Anderson (Figure 5:3) and Anne Jemima Clough (Figures 6:8,9).

Artists often fall from fashion soon after their death, to be rediscovered some years later. Herkomer, Sargent and Watts provide typical examples of this and there have been several recent studies of them, such as Lee M. Edwards publications on Herkomer and Barbara Bryant on Watts.[5] These outline an artist's life and point pointers to invaluable secondary sources of relevant works worth studying. As in previous chapters, contemporary records - reports, reviews, comments, remarks in diaries, letters – are the the main source of information, as they are an unadulterated source and exemplify the opinions of the time; always keeping in mind, however, that 'the professional critic, whether of art, literature or music, is not always a safe guide. He is apt to become hypercritical and jaded, or too vain and sophisticated to admire what everybody else is admiring'.[6] People will always have their own agenda – Mary Seton Watts, for example, though a direct source, can be argued as being too close to her husband to write completely objectively - but at least with an original source there has been less time for distortion.

In Chapter Two the genre paintings of Hubert Herkomer, in particular *Eventide* and *The Last Muster*, were considered.[7] Herkomer's repertoire was wide but from the late 1870s he concentrated on portraiture, producing about 470 in all, and was considered to be 'the most successful portrait painter of his day'.[8] As mentioned in Chapter Two, he had a strong sympathy

[5] Lee M. Edwards, *Herkomer: a Victorian Artist (*Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 1999). Barbara Bryant, *G. F. Watts: Portraits: Fame and Beauty in Victorian Society* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2004).
[6] J. Saxon-Mills, *The Life and Letters of Hubert Von Herkomer* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1923), 84.
[7] Edwards, *Herkomer*, 28. He acquired the 'von' from the Bavarian administration in 1899. He was born in Bavaria in 1849, emigrated with his parents to the US in 1851, then to England in 1857; throughout his life he found it convenient to use both English and German citizenship.
[8] Edwards, *Herkomer*, 87. 'Sir Hubert von Herkomer', *The Athenaeum* (April 4th 1914): 501.

for the old and studying his portraits of older people should clarify both his attitudes and those of his audience. There is no doubt that *The Last Muster*, with its portrayal of 'about seventy heads ...all literal portraits', had marked him as the 'painter of old men'.[9] In 1879 this led to the first commission of his portrait career, when he was authorised by King's College, Cambridge, to paint a former student, the ninety-three-year-old Stratford Canning, Lord de Redcliffe (1786 – 1880), diplomat and politician (Figure 6:2).

Herkomer wrote of the challenges of the sitting, not only the artistic concerns such as 'the arrangement of light', but also the demands brought about by the age, or more precisely frailty, of the sitter – Herkomer commented how 'more than half [his] time was taken up by attending to him as a nurse'.[10] Canning's physical health was poor and he had been chair-bound for over two years, but his mind was still lively and active; during the sittings he talked with Herkomer 'dwelling chiefly on subjects of a poetic and philosophical nature'.[11] This was especially valuable to Herkomer, who considered that 'the most powerful engine for the discovery of the inner man [was] conversation'.[12]

Lord Canning is painted in a waistcoat, cravat and plain dark coat with two of his awards displayed on his jacket. He is sitting in a plain chair, against an unadorned wall, true to Herkomer's belief that 'the more elaborate a background, the less a portrait'.[13] His hands rest on the chair arms and are smooth, certainly not those of a man who had worked with his hands; his aged face is beautifully detailed; the skin tones soft and clear, the mouth wide, downturned yet firm, the forehead bald and domed, and the eyes beautifully clear and expressive. They revitalise the face, confirming Herkomer's opinion that the eyes were of vital importance in a portrait-'it is impossible to render an expression of face without the eye, it is the very keynote to the character' he wrote.[14]

A certain gravitas is required in any portrait, as it is not only for the present time, but also for the future; portraits are the 'living books of humanity', and 'the portrait painter truly records history..... a priceless possession' for family, friends, colleagues and posterity.[15] To record someone's final short-lived engulfment in disease after years of productive living would be hurtful and also inappropriate as it would negate their life's achievements, and record only a fleeting moment in what may until then have been a full and worthwhile life; after all, a portrait's

[9] Saxon-Mills, *Life and Letters*, 87. Hubert von Herkomer, *The Herkomers (*London: MacMillan & Co., 1910) 1:216.
[10] Hubert von Herkomer, 'Portrait Painting 1- Popular,' *Magazine of Art* (January 1904): 26. Herkomer, *The Herkomers,* 1:216.
[11] Herkomer, *The Herkomers,* 1:216.
[12] Herkomer, 'Portrait Painting 1- Popular,': 24.
[13] Hubert von Herkomer, 'Portrait Painting Technically Considered: II,' *Magazine of Art* (January 1904): 223
[14] Hubert von Herkomer, *My School and My Gospel* (London: Archibald Constable & Co, 1908), 16.
[15] Herkomer, 'Portrait Painting 1- Popular', 29. Hubert Herkomer, *Autobiography* (London: printed for private circulation, 1890), 54.

'full value is to be there once and for all'.[16] Herkomer understood this difficulty, writing how he might sometimes see 'the symptoms of senility creep over the face of an aged sitter, before his family or his medical advisers suspected its near approach' adding his opinion that 'surely that was not an essential to be emphasized by the painter?'[17] He acknowledged there was a temptation to use such symptoms as it could give 'more pathos, or [be] artistically more interesting', but his stronger feeling was that it would be 'a mistake in selection'; he therefore chose to show Lord Canning wearing a coat he found irksome, as he 'did not dare to hand him down to posterity in a dressing-gown'.[18] It was the same problem which had faced Sargent when he painted Frederick Olmsted and Richard Hunt, (Figures 5:15, 16), and both painters chose the path of consideration, to their sitters, the portrait's commissioners and posterity. Lord Canning looks slightly forlorn, the compression of the lips indicating possible discomfort, perhaps pain; nonetheless he is still a dignified figure, upright, clean and benign, a distinguished man worthy of esteem. Throughout his paintings Herkomer treated elderly sitters with respect, as can be seen both in his writings and also the upright way he portrayed them; his attitude was a positive one which appreciated, and understood, their worth and also their struggles.

The Canning portrait is damned with faint praise by Herkomer's biographer, Saxon-Mills, who calls it 'a well-accomplished portrait …. [which] faithfully commemorates its subject', before adding that though 'a respectable work... it almost wholly lacks the distinctive Herkomer touch of power and directness'.[19] This 'touch' was perhaps more in evidence in another of Herkomer's portraits (Figure 6:3), which was produced about eight years after Canning's portrait. It shows civil engineer Thomas Hawksley (1807 – 1893), 'one of the most eminent and best-known civil engineers' of his day, who had been 'personally responsible for upwards of one-hundred-and-fifty water-supply schemes'.[20] He had therefore made a prosaic yet vital and civilising contribution to nineteenth-century society, especially necessary with the extraordinary growth of towns as people flocked to them for employment and opportunity. Age had not diminished his abilities and he was able to keep working until 'after a week's illness he quietly passed away' in 1893, aged 86.[21] The portrait had been commissioned as 'a great mark of respect' by his colleagues and friends in recognition of his eightieth birthday.[22] He is portrayed as clearly elderly, with white whiskers and flaccid cheeks. Seated, facing the viewer, wearing a dark suit with neck-tie, his awards pinned to his jacket, he seems less wearied than Canning, the slight sideways declension of the head making him appear wryly alert, with his plans at his side ready for immediate study. His hands are more detailed than Stratford Canning's, and are work-worn, with the pronounced

[16] Herkomer, *The Herkomers,* 2:11.
[17] ibid, 2:114.
[18] ibid, 1,216.
[19] J Saxon-Mills, *Life and Letters,* 105.
[20] 'Death of Mr Thomas Hawksley' *The Times* (25 September 1893): 4. 'Thomas Hawksley' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2004–2016).
[21] 'Death of ...Thomas Hawksley', *The Times* (25th September 1893), 4.
[22] ibid

veins of age. One hand clutches his spectacles and that comfort of old age, a 'worry' handkerchief, (reminiscent of Raphael's *Pope Julius II*, Figure 1:19). Canning, especially with the bland finish of his hands, looks a man well-suited to the indoor world of politics, whereas Hawksley appears more pragmatic, his hands rougher and well-used. He is commemorated with receding chin, thinning hair on top, conspicuous bags around the eyes, sagging cheeks and almost edentulous look, but with his upright pose and straightforward gaze retains a look both capable and competent.

Herkomer had painted two different but dignified elderly men, providing evidence of his particular skill of a 'searching examination of individual peculiarities.... a power [of observation] that has helped him to suggest subtle details of personality and minute shades of character'.[23] At a date midway between these two portraits Herkomer produced another work (Figure 6:4) which, with its combination of the composure of Canning and the sprightliness of Hawksley, presents another positive view of age. Herkomer has portrayed his wood-carver father, Lorenz, standing upright at his work bench, mallet and chisel in hand, surrounded by his other wood-working tools; wood-shavings lie on the bench indicating he has just paused for a moment in his work. It presents a positive view of age and one reviewer described it as 'a particularly noble specimen of portraiture …. a beautiful tribute to a vigorous old age, sedate and yet skilful still'.[24] The impression is one of an able older man, and although reviews refer to him as old, it is disconcerting to realise that at this time Lorenz was only in his late fifties. The fleshy nose, bald shining head and flowing grey beard, so prevalent amongst men in these years, age him and it is clear why he would be described as old.

One of the artists who had encouraged Herkomer to take up portrait-painting was George Frederick Watts (1817 – 1904), an artist who over a long career had developed into one of the most revered portrait painters of his day. He was credited by many critics as rescuing 'English art from the triviality of thought and emotion into which it had fallen' earlier in the century, and 'raising portraiture to a level never before attained in English art, so far as significance and humanity are concerned'.[25] His comment that he intended to make 'first rank pictures' but not of 'beautiful people, they are not invariably best for pictures' is of especial interest to this study.[26]

He did not elaborate on what he meant by 'beautiful', but as he sought to 'discover his sitter's turn of mind, his thoughts and habits' rather than 'to make a speaking likeness... [or] ...exaggerate the physical peculiarities of the sitter, [and].... reproduce his/[her] mental characteristics', it seems a

[23] A. L. Baldry, *Hubert von Herkomer; a study and a biography* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1901), 56.
[24] 'Mr Herkomer's Portraits,' *Pall Mall Gazette* (April 4th 1882): 4,5.
[25] Our Own Correspondent, 'G. F. Watts's Works at the New Gallery,' *Glasgow Herald,* (Dec 29th 1896):7. G. K. Chesterton, *G. F. Watts* (London: Duckworth & Co, 1904), 46.
[26] letter from G .F. Watts to Mrs Prescott on 1st December 1859, quoted in Bryant, *Watts*, 20

safe inference that he sought for more than 'the insipidity of too great perfection'.[27] This makes him a valuable artist for this study of the old, as the beauty of the elderly is not in fresh, bland, unspoilt, untouched features but in the corrugated face of an old person, with its record of life's struggles and achievements, the wear and tear of life's journey and the hints of life stories behind the façade.

Watts was of an intense turn of mind, and considered not only that he had an artistic mission but that 'art must be linked to life'.[28] 'I ardently desire to be useful to my generation' he wrote to a colleague, and evolved a scheme, to paint 'portraits of individuals whose names will be connected with the future history of the age'.[29] These would therefore be 'valuable at all times both as faithful records and as works of art' and also provide 'an incentive to others to do better'.[30] The paintings later became known as his 'Hall of Fame' series or, more colloquially, 'Watts' Worthies'.[31]

There are over fifty portraits within this sequence; the sitters' ages range from thirty to ninety, with the majority between fifty and seventy; the choice of subject was entirely according to Watts' whim. The majority of sitters were male, which, given the climate of the times, in that professional opportunities for women were so limited, was to be expected. He had wished to include some female portraits - George Eliot, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Florence Nightingale - but this was not possible for specific practical reasons.[32] The only woman he painted was social reformer Josephine Butler (1828 – 1906) (Figure 6:5) who was particularly known for her campaign against the misogynistic and intrusive Contagious Disease Acts of the 1860s (finally rescinded in 1886).[33] Watts had been particularly impressed by, even envied, her 'arduous and devoted labours in the cause of humanity'.[34] Always of philanthropic bent, she had sought to relieve the heartbreak of her daughter's accidental death in 1864 by immersing herself in helping others on the edges of society, especially those who might be termed 'fallen women'.

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[27] Julia Cartwright, 'The Life and Works of George Frederick Watts R.A.' *The Art Journal* (Easter 1896):19,20. George W. E. Russell, *Collections and Recollections* (London: Smith, Elder & Co 1904 (7th edition, first published 1898): 36. The phrase is used in a description of Cardinal Manning – 'his face was saved from the insipidity of too great perfection by the imperious... lines of his mouth and the penetrating lustre of his deep-set eyes', but it seems especially apt in the above context.

[28] Chesterton. *Watts*, 18.

[29] Letter from Watts to Sir Henry Taylor, c1846. Quoted in Cartwright 'Watts, R.A.' *The Art Journal*: 31. Letter from Watts to friend John Murray, 30 Oct 1858; quoted in Bryant, *Watts,* 18.

[30] Letter to Alexander Ionides, Feb 1858 quoted in Bryant, *Watts,* 19. M. H. Spielmann, 'The Watts Portraits,' *Manchester Guardian,* (June 8th 1905): 5.

[31] *'George Frederick Watts: the Hall of Fame; Portraits of his Famous Contemporaries'* London: National Portrait Gallery,1975): 5.

[32] 'There were four women of mark whom Signor [i.e. G.F.Watts] would have liked to include in his series – Mrs Barrett Browning, whom he never had the good fortune to meet; Mrs George Lewes [George Eliot],whose portrait he was afraid to attempt, perceiving the difficulty that it would have presented [ie her large face and short-sighted look would have dominated the expression of her visionary mind – quoted in Bryant, *Watts*, 96]; Miss Florence Nightingale, whose portrait he found he was unable to complete [through Florence Nightingale's ill-health]; and Mrs Butler, for whose heroism he had a deep veneration'. Watts, *Annals*, 2:250.

[33] She was also one of only three women were invited to Queen Victoria's Jubilee Service in 1887 – the others were Octavia Hill and Florence Nightingale. www.wisbech-society.co.uk Accessed 29/11/2016.

[34] Josephine Butler refers to his 'sad and self-reproachful tone', how he 'said he had never been able to wakened up to try to do good to unhappy people', and how he told her how he wished he could 'look back upon a life such as yours.' Quoted from a letter from J. Butler to Stanley Butler from Limnerslease, 10 Oct. 1895, Liverpool UL, Spec. Colls, JB 1/1 1895/10/10(I); http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portraitExtended/mw00969/Josephine-Elizabeth-Butler-ne-Grey accessed 29 November 2016. Cartwright, *Life & Works,* 25.

Watts painted her in three-quarter view, looking to her right. The background is subdued and plain and the canvas is dominated by her face, which is meticulously shown, with large pointed nose, resolute wide mouth, determined large chin, one large ageing ear and eloquent dark eyes. Mrs Butler herself had commented how the eyes were 'wonderfully done', even though she felt she had 'no brightness in the eyes now'.[35] The eyes may not be bright, but they are certainly deep and expressive, with a 'vital intensity'.[36] Unlike Sargent's portrait of *Joseph Pulitzer* (Figure 5:8), with its stark division of mood, Mrs Butler's expression is consistent across her face as she gazes, as Watts intended, 'into Eternity, looking at something no-one else sees, because he says I look like that'.[37] Her hair, once long and flowing, is now firmly controlled in her habitual 'lace and velvet cap' with a fashionable false fringe at the front.[38] Her large hands, sketchily painted with a few swift brushstrokes, lie sedately in the lap of her plain and sombre dress, the only break from the darkness the lace streamers of her cap and the thin white edging to her collar.

She was sixty-seven when Watts invited her to sit for him, he was seventy-eight. When shown her completed portrait, rather than verbally comment she chose to write about her reactions in an immediate letter to Watts. His work clearly touched her deeply, for when she saw it she had wanted 'to burst into tears' as she 'felt so sorry for her'; she understood how Watts had perceived, and 'written in the eyes, and the whole face', a record of her past sufferings, then thanked him that he had not made her 'look severe or bitter, but only sad, and yet purposeful'. She acknowledged that it was 'not at all pretty.... the jaw and head are too strong and gaunt, I don't think my friends will like it'.[39] She felt, however, that 'if the portrait speaks with such truth and power to me, I think it will in some way speak to others also'.[40]

Watts did not flatter her, but with his ability to make 'the face the window of the mind' he painted a likeness which indicated her strengths and past sufferings, creating for posterity an exemplar of a valuable, useful life.[41] Watts' second wife, Mary (1849 – 1938), though much younger than both Mrs Butler and Watts, was nonetheless able to see that Mrs Butler still had a 'true beauty' to her fac*e,* even though 'it bore too plainly the marks of an heroic crusade'.[42] A phrase which reverberates with the quotation, attributed, though without proof, to Rembrandt, that 'life etches itself onto our face as we grow older, showing our violence, excesses or kindnesses'.[43]

[35] Letter from J. Butler to Stanley Butler, 14 Oct. 1895, Liverpool UL, Spec. Colls, JB 1/1 1895/10/14(I). http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portraitExtended/mw00969/Josephine-Elizabeth-Butler-nee-Grey accessed 29th November 2016.
[36] A. S. G. Butler, *Portrait of Josephine Butler,* 217. The comment was made by a school friend of A. S. G. Butler's, who had seen Mrs Butler just before she died.
[37] Letter from J. Butler to Stanley Butler, 14 Oct. 1895, Liverpool UL, Spec. Colls, JB 1/1 1895/10/14(I).
[38] A. S. G. Butler, *Portrait,* 56
[39] Letter from J. Butler to Stanley Butler, 14 Oct. 1895, Liverpool UL, Spec. Colls, JB 1/1 1895/10/14(I).
[40] M. S. Watts, *Annals,* 2:251.
[41] Cartwright, *Life & Works*, 26.
[42] M. S. Watts, *Annals,* 2:250.
[43] Although this phrase is frequently attributed to Rembrandt, there is no proof that he ever expressed it. My thanks to Dr Harry Mount of Oxford Brookes University for clarification of this uncertainty.

Another of Watts' portraits was of Cardinal Henry Edward Manning (1808 – 1892) (Figure 6:6) and was produced in 1882, coincidentally the same year as the portrait of Cardinal John Henry Newman (1801 – 1890) (Figure 6:7) by John Everett Millais (1829 – 1896). These two portraits of elderly churchmen, late converts to Roman Catholicism and influential figures of their time, show two different portrayals of both old age and Christianity. Newman is shown as benign and forgiving, the figure of the older person who can provide comfort and support, the Christian face of love, forgiveness and redemption. In contrast Manning appears stoic, austere and disciplined, an old person with exacting standards, vast experience, high expectations and somewhat intimidating – when he entered a room even 'the most Protestant knee instinctively bent' wrote one acquaintance.[44] The gaunt face – 'a death's head in a skull cap', as Manning himself described it - outlines clearly the skull beneath the skin, and acts as a memento mori, reminding the viewer that old age is the vestibule to ever-present death.[45]

Manning was aged 74, Newman 80, when these portraits were painted. Both artists follow the style of the conventional papal portrait (see Figures 1:19, 20), with the subject sitting and in three-quarter length, their aged hands resting in front of them. Newman looks directly out at the viewer, while Manning gazes to his right. This latter portrait in both pose and expression has pronounced echoes of Raphael's *Pope Julius II* (Figure 1:19) and Bellini's *Doge* (Figure 1:9) as was observed at the time -'a picture of grand old age which has been often compared.... to Bellini's portrait of the Doge of Venice' wrote one contemporary.[46] The attention to detail is superb, the lace on Manning's robes asking to be touched, the horizontal strokes of Newman's garment clearly showing the patina of the watered silk.

Millais, commissioned by friends of Newman to paint a portrait to be 'present[ed] to some public gallery in London', thought the result 'the best he has done ...the one he wishes to go down to posterity'.[47] Reviewers shared this opinion, considering the portrait a 'very striking likeness'.[48] This is confirmed by contemporary descriptions of Newman, such as 'a wan little man with a shrivelled face and a large nose, and one of the most beautiful expressions which ever appeared on a human being' and 'very kindly .... he looks very aged, hair more white than silvery, body stooped..... an air of melancholy, as of one who has passed through terrible struggles, yet of serenity as of one who has found peace'.[49]

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[44] Russell, *Collections and Recollections,* 36.
[45] Robert Gray, *Cardinal Manning: a biography* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson,1985), 278.
[46] Cartwright, *Life & Works,* 24.
[47] Letters from Newman to (i) Duke of Norfolk, April 8th 1881, and (ii) July 21st 1881 to close friend Miss M. R. Giberne, quoted in Charles Stephen Dessain & Thomas Garnall (eds), *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1976), XXIX:360, 398.
[48] 'London Notes and Lobby Gossip' *North Eastern Daily Gazette* (May 2nd 1882):3.
[49] Douglas Sladen, 1856–1947, *My Long Life; Anecdotes and Adventures (*London: Hutchinson & Co,1939),46. Letter from Bryce to his sister Kate dated 8th March 1865; quoted in H.A. L. Fisher, *James Bryce, Viscount Bryce of Dechmont (*London; MacMillan & Co, 1927), 1:121.

It is not only the physical likeness which is remarked on, it is his expression – 'a mood of restful benignity' and 'beautiful and benignant .. which records... the passage of years, and many experiences, and a tranquil settlement, when the day is well spent, and it is towards evening'.[50] This latter comment is so reminiscent of Newman's own words, 'May He support us all the day long, till the shades lengthen, and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done!' that it seems likely to have been a deliberate apposite choice, showing the contemporary popularity of Newman and his works.[51]

This portrait of Newman presents a positive view of an elderly person – gentle, understanding and forbearing. In contrast, the portrait of Manning gives a much more severe impression of old age, but despite some negative views - 'not agreeable' wrote one reviewer - there are plenty of positive comments -'an especially powerful production' and 'a picture of grand old age'.[52] 'Exceedingly noble' wrote Chesterton, continuing later that 'the handsome ….. gentleman' could still be seen behind 'the wreck of flesh and the splendid skeleton'.[53] The veneer might be fading away, but it was still possible to perceive and appreciate the worthwhile human being beneath. Watts had made great efforts to record Manning's appearance meticulously, notwithstanding the difficulties inherent in such a task; he commented that 'the attenuation of [Manning's] face and figure.....was almost impossible to realise in any living man'.[54] This was old age in very realistic light, and the artist considered it important to record this precisely, making clear that though it recorded the inevitable decay of the body, the living spirit within was still a force to be respected and reckoned with.

As mentioned earlier, the majority of Watts' 'Hall of Fame' portraits were of men, since at that time it was very difficult for women to acquire a professional training, as exemplified in the struggles of Elizabeth Garrett Anderson (Figure 5:3). Times were changing, however, and stalwart and courageous women were opening up pathways to the professions and higher education for women; by the end of the nineteenth century vast inroads had been made into the prejudices of the age and further education for women was becoming much more available and accessible. A typical example of such a pioneer who fought to improve educational opportunities for women, is Anne Jemima Clough (1820 – 1892), who was born in Liverpool in 1820, moved with her family to South Carolina in 1822, returned to England in 1836, and became increasingly involved in education. At one point she served on the same committee as Josephine Butler - the North of England Council for Promoting the Higher Education of Women, of which she was

[50] 'The Grosvenor Gallery',*The Standard (*1st May 1882):4. 'The Royal Academy' *The Standard (*29th April 1882): 2.
[51] Henry Newman, *Sermon 20*, 1834 http://www.newmanreader.org/works/subjects/sermon20.html accessed 23rd November 2016
[52] 'Grosvenor Gallery, 2nd & concluding notice,' *The Athenaeum*, (20th May 1882): 641. William Gilbert, 'The Grosvenor Gallery,' *Royal Cornwall Gazette, Falmouth Packet, Cornish Weekly News & General Advertiser* (May 12th 1882), 6. Cartwright, *Life & Works,* 24.
[53] Chesterton, *Watts*, 160, 164.
[54] A. De. G. S, 'Watts, Home and Work' *New York Times* (21st May 1882).

secretary 1867 – 1870.[55] From 1871 she worked in Cambridge, eventually becoming the first Principal of Newnham College, the newly established (1875) college for women.

Two portraits of *Anne Jemima Clough* (Figures 6: 8, 9) were instigated from subscriptions provided by students and friends, as was the common custom. Fashionable portrait painters were chosen; William Blake Richmond (1842 – 1921) was selected in 1882 to produce the first portrait of Anne Clough. James Jebusa Shannon (1862 – 1923) (American born, he moved to England in 1878 to pursue his artistic career) was selected for the later portrait in 1890, to complement his earlier (1889) portraits of two of Miss Clough's colleagues, Henry and Eleanor (Nora) Sidgwick, who had also both been influential in the founding of Newnham.[56]

In her memoir of her aunt, Blanche Athene Clough recalls that 'the striking points of her appearance became more marked as she grew older, and there were many who …. would have described her face as beautiful.[57] She was a woman of fascinating physical appearance -'Her face was a very beautiful one, with its clear olive colouring, the snow-white hair, the wonderful dark eyes', but the personality also shone through - ' I have never known anyone whose memory left such an impression of beauty and simplicity upon me' wrote one of her students, who had known her during the last two years of her life.[58]

The portraits, produced eight years apart, were considered to 'offer a curious contrast'.[59] In Richmond's portrait, when she was sixty-two, she is shown as upright, organised, reluctant to put aside her work and with a slightly mocking gaze. Although described as 'a fine picture' it was also felt to present her 'in a severe aspect which was not familiar to her friends'.[60] It portrayed 'her as none of us ever remember to have seen [her]... looking down at us sternly and austerely'; nor was it familiar to Miss Clough herself, who laughed when she saw it, and remarked how she 'must try to live up to [her] portrait'.[61]

In Shannon's portrait eight years later she is clearly and inevitably older, sitting almost full-length in a dominant armchair. The artist seems to have slightly elongated her body and chair, which he had not done in the earlier paintings of the Sidgwicks and, particularly in contrast to the uprightness of the Richmond portrait, this adds to the elderly impression. Miss Clough does appear relatively relaxed, however, and her older face is so reminiscent of contemporary

[55] A. S. G. Butler, *Portrait,* 63.
[56] *Dictionary of National Biography* Oxford; Oxford University Press 2004-2016. Gillian Sutherland, *Faith, Duty and the Power of the Mind: the Cloughs and Their Circle 1820 – 1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 126.
[57] Blanche Athena Clough, *A Memoir of Anne Jemima Clough; First Principal of Newnham College, Cambridge (*London: Edward Arnold, 1903), 334.
[58] Jane Lee 'Miss Clough, Principal of Newnham College, Cambridge' *Atalanta* (April 1st 1892):414/5. Clough, *Memoir,* 331.
[59] Lee, 'Miss Clough', 414.
[60] ibid, 414.
[61] ibid, 415.

photographs (Figures 6:11, 12), that it confirms the accurate rendition of her features. A close-up of Shannon's portrait (Figure 6:10) shows the effort he put into the painting of the face; he certainly has not glamorised her but recorded every detail - the dark shadows around the eyes, the slightly sagging chin and jaw line. Many reviews were positive, using words such as 'satisfying' and 'excellent'.[62] Friends thought Shannon's portrait showed her 'as we all remember her face, with its strong lines graven by wisdom and experience, its expression of great benevolence and gentleness, its somewhat tired though peaceful look'.[63] Some of her acquaintance, however, viewed the portrait with a more qualified appreciation, as although it gave 'great satisfaction...a very pleasant representation of her' it also seemed 'to be wanting in life and power, and to make her look unusually old and tired'.[64]

Apart from this reservation about the failure to record her habitual energy and drive – the word 'tired' appears in at least two reviews - the portrait seems to have been well received; concern was expressed that her habitual expression had not been successfully recorded, which indicates that accurate delineation was expected from a portrait. In earlier chapters paintings of older women have been considered, including Sargent's *Octavia Hill* (Figure 5:2) and *Mrs Marquand* (Figure 5:9), Eakins' *Elizabeth Duane Gillespie* (Figure 4:20), and all are presented with their ageing attributes - wrinkles on hands and face, puffy and shadowed eyes – clear for all to see. The men, it is worth noting, were treated in exactly the same way, as can be seen when considering, for example, Eakins' portraits of *Archbishop William Elder* and *Dr William Thomson* (Figures 4:14, 19) as well as Sargent's of *Coventry Patmore*, *Frederick Olmsted*, and *Richard M. Hunt* (Figures 5:13, 15, 16). No remarks seem to have been made on the ageing attributes of these people, in either a positive or a negative way, which can be interpreted as meaning such attributes were routinely accepted, and not considered important enough to be commented on. It is possible, even probable, that viewers prefer these intimations of everyday ageing; as noted in the last paragraphs of Chapter Two, it was the rendition of an old and plainly dressed old lady which was more popular than the bland pretty girl holding the bowl of peonies. This points to a preference amongst viewers for a sympathetic recognisable figure, grounded in everyday life and displaying a common humanity.

The comments noted above about Anne Clough's inappropriately severe appearance in the Richmond portrait, or the unusual tiredness perceived in Shannon's, underscore the importance, and expectation, of a typical and truthful look of the sitter being recorded. Facial expressions are constantly in motion, and part of an artist's task is to capture a characteristic aspect, when the subject is 'seen at his[her] best in a particular mood'.[65] One notable portrait subject who

[62] 'Art: The New Gallery,' *Hearth and Home* (May 28th 1891): 53. Obituary, *Ladies' Treasury* (April 1st 1892), 205.
[63] Lee, *Miss Clough,* 410.
[64] Clough, *Memoir,* 331.
[65] T. Wemyss Reid 'Mr Gladstone and his Portraits' *The Magazine of Art (*January 1889), 84.

presented particular challenges for the painter because of the multitudinous expressions that flitted across his face was politician William Ewart Gladstone (1809 – 1898). He was a politician and public figure who had lived and aged under the public gaze, a significant member of the 'grey power' which was so apparent in English public life in the late nineteenth century.[66] He was Prime Minister four times, and was described as the 'Grand Old Man' of English politics.[67] He sat for numerous portraits, and 'for thirty years past no face in England has more frequently engaged the attention of the portrait-painter' to the extent that producing a portrait of Gladstone was all but de rigeur for any artist.[68]

Gladstone's features were well known and thus might be considered easy to fix on canvas, but in reality it was very challenging to catch the expression. 'There are few men of distinction whose likeness it is more difficult to fix upon canvas. For the expression …. varies in the case of Mr Gladstone from hour to hour' and it was said that he had 'one face for the House of Commons, another for society, and yet a third for his own library' and the portrait painter needed to select the moment when 'he is seen at his best'.[69]

Given these challenges to the painter, two portraits of Gladstone in his late seventies are useful for this study as they show the well-known face of a powerful figure late in life, but approach it in different ways. They were produced within a year of each other; one is by Frank Holl (Figure 6:13), the other by Henry Jones Thaddeus (Figure 6:14). The Holl portrait was painted at Hawarden, Gladstone's home, in the autumn of 1887, and finished in Holl's London studio in April 1888. Thaddeus himself asked Gladstone for a sitting whilst the latter was on a visit to Florence early in 1888.[70] Holl's portrait was preferred over Thaddeus's for the 1888 Royal Academy exhibition, whereas the Reform Club, who had initially commissioned Holl to paint the portrait of Gladstone, for unrecorded reasons considered it unsatisfactory, and purchased Thaddeus's as a substitute.[71]

Frank Holl (1845 – 1888), an erstwhile colleague of Hubert Herkomer at *The Graphic* magazine, and member of the 'Dismal School', began his career with heart-tugging genre pictures before moving into portraiture in 1879; he went on to produce almost two hundred portraits before his early death in 1888.[72] Generously described by his competing colleague Thaddeus as 'undoubtedly the greatest English portrait painter of his time', his portraits were considered to be

[66] Karen Chase, *The Victorians and Old Age* (Oxford:Oxford University Press, 2009):6.
[67] 1868 – 1874; 1880 – 1885; 1886; 1892 – 1894. H. C. G. Matthew, *Gladstone 1809–1898* (Oxford; University Press, 1997), 531.
[68] Wemyss Reid, 'Mr Gladstone', 82. G. F. Watts had painted him in 1858 as one of his 'Hall of Fame' portraits, which he planned to 'bequeath to the nation', ibid, 84.
[69] ibid, 84.
[70] H. Jones Thaddeus, *Recollections of a Court Painter* (London: John Lane, Bodley Head 1912), 100.
[71] ibid,102/3.
[72] such as *I Am The Resurrection and the Life* 1872.

'full of force, vigour and actuality'.[73] As with Thomas Eakins (Chapter Four), he was considered to have 'what became almost an infirmity with him..[in that he gave].. 'his subject more years than [the] actual age warranted'.[74]

Henry Jones Thaddeus (1860 – 1929) had a more cosmopolitan career.[75] Born in Cork, Ireland, he came to London in his late teens and lived in England, Europe, the Middle East and the United States before settling in his final years in the Isle of Wight. His repertoire was broad, but it was his 1885 portrait of Pope Leo XIII (1810 - 1903) which had particularly impressed Gladstone and made him immediately sympathetic to Thaddeus's request for a sitting.[76]

Both Holl and Thaddeus present Gladstone in three-quarter view; in Holl's painting it is the right side of Gladstone's face which is in profile, whereas in Thaddeus's it is the left side; Holl remarked not only on Gladstone's very large head, but 'how very much more developed it was on the left side than on the right'.[77] Whilst this is not unduly clear in the two portraits, in Thaddeus's work the facial features (left-side) do seem more strongly defined. Holl portrayed Gladstone with a smooth, calm, somewhat pallid face, and used marked contrasts of light and shade to give him a vibrant, defiant look, which also acts as a reminder of his renowned irascible temper.[78] Due to time constraints, having finished the head and needing to paint the hands, Thaddeus asked Gladstone to 'take a natural attitude ... customary to him',[79] which he did, and negated the need for his hands to be painted by tucking one hand in his jacket at the front, the other behind his back. In contrast, in Holl's portrait the hands are clearly shown, mottled and elderly, gripping a large book, with their strong clutch implying a contained strength, echoed in the upright stance.[80] Holl deliberately chose standing as a suitable posture for Gladstone, explaining in a letter to his daughter that 'to *sit* is to be at ease, and not the character of the at once wonderful and extraordinary life he has led'.[81]

In his study of Gladstone portraits, T. Wemyss-Reid considered Thaddeus's portrait as 'extremely clever', but also, somewhat curiously, stated that the portrait showed Gladstone 'in the long calm retrospective survey which is one of the privileges of age'.[82] It underlines the opinion that old age brings reflection and remembrance, but sits a little oddly with the bright eyes and firmly set mouth shown in this portrait, which indicate a more volcanic and lively figure, ready to erupt at

[73] Thaddeus, *Recollections*, 102. 'The Royal Academy: First Notice.' *The Times (*May 4th 1889):7
[74] 'Winter Exhibition at Burlington House.' *The Times (*January 7th 1889): 9.
[75] in 1885 he rearranged by deed poll his birth name of Henry Thaddeus Jones. Brendan Rooney,*The Life and Work of Henry Jones Thaddeus* (Dublin: Four Courts Press Ltd 2003): 257.
[76] ibid, 100.
[77] Ada J. Reynolds [ie Holl's daughter], *The Life and Work of Frank Holl* (London: Methuen & Co 1912), 285.
[78] 'I was aware that Mr Gladstone had an irascible temper' Thaddeus, *Recollections*, 100
[79] ibid, 101.
[80] 'what vigour there still was in the old man' wrote Sir Charles Oman about Gladstone early in 1890; Charles Oman, *Things I Have Seen* (London: Methuen & Co., 1933), 77.
[81] Letter dated 31st October 1887 from Holl to his daughter Ada Reynolds, quoted in Reynolds, *Holl*, 279.
[82] Wemyss-Reid, 'Mr Gladstone,' 84.

any moment. In the Holl portrait he seems a little calmer, and perhaps more prone to retrospection, but even so the figure still seems braced for action. Almost ten years later, just over a year before his death, Gladstone finished his diary with the sentence 'Old age is appointed for the gradual loosening or successive snapping of the threads'; at the time of these portraits, however, there is no hint that the threads were loose or snapping, and the portrayal of old age is affirmative.[83] Both these portraits also show him as a capsule of living history, emphasising how the value there can be in old age, faces showing 'the interest of age, of the result of a lifetime ... the story of a past'.[84]

This chapter has looked at several portraits of notable people, elderly and English, who were considered to have contributed something beneficial to society and be worthy of record. By their nature, portraits are evidence of a person's vanity, a means by which a sitter's status is recorded and reinforced for both contemporaries and posterity, and will thus inevitably provide a positive view of the subject. They can also be understood, however, as an appreciation, a worthy compliment; colleagues and friends who commissioned a portrait often had the best of motives, and intended them as 'a mark of great respect'.[85] Portrayals of ageing people also provided what historian of the elderly Pat Thane described in one study as 'highly visible models of what old age could be'.[86] This was especially useful at this time because, as has been mentioned earlier, in the years under consideration public figures such as Queen Victoria, Gladstone and Disraeli were ageing before society's eyes; their images, whether as a portrait or other medium, such as photograph or cartoon, would often be before the public's gaze.

The English subjects of portraits selected for study in this chapter include both men and women, with a variety of status and occupation and a range of backgrounds. Gladstone, Canning and Cardinals Manning and Newman are from the political and religious spheres; Anne Clough and Thomas Hawksley show the rapidly expanding professional classes; Josephine Butler is an example of the philanthropy and efforts at social reform which were evident in the age; and Lorenz Herkomer is painted by his son as a flourishing workman. He is a slightly more unusual choice, as he was of the artisan class, who are often more evident in genre paintings than portraits; he was, however, a picturesque figure in his own right, and as the father of the artist provided him with an ever-present model. He is also vibrant and upright enough to withstand comparison with the stalwart tradesmen portrayed in the United States (see Chapter Three), such as Hovenden's *Blacksmith* (Figure 3:6) and Fuller Graves' *Clock-mender* (Figure 3:10).

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[83] *Gladstone's Diary, (*Dec 29th 1896), quoted in Matthew, *Gladstone,* 631.
[84] The Royal Academy,' *The Standard* (May 30th 1882): 3.
[85] 'Thomas Hawksley Obituary', *The Times* (25th September 1893). see also earlier in chapter
[86] Pat Thane, *Old Age in English History: Past Experience, Present Issues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 270.

What comes across consistently in both English and American portraits of this time – not only those shown in this chapter but also those from which the choice was made - is the dignity with which the sitters are shown. Herkomer wrote of the efforts he had to make to present the invalid Stratford Canning – still lively in mind, though frail in body - in a gentle, respectful light, redolent of past achievements. Herkomer's endeavours went beyond the mere requirements of producing a painting, having at their heart a kernel of respect and consideration for the person being recorded for posterity, and a reflection of their common humanity. From the dignified portraits they produced it seems likely that other artists, though they may not have expressed themselves in words as Herkomer did, (or may have felt it unnecessary to make comment on age distinctions) retained this core of respect for their aged sitters. The relationship between sitter and artist is of course, though transient, a close one between individuals, and more pragmatic and tangible than the general abstract view of society as a whole. Portraits were painted for people to view and it is reasonable to conclude that the accepting attitude demonstrated in the work of artists was also understood and appreciated by society at large with no hint at this time of any evident disparagement of the aged.

With its concentration on English portraits of English people this chapter has provided a balance for the two previous chapters, with focus on the American portraits of Thomas Eakins and the transatlantic and cosmopolitan sitters of Sargent. The portraits for this chapter were selected to show a variety of elderly people who had made valuable contributions to society through a diversity of skills, attributes and backgrounds. In James Laing's portrayal (Figure 6:1) the thoughtful gaze and strong hands of a 'captain of industry' are emphasised by the way they are set against the almost mono-chromic background. The worn features of Thomas Hawksley (Figure 6:3) show not only the wear and tear of age, but also the retention of competence and ability. Two faces of Christianity are shown in the severe authority of Cardinal Manning (Figure 6:6) and the gentle benignity of Cardinal Newman (Figure 6:7). Josephine Butler's face (Figure 6:5) provides a clear record of the anguish of life's experience and because of this can, as noted earlier in the comment she herself made, provide hope, strength and courage to those who view the portrait. This emphasises the pictorial benefits of an old, line-etched face and the way old age can provide a helpful and positive view of life which the smoothness of a younger face cannot contain.

The chapter has also provided an unusual and rewarding opportunity of considering, in two different cases, more than one portrait of the same person. A comparison of two portraits of Gladstone, one looking to the left, one to the right, and painted within a year of each other, confirm his continuing retention of authority, an upright old man still poised for continued service to the state.

A similar finding appeared with both the portraits, eight years apart, of educational pioneer Anne Clough. Inevitably she had aged, but in each painting friends and colleagues recognised her characteristic expressions, both good and bad. These comments from contemporaries have also once again emphasised the vital contribution contemporary responses have to make in studies such as this as they put the paintings into the context of their time, and thus clarify contemporary reactions and attitudes from the time when the portraits first appeared.

Evidence has also been given of the challenges which may arise in painting an elderly person, when weakness and disease may have taken their toll; although it should be emphasised that it is more often ill-health which is the problem rather than age itself. In an echo of Sargent's difficulties with Olmsted and Hunt (Chapter Five), it was noted how Herkomer dealt with the physically frail Stratford Canning (Figure 6:2) and still produced a portrait of dignity and veracity.

The scrutiny of these English portraits has made it clear how artists had painted with verisimilitude and consideration, managing to record an elderly visage for posterity as well as for contemporaries. With the end of this chapter the full panorama of portrayals of the elderly has now been completed, and sufficient information gained to meet the requirements of the thesis, and conclusions to be drawn.

CONCLUSION

This study has provided a comprehensive overview of how the old were portrayed in paintings in England and the United States between 1870 – 1910 in order to determine the attitudes to the elderly in those years. As noted in the Introduction, scholars such as Andrew Achenbaum and David Fischer had postulated that there were very specific times when there had taken place what Achenbaum described as 'an unprecedented devaluation of old people's worth'.[1] They had explored the idea that there was a clear, abrupt and complete volte-face in attitudes, from positive to negative. When this study began it therefore seemed likely that there would be clear and irrefutable evidence of such a pronounced change. Instead, it was unexpected as well as heartening to discover, as work progressed, that there were very few, if any, indications of changes to more negative attitudes to the old. As the evidence was collected it became apparent that there had been no significant alteration in the attitudes displayed in the studies of the work of artists.

The introduction to this thesis began with the acknowledgement that old age has always evoked a marked ambivalence in attitudes. Over the centuries opinions on old people have often seemed polarised, with two faces. On the one side they may be regarded as serene, benign and approachable, dignified figures of comfort, wisdom and support, whilst the opposing view is that they can be seen as tormented (and tormenting), spiteful and irascible, their bodies crumbling, decaying and decrepit, a burden to everyone and with the potential of being a significant drain on society's, and their own, resources. Both opinions have been recognised in this thesis, but as the study progressed it became clear that, unexpectedly, for the most part, old people were portrayed in a positive and accepting light, not only during the years between 1870 and 1910 but also throughout earlier centuries. Paintings of or including the old were found to have been a routine and common factor in both English and American paintings for many years; the old people being portrayed being such a unremarkable part of the subject matter that their use was not thought by contemporary commentators to require remark. They appear in many poses, sometimes in restful mode, lost in reverie and contemplation, and on other occasions they are shown absorbed in their work, carrying out their daily tasks, seemingly content, competent in their field and in full command of their faculties. This can be seen on both sides of the Atlantic, with the aged being shown at work as craftsmen, such as the blacksmiths and clockmakers painted by Thomas Hovenden (Figure 3:6) and Fuller Graves (Figures 3:10); as labourers, as in *Threshing the Gleanings* (Figure 2:5) and in domestic tasks such as cleaning *Polishing the Pots (*Figure 2:22), shopping and visiting a store (*Country Grocery in Kennebunkport, Maine (*Figure 3:3) and *Village Post Office* (Figure 3:2); or they are shown in animated philosophical chatting, as in *A*

1 Achenbaum, *Old Age in the New Land*, 54.

Cosy Party (Figure 2:23) and *The Nantucket School of Philosophy (*Figure 3:4). As noted in an earlier chapter, an artist was not on oath, and might, to provide a suitably composed picture, slightly amend their work to display a more appropriate reality which would please the viewers and critics and thus aid sales. It was also important, however, to maintain the familiarity and realism of scenes in order to provide, through the comforting representation of everyday scenes, reassurance to potential buyers. There were several works which showed the sadder aspects of age, such as *The Last Furrow* (Figure 2:38), Moeller's *Signing the Will* (Figure 3:22) or Titcomb's trusting deathbed scene *Piloting Her Home (*Figure 3:23), but these were found to be very much in the minority.

Portraits, with their focus on an individual, provided a different perspective on the old from genre. The purpose of a portrait is to provide for contemporary viewers and posterity a record of the features and fashions of individuals who, for whatever reason – achievement, wealth, status, conceit, gratitude, respect – were considered, or considered themselves, to be suitable for having their appearance recorded in a portrait. This, especially when working with older subjects, could present painters with particular challenges; as has been noted in earlier chapters, Herkomer and Sargent had the difficulty of recording for posterity the likeness of elderly people who had achieved much over their lifetime but were now in failing health, and the painters found it necessary to strike a balance between present fact and previous achievement. Thomas Eakins, though he had some commissions (for example, Archbishop Elder, Figure 4:14) had the advantage of being able to make his own selection of those he wished to paint, his only restrictions on his choice of sitter being their agreement and availability. The age of the sitter could be his deliberate choice, and he seems to have had at the very least an inclination, more likely a strong preference, towards the middle-aged and the old, because, as his delight in wrinkles implies, (see earlier Chapters) their more etched features gave him such excellent opportunities to utilise his skills to the full. The formidable almost eighty *Elizabeth Duane Gillespie*, (1820 – 1901) (Figure 4: 20), with her large hands and withered face, as well as her artistic connections (see Chapter Four) was a natural choice. As was Eakins' friend, colleague and doctor, the 74 year old *William Thomson*, (1833 -1907) (Figure 4: 19), portrayed as still poised and at work, these attributes being emphasised by the inclusion in the painting of not only his work instruments but also his inventions.

What contribution to knowledge has been made by this study of paintings of the elderly in England and the United States in those influential years between 1870 and 1910? First of all, a comprehensive and detailed database has been constructed which has brought together many paintings which portray the elderly from both sides of the Atlantic. This provides not only the necessary starting point for this study, but also has the potential be used as a base from which

further studies of the elderly, referred to later in this conclusion, could be launched. Another beneficial finding was how little difficulty there was in discovering paintings with the elderly included as part of the subject matter, which implies that the age of the sitters was not an issue, and there was no objection or reluctance towards them as subjects of a painting. It was very frustrating, however, to find that although many reproductions and examples of suitable works could be easily found on-line, there was often only the title, the artist and perhaps the medium, but no other indication given of present whereabouts, the original sizes and the dates of the paintings. It would be useful to explore these sources further and seek to find more information of these intriguing and significant works.

It was a worthwhile revelation to find that working with an aged sitter could be, to a painter, a much valued asset. Comments made by artists, such as those referred to in earlier chapters by Frith and Jopling, make clear that many of them relished the challenge and practice such subjects gave them, providing as they did such excellent opportunities for the painters to use their skills. Elderly sitters also had the benefit of often being quieter sitters, displaying with no effort the contemplation and reflection frequently associated with the old. The recording of life's experiences in the lines on elderly faces, necks and hands added a fascinating depth to a portrayal, hinting as it did at the possibility of interesting stories in the sitter's life. Life's challenges and vicissitudes would have certainly left their mark on an old person's face, a confirmation of Rembrandt's reputed aphorism, noted in Chapter Six, of 'life etch[ing] itself onto our face as we grow older'.

My thesis has also highlighted and brought out from the shadows the work of many painters who in their day were very popular but who have now become lost to history. This has been an especially useful contribution to the field of art history, as these artists provide not only valuable insights into the world of the painter at that time, their styles, techniques and influences, but also a reflection of the mores of their times. As will be discussed later, they provide fertile ground for future study.

A question which it is difficult to avoid in a study such as this, with its focus on two countries, is whether it is possible, when looking at a painting, to determine in which country the painting had its origin, especially in terms of the presentation of the subject. Although the topics and themes were markedly similar, in the works produced in the United States it became apparent that the subjects, in their dress and surroundings, appeared to be better off, at least in terms of surroundings and dress, which was in pronounced contrast to the more threadbare realism of England. In American paintings the elderly, whether poor or not, were portrayed as people who were vibrant, self-reliant and defiant, as can be seen in *Widow McGee* (Figure 3:24) and *Tattered*

and Torn (Figure 3:25). In contrast, the figures in English paintings, though often appearing as lively and kindly, wore less luxuriant garments, their surroundings were more shabby, and by some slight differences in posture, could be interpreted as having a more fatalistic, submissive attitude to the vagaries of life and society. As an example, the solitary individual in the English *Will It Rain?* (Figure 2:21) though undoubtedly upright, self-contained and spirited, has more of a reserve about her. She lacks the brashness of her American counterparts, her carefully painted facial expression is gentler, her wry stare less of a glare.[2]

Despite these differences in portrayal of the elderly in the two countries, it also became apparent as the collection of paintings in the database grew, that whilst there were differences between the works from each country, there were also pronounced similarities, and it was not always immediately apparent on which side of the Atlantic a painting had originated, the compositions, styles and subjects being all but interchangeable. This is clearly illustrated in works such as, for example, Platt Powell Ryder's *Patience* or his *Fireside Companion* (Figures 3:37, 38), and Edwin Harris's *A Pinch of Snuff* (Figure 2:31) or Walter Langley's *When One Is Old* (Figure 2:37). Each of these works could be as easily a painting of the English Newlyn School as a genre work from the United States. These similar subjects and poses provide evidence of the commonalities and shared influences between the two countries, which can be seen very clearly in the works of English painter Mary Kindon and American artist Louis Moeller. Both often have as subjects cheerfully chatting groups of elderly people, though the English figures appear in more sparsely furnished interiors, with clean plain plastered walls, and shabby clothes, though there are no signs this diminishes their enjoyment of each other's company.

It also became clear as this study progressed that there was in these years a paucity of any controversial or conscience-provoking paintings in the United States, which is in pronounced contrast with England (and Europe), where from the middle years of the nineteenth century a significant school of social realism developed, (also referred to as the 'dismal school'). This had as its focus the poorer, less fortunate, members of society and drew attention to the pronounced inequalities in society. Such subjects were not limited solely to the elderly, or indeed any particular age group, all ages could be included, from forlorn children through to the elderly. This style is exemplified in the early work of Luke Fildes, Frank Holl and Hubert Herkomer who, as has been noted, early in their careers roamed the city streets to find suitable subjects for their work for *The Graphic Magazine*.

The Charity Home, the lost painting by Francis Miller referred to in Chapter Three, was an unusual example of an American painting whose subject, in other countries at least, would have

2 The care, skill and very precise brushstrokes which went into the painting of this face are extremely clear in the original.

had at least the potential of unsettling its audience with its nudges towards a social conscience. It is not that poor people were not depicted in America, but those that were painted were shown not as passive figures, but as figures of determination and self-reliance, characteristic examples being the self-educating families in Roseland's works *Budding Scholar (*Figure 3: 31) and the defiant lady in Kappes' *Is This Life Worth Living?* (Figure 3:30). From Kappes' title it is not clear who is asking the question - the viewer, the artist or the subject, but her defiant attitude, with her hand grasping the defensive implement at her side, indicates that to her at least life is worth fighting for. She, and many similar subjects, are shown as self-reliant, purposeful figures, seeking to provide for themselves and maintain their independence as long as they possibly can. This is an important finding, as it emphasises the differences between the two countries, and thereby makes a significant contribution to the overall views being built up of attitudes to the elderly in each country.

The study also drew attention to the sometimes complex backgrounds of both sitters and, more especially, of painters; this can make it considerably more challenging to determine the unseen influences in artists' lives which could determine their style, techniques and attitudes. An excellent example of this is the complex intertwining of origin and influence to be found in the world of artist Hubert Herkomer, who has had a frequent presence in this study. Although described as an English painter because he lived in England for most of his life, he was born in Bavaria, taken to America in very early childhood when his parents emigrated there; at the age of six he accompanied his parents again as they crossed the Atlantic to settle in England, where he lived until his death, though he made frequent visits to Bavaria. He also returned to the United States, on visits, at least twice in his life, the first time from late October 1882 – June 1883 and the second time from December 1885 to May 1886. He was well-received on these tours and painted several portraits during his time there.

It was also not unusual in exhibition reviews in these years to find references to paintings of old people, as is demonstrated in a review of the work entitled *Winter,* painted by Richard Gross. It is described as 'a hoary portrait of an old, wrinkled man's head' which 'charmed the spectator with the well-drawn face … and the careful anatomy of bones and muscles, which gave evidence of real study'.[3] This confirms not only how important to critics was the technique and expertise of the artist, but also that they considered there to be no need to comment on the choice of an elderly subject, which again acts as a reminder how routine and unremarkable such a subject was.

3 'Exhibition of the Society of American Artists' *The Art Journal* 5: (1879):156. 'Winter by Mr Richard Gross is represented in the hoary portrait of an old, wrinkled man's head, upon which the light is well diffused. Compared with the slovenly work one so often sees, this head charmed the spectator with the well-drawn face of the thin, weather-beaten face, and the careful anatomy of bones and muscles, which gave evidence of real study so superior to quick and impatient effects'.

Over the years in question styles of painting were inevitably changing and developing in both England and America. This does not, however, seem to have any impact on the selection of elderly people as subjects, depictions of them continued throughout the times under review. When Eastman Johnson died in 1906 the 'sincere and laborious devotion to truth' evident in his work was still appreciated, even though it was by then acknowledged to be out-of-date.[4] By early in the twentieth century, what was now fashionable was not a punctilious and accurate rendition of the subject but the different style of painting required for the blurred and sweeping brush strokes of Impressionism, as can be seen in Luks' *Widow McGee*.

The years in question were also the years when the United States was developing and strengthening its own style of painting, and moving away from merely echoing the influences of Britain and Europe, which had inevitably spread a large shadow, partly through their long history, but also because such a very high proportion of immigrants had their origins in Europe and the British Isles. American artists were now creating their own path; in the early twentieth century artists such as Robert Henri and John Sloan, members of the Ashcan school, recommended that artists got 'out of the art school and studio. Go out into the streets and look at life'. From the pictures they produced it is clear that many painters did this, but it is also apparent that they continued using the elderly as subjects for their paintings; by doing this the continuing value of the old as suitable subjects was confirmed.[5]

This study has also had a wider purpose, in that it has much to offer art historians by the provision of an invigorating starting point for further research on many topics. These opportunities include explorations of gender, religion, race, class, the interplay between generations, treatment of the poor, and, especially in the case of the United States, themes such as slavery and post-colonial attitudes. In the Introduction to this study it was made clear that the intention was to concentrate on the depiction of the elderly generally, so as to provide an overview rather than an in-depth analysis of each of the many possible further topics. The base which has now been created, however, has the potential to act as a signpost to these avenues of further study, enabling stringently and narrowly focused studies on particular topics to be explored. As an example, it became clear during this work that women were very slightly in the majority as subjects of genre paintings, a fact which is probably explained to a large extent by the fact that women were more available to sit for painters as their work was often in and around the home – cleaning, feeding, mending – whereas men went away from the home to work, to tasks such as farming, fishing or factory work. An initial finding such as this could be used as an

4 Edward King 'The Value of Nationalism in Art', *Monthly Illustrator* 4:14 (June 1895):267.
5 John Sloan, *The Gist of Art: Principles and Practise Expounded in the Classroom and Studio* (New York: Dover Publications Inc, 1939), 81

opportunity for further thorough and in-depth studies, in this instance of gender, to be undertaken.

During the progress of this thesis, it was very encouraging to discover that a new on-line volume - *Age, Culture, Humanities: An Interdisciplinary Journal* – had been founded in 2014 to 'promote cross-disciplinary, critical investigations of the experiences of age, aging, and old age, as seen through the lens of the humanities and arts'.[6] This is both reassuring and invigorating, as it provides a means of crossing the artificial and limiting boundaries which have sometimes been set between disciplines and methodologies, especially those which concern aspects of humanity. Flexibility of attitude to these restrictions, a blurring of the edges, in fields such as art history, social history, gender studies and/or post-colonial studies, gives the potential for the development of new and broad perspectives, enabling new facets to be found in many subjects.

As remarked on earlier, another enticing avenue for further research is a more in-depth and detailed examination of the works of several of the artists who have been unearthed for this study and who, in their paintings and writings, have enabled the addition of valuable and revealing information to the whole thesis. Many of these artists, such as Mary E. Kindon, James Charles, Abbott Fuller Graves, Philip B. Hahs and Alfred Kappes, were clearly popular and respected in their day, but are now unfashionable, unappreciated, unregarded and maybe even unknown. They would repay additional study, not only for the light they shed on the mores of their time, but also on their impact on other artists, the techniques and styles they used, as well as the influences they may have been under themselves. As an example, Mary Evelina Kindon produced some well-thought of paintings, displayed in both England and Europe to good reviews. She moved to Bushey, probably from choice, at the time when Herkomer's school was fully operational, and so it seems highly probable, and would bear further investigation, that she was influenced by, adopted and adapted at least some of his practices and methods – it is even possible that she had some influence on the school itself.

Tracing the extent of the influence of earlier artists on later ones could also benefit from further scholarly attention. As this study progressed, it became clear how much the painters being scrutinised had been influenced, intentionally or not, by painters of earlier centuries. Eakins openly acknowledged his debt to the early Spanish painters such as Ribera and Velazquez. Nor, though there are no written records of this, was it difficult to make a connection, especially in terms of posture and detail, between Frans Hals' *Regentesses* (Figure 5:11) painting and Sargent's painting of *Mrs Marquand* (Figure 5:9). Several other painters, for example Eastman

6 http://ageculturehumanities.org Accessed 26 November 2017

Johnson and Frank Holl, openly acknowledged their respect and admiration for the Dutch school and there is clearly considerable potential for further research on this topic.

Examining the paintings collected for the database, it became very clear that certain themes in painting constantly recur, and are not restricted to any particular age. The cross-generational look was commented on in Chapter One and can be seen in both Story's *A Chance Acquaintance* (Figure 3:36) and Ghirlandaio's *Old Man and a Boy* (Figure 1:5). Two other works, referred to in Chapters Two and Three, are very significant in this study as they not only illustrate this recurrent theme but also provide evidence of the variations in attitudes between England and the United States. The American work, *Trying the Pipe* (Figure 3:32), is by Abbott Fuller Graves; *Keeping It Alight For Grandfather* (Figure 2:29), the English work, is by James Hayllar. In each painting a young boy smokes his grandfather's pipe, having picked it up from the older figure, who snoozes in a nearby chair, but the titles give each work a different emphasis, reflecting, it can be argued, the tougher and more self-focused attitudes in the United States against the gentler, kindlier, more old-fashioned modes of England. In Hayllar's work the boy is not only sampling the flavour, but can also be considered, at the very least in terms of the title, as seeking to assist his grandfather as he tries to keep the pipe alight for his benefit. In contrast, in the painting by Fuller Graves, as the title makes clear, the boy tests the pipe solely for himself, deliberately blowing the smoke towards his grandfather's face. There is, perhaps, a gentle mockery of the dozing older men in both paintings, but there is also recorded in the upright pose and pert facial expression of each boy a supportive robustness which reflects well on the relationship between the two generations.

It also became apparent, exemplified best in the contemporary comments noted in earlier chapters about *Eventide* (Figure 2:15) and *Our Poor* (Figure 2:20), that it was not age in itself that was feared or despised, but the dependency and infirmity which may accompany it. Old age, which waits for all if they live long enough, is something from which there is no return, and thus will always be viewed with some trepidation, though the more profound fear is frailty and contingent dependency. Woven through this work is the consistent thread remarked on in the Introduction of the 'marked ambiguity, ambivalence and conflict about feelings about growing old and being old', which provides confirmation that there was no one inflexible date when attitudes to old age suddenly performed a volte face, from positive to negative.[7] The portrayal of the old has been a common factor in both English and American paintings throughout the years under study, and in most paintings the aged are shown absorbed in their work and daily tasks, seemingly content, competent in their field and in full command of their faculties.

7 Cohen & Kruschwitz, *'Old Age in Popular Sheet Music,'*345.

The relationship between sitter and artist is, though by its nature transient, also a close one between individuals, and probably more pragmatic and tangible than an abstract view of society as a whole. From this scrutiny it has emerged that the elderly were regularly used as subjects of paintings and for the most part were portrayed sympathetically, frequently shown as unexceptional, busy and accepted figures within a community. Their elderly features were carefully painted, with no attempt to soften or distort their attributes of age, such as white hair, bulbous nose and stooped posture. This was an unexpected finding, as the initial expectation had been, especially when considering Achenbaum's contention that the aged were increasingly despised during these years, that the negative view of obsolescent and parasitic old age would be the one that prevailed. It is also a positive and optimistic finding, implying as it does that there are positive aspects to the process of ageing.

This thesis has not found any evidence of a change, whether sudden or protracted, in attitudes to the elderly, but it has demonstrated how much artists enjoyed depicting the aged; in part because of their capacity to be available and to sit quietly for a painter, and also because their wrinkled weathered faces and hands provided such practice for artistic skills. As has been seen in earlier chapters, several artists expressed the view that old people might become more beautiful as they aged. An idea shared by Louisa Garrett Anderson, who, in her biography of her mother Elizabeth Garrett Anderson (Figure 5:3), commented how their friend and colleague Emily Davies (1830 – 1921; founder of Girton College, Cambridge), had been 'plain looking' when younger, but in 'old age character and ability presented themselves on her face'.[8] A remark which reinforces the concept that old people could be attractive and popular in their own way, and be valued and respected as subjects by painters, their life-etched features providing so many more ingredients with which to compose the final picture. The furrowed face may have provided a different form of beauty from the bland smooth-skinned charms of youth, but it was still beauty, and clearly had its own attractions (as noted at the end of Chapter Two) for viewers and painters alike.

8 Louisa Garrett Anderson. *Elizabeth Garrett Anderson 1836–1917 by her daughter (*London: Faber & Faber Ltd, 1939), 42.

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The Athenaeum
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Falmouth Packet
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Ipswich Journal
Journal of Victorian Culture
Literary Review
Magazine of Art
Munsey's Magazine
Newcastle Daily Journal
Newcastle Weekly Chronicle
The Nineteenth Century and After
Nottinghamshire Guardian
Pearson's Weekly
Saturday Review
Scribner's Magazine
The Times

APPENDIX ONE – British Prime Ministers and US Presidents - Age when in Office

British Prime Ministers 1860 - 1910

Name	Life Span	In Office	Age when in office
Lord Palmerston	1784 - 1865	1859 - 1865	75 - 83
Earl Russell	1792 - 1878	1865 - 1866	73
Earl of Derby	1799 - 1869	1866 - 1868	67 - 69
Benjamin Disraeli	1804 - 1881	1868	64
William Gladstone	1809 - 1898	1868 - 1874	59 - 65
Benjamin Disraeli	1804 - 1881	1874 - 1880	70 - 76
William Gladstone	1809 - 1898	1880 - 1885	71 - 76
Marquess of Salisbury	1830 - 1903	1885 - 1886	55 - 56
William Gladstone	1809 - 1898	1886	77
Marquess of Salisbury	1830 - 1903	1886 - 1892	56 - 62
William Gladstone	1809 - 1898	1892 - 1894	83 - 85
Earl of Rosebery	1847 - 1929	1894 - 1895	47 - 48
Marquess of Salisbury	1830 - 1903	1895 - 1902	65 - 72
Arthur Balfour	1848 - 1930	1902 - 1905	54 - 57
Henry Campbell-Bannerman	1836 - 1908	1905 - 1908	69 - 72
Herbert Asquith	1852 - 1928	1908 - 1916	56 - 64

United States Presidents 1860 – 1910

Name	Life Span	In Office	Age when in office
James Buchanan	1791 - 1868	1857 - 1861	66 - 70
Abraham Lincoln	1809 - 1865	1861 - 1865	52 - 54
Andrew Johnson	1808 - 1875	1865 - 1869	57 - 61
Ulysses S. Grant	1822 - 1885	1869 - 1877	47 - 55
Rutherford B Hayes	1822 - 1893	1877 - 1881	55 - 59
James A. Garfield	1831 - 1881	1881	50
Chester A. Arthur	1829 - 1886	1881 - 1885	52 - 56
Grover Cleveland	1837 - 1908	1885 - 1889	48 - 52
Benjamin Harrison	1833 - 1901	1889 - 1893	67
Grover Cleveland	1837 - 1901	1893 - 1897	54 - 58
William McKinley	1843 - 1901	1897 - 1901	54 - 58
Theodore Roosevelt	1858 - 1919	1901 - 1909	43 - 52
William H. Taft	1857 - 1930	1909 - 1913	52 - 56

APPENDIX TWO
Table of Gender and Age in the Works of John Singer Sargent[1]

	to 1889	1890-1899	1900 & after	**Totals**
Male	51	48	96	**195**
Female	110	63	96	**269**
Child	30	10	8	**48**
English	32	46	90	**168**
American	67	56	74	**197**
European	52	11	30	**93**
Sargent's Family	12	1	2	**15**
Young 29 & under	48	34	34	**116**
Middle 30 - 60	62	44	107	**213**
Old 60+	13	26	50	**89**

1 Figures obtained from Richard Ormond and Elaine Kilmurray. *John Singer Sargent: Complete Paintings.* New Haven & London: Yale University Press. 1998–2014. Volume 1, *Early Portraits,* 1998. Volume 2, *Portraits of the 1890s,* 2002. Volume 3, *Later Portraits,* 2003.

APPENDIX THREE Artists whose work was considered for the study.

1) English Artists

Artist	Born	Died
Bacon, John Henry F	1868	1914
Bramley, Frank	1857	1915
Charles, James	1851	1906
Clark, Joseph	1834	1912
Clausen, George	1852	1944
Collier, John	1850	1934
Cotman, Frederick George	1850	1920
Evans, Fred McNamara	1859	1929
Forbes, Elizabeth Armstrong	1859	1912
Forbes, Stanhope	1857	1947
Frith, William Powell	1819	1909
Hardy, Frederick Daniel	1826	1911
Harris, Edwin	1855	1906
Hayllar, Edith	1860	1948
Hayllar, James	1829	1920
Hedley, Ralph	1851	1913
Herkomer, Hubert Von	1849	1914
Hicks, George Elgar	1824	1914
Holl, Frank	1845	1888
Kilburne, George Goodwin	1839	1924
Kindon, Mary Evelina	1849	1919
Langley, Walter	1852	1922
La Thangue, Herbert	1859	1929
Leighton, Edmund Blair	1852	1922
Perugini, Charles Edward	1839	1918
Sadler, Walter Dendy	1854	1923
Snape, William H	1862	1904
Stocks, Arthur	1846	1889
Titcomb, William Holt Yates	1858	1930
Webster, Thomas	1800	1886

2) American Artists

Artist	Born	Died
Alexander, Henry	1860	1895
Anshutz, Thomas	1851	1912
Beckwith, J. Carroll	1852	1917
Birney, William Verplanck	1858	1909
Blauvelt, Charles E.	1824	1900
Brooke, Richard Norris	1847	1920
Brown, John George	1831	1913
Carr, Samuel	1837	1908
Cassatt, Mary	1844	1926
Chalfant, Jefferson D.	1856	1913
Champney, James Wells	1843	1903
Eakins, Thomas	1844	1916
Enneking, John Joseph	1841	1916
Gay, Walter	1856	1913
Graves, Abbot Fuller	1859	1936
Guy, Seymour Joseph	1824	1910
Henri, Robert	1865	1929
Henry, Edward Lamson	1841	1919
Homer, Winslow	1836	1910
Hovenden, Thomas	1840	1895
Johnson, Eastman	1824	1906
Kappes, Alfred	1850	1894
Luks, George	1887	1933
Miller, Francis H.	1855	1930
Moeller, Louis C.	1855	1930
Palmer, Walter Launt	1854	1932
Perry, Enoch Wood	1831	1915
Proctor, Charles E.	1866	1950
Roseland, Harry	1867	1950
Ryder, Platt Powell	1821	1896
Story, George Henry	1835	1923
Tanner, Henry Ossawa	1859	1937
Ulrich, Charles	1858	1908
Vedder, Elihu	1836	1923
Weir, Julian Alden	1852	1919
Wilmarth, Lemner Everett	1835	1918
Wood, Thomas Waterman	1823	1903