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I, Kathryn B Gephart, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Art History.

It is entitled:
Ellen Anderson, Mildred Burrage, and the Errancy of Modernist Painting

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Ellen Anderson, Mildred Burrage, and the Errancy of Modernist Painting

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ABSTRACT

American painters Ellen Anderson (1885-1970) and Mildred Burrage (1890-1983) studied art in Paris in the years directly preceding World War I. In Paris, Anderson and Burrage were exposed to modernist ideas and techniques and trends very far removed from those in regional American painting traditions. This study examines how Burrage and Anderson engage both sides of the regionalist-modernist equation and use color, as well as a shared interest in the intersection of art and fashion, to reframe the trajectories of regional and avant-garde painting in a more horizontal and inclusive direction in their work. Applying the vocabulary of both modernism and regionalism, Anderson and Burrage create *oeuvres* that are not merely imitative or derivative of either a modernist or regionalist approach. Counter to one possible narrative of art history that emphasizes originality and teleological progression, the work of Anderson and Burrage speaks to the thematics of femininity in art. Their artistic practices depart from the mainstream and dominant modes of art making traditionally favoring men. The thesis contributes to the body of scholarship that problematizes the current model of modernism. It also adds to the developing discourse seeking to highlight the work of so-called minor artists.
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INTRODUCTION

Some people think the women are the cause of modernism, whatever that is.¹

Ellen Anderson (1885-1970) and Mildred Burrage (1890-1983) were two of many American expatriate artists who worked in Paris in the early twentieth century and sought out training and experiences different from those that the United States had to offer. These women lived and studied in France until the outbreak of World War I, and during this period, they witnessed and experimented with cutting-edge developments in European modernist painting. The oeuvres of these women are extensive, but the focus of this study involves their exposure to the color and brushwork of modernist French art in the early twentieth century and their subsequent adaptation of modernist ideas to themes that were of personal significance to them: portraits of family members and landscapes in their hometowns. I want to trace and investigate the process of translation that takes place—between Paris and regional America—in each case, particularly with reference to the role of color in painting, questions of gender and femininity, and, further, the interface between art and fashion in the work of both artists.

A sense of place, something some modernist artists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were keen to discard, can create the most concrete ties to reality. Thinking of the profound connections between feeling and place, American author Eudora Welty has claimed that only art that “speaks most clearly, explicitly, directly and

¹ New York Sun, February 13, 1917.
passionately from its place of origin will remain the longest understood."² Burrage and Anderson bring their deeply felt relationships to their hometowns into dialogue with the modernist techniques they learned abroad. Their style of painting, marked by a brushy application of paint and non-realistic color, may seem at odds with their strong sense of place. Indeed, in her study of Édouard Manet (1832-1883) art historian Carol Armstrong describes that such denaturing of reality creates a certain either/or-ness of painterly illusion; an artist can create an awareness of the materiality of paint or a connection to his or her subject as reality. This construction imposes a strict division between culture and nature, artifice and reality, and suggests that both are not possible. However, I will show in this study that Mildred Burrage and Ellen Anderson rejoin these notions in their work.

Personally and professionally, there is a great deal of overlap in the lives and careers of Anderson and Burrage. Both were born into middle-class families and studied art during childhood. They developed an interest in art outside of the major American art centers at the time, and each successfully entered art contests and exhibited work throughout Paris and the United States, in New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia. Though there is no evidence to suggest they met while abroad in France, they both knew American artist Anne Goldthwaite (1869-1944) and visited Gertrude and Leo Stein in their legendary 27 Rue de Fleurus apartment. Yet even when their professional endeavors drew them away from home, each worked to maintain connections to her community.

Anderson’s father was a prominent figure in Lexington, Virginia, and from him Anderson learned the value of civic engagement. She became an outspoken community member, an active participant in her church and the local chapter of the Colonial Dames, a national society devoted to patriotic service, education, and historic preservation. Anderson was also a proponent of the arts and helped to bring musical and theatrical performances to Lexington. Burrage’s father, likewise, was well known and served as the state historian of Maine. Despite having an interest in European modernism, Burrage also revered tradition and became very interested in historic preservation. She organized networks of local artists and held exhibitions and seminars to promote their work in her native Portland. In the late 1950s, she founded the Lincoln County Cultural and Historical Association and the Maine Art Gallery, both of which still operate today.

During their early years of study in France, Anderson and Burrage each developed an appreciation for the arts that they maintained through their lives and spread to others in their hometowns. A newspaper article about Burrage’s life stated that the artist had “one foot in the eighteenth century and the other one in the twentieth;” and further, “she constantly strove to preserve the past even as she was anticipating the future.” Though written about Mildred Burrage, this statement is certainly relevant to the lives of both women.

The art of Anderson and Burrage demonstrates clear talent and is striking and distinctive, but they are still categorized as “minor” artists. However, a close reading of the paintings of such figures can illuminate things we would not see otherwise. In “Courbet, Oller, and a Sense of Place,” Linda Nochlin raises several questions about the

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so-called provincial or marginal artist. With regard to minor artists, she asks, “What do we mean by provincial and who decides who is provincial? Why was Cézanne’s painting at Aix or Monet’s at Etretat ‘mainstream,’ or central? …Why was Cézanne’s painting the Montagne Sainte-Victoire in Aix-en-Provence not considered regionalist?”

As we will see, these decisions are not based purely on aesthetic merit, but rather they relate to issues of power and traditional associations of “macho” avant-gardism. In this study, I frame this male-oriented version of painting as focusing on singular genius, originality, and being the first to do something in painting, as though art history is a race accessible only to major competitors. Here, I approach the “feminine” and the “masculine” as constructions in exploring the norms of art history and point towards a new tradition on the cultural margins of the painting in the early twentieth century.

Although they are considered minor, the lives of Anderson and Burrage are well-documented and most of their paintings and drawings have survived because of their involvement within their communities, especially on behalf of the arts. Evident in their work is an interest in the use of pure—and at times, artificial—color. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, American regional art was coded as realist, especially in terms of its color palette, as well as its fine brushwork and exacting division of spatial grounds. But Anderson and Burrage took from their studies abroad a formal delight in artifice, expressive brushwork, and a bright, cosmetic color palette. Color and line have traditionally been associated with the emotional and rational, respectively, and Charles Blanc, Head of the Bureau of Beaux Arts, pushed this connection further.

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claiming: “drawing is the masculine sex of art, and color is the feminine one.” Playing on these constructs, Carol Armstrong has used *le beau fard*, the idea of painting as coloristic and cosmetic, to open the paintings of Manet up to the thematics of femininity. “Femininity,” in this sense, does not refer to that which is essentially feminine, sweet, or gentle, but rather a trajectory that errs from the traditional model of a macho modernism. Armstrong argues that Manet’s use of color and his abbreviated and brushy applications of paint enter into the cosmetic space of the feminine, thereby creating an elision of the act of painting and that of applying makeup. This alliance of the painterly and cosmetic facture joins Manet’s “producerly” marks with a “thematization of feminine consumerism—the kind of consumerism involved in the production of the effects of femininity [fashion, accessories, makeup]—rather than feminine objecthood per se.”

Anderson and Burrage both adopt the use of bright color and a “feminine” painterly style in their work, employing the tools of modernism—color and brushwork—to subvert the machismo of the avant-garde, as well as American regional art. Their color, particularly, tends to accent a feeling of space or atmosphere, whereas line is typically associated with action, decision, or other forms of mastery. While line demarcates, color is impossible to stabilize or completely define. The experiments of Anderson and Burrage in Paris changed the way they constructed paintings and point to a desire to guide American art in a new direction.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

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7 Armstrong, 94.
My research for this study relies largely on archival sources. Ellen Anderson’s journals, letters, and ephemera from France are included in the papers of the Anderson family. This collection of over 700 items of family information contains letters, newspaper clippings, receipts, brochures, and tables of genealogy dating from 1755 to 1958. The papers came into the possession of Washington and Lee University on October 18, 1977. In addition, the oral history accounts by Anderson’s friends and family members have provided invaluable insights to her life.

The Mildred Giddings Burrage Collection, organized by Jamie Kingman Rice, contains correspondence, sketchbooks, photographs, and printed material pertinent to Burrage and her contributions to Maine’s artistic community. After her death in 1983, Burrage left these materials and her paintings to the Portland Museum of Art. The works on paper subsequently went to the Maine Historical Society. Curator Margaret E. Burgess and state historian Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr., organized an exhibition of Burrage’s paintings from Paris at the Portland Museum of Art (April 21-July 15, 2012). The exhibition catalogue, From Portland to Paris: Mildred Burrage’s Years in France (2012), provides information regarding Burrage’s early years and her painting practices in Europe. Shettleworth writes of Burrage’s time spent abroad: “For Mildred Burrage, the years from 1909 to 1914 were the cornerstone of a long, extraordinary life devoted to pursuing new ways of expressing herself through art.”

Many studies consider the development of artistic modernism, but two stand out because of the connections the authors make between color and a feminine aesthetic.

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Carol Armstrong and Jacqueline Lichtenstein consider how artists’ use of color sets their work in opposition to dominant conventions of European painting. In The Eloquence of Color (1989), Lichtenstein traces the thinking of color in painting from Platonist theories of nature and artifice to the art of the French Classical age. The natural, visible world had been suspect since Plato first accused the Sophists of relying on rhetorical show, essentially, of being makeup artists. Focusing on this link to cosmetics, Lichtenstein explores the re-evaluation of rhetorical “color” and pictorial color. Her analysis ultimately points to how ornament and makeup, the charms of seduction, are linked to color as well as femininity, and how in painting, color in turn becomes the aesthetic tool of visual deception.

Similarly, in “Facturing Femininity: Manet’s ‘Before the Mirror’” (2002), Armstrong offers a reading of Manet’s paintings as antithetical to avant-garde painting. She frames the artist’s use of artificial color as participating in a “feminine” style of painting, one that runs counter to traditional understandings of his work. Armstrong also includes a description of Manet’s mark making, which she likens to the application of makeup and which also seems to implicitly align itself with forms of female self-representation (i.e., Manet seems to suggest a “rhyme” or parallel between painting and cosmetics). She extends this argument by connecting makeup, dress, and other attributes of self-presentation to the opportunities for consumerism in nineteenth century Paris. In his analysis of Edgar Degas’s work, Meyer Schapiro writes that shopping for the latest fashions, for example, hats, casts a woman as the “artist-critic” of her appearance, and that the trying on a hat or pair of gloves is “itself a work of art visualized through its

9 Armstrong, 79.
projecture in the plane surface of a mirror.” The argument of Charles Baudelaire in “The Painter of Modern Life” (1863) also lays groundwork for these positions, as Baudelaire points to the use of cosmetics and modern fashions as essential features of modern Paris.

Several texts have helped establish a context for the experiences of Burrage and Anderson in Paris. Kirsten Swinth does not mention either artist in Painting Professionals: Women Artists and the Development of Modern American Art, 1870-1930 (2001), but her study is relevant to mine because it offers the best overview of the emergence of women in art through academic study abroad, and how these artists returned from Europe to navigate the American art world. Additionally, Laura Prieto’s At Home in the Studio will inform my project because it plots the trajectory of the professionalization of American women artists beginning in the early nineteenth century. While none of the three figures central to my study are mentioned in Prieto’s book, her conjecture about the larger historical narrative of women artists in the period explores key themes for this study.

Finally, material on this time in American art, particularly the prevailing characteristics of American regionalist painters, is key to an understanding of the tension between regionalism and internationalism in the work of Anderson and Burrage and the process of translation between one and the other. Among the texts I have considered, three are particularly useful for their comprehensive analyses of the era in which the subjects of this study were active. American art historian and critic Barbara Rose is the author of American Art Since 1900: A Critical History (1972), a survey of American

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painters and sculptors in the twentieth century. *The American Century: Art and Culture, 1900-1950* (1999) is the title of a yearlong exhibition of American art at the Whitney Museum of Art. Here, curator and art historian Barbara Haskell situates works of art from this period within the larger culture that gave rise to them. Wanda Corn takes this approach farther in *The Great American Thing: Modern Art and National Identity, 1915-1935* (2001), paying particular attention to discourse surrounding the creation of art that was both American and modern.

Despite the abundance of archival materials on Anderson and Burrage, there have been only a few attempts to synthesize their oeuvres within any sort of greater art-historical context. The exhibition in Portland was the first thematic public display of Burrage’s paintings, and only a sampling of Anderson’s pen and ink drawings has been shown publicly, namely at the Leyburn Library in Lexington, Virginia in 1988. These women created a rich and diverse body of work, and through my research into their practices and close readings of their art, my study explicates how they translated their experiences in European artistic circles into a distinctive, new vocabulary countering the traditional accounts of modernism. Their art is not expressly derivative of either American regionalism or modernism, but rather it rests somewhere in between and necessitates a more nuanced, multifaceted narrative of art in the twentieth century.

**Chapter Descriptions**

In the first chapter, I discuss the importance of modernity and the stimulation that Paris provided to Anderson and Burrage. The city experienced great change over the course of the nineteenth century that had particular bearing on the direction of painting for the next generation of artists, including the use of color. I also explore the prevalence
of the trope of the “American Girl Abroad,” as popularized by Henry James’s novella *Daisy Miller* (1878). Free, independent, and spontaneous—perhaps the point of recklessness—women accounted for one third of the twenty-two hundred Americans born before 1880 who studied art in Paris. While the prestigious *Académie des Beaux-Arts* refused entrance to women, many other institutions afforded women the same opportunities as men for advanced training and exhibition. The city itself provided an exciting environment, artistic and otherwise, with plenty to see and plenty to buy. Using their illustrated letters and sketchbooks, I will discuss how these experiences outside the studio melded with the more formal instruction Burrage and Anderson received.11

Secondly, I consider how these various aspects of their formation as artists play out in terms of the relationship between regionalism and internationalism in Mildred Burrage’s work. I will closely examine the influence of Richard Miller (1875-1943), Burrage’s instructor in Giverny, and Claude Monet (1840-1926), whose work she came to know and admire through her friendship with his granddaughter Lilli Butler. I use examples of work by Miller and Monet to explore how Burrage began to incorporate modernist techniques and theories of brushwork and color into her own paintings, before finally embracing what Armstrong calls a feminine mode of modernism. Then, using the example of a painting of her sister Madeleine and the decorative murals she painted in her house, I show how Burrage combined elements of the subject matter of American regionalism with the pictorial experimentation of the French avant-gardes to err from

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11 In this context, modernism is not merely an affair of painting. It extends across a range of forms and genres including decoration, illustration, etc.
masculine model of both traditions, thereby marking out her desire for a new trajectory for painting.

The third chapter consists of a study of similar themes in the paintings of Ellen Anderson. I compare her earlier work, for example *Louise at Age Five* (1910), to her paintings completed after her study in Paris. Paintings, such as *In the Virginia Mountain* (1926) and *Still Life: Flowers in a Vase* (1926), show an awareness of the painting conventions in Virginia that Anderson would have known about, for example darker, earthier tones and carefully executed spatial recession. But these paintings also exemplify how she filtered a personal, regional subject matter through her study of the expressive brushwork and color palette of the French avant-garde. Anderson’s uncle, the painter Patrick Henry Bruce (1838-1930), was friends with Gertrude (1874-1946) and Leo Stein (1872-1947), and Robert (1885-1941) and Sonia Delaunay (1885-1979), and lived above Henri Matisse (1869-1954). Anderson writes in her letters about the iconic locales and artists’ haunts where Bruce took her. Bruce’s own work was greatly influenced by Paul Cézanne’s work (1839-1906), and while a similar interest in faceted brushwork and flattened space is present in Anderson’s paintings, her more pronounced use of a coloristic and cosmetic palette codes her work, too, as belonging to a “feminine” mode, in Armstrong’s sense.

**Methods**

Based on archival research, I present a cultural study of two female artists responding to European modernism and influential themselves in their own small-scale cities in the United States. My reading, however, turns away from the traditional focus of modernism: ideas of difference, that is, artists’ work that differs from the standard model,
become more important than those of originality. A consideration of the works of art that I examine relates closely to the biographies of Anderson and Burrage, and I emphasize the connections between the artists’ lives and their paintings. The particular circumstances of family, residence, and artistic training bear strongly on the conception and execution of each artist’s respective oeuvre. I rely extensively on archival documents and texts concerning the lives of these three artists in order to extend my analysis. Carol Armstrong’s theorization of a “feminine style” of painting and Meyer Schapiro’s suggestion of women’s costumes as artistic tools of self-presentation also grounds this study in terms of gender. In light of these sources, I offer a close reading of the works relevant to my study and of the material conditions in which they were produced.

Conclusion

The experiences of Anderson and Burrage parallel those of so many American women artists in the early twentieth century: serious students of art sought further training in Europe and demonstrated talent rivaling that of many of their male counterparts. Yet many of these women remain anonymous, and their stories are lost. Both of the figures in this study were actively involved in their communities, and subsequently, records of their lives and work still exist. While their lives and careers are unexplored for the most part, they parallel those of some of the major protagonists of modern art. A nuanced reading of the work of Anderson and Burrage contributes to a more complex account of the history of modernism, beyond the usual narratives that accent avant-gardism. Their work forces us to rethink the meaning of modernism, and also that of American regionalism, to some extent, in different and more multifaceted and complex ways, one more open to departures from convention. Their paintings point to a
definition that emphasizes breaks from the norms of representation, rather than often sterile debates about originality and precedence.
CHAPTER ONE
Old Worlds, New Worlds: Americans in Paris

Paris in 1913...what a time for a young artist to be alive and learning! Days when the light of Impressionism still cast its glow, but days too, when the next wave of experimentation—the Cubists and others—had begun to flood the scene, harshly questioning what “art” is all about.  

In the second half of the nineteenth century, social conditions were changing and taking art in entirely new directions. Europe saw a huge influx of American artists, particularly women. The Grand Tour of the eighteenth century rekindled an interest in travelling to continental Europe, and among well-to-do Americans, this tradition continued well into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In 1879, Abigail May Alcott Nieriker authored a volume geared towards the female art student interested in foreign study in which she asserted: “The feeling prevails that there is no art world like Paris, no painters like the French, and no incentive to good work equal to that found in a Parisian atelier. Many will continue to seek what, in their estimation, cannot be found in America.”  

Artistic developments, and even conflicts, pushed Paris to the forefront of the cultural landscape during of the nineteenth century. At this time, modernization occurred on many fronts: the city itself underwent a modernization spearheaded by Baron Haussmann between 1852 and 1870. This approach to urban planning emphasized the restructuring of the city’s streetscape, widening boulevards and opening up the city with public facilities, monuments, and parks. The social repercussions of Haussmannization worked both to the benefit and detriment of the city’s inhabitants, and the stimulus for revolutionary changes reached nearly every aspect of life. In *Paris as a Revolution*, 

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Priscilla Ferguson describes the city as “revolutionary because it is modern…with individuals crossing geographical and social boundaries and with the boundaries themselves shifting.”¹⁴ With regard to the visual arts, the changes incited were especially noteworthy: the city itself looked different, so the manner in which French citizens, especially artists, conceived of and subsequently depicted the “modern” city changed as well.

COLOR, DIFFERENCE, AND NEW WAYS OF SEEING

A concern for not only what is seen, but also how it is seen, the very optical process itself, grew to be a priority for many modern artists in Paris. In a published interview, Paul Cézanne (1839-1906) described the artist’s approach to seeing in France: “I went to the Louvre every morning when I was in Paris, but I ended up by attaching myself to nature more than they did. One must make a vision for oneself…one must see nature as no one has seen it before.”¹⁵ Ironically, seeing nature in this new way meant a non-naturalistic mode of representation. The truth of something became more closely tied to the feeling it evoked rather than its illusionistic representation.

Western philosophy had traditionally prized reality over art, and this mode of thinking influenced many disciplines, including painting. In this tradition, art posed an inherent threat to Platonist metaphysics in that it was seen to belong to the realm of the image. In this sense, as Jacqueline Lichtenstein notes, it was also seen to have

“developed in the philosophical compost as a worm develops in fruit, corrupting the logos to which it owed its birth and affirming qualities incompatible with the conditions that determined its filiation.”¹⁶ In order to ensure compatibility between the image and the philosophical framework of society, a revised Platonist orthodoxy imposed certain rules on painting which gave preference to line over color. Color, according to Lichtenstein’s analysis, was vilified because it was an anomaly in the realm of reason: words, or rather, the very system of language, failed to explain color and the emotions it produced.¹⁷

Beginning in seventeenth-century France, however, proponents of color took up the debate with renewed vigor. Roger de Piles translated De Arte Graphica, a poem championing the use of color, into French and punched up the offensive.¹⁸ Piles created a manifesto of sorts for colorists, one that even permeated the Royal Academy of Painting. On November 7, 1671, academician Gabriel Blanchard gave a lecture on the merit of color in which he used the expression le beau fard to describe the color in painting by Peter Paul Rubens. Piles appropriated this phrase to write a defense of color, in which he likened the seductive power of makeup to the ability of color to grab the eye.

In his Cours de peinture, Piles stated: “The essence of painting consists not only in

¹⁷ Lichtenstein, 4.
¹⁸ Though some two centuries separate Roger de Piles from modernism, Carol Armstrong notes that his views have an afterlife. Rococo painters who favored color over line, the so-called Rubenistes were initially slighted by Enlightenment critics, but the late nineteenth century saw a celebration of their work by writers including the Goncourt brothers, who then applied de Pile’s theories to paintings by Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Manet. See Armstrong, Manet Manette, xviii and p. 321n.24.
pleasing the eye but in deceiving it.”¹⁹ Color, the tool of pictorial deception, mimics the function of ornament and cosmetics. Lichtenstein develops the analogy: “Like the charms of feminine seduction, the captivating graces of [color] are the object of the same moral reprobation. When ornament becomes makeup on a canvas, painting becomes a woman.”²⁰ Color, analogous to feminine ornamentation and the application of makeup, would come to usurp the position of line, undermining the prevailing power structure of natural representation over artifice.

In the 1870s, Impressionist painters continued to explore this new way of seeing by calling attention to the means of presentation itself as much as what was presented; depiction increasingly became a subjective, creative process. Color continued to be an important formal concern for the Impressionists, but as a function of light and shadow. Physiological optics informed their decisions of color, and this analytical, scientific analysis arguably coded Impressionistic color not as feminine, but as masculine. Further, the notion prevailed that an artist’s (masculine) creativity must impose order on (feminine) nature. In the twentieth century, artists reinforced this division: in their quest to map the lineage of art, modernist critics cast Impressionism as the forefather of abstraction and staunchly defended its originality and thus its masculinity. Monet’s patron and biographer Georges Clemenceau (1841-1929) stressed Monet’s “personal virility” and described his painting process in terms “manly attacks on the canvas and heroic battles with nature.”²¹ Such emphasis on creative genius and a teleological (and

¹⁹ Roger de Piles, *Cours de peinture parprincipes* (1708), in Lichtenstein, 171.
²⁰ Lichtenstein, 190.
extremely patriarchal) progression of painting in the grand narrative of modernism gives preference to male artists and ignores that which exists on the periphery.

THE INTERNATIONAL AMERICAN GIRL

In The Studio, published in 1903, art critic Clive Holland expounded on the lifestyles of young “lady art students” in Europe:

The Lady Art Students of the present day are going to Paris in increasing numbers. That the life they lead there differs from that led by their male companions as regards to its freedom and strenuous [sic] goes without saying...she lives a solitary existence, varied only by the daily visit to the school or atelier; the incursions of the artists friends, the occasional visit to a place of amusement, when an escort is available; or the equally occasional visit at a restaurant.22

Holland’s description paints a bleak picture for American women hoping to go to Paris; to study art there, according to him, was a self-imposed bout of solitary confinement. However, records from the various expatriate art clubs suggest a different story. A number of these groups formed in Paris, many geared especially towards women. In 1886, Mrs. William Newell, the wife of a Reverend William W. Newell, both Massachusetts natives, began holding a “Sunday Social Hour” at her house on Rue de Rennes, once again in the sixth arrondissement.23 From these gatherings, formalized art groups for women formed and included entertainment such as afternoon tea, dancing, and group outings. Soon, live-in establishments formed which enabled young American women to pay an all-inclusive fee for room, board, and meals. Living together, women

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were never at a loss for companionship and had plenty of opportunities to go out and explore the city and its rich artistic possibilities.

Holland may have been deliberately trying to dissuade young ladies from undertaking art studies, or he could have been warning them of the self-sacrifice of hard work that faced a serious artist. But there was also the concern about young women living without parental or spousal control. Living away from home gave women the luxury to design their own lives: aside from their studio lessons, they could set their own hours and maintain their own appointments. Yet some high-spirited young women saw this as an opportunity to rebel against the social norms they found restricting and gloried in a feeling of bohemian freedom. M.E.W. Sherwood, an American traveler in Paris at the turn of the century, noted that “the American Girl was the most talked-of creature in the world” and her European observers saw her as “beautiful, rich, vulgar, strange, loud, and fast . . . [exhibiting] a love of show, love of publicity, and a disdain for privacy. [She] is a totally illiterate composition of good looks and bad manners.”

Henry James’s character Daisy Miller of the eponymous novel undoubtedly perpetuated the association of these characteristics with American women. Daisy, a spontaneous but naïve flirt from Schenectady, New York, embarks on a Grand Tour of Europe. Through the character of Daisy, James evokes a tension between the youthful innocence of America versus the age and corruption of Europe—they are like an odd couple, but the energy of new possibility (i.e., modernism) rests more with Daisy than the Europeans. Daisy believes that she does not need to follow archaic social rules, and this nonconformity became associated with the distinctly American ideal of personal

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24 Ibid.
freedom. Her disregard for society’s conventions ultimately leads to her misfortune, and indeed, the aforementioned Mrs. Newell confided that her motivations for initiating her Sunday Social Hour stemmed from concern for the welfare of young American women after an encounter with an “unfortunate girl.”  

_The New York Tribune_ published an article in 1899 assessing the two styles of women’s art education. While some women pursued serious study, there were those who “waste their time, injure their health, grow lax in moral views and get into slatternly habits through the bohemianism that has such a false glow about it.” Ellen Anderson and Mildred Burrage viewed their time abroad as a privilege, giving top priority to their instruction, and do not appear to have fallen victim to the European “decadence” evoked by Miller. Their focus appears to have been on familiarizing themselves with new techniques in painting, but also other facets of Parisian life, including women’s fashion.

Burrage studied first in Giverny under the American painter Richard Miller (1875-1943). Less than fifty miles from Paris, the artists’ colony of Giverny became a veritable mecca for students, especially women. Claude Monet was attracted to Giverny by its verdant landscape settled there in 1883. In the next few years, American artists “discovered” the village and, and by the 1890s, Giverny emerged as a popular rural locale for artists and art students. Indeed, 350 art students from eighteen countries studied in Giverny between 1885 and 1915, and of these, seventy percent were American.  

Women especially seemed to dominate the scene: American painter and illustrator Will

25 Ibid.
H. Low (1853-1932) visited Giverny in 1892 and found “a bevy of student-esses . . . these up-to-date women were exclusively preoccupied with Monet.”28 Established American painters working in Giverny were another draw for these art students, and it is through this connection that Mildred Burrage found herself in Giverny in 1909.

Burrage enrolled in Mary C. Wheeler’s School in Providence, Rhode Island in 1908, where she primarily studied art history and drawing. Wheeler began her summer art program in Giverny in 1907 and quickly developed professional relationships with a number of American painters there including Miller, Frederick Frieseke, and Arthur Frost. Burrage knew these were all “great men of ability” and noted that during the summer of 1909 that “all the great American artists in Paris are here.”29 The summer school building itself neighbored Monet’s property, and Burrage befriended his son-in-law Theodore Butler, stepdaughter Marthe Hoschedé, and their children Lilli and Jimmie. Despite her friendship with the Butler family and her great admiration for Monet, Burrage did note that he “always looked very forbidding.”30 Still, Burrage was surrounded by artists working at the very forefront of the modernist movement. Her friend and travel companion Mary Koopman explained the excitement she and Burrage shared: “What made this work of ours so interesting in Giverny was the fact that almost everybody in the village was painting, and wherever we went, we found people talking

28 Ibid.
29 Mildred Burrage, letter to family, Giverny, July 10, 1909, Mildred Giddings Burrage Collection, Maine Historical Society, Portland, Maine.
about art.”

The ubiquity of art and art education made it easy for Burrage to forge personal and professional relationships that lasted beyond her stay in Giverny.

At the suggestion of Richard Miller (who told her “about [her heads] that what [she] needed was solid academic drawing”), Burrage enrolled in Parisian art classes, both at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière under Lucien Simon, and the Académie Colarossi under Henri Caro-Delvaille. A sketch from this period (Figure 1) is one of Burrage’s academic figural studies and could be a self-portrait. Interestingly, Burrage clearly delineates the right side of the woman’s face but casts the left in dark shadow, perhaps evidencing a greater interest in the facial juxtapositions explored by the avant-gardes painters of the day. Burrage did return to Giverny throughout her stay in Paris, however, and notably spent Christmas 1910 there with the Butler family. Monet’s chauffeur met Burrage at the train station, and while the painter and his wife Alice were absent because of her illness, they did extend an invitation to Burrage to visit their gardens. On their tour, she and Lilli happened upon Monet, an encounter that left quite an impression on Burrage. As she wrote to her family:

Now when we were into the green house Monsieur Monet was walking about in the garden headed toward the water garden…Lilli walked brazenly along & we trembled on behind & he was in the water garden & we went in! And Monsieur Monet watched us come into the water garden…and he took off his brown fur cap & bowed to us & we said “Bonjour, Monsieur.’ Although I felt as if it would be more fitting to bend the knee or kiss his hand or something…I think I almost admire him more for what he has done for modern painting than for his own work. He had on a dark overcoat & a grey suit & a blue shirt & a brown fur cap.”

31 Mary Koopman, Miss Wheeler’s School: Twenty-Fifth Anniversary, 1914.
32 Burrage, letter to her family, Giverny, July 4, 1909.
33 Burrage, letter to her family, Giverny, January 3, 1911.
This passage, from a watercolor postcard that Burrage made for her family (Figure 2), shows Burrage’s growing interest in both modernism and observing the dress of those around her. She maintained both these interests during her visit.

In Paris proper, the opportunities for study were seemingly endless. During the day at académies or in ateliers, art students cultivated skills in draftsmanship and understandings of anatomy and perspective. However, when their formal lessons were over, the learning did not stop. Nieriker asserts that “all Paris . . . is apt to strike the newcomer as being but one vast studio . . . pictures literally darken the air.”34 When Burrage moved to Paris, she lived at the American Art Students Club at 4 rue de Chevreuse, near the Luxembourg Gardens. Less than two kilometers away, Ellen Anderson’s apartment was situated along the rue Notre Dame des Champs in the sixth arrondissement. Both were located in the center of the Montparnasse quartier, a neighborhood burgeoning with the innovative ideas of renowned painters and sculptors: John Singer Sargent lived down the road at 73 rue Notre Dame des Champs.

Like Burrage, Anderson displayed a similar dedication to her art lessons: she sought out an appropriate institution within a week of her arrival. In a letter to her father dated 12 September, 1913, Anderson wrote that she had settled on the Académie Moderne, “being in Whistler’s old Studio on Notre Dame des Champs.”35 Her teacher, Charles Guérin (1875-1939) had studied at the École des Beaux-Arts under the French Symbolist painter Gustave Moreau, known for his use of color. Anderson’s great-grand nephew Andy Stone has two framed anatomical studies in charcoal that Anderson created

34 Nieriker, 43.
35 Ellen Anderson, letter to her father, Paris, September 12, 1913, Papers of the Anderson Family, Mss. 001, Leyburn Library, Lexington, Virginia.
while she was in Paris. These drawings demonstrate the academic emphasis on the human form that institutions such as the École des Beaux-Arts prioritized (Figures 3 and 4). While an interest in classical mythology and literature dominated his own canvases, Guérin also exhibited a strong interest in radical color theory, and his works in this style were shown across Europe as well as the 1903 Salon d’Automne and the 1906 Salon des Indépendents.36 She also enrolled in an afternoon drawing class with Scottish artist Ernest Archibald Taylor (1874-1951) to supplement her work with Guérin. Here with Taylor, she first encountered woodblock prints, “a very popular form now somewhat resembling colored etchings” that would have an undeniable influence on her later illustrative work in pen and ink. Between her art lessons and her conversation classes in French and Italian, Anderson was rather overly committed, as she described to her mother: “I am busy all day with my studies except at tea time when I usually go to the American Club.”37

Anderson and Burrage found themselves in easy walking distance from the Luxembourg Gardens and the Louvre, and each took full advantage of this position by visiting these sites on a regular basis. In a letter to her father, Anderson described visiting the Louvre for artistic study:

I have been making preparations today to copy the Infanta Marguerita in the Louvre, by Velasquez. I want especially to do it, partly because it looks a little like Anna [Anderson’s cousin], and also because I am specially attached to it. It is unfortunately for me placed very near “La Giocanda,” and as there is such a crowd always to see that, it will be very difficult to achieve I fear. “La Joconde” as written in French is so much more beautiful than I had imagined. The photographs give no idea of it.38

37 Anderson, letter to her mother, September 12, 1913.
38 Anderson, letter to her father, undated.
They also visited commercial art galleries where they would have had the opportunity to see work by contemporary artists, including Monet, Renoir, Gauguin, Manet, Matisse, and Cézanne. Burrage saved many of her programs from gallery visits, and they are all covered with her observations of the artists’ work, primarily regarding their use of color.

Upon viewing Henri Matisse’s works in the Salon d’Automne of 1910, she wrote:

Matisse has two huge canvases. One—perfectly bright red figures dancing round and round on a perfectly bright green grass with a perfectly bright blue sky back of them. And the other exactly the same colors with the queerest red musicians piping away—and singing. No shading—no modeling—no anything—just red and green and blue. They were most extraordinary.  

MODERN ART AND LA MODE

In 1863, French poet and critic Charles Baudelaire published “The Painter of Modern Life,” in which he presented his views on art, culture, beauty, and the nature of modernity in Paris. Therein, Baudelaire questions the infallibility of nature and suggests a greater importance for artifice in modern life, as opposed to the classical ideal. He charges the flâneur, the “passionate spectator,” with the task of searching for traces of modernity in Paris: “the crowd is his element…his passion and profession are to become one with the flesh of the crowd.” The task of the painter, then, is to paint the characteristics of modernity as distilled through the act of flânerie. Contemporary trends in fashion and cosmetics are chief among these for Baudelaire, as they, like the very nature of modernity, are transitory. A painter cannot simply substitute the fashions of a previous age and expect to understand present-day beauty, but rather he must immerse

39 Burrage, letter to her family, October 23, 1910.
himself if the crowd to see how dress contributes to life in modern Paris. Of fashions, he writes that they are a “sublime deformation of Nature…[they] should be thought of as vitalized and animated by the beautiful women who wore them.”41 For Anderson and Burrage, the chance to observe Parisian fashion firsthand contributed to the development of a cosmetic color palette, analogously, what could be seen as a distinctively “feminine” mode of painting.

Burrage rather breathlessly described her initial impressions of the city: “And all the French high life ladies, prancing about, and tons of automobiles dashing up and down—and the general excitement of its being really Paris gives you thrills indeed.”42 In a letter to her mother, Anderson describes her neighborhood and the personages it attracted: “. . . [I] find that boulevard Montparnasse is really the center of it. The proverbial longhaired and slouch-hatted species of Artist frequents all the boulevards and street cafés in the quarter—I suppose last summer this species was out of town, for we saw none . . . nevertheless, I feel really at home now.”43 Burrage’s sketchbooks and illustrated letters capture scenes from everyday Parisian life that she observed around her, including a similar “species” mustachioed “artist man” (“not the kind we have ‘ici’”) (Figure 5).44 While the elaborately curled mustache of Burrage’s figure suggests caricature, these descriptions and illustrations in their letters convey details about the denizens of Paris. Anderson’s use of the term “slouch-hatted,” for example, was not purely derogatory. Rather, it spoke specifically to a wide-brimmed felt or cloth hat with

41 Baudelaire, 33.
42 Burrage, letter to her family, July 3, 1910.
43 Anderson, letter to her mother, October 9, 1913.
44 Burrage, letter to mother, July 20, 1909.
a chinstrap (Figure 6). United States military officers wore this style of hat during the Civil War, in which Anderson’s father had served as a general.45

Burrage, too, demonstrates an interest in hats, as seen in the same letter from July 20, 1909. She included illustrations of Miss Wheeler, friends Alice Buckingham and Elizabeth Cramer, and herself (“Bingie”). Each woman wears a different style of hat, and details such as the three large buttons on her own skirt and elaborate plumes of her hat show Burrage’s intent study of the fashions of the subjects whom she treats in painting (see again, Figure 5). Art historian Meyer Schapiro has discussed the role of fashion, particularly hats, in the development of modern art. In his reading of Edgar Degas’s *At the Milliner* (Figure 7), Schapiro states that in the same way an artist constructs a painting, the woman trying on the hat is fashioning her image, as her own work of art: “The woman is testing the fitness of a work of art that is not at all a representation, yet as a part of her costume will symbolize her individuality and taste in shape and color.”46 The self-presentation of people, especially women, through fashion, grew to be an extension of art in modern Paris. Burrage and Anderson, both clearly interested in the dress of those around them, integrate their art with “the whole of social life” of the city, which, for Schapiro, is purely indicative the avant-garde.47

Burrage’s keen interest in describing fashion also emerged in letters that she wrote in Giverny. To her family, about a Fourth of July party, she wrote: “When we walked in [the gate] it was like fairy land…the gardens were hung with a row of Japanese lanterns, pale green…and the green light on the white dresses and duck trousers was the

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46 Schapiro, 37.
47 Schapiro, 41.
pretties thing you ever saw!”

Even after her departure, Burrage kept up with fashions from France: among her possessions later donated to the Maine Historical Society were several hand-drawn fashion sketches imitating styles from Parisian ateliers during the late 1920s and early 1930s. Two fabric swatches and a detailed description accompanied each drawing (see Appendix).

On a side-trip to Munich, Anderson demonstrated this same interest in contemporary dress in a letter in which she described the typical “Bavarian costume”: “soft felt hats for men and little boys, socks only on the centre of the leg, bright flowers on black or blue grounds. Plaid colored aprons for all little girls,” and the women “in gingham dresses with Edelweiss embroidery and ridiculous Tyrolean hats.”

Sketches originally accompanied this letter, though they are now lost.

Anderson’s sketchbooks from Paris have survived, however, and each drawing or watercolor bears a label, identifying the scene and where it was executed. In a watercolor sketch from September 21, Anderson ventured to the Luxembourg Gardens where she painted nursemaid with several children in brightly colored outfits playing around her (Figure 8). The brushwork is broad, and she handles her watercolors with bright daubs of pure color. From these sketches, her growing preference for color becomes apparent. Interestingly, in some of her scenes for this book, only articles of clothing are fully articulated. In this study of a man (Figure 9), Anderson roughs in his body, but only paints his suit, hat, and hair, perhaps indicative of her interest in the details of dress.

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48 Burrage, letter to her family, July 10, 1910.
49 Anderson, letter to her family, July 6, 1913.
Burrage often visited the Luxembourg Gardens as well, and her painting, *Luxembourg Gardens, Paris* from 1910 (Figure 10) and the letter associated with it both attest to her interests, shared by Anderson, in fashion and observing Parisian daily life:

All the little children are there with their *bonnes*—darling little boys in their sailor capes with hoods—and their dear little bare legs and round caps. And sweet little girls. And Breton maids with fetching little caps, bearing on their arms little bits of babies all covered with white net. And the gardens are full of dahlias & chrysanthemums & geraniums. And the leaves are just turning yellow, and the grass is still perfectly green, and the sky is like April at home—grey & blue &white. And altogether it is too perfectly lovely for anything.\(^{50}\)

While Burrage’s use of color in this painting is not yet as bold as in Anderson’s works of this time, the physicality of her paint application is apparent. Her brushy daubs of pink, green, and red on the green grass suggest the flowers she describes in her letter, and the smears of yellow and pink in the treetops parallel her description of the changing seasons.

Burrage compares the sky of Paris to that of her hometown in Maine, and such references to home are also present in Anderson’s letters. She received many “Lexington cards” from her friends and family and displayed them on her dresser, along with a “row of p.c.s. *[sic]* of House M[ountain] and the V.M.I. [Virginia Military Institute] all on my wall.” The “country news” she received comforted her when she was homesick and “dreamed of people I have known at home.”\(^{51}\) Her sister Judith came to visit, and this visit cheered Anderson considerably. She wrote to her mother of their shopping trip in Paris, saying that while Judith was tired from traveling, she “looks extremely well in the new tan hat on which we have put a many colored, uncurled ostrich [feather].”\(^{52}\)

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\(^{50}\) Burrage, letter to her family, October 23, 1910.

\(^{51}\) Anderson, letter to her family, February 26, 1914.

\(^{52}\) Anderson, letter to her mother, undated.
Towards the end of her time in Paris, Anderson began to spend more time with her cousin Patrick Henry Bruce (1881-1936), famous for his Synchronist paintings. As cousins by marriage, they may not have been close growing up, but another familiar face, especially with connections in the art world, would surely have been welcome company. Bruce had studied painting under William Merritt Chase and Robert Henri in New York before traveling to Paris in 1904. Upon his arrival, Bruce befriended Gertrude and Leo Stein, who exposed him to modernism and the work of Impressionists, such as Pissarro and Renoir. He began to show works at the Salon d’Automne, and by dint of this exposure, he befriended many other members of the French avant-garde. He apparently loaned Pablo Picasso a large sum of money, and he was especially close to Robert and Sonia Delaunay, whose Orphic Cubism he admired.\(^\text{53}\) He lived above Henri Matisse, and the two became close colleagues: Bruce assisted with the opening of the Matisse School in 1908. His early paintings from France exemplify the color theory of Matisse and the Fauves, but by the time Anderson arrived in Paris, Bruce had incorporated more of Cézanne’s planar modulation, open composition, and tilted perspective. *Wood Interior, Summer* (Figure 11) characterizes Bruce’s work at the time of Anderson’s visit and suggests the intersection of physical brushwork and bright color that will Anderson will further explore in her own oeuvre.

Bruce and his wife Helen often took Anderson on an excursion to “one of the little cafés Boulevard des Italiens,” one of the four grands boulevards and a hub of Parisian nightlife.\(^\text{54}\) The Bruces also invited Anderson to the Bal Bullier, a popular Parisian dancehall. Anderson wrote that it “was in great demand among the very new

\(^{53}\) “Patrick Henry Bruce,” *MoMa*, no. 11 (Summer, 1979): 2.

\(^{54}\) Anderson, letter to her family, March 6, 1914.
French artists,” and it was indeed painted by artists such as William Glackens, whose work Anderson may have known from her time at the Art Students’ League, and Sonia Delaunay. Though Anderson did not paint or sketch any scenes from her trip there, this exposure to performance may have contributed to her later illustrative work, where she drew dancers, actors, and opera singers for newspaper and magazines.

In her last letter from March of 1914 Anderson seemed torn between returning home to her family in Lexington and remaining in Paris until April. She wrote, “I want to stay here till April 6th for the reason that on April 4th and 5th the things have to go in for the spring Salon. I want to submit some, even if they are rejected. That would give me still a few weeks more before leaving.”55 Despite her desire to submit her paintings, she also wrote to her family, “I think tho I had rather study here or come for inspiration, but be identified with America.”56 Burrage, too, betrayed homesickness in some of her letters: “I will be so glad to get home. Paris is too lovely, but I am absolutely painted dry—if you can use such an expression!”57 Regardless of Anderson’s and Burrage’s ambivalence, the outbreak of World War I in August of 1914 ultimately impacted their travels. Anderson sailed home to Virginia, and Burrage’s father came to collect her from Venice, where she had traveled to in May for sightseeing and painting. The *Kennebec Journal* recounts the ordeal of their return to safety:

He [Burrage’s father] managed to get on board a troop train from Paris to Giverny after bribing the railroad agent, who at first refused to sell him a ticket. With his daughter he motored from Giverny to Dieppe, and was held up every few miles by French soldiers. At Boulogne he was obliged to show his passports no less than 10 times before he cleared the city limits.58

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55 Anderson, letter to her family, March 6, 1914.
56 Anderson, letter to her mother, January, 1914.
57 Burrage, letter to her family, May 1911.
Though their time in Paris had been cut short by the War, Anderson and Burrage had made the most of their time abroad through both their studies and their observations of the city. Modernism had “elbowed” itself in to their painting, to use Baudelaire’s phrase: “The external world [was] reborn on [their] paper, natural and more than natural, beautiful and more than beautiful…all the raw materials with which the memory [had] loaded itself are put in order, ranged, and harmonized.”  

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59 Baudelaire, 12.
CHAPTER TWO

After Monet in Maine: Mildred Burrage

Reverence for the past did not blind her to the realm of the modern; while she was a historian by birth, Mildred Burrage was a thoroughly modern artist by design.  

A woman stands before a window and rests her hands on a chair. The drawn curtains reveal a garden of purple lupines behind her, and beyond the flowers, brushy expanses of green tones comprise the background. In Madeleine Burrage (c. 1912-14), a three-quarter-length portrait of her sister Mildred Burrage demonstrates the artist’s interest in color and her ability to manipulate it (Figure 12). Madeleine’s form is outlined in a shade of violet-blue, and while this may seem to run counter to Burrage’s attention to color, it corresponds with the colors of the bow and pleats on the figure’s dress and the flowers behind her. At a Parisian art gallery, Burrage observed a similar use of blue line in the work of John Duncanson Fergusson (1874-1961):

John Ferguson [sic], a Scotchman who has forsaken the path of Academic honor to play with interesting decorative arrangements, shared some landscapes and figure pictures in which everything was outlined with bright blue lines. M. Ferguson, who teaches at the school called ‘La Palette,’ has many followers. It is so easy to get unusual effects with blue line. 

Burrage experimented with this technique in Madeleine Burrage, and we see in this painting how she also reversed the traditional understanding of color and line. As Charles Baudelaire explained the relationship between these pictorial elements: “Just as a draughtsman can be a colorist by broad masses, so a colorist can be a draughtsman by logical understanding of lines as total shape, but one of these two qualities will always

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60 Lofton, 46.
absorb the detail of the other… Colorists draw like nature; their figures are naturally outlined by the harmonious conflict of color masses.”62

Burrage represented the light streaming through the windowpane and reflecting on the sheer drapes with streaks of green, purple, and gold paint, the same colors that repeat throughout the composition. Small highlights of pink, the only real warm color in the painting, appear both in the flowers outside the window and in the figure’s dress and skin; the colors and textures of Madeleine costume repeat in nature. She stands tall beside the chair, and her posture mimics the verticality of the lupine flowers, a variety native to the New England coast and especially, to Maine. Burrage may have created this harmony between her sister and the flowers to explore the conventions of domestic female portraiture and test its limits through her use of exaggerated, cosmetic color. From 1909 to 1914, Burrage divided her time between France and Maine, and the paintings she created during this period suggest a dialogue between the artistic climates of both locales.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I explored the importance of Paris in Burrage’s development as an artist, particularly her approach to modernism through an interest in contemporary fashion and makeup. I will now trace the synthesis of modernism with the regionalist approach to painting familiar to her at home in the United States. The end result suggests a response to both locales, but guided, as seen in Madeleine Burrage, in a different direction by the use of artificial, cosmetic colors.

Madeline Burrage, also referred to as “Bob” or “Wuzzo” by her family, also attended Miss Wheeler’s School and accompanied Burrage to France in the summer of

1912. The two also traveled to Italy together in the winter of 1913-14. During that time, Burrage painted this portrait of her sister towards the end of her trips to Europe, signaling a more complete articulation of a feminine mode of painting in her work. As she synthesized the influences of regionalism, Impressionism, and Post-Impressionism, her reliance on a vivid and at times highly artificial color palette codes her paintings as feminine, outside the dominant norms and narratives of pictorial representation. With this broad sketch of Mildred Burrage’s body of work, let me now explore how Burrage deviates from artistic conventions and what makes her oeuvre more than simply a diluted version of modernism.63

Portraiture flourished in Maine during the nineteenth century, and following the Civil War, many American painters used their work to herald a return to the virtues of rural life. Artists working in this regional tradition dominated painting in Maine until the twentieth century, and the popular mode of portraiture in the state was marked by a form of vernacular realism. The work of Eastman Johnson (1824-1906), a native of Maine, exemplifies this mode of painting. Though perhaps best known for his nostalgic genre scenes, Johnson turned to portraiture later in his life. As in his earlier work, however, Johnson continued to mythologize American life and endeavored to convey the domestic virtues of the nation.

Johnson’s portrait of his wife from around 1888 (Figure 13) evinces this thematic orientation. Johnson presented his wife seated and in profile, with her left hand raised to her chin in a pensive, almost brooding, pose. American art historian Barbara Haskell has noted that such quiet, meditative portraits of women signal a specific desire on the part of

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63 The portrait of Madeleine is one of the forty-four oil paintings known to comprise Burrage’s oeuvre.
the artist. After the war and with the ever-encroaching modernization of society, American painters tried to evoke nostalgia for a familiar world marked by stability and serenity, traditionally regarded as “feminine” realms. Critic John Ruskin (1819-1900) codified this sentiment in his collection of lecture, *Sesame and Lilies*, published in 1865. Ruskin helped to popularize a conservative ideal of womanhood in the nineteenth century and divided the duties of men and women into the public and private spheres, respectively. Through their feminine accomplishments and reflection within the home, women exercised morality and purified society. Because of the strikingly dark background of Johnson’s portrait, the specific setting is difficult to discern, we can assume it is an interior scene. Overall, the color palette is extremely sober, which perhaps contributes to the serious, moralizing undertones of the piece. In addition, the composition is very austere and strongly rooted in the established conventions of painting. Johnson uses modeling to suggest the illusion of three dimensions, especially apparent in his wife’s cheekbones and the fullness of her forearm. In keeping with the artist’s preference to uphold the virtues of American life, the iconography and techniques used in *Mrs. Eastman Johnson* demonstrate the prevalent traditions of American portraiture during the nineteenth century.

While the color palette is rather similar, *Typical Wheel Girl* (Figure 14), one of Burrage’s pre-France paintings from around 1909, already seems to indicate a greater looseness and freshness. Burrage has not only included a discernable background, but

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has also inserted different compositional elements—the dresser, at left, and vase-shaped objet in the center—that push forward into the space of the seated figure. Also in this painting, Burrage’s interest in intense color begins to emerge. Rather than line, she used vivid shades of blue and daubs of bright white to suggest the drape of the garment against the woman’s bent knees and bent arm. Against the rest of the painting’s darker, earthier colors, popularized by the heroes of American regionalist painting, the artificiality of Burrage’s colors becomes especially apparent.

Burrage’s time in Giverny undoubtedly contributed to her preference for sensuous color and to the loosening of her brushwork. Richard Miller instructed Burrage there from 1910 to 1912, and she greatly admired his work. His Meditation (Figure 15) comes from around 1912-1913, the same time as the portrait of Burrage’s sister. Here, Miller also depicted a woman before a window, though this time she is seated in a chair and fiddles idly with a necklace. Miller imparts a decorative feel with the Venetian blinds and their corresponding shadows on the floor. Bright sunlight shines in from the outside and warms the pinks in her wrap, cheeks, and vanity accessories. Cool blues in the shadows and fabrics dominate the rest of the composition. This painting displays a noticeably more vivid color palette than that of Burrage’s American antecedents, as well as an interest in patterning also present in the portrait of Madeleine.

As I noted in Chapter One, Jacqueline Lichtenstein suggests that color, regarded as an “ornament” to the canvas, may be seen as signaling a “feminine” aspect of painting. She notes that color, associated with the use of pigment to both stain (teindre) and feign (feindre), gave painting a direct link to makeup and other attributes of self-presentation
used by women.Indeed, Miller’s use of rather cosmetic pinks and purples, in conjunction with the details of dress and the open jewelry box on the vanity, enter the painting into the theoretical space of femininity. However, the presence of line also underpins the canvas: while the woman’s hair and pink shawl are more abstracted and freely painted, the chair, blinds, and window frame are the products of traditional linear perspective. Further, in “Facturing Femininity,” Carol Armstrong problematizes the scenario of a male artist engaging in so-called boudoir imagery: in his intimate paintings of women at the mirror, Édouard Manet may have “reclaimed [Berthe] Morisot’s image [that is, of women in the act of dressing and self-preparation] of the space of femininity for himself, shifting it back to the domain of courtesan imagery, and associating it again…to the thematizing of voyeurism, the male gaze, and the commodification of the female body.”67 This re-appropriation, coupled with the presence of traditionally masculine line, places Miller’s Meditation within the established parameters of modernism, which has historically given preference to male artists.

Women in interior settings or gardens—spaces of domesticity—were commonly rendered themes in Impressionist paintings. Claude Monet, whom Burrage idolized during her stay in Giverny, painted his first wife Camille in a similar fashion in 1875 (Figure 16). Monet’s painting is far less beholden to line than Miller’s and displays a greater character of flatness, as does Burrage’s portrait. In Madame Monet Embroidering, the figure of Camille seems to hover over her chair: she lacks the weighty, sedentary quality of Miller’s figure and seems anchored by the painting’s linearity. Over

67 Armstrong, 90-91.
her head, the branches of the potted trees impart a decorative quality, and the patterns on the planters and curtains extend this flattening effect. Outside the window, Monet continues to suspend spatial recession through his dappled, golden brushstrokes.

Generally, Monet’s painting is rendered more loosely than Miller’s and, without such a rigid linear structure, becomes more a study of the effects of color and light. The saturation of color is much greater here, most notably in the bright greens and yellows of the potted plant in the lower right, as well as and the folds of Camille’s skirt. Burrage’s color choices in Madeleine seem to be reminiscent of the turquoises and purples Monet used here in depicting dress. Monet returned to this color scheme in his many paintings of water lilies, which Burrage saw firsthand in at the gallery of Durand Ruel in 1909. Clearly fascinated by the paintings, she wrote to her family: “There were three rooms of the most marvelous pictures of work with lilies—& reflections of the trees & sky—painted at all times of day & night…It really was worth coming to Europe to see them.”

Henri Matisse, another artist whose work Burrage admired, described the effect of such a visceral reaction to a painting, especially to its color: “If at first, one tone has particularly seduced or caught me, more often than not once the picture is finished I will notice that I have respected this tone.”

Burrage seems to have been particularly “caught” by these vibrant tones because in terms of color, Madeleine is more closely linked to Burrage’s artistic interests abroad rather than in America. A comparison of her Typical Wheeler Girl and Madeleine reveals the evolution of her palette, as influenced by her experiences in France, but I would argue still that Burrage’s interests extended beyond the effects of light on color. In

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68 Burrage, letter to her family, June 11-13, 1909.
69 Henri Matisse, “Notes of Painter” (1908), reprinted in Colour, 53.
Madeleine, Burrage not only used color to record temporal sensations as the Impressionists did, but engages a specific palette because of its expressive potential and engagement with a “feminine” mode of painting in the terms I have previously outlined. In the portrait of Madeleine, she united her close relationship with her sister with the impact of her experiences in France. The colors of Monet (and other modernist painters) were central to Burrage’s approach, and she found correspondence between these colors and those of the lupines of the Maine landscape, where she and her sister grew up. The sense of place in this painting cannot be overlooked because, in addition to color, it serves the expressive quality of her work.

Questions of personal relationships, not only relationships to place, are also crucial here. Madeleine and Mildred lived together for most of their lives and worked together closely on many projects involving the arts and historic preservation. Madeleine Burrage is not merely a painting of a woman, but rather a portrait of Burrage’s sister and closest friend. An artist in her own right, Madeleine Burrage was an accomplished jewelry maker who showed her work at the Museum of Modern Art. She, like Mildred, had ambition, and in this portrait, the artist also considers the confidence of her subject. Madeleine’s self-assuredness, however, runs counter to the traditions of domestic female portraiture. In his “Theory of the Leisure Class” (1899), Thorstein Veblen even conjectured that the subject of “a woman at leisure announced her husband’s or father’s wealth and status” rather than speak to her own convictions or identity.”

Artists often situated figures of women in enclosed interiors with vases of flowers.
patterned accessories, as well as in gardens, to construct an image of demureness and
gentility. As Bram Dijkstra notes: “Plants were the most passive organisms in
nature…Flowers were…the most delicate products of the world of plants…Hence the
truly evolved woman of the late nineteenth century was a flower among flowers—she
blended with the world of plants to such an extent that it was hard to distinguish her from
her flowery environment.”  

How did Mildred Burrage distinguish her painting in the context of these tropes?
I would argue that Madeleine’s posture and direct gaze differ greatly from the idleness
and even passivity of figures in the paintings of Miller and Monet. Rather than the
subjects of the paintings, Miller’s and Monet’s figures become objects or accessories to a
domestic scene of bourgeois leisure. Burrage’s treatment of the figure in Madeleine, very
squarely the subject of the painting, connects to that in Mrs. Eastman Johnson, and shows
how she, in part, retained and responded to the traditions of American portraiture. Miller
and Monet use color to divide the interior and exterior spaces: while the inside (domestic)
space is cooler, the outside (public) sphere is warmer and light-filled. In Burrage’s
painting, the same colors are used equitably in both realms. The only real divide Burrage
created in this work is between her sister and the flowers. Whereas potted plants and
flowers surround Camille in Madame Monet Embroidering, for instance, Burrage placed
the window, a barrier, between her sister and the flowers, so as to completely separate her
from Dijkstra’s “flowery environment.” And while Madeleine’s dress and the landscape
are both comprised of sensuous purples, blues, and greens, Burrage captured her sister’s

72 Bram Dijkstra, “The High Cost of Parasols: Images of Women in Impressionist Art,” in
Patricia Trenton and William H. Gerdts, eds. California Light, 1900–1930 (Laguna
direct and somewhat unsettling gaze, which gives Madeleine agency within her environment.

The clarity of Madeleine’s face is another point of departure from the approaches favored by the Impressionists, and in the work of Ellen Anderson, as we will see shortly. Though her application of paint is loose and brushy, especially in the curtains and folds of the dress, Burrage’s strokes lack the hurried physicality of many of her contemporaries. A key source here seems to be the intense color saturation of Matisse, whose work she saw in the Salon d’Automne, as discussed in Chapter One. Burrage was quite taken with the two paintings, Dance and Music (Figures 17 and 18), and noted their lack of modeling and shading. As she wrote, Matisse relied on, “just red and green and blue.”73 While she used color to suggest form and shading in Madeleine, Burrage’s broader passages of color are reminiscent of Matisse and indicate her adaptation of his technique. In a discussion with art critic Tériade, Matisse explained that his work was not question of brushstrokes but instead of colored planes: “I did not stay on this course [of the Impressionists] but started painting in planes, seeking the quality of the picture by an accord of all the flat colors.”74 The smooth, broad areas of color in Burrage’s painting intensify the atmosphere of the pictorial scene and contribute to its sensuous quality.

Yves-Alain Bois has discussed the force created by Matisse’s color choices. The extreme saturation of color (or, as Burrage described it, “perfectly bright red”) in paintings such as Dance and Music create powerful effect. Rather than simply appealing to the eye and drawing it in, Bois argues that Matisse’s paintings create a “sense of an

73 Burrage, letter to her family, October 23, 1910.
explosion, of a big bang followed by a hypnotic silence as the color particles spread out from the point of impact.” The portrait of Madeleine may lack the aggression and pyrotechnic charge that Bois describes, but the element of stillness certainly does play out in the piercing, fixed gaze of Burrage’s sister and her bold use of color.

In some of her later work, Burrage’s focus shifted to another aspect of Matisse’s oeuvre, his use of decorative patterning. Burrage’s fascination with fashion and ornamentation came through in her drawings and letters from Paris, and her particular mention of Fergusson’s “decorative arrangements” extends this interest. Burrage painted two murals in the house where she and her sister lived after moving out of their parents’ home, and these show her exploration of the decorative beyond the easel. The first (Figure 19) shows an imaginary backyard and gives way to the town in their house on a hill overlooked. In the second mural (Figure 20) Burrage covers the wall leading down into the basement with a profusion of abstracted floral forms. In “The Post Impressionists at Home,” an article she wrote following her attendance of the Armory Show in 1913, Burrage explained that the problem with displaying the work of modernist painters in American houses stemmed from the latter’s lack of the decorative:

I have always felt that a Post-Impressionist picture in the average American living room would not only be impossible, but sacrilegious. To have Post-Impressionist pictures, one should have a Post-Impressionist setting…a bright yellow or blue wallpaper, furniture painted emerald green and upholstered in orange, a magenta rug, and behold, the proper environment! Perhaps Burrage was motivated by a desire to create an appropriate environment for post Impressionist art when she created the murals. Or, more precisely, she intended to unite

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75 Bois, 67.
the environment of Maine with the bright, cosmetic colors of Parisian painting, with decorative patterning acting as an interface between the two.

In the landscape scene, Burrage retained the verdant color palette of Madeleine Burrage and used the pinks and oranges of the flowers to accent the greens, blues, and purples that dominate the wall. Areas like the grass and trees still exemplify Matisse’s broad areas of color, but her brushwork is more apparent in the swirls of the clouds in the sky. Burrage also rendered the landscape with the intention of teasing out naturally occurring patterns. The girl with the hoop in the foreground wears a dress adorned broad stripes, a thin, grid-like pattern, and a bold argyle motif near the hem. But Burrage demonstrated the same ornamental dexterity in her rendering of the peacock feathers and the intricate latticework of the gazebo. The rooflines and chimneys, which Burrage outlined in red paint, repeat throughout the town and impart a greater decorative quality.

On the decorative, Matisse observed: “Expression and decoration are one and the same thing, the second term being condensed into the first.” Matisse’s use of the decorative to achieve expressive ends resonates with the motivation for Burrage’s murals: she brought out the colorful, ornamental features of the city and landscape, uniting her love of Maine with the expressive techniques of French modernist artists.

Ann Dumas has analyzed the influence of decorative patterns in Matisse’s art and notes that textiles played an important role in the development of this lifelong fascination. Matisse’s family had been involved in the French textile industry for centuries, and he collected fabrics from around the world. His so-called “working library” consisted of African wall hangings, Turkish robes and carpets, wallpaper scraps, Spanish quilts, and

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77 Matisse, in Bois, 91.
even Parisian couture.\textsuperscript{78} Matisse used fashion overtly in his work, as seen in the example of *The Manila Shawl* (Figure 21). The bold design and vivid orange flowers of the woman’s garment echo the explosion of floral patterning in Burrage’s basement mural. Formally, the two paintings are similar in that the flowers are set against white backgrounds to enhance the sensuousness of color. Matisse’s known use of haute couture in his painting also speaks to Burrage’s interest in fashion and perhaps specifies what elements of her Parisian experiences she hoped to translate back in Maine.

Beyond bridging the modern and the regional, Burrage may have wanted to make her interest in the fashions she observed abroad relevant to everyday life. Her artistic experiments with color and ornamentation brought Parisian fashion into a more harmonious dialogue with her life upon her return to the United States. Burrage’s mode of painting points to a bolder aesthetic and demonstrates a transformative synthesis of these different currents in her work.

CHAPTER THREE

Refashioning the Virginia Landscape: Ellen Anderson’s Uncanny Modernism

The aspect we call regional is only the universal surveyed from a shifted angle of vision.\textsuperscript{79}

In Chapter One, I suggested a tension in the work of Ellen Anderson and Mildred Burrage between experiences abroad and what was familiar at home. Both women drew comparisons between Paris and their hometowns, as we have seen. Anderson described to her mother how she displayed pictures of House Mountain on her dresser. After returning to Virginia, Anderson painted House Mountain, the focal point of the Lexington landscape, in 1926. In \textit{House Mountain} (Figure 22), brushily rendered foliage punctuates the undulations of the countryside, and a crop of trees rises vertically in the right foreground, counterbalancing the strong horizontal bands of color that give form to the surrounding land. Eschewing traditional spatial recession, Anderson relied on color to create zones that distinguish one area from another, while her readily apparent brushwork suggests the continuity of the mountain and sky. Her diagonal daubs of paint evoke the fullness of the trees and shrubs, but she simultaneously flattens the house at the very right of the canvas. Interestingly, while the specificity of place is central here, the temporal setting of this painting is indeterminate: some of the colors—the blues, purples, and oranges—point to sunset, while only bright sunlight would elicit the greens of the foliage. Anderson is more concerned with using color to evoke the emotions tied to the familiar setting of House Mountain than in creating an accurate representation of the landscape.

A label attached to the back of the painting indicates that it was entered in New York City’s “Great Southern Exposition” at the Grand Central Palace in May of 1925.

\textsuperscript{79} Ellen Glasgow [cousin of Ellen Anderson], \textit{A Certain Measure: An Interpretation of Prose Fiction} (New York: 1943) p. 190.
Additional entry forms suggest that Anderson also submitted other landscapes to art exhibitions and show that her painting was a serious, professional endeavor, rather than a passing hobby. In 1926, she entered the 121st Annual Exhibition of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and also submitted *In the Valley of Virginia* (1926) and *Liberty Hall Ruins* (date unknown) to the Rockbridge County Art Festival. Previously thought to be lost, Anderson’s great-niece Aylett Suhr has two landscape paintings that seem to match these titles (Figures 23 and 24). These records show she only entered landscape paintings, and while this genre of painting was extremely popular in Virginia, I propose that her preference reflects the greater mobility that women enjoyed in the early twentieth century. Previous generations of women artists, including Berthe Morisot and Mary Cassatt, were primarily limited to domestic themes in their work because of the social conditions of the upper middle class. After the turn of the century, however, women were freer to paint and sketch in public places. *House Mountain*, a painting of a space newly opened to women and marked by the use of a “feminine” and artificial color palette, shows Anderson’s desire to participate in a more horizontal, less male-oriented model of modernism.  

In this chapter, I will begin by discussing the traditions of painting popular in Virginia with which Anderson was familiar. As I will show, Anderson initially worked within these traditions, adopting illusionistic depth, a static composition, and above all, a realistic—if not muted—color palette. Anderson’s study in Paris allowed her to infuse

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80 In addition to *House Mountain*, Anderson’s body of work includes twenty-five oil paintings, twelve works in watercolor and pastel, a handful of “miscellaneous media” works, according to Anderson Family Papers. Anderson also completed over forty pen and ink drawings as an illustrator for newspapers and magazines after her return from Paris. These drawings of dancers, actors, and singers supplemented articles about the performances in which these entertainers appeared.
American regionalism with her burgeoning interest in European modernism, particularly as she accesses Paul Cézanne’s brushwork and structural use of color, as well as Henri Matisse’s use of bright, non-realistic color and interest in decorative patterning.

However, as in the second chapter, I will closely question how Anderson’s paintings are not merely derivative of the work of those who influenced her, either in France or the United States.

In 1910, before her trip to Paris, Anderson painted a portrait of a close family friend, Louise Blair (later Daura), (Figure 25). In this early painting, the style of portraiture reflects conventions of American portraiture that Anderson learned from her studies in the United States and from prevailing artistic tastes in Virginia. She presented her subject in a frontal manner set against an ambiguous, dark space, similar again to the work of Eastman Johnson, whose portrait of his wife I discussed in Chapter Two. Anderson focused on capturing the effects of light and the three-dimensionality of Louise’s dress. She also employed tonal modeling to give volume to her sitter’s forearms, neck, and face, and seems to have paid special attention to the fall of Louise’s hair. An authentic representation, marked by spatial volumes and illusionism, underpin Anderson’s early artistic efforts, but, as we will see, this began to change after her experiences in Paris.

Louise Blair also studied in Paris—though later in 1927—and submitted her paintings at the Salon d’Automne. While abroad, she met her future husband Pierre Daura (1896-1972), a Spanish painter who traveled to Paris to study painting under Émile Bernard in 1914, the same year as Anderson’s own arrival. Daura was active in the Constructivist group Cercle et Carré of which Jean Arp, Piet Mondrian, and Antoine
Pevsner were also members. Pierre and Louise returned to Rockbridge Baths, Virginia, ten miles west of Lexington, in 1939. William M.S. Rasmussen writes that Pierre Daura “sought the friendship of his neighbors in the country” and this included Anderson, whom the Dauras referred to as “Cousin Ellen.”

A shared fascination with modern art as well as a great appreciation with the Virginia landscape could have bolstered the closeness between Anderson and Pierre Daura. Louise told her friends: “Pierre is painting landscapes everyday in our wonderful warm sunshine, landscapes very different from those he used to paint of St. Cirq. He . . . whistles while he works and throws on color with abandon, happily painting just as he wants to.” From around 1942, Fall at McCorkle’s Barn (Figure 26) shows that while Daura’s colors were undeniably bold, they still lacked the cosmetic qualities of Anderson’s palette in her painting of House Mountain. Still, Anderson and Daura both used decidedly modernist vocabularies to depict the Virginia landscape, and their modes of painting sharply diverge from the traditions of landscape painting that had prevailed up to that point.

According to art historian William Rasmussen, “nostalgia has a long history in Virginia,” first in response to the Civil War and later as a reaction to “rampant urban expansion.” Western Virginia, especially, was seen as the source of a new direction for art. The dawn of the twentieth century marked a new era in which the country was

84 Rasmussen, The Virginia Landscape, 141.
reunified, and the unexploited landscape served as a symbol of this rejuvenation. A new twentieth-century approach to landscape painting was exemplified by tame and tranquil, but still awe-inspiring, scenery. W.D. Washington (1833-1870) could be considered the key architect of this approach to landscape in Lexington. His artistic reputation was known throughout the community by dint of his position as the first Chair of Fine Arts at the Virginia Military Institute in the late 1860s, and his paintings would have been both familiar and accessible to Anderson, as they were so close to her home.

Washington was not a native of Lexington (he was born in Snickersville, Virginia), but his time at the Virginia Military Institute established his position within the Lexington community, and he is now buried at the Stonewall Jackson Cemetery. In 1951, a graveside tablet was dedicated by the Rockbridge Historical Society, due mostly to the “faithful efforts, correspondence, and inquiries” of Ellen Anderson herself. Anderson clearly appreciated Washington’s work and his contributions to the artistic community, including his painting *House Mountain and the Commandant’s House* (Figure 27) from 1869. While Washington’s theme is similar to Anderson’s, the style of his painting is steeped in tradition. House Mountain is depicted in both paintings, but Washington shrouds it in clouds to suggest atmospheric perspective. He has clearly delineated three grounds and creates a sense of vastness through the use of spatial recession. Washington’s compositional structure and use of perspective link this work to Neo-Classicism, and his treatment of the Commandant’s house deepens this comparison. Shown in ruin after the Civil War, Washington alludes to the ruins of Greco-Roman

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85 Ibid.
antiquity. His use of naturalistic color bathes the scene in light, indicating hope in the aftermath of the war. While Anderson admired Washington, her works departed from the austerity, grandeur, and realistic color he and other Virginia artists favored.

John Ross Key (1837-1920), another painter from Virginia, produced a landscape depicting the Blue Ridge Mountains in 1908 (Figure 28). Key’s painting of this locally-beloved mountain range may have been another reference point for Anderson’s work. In Afternoon, Hawksbill River, Key avoided referring to any trace of settlement and rather focused on the seemingly “pure” promise of the land itself. The composition of the painting helps to establish a sense of order: it is very structured, and clearly divided into three spaces or zones. The foreground is clearer and darker, and then slowly gives way to the middle ground of trees. The background of the canvas is consumed by the vastness of the mountain, carefully shaded and blurred through atmospheric perspective. Key’s depiction shows a bucolic scene that hearkens back to a simpler time, prior to the concerns of modern, urban society.

The First World War brought new concerns to the fore, and, according to Rasmussen, many American artists reacted by “rejecting the spirit of internationalism that had drawn the nation into World War I.” The desire to depict the American landscape in a decidedly American way marked the beginning of regionalism, a style that prioritized “national self-investigation…through attention back to rural life and values.” Anderson’s subject matter from this time period reflects the preeminence of regionalism, but her use of color and expressive brushwork in House Mountain demonstrate an internalization of what she learned in France.

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87 Rasmussen, The Virginia Landscape, 141.
88 Ibid.
Though House Mountain would certainly have been familiar to the residents of Lexington, Anderson presented it in a very different and perhaps unexpected way. Her approach in her *House Mountain* indeed suggests aspects of the uncanny. In 1919, Sigmund Freud published his theory of the uncanny in which he explored the encounter of feelings related to what is frightening about the everyday experience.\(^{89}\) The term “uncanny” translates in German as *unheimlich*, literally that which is “un-homely.” In this tract, Freud posits that our experiences of the uncanny are therefore always rooted in something “homely,” rather than something completely new and alien. There was nothing frightening about Anderson’s paintings, yet she made the familiar strange by rendering the Virginia landscape with non-realistic color and conspicuously physical, painterly brushwork. The influence of the French avant-garde—specifically Cézanne—figured heavily in the paintings that she produced upon her return to the United States and indicates her desire for a different, unfamiliar format.

Anderson’s cousin, Patrick Henry Bruce, undoubtedly helped Anderson navigate the world of the avant-garde in Paris. Matisse and Cézanne were important sources for Bruce’s own work, and their influence is also apparent in Anderson’s *oeuvre*. Matisse’s handling of color significantly informed Anderson’s palette, as it did for Mildred Burrage. I have discussed Matisse’s theories of color in the preceding chapter, but Anderson’s inflection seems to focus on what Yves-Alain Bois has called the “expansive force” of Matisse’s treatment of color relationships.\(^{90}\) In “On Matisse: The Blinding,” Bois describes the particular vitality of the artist’s paintings, which he then attributes to

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\(^{90}\) Bois, 62.
Matisse’s broad planes of color, rather than smaller strokes. Matisse famously claimed that a square centimeter of blue was not as blue as a square meter of the same blue, and it follows that the quality of color (i.e., its saturation and value) depends on the surface area it covers on the canvas.”\(^{91}\) The expansive force of color in Matisse’s paintings often causes the viewer to remember them as larger than they actually are, and this holds true for Anderson’s painting as well. Her broad bands of color, coupled with her up-close format, imbue *House Mountain* with the monumentality that Washington created through perspective. Rather than the stateliness of Washington’s mountain, however, Anderson injected the otherwise static landscape with a sense of vitality.

The physicality of her brushwork also contributes to the lively, expressionistic nature of the painting. Anderson’s faceted application of paint is reminiscent of *passage*, a brushwork technique championed by Cézanne that merges different forms and shapes together. He was also interested in color, though, and his theorizations also bear significance on a reading of *House Mountain*. Cézanne writes:

> I wished to copy nature. I could not. Yet I was satisfied when I discovered that the sun, for instance, could not be reproduced by must by represented by something else…by color… form is not separated from color; they condition one another, they are indissolubly united…by a singe brushstroke.\(^{92}\)

While Matisse’s influence ceded to that of Cézanne in the work of Patrick Henry Bruce, Anderson continued to engage both influences; I would suggest that this combination largely contributes to what we might see (following Armstrong and Lichtenstein) as the “feminine” mode of her paintings.

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\(^{91}\) Bois, 92.

Cézanne’s influence is clear in *House Mountain*, and Anderson’s painting relates most closely to his series of paintings of Mont Sainte-Victoire from 1902-1904, (for example, Figure 29). Cézanne built up the form of the mountain through faceted brushwork wherein the geometries of applied color blend together to suggest form. Susanna Leval’s description of the Mont Sainte-Victoire series also applies to *House Mountain*: “As our eye delights in the color harmonies, our mind provides the missing forms. We perceive the truth of the image rather than its representational accuracy.”

While Cézanne’s palette is still far more vibrant than that used by Washington and Keys, it lacks the highly artificial quality of Anderson’s mauves, purples, and oranges in *House Mountain*. Still, she relied extensively on his technique of passage to develop the cosmetic character of the painting.

In “Facturing Femininity,” Carol Armstrong explores how painterly mark making relates to makeup and therefore activates the thematics of both femininity and the modern. Armstrong identifies a key passage of contemporary criticism about the work of Édouard Manet, wherein the critic J.K. Huysmans praises Manet’s use of color and brushy marks:

> His bright work, from which have been scrubbed the mummified mud and tobacco juices which have mucked up canvases for so long, is possessed of a coaxing touch, beneath its swaggering appearance, a brief and concise but somewhat hesitant drawing, a bouquet of vivid marks within paintwork that is both silvery and blonde.

Armstrong hinges her argument on the relationship of brushwork and representation and suggests that the noticeably varied length and shape of Manet’s marks emphasize the

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materiality and flatness of the canvas. In direct opposition to the illusionistic manner of academic painting, Manet’s work must be considered as a “formal arrangement, [an] aesthetic commodity.” Armstrong connects this notion of commodity to fashion, and, more precisely, makeup, to which painting has historically been linked.

With regard to Manet’s *Woman Reading* (Figure 30) from 1879, Armstrong continues to develop her analysis of his brushy application of paint, similar to that of Anderson. Manet centered the figure against a garden backdrop, and she turns away from the viewer slightly as she reads an illustrated journal whose sketchily rendered pages seem to advertise clothing. Indeed, Manet used his most brushy marks for the magazine, as well for other areas of interest, including the woman’s hair, ruff, gloves, hat, and, most notably, her “cosmeticized face.” Armstrong notes: “Her lips and the flesh of her face are rendered in such a way as to suggest the layering of rouge on top of skin, rather than the skin itself, and thus to align painterly with cosmetic facture.” While Armstrong joins Manet’s producerly marks to feminine consumerism, I argue that in the case of Anderson’s work, the brushwork is linked primarily to an awareness of the fashions involved in producing effects of femininity and does not make such an overt statement about consumption. Though *House Mountain* is landscape and not a portrait, I maintain that, as in Manet’s work, Anderson’s marks reject the illusion of leaves, grass,

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95 Armstrong, 82.
96 Ibid. For more on the parallels between painting and makeup, see the discussion of color in Chapter One.
97 Armstrong, 94.
98 Ibid.
and sky: their suggestion of cosmetics “supports that refusal…paint suggests paint, in other words, paint of the feminine kind.”

Elements of this “feminine” ornamentation and the decorative are also apparent in Anderson’s *Still Life* from 1926 (Figure 31). Lexington native Bruce MacDonald discovered the painting in storage at Stonewall Jackson Hospital and oversaw its restoration. He recalls that the painting was “very dark” and covered with “the dirt of the decades,” but that after cleaning, the “lovely, glowing colors from the original painting began to emerge.” MacDonald discovered several cards taped to back of the canvas, showing that Anderson dedicated the painting to her mother, Mary Louisa, to brighten her declining years. This personal, familial connection perhaps does not follow the grand-narrative of modernism, yet it does show, once again, how Anderson endeavored to synthesize the regional with new directions of the avant-garde.

Here, Anderson’s use of color, simplification of form, and *passage*-like marks reinforce her understanding and adaptations of modern approaches to painting that she had studied in Paris. From Cézanne, Anderson took distorted perspective and a faceted handling of color. She used brushy planes of color to suggest space, and the overall effect is very flattened, a reminder of the two-dimensionality of the canvas. Anderson painted her tulips in such a way that the viewer can simultaneously look down into, as well as directly at, blooms from the same angle. She used color to create depth and volume of the forms. Each tulip is comprised of sketchy daubs of color set off by areas of pure white highlight and black lowlights. Anderson’s handling of the vase is especially skillful. The vase is rendered in facets of light and captures the interplay

\[^{99}\text{Armstrong, 95.}\]
\[^{100}\text{Ibid.}\]
between reflection and shadow from the flowers above. The bottom of the vase picks up
the reflection of the lowest bloom, and this repetition of red draws the eye from the
flowers, to the vase, and finally to the patterned table runner.

Anderson’s use of the runner serves a spatial complication and seems more
dynamic than examples from Cézanne. This dynamic element aided Anderson’s
exploration of geometric patterning, similar to that of Matisse. Still Life has the same
expansive feel Bois observed in Matisse’s work, and again the up-close format and
extension of the rug off the picture plane enforce this distortion of scale. In terms of the
decorative, Matisse had the opportunity to view exhibitions of Islamic art in Paris in
1893, 1894, and 1903, and Yves-Alain Bois has noted that it was the “accessories of
Islamic art (ceramics, cloth, screens, rugs, etc.) that Matisse found most seductive.”
Interestingly, Bois’s mention of accessories intersects with Armstrong’s analysis of
clothing, makeup, and other items including accessories—in the fashion sense—that are
used to create feminine effects. Anderson’s interpretation of the feminine mode here is
especially marked by charm. This quality may stem from the seductive role of color and
patterning that had fascinated Matisse. Or perhaps the aesthetic “prettiness” evoked by
the attention to ornament and decoration, combined with the thoughtful dedication to
Anderson’s mother, creates an appeal to both sensation and emotion.

The local subject matter of In the Virginia Mountain and the sentiment behind
Still Life diverge drastically from the cosmopolitan dynamism of Paris. But Anderson
sought out that which was familiar to her and chose to inflect it in an unfamiliar, modern
manner. Cézanne’s paintings of Mont Sainte-Victoire involve in fact a similar nostalgia:

101 Bois, 67.
the scenes come from his home near Aix-en-Provence and serve as a “parenthetical memory” of where he started and ultimately ended his life. Nature was important to Cézanne both personally and professionally, and he emphasized contact with nature for his students: “The Louvre is a good book to consult but it must only be an intermediary. The real and immense study that must be taken up is the manifold picture of nature.”

Anderson had visited the Louvre, but as Cézanne suggested, she then returned to nature, specifically a landscape scene from her everyday life, as a source of inspiration.

As I have shown in this chapter, Anderson used expressive, artificial color and physical brushwork to engage a vein of modernism outside of the mainstream model. Her interest in fashion, cosmetics, and ornamentation signal a “feminine” inflection of modernism and also err from the traditions of American regionalist painting. Her pragmatic unification in her artwork of the modern and the regional, of fashion and the everyday, show her conviction that there is no singular model for painting. Anderson’s navigation of both and her particular experimentation with what we might call “feminine” aspects of painting serve as a guide for American art to extend in a more nuanced and multifaceted direction.

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103 Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art, a Source Book by Artists and Critics*, 356.
CONCLUSION

Looking back on the ways Mildred Burrage and Ellen Anderson adapted aspects of French modernism, the subtle translation between modernist pictorial idioms and regional representation, as well as the intersection of fashion and art in their paintings, is striking. Their use of highly artificial color and decorative patterning relate to the promulgation of makeup and haute couture—the hallmarks of a modern, cosmopolitan city—that they encountered while studying art in Paris. As we have seen, the development of their respective oeuvres hinged on the adaption of their experiences abroad in a way that still resonated with their lives in the American regions. Joining bright, non-naturalistic color and experimentations with the decorative with a familiar subject matter, their work takes a course of modernism in a different direction, counter to mainstream narratives. Engaging this secondary, non-linear model of modernism in this way suggests an alternative, “feminine” mode of painting, one less focused on the artist as a first or original creator. In this study, I have used the word “horizontal” as the mode of art their work proposes, but perhaps their paintings also suggest a more cyclical approach to art history, somewhat similar to the cycles of fashion.

Some nineteenth-century critics maintained that fashion was an extension of art, and poet Stéphane Mallarmé went so far as to take on the publication of La Dernière Monde, a premiere French fashion magazine. As editor and writer, Mallarmé used the magazine as a vehicle to theorize the concept of fashion through a cast of writers (including “Miss Satin” and “Madame de Ponty”) that he himself voiced. As P.N. Furbank has suggested in his analysis of La Dernière Monde: “…One of the favorite
tropes or principles of Madame de Ponty…is that the \textit{monde} (world) of the ‘high-life’ sense (i.e. the scene of worldliness and fashion) is synonymous with the \textit{monde} or world in the everyday sense.” Mallarmé viewed fashion not only as an extension of art, but of life, and used his analyses of various trends in dress to make grander statements about Parisian society.

Notes on hats in particular appear repeatedly in \textit{La Dernière Monde}, and the trope of this fashion accessory also recurs in the letters and drawings of Burrage and Anderson. As Madame de Ponty, Mallarmé wrote: “What calls for most care in a woman’s costume is, unquestionably … the hat, the sole duty of which is to be charming.”\footnote{Stéphane Mallarmé, “Fashion,” \textit{La Dernière Monde} 2 (1874) in \textit{Mallarmé on Fashion}, P.N. Furbank and A.M. Cain (New York, NY: Berg, 2004) p. 51.} This element of adornment denotes style and was at the forefront among the marks of modernity. The interest these two women shared in high style seems to operate in tension with the practicality of their upbringings and lives at home. However, we can see how in the cases of Burrage and Anderson, again the relationship between their experimentation and ambitious art making, their own take on the “high style” of Paris, is brought back to the regionalist experiences in the United States, especially from a female perspective. The experiences of Burrage and Anderson, and, for that matter, any of the so-called lady art students, would have differed from those of their male counterparts. These differences result in inflections of modernism that err from the classic models of Monet, Matisse, and Cézanne.

Though perhaps “minor”— in comparison to the artists whose work so influenced them—the dynamic of their work is hardly subordinate. It runs in a cycle counter to the accepted trajectory of art history, one less interested in being the winner of the race and
anticipating the future in the form of the next artistic achievement. In *La Dernière Monde*, Mallarmé wrote:

…Let us pass on, all the more so since to have anticipated fashion by several seasons may seem to some like forgetting our duty, which is to create fashion day by day. So, instead of riddling the future, let us turn to the present and study that: for instance the favourite trimming of today, feathers. 105

Mallarmé’s concern with everyday fashions corresponds in many ways with the analogous concerns of Burrage and Anderson. For some, this suggests that both women are minor artists—they thought in the present and created art that lacked the grandiose, portentous significance of their more noted contemporaries. Burrage and Anderson created charming artworks. Their work engages with the *monde* in both senses because the fashion and modernity of Paris was, for a period of time, their everyday. When they returned from Europe, they incorporated elements of the modern with what was familiar to them in Maine and Virginia, and this recombination adds a new and different dimension to the grand narratives of European and American painting. Rather than the macho traditions, their work points to an art that is nuanced and multifaceted. Quite simply, their art performs a role uncannily similar to that proposed by Mallarmé for the hat: “…I said that a hat has to observe one rule only, to be ravishing: a vague prescription but not hard to follow.”106

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105 Mallarmé, in Furbank, 52.
106 Ibid.
Figure 1

Mildred Burrage

*Sketch of a Woman’s Face*

c. 1909-1914

Graphite on paper, 18 ½ x 12 inches

Portland Museum of Art, Maine, gift of the artist, 1981.595
Figure 2
Mildred Burrage

Merry Xmas from Giverny
1910

Watercolor on postcard, 3 1/3 x 5 3/8 inches
Portland Museum of Art, Maine, gift of the artist, 1981.1322.4
Figure 3

Ellen Anderson

*Untitled Charcoal Study*

1913-1914

Charcoal on paper, dimensions unknown

Collection of F. Anderson Stone, Virginia
Figure 4
Ellen Anderson
*Untitled Charcoal Study*
1913-1914
Charcoal on paper, dimensions unknown
Collection of F. Anderson Stone, Virginia
Figure 5
Mildred Burrage
Letter, July 20, 1909
Ink and watercolor on paper, 8 x 5 inches
Collections of the Maine Historical Society, Portland, Maine
Figure 6
Issuing Passes at St. Louis
March 1862
Dimensions unknown
Harper’s Weekly
Figure 7

Edgar Degas

*At the Milliner’s*

1882, pastel on pale gray wove paper (industrial wrapping paper),
Laid down on silk bolting, 30 x 24 inches
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 29.200.38
Figure 8

Ellen Anderson

Assorted Sketchbooks

Paris, 1913-1914

Collection of F. Anderson Stone, Virginia
Figure 9

Ellen Anderson
Assorted Sketchbooks
Paris, 1913-1914
Collection of F. Anderson Stone, Virginia
Figure 10

Mildred Burrage

*Luxembourg Gardens, Paris* (detail)

c. 1910

Oil on canvas, mounted on board, 12 ½ x 9 3/8 inches

Collection of Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr., Gardiner Maine
Figure 11

Patrick Henry Bruce

*Wood Interior, Summer*

1912

Oil on canvas, 17 ½ x 21 2/5 inches

Private Collection
Figure 12

Mildred Burrage

Madeleine Burrage

c. 1912-1914

Oil on canvas, 33 x 28 ½ inches

Portland Museum of Art, Maine, gift of the artist, 1981.135
Figure 13
Eastman Johnson
*Portrait of Mrs. Eastman Johnson*

_c. 1888_

Oil on canvas, 31 3/8 x 22 7/8 inches
Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.
Gift of Daniel Cowin, 1972.169
Figure 14

Mildred Burrage

Typical Wheeler Girl

c. 1909-1910

Oil on artist’s board, 14 x 10 inches

Portland Museum of Art, Maine

Gift of the Artist, 1981.131
Figure 15

Richard Miller

*Meditation*

1912-13

Oil on canvas, 36 ¼ x 29 inches

Private Collection
Figure 16
Claude Monet

*Madame Monet Embroidering (Camille au métier)*

1875

Oil on canvas, 25 ¼ x 22 inches

The Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, BF197
Figure 17
Henri Matisse

*Dance*

1910

Oil on canvas, 102 3/8 x 153 15/16 inches

The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg
Figure 18

Henri Matisse

*Music*

1910

Oil on canvas, 100 x 153 inches

The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg
Figure 19
Mildred Burrage
Dining Room Mural
Wiscasset, Maine.
Figure 20
Mildred Burrage
Basement Mural
Wiscasset, Maine.
Figure 21
Henri Matisse
*The Manila Shawl*
1911
Oil on canvas, 46 3/8 x 29 ¾ inches
Private Collection
Figure 22
Ellen Anderson

*House Mountain*

c. 1926

Oil on canvas, 19 ½ x 15 ¾ inches

Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Virginia
Figure 23

Ellen Anderson

*In the Valley of Virginia*

1926

Oil on canvas, dimensions unknown

Collection of Aylett Suhr
Figure 24

Ellen Anderson

Liberty Hall Ruins

Oil on canvas, dimensions unknown

Collection of Aylett Suhr
Figure 25

Ellen Anderson

*Louise at Age Five*

1910

Oil on canvas, 30 x 24 inches

Georgia Museum of Art, Athens
Figure 26

Pierre Daura

Fall at the McCorkle’s Barn

Oil on canvas, mounted on board, 17 ½ x 23 2/3 inches

Georgia Museum of Art.
Figure 27

W. D. Washington

*House Mountain and the Commandant’s House*

1896

Oil on canvas, dimensions unknown

The Virginia Military Institute, Lexington, Virginia
Figure 28

John Ross Key

*Afternoon, Hawkshill River*

1908

Oil on canvas, 28 x 40 inches

Virginia Historical Society, Lora Robins Collection of Virginia Art
Figur e 29

Paul Cézanne

_Mont Sainte-Victoire, seen from Les Lauves_

1902-1906

Oil on canvas, 25 1/8 x 32 1/8 inches

Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City
Figure 30

Édouard Manet

Woman Reading

1879-80

Oil on canvas, 24 1/16 x 19 7/8 inches

Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois, 1933.435
Figure 31

Ellen Anderson

*Still Life*

1926

Oil on canvas, dimensions unknown

Stonewall Jackson Hospital, Lexington, Virginia.
APPENDIX

The Fashion Drawings of Mildred Burrage, c. 1928-36
The Maine Historical Society, Portland
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